READING THE PRISON NARRATIVE: AN EXAMINATION OF SELECTED SOUTHERN AFRICAN POST-2000 WRITINGS

A dissertation submitted by

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to the Department of English

in the School of Human and Social Sciences

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in fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English (Literature)

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2018

DECLARATION

I, Robert Moyo, hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted for a degree or qualification at this or any other university or other institute of learning, and that this is my own work in design and execution and that all reference materials contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature……Date …….

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents for their love, support, encouragement, and guidance that made it possible for me to further my education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors Prof. H Sewlall, Dr G.S. Mashau and Dr O.A. Oduwobi for diligently supervising and equipping me with necessary skills and information to conduct this study successfully. I would also like to thank all the staff members and students in the English Department for their academic and moral support.

Lastly, I would also like to thank my family, relatives and friends for their unwavering loyalty and unconditional love.

ABSTRACT

This study examines a selection of Post-2000 Southern African prison narratives. It primarily focuses on fictional narratives that were written in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Little critical attention has been given to fictional prison writing in Southern Africa considering that much critical attention has been accorded to autobiographies by political prisoners. The demise of autobiographical writing has led to the rise in the production of prison novels, hence the need to examine this evolving genre. This study is driven by the need to examine the construction and representation of subjectivity in the selected narratives. It explores how the prison is experienced, by paying attention to issues of criminality, identity, gender and power. This study begins with the examination of criminality and the representation of the function of the prison in *Red Ink* by Angela Makholwa (2007), followed by the exploration of gender and identity issues in *A Book of Memory* by Petina Gappah (2015). It further examines how the notions of power and counter-discourse are portrayed in *The Violent Gestures of Life* by Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho (2014). This study employs the method of close textual analysis of the selected narratives. It is underpinned by post-colonial theory, the paradigm of the Panopticon which is foregrounded by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1977) and Daniel Roux's perceptions of the prison in *Doing Time under Apartheid* (2013). This study contends that notions of detention and imprisonment continue to play a central role in the production of selfhood in literary works. It is clear in the study that the prison is used as an institution to critique different phenomena regarding the prison experience. In this study, I clearly show that the selected narratives can be read as platforms for resistance against social ills that prevail in the post-apartheid/post-colonial society. I also argue that there is a thin line between fiction and non-fiction, apartheid/colonial and post-apartheid/post-colonial prison systems. The narratives I explore in this study reveal more continuities than discontinuities from the apartheid/colonial prisons.

Keys words: Southern African, prison narratives, subjectivity, identity, power, counter-discourse, gender, Panopticon, Foucault, Roux.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Preamble

In this study, I examine how issues of criminality, identity and gender are represented in a selection of Southern African Post-2000 prison narratives. My study basically explores the construction and representation of subjectivity in *A Book of Memory* by Petina Gappah (2015), *Red Ink* by Angela Makholwa (2007) and *The Violent Gestures of Life* by Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho (2014). It engages these selected narratives through a close textual analysis. The emergence and growth of writing about imprisonment in fictional works deserve literary analysis since more attention has been given to prison autobiographies.

1.2 Background to the Study

The birth of the modern prison was part of a much larger movement in which many institutions such as schools and hospitals came to be established as the solution to a wide range of social problems. The aim of incarceration was predominantly concerned with the implementation of punitive justice as a deterrent to offenders. Its purpose transformed towards the end of the 19th century, hence the twin imperatives of deterrence and reformation were adopted which Foucault terms as the "Great Transformation" (Cavadino and Dignan, 1992:114). In the introduction of *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (2003), Florence Bernault argues that penal incarceration did not exist in African societies prior to European conquest. After the colonising project, colonial regimes established prisons on an enormous scale for deterring political opposition. In light of this assertion, prisons were meant to contain political prisoners and to secure a workforce for the colonisers in the mines and other factories. The main aim of the colonial prison was to maintain hegemonic control. The detention of political activists during colonisation marked the birth of political prison literature in Africa. Those political prisoners were active as they challenged, subverted and negotiated domineering disciplinary conventions. Hence, Munochiveyi (2008:19) argues that "in their challenging, subversion, and negotiation of political imprisonment, political prisoners undermined the prison as a technology of control, and hence challenged state hegemony". Given the history of the African prison systems, it is evident that prison writing evolved as a way of challenging and subverting the prison systems.

African prison writing was shaped by the politics, race and gender of the prisoners (Kenney, 2017). The emergence of prison writing in Africa was accomplished through autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, letters and novels. The prominent former political prisoners who wrote about prison include the likes of Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nelson Mandela, Joshua Nkomo and Didymus Mutasa, to mention but a few. Concerning prison life writing, Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981:100) writes, "a narration of prison life is, in fact, nothing more than an account of oppressive measures in varying degrees of intensity and one's individual or collective responses to them". In his article, "Chained Letters: African Prison Diaries", Lovesey, (1995) examines the role played by the prison on African leaders and writers. He states that "the colonial prison was the school for national leaders from Kwame Nkrumah and Kenneth Kaunda to Jomo Kenyatta; Robben Island is referred today as 'Mandela University'" (Lovesey, 1995:31). His assertion is based on the belief that it was in prison where most political prisoners learnt counter-hegemonic practices. Political prisoners' writings often challenged norms of social justice and the existing social order. Of interest is the observation made by Harlow (1992:4):

> The literature of prison, composed in prison and from out of the prison experience, is by contrast necessarily partisan, polemical, written as it is against those very structures of a dominant arbitration and a literary historical tradition that have served to legislate the political neutrality of the litterateur and the literary critic alike. Reading prison writing must in turn demand a correspondingly activist counterapproach to that of passivity, aesthetic gratification, and the pleasures of consumption that are traditionally sanctioned by the academic disciplining of literature.

Daniel Roux (2014:247) has this to say about prison writing in the post-colonial era: "A striking feature of the post-apartheid era is the demise of prison life writing: the prison narrative, once a central pillar of South African autobiographical writing, abruptly moved to an almost-invisible periphery after the demise of apartheid". With the end of colonisation, prison writing has now taken the form of fiction instead of the autobiographical writing. Hence, my study is centred on fictional narratives about crime and imprisonment. Some scholars argue that everyone in prison is a political prisoner. However, they explain that it does not mean that we should glorify crime or ignore the heinous acts committed by violent criminals. In the same vein, Ndlovu (2010:188) asserts that most contemporary narratives illustrate that crime and imprisonment in the post-colonial era are still political entities despite the attempt to read them otherwise. Hence, they participate in the unmasking of the political theme.

It must be stated that my study examines contemporary prison narratives which focus on how the prison is experienced and negotiated, paying attention to issues of identity, gender and power in the selected literary works. Like other prison narratives, prison novels are fictional narratives which are a kind of documentary fiction, a specific form of witness literature that exposes and critiques phenomena in a vital institution. Some of the authors of the selected texts have no first-hand experience of prison life but have attempted to represent life behind bars honestly. While acknowledging that these texts are preoccupied with several themes, it is also pertinent to note that my study is primarily concerned with issues relating to criminality, gender, power, identity and imprisonment.

Rationale for the selected texts

Petina Gappah's *A Book of Memory* is a novel which probes the true nature of memory through a story of Memory, an albino woman convicted of murdering her adopted father, Lloyd. Gappah is a human rights lawyer hence her knowledge about justice formed the basis of her novel about the struggle for justice. Memory is sentenced to death and as part of her appeal she writes down memories of what happened which constitute the plot of the narrative. As a young woman and an albino, Memory suffers from the emotional and physical trauma of being an outsider both in and outside prison. Racially, she feels she is black but not black, white but not white, hence she struggles emotionally with her identity as she loses a sense of belonging in and outside prison. Memory's lack of a sense of belonging is further aggravated by the time when she feels she has been sold to a white man named Lloyd. Gappah's novel is comprised of many themes which include the economic disparity between the rich and the poor, unreliability of memory, fate and free will, collision of tradition and modernity, impact of politics on the personal and search for identity and imprisonment. While acknowledging multiple themes in this novel, I examine how issues of gender and identity are treated in *A Book of Memory*.

Angela Makholwa's *Red Ink* is based on a true crime and prison story of a serial rapist and murderer. The penning of her novel was influenced by the experiences she had as a journalist in the 1990s when she was a crime reporter. Her novel started as a biography of Moses Sithole, a serial killer who was charged with multiple counts of rape and murder and had approached Makholwa to write a book about him. However, she dropped the project before completion after Sithole started behaving like a psychopath. Given this background, *Red Ink* is a fictitious story of crime and prison set in post-apartheid Johannesburg, South Africa. It

documents the interaction of Lucy and the imprisoned serial killer and rapist Napoleon Dingiswayo. The novel depicts post-apartheid society as not only the location of crime, but also having a symbiotic relationship with the prison. This is evident in Lucy's life which turns into a nightmare after she receives a call from Napoleon Dingiswayo on their proposed project. Therefore, I examine notions of criminality and the representation of the function of the prison in *Red Ink.*

The Violent Gestures of Life is a novel about imprisonment by one who understands it from the inside. Mukwevho is a South African ex-convict who was arrested at the age of fourteen for breaking into shops. He was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison, though he served eleven years after being released on parole. It is his prison experiences which motivated him to write a novel about incarceration. His novel deals with the idea of prison both as a physical space of confinement and a confinement of the mind. It blurs the line between fiction and memoir as it is based on some true personal experiences of the author. *The Violent Gestures of Life* documents Gift's life who is just fourteen years old when he is imprisoned at Qalakabusha youth reformatory. From this text, I extrapolate how the author represents issues of power and resistance against prevailing prison discourses.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The emergence and growth of writing about imprisonment in fictional works deserve scholarly attention. The rationale for this study is that most literary analyses of prison literature have been focused on autobiographical writings by (former) political prisoners and little analysis has been done on fictional prison writings; hence my study aims to fill the gap. Instead of examining the prison from a human rights perspective, I explore the construction and representation of subjectivities in the selected fictional prison narratives.

1.4 Aim of the Study

My study examines the construction and representation of subjectivity in a selection of contemporary Southern African prison novels. I explore how the prison is experienced and negotiated, paying attention to issues of identity, gender and power relations in the selected texts.

1.5 Objectives

- To explore the notion of criminality and the function of the prison
- To analyse the different ways in which issues of identity and gender are dealt with in the selected narratives
- To examine how a counter-discourse operates in the selected fictional prison writings

1.6 Research Questions

The following questions are integral to the realisation of the research objectives:

- How are criminality and the function of the prison represented in the selected Southern African literary texts?
- How are issues of identity and gender dealt with in the selected literary works?
- How are notions of counter-discourse explored in the selected narratives?

1.7 Justification of the Study

Most prison literature studies in Southern Africa tend to focus on autobiographical narratives by political prisoners whose imprisonment was meant to prevent them from engaging in politics. However, it is important to note that prison literature has shifted from political resistance to include many criminal activities, hence some scholars believe that prison literature as a genre cannot be separated from the crime genre. There is little critical work that refers to fictional works about prison hence the need to examine the construction and representation of subjectivities in a selection of Southern African Post-2000 fictional prison narratives. The reason for choosing the selected texts is that their authors come from countries which inherited their prison systems from the colonial model hence their prison systems are almost the same.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to Southern African Post-2000 prison narratives. It focusses on a selection of Zimbabwean and South African texts, mainly prison novels**.**

1.9 Literature Review

Prison narratives reveal a hidden history of the society in which they are produced. Prison literature is considered as a hybrid genre whose formal boundaries are fluid and its content diverse. Some scholars state that prison literature comprises works by writers who are incarcerated and by prisoners who become writers in prison and after prison (Times Higher Education, 2000). However, it is worth noting that some prison narratives are fictional in nature, written by authors who have no direct experience of the prison. Authors who write fictional works about prisons claim that their writings are true fictions which objectively depict the prison experience. Such writers are often impelled to assume the role of witnesses. For example, Zwelonke (1973:3) states: "For various reasons I have written a work of fiction. Fiction, but projecting a hard and bitter truth; fiction mirroring non-fiction, true incidents and episodes". Prison literature takes different forms such as autobiographies, letters, novels, diaries, memoirs, essays, manifestos and poetry. Thus, the prison experience becomes the focus of a text, the stimulus for a social or political cause or an impetus for writing.

In most prison narratives, writers are often compelled to write about what transpires in places of incarceration. Stories of brutality, dehumanisation and radical deprivation are always the focus of most, if not all prison writings. The thematic pre-occupations of prison narratives are centred on oppression, corruption, rebellion and rehabilitation. Although prison writing encompasses autobiographies, journals, letters and novels, very little attention has been given on the prison novel, hence my study examines how selected Southern African writers represent the prison in their fictional prison writings. The selected texts try to artfully straddle, cross, and blur the line between fiction and non-fiction hence they can be read as true fictions which are not just based on creativeness but on certain realities about incarceration (Watson, 2013). As opposed to other studies on prison literature, my study limits itself to fictional texts about incarceration. In an unpublished doctoral dissertation presented at University of Johannesburg, Eirwen Elizabeth Oswald (2005) assertion that prison literature deals with shaping of identity and protest against the prison system is true as this is evident in the selected prison narratives.

The prison in literature has not only been a site of cultural production, but also an important philosophical and literary trope. Contemporary prisons are penal instruments with punitive mechanisms that are hidden from the public. This is well documented by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1977) wherein he states that punishment

used to be a public spectacle but now it is executed in penitentiary institutions. He says, "Among so many changes, I shall consider one: the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle" (Foucault, 1977:7). Sobanet (2008:9) avers that "prison novels expose the details of life behind bars to an outside public that is ostensibly uninitiated in the bureaucratic practices and the sociological and psychological processes of the carceral universe". Thus, prison literature reveals, often in highly politicised and personal terms, how individuals respond to a foreign and hostile environment. Moreover, some scholars postulate that as prisons changed from being places of reformation to being places of cheap mass production, literature by convicts became increasingly a form of protest literature against the brutality of prisons and sometimes against the system itself. In light of this, my study examines how prisoners resist the prison discourses.

Prison literature, also in the form of fictional prison narratives, reveals the experiences of "inmates [who] are collectively subjected to radical and systematic deprivation" (Sobanet, 2008:9). They lose contact with their loved ones, are stripped of their freedom and trade their own clothes for regulation uniforms and their names for numbers. They are forced to submit to power structures, surveillance and strictly regimented schedules. Thus, prisoners are subjected to a subculture as they embrace new value systems in prison. Prison novels depict, in detail, life behind bars and the prison is used as a vehicle to critique and question cultural, socio-economic and political power structures. The selected texts narrate the realities of incarceration and link them to socio-economic factors such as poverty and social inequality. The representation of prison in the selected novels blurs the line between fiction and non-fiction. Hence, Sobanet (2008:15) states that "the heightened referential implications which indicate to the reader that the experience portrayed is not simply the product of the author's imagination but rather is representative of actual conditions of captivity".

Most prison narratives are preoccupied with identity issues that prevail in prisons. Crawley (2001) states that when prisoners enter the prison, they are coerced into assuming new identities within the discourse of transgression and correction. She further states,

> The initial procedures of registration and observation that govern the individual's entry into the prison ensure that all other forms of identity are abandoned at its threshold. Following this tabula rasa, the 'facilitation' of the prisoner's adaptation to the carceral world begins with a preliminary body search, thirty days' solitary confinement for the purposes of questioning and observation, and the searching and confiscation of personal affairs (in other words, a rigorous procedure of depersonalization and deindividualization). (Crawley,2001:305).

This is followed by the presentation of several codes to which the prisoner is told to adhere in order to avoid punishment or an elongated prison term. To add on Crawley's assertion about the formation of new identities in prison, Hall (1996:4) argues that identities "are constructed within, not outside discourse, [hence] we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies". Thus, this is the culture which prisoners are presented with on their arrival at the prison. Part of their prison culture relates to personal hygiene, dressing, religious practices, visits, work, education and sleep. Erving Goffman (1961) describes the effects of imprisonment on the inmate's self as immediate and devastating. He argues that a "recruit" to a total institution goes through a "series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if unintentionally, mortified" (1961: 24).

The theme of rebellion is also popular in most prison narratives as prisoners rebel against a hegemonic space. Crawley (2001) argues that in most cases the prison appears to be a hegemonic structure which manipulates the prisoner's fear of demotion and desire for promotion and rests on the prisoner's assumption that he or she always has the possibility of being seen. Harlow (1992) affirms that despite the prison institutions' function of being the state's coercive apparatus of physical detention and ideological containment, they also provide a critical space where alternative social and political practices of counter-hegemonic resistance movements are learnt. Hence, my study analyses how issues of power and counter-discourse are represented in the selected fictional texts.

Willingham (2011:56) argues that "black women's prison narratives offer a unique insight into interlocking patterns of oppression that contribute to their incarceration and how gender and sexuality extends into prison". Building on this assertion, it is pertinent to note that prison narratives pose numerous questions about gender, racial and class hierarchies, historical background as well as social justice. It is believed that these issues often contribute to imprisonment and they also extend to the prison. The focus on gender by most contemporary prison narratives is contrary to the view by some critics that Southern African writing in general disregard gender as an analytical tool. Contemporary prison writing has been particularly critical of and sensitive to the major flaws of society. The report in Times Higher Education (2000) indicates that the relationship between gender and prison has attracted academic interest in the past decade. Thus, my study takes advantage of the texts written by women to examine how notions of gender are represented in their narratives.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

My study is underpinned by postcolonial theory. The reason to use this theory stems from Gilbert and Tompkins's (1996) definition of post-colonialism. They define postcolonial theory as an engagement with or contestation of colonial discourses, social hierarchies and power structures. Bearing in mind Bernault's *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (2003), it is paramount to note that African societies inherited their prisons from the colonial masters. She argues that in colonial Africa, colonial authorities introduced the prison as a technique of domination and subjugation. Hence, prison literature is believed to be aimed at resisting and subverting the prison discourses. For instance, torture in many African prisons is deep rooted in the colonial era hence some scholars believe that colonialism and torture are inseparable. Thus, prison officials inherited such a dehumanising system meant to emphasise their hegemony in post-colonial prisons. Kothari (1998:35) notes that "postcolonial theory, as it has hitherto established itself, has been concerned with highlighting the discursive nature of oppressive structures". Prisons have long been considered as oppressive and powerful colonial institutions, which writers, prisoners and former prisoners have always contested in their writings. In this context, Rossini (2008:33) argues that the oppressive structures of prison establish a framework for the explicit assertion of power and the inmates' various forms of resistance. Postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance, of resistance as subversion, or opposition, or mimicry.

The concept of resistance carries with it or can carry with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality. Kothari (1998:36) further adds that:

> …the category of 'resistance' requires serious reconsideration: resistance in literal terms means 'a resisting; opposing; a withstanding' and further, 'opposition of some force, thing, etc. to another or others'. This presumes a very clear presence of the dominant other, resistance in relation to something more powerful. Postcolonialism is concerned with foregrounding the colonized as resisting subject against the colonizing.

Walcott (2009) asserts that postcolonial theorists explore multiple modes of colonialism in historical and contemporary contexts, and illuminate the intransigence and reproduction of colonising practices in post-colonial societies. In this sense, resistance is rewriting and opposing dominant cultural values, narratives, codes and behaviours. Some scholars believe that resistance based on saying "no" to power can lead to social change, though it does not automatically lead to social change or transformation of the dominant logic underlying social

structures. Jeffress (2008) explains that Bhabha locates resistance in the spaces between colonial expectations and the native's response, so that the oppressed can calculate strategies to 'alter' and 'displace' authority within these in-between spaces. This approach entails that subverting colonial authority is possible because power is never total or absolute. Elaborating on the practices of mimicry and hybridity, as adumbrated by Bhabha, Jeffress (2008:29) writes:

> ...illuminates the way in which more material forms of opposition, struggle, and protest can be seen as enabling, and enabled by, modes of discursive refusal, wherein the colonial narrative does not simply fail but is transformed by the colonized in politically meaningful ways.

Considering that post-colonial literature is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonialism, my study treats the selected texts as post-colonial writings, designed to subvert the prison as a colonial instrument meant to maintain power. Using postcolonial theory, I engage and interrogate the prison as a power structure in the selected Southern African texts. Some relevant post-colonial terms to note are identity, power and counter-discourse. This theory is employed as a vehicle to critique the creation of subjectivities by the prison which scholars such as Crawley (2001) regard as a hegemonic space.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1977) focuses on the tactics and techniques of power and how power is exercised in penal institutions. His views on power are relevant to this study as they allow the researcher to examine how contemporary prisons create penal subjectivities. His book concentrates on the advent of the modern prison which focuses on the mind of the inmate and the eradication of repressive forms of power. Hence, he states that "it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour…" (202). For Foucault, power produces knowledge through constant observation of the inmates. In his view, knowledge is always connected to power. He states:

> Perhaps, too, we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests. Perhaps we should abandon the belief that power makes mad and that, by the same token, the renunciation of power is one of the conditions of knowledge. We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault 1977:27).

In his work, Foucault cites Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, an architectural design for prisons, as another mode of power. The Panopticon would allow guards to continually see inside each cell from a vantage point in a high tower, unseen by the prisoners. This modern structure meant that prisoners would internalise a consciousness of constant surveillance. He writes:

> Bentham's Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a school boy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and recognise immediately. (Foucault, 1977:200).

The Panopticon's modes of observation produce knowledge of those under surveillance. Foucault states, "[t]hanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour, knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised" (1977:204). For him, power comes from everywhere and is omnipresent. It is a key concept because it acts as a type of relation between people; a complex form of strategy with the ability to secretly shape other people's behaviours. He regards power as a producer of reality because "it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (194). However, he also notes that wherever there is an exercise of power on a certain group of people, there is also resistance. It is against this background that my study examines how the selected prison narratives portray issues of power and resistance in contemporary prisons. Closely related to the power of the Panopticon is his concept of discipline. It aims to exercise power on the docile bodies of inmates. Among other elements of the prison, such as the rehabilitation programmes and punishment ideologies, the architecture of the prison is also a tactic of the prison discourse which shapes the lived reality of the prison. Foucault postulates that these elements work to discipline, control and shape prisoners' bodies, producing and reproducing a certain kind of subject. Thus, the modes of power which he discusses are paramount to this study.

Daniel Roux' most striking observations in *Doing Time under Apartheid* (2013) are the continuities and the discontinuities that prevailed in apartheid and post-apartheid prisons. In his article titled, "Inside/Outside: Representing Prison Lives after Apartheid" (2014), Roux (2014) argues that the apartheid prison developed a prison template for the post-apartheid prison. He states, "[d]uring the last years of the apartheid regime, prisons emptied of political prisoners, but the prisons certainly did not disappear". Prisons remain part of social reality even though they recede from public spectacle that focuses on the self of the prisoner. He avers that a prison is not just a place, a hindrance to overcome, it is a state apparatus which changes one's self in a way and understands it as

> …a rich site for speculation about the imbrication of subjectivity with institutional culture and time because the modern penitentiary is a materially located institution that seeks to govern and produce subjectivity— that is, it works on the mind through the body (Foucault, 2014:248).

In light of this assertion, he affirms that prison narratives, in other words, cannot be read simply as the expression of the experience of a particular fully constituted individual subject, because the prison is tasked with making subjects, with producing a point of view and a form of consciousness. Roux's assertions about imprisonment provide the lens through which my study examines how the selected texts portray the prison experience.

1.11 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach. Walliman (2011:130) defines the qualitative approach as research that is "based on data expressed usually in the form of words-descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings etc.-rather than on numbers... whenever people are the focus of the study, particularly in social groups or as individuals". In a qualitative research, data is analysed by seeking meaning from the available source of data and then sorted and categorised into themes. This study employs close reading and textual analysis of a selection of Southern African Post-2000 prison writings. Boyles (2013:37) defines close reading as means of "reading to uncover layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension". On a similar note, Jones et al (2014: 4) postulate that, "the goal of close reading is to enable the reader to deeply engage with the challenging and high-quality text". This method has been chosen to engage the primary texts extensively in order to gather their underlying meanings. Secondary data in the form of theoretical insights is also used to complement data from the primary sources. These include post-colonial theory, Roux's perceptions of the

prison in "Doing Time under Apartheid" (2013) and *Foucault's Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1977). Other relevant theories related to the study are consulted to substantiate the examination of the selected texts.

1.12 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter highlights the background to the study, rationale of the texts, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study. The rationale of the study as well as literature review on prison and prison writing constitute part of this chapter. The methodology and the theoretical insights of this study are discussed here as well.

Chapter 2: Criminality and Imprisonment

My discussion opens with Makholwa's *Red Ink*. It offers a detailed critique of criminality and the function of the prison in a post-colonial era. I argue that it is marked by a number of ironies and contradictions as it depicts the prisoner as being responsible for all the harm committed by him, at the same time it depicts the criminal or prisoner as a victim of his macro-environment. The analysis of Makholwa's *Red Ink* using feminist literary criticism indicates a patriarchal society where crime and violence are prevalent, and are in many cases directed to women. The multiple ironies present in *Red Ink* allow me to argue that the Panopticon described by Foucault is not practical in post-apartheid South African prisons, partly because of corrupt warders. Thus, in this chapter, I examine notions of criminality and imprisonment, paying particular attention to the relationship between prison and the society.

Chapter 3: Identity and Gender

In chapter three, I examine issues of gender and identity in Gappah's *A Book of Memory*. It is a novel that probes the nature of memory through the narrative of an albino woman, called Memory, languishing in Chikurubi Maximum prison. It has elements of an autobiography. The use of memory to mediate all the events that brought her to prison helps me to argue that there might be a distortion of reality about the self as "profound changes can render a former identity or self almost incomprehensible" (Maftei, 2013:5). I also argue that Gappah's narrative depicts Memory as a victim of circumstances who experiences imprisonment in a metaphorical and figurative way. The examination of identity in *A Book of Memory* shows

that identities are not fixed and linear; they intersect according to space and time. This narrative also depicts the prison as a gendered space which teaches and reinforces patriarchy through the analogy of the Panopticon.

Chapter 4: Power and Counter-Discourse

Chapter four examines how issues of power and resistance are dealt with in *The Violent Gestures of Life*. In this chapter, I take advantage of Crawley's (2001) view of prisons as hegemonic institutions to examine how prisoners resist these hegemonic spaces. Building on Bernault's assertion that prisons did not exist in Africa before colonisation, I regard this narrative as a post-colonial narrative participating in subverting the prison system as a colonial institution meant to maintain hegemony. I argue that writings about imprisonment are among other ways of resisting the prison discourses. *The Violent Gestures of Life* documents Gift's life who is just fourteen years old when he is imprisoned at Qalakabusha youth reformatory. He finds the prison to be oppressive to his mind and body. Thus, I examine how the author represents issues of resistance against prevailing prison discourses.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Chapter five concludes my discussion of the selected writings. I briefly discuss how notions of criminality and the prison's function have been represented in the selected fictional prison narratives. I also conclude on how the prison is experienced and negotiated, paying attention to issues of gender, identity and power. Finally, I briefly discuss how notions of counter-discourse and counter-hegemony are addressed in the selected texts.

CHAPTER 2

Criminality and Imprisonment

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine notions of criminality and imprisonment in post-apartheid South Africa through a reading of Angela Makholwa's *Red Ink* (2007). It is a fictional story of crime and prison set in post-apartheid Johannesburg, South Africa. When read closely, it depicts criminality and imprisonment as political entities despite attempts to read it otherwise. It also depicts a consciousness of the social and political rootedness of criminality and imprisonment. This narrative is marked by the paradox that the prisoner is regarded as "responsible for all the harm committed by that individual" (Dilts, 2014:92); the prisoner/criminal is also depicted as a victim of his unfriendly environment. Dilts (2014:82) regards such narrative as a "neo-liberal proposal to radically reconceive the human subject as a rational actor". When read from a feminist literary perspective, Makholwa's novel depicts a patriarchal society where violence and crime are prevalent and directed against female characters. Makholwa's novel exposes contemporary constructions of gender and their effects on crime. More importantly, her narrative is an exploration of society's interaction with the imprisoned and the function of contemporary prisons. It documents the interaction of Lucy and the ill-famed imprisoned rapist and serial killer, Napoleon Dingiswayo. Makholwa's narrative is characterised by a number of ironies about criminality and imprisonment. Thus, in this chapter, I examine criminality and imprisonment, paying attention to the relationship between crime, gender construction, justice, inequality, misogyny and politics. I also examine the relationship between prison and society.

2.2 Criminality, Gender, Inequality and Justice

Makholwa's *Red Ink* engages with the most recognised menace to citizens and residents of South Africa − crime. The novel interprets and traces the effects of crime, while commenting on the way justice is handled in post-apartheid era. Through Makholwa's examination of crime, she exposes a particularly noticeable divide between want and need, rich and poor, as well as excess and deprivation. The villain in Makholwa's novel, Napoleon, is serving five life sentences for his criminal offences of maiming, raping and killing over 41 young women around Johannesburg. Makholwa suggests that Napoleon is a product of his fractured past

and unfriendly environment. Her narrative also suggests his personal responsibility over and above the political and social environment that enables his evolution. *Red Ink* is narrated from the third-person point of view and the protagonist is the heroine of the novel.

Makholwa's narrative indicates that crime and imprisonment are deep-rooted in the socio-economic background of the offenders. Her narrative concurs with Agnew's (1992) assertion that unfavourable childhood, histories of violence, low family income, poor relationships with parents/partners and poverty, among others, may lead to future anti-social behaviour and criminality in males and females. Napoleon succeeds in self-exculpation by portraying himself as a victim of a poor childhood and violence. *Red Ink* indicates that Napoleon had an unfavourable childhood at the hands of his abusive alcoholic mother and foster parents. This is evident when Napoleon says to Lucy:

> D'you think I was born like this? Do you think God decided, yes, this one is going to spend most of his life in prison? No. It is people who have made me like this. From my mother to the rest of the stinking poison that kept on appearing in my life over and over again, I had no choice. (60)

This narrative suggests that troubled childhood background is a cause of violent crimes against women, even though they cannot be condoned. As Napoleon puts it, his violent crimes against women are because of the abuse he suffered from women. He maintains:

> My mother was always drinking; when she wasn't drinking she was swearing at us or beating me or Sifiso. She hated our father more than any of her other husbands or boyfriends. I don't know why, but she took out all her hatred of him on us… When you are a child and all you know is violence, every single day of your life just becomes about survival. (46)

Scholars like Borowsk et al. (1997) aver that childhood environments that are physically violent, emotionally unsupportive and characterised by competition for scarce resources have been associated with sexual violence. In the same vein, Ouimette and Riggs (1998) state that sexually aggressive behaviour in young men has been linked to a history of witnessing family violence and having emotionally distant and uncaring fathers. Considering these assertions, it can be argued that the violent behaviour of Napoleon and his brother, Sifiso, as foreshadowed by their traumatic childhood. Furthermore, Napoleon and Sifiso's criminality can be explained by employing Freud's psychodynamic theory. This theory is centred on the notion that an individual's early childhood experience influences his or her likelihood of committing future crimes. It assumes that there are three elements which constitute a human personality: the id, ego and the superego. Freud ([1930] 2002) proposes that the id represents the

unconscious biological drive for sex, food and other necessities over one's life span. The salient element in his theory is the id, which is concerned with instant pleasure or gratification, while disregarding concern for others. Freud states that the ego compensates for the demands of the id by guiding an individual's behaviour, to keep him or her within the boundaries of society. Thus, unpleasant childhood experiences result in inadequate ego and superego development.

Psychodynamic theory states that offenders are frustrated hence they resort to committing crime. Offenders are usually drawn into events that happened in their early childhood as a result of neglect, misery or an unhappy childhood, which is mostly characterised by a lack of nurturing or love. Freud's theory implies that victims of traumatic childhood, like Napoleon and Sifiso, lack the ego which guides their behaviour within the expectations of the society. What their ego does is to identify with the aggressor, instead of negotiating with their id. Thus, Makholwa seems to adopt these assumptions to explain Napoleon and Sifiso's violent crimes against women. However, some scholars have criticised Freud's theory, stating that its assumptions cannot be scientifically measured or verified and it is deterministic as it suggests that behaviour is predetermined and people do not have free will (Hergenhahn, 1980). Alfred Adler, a former colleague of Freud, introduced the notion of "ego psychology" in an effort to give equal importance to the role of conscious factors in determining behaviour. According to him, all humans experience feelings of inferiority as children hence they spend the rest of their lives trying to compensate for those feelings (Adler, [1999] 2013). Adler's perceptions of 'inferiority complex' can also explain Napoleon's behaviour as he rapes to conquer and overpower.

While not overlooking Napoleon's unhappy childhood as the cause of his violent crimes, the novel reveals that his criminality can also be traced to his obsession with sex which started when he was fifteen years old. One of the incidents to note is when Napoleon is taken to Hillbrow "to experience what the Senatla gang called a rite of passage into manhood" (124). At this point, one of the women in the nightclub takes Napoleon to have sexual intercourse with him and Napoleon does not resist the move. Napoleon's brother, Sifiso, follows the couple upstairs and hears moans as "the woman appeared to be jumping on top of his brother" (124). This is the day "he lost his virginity to a prostitute only to be interrupted by Sifiso, who thought the prostitute was attacking him" (147). This incident is depicted as the beginning of Napoleon's initiation into sex until he became a serial rapist. His promiscuous behaviour is also evident during his imprisonment when Lucy agrees to have their first

appointment at the prison about their biography project. Napoleon does not get excited about the outcome of the whole project; he seems to only have lust for Lucy. What comes to his mind is a romantic relationship with Lucy, not a professional one. Ndlovu (2017:2) notes that *Red Ink* "inscribe[s] gender into the prison experience in ways that reveal an unsettling undercurrent of sexual desire, which disrupts any attempts at simplistic configurations of a power matrix between male prisoner and female interviewer". When describing Napoleon's imaginations about Lucy, the narrator says:

> He closed his eyes, and imagined her inside his jail cell, asking him questions about his life, wanting to know everything about him. He unzipped his zipper and closed his eyes. The beautiful, sexy devil was with him, touching him, doing unimaginable things to him. He came immediately. What a release. (17)

Napoleon's sexual hunger cannot be doubted as the reason for his rape attacks, even though his gender assumptions and hatred for women cannot be ignored either. In another instance, "[h]e imagined himself on top of her, doing unimaginable things to her while she screamed with pure pleasure" (34). It is clear that Napoleon's criminality was driven by his obsession for sex apart from his hatred of women. Thus, the novel depicts the individual as being responsible for all the harm done.

Makholwa depicts Napoleon's felonies as also being deep-rooted in his perceptions about women. Napoleon's stereotypical or sexist view of women is a result of his upbringing at the hands of his uncaring mother. Being haunted by the memories of the violence he suffered during his childhood, he develops malicious intentions towards all women whom he regards as tainted. In many instances in the text, he calls women "bitch[es]" (92) or "whores" (91). His self-constructed view of women leads him into committing violent crimes against them. He regards women as sex objects that are meant to be acted upon. He is stuck to the angel-bitch duality. In his initial interactions with Lucy, he constructs her as an idealised and angelic woman. He says to Lucy, "They must not turn you into evil, Sibongile. To me, you are an angel, and you must never let them change you" (60). Of note is Napoleon's altered view of Lucy when he starts doubting her over their biography project. The narrator states, "surely she couldn't be as bad as those other bitches…dirty fucking filthy whores. She wasn't like his mother … or was she?" (91). Through Napoleon, Makholwa projects a patriarchal society which renders women vulnerable to abuse by men. This is evident in Napoleon's motive of raping and killing his victims. The narrator writes, "That young girl, whom he raped and killed on behalf of KK, had awoken in him a desire to overpower, conquer and

humiliate" (232). Thus, Makholwa's novel is an attempt to interrogate the stereotypical view of women as sex objects.

In the prologue, the reader is introduced to notions of misogyny which are explicit and rampant in the novel. It starts with a sentence which indicates the vulnerability of the female characters portrayed in the novel: "Busisiwe was nervous" (1). Busisiwe is apprehensive as she tries to impress on a date with a stranger named Sipho. It becomes obvious towards the end of the prologue why her fear is justified. It turns out that Sipho has malicious intentions on her. While Busisiwe tries to dress in an impressive way, Sipho "felt there would be something special about getting rid of this particular bitch" and "he felt nothing for women" (4). The prologue introduces the reader to the way women are perceived in the novel, which is the sole reason why they suffer from gender-based crime. The hatred of women is explicit in the novel. The narrator says, "He hated everything about women-their high-pitched voices, their fake mannerisms, their smell" (6). Murray (2016) observes that rather than regarding crime against women as aberrations, *Red Ink* suggests that such crime is pervasive and that the brutal instances of physical violence are merely extreme manifestations of discursive and structural gender oppression that shape every aspect of the female characters' lives. Smith (2013:15) reminds us that "[m]isogyny wears many different guises, reveals itself in different forms which are dictated by class, wealth, education, race, religion, and other factors, but its chief characteristic is its pervasiveness". In her observations about violence against women, Banyard (2010:107) refuses to regard such crimes as aberrations: "Look beneath the surface and you find the roots of all these individual acts connected in a tangle of gender inequality that is firmly planted in the heart of normal, everyday society". After the prologue, we are introduced to Lucy who, like Busisiwe, is exposed to gender-based crime and misogynist assumptions about women that continue to flourish in a post-colonial society that is characterised by deep hostility towards women.

When reading *Red Ink* through a feminist literary paradigm, it is clear that it depicts a post-apartheid South Africa which is haunted by horrendous gender-based crimes. Crime is represented as a way of affirming and reaffirming masculinities and dominance by men. Ussher (2006) affirms that violence and sexual assault are some of the ways in which men maintain dominance over women. Most of the crimes depicted in this text are gender-based crimes committed by men, who, in most instances, have stereotypical views of women. For instance, Lucy's friend, Fundi, who is a struggling actress and phone-sex service consultant, is referred to as a "whore" (221) by her boyfriend, KK Mabote, who is also known as 'The

Sponsor', when she refuses to play along with his sexual fantasies. The abuse which female characters are subjected to, is depicted as a way of maintaining dominance over women.

The oppression which women are subjected to is reminiscent of Beauvoir's ([1949] 2012) assertion that women can never be liberated unless the system of patriarchy is overthrown in a society. Her claim is based on the fact that women are usually regarded as "other" by men who consider, themselves as the 'subjects' who should act on the objects (women). It is learnt through Detective Morapedi's revelation to Lucy that her late friend, Patricia, was on many occasions subjected to abuse by her boyfriend, Tshepo Ramaitse. For Lucy, this is unbelievable because she knows Tshepo as a sweet, charming man. She says, "Are you kidding me? That guy is super sweet. He wouldn't hurt a fly" (101). The revelation about Patricia and Tshepo's relationship makes Lucy recall how her own "abusive lover would drag her by her hair and bash her head against a wall, only to resurface days later with platitudes of forgiveness and a surprise dinner or a spa treatment voucher intended to wipe away the horror of the experience" (101). Lucy remembers how her violent ex-partner, Ludwe, used isolation tactics in an endeavour to enforce his power over her. "He would create distance between Lucy and any other person who was close to her at the time, including Lucy's own mother, preferring to keep her to himself and dominating every aspect of her existence" (103). Similarly, it is learnt through Lucy's conversation with Patricia's sister, Ntswaki that Tshepo used the same isolation strategy to keep Patricia to himself. Ntswaki says, "that man is wicked, he is the one who influenced her against you. He was planting all sorts of ideas in her head…that she could do better without you" (121). The relationships which these female characters find themselves in are best described by Ganley (1995), who states that conventionally romantic relationships can be more sinister in abusive contexts. She avers that "[s]ometimes physical abuse, threats of harm, and isolation tactics are interwoven with seemingly loving gestures…" (Ganley 1995:22).

While in most cases the majority of female characters in *Red Ink* are represented as strong and powerful, they have a weakness of succumbing to gender-based violence as they believe that their happiness depends on men. Makholwa's female characters stoically endure violence from their partners because they believe that their lives should always revolve around men. When juxtaposing Lucy with other female characters in *Red Ink,* it is clear that they have an enormous difference. Lucy runs her own Public Relations company without a steady boyfriend or husband; she is independent, yet other female characters believe that having a

man is the ladder to success. Thus, this mentality is portrayed as the contributing factor to gender-based crime which continues to prevail in the society.

Makholwa's *Red Ink* also depicts a patriarchal post-apartheid society which renders women vulnerable to all forms of abuse. Among other forms of maintaining dominance over women, is sex, as portrayed in the novel. In Napoleon's case, for example, it is well-articulated that his intention to rape was to feel superior to women. Initially, Napoleon's mission to rape women was only meant to give him a sense of power and dominance over them. He only modified it when one of his rape victims testified against him. It was only after serving his sentence that he vowed to get rid of his victims. What separates Napoleon from his brother is the fact that Sifiso never dared to rape a woman; his thrill was to kill, unlike Napoleon, who raped and killed. Napoleon's justification for rape, as the narrator claims, "was literally the only time he could only enjoy himself with a woman because it was only then that he ever felt powerful" (232). This sums up the observation that men in *Red Ink* commit crimes against women as a way of assuming power and dominance over them.

Red Ink portrays sex as a way of dominance over the other partner throughout the novel. Interestingly, it is not only Napoleon who rapes to overpower; Sifiso and KK's intention to have sex with their same-sex partners is also linked to the assumption of power. The narrator states, "It had completely emasculated Sifiso, but for KK it was the only way to establish a pecking order" (203). The assumption of power through sexual intercourse is not only portrayed between males and females, but it also prevails between homosexual partners, for instance, between Sifiso and KK. This is evident when the narrator says, "It reminded him of the times when The Sponsor felt the need to establish his domination, making Sifiso scream like a wounded animal from the pain of penetration" (209). However, economically powerful men like KK, while being homosexuals, never agree to be penetrated. They maintain their manhood even after being degraded by the prison. He maintains his masculine identity even though others assume feminine identities after being sodomised in prison. The homosexual and heterosexual practices depicted by Makholwa are all based on unequal power relations. The other partner regards him or herself as physically or economically powerful, hence it exerts its power on the less powerful. The sexual behaviours which Makholwa portrays are based on binaries whereby the less powerful is subjected to penetration. Like KK, Sifiso, as a homosexual, does not want to be penetrated for the same reasons of assuming and maintaining power over his partners. The narrator observes, "After KK, Sifiso only enjoyed it if he maintained the power. Somehow being the one who always shoved it into them made

him feel better about his sexual tastes. He was still the alpha male" (204). Sifiso's gay tendencies are portrayed as the contributing factor why he never raped his victims, unlike Napoleon. For him, "the female represented filth, disease and whoring. He could not touch them. Women were beneath him" (209). The representation of his views on women suggests that his homosexuality is a result of his traumatic childhood experiences at the hands of his mother.

Makholwa's *Red Ink* focuses on a misogynist who targets mobile black working women while taking advantage of their economic and social problems caused by the political order of the day, hence, it calls for equal opportunities for everyone, particularly women who seem to be the most vulnerable in the society. This is evident in the way Napoleon hypnotises his prey to whom he promises job opportunities before he rapes and kills them. It is stated that, "He lured poor, unemployed women by promising them job opportunities and lunch dates" (10) and "[h]e was known to target young black women" (25). While women seem to be apprehensive of men, their social and economic status in the society makes them vulnerable as they take dangerous decisions which involve strangers like Napoleon. For instance, the lady who is introduced as Busisiwe in the prologue meets a stranger named Sipho. They arrange for a date while Sipho drives her home late in the evening. Busisiwe's intention as she tries to impress on the date is to charm Sipho and have a romantic relationship with him as "She could not wait to get married and move out of her parents' home. After all, she was already twenty-four years old" (3). Unknowingly to Busisiwe, Sipho regards her dressing and action of accepting a lift from a stranger as that of a "bitch" (4). While crime against women can be construed as an element of misogyny, the post-apartheid society is depicted as responsible for rendering women vulnerable because of its failure to accord equal opportunities to everyone.

The examination of criminality and imprisonment in *Red Ink* brings to light how justice is handled by law authorities in post-apartheid South Africa. While Napoleon is apprehended for his crimes, the law authorities fail to notice that he has an accomplice at the beginning of his violent crimes. It ironically emerges later in the novel that the media labels Napoleon as 'The Butcher' instead of his brother, Sifiso. Even Lucy, a former journalist, claims that she "…followed the case. There was no accomplice" (21). The society, through lack of justice, is made to believe that Napoleon committed all the crimes alone. In another instance, Lucy thinks "Napoleon seemed to have operated pretty much as a one-man show…" (98). It only becomes suspicious to Detective Morapedi that Napoleon has an accomplice after the murder

of Patricia, though he initially suspects Lucy to be Napoleon's accomplice, as the two have had some kind of a relationship. At some stage, the detective suspects Patricia's boyfriend, Tshepo Ramaitse, to be responsible for the murder of his slain girlfriend, based on his fingerprints that were found at her apartment. Ironically, it is the sceptical Fundi who senses the presence of an accomplice in the sudden brutal murder of Patricia, as she says: "How do you know he didn't send someone to off your partner?" (105). In another instance, Fundi reasons:

> Remember that first time we met Napoleon's brother? When I came to the prison with you? I told you there was something creepy about Sifiso. I think we should go back to what happened five years ago. I have a feeling that Sifiso was linked to those crimes. Was there ever any mention of an accomplice?" (189).

Sifiso, Napoleon's brother and accomplice, is portrayed as a silent killer who was "unseen and unheard" (123), hence it is not surprising that the dysfunctional South African criminal justice failed to link him to Napoleon's crimes. While Napoleon is described as someone who was always in and out of prison during their years as delinquents, Sifiso, is described as "[s]tealthy as a cat and smart as a jackal" (193), hence he was never imprisoned. The Dingiswayo brothers' way of murdering their victims seems to have had a resemblance. This is evident when the narrator states, "Someone had killed Patricia with the same brutal force that Napoleon had used on those women" (126). At some point, Lucy and Karabo are attacked by Sifiso, who bulldozes into the back of their car but Lucy naively fails to link the Dingiswayo brothers with the attack. Lucy says, "Karabo, the guy's in jail. What could he possibly have to do with the attack?" (183). Their pattern of killing is also evident in the murder of Karabo by Sifiso. "He gouged out his eyes" (185) the same way Napoleon does to his victims. The struggle for justice is evident in Makholwa's *Red Ink* as the police fail to apprehend the most dangerous criminal who acts invisible. Detective Morapedi only learns about Sifiso's criminality upon the revelation by Mr Nkosi who used to be the Dingiswayo brothers' landlord. Mr Nkosi reveals: "What really surprised me about that case was that Sifiso did not feature anywhere in the paper reports or the police investigations" (199). The revelation flabbergasts Morapedi, as he thinks Napoleon operates as a one-man show. When asked if Mr Nkosi thinks Napoleon committed his crimes alone, he responds:

> Detective Morapedi, if someone had stopped me in 1996, just before Napoleon was apprehended and told me that one of the Dingiswayo boys was this Butcher that everyone was talking about, I would have bet all my lifesavings on Sifiso instead of Napoleon" (202).

It is said that "Morapedi was disappointed when they could not find anything about him in the police files. The man was spotless as a saint" (201). It only emerges later when Lucy is sent with a device to spy on Napoleon that Sifiso has some links to Napoleon's crimes. He also attempts to murder Lucy, who is rescued by Tshepo. This confirms the failure and weakness of the South African justice, which fails to apprehend the hard-core criminals. While acknowledging that Makholwa's narrative is fiction, it is worth noting that her question over the lack of effective criminal justice in post-apartheid South Africa is reminiscent of many crimes that are committed daily, yet the culprits walk freely on the streets. Hence, it blurs the thin line between fiction and non-fiction.

Makholwa's novel depicts a society whose corrupt criminal justice favours the elite. In the same vein, Ngobeni (2014) notes that

> South Africa has two systems of justice: one for the rich and one for the predominantly African poor. This is for a variety of reasons, race, class and economics, and the African majority mostly has access only to a second-class system of justice.

This is evident in the way the police handle KK's crime of raping a drunk seventeen-year old in his house. After realising that the accused is KK, the police do not pursue the case and the girl's claim is discredited. The narrator says, "The cops, recognising KK's face, agree to investigate the young woman's claims further and assured KK that his good name would not be dragged through the mud unless absolutely necessary. For their trouble, KK slipped them four hundred rand" (232). *Red Ink* is a critique of the corrupt and biased post-apartheid criminal system which operates in favour of the rich. The law and prisons are depicted as if they were established by the political elite and the rich in an endeavour to control and oppress the poor. Thus, it seems to be a fallacy to expect the elite, like KK Mabote, to be imprisoned as portrayed in the novel. It is evident that KK's case could have been handled differently if the same crime had been committed by a poor person. Upon revealing that KK is involved in Napoleon's crimes, Morapedi reasons: "…but do you think this guy was involved in the murders? His kind don't usually get their hands dirty. They are more interested in contract killing, where there's proper motive, instead of straight out psychopathic murders" (218). In relation to this excerpt, White (2011:150) argues that "it is the structurally unequal and socially disadvantaged position of people that provides the context for certain types of criminality and the commission of certain types of crime". White's premise is based on the belief that typically patterns of crime are usually linked with specific classes. This is a comment on the theme of the rich versus the poor, in the sense that the law always targets the

poor who are believed to be the perpetrators of crime. Unknown to the detectives, it emerges later that KK has some close ties with the Dingiswayo brothers that can be traced back to the evening when he rapes a drunk girl and then pays Napoleon and Sifiso to kill her. His involvement in violent crimes is indicated in the text when it is described as "one little incident that had taken place at his home" (213). KK and the Dingiswayo brothers' close ties which are centred on crime before and after the struggle for democracy are further indicated when the narrator says:

> Post democracy, there were new deals to be made. Sometimes worrisome bodies still needed to be removed, which is why KK Mabote never regretted having had a gun held to his head by the Dingiswayo boys so many years ago. (195).

Because of his wealth, KK takes advantage of the poor Dingiswayo brothers, whom he uses to commit crimes on his behalf. This is indicated when the narrator states that "[Sifiso] knew his secrets, his ghosts and all the bodies that had been buried in The Sponsor's name throughout the fifteen years that he and Napoleon had known the man" (192). A comment on the discrepancy between the rich and the poor is further indicated in the novel when it is revealed that Napoleon sacrificed his life behind bars by not revealing his link with KK and Sifiso in his crimes. As a result of his poor economic status, Napoleon is promised that his studies and son and are to be funded by KK. This observation is evocative of Marx's assertions about the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He argued that the capitalist bourgeoisie mercilessly exploited the poor. His argument was based on the fact that the proletariat do most of the work for the bourgeoisie yet they are given meagre wages (White, 2011). Thus, he foretold that the proletariat would lead a revolution against their exploitation. Makholwa seems to have borrowed the Marxist theory to explain the relationship between Napoleon and KK. When Napoleon feels that KK and Sifiso are isolating him, he throws a tantrum and says:

> Hey wena, KK… I'm tired of you and Sifiso treating me like a child. I made a sacrifice for all of us, and it was agreed that for this, I would be taken care of. The way I've been treated by both of you lately is against everything we agreed on all those years ago. (197)

Unknowingly to Napoleon, he had also been fooled about the biography project which he wants to be written from his point of view. He has been duped into believing that the project will assist him to be granted an appeal. It is indicated that "It was The Sponsor's idea to get a book published about Napoleon's story. But the book had to be written exactly according to

The Sponsor's view of events to protect himself and Sifiso" (196). However, Napoleon soon realises that KK and Sifiso are using him. He says:

> All my life, Sifiso, you and that rich bastard have planned and plotted to get to do things your way. Whenever it suited you, you fed me a pack of lies, and like the damn fool I was, I always believed you. You were my brother after all, how could I not trust you? (217).

This indicates that there is a link between crime and class. *Red Ink* portrays class structures which still prevail in post-apartheid South Africa, whereby the poor are not only paid to commit crimes on behalf of the rich, but also conceal information that may lead to the incarceration of the rich. This is exactly what happens between Napoleon and KK. Napoleon kills on behalf of KK and serves a sentence alone which could have also led to the arrest of KK and Sifiso. Thus, the link between crime and class is evident in Makholwa's narrative.

Red Ink depicts the thin line between crime and politics. This is evident in KK and Dingiswayo brothers' relationship which originates in crime and anti-apartheid struggle politics. Their relationship starts when the Dingiswayo brothers try to hijack KK from his Mercedes Benz during the anti-apartheid struggle, which they want to sell to a Mozambican. KK Mabote takes advantage of the political situation of the time to convince them that their poverty is due to the political unrest, hence he is in a struggle to fight for the whole nation. He says, "Thina, my brothers, we are fighting for the liberation of all of us, not just me and my family. Your families, your brothers, and your mothers" (194). They are finally convinced to join hands with KK in the struggle against the apartheid system. It marks their complex friendship which survives South Africa's rise to democracy. In the struggle for democracy, the narrator says, "The two brothers carried out a number of hits on the regime's policemen and women. They planted bombs, they killed black spies and police informants and for this, they were well looked after by The Sponsor, known as KK to his friends" (195). While Napoleon is portrayed as a criminal, it is also clear he has some qualities of being a liberator who fights against the oppressive apartheid regime.

The interconnectedness between crime and politics is more evident in the sarcastic portrayal of KK. He is a businessman and politician who does not believe that crime and politics are exclusive. The narrator says, "During the struggle he had spent many a day in various prisons, including Robben Island, so his struggle credentials were intact" (209). The link between apartheid imprisonment and struggle for liberation is highlighted by the fact that being imprisoned earns someone the title of being a liberation hero. Thus, it is worth noting

that being imprisoned in places like Robben Island during the apartheid struggle served as a symbol for heroism.

2.3 The Prison and the Society

Makholwa's *Red Ink* addresses quite a number of common views about contemporary criminality and imprisonment. Even though her narrative is not written from inside prison, it still represents a popular understanding of the prison in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Red Ink* shows that the prison and the outside world exist in a state of ambivalent mutuality, even though the society believes that the prison exists outside the society. This is evident in Napoleon's interactions with Lucy. While Lucy knows that engaging in her project of writing a book about Napoleon is not for the faint-hearted, she takes the risks to establish herself as one of the best writers in this genre. Thus, she needs Napoleon for her own good and Napoleon needs her to satisfy his lonely life and to be granted an appeal in his case. Because of trust issues, their relationship becomes ambivalent, as they all seek to benefit from it. At a point, Napoleon believes Lucy "couldn't be bad as those other bitches…dirty fucking filthy whores. She wasn't like his mother…or was she?" (91). In the same vein, although Lucy wants to be an accomplished writer, her conscience knows of the risks involving her relationship with Napoleon. The narrator reasons:

> Was it moral to interact so freely with such a monster, a murderer of women? The question made her feel uneasy. Never had she wanted something so badly, but doubted herself at the same time. Was this the best way to go about fulfilling her desire to write? (126).

Thus, Lucy's understanding of the prison represents the general views held by South African society that imprisoned people are powerless once they are incarcerated.

Through the depiction of their relationship, which is characterised by ambivalent feelings, it is clear that Makholwa's *Red Ink* questions the distance which the society should give to the prison, particularly with dangerous criminals like Napoleon. For instance, Lucy finds herself in a predicament where she is supposed to choose to be at risk or to become a distinguished writer from the moment she gets a call from Napoleon Dingiswayo about writing a book about him. As an optimistic and determined person who knows the worthiness and risks involved in her intended project with Napoleon, Lucy finds it difficult to tell her boyfriend

and parents about her project. When the risks of associating with Napoleon start to surface, she confides in her uncle. It is Uncle Qiniso who encourages her to continue with her dream, rather than her friends, who discouraged her by elucidating on the function of art. He enunciates:

> Do you know what the role of an artist is? It is to reveal, to expose some facet of the human soul. Whether it's good or bad, express it the best way you know how, and you don't give a damn about other people. Art doesn't kill anyone (130).

Lucy regards writing about Napoleon as a glorification of his predatory behaviour. She reasons, "I wonder if I'm doing the right thing. He wants to be immortalised; he enjoyed all the attention he received in the media during his heyday. I'm just worried that I may be glorifying a killer" (130). To some extent, Makholwa's narrative is indeed a glorification of Napoleon, which attempts to reduce Napoleon from being perceived as a villain to a rational person. For instance, on Lucy's first visit to Napoleon at the prison, Lucy expects to see a fiend, but upon seeing him, her perceptions about him completely change as she notices that he "was a man who was supposed to represent the sum total of all her fears but now, after meeting him, all she could think of was that he was fairly normal, really nice guy" (27). While Lucy dreams of emerging as a distinguished writer from their project, Napoleon has sexual thoughts about Lucy before he even meets her. He imagines a sexual relationship with Lucy to the extent of manually stimulating his sexual organs. Throughout the novel, Lucy is depicted as focused on her daring project, although her way has many hurdles while Napoleon is stuck on his sexual illusions about Lucy.

It is worth noting that the post-apartheid street is not depicted as the only source of crime but as having a synergetic relationship with the prison. The street haunts the prison and the prison haunts the street through Lucy's interaction with Napoleon. This is evident when Lucy's life turns into a nightmare after she receives a call and goes into the prison to meet Napoleon Dingiswayo concerning their proposed biography project. When Lucy proclaims her interest to write a book about Napoleon to Patricia Moabelo, her business partner, Patricia senses the risk of associating with Napoleon, forewarns and tries to discourage her from indulging in it. Patricia says, "You can't get yourself involved with this psychopath. He'll get you into trouble" (21) and Lucy responds naively, "I'll take my chances, remember, he's in jail and I'm not" (21). Patricia tries to indicate that Napoleon may have an accomplice but Lucy naively dismisses this suspicion by claiming that there is no accomplice in Napoleon's case

because she is following it. Lucy is further warned by Detective Morapedi about the possible dangers of her project but she takes it for granted.

Lucy understands the prison to be a place of total isolation, especially if someone is serving a life sentence. Hence, the prisoner cannot pose any threat to her and the society at large. This is evident when she replies to Fundi's suspicion, "And relax, Dingiswayo's harmless. Remember he is behind bars, we're not, so don't give him power" (105). Ironically, Patricia's brutal murder is carried out by Sifiso at the orders of Napoleon, after Lucy has divulged to Napoleon that Patricia has become selfish. Patricia does not want to stick to the verbal agreement which they have made, that Lucy will get almost a fifty percent share but now she wants to give her only her thirty percent. After Lucy divulges her feud with Patricia, Napoleon secretly orders Sifiso to get rid of Patricia. Her perception of prison as a total space of isolation and subjection stops her from linking Patricia's murder with her relationship with Napoleon. Makholwa's narrative indicates that prison is not a space of complete isolation, rather, it is a hub of crime which poses threats to the society through the associations of the imprisoned with those on the outside.

Red Ink indicates that the incarceration of dangerous criminals does not render the society safe and the incarcerated powerless. This perception of prison as a space of isolating the dangerous people from the outside is satirised by Makholwa in her ironic portrayal of the function of the prison. Lucy's naivety and overrating of the prison contributes to catastrophic events caused by Napoleon. The incidents which unfold at the end of the narrative are ironic in the light of her perceptions of the prison. Makholwa's narrative indicates that it is only Napoleon's body which is incarcerated but his evil mind still haunts the outside through his accomplice and brother, Sifiso. It is clear that Napoleon still rules the outside from the prison, his imprisonment offers him another chance to assume power over women, as evident in his interactions with Lucy in the prison. Even though he has limited freedom in prison, Napoleon proves that he is still a macho man in prison. He takes the liberty to steal a kiss on Lucy's cheek during their second meeting in the prison.

Red Ink depicts the prison as an ambitious institution which fails in its attempt at contributing to a peaceful and safer South Africa through rehabilitating its subjects. It is clear that even though Napoleon was apprehended, he still haunted the society just after he started engaging in a biography project with Lucy. It is interesting to note that "[w]hen he was finally captured, mothers across the nation, including Lucy's had heaved a collective sigh of relief"

(25) not knowing that he will continue ruling the streets from inside. Ironically and unknown to Lucy's mother, it is Lucy's association with the callous Napoleon which puts the society as risk. On his first appointment with Lucy in prison, Napoleon tells Lucy he is studying towards a theology degree, as part of his rehabilitation process. However, this is incongruous to what he does as he masterminds the murder of Patricia, instead of amending his actions.

Contrary to the depicted function of the prison in the Makholwa's narrative, Foucault (1977:203) states that Bentham's Panopticon was used as "a laboratory, to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals". As suggested by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1977), it must be noted that the Panopticon was a dream building meant to mark the end of punishing through inflicting physical pain to prisoners by advocating for close examination of the inmates to change their behaviour. Ironically, Makholwa's prison does nothing to change Napoleon, even though he is studying towards a degree in theology. Foucault (1977:205) suggests that the power of the Panopticon resides in its ability to penetrate into men's behaviour, hence "it serves to reform prisoners". Foucault believes that the penal system aims at changing the prisoner's mindset because it was the mind that led to the committing of his or her crime, while bringing an awareness of the fact that the initial crime committed was unacceptable. He notes that modern prisons aim at rehabilitating the soul. The hope is that the way in which prisoners deal with life outside will become more acceptable in terms of societal norms. Therefore, the actual act of imprisonment is the punishment that is accompanied by the learning of acceptable behaviour patterns. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, in a chapter titled, "Panopticism", Foucault discusses how power is exercised in modern prisons through Bentham's concept of the Panopticon. It should be noted that Foucault did not just write about prison system, he was highly critical of it because he saw it as a repressive mechanism of power which othered certain human beings. He states that the Panopticon was a dreaming building which could be used "…as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals (1977:203). However, looking into Napoleon's imprisonment, the effects of the panoptical nature of prison and its mode of surveillance are not visible, considering that prior to his five life sentences, he has been going in and out of prison without altering his behaviour. Instead, his crimes worsen as he starts murdering all his rape victims after one of them testifies against him, leading to his imprisonment. This suggests that the prison turned him into a more hardened criminal. Apart from this, through his connection with corrupt warders and people like Sifiso, he masterminds the murder of Patricia. Thus, the

power of the Panopticon is not visible in Napoleon's imprisonment as it fails dismally to penetrate his mind.

Furthermore, Makholwa reveals that prison is a failure in its attempt to change the evil minds of people like Napoleon, as she depicts Napoleon as being an unchanged predator. In his case, the prison works on controlling his body movements instead of his mind. This is also evident when he threatens Sifiso for isolating him. He says:

> And do not dare touch that woman. I'm not stupid. You touch her you are dead…You may be the clever one, the calculating predator, but remember, I've always been the wild one. Do you want to mess with a wild animal who has nothing to lose? (217).

When Lucy visits Napoleon after the murder of his brother, Sifiso, he assumes power by slapping Lucy in front of a prison guard and vows to avenge his brother's death. It emerges that the "convicted serial killer and rapist 'Napoleon Dingiswayo' escaped from Pretoria's C-Max prison at twelve-fifteen this afternoon" (243). In Foucauldian terms, the Panopticon was arranged in a way that the guard could see into every cell without being seen by the prisoners. Hence, by this arrangement, the prisoner will be conscious of being under continuous surveillance. Contrary to this, Napoleon's imprisonment does not show any sign of internalised constant surveillance in contemporary prisons. The prison fails to internalise in him a conscience of continuous surveillance, as it is learnt in the epilogue that he escapes from prison. It is paramount to note that the prison depicted in *Red Ink* is not a powerful institution which should work on the mind of the inmate. To some extent, *Red Ink* can be read as Makholwa's attempt to satirise some contemporary prisons which are masquerading as attempts to provide safety to the society and rehabilitation to the offenders. The belief that prison works on the mind through the body is not evident in the case of Napoleon's imprisonment. He rules the streets, threatens to kill Sifiso and cut Dawie's private parts, slaps Lucy in front of a warder and escapes from prison. According to Foucault (1977), if a prison system can reform a prisoner, then the system will have been successful. Hence, Makholwa's narrative questions the post-apartheid prisons for failing in their missions to safeguard society and reform prisoners into normal beings.

While Napoleon finds prison as a filthy place, he enjoys the privilege of having a 'Sponsor', known as KK Mabote and Dawie Botha around him. It is through the corrupt warder, Dawie, that Napoleon enjoys some privileges, especially in relation to making phone calls and sending letters. Prison only limits his freedom of movement, which prevents him from having

personal contact with the outside world but he uses his accomplice, Sifiso, to achieve his aims. The prison only works on Napoleon's body but fails to penetrate his mind. The power of prison on him is only evident when it curtails his freedom to use his laptop. In his attempt to resist limitation to his freedom, he goes on a hunger strike, which culminates in his collapse. He states:

> These people really pissed me off. I need that computer and I had signed all the documentation to make sure that I would get it. They know I am studying and I have never done anything to break the rules, so I had to go on that strike. (145)

It is also evident in Makholwa's narrative that there is a thin line between the outside world and prison. This is because of Napoleon's relationship with the prison warder, Dawie Botha. The novel links the synergetic relationship between the street and prison to the corrupt warders and the relatives of the imprisoned. The criminally-inclined and politically-influential people like KK are portrayed as also dangerous to the outside world as they have connections with criminals. The link between Napoleon and his brother, Sifiso and Lucy becomes a dangerous one between the outside and the prison. Their link leads to the death of Lucy's friend, Patricia, and her boyfriend Karabo Monare by Sifiso. Not only does her relationship with Napoleon become dangerous to her friends, KK and Sifiso also feel the possible risks of their relationship. In their case, they are afraid of being incriminated as they have some links to Napoleon's felonies. Their fear over Napoleon's relationship with Lucy is evident when KK says:

> All I'm trying to tell you is that if Napoleon continues with this woman, he is going to disclose everything, and we are the ones who have the most to lose. It's a mess, and I know I had something to do with it, but now we have to get rid of the woman, that's all" (212).

In summation of their fears, the narrator says:

> Sifiso was trembling at the prospect of ridding the world of Lucy Khambule. Her relationship with Napoleon had become a serious threat to him. All the years, he had safely isolated himself from the incidents of the past, and now this woman threatened to blow the whole thing up. (225)

Lucy is drawn into the corrupt circle of prison life on her first visit to prison. Bearing in mind that the prison does not allow any recording of material, Napoleon devises a plan that Lucy should use his notepad and pencil. He says, "You can use it…discreetly, to jot down some of the important points of our discussions" (46). The novel depicts Napoleon as a cunning and manipulative man who is always successful in hypnotising his prey. Lucy falls into participating in Napoelon's circle, not knowing that everything has been masterminded by

KK Mabote, also known as The Sponsor, and Napoleon, with the help of the corrupt warder, Dawie Botha. Napoleon manages to haunt the street by connecting himself to Lucy and Dawie.

Makholwa's narrative is satirical as it questions the post-apartheid belief of portraying colonial prisons as spaces where authentic heroes are produced (Ndlovu, 2010). This narrative depicts prison as a space where multiple ironies are found. While prison is perceived as a disciplinary power institution which exerts its power on inmates, it is also important to note that it is also a source of power for prisoners especially in the case of political prisoners like KK. He derives his power of being a distinguished liberator from the mere fact that he has been imprisoned in different prisons. Moreover, it is in prison where he discovers his bisexual tendencies. The narrator says, "[I]t was also in prison that he discovered a taste for his own sex" (209). Makholwa portrays the prison as a source of sexual practices which the society considers as unsavoury even though she attaches value to the imprisonment of politicians. Propper (1981) argues that the pressures of social and sexual deprivations in prison are some of the factors which foster homosexuality. In a same vein, Ndlovu (2010) observes that *Red Ink* suggests that it is the absence of the opposite sex that triggers homosexuality. Therefore, Makholwa's narrative suggests that homosexuality is born out of absence of the opposite sex, degradation and oppression experienced in prison.

Some discontinuities from the apartheid to the post-apartheid prison are present in Makholwa's narrative. Roux (2014) asserts that with the demise of a major institution like apartheid era, it seems natural to invoke a before and after. In light of this assertion, the post-apartheid prison abolished some of the discourses which prevailed during the apartheid era. Hence Makholwa's narrative is indicative of one major discontinuity of the post-apartheid prison system, the death sentence. The narrator states, "Apparently, Napoleon's trial was so high-profile that it raised the usual debate about the death sentence, which of course had been scrapped by Mandela's government" (41). While acknowledging Roux's affirmation that the apartheid-era prison provided the post-apartheid era with an important template, it is interesting to note that Makholwa' narrative contradicts with this assertion to some extent considering the abolition of the death sentence as depicted in the novel. It is obvious that Makholwa depicts the abolition of the death sentence as a major positive change by the post-apartheid government. The abolition of the death penalty is reminiscent of Foucault's (1977) assertion that the introduction of the Panopticon marked the end of the body as the major target of penal repression. Prior to the nineteenth century, many states in Europe practised

public torture and executions of criminals which slowly disappeared in the early nineteenth century. He writes:

> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the great spectacle, of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment. The age of sobriety in punishment had begun. By 1830-48, public executions, preceded by torture, had almost entirely disappeared…Punishment had no doubt ceased to be centred on torture as a technique of pain; it assumed as its principal object loss of wealth or rights. (14-15)

Bearing in mind Florence Bernault's *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (2003), wherein she avers that imprisonment did not exist in Africa prior to colonisation, it is crucial to note that harsh punishment in the form of the death penalty was also practised in Africa to maintain colonial hegemony. In relation to Makholwa's *Red Ink*, Napoleon survives the death penalty owing to South Africa's independence from the apartheid regime.

2.4 Conclusion

The examination of *Red Ink* indicates that criminality is a result of an individual's childhood background and patriarchal environment, even though the harm done by the individual is not condoned. Notions of misogyny are explicit in post-apartheid South Africa, where women are haunted by horrendous gender-based crimes. The way crime is handled, especially when it concerns the political elite and rich is evident in Makholwa's examination of criminality. Makholwa's *Red Ink* also portrays a gendered prison which has dangerous links with the outside through the interactions of the imprisoned, their relatives and the corrupt warders. Prison is depicted as a failed attempt at serving its purpose of rehabilitating and protecting society.

CHAPTER 3

Identity and Gender

3.1 Introduction

Memory Gappah's novel titled *A Book of Memory* probes the nature of memory through the story of Memory, an albino woman, languishing in Chikurubi maximum prison in Zimbabwe, convicted of murdering a rich white man, Lloyd Hendricks, her adopted father. As part of her appeal, she pens down her memories of what happened, hence, her notebooks form the novel. Gappah's novel is a non-linear narrative which mirrors the movement of memory, looping back and forth from time to time, swerving over sore points and later returning to prod the painful moments. *A Book of Memory* is Memory's reconstruction of past events against a subsequent time lapse, hence we cannot ignore the possibility that some events may be a distortion of reality as "profound changes can render a former identity or self almost incomprehensible" (Maftei, 2013:5). Gappah's novel is a testament penned at the request of Memory's lawyer, Verna Sithole, to aid an appeal against her conviction for murdering Lloyd. Her novel grapples with themes of fate and free will, the collision of tradition and modernity, loss and love, the impact of politics on the personal, search for identity and imprisonment. Rothfeld (2016) notes that *A Book of Memory* is an attempt to reclaim, by way of reconstruction, a genealogy both personal and cultural, an exercise in self-searching that upends many of Memory's most deeply entrenched conceptions about herself and her origins. Considering this observation, Gappah's novel is a narrative about search for identity. Jenkins (2000:20) states that identity formation is a reflexive process that involves not only self-identification, but also the categorisation of others, meaning that the treatment of an individual depends on how others identify the individual.

For the purpose of this chapter, I examine how Gappah deals with issues of identity, gender and imprisonment in *A Book of Memory*. Memory experiences the prison in a literary and metaphorical way because of her albinism. The depiction of her childhood experiences as an albino is a metaphor of what she experiences at Chikurubi maximum prison. The text demonstrates that identities are not fixed and the transgression from one identity to another is not linear. Likewise, Memory undergoes different identities of being a daughter, albino, adoptee, criminal woman, and prisoner. The examination of *A Book of Memory* is supplemented by feminist literary criticism bearing in mind the argument by some scholars

who argue that Foucault's Panopticon alone cannot help to fully understand women's subjectivity in prisons because his examination is androcentric in nature. This premise is based on the fact Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1977) was written at a time when prisons were predominantly meant for incarcerating male offenders, hence his examination of prison and power does not include women. Gappah's novel is told from a first-person point of view where the 'I' represents an embodiment of her multiple selves and 'we' that characterises a collective identity that constitutes other prisoners, albinos and everyone around her at large.

3.2 Memory, Writing, Gender and Identity

Memory's recollections of her past events move from a Harare township called Mufakose to a mansion in the white suburbs, to studies in Europe, then back from Europe to the suburbs and then to prison where she writes her notebooks. As her memory loops back and forth to recollect the events that landed her in Chikurubi prison, a web of secrets and delusions comes to light. Her recollections of past events leading to her incarceration reveal the multiple identities which she undergoes through space and time, hence, scholars like Hall (1990:222) argue that "…we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" to demonstrate that identities are dynamic.

The deployment of non-linear narrative strategies in the life writing of Memory's recollections contravenes the master narratives of autobiography that advocate the production of stable, coherent self-narratives. Memory's order of events is not arranged in a chronological order; her memory moves back and forth as she attempts to pen her life stories that brought her to prison in relation to those who have been around her. She finds it hard "to tell a linear story with a proper beginning, an ending and a middle" (85). In the text, she writes:

> I wish I could start this traditional way, by telling you about my father and mother and how they met and who their parents were and all the begats that preceded their lives, but I cannot…The ritual of oral autobiography here is that we introduce and begin stories by locating our position in the family. (12)

Leggot (2004:18) believes that "the deployment of such non-conventional narrative techniques to testify to traumatic historical experiences serves to undermine masculinist

versions of historical and cultural memory, while simultaneously foregrounding the role of memory as agency in the inscribing of women's life stories…".

Gappah's novel depicts memory as a salient device in the writing of past and present experiences of a troubled self in relation to others. Likewise, Memory gathers recollections of her childhood life which is characterised by identity and gender issues. She recounts her events against a subsequent time-lapse, hence, there is a possibility that some events may be a distortion of reality as "… profound changes can render a former identity or self almost incomprehensible" (Maftei, 2013:5). In this vein, Memory is an unreliable narrator who is liable to distort some reality. The narration of some of her memories alludes to this observation. The evidence of her unreliable memory is problematic in writing truth about herself which she purports to write. For instance, when she talks about her late brother Gift, she says, "So it may have been even earlier than that when my brother died. Or perhaps it is another child's funeral that I remember, nothing to do with my brother at all" (44).

As a convicted murderer, Memory is requested to write everything she remembers by her lawyer, Verna Sithole, and address it to a white journalist from America. Thus, she pens down her past recollections to aid an appeal against her conviction for allegedly murdering the white man who had adopted her, Lloyd. Her recollections not only aid an appeal against her conviction, they also assist in her search of identity as an albino woman. She says, "I am writing this for you and for Vernah, for the appeal, as she told me to, but I am also writing it for myself" (84). The writing of her notebooks is mediated through her memory. Some scholars argue that the belief that memory may constitute a form of therapy has been seen to be particularly relevant to the articulation of women's experiences, in this case, Memory's. Henke (1998:18) avers that "a major impetus behind autobiographical literature in general, and women's life-writing in particular, may be the articulation of a haunting and debilitating emotional crisis that, for the author, borders on the unspeakable". Likewise, Memory claims that the writing of her prison notebooks is a form of therapy and reimagining of herself. She writes:

> I am writing to keep myself alive. But I am also laying out threads that have pulled my life together, to see just where this one connects with that one or crosses with the other, to see how they form the tapestry from which I will stand back to get a better view (85).

Gappah's narrative suggests that writing Memory's story becomes therapeutic of the physical and psychological wounds she suffers along her journey to prison which are characterised by an identity crisis and a lack of sense of belonging.

Frances' (2013:13) assertion that "memory allows a prisoner to understand his past and present identity in a manner that grants him the self-reification he requires to anticipate eternal reward in the eschatological future…", is applicable in Memory's narrative. Gappah's narrative indicates that writing through the mediation of memory, enables the writer to reimagine a better life and find a purpose of her existence. This is evident when Memory says, "I look forward to leaving because finally, my life make sense. My discomfort has not just been feeling ill at ease in my skin, but a discomfort in myself" (262). Memory believes that memory and autobiographical writing have enabled her to find truth about her identity, thus, enabling her to reimagine a better life. She says, "And to start my life all over again, whether in here or out there, but to start it over with the full truth before. Maybe that is enough to begin with" (263). It is pertinent to note that Memory is aware of her unreliable memory which has enabled her to recollect all the past events in an endeavour to locate her identity and purpose of existence, in and outside prison. In her narrative, she writes, "With all the treachery of my imperfect recall, the notebooks have helped us to reconstruct our collective memory" (267). Studies on women prison writing, including Rowe's (2004) study, have indicated that prison writing helps inmates heal and cope with emotional issues that culminated to their incarceration.

Childhood and adulthood perceptions of the self are evident in Gappah's narrative as Memory tries to gather some memories which date back to her childhood at Mufakose. Through the childhood perceptions of the self depicted in the novel, *A Book of Memory* shows that the child's understanding of reality, and the emotions that derive from it, are unfamiliar to the adult conception to the point to seem almost mysterious, and to be on the verge of yielding a message, no longer audible in maturity, on the nature of the past. For instance, when Memory is adopted by a white man called Lloyd Hendricks, she feels she has been sold. She states:

> The story that you have asked me to tell you does not begin with the pitiful ugliness of Lloyd's death. It begins on a long day in August when the sun seared my blistered face and I was nine years old and my father and mother sold me to a stranger man. (1).

The change of perception about her identity is further indicated when she disregards the association of her albinism with evil. The juxtaposing of her childhood and adulthood perceptions, at Mufakosi and in prison, is indicative of a reimagination of a new self. She writes, "Years ago, this might have hurt me, but it doesn't now. It no longer hurts with the acid pain I felt as a child. It is a long time since I wanted to crawl out of my skin" (51). It is vital to note that Memory's childhood self is characterised by a sense of identity crisis. She has been in a crisis where she feels black but not black, white but not white; to the extent that she tries all scientific and religious means to have colour on her skin. She says, "Religion having failed me, I turned to science. When my father was not looking, I sat in the sun and wished for my skin to darken. It only made my skin red and sore and blistered" (56). The notion of identity crisis by Gappah indicates a lack of belonging on the troubled self. Gates (2013) compares identity crisis to double consciousness, which is a sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. This is exactly what Memory does as she longs for colour on her skin like others around her. On the same note, Erickson (1970) defines an identity crisis as a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself.

On her adult perception, she regards her childhood construction of the reality of being sold to Lloyd as a 'false memory'. Through the mediation of memory and with the help of her sister, Joy, who comes with the news of their parents' death, Memory learns that her memory has been tainted by false interpretations of reality. Hence, she soon tries to restructure her life based on true revelations. She reasons, "How do you begin your life again after you find out that everything you thought about your self is wrong? How do you begin to understand your life again?" (245). When juxtaposing her childhood and adulthood perception of reality, she reflects deeply:

> My mind keeps going back to that memory of seeing Lloyd hand over the bills, a false memory on which I built the foundation of my life, or, to put it more accurately, a true memory from which I have made false assumptions. My utter conviction that my parents sold me rested only on that exchange of money" (261).

Thus, Gappah's novel shows that the perception of reality regarding the self and its identity is in a subjective interpretation of it, liable to misconceptions and false impressions.

Memory's adulthood perceptions enable her to realise that she has a similar identity with Lloyd in the sense that they are both objects of wonder in the newly born Zimbabwe which subscribes to traditional beliefs. After discovering that Lloyd is homosexual, she feels

contaminated and consequently develops a sense of hate towards him as she goes to the extent of having him arrested. The way she handles Lloyd's homosexuality, shows the intolerance of homosexuality in Zimbabwe. She only learns later that "[Lloyd] was as different as [she] was and knew what it was to be different" (261). Gappah's narrative indicates that albinism and homosexuality are peculiarities which the Zimbabwean society finds unpalatable. The unwillingness to recognise homosexuality is a real burning issue in Zimbabwe which has raised debates between the government and different human rights organisations and activists. Regarding homosexuality, former President Robert Mugabe was quoted as calling it something "that destroys nations, apart from it being a filthy, filthy disease" (Eyewitness News,2013). Memory's uniqueness is deemed as a sickness or curse, yet homosexuality is deemed as a crime, hence Lloyd is detained for two weeks though the state fails to gather enough evidence to convict him. Owing to her maturity, she reasons:

> If I had been mature enough or had sufficient imagination, or generosity of spirit, I might have seen that Lloyd was as different to those around as I was, that the fact of our difference bound us. But I felt only repugnance…I was as much a victim of my society as anyone else (197).

The discovery of Lloyd's homosexual identity allows her to imagine how hard it is to live a lie in a country which is divided, as she also tried to be invisible during her childhood. Read from this perspective, Gappah's novel draws attention to how the society views and discriminates against people with peculiar identities.

Harlow (1986) views prison life writings as narratives against social and political repression in Third World countries. In this vein, Gappah's narrative can be viewed as a protest against the social and political ills of the society. The economic and political situation in Zimbabwe depicted by Gappah in *A Book of Memory* is portrayed as a factor that pushes some women to crime, a situation that was not there in pre-colonial Africa. For instance, Jimmy has been a prostitute to finance her poverty and she gets imprisoned for attempted murder. She bit the penis of a man "who refused to pay her after sex at a nightclub" (22). The belief that women are influenced by their environment to engage in criminality is supported by Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) who assert that women are more likely to engage in crime after being subjected to extremely high levels of provocation. Unlike Jimmy, Memory's imprisonment is as a result of the interconnectedness between politics and law. She gets arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced within two weeks, which is rare in murder cases. She is convinced that the death of three white farmers who died prior to Lloyd's death, whose death was linked

to land invasions, had something to do with the swiftness of her trial. The judge concludes her trial without forensic and post mortem evidence:

> There had been an outcry around the world about these deaths, but no one had been arrested; no one had been tried. So when Lloyd died, another man over whom the world would make a hue and cry, something had to be done. And there I was, a readily available suspect, caught with the body, ready to make this a simple domestic murder, nothing at all to do with the vexed and anxious questions of land and its ownership. (222)

Thus, Gappah's narrative is depicted as an attempt to critique the benighted Zimbabwean justice system. The purpose of addressing Memory's prison notes to an American journalist is a means of exposing the weaknesses of the justice system. She states, "So I know that you have made a career out of exposing miscarriages of justice. Verna has told me that you are here for a year to research a series of essays on our benighted justice system" (9). Not only does her narrative expose the miscarriages of the justice system, it also exposes the inhuman treatment of prisoners at Chikurubi prison.

Memory's narrative also shows how her socio-economic and political background has shaped her identity. Memory's identity as an albino during her childhood is depicted as a form of self-imprisonment which limits her freedom of associating with other children. This narrative depicts Memory as well prepared for prison after a childhood of confinement. Unable to take the sun and bullied by her peers, young Memory was incarcerated at home with an irascible mother who showed her no affection. She says, "Mine was not an illness, but a curse sent to her by her ancestors to punish her" (102). She writes, "I could not join in because, if I went out and stayed in the sun for any length of time, my skin cracked and blistered" (47). In light of this statement, Gappah depicts her childhood identity as a preparation for the solitary confinement she experiences at Chikurubi prison later. As a result of her condition, her childhood can be perceived as some sort of imprisonment. She states:

> I spent twelve hours of everyday in my own cell. There are women here who would go mad in such solitude…The idea of being alone horrifies the others. They prefer to move in groups, work in clusters, to always have a companion. It is different for me. Solitude is not the hardest thing about prison life for me. From the time that I was a child, I have been able to retreat into myself, and to find within myself the resources that have made it possible to bear my company (77).

Because of her identity as an albino, Memory metaphorically experiences solitary confinement at home which prepares for her literary confinement at Chikurubi prison. Thus, she assumes a literary and metaphorical prisoner identity throughout her life.

A Book of Memory is a testament that some criminal identities are coerced by means of torture and deception. Foucault (1977:35) notes that "knowledge was an absolute privilege of the prosecution" because it supplemented the process of the criminal investigation, hence the exercise of torture by the judiciary institutions. Fontebo (2013:24) argues that "the use of judicial torture to elicit evidence from the accused was carefully regulated and allowed only where sufficient written evidence already existed to imply a prima facie degree of guilt". However, Foucault viewed torture as a brutal phenomenon, which is still existing in contemporary prisons and should not be perceived apart from this discourse. *A Book of Memory* is an indication that torture still prevails in contemporary judiciary systems and it cannot be condoned as innocent victims are forced to confess crimes which they are not guilty of. For instance, Memory assumes and performs a criminal woman identity as she is tortured into falsely confessing that she murdered Lloyd. The effects of wrongful arrest on Memory's identity are evident in Gappah's narrative as she tries to negotiate it in prison. it is clear that in cases of wrongful conviction where a 'criminal' identity is imposed, former identity may be in a state of struggle, especially within the prison context". Memory says-

> After the police came for me on the night he died, after they arrested me and took me to the police station at Highlands, after I had spent three days without food or drink, after I had wept myself hoarse and my marrow dry-for Lloyd, I told myself, but really it was the fear- and after the dreams started coming again, I told them what they wanted to hear (3).

The above excerpt indicates her attempt to resist the "criminal" identity that is forced on her. Her former identity of being "innocent" for the alleged offence is challenged leading to her incarceration. *A Book of Memory* indicates that identity is formed through self-identification as well as external forces, hence differing identities clash.

The criminal identity which is forced on herself is an indication of poor handling of criminal justice. The poor delivery of justice in Zimbabwe is further satirised by Gappah when she states that stiffer sentences are given for stock theft than raping. She states "…magistrates here hand out stiffer sentences for stealing cows than raping children" (21). It is for this reason that her lawyer, Verna Sithole, encourages her to write down all her memories and address them to an American Journalist, Melinda Carter, as an attempt to win an appeal for her case. Through the circumstances that leads to her false confession, her lawyer is convinced that she will get an appeal and have her death sentence overturned. Her narrative indicates that prison writing is an attempt to win sympathy from the readers and protesting against the law. Chikurubi prison is in this case a place where prisoners like Memory end up

on death row without any forensic evidence forming part of the case against them. She argues, "[Alexandra] was the only witness. Beyond her statement, there was no other evidence. There were no forensic reports, and no post-mortem: the last pathologist had long left the country. The signed confession that the prosecutor produced sealed my fate (224)". Similarly, Memory's fellow inmate, Nomvula, assumes a forced identity after being deceived by her boyfriend to falsely confess to a crime she did not commit. Memory states that, "[Nomvula] only agreed to say that she had been driving because her boyfriend had asked her to. She would get a lighter sentence than him, he said, because she was a woman" (20). The belief that the law works in favour of women is satirised my Gappah through Nomvula's predicament who is given a five-year sentence. Thus, *A Book of Memory* shows that some identities are falsely assumed.

Gappah's narrative depicts the stereotypical view of gender and criminal identities. For instance, the justice system during Memory's trial considers her crime to be associated with men. She says, "The judge concluded I was guilty of the crime that I was charged with, a cold and calculated murder: an unnatural act for a woman" (224). This narrative shows that Memory acquires a female criminal identity, an identity that was previously associated with the male gender. The connection between gender and crime suggests that female imprisonment is not only meant for women to pay for their crimes, but for also rebelling against social norms of femininity (Ndlovu, 2010). In a similar context, Gilmore (1994) argues that society constructs models of what constitute good social conduct. Some feminist scholars state that it is through the reformatory movement that the criminal justice system has become a mechanism for punishing women who do not conform to definitions of femininity (Rafter,1990). Like her disability, her criminal identity is perceived as an abnormality by the court. Moreover, her fellow inmates find her crime fascinating as they have never seen or heard of an albino being convicted with murder in real life. The interconnectedness between crime and gender is further indicated in Memory's prison mate, Esnath Matema's case. After strangling their baby, Esnath is charged with incest and infanticide whilst her uncle, whom she committed the crime with, is charged with incest and murder. This reinforces the belief that there is a link between crime and gender considering the fact that Esnath's uncle is given a death sentence yet they committed the same crime together.

Notions of mistaken identity are also evident in Gappah's *A Book of Memory*. Memory becomes a victim of mistaken identity during her childhood and later when she is charged with murdering Lloyd. For instance, Memory is found in possession of peaches which were

stolen by Nhau from MaiNever's yard. MaiNever is convinced that Memory stole the peaches and dismisses Memory's explanation that she picked them on the road. She explains:

> I left the Veranda and went to pick them up. I rubbed one on my dress. Just as I was about to bite into it, MaiNever came and saw me with the three peaches in my hands. "'you are the thief who has been taking our peaches!'" She shouted (122).

The incrimination which she is subjected to is similar to her murder conviction. Memory is convicted and given the death penalty for the alleged murder of Lloyd, her adopted father. She writes:

> Lloyd was dead when I found him…In the turmoil of my wild panic, I decided to make his death look like he had been shot during a robbery. I would shoot him with his gun, and then I would drop his body into the pool (225-226).

Unfortunately, she is found by Lloyd's sister, Alexandra, in the act of dumping the dead body into the pool. The court becomes convinced that Memory murdered Lloyd through Alexandra, its witness, who had seen Memory moving Lloyd's body. Owing to Alexandra's statement and the lack of forensic reports and post mortem as evidence in her trial, Memory is mistakenly and unfairly convicted for murder. Thus, I argue that her childhood is a metaphor for the life she is subjected to, as she becomes a victim of mistaken identity during her childhood and adulthood.

3.3 Gender and Identity Construction in Prison

A Book of Memory is not only an attempt to expose the miscarriages of justice, it is also an attempt to expose the abuse of power in disciplinary institutions by prison guards. The abuse of power is prevalent and explicit and it is mainly directed on the powerless inmates especially those who have just acquired the prisoner identity. For instance, Sinfree is subjected to abuse by the ruthless head guard, Synodia, for her continued use of English instead of Shona when speaking to her. Sinfree is unaware of how her identity as a Tonga will be affected by her imprisonment, hence, she is beaten for failing to speak Shona. The prison is therefore depicted as a space where multiple identities collide, where one's identity has to be sacrificed so as to adopt a new one. Bernault's (2003) assertion that colonial prisons were places of domination and subjugation is still applicable in post-colonial prisons as guards try by all means to assert their power and authority over prisoners. Memory says-

> Synodia gave Sinfree another slap before pushing her to her knees. 'Did you not hear what the murderer there said?' she said to Sinfree, still speaking in Shona. 'Hanzi pfugama. You want English, well- we will give all the English you want. Here is some English. And some more English.' Each 'English' was a slap that spun the girl's head. After Sinfree collapsed, Synodia turned to the three of us (90).

Contrary to Foucault's view that imprisonment should be aimed at reforming the soul, corporal punishment is used as one of the additional forms of punishment so that "a condemned man should suffer physically more than other men" (Foucault, 1977:16). It is believed that one of the aims of prison is to remove individuals with socially undesirable behavioural traits from the mainstream society and to place them in a place of isolation. However, prisoners seem to suffer double punishment as they are sometimes subjected to some forms of punishment in prison such as solitary confinement and corporal punishment. In light of these observations, Fontebo (2013:23) argues that "in common with forced labour or even imprisonment, the mere loss of liberty has never functioned without a certain additional element of punishment that often concerns the body itself". Thus, the old system of prison which was criticised by Foucault, still exists in contemporary prisons, and worldwide. Hence, Foucault (1977:16) states that "it is difficult to dissociate punishment from additional physical pain. What would a non- corporal punishment be?".

Through the reading of Gappah's *A Book of Memory,* I concur with Crawley's (2001) assertion that prisoners assume new identities the moment they enter a prison within the discourse of transgression and correction. In light of this statement, Hall (1996:5) believes that identities "are constructed within not outside discourse, no need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within discursive formations and practices by specific enunciative strategies", hence, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power. All their previous identities of being mothers, daughters, and so forth are abandoned. For instance, Sinfree, like other prisoners is stripped of her identity and beaten for not being able to speak Shona on her first day in prison. This is part of what Erving Goffman (1961;17) calls "mortification", a process which involves the stripping of former identity from the individual, first through the physical separation from the wider society, and subsequently breaking down social roles and forcing the individual to adopt to an institutional one. In this new space of prison, they assume new identities of being evil criminals and prisoners. The uniforms become a symbol of their identity and it is also used as a way of separating individuals from their previous selves. In addition, they are called by the crimes that brought them to prison instead of their names, hence, it is believed that imprisonment leads to the

abandonment of previous identities and the adoption of new identities. The Panopticon model which prisoners are subjected to, makes sure that all their identities are abandoned as their movements and actions are monitored, and they are compelled to live according to certain codes created by prison. Memory writes, "There is nothing to do here in those twelve dead hours between four thirty in the afternoon, when we are locked up for the night, and four thirty in the morning, when the siren goes" (10). Moreover, they are also taught on how one should conduct herself when talking to a guard:

> So you learn that a prisoner is allowed to talk to the guards only when she kneels before them. A prisoner may not look directly at a guard. A prisoner's hands, those dangerous implements, are to be in front of her at all times that she appears before a guard. No prisoner is called by her real name. (89)

Even though it can be argued that the deconstruction of previous personal identity in disciplinary institutions serves as a rehabilitative process, it becomes problematical to those whose 'criminal' identity has been imposed on them.

Through the newly assumed identities of being prisoners, subjectivities emerge. Hall (1996:6) believes that identity involves "processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken". For Memory, being a prisoner means being stripped off all the freedoms and submitting to the oppressive prison culture. Memory understands prison as a space where one cannot get accustomed to, regardless of the time that one has spent in time. She reflects, "I should be accustomed now to the strange rhythms of the jail, but it seems the two years that I have been here are not yet enough to make me used to the distorted sense of time" (18). For Memory, the sense of time is distorted once someone is incarcerated. Therefore, prison is depicted as a place of subjection for inmates.

Gappah's treatment of identities suggests that identities are not fixed and stable, they intersect according to time and space. For instance, when Memory is imprisoned, she is subjected to a new cultural identity of the prison. As already discussed above that all previous identities are abandoned the moment someone gets imprisoned, Memory also assumes a criminal woman identity and is presented with a prison culture which comprises certain beliefs, codes and norms. In other words, the prison creates a homogeneous cultural identity which all prisoners are forced to assume. Crawley (2001) avers that part of the prison culture relates to personal hygiene, dressing, religious practices, visits, work, education and sleep. Memory is subjected to a prison culture where she is not allowed to eat using knives and forks, where she routinely eats either undercooked or overcooked food, where she wears a green uniform which

symbolises her prisoner identity and where is told when to sleep and when to wake up. Thus, Memory regards prison as a hegemonic state apparatus which controls their movements and thoughts:

> Every aspect of our lives, from where and how we sleep what to eat and how fast we eat, from how much water to how much toothpaste we use, is chosen for us. Our companions, our words, our very thoughts and dreams, are not ours to choose but are given to us from the sixth floor of the New Government Complex. (17)

Gappah's novel depicts prison as a site of struggle to maintain previous identities through the stripping of former identities upon entrance in prison and the imposing of a homogenous institutional identity by means of authority.

A Book of Memory shows that within the cultural identity created by the prison system, there is a sub-culture which is created by the prisoners in their cells. In light of this observation, Sykes and Messinger (1960) argue that prisoners create an "inmate code" of values which governs social relations within the prison. Their lives are governed by certain codes which are centred on maintenance of self, absence of arguments and how they should use the toilet after lock-up. Memory states, "And there is only one toilet bucket in the cell for all the women to share. If anyone breaks the code that says that only urination is allowed in the bucket after lock-up, the acrimony can turn ugly" (25). According to this sub-culture, Philips (2007) postulates that the prison world is characterised by solidarity among prisoners and community cohesion, implemented through the inmate code which operates above any other identities, as prisoner identity assumes the greatest significance.

The assertion by Crawley (2001) that new identities in prison start with a body search and confiscation of personal belongings, and the final presentation of prison culture whereby prisoners are told about the prison codes, is inapplicable to what political prisoners experience in prison as evident in *A Book of Memory.* Owing to insufficient uniforms, they are spared the humiliating body search exercise. They maintain their identity as political activists despite the attempt by the prison to orient them into the prison culture. This is evident when she states, "The new prisoners had not learned that the only response is deference-instant and absolute deference-eyes down, humility in every movement, submission in the tone of voice" (177). Unlike common criminals, political prisoners negotiate and strive for the continuity of their identities as they interrupt Synodia's prayer with political slogans, singing their opposition party songs when Synodia tries to lead them in a song and they refuse to eat, and instead sing

and jump on the tables. Political prisoners are depicted as defiant in not embracing the prison identities.

Gappah's narrative indicates that disciplinary institutions are spaces where homogenous identities are created. The fact that prisoners enter the prison within the discourse of transgression and correction, means that the prison creates a homogeneous identity; that all prisoners are criminals and evil. For example, prisoners are subjected to stigmatisation as they are called by the crimes they are convicted for. Memory complains, "To them we have no names. We are cattle rustlers and murderers, arsonists and prostitutes" (28). In addition, the editorial in the Herald newspaper which read,

> Let no one be in any doubt that in this country we really know how to deal with criminals. We put them in prison, then we throw away the key, and leave them to rot there with all the other filth and dregs of society. And if they do not like it, well, they should not commit crimes (35),

supports my argument that prisons create a homogeneous identity in that all prisoners are criminals. However, it is pertinent to note that some of the inmates mentioned in *A Book of Memory* are not real criminals. For instance, Memory is charged without post-mortem evidence and Nomvula is tricked into confessing that she was driving when her boyfriend knocked over and killed a cyclist. Furthermore, Philips (2007) affirms that the perception of prisoners having a shared identity is the one that has divided prison sociologists. Scholars such as Sykes (1958) believe that the totality of the prison experience leads to a unified body of prisoners with a functional shared identity, group connection and solidarity against ruthless staff. For instance, Jimmy, Verity and Memory stand up in solidarity as a sign of resistance against Synodia who punishes Sinfree for the fact she is still new and cannot speak Shona. In her narrative, Memory writes, "Jimmy, Verity and I all made the same almost involuntary movement. From our separate tables, we stood up as though propelled by the same force" (90). Thus, some scholars have also argued that the prison system, which reduces all inmates to the same self, must be challenged in its dissolution of heterogeneity.

A Book of Memory reveals that some identities are created within the "prisoner" identity based on the duration of an individual's sentence. While being labelled as criminals and prisoners, they also assume other identities within the prison based on the codes of their cells. Contrary to the argument I made earlier on, that prisons create a homogeneous identity founded on the belief that all prisoners are evil, it is important to note that the classification of prisoners into cells A, B, C and D, shows that prisons also create heterogeneous identities within the

prisoner identity, though to a lower extent, based on the nature of one's crime and duration of the sentence. The classification of cells using alphabetical letters in most Zimbabwean prisons and numbers in other prisons, especially in South Africa, denotes a sense of identity within the prison discourse. The classification of prisoners into cells A, B, C and D also denotes time perception. In Chikurubi prison, 'A' is for the remand prisoners, 'B' is for those who did petty crimes, 'C' is for those who have more than two years but less than five years to serve and 'D' is for those whose sentences are the longest and need the most watching. Memory spends her time with other prisoners in 'D' section, who are considered as the most dangerous prisoners in Chikurubi. In this vein, through her imprisonment, Memory does not only assume a prisoner identity, she also assumes the "most dangerous inmate" identity as she spends time with 'D' section prisoners. Being in 'D' section for her means that she needs serious and constant surveillance. Albeit 'D' is for the most dangerous prisoners, it is incongruently depicted as a comfort zone, whereby other prisoners from 'C' section bribe their way into 'D' section. For example, Verity Gutu and Monalisa Mwashita are at 'D' section yet "[t]hey are both C-class offenders, each serving four years for fraud and theft by conversion. But they had money to bribe the guards into putting them into the comfort zone of D, such as it is" (22). 'C' section is depicted as the filthiest section of the prison because of its overcrowding and there is only one toilet bucket in the cell for all more than one hundred women to share. 'D' is depicted as the comfort zone because it has only fourteen inmates, hence, other prisoners prefer to bribe their way into it even though they do not belong there.

Memory's multiple identities of being the "other" in prison are further marked by her personal cell after lock-up. As already discussed above, Memory spends time with 'D' section during the day but stays alone after lock-up owing to her sentence. Bearing in mind that she is on death row, she is expected to live and work separately from the other 'D's. Elements of othering exist in prison as some prisoners receive separate treatment from others owing to the type of their crime and sentence. Othering in prison is further indicated by the fact that prisoners from section A, B, C and D are released on amnesty and she is left alone because of the seriousness of her crime and sentence. Hence, some scholars argue that, it is through others that we become aware of our identities. As a result of her crime, Memory assumes multiple identities of being a murderer, prisoner, most dangerous prisoner, and the only woman on death row in more than twenty years. For Memory, being the only one in 'D' section on death row is better than being incarcerated in other cells even though her crime is regarded as the worst. She writes:

> If I can ignore the inevitability of the sentence that awaits me, there are a number of advantages to being the only one in D on death row. After lock-up is when I most feel the benefits of being on death row. I am locked up in my own cell. And, luxury of luxuries, I have my very own completely unshared toilet bucket. (26)

Memory's imprisonment is ironically portrayed as she finds it advantageous to be the only woman on death row. The fact that she is given a separate cell, induces in her a consciousness of the seriousness of the crime she is charged with.

The implication of Memory's murderer identity in prison is evident when other prisoners are given amnesty and she remains alone. The fact that she remains alone in prison gives her some form of freedom as her imprisonment regulations are relaxed. She says, "The prison is now open to me; I go where I please, when I please. There is no lock-up. I eat at Loveness's house, and spend most of my time there" (260). The freedom she derives from being alone in prison shows the power of prison and its mode of surveillance. Foucault states that the main aim of the Panopticon on the exercise of power is to make it efficient by making individuals internalise power, resulting in the self-monitoring of the individual. The inmate would be under the illusion that that he or she is not under any compulsion to act the way he or she does. He writes:

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power …for it automatizes and disindividualizes power … A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation. So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour…" (Foucault, 1977: 202).

Even though no one directly regulates her movements like before when she arrived in prison, Memory is aware that being a prisoner means her movements are being monitored in one way or another.

Foucault states that the seventeenth to eighteenth-century penal systems aimed to punish through the direct seizure of the body, through the infliction of pain and death, whereas the nineteenth to twentieth penal systems sought to reform the mind through discipline and the denial of freedom. The transformation of the purpose of penal systems in the twentieth century marked the abolition of capital punishment in modern prisons. A reading of *A Book of Memory* indicates the prevalence of capital punishment in form of death penalty in Zimbabwe. As already stated above, Memory is sentenced to death. However, the execution of her sentence is delayed by the lack of a hangman in Zimbabwe, which is a current real situation where people are sentenced to death yet there is no hangman. She writes, "A few metres away, on the men's side of this complex, are men who have been waiting for more

than ten years for the hangman…" (62). Therefore, Memory stays in prison with 'D' section offenders in the hope of a presidential amnesty or an appeal to her conviction. Gappah's narrative indicates that the current Zimbabwean judiciary is still operating in the seventeenth century models of European judiciaries. Bearing in mind Bernault's (2003) assertion that prisons did not exist in African countries prior to colonisation, it is pivotal to note that the prevalence of the death penalty indicates that the colonial mechanisms of domination and control are still in place in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Hence, it can be argued that the post-colonial Zimbabwean prisons are still using the colonial prison template as suggested by Daniel Roux (2014) when commenting about apartheid and post-apartheid prisons.

Grossberg (1996:89) asserts that "any identity depends upon its difference from, its negation of, some other term, even as the identity of the latter term depends upon its difference from, its negation of, the former". Building on this assertion, some of Memory's experiences in prison are characterised by her identity as an albino which is different from others. For instance, during her first days in prison, she is subjected to bullying by other prisoners and uses her killer looks to her advantage. She says:

> In those days, a woman called Marvellous gave me the hardest time…She told me that all new prisoners had to give their food to her at meal times. In the first weeks, I gave half my food to her without protest, but I soon came to see that I would starve if I do not find some way to defeat her. So I took to giving her long unbroken stares as she ate my food. 'Don't look at me with those eyes,' she snapped…At the next meal, I stared at Marvellous again, and again at every meal for continuous days. After a week she asked to be moved away from me. Jimmy told me that she had told the guards that the looks I gave her are what killed her son, 'just like she killed that white man'. Marvellous became afraid of me, and would not look at me when she passed me. After that, I did not hesitate to use my condition to my advantage. (26).

The above excerpt is reminiscent of Foucault's assertion that power is relational, not only through prison guards to prisoners, but also amongst prisoners themselves. Those who have stayed longer in prison exercise their power over new comers. While beliefs in superstition concerning her albinism makes her an object of wonder, her identity as an albino rescues her from bullying and abuse from other prisoners. Her identity gives her power over other prisoners. Moreover, the incident when she picks a chameleon also reinforces the belief that she must be practising witchcraft, hence, other prisoners start to fear her. She says:

> I had forgotten that, like those creatures of darkness, like owls and hyenas, chameleons are portents of evil, associated with witch craft and black magic. The news spread throughout the prison and made me safe from bullying, at least from other prisoners (28).

Memory becomes fully aware of her identity through the interactions with those around her in prison as she derives power from her albinism. Hence, Robins (1996:79) questions, "What would an identity mean in isolation? Isn't it only through the others that we become aware of who we are and what we stand for? We must consider identities in terms of the experience of relationships…".

A Book of Memory inscribes gender as an analytical tool for prison and the society at large. It is a narrative which inscribes gender into the prison experience. The prison labour which Memory and her fellow prisoners are subjected to, indicates the reinforcement of gender roles. The female prison labour depicted in the novel plays an important role in the complete gender education provided by prisons, hence, it constitutes one aspect of the attempt by the prison apparatus to produce properly gendered inmates for the real world after imprisonment. In the case of Memory and other prisoners, the gendered space offers them with feminine prison labour such as sewing, washing, ironing and working in the garden. She states, "The condemn, where we bleed our fingers on blunt needles as we try to restore wearability the uniforms that should have been thrown out long time ago; the laundry, where we wash and iron the guards' clothes…" (16). Gappah depicts the prison as a disciplinary institution which forges and reinforces desirable gendered identities. The prison reinforces gender constructions held by the society, on what is expected from women. For instance, men are considered as bread winners yet women are expected to be housewives. Memory writes, "[H]e was looking for a job, he would get a job, it was just a matter of time before he got a very good job, an excellent job, and all he wanted was a good wife to cook for him" (40). The construction of gender is represented as an ideology that is installed in one's mind at an early age. Memory says, "I was reasonably a good cook by then; all girls who are raised in the townships and villages can cook something by age of seven" (129). Thus, Butler (1988:519) argues for gender as a subjective and performative category that is socially constructed, "an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts".

The Panopticon's model of perpetual surveillance as a prison policy with the purpose of social control has been considered problematic by feminist scholars. It is believed that it has implications for female inmates than male inmates. Dobash et al. (1986:144) argue that "surveillance and regulation were 'always closer and more omnipresent than usually directed at men'" yet some scholars suggest that disciplinary regimes are similar for both men and women. Fontebo, (2013:26) argues that:

> [T]he panoptical institution for women in particular implicitly provides a model of the "perfect" patriarchal society because it trains women to subject to the constant surveillance by an (invisible) patriarchal 'eye' in society at large – an 'eye' which 'gazes,' observes and prescribes how to look, how to behave, where to go and where not to go – thus executing social control over all women.

Similarly, the female inmates in the novel are under heavy surveillance which observes and sets the expectations which they should adhere to, such as washing and ironing for prison guards. In this context, the prison guards represent the husbands who control their lives at home, hence, the Panopticon is believed to be the patriarchal eye which trains women on how to behave in order to conform to the societal expectations. Dobash et al (1986) aver that conforming to the notion of being disciplined when comes to gender roles is more severe for women than men and failure to conform has calamitous results for women than men. For Foucault, discipline comprises a number of techniques by which the body's movement is controlled. It functions by arranging and coercing the inmate's movements and experiences of space and time and it is accomplished through timetables. It is against this background that feminist scholars believe that discipline in women's prisons is a source of tension that has raised a number of arguments over the years. It is believed that discipline for women is usually harsh because prison authorities expect higher standards of behaviour from women than from men (Carlen and Worall, 2006). Dobash et al (1986) argue that, as a result of this, female prisoners are subject to special, closer forms of control and confinement. Feminists believe that there are noticeable parallels between the policing of women's everyday lives and their policing through formal regimes such as the prison. The prison depicted in Gappah's narrative does not encourage the betterment of women's lives after prison but it only trains them to be better housewives. It is a space where women are denied their citizenry rights to access information and education. For example, when an inmate named Monalisa, suggests that "some of the more qualified prisoners could teach the less qualified, as there [is] little to do after lock up" (64), Synodia disregards her suggestion. She replies:

> Who said you are here to get an education? If you are so educated, why are you here? You come here with your English and you think you are special. Let me tell you something. Here I will give you all the education that you will ever need (64).

The gendering of prison is represented as being caused by the corrupt prison guards who sell all the reading materials donated for prisoners. It is written in the novel that, "Every time the Goodwill donates books to the prison, covering all sorts of subjects, science and history, novels and poetry, the guards sell them" (64). Thus, the prison is depicted as playing a critical

role in training women to live in a patriarchal society that observes and controls them. Gappah's novel calls for agency in the elevation of women's roles in the society.

The ratio of female to male prisoners is believed to have some connections with the filthy and gendered conditions which women are subjected to in prison. Given the ratio that there are more male prisoners than female prisoners in Southern Africa and the world in general, scholars argue that the prison system is organised from a male perspective (Coyle, 2005), hence, they only meet men's needs rather than women's needs. It is stated in the novel that, "In the men's prison, they call the longest-serving prisoners the 'staff'. There are so few of us here that we do not qualify as staff" (18). Genders and Player (1987) and Heidensohn (1985) argue that the development of disciplinary institutions has primarily represented a response to deal with male crime. As a result of this, women's prisons have been inappropriately modelled on institutions designed for men. The lack of basic toiletries for women in prison attests to the argument that prisons were primarily established for men, hence, they do not cater much for women's needs. Gappah's narrative seems to endorse the theory that prisons were meant for men, hence, the reason why women suffer most as their needs are not well taken care of.

3.4 Conclusion

The examination of *A Book of Memory* indicates that identity is problematically constructed through writing. Memory, a victim of multiple identities, uses her memory to write her narrative in an endeavour to understand the events that have led to her current predicament. Her narrative proves that memory is an unreliable device in biographical writing. The shifting of her identities from one to another show that subjectivities are not fixed. Her narrative shows that prison writing is a means of emotional healing for prisoners. Moreover, her prison narrative indicates that prison is a gendered space which trains women to be better housewives.

CHAPTER 4

Power and Counter-Discourse

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how issues of power and counter-discourse are dealt with in *The Violent Gestures of Life* by Tshipfiwa Given Mukwevho. In terms of postcolonial theory, Shehla Burney (2012:107) defines counter-discourse as:

> [A] form of deep resistance that speaks through creativity, words, and actions, deliberately negating the dominant discourse of colonialism. A counter-discourse is a re-inscription, rewriting and re-presenting in order to reclaim, reaffirm, and retrieve subject peoples' ownership of their own lives, which had been appropriated by the colonizers; it is a discourse that goes against the grain to challenge assumptions of imperial power.

Building on these definitions, this chapter examines how Mukwevho's novel portrays the negotiation and resistance of power and prison as a hegemonic institution. Florence Bernault (2003) notes that prisons did not exist in Africa prior to colonisation, hence, she argues that in colonial Africa, colonial authorities introduced the prison as a technique of domination and subjugation. Regarding prison narratives, Harlow (1992) affirms that literature composed in prison and out of prison is necessarily partisan, polemical, written against the very structures of a dominant discourse. *The Violent Gestures of Life* can be read as a post-colonial text, written to negotiate and subvert the prison as a colonial instrument meant to maintain power. It is well portrayed in the novel that a counter-discourse of imprisonment seeks to produce new narratives of empowerment for those subjected to unequal power relations. As evident in post-colonial literature and obviously in Mukwevho's narrative, resistance is not only practised through literature but it is also evident in the day to day interactions between those in power and those under power.

Mukwevho's novel shows that prison is a space for greater inequalities. His novel is written in the first person to narrate Gift's life and that of other people whom he has had contact with, using different tones. He seldomly narrates about other people's experiences. The text shows that relations of subordination and domination are not fixed; hence, prison life is characterised by perpetual resistance and negotiation of power. Mukwevho is a South African ex-convict who was arrested at the age of fourteen for breaking into shops. He was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison, though he served eleven years, and was released on parole. It is his prison experiences which motivated him to write a novel about incarceration. His novel

blurs the fine line between fiction and non-fiction, as it based on his personal experiences in prison. Using Gift as his protagonist, Mukwevho's novel bears an imprint of his prison experiences. In light of this observation, Sobanet (2002:3) notes, "the sociological element of prison novels in general is reinforced due to the fact that these novels borrow for their authority from real life experience". Mukwevho's novel deals with the idea of prison, both as a physical and a mental space of confinement.

4.2 Prison Writing and Resistance

The Violent Gestures of Life documents Gift's life, who is just fourteen years old when he is imprisoned at Qalakabusha youth reformatory. The novel evokes a sense of sympathy from the reader, to perceive Gift as a victim of circumstances. As the novel depicts his pathway to criminality, he blames family issues for the crimes he committed. He says, "I think of my parents and the circumstances that led to their divorce. Had they not separated, I would have not been put in Qalakabusha" (111). He is charged with robbery, assault, car theft, theft of goods and malicious damage to property. However, towards the end of his narrative, he acknowledges his misdemeanours. He finds prison to be oppressive to his mind and body. He tries by all means possible to oppose power and prison discourses. The novel depicts Gift as a character who cannot stoically endure unjust treatment by those with power; hence, he is active in resisting power. Gift has a strong sense of fairness, and though he knows that keeping silent in the face of unreasonable authority will keep him out of trouble, he also cannot restrain himself from speaking out at times. The notions of resistance portrayed in the novel are pertinent in the "understanding of imprisonment since it highlights the struggle inmates experience to retain a sense of choice and autonomy in a situation where they are relatively powerless" (Bosworth and Carrabine, 2001:505). Thus, in this chapter I explore how issues of power and resistance are portrayed in the novel.

While acknowledging the fact that Mukwevho's text is fictional in nature, it is clear that it mirrors the true nature of imprisonment and its impact on oneself. As a former prisoner, instead of writing his prison experiences in a biographical way, he chooses to fictionalise it. During an interview with a *Sunday Times* journalist, Mukwevho said he chose to fictionalise his memoir, to give himself more freedom with the text, but admitted that not all of his readers comprehend the nuances. The journalist quoted him saying:

> I wanted to be at liberty to write as much as I wished and to be creative with the story, to the extent that I could broaden up the story with some social ills that might not have happened to me directly but those I viewed in society. (Malec, 2015).

The use of the first-person narrative is significant in that it keeps Mukwevho involved in the story, making it more detailed, vivid and authentic to the reader. In this context, Oswald (2005:94) adds that [p]rison literature thus plays the valuable role of filling in the gaps-providing an alternative to the censored…". It cannot be doubted that Mukwevho's critique of power and prison is a combination of fact and fiction. It is therefore interesting to examine how he perceives power and prison. Some scholars posit that critiquing the prison text can run the risk of devaluing, minimising or even justifying the prison experience of the text writer.

Having seen the imbalance of power, Mukwevho writes about prison in an endeavour to contest and subvert power and prison. Oswald (2005:69) notes that, "the prisoner, wanting to disrupt and redress this imbalance of power, would need to find a form of power for himself or herself". Prison writing is therefore a means of subverting and lessening the power of prison. Bearing in mind that Mukwevho was imprisoned at the age of fourteen before venturing into writing, he engages in prison writing after his time in prison as a way of challenging and exposing the absolute nature of power which prisoners are subjected to in prison. The negative depiction of power in the novel shows that writing is a form of resistance against the "automatic functioning of power" discussed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977:200). Mukwevho's novel is an attempt to invert the hierarchy of power. He writes against the hostile space which forces power over prisoners. In *Detained,* Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes, "a narration of prison life is, in fact, nothing more than an account of oppressive measures in varying degrees of intensity and one's individual or collective responses to them" (1981:33). Writing about post-colonial writers, Tiffin (1995:96) avers that "…post-colonial writers and critics engage in counter discourse". It is against the view by scholars who view post-colonial writing as resistance or counter-discourse that I examine how Mukwevho treats issues of power and counter-discourse. In this vein, it is worth noting that *The Violent Gestures of Life*, as a post-colonial text, counters the prevailing prison discourses which have been in place since the colonial era.

In his novel, Mukwevho uses his protagonist to explain his intention of writing about prison and its power. Gift chooses journalism as his career after his imprisonment. He says, "I may

go for journalism. If I study journalism at a college or university then I will be in the right position to expose all the shit the system is involved in" (104). In another instance, he says, "I will work hard so I can become a journalist and write features about the wrong side of the reform" (116). Through writing about the bad side of prison, Gift endeavours to seek a voice that the prison does not afford him. In this context, the voice afforded to him by prison writing is a means of making people aware of the prison conditions hidden from the public. Thus, the act of exposing and critiquing prison and power is a means of lessening power and to bring about change in reform institutions. Regarding post-colonial literature as resistance, Said (1994:215) writes, "Local slave narratives, spiritual autobiographies, prison memoirs form a counterpoint to the Western powers' monumental histories, official discourses, and panoptic quasi-scientific viewpoint". Mukwevho's text is polemical, as it criticises the oppressive nature of power and prison. In this vein, Jocelyn Alexander (2008:395) writes, "where African prison writings have been studied as a genre, they have tended to be treated as emblematic of a universal experience, and as exemplary accounts of the struggle against oppression". Towards the end of his narrative, Gift highlights the possibilities of writing his prison experiences after his term in prison. He hints, "Who knows - I might even write a book about my experiences one day!" (160).

Schalkwyk (1998:81) says, "to write from and about prison, to write as a prisoner, is therefore in itself an act of dissidence". In light of this assertion, is important to note that *The Violent Gestures of Life* is meant to critique and oppose prison discourses. Mukwevho's fictional text portrays power in a negative light. Mukwevho's portrayal and perception of power seems to have been influenced by his experiences when he was incarcerated. Mukwevho's narrative is therefore problematic in the understanding of power and prison, considering that his text is fiction mirroring real conditions of prison. Thus, the novel seems to interweave Mukwevho's prison subjectivity with fictional characters.

4.3 Power and Counter-discourse

In Mukwevho's novel, the prison is portrayed as unequivocally supporting a clear binary between the oppressor and the oppressed, the subject and the subjected, the powerful and the powerless. The oppressed or the subjected are under the obligation to adhere to everything that the oppressor wants. The novel represents the prisoners as justly fighting against oppressive prison discourses which construct them as docile and powerless. The upper

management of Qalakabusha through the principal and the caretakers all endeavour to control the prisoners in both illegitimate and legitimate ways as they try to coerce them through their hegemony or by force, to be obedient, to follow prison codes and to do as they are told. The principal of Qalakabusha youth reformatory centre, Mr Robertson's comparison of a youth reformatory centre and caretakers to a maximum prison and prison wardens respectively, bears testimony to the observation that prison creates binaries between the subjects and the subjected. He says to Gift, "There are certain things that I must not discuss with you…You mustn't forget you are equivalent to a prisoner. Caretakers are like prison wardens. I am the authority here" (132). Therefore, *The Violent Gestures of Life* problematises the relationship of the oppressed and the oppressor.

The representation of power between inmates and officers by Mukwevho shows that power is non-linear, as it is prone to negotiation and subversion. Similarly, Bosworth and Carrabine (2001:502) maintain:

> …power negotiations in prison, whether among inmates or between them and staff, are rarely strictly linear. Other than in extreme circumstances, such as perhaps in a situation of complete lock-down, nobody's authority is entirely fixed. Instead, there are every day, ongoing negotiations occurring among inmates and between them.

The portrayed tensions which come as a result of unequal power relations are at the centre of the production of prison subjectivity. Using the lenses of post-colonial theory, it is clear that Mukwevho's novel is political in the sense that it dismantles the hegemonic boundaries that create unequal power relations, based on binary oppositions, such as us/them, powerful/powerless, superior/inferior. Most boys at Qalakabusha perceive prison as a space of subjugation. This makes them active in negotiating their prison experiences. In his novel, Mukwevho deconstructs the boys from being passive recipients of power to active agents of their imprisonment. The novel seems to be preoccupied with the theme of agency. David Arnold (2004:43) has this to say about agency, "[p]rison narratives are paradoxically replete with a powerful sense of individual agency". Writing about agency, Ashcroft et al (2007) also note:

> In contemporary theory, it hinges on the question of whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed. Agency is particularly important in post-colonial theory because it refers to the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate actions in engaging or resisting imperial power. (6)

Thus, *The Violent Gestures of Life* shows that although it may be difficult for prison subjects to escape the effects of forces that construct their subjectivity, the fact they are able to recognise those facts suggest that they may also be countermanded.

Mukwevho's novel suggests that power is not absolute; it is breakable and is based largely on the subjects' submission to it. Like Gift, Sipho finds the prison to be physically and emotionally oppressive. He says "Mr Ndulapo is full of shit…He thinks Qalakabusha is his…He beat me last Tuesday. He said I was late to wake up, remember, Gift?" (2). For this, he plans to directly confront the system by seeking revenge on the ruthless caretaker, Mr Ndulapo. In an attempt to confront the oppressive nature of the prison, he declares, "I'll hate him forever and I'm going to revenge, you'll see!" (3). The novel suggests that where there is excessive power, there is always resistance, as pronounced by Foucault in *Discipline and Power: The Birth of The Prison* (1977), wherein he states that there is a plurality of resistances which exist in the field of power relations. Such an act of resistance "attempts to shift the dynamics or openly challenge the givenness of situational power relation" (Ewick and Silbey, 2003:1328). Ewick and Silbey (2003) postulate that although these acts of resistance against power cannot bring about institutional change; they provide the individual with the temporary opportunity to reverse the trajectory of power. Mukwevho's portrayal of counter-discourse suggests that power is relational rather than absolute, hence interpretations and arrangements of it are possible. The postcolonial critic, David Jeffress (2008), conceptualises this kind of resistance as subversion. He states, "resistance as subversion constitutes the disruption or modification of colonial modes of knowledge and authority" (2008:20).

The novel shows that the actions of counter-discourse represent the ways in which individuals without power can "accommodate to power while simultaneously protecting their interests and identities" (Ewick and Silbey, 2003:1329). This is evident when Gift breaks a prison code which stipulates that no boy should walk out of the dining room within the first five minutes of the meal. Gift does this as a way of resistance and remembrance of his friend Sipho, who was seriously injured when he was running away from Mr Ndulapo, who wanted to beat him. In their article, Dragan Milovanovic and Jim Thomas (1989:50) argue that acts of resistance provide "one way prisoners can attempt to over-come the powerlessness of their position to challenge behaviors and policies that make little sense to them and seem capricious and unjust". Thus, Gift breaks "a rule which no boy has ever broken" (10) and is discouraged from countering that discourse by Mr Mpofu, the caretaker, who says:

> We won't condone your misbehaviour… You can't just walk out of the dining hall when you feel like it. You know very well you're only permitted to leave after 20 minutes. We do that to allow all the boys enough time to eat their food so that there will be order in the hall (10).

The novel's questioning of power shows that post-colonial writers like Mukwevho "set out to dismantle a specific historically grounded discourse in the hopes of demonstrating that an alternative discourse is possible" (Gallagher, 1994:14).

The novel represents those under power as successful in constructing themselves as agents of their situation, despite the restrictions placed upon them by the system. These acts of resistance have been described by Goffman as "secondary adjustments" (1961:54). He explains that secondary adjustments are those practices which do not directly challenge the staff but allow prisoners to obtain forbidden satisfactions or to obtain permitted ones by forbidden means. He further states that those acts of resistance to repressive forms of power provide the inmate with important evidence that he is his own man. The novel depicts Gift as being aware of the consequences of his rebellious actions against the tyrant system of the prison. The belief by Amanda Crawley (2001) that the interdictions which prisoners are presented with upon arrival in prison become a site of protest against the system is evident as Gift protests one of them. He says, "if they feel that I have committed a crime by walking out for which I deserve a punishment then let them punish me…Let them punish me, for my best friend has been taken to hospital with a gaping wound on his neck" (10). The way prisoners respond to the prison environment gives them some sense of agency, power and control of their situation, even though those acts of counter-discourse are followed by immediate consequences such as corporal punishment, solitary confinement and elongated term in the reformatory centre. Thus, Mukwevho's text deconstructs Gift from being a docile subject of prison to a subject that speaks against a number of prison discourses.

Mukwevho seems to adopt the belief by some scholars that power is seamless; hence, small acts of counter-discourse can disrupt the status quo of prison to explain the impact of resistance on power and prison. The impact of resistance is evident when Gift notices some changes in their treatment by the system. He says:

> It has been calm in the reformatory ever since the boys returned at the end of the holidays. No officer treats a boy unfairly. I don't know what changed the wheel of events for the better, but the new atmosphere makes a more habitable place. There is a feeling of change in the air. I have been observing things quietly for the past weeks. The system seems to be wearing a set of false teeth in place of its typical

> rusty ones. I would prefer for the system to have its original set of teeth; there is always something that feels wrong with artificiality. (129)

The above extract clearly shows how speaking against dominant prison discourses imposed by caretakers has helped Gift and other boys shape their prison experience. In this context, some scholars posit that although dominant groups may control the social institutions, those groups cannot control the capacity of subordinated peoples to think, speak and act. Thus, notions of resistance against prison discourses are depicted as instrumental in changing institutional operation of domination and power.

The Violent Gestures of Life indicates that the bureaucratic functioning of power induced by Mr Ndulapo is one of the prison regimes which prisoners find unnecessary and oppressive. Gift is denied the opportunity to talk to Mr Robertson by Mr Ndulapo, who tells him that if he has a problem, he should tell them and they will see how to help. Gift finds the bureaucratic nature of power to be an infringement to his rights. He says, "'I think you are trampling on my rights,' I tell him, raising my voice… I know my rights…If I have a problem that I think you may not be able to handle, I take that to the principal" (113). Having been denied access to talk to the principal, he initially contemplates killing a prison officer, and having thought of the consequences, he plans to escape the prison as he realises that his plans to negotiate power are futile and stressful. He declares, "I have got to escape from this hell" (113). He does not pursue the plan, bearing in mind the consequences if he happens to be found. The fact that he drops all his plans to counter power through killing an officer and escaping the prison, shows that he is to some extent under self-surveillance due to the supposed effects of the Panopticon. This is an evidence of the automatic functioning of power through its internalisation discussed by Foucault. He states that the Panopticon "…is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power … A real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation" (1977: 202). Moreover, in his description of the Bentham's Panopticon, Foucault states that "if the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future…" (1977:200). The novel depicts Gift as not only fighting for freedom in prison, but also as fighting against discourses of bureaucracy which he finds suppressive. Thus, Gift's reaction to power and prison indicates that power cannot be simply imposed on unhappy prisoners. On a similar note, Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) aver that the jostling and tension among prisoners and prison officers suggest that the balances of power are never fixed.

Furthermore, the notion of counter-discourse portrayed by Mukwevho through Gift's narrative indicates that being trapped in power and prison does not mean that Gift and other boys incarcerated at Qalakabusha have simply been co-opted into the prison system, as suggested by Foucault's understanding of the Panopticon. In his description of the Panopticon, Foucault states that the Panopticon traps one into power by means of surveillance and observation. Explaining the use and effects of the Panopticon, Foucault writes:

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power … The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. (1977: 201-202)

By acting defiant, the boys seek to demand fair treatment by prison warders which would make them as recognisable subjects.

Crawley (2001:310) affirms that "the prison at all levels appears as a hegemonic structure which manipulates the inmate's fear of demotion and desire for promotion and rests on the prisoner's assumption that he or she always has the possibility of being seen". Similarly, Mukwevho portrays the prison as a hegemonic space in the sense that it is the mention of solitary confinement which instils a sense of fear on the inmate. The sense of fear of solitary confinement leads to self-regulation. Peter Scharff Smith (2006:442) notes that:

> Solitary confinement is occasionally used in most prison systems as a means to maintain prison order: as disciplinary punishment or as an administrative measure for inmates who are considered an escape risk or a risk to themselves or to prison order in general.

For Gift, solitary confinement is the only form of punishment which he fears in the reformatory school. He writes:

> The system has only one way of knocking arrogance and unruliness out of a boy, and that is through detention in solitary confinement. Stories of this dark place frighten me enough to make me refrain from committing any sin which might have locked up there. (98)

The above excerpt suggests that the mention of solitary confinement is used as a form of ensuring conformity to all the prison ideologies especially to rebellious boys. Solitary confinement is also represented as a way of co-opting or coercing the dominated into accepting the legitimacy of the institutional power. The depiction of the use of solitary confinement indicates to me that there is little difference between colonial prisons and post-colonial prisons. In this vein, Roux (2014: 249) argues:

> …despite the removal of all apartheid legislation, the post-apartheid prison population remained stable: rather astonishingly, the abolition of a corrupt regime that used the prison as its primary tool of coercion made no difference to the number of prisoners in South African jails.

This mode of dominance serves to direct the construction of prisoners' subjectivity. Smith (2004) notes that solitary confinement plays a central role of controlling and influencing the minds of the prisoners. Having said this, in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault analyses the nineteenth-century prisons as modern technology of power that makes for a more and effective and individualised social control, which is aimed at controlling not only the bodies and actions of prisoners but also their thoughts. Thus, solitary confinement is depicted as a way of internalising control in an individual. Hence, Norbert Finzsch (1996:31) aver that contemporary prisons reflect a shift "from the body as object to the mind as object". Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) note that prisons hold a population which is under sufferance. So in order to maintain this population, as shown in the text, the prison finds means to control the minds of prisoners.

In his novel, Mukwevho seems to adopt the view that the prison is a space of subjugation which produces subjectivity. Gift finds prison as an authoritarian institution which is meant to control the docile bodies of the prisoners. He says, "It seems to me that this school is experiencing a fatal breakdown in its operational system. It doesn't want to rehabilitate but to control us and force us to behave in the way it dictates" (13). It is quite clear in the novel that Gift does not want to succumb to the incarceration of his mind by the system which seeks to control the way prisoners should think. Throughout the novel, he refuses to regard the incident which led to Sipho's injury and death as an accident. He writes:

> It is confirmed to me that the system continues to make us believe what is convenient for them. We are being conditioned to see and hear things the way they want us to see and hear them. If someone urinates on your head and they say it rained on you, you are forced to take it as such. (33)

Gift perceives prison as more punitive than rehabilitative. He states, "I am growing to hate Qalakabusha, a system which I fail to comprehend. Its name means "to start afresh". But the system here is not based on a desire to rehabilitate boys but to punish them" (16). Considering the negative depiction of power and prison by Mukwevho, it is interesting to note the irony behind naming the reformatory school where Gift is imprisoned as "Qalakabusha". Mukwevho chooses this name to show the reader how the post-colonial prison is made to sound like a good place. In most cases throughout the novel, Mukwevho satirises the suppressive nature of power and prison, even though the name "Qalakabusha"

means to start afresh. The belief by Amanda Crawley (2001) that the prison has power to coerce prisoners into assimilating the discourse of transgression and correction upon their entry into prison seems to be contrary to what Gift experiences.

The questioning of the name of his space of subjugation is largely based on his subjective experience of the reformatory youth centre, which in most cases he refers to as "the system". He believes that it has been romanticised by calling it Qalakabusha because of the mode of its operation, which defeats its purpose, as suggested by the name "Qalakabusha". He says, "who said I should spend the best of my youth in Qalakabusha-this prison made to sound exotic and romantic simply by the name they give it. A reform school doesn't reform, it merely imprisons" (141). He perceives the prison as a space for domination and control which imprisons someone body and soul. It is for this reason that he vows not to come back to prison after his sentence. He declares that his "…life is not destined for imprisonment" (140).

Mukwevho's novel portrays the punitive nature of the prison as being caused by the ruthless caretakers like Mr Ndulapo, who seem to enjoy the suffering of the condemned boys. *The Violent Gestures of Life* is therefore a critique on the excessive power of the prison which defeats the main theoretical aim of the prison. Gift believes "it is people like Mr Ndulapo who inflict the most pain and frustration on a young boy's mind. He believes in reformation through physical punishment. But when you live in fear of being beaten, you can't focus on rehabilitating" (16). Moreover, the prison officers, through Mr Mpofu, seem to relish the suffering of the boys who get sodomised in prison. This is well articulated by Gift when he throws a tantrum, "'You're pleased that Bheki might be sodomised,' I say. 'What kind of a picture does an adult caretaker like you send us? Our pain gives you joy. You take pleasure in our troubles. Society expects us to rehabilitate when in fact you are…'" to Mr Mpofu (111). Foucault's views about the Panopticon are pertinent in the understanding of how power is exercised in contemporary prisons. He notes that the Panopticon was introduced as an experiment of eradicating repressive forms of power by focusing on the soul of the inmate. He writes, "So it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behaviour…" (202). Mukwevho seems to echo Foucault's assertion that repressive forms of power are not effective in changing of an inmate's soul. On his explanation of the Panopticon, Foucault further notes that:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously

> upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which is always decided in advance. (1977:203)

Considering the above excerpt, Mukwevho's narrative is a critic to the physical forms of punishment which target the body than the mind. For Foucault, punishment should be aimed at changing the mind because it is the one which leads to criminality. Gift's rebellious demeanour is portrayed as emanating from the totalitarian nature of prison which does not play any positive role to their rehabilitation process. Thus, the text shows that repressive forms of punishment are not rehabilitative, but they train inmates to be rebellious.

The Violent Gestures of Life shows that acts of counter-discourse are deep-rooted in the way prisons subject inmates to absolute power. Its power is that which creates a homogeneous identity of prisoners. This is evident when Mr Ndulapo threatens to punish all the boys for a crime committed by Bheki and for the fact that Bheki refuses to submit the knife which he used to stab another boy. He says, "Do you know the proverb that says one rotten potato in a bag makes all potatoes go rotten" (97). Surprisingly, he cancels the trip to Leslie because of Bheki's deed. The attitude of Lucky and Calvin who directly argue against the idea of punishing all the boys when only one person committed the crime is indicative of how power is negotiated and resisted in an endeavour to maintain innocent identities. Their kind of resistance directly confronts the system which tries to create them as passive subjects. Calvin says, "Why punish us when we did nothing? We should be treated separately" (97). Jeffress (2008) argues that such kinds of resistance identify the way in which authority is contested. Mukwevho seems to parallel Crawley's view that the prison system, which reduces all inmates to the same identity must be challenged in its dissolution of heterogeneity in critiquing the prison for punishing all the boys for one boy's misdeed (2001:315). The type of resistance portrayed in this case, is that which seeks to negotiate power to lighter terms.

While Mukwevho shows that power cannot be absolute, Mr Ndulapo tries to make his absolute. Mukwevho depicts the prison as a space of inequalities and coercion. When some boys argue against his decision to cancel the trip, he answers, "I am the officer in charge...I am the one who gives the instructions and orders here. And my word is final" (97). Using his narrator and protagonist, Mukwevho shows that it is always tempting to argue and resist authoritative power in prison. This is evident when Gift says:

> Never argue with the system or else stress might stifle your soul, one of the boys once told me when we were sharing a smoke. One may try hard, and even harder, not to argue with the system. But it seems impossible not to engage your mind with the hardship which the system requires you to go through during your stay in reform. It is pointless to imagine that you will never argue with the system. My thoughts, in a sense, are an integral argument with the system already. (97)

The incident of Bheki stabbing another boy indicates the problematic functioning nature of the Panopticon. It fails to internalise in him the consciousness of being under surveillance to alter his behaviour. He stabs the boy at the watch of Mr Ndulapo and funny enough, he refuses to surrender his knife to Mr Ndulapo. In Foucauldian terms, the Panopticon allows one to police his actions, behaviour and thoughts. However, this is contrary to what Bheki does as he stabs someone knowing that a caretaker is looking at him.

4.4 Power and Masculinity

Mukwevho's text indicates that in some instances resistance in prison is executed as a way of maintaining one's identity. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, prison is a space where multiple identities collide. *The Violent Gestures of Life* depicts it in the same light. Bheki, Gift's fellow inmate, resists the contamination of his identity by an unnamed new boy who wants to sodomise him. The prison is also portrayed as a space where unconventional sexual practices are found. In an attempt to maintain his identity as a heterosexual, Bheki stabs the boy. Gift says:

> The new boy wanted to sodomise Bheki; such is his claim anyway. Was there any need for Bheki to take the ghastly decision to stab him with a knife, though?... It is likely that his intention was only to warn him to send the new boy away with the knowledge that if he continued demanding sex from other boys he might die sooner than expected (98).

While Propper (1981) argues that the pressures of social and sexual deprivations in prison are some of the factors which foster homosexuality, Bheki manages to break this myth by maintaining his identity even in the absence of females around him. Bheki's resistance to penetration suggests that he is also resisting to assume the passive role of being feminine. It is therefore worth noting that Mukwevho portrays Bheki's resistance as a way of protecting one's interests and identity. Mukwevho uses this incident to depict the prevalence of unequal power relations in prison.

Mukwevho portrays acts of resistance as signs of masculinity. In his terms, it is being defiant that defines masculinity. His text defines a man as individual who is bold and defiant, to act against the oppressive nature of prison. This is evident when Gift's friend, Kaelo says, "You stood your ground and spoke against the system…You have shown us how to be a man" (11). Mukwevho depicts the notions of counter-discourse in a stereotypical way. He associates resistance with masculinity, meaning that those who submit to power are not real men and powerful in being agents of their situations. Thus, this portrayal of resistance links masculinity to power. *The Violent Gestures of Life* shows that counter-discourse is in itself a form and use of power, considering that prisoners are expected to be docile and submissive. As an outspoken and defiant character, Gift distinguishes himself from other boys and refuses to stoically endure to be subjected to excessive power. He writes, "they see us as robots that one controls with a battery remote from a distance" (12). Mukwevho shows how some prisoners find it unsavoury to succumb to the dominant penal ideology and becoming what is expected of them as prisoners. In Foucauldian terms, such counter-discourses in prison act as chemical catalysts so as to bring to light power relations (1982:780). In light of this assertion, resistance is depicted as an attempt to reverse the absolute nature of power in prison. It is a means of negotiating for equal power relations between prisoners and prison guards.

4.5 Power Relations in Social Structures

Gift's attitude towards power and prison is reminiscent of the way he resists some traditional discourses founded on the basis that children have an obligation to respect their parents or elders. In both institutions his family and prison, Gift opposes and negotiates power in all possible means. He views power from a negative perspective, in such a way that he perceives it as suppressive to himself, even though Foucault suggests that "We must cease for once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms" (194). His self-expression towards the prison becomes corroborating evidence of the attributes supposed to have led him to take the pathway which culminated to his imprisonment at a youth reformatory centre. When juxtaposing his demeanour towards his parents and caretakers, his narrative indicates that he confronts power in a similar way; he does not want to submit to it. His narrative indicates that unequal power relations within institutions contribute to different forms of resistance to power. Frustrated by his parents' divorce and hatred for his step-father, Gift deliberately plans to show his stepfather hatred by subverting his authority. He is grossly hurt by the fact that his

mother has finally divorced his father and preferred to settle with a man referred to as 'the miller', hence, he resists all the power that the miller tries to exert. He clearly states:

> True, Nancy's father had won and my father was a loser. I sought ways to make my dislike of the miller evident. When he sent me to get meat from the butchery, I would refuse, citing tiredness as the excuse. He had once sjamboked me for refusing to perform an errand. As a result, he got what he asked for, waking the next morning to find that the tyres of his car had been knifed flat… I felt triumphant when I realised that my wars against him were bearing the desired fruits. (72)

Moreover, he makes it obvious even to his mother that he does not approve the authority of the miller as well as their relationship. He induces vomit of the biltong that he is eating after being reprimanded by his mother for failing to respect the miller. He vomits it as a sign that he can never submit to the miller's authority. He says, "I am vomiting up your man's food. It has no room in my stomach anymore… And you think the miller is clever because he made sure you and my father stayed apart" (76). Gift's narrative indicates that he is not only fighting for equal power relations, but he is also fighting to own his mother. He is to some extent fighting to reverse the power and authority which the miller has assumed over his mother and family at large. Interestingly, later towards the end of his narrative, he realises that his demeanour towards the miller and mother was against some accepted norms. He says, "The fault was with me. I wanted to own my mother, for the fact that she was my mother" (112). Through Gift's narrative, Mukwevho shows that power is relational and whenever it exists, the direction of the power can be reversed through resistance. The notions of counter-discourse depicted here indicate the need for maintaining one's interests and to bring about equal power relations.

Mukwevho's narrative seems to resonate with Foucault's assertion that power is everywhere and rational; it is not only visible though prison guards to prisoners, but also amongst prisoners themselves. This is evident when Gift tests his authority over the new inmate. He writes, "he is a new boy and I feel I have every right to test his patience. This is not bullying but a mere game of sharpening one's thoughts and testing whether you have any qualities of authority" (130). He assumes a sense of power and authority over the boy by questing his misbehaviour of smoking indoors on his first day. His attitude to prison codes is ironically portrayed as he questions someone for breaking a prison code yet he broke one before. Hence, Foucault notes that power is omnipresent, not because it embraces everything uniformly, but because it comes from everywhere, as it does not exist only in institutions but

also among individuals. Mukwevho depicts the net of power relations within prisoners and how other prisoners come to assume authority over new prisoners. It therefore appears in the text that some prisoners, such as Gift, can serve as staff in the codification of others.

4.6 Knowledge and the Power

The power of prison to observe and correct delinquents is depicted as emanating from psychologists, social workers and reformatory teachers. The power held by these experts plays a central role in a delinquent's progression during his or her sentence and the course of their life in prison. The records kept by the social worker determine how long the delinquent will be sentenced. For instance, it is the social worker, Mrs Doris, who suggests that Gift should be incarcerated at a child and youth development centre. Through the biographical narrative of Gift, Mrs Doris argues that direct imprisonment "would not serve any good purpose for youngsters like [him]" because they "might learn more criminal traits in prison and come out as killers and rapists who would terrorise society" (93). This suggests that maximum prisons do not only have the power to correct, but they also have the power to transform criminals into more hardened ones. Understood in this way, prison is therefore a space of transculturation. The assessment which Gift undergoes indicates the initial process of operation of power on delinquents. Mukwevho's text seems to bear testimony to Foucault's assertion that the initial processes of functioning of power and knowledge includes the investigation into the biographical narrative of the delinquent. Foucault writes:

> The observation of the delinquent should go back not only to the circumstances, but also to the causes of his crime; they must be sought in the story of his life, from the triple point of view of psychology, social position and upbringing, in order to discover the dangerous proclivities of the first, the harmful predispositions of the second and the bad antecedents of the third. This biographical investigation is an essential part of the preliminary investigation for the classification of penalities before it becomes a condition for the classification of moralities in the penitentiary system… The Introduction of the 'biographical' is important in the history of penality. Because it establishes the 'criminal' as existing before the crime and even outside it. (1977:252)

The novel shows there is diffusion of power rooted in knowledge and administered by prison staff and experts. Hence, Foucault states that control is exerted by making the subject highly visible. Gift's narrative indicates the power to control boys in youth reformatory is mostly invested in the experts like teachers and social workers. For instance, it is his teacher, Mrs

Hadebe, who recommends to the principal that Gift should be released on the basis that he has "applied [diligently] to [his] studies and demonstrated remorsefulness and a desire to function less destructively in the outside world" (139). While in most cases Gift resists to believe in the main aim of imprisonment and to be co-opted in power of the system, he unconsciously becomes the object of the Panopticon which corrects him to be a desirable person outside the prison. Mrs Hadebe assesses him and derives valuable knowledge about him which leads her to convince the principal to release him. Gift's narrative shows that the Panopticon's modes of observation produce knowledge of those under surveillance. In his examination of the Panopticon, Foucault (1977:204) observes:

> The Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory work. Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour; knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised.

For Foucault, power produces knowledge through constant observation of inmates, hence the experts which comprise teachers, social and prison warders deem it necessary for Gift to be released before the end of his sentence due to their observation concerning his response to rehabilitation. Foucault asserts that power and knowledge are inseparable. He postulates:

> …that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These 'power-knowledge relations' are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge (Foucault, 1977:28).

Thus, Mukwevho's text shows power and knowledge complements each other as discussed by Foucault.

4.7 Ambivalence and the Power of the Prison

Notions of ambivalence are evident in the way Gift perceives power and prison. In some instances, Mukwevho portrays him as being attracted to the discourse of reformation at Qalakabusha, yet in most instances he is portrayed as defiant to prison discourses. For

instance, his view of Qalakabusha as "… a very good place for delinquents to start afresh in life" (112) contradicts his view of prison as a space which "cripples one's soul" (140). Ashcroft et al (2007:10) postulate that ambivalence "describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized". In this context, Gift suffers from ambivalence in the sense that he has both feelings of love and hatred of prison and its discourses. Ashcroft et al (2007) add that ambivalence characterises the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonised subject, for it may be both exploitative and nurturing or represent itself as nurturing at the same time. For the purposes of this chapter, it worth noting that the novel shows how the imprisoned subjects find the prison suppressive and rehabilitative.

Gift's narrative is marked by contradictions in its depiction of power and the prison system. In most cases, power and the prison are depicted in a negative manner, in the sense that power is portrayed as repressive and absolute. As already stated in the preceding paragraphs, Gift finds prison to be oppressive to his mind and body; hence, he actively resists the power of prison and its discourses. It therefore creates in him a subject which speaks against the domineering nature of prison. He views power and prison to be authoritative and unfair to the minds and bodies of the prisoners. On a dissimilar note, he realises that his mind is not confined, hence he becomes an agent to change his life in and outside the prison for future purposes. He reasons, "I know my mind is not chained. I am free to think as I wish… The future is in my hands" (120). To some extent, Gift's narrative portrays power and the prison not only on a negative note, but also on a positive one. In his examination of the effects of power, Foucault asserts:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces, it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (1977:194).

While in many cases Gift negotiates the nature of power and prison which he regards as punitive rather than rehabilitative, he succumbs to the panoptical nature of Qalakabusha youth centre which finally rehabilitates him. The principal's remarks which read, "But let me inform you that I have noted everything, including Mrs Hadebe's recommendation that you work hard in her classes and that you demonstrate remorse for the sins that brought you here" (132), alludes to my observation that Gift is unconsciously co-opted into the power of the Panopticon which aims at rehabilitating inmates. He submits to power through the panoptical

and hegemonical nature of prison which encourages him to behave so as to get his sentence lessened. This is evident when Mrs Hadebe advises, "I challenge you to behave yourself and see what will happen" (120). He submits to the prison's discourse of correction and reformation.

Gift's narrative suggests to the reader that power produces docile and tenacious bodies of prisoners, as evident in Gift who operates on two polarities. In some instances, he is active in negotiating power, yet passive at time. As Gift digests Mrs Hadebe's words of encouragement, he reflects, "A little bit of decency and behaving well might earn me enough to go outside" (121). Gift's narrative indicates the effects of the Panopticon which induces a sense of self-surveillance of himself as he tries to behave so that he may be released before the end of his sentence. In light of these observations, Foucault notes, "…the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). Towards the end of his narrative, he is portrayed as a reformed person who is ready to go out and forge a better relationship with his family. This is reminiscent of Foucault's assertion that for a prison system to be successful in operations, it should correct rather than merely punish. It is pertinent to note that "… the Panopticon was also a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals" (Foucault, 1977:203). Hence, Gift turns out to be rehabilitated. It is from this stance that I argue that the elements of the prison system aim to control and shape prisoners' bodies, producing and reproducing a certain kind of subject. Mukwevho depicts Qalakabusha youth reformatory centre as successful at making a difference in these youthful prisoners.

While acknowledging that the prison invests some of its power in education as a way of reforming inmates, it is also pertinent to note that inmates appropriate power from education to enhance their interests for their future. Gift and other boys appropriate power through education. Even though at times they feel their minds are also incarcerated, they realise later that they are free to think about their future. Gift and Calvin assume power afforded to them through education by realising that their minds are not imprisoned, hence they prepare for their lives after imprisonment by choosing careers that they will pursue after prison. Calvin realises that "[their] minds are not chained. [They] are free to plan [their] lives" (103). Gift also shares the same sentiment with Calvin. They make use of their time in prison, and fortunately enough, they pass their exams. It is being optimistic that gives them power to shape their lives in preparation for their release from prison. The novel suggests that the

harshness of prison life makes prisoners find insights which allow them to shift from victimhood to personhood.

4.8 Conclusion

The Violent Gestures of Life portrays, in great detail, life behind bars. Prison is used as a vehicle to critique socio-economic and political power structures. It is a novel which relies on a combination of textual and paratextual strategies to blur the line between fiction and non-fiction. The novel also shows that power is relational and whenever it exists, there are always attempts to counter it, either through physical means or writing.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The observation by Roux (2014:247) that "[a] striking feature of the post-apartheid era is the demise of prison life writing: the prison narrative, once a central pillar of South African autobiographical writing, abruptly moved to an almost-invisible periphery after the demise of apartheid", cannot be doubted especially when looking at the production of autobiographies about imprisonment. With the demise of colonisation, Africa has "experienced a significant drought of detention and prison narratives" (Ndlovu, 2010:239). Ndlovu notes that what have been emerging from post-colonial African prisons by way of literary productions are anthologies by writers and imprisoned criminals. Some of these anthologies include; *Journey to Myself: Writings by Women from Prison in South Africa* (2004) by Julia Landau (ed), *A Tragedy of Lives: Women in Prison in Zimbabwe* (2003) by Chiedza Musengezi and Irene Staunton (eds) and *Fifteen Men: Words and Images from Behind Bars* (2008) by Margie Orford (ed). Thus, the decline of prison writing through autobiography has also led to the birth of fictional prison writing. The narratives I examine in this study are fictional in nature and they have attempted to represent notions of criminality and imprisonment authentically. These selected Southern African narratives attempt to artfully cross, straddle and blur the line between fiction and non-fiction. The impetus for examining fictional works about detention and imprisonment is based on the fact that more attention has been given to prison autobiographies than to prison novels.

Chapter One is the introduction of the study wherein I highlight the background of the study, statement of the problem and the synopsis of the novels. I also outline the aim and objectives of the study. The methodology and theoretical insights are discussed here as well. This study primarily aims to examine the construction and representation of subjectivity in a selection of Southern African narratives. I examine how the prison is experienced and negotiated by focusing on issues of criminality, gender, identity and power. I read these narratives through the method of close textual analysis.

I employ Michel Foucault's views about contemporary prisons and the "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison* (1977) as my main theoretical framework since the study examines issues of imprisonment and subjectivity. Taking into consideration

that he wrote his book when prisons were predominantly inhabited by men, scholars like Fontebo (2013) have considered Foucault's examination of prison as androcentric in nature since it does not give room for women imprisonment. Given this background, I utilise feminist literary criticism to analyse gender issues in crime and imprisonment. Bearing in mind that prisons were inherited from colonialists, I have incorporated postcolonial theory in order to analyse how issues of counter-discourse against power structures operate in the selected narratives. Daniel Roux's views are used to show some continuities/discontinuities between apartheid/colonial and post-apartheid/post-colonial prisons.

Imprisonment in Africa and the world at large has emerged as an ultimate replacement for capital punishment in many countries as a means of punishing criminals. It is worth remembering that African prisons were inherited from the colonial models. Bernault (2003) argues that the prison system in Africa was based on a European model and it did not develop any features that made it unique to the colonial state bearing in mind that some forms of physical punishment survived long and they still survive even after they had been abolished in Europe. She postulates, "African governments have unanimously preserved the penitentiary apparatus at the center (sic) of their judicial systems" (2003: 26). It is the establishment of prisons in apartheid/ colonial and post-apartheid/ post-colonial era society that contributed to the production of prison literature. Prison writing in Africa was started as a result of mass incarceration of black political prisoners during the apartheid/colonial era. Those political prisoners were active as they challenged, negotiated and subverted dominant prison discourses through autobiographies, letters, diaries, and poetry. It is clear that prison narratives through different genres will always prevail as long as imprisonment exists. Over and above everything, the examination of a selection of Southern African prison writings shows the pivotal role of criminality and imprisonment in the production of prison literature and the self. Like other prison narratives, the narratives I examine in this study reflect the creation of individuality in prison especially considering that each prisoner experiences imprisonment differently. However, Paul Gready (1993) argues that even though the power of prison writing seeks to individualise, prisoner life is increasingly organised on the basis of the collective "we".

Bearing in mind that this study examines a selection of prison novels, it demonstrates a fine line between fiction and non-fiction. Ralph Reyes (2004:15) argues that "the border between fiction and non-fiction has grown increasingly vague". He further states that a narrative is a vague, not quite true, not quite false genre of writing. In light of this assertion, I argue that

these narratives do not show a clear distinction between fiction and non-fiction, hence, the need to afford anthologies some literary attention. Looking at Angela Makholwa's *Red Ink*, it is a narrative characterised by some realities of detention and incarceration, especially if we look at the fact that it initially starts as a biography of Moses Sithole, a serial killer who is charged with multiple counts of rape and murder. He approaches Makholwa to write a book about him. Sithole's psychopathic tendencies lead Makholwa to drop the project before it is completed. As an unfinished project, the biography is fictionalised into a novel based on reality. Moving on to *The Tragedy of Lives* by Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho, it is a narrative by one who understands imprisonment from within. His novel is influenced by his true personal experiences of imprisonment when he was incarcerated at the age of fourteen. As a lawyer, Petina Gappah uses her knowledge of justice to write about miscarriages of justice and imprisonment. Against this background, it is clear that these fictional prison narratives are not just based on the imaginations of the authors but they have elements of reality in them. The manner in which issues of criminality and incarceration are represented indicates that these narratives are not only based on authors' fantasies. They are fictional narratives which mirror the society in which they are produced hence, they require the reader to analyse them as fiction portraying non-fiction. These fictional narratives have been used to question the cultural, socio-economic and political power structures which prevail in the post-colonial/apartheid Africa. The prison is used as a vehicle to question and critique different issues affecting the post-colonial prison society. While prison autobiographical writing seems to have ebbed, realities of detention and imprisonment are evident in the prison novel.

It is evident in this study that prison writing is used as a vehicle to criticise different phenomena. The narratives examined in this study show a relationship between politics and imprisonment. During the colonial and apartheid era, people were imprisoned for resisting colonial rule and contravening pass laws. The end of colonialism and apartheid has seen people being imprisoned for different crimes such as murder, rape, theft, house breaking, assault and others. While it may sound like criminality and imprisonment are not politically connected, these narratives show that they are still political entities despite the possible attempts to read them differently. In this vein, it can be argued that everyone in prison is a political prisoner, though criminality cannot be condoned. In Makholwa's *Red Ink* (2007), the connection between politics and imprisonment is evident in the way the theme of inequality is portrayed. The relationship between the Dingiswayo brothers and KK Mabote starts before the end of apartheid when they have been paid to kill a young girl on behalf of the politically

minded KK. It proceeds even after the apartheid struggle until Napoleon is imprisoned and tricked not to expose the link of KK and Sifiso to his crimes. In Gappah's *A Book of Memory*, the imprisonment of Memory is also politically connected. The criminal justice connects her alleged crime to the political situation of land grabs and murder of white farmers in Zimbabwe after independence. Thinking of power as a political process that offers authority to other individuals over their perceived inferiors, Mukwevho's *The Violent Gestures of Life* depicts Gift as being trapped in a network of power relations at Qalakabusha youth reformatory.

In Chapter Two, I examine how notions of criminality are depicted by Makholwa. The notions of criminality depicted in the selected texts show how criminality plays a role in the production of self and the literary. The examination of criminality also indicates that some prisoners are not hardened criminals but are victims of their macro-environments where they come from. Such characters achieve self-exculpation by portraying themselves as victims of circumstances. In this chapter, I argue that Makholwa constructs a criminal as an innocent victim of society. The construction of prisoners as victims of circumstances represents the prison as nothing but an instrument of a fundamentally unjust society. It can also be argued that on the other hand, some prison narratives legitimise the prison by claiming that unreformable criminals will always prevail. Makholwa's villain, Napoleon, does so by linking his criminality to his poor childhood. At the same time, Gappah's protagonist, Memory, does so as well by linking the swiftness of her trial to the Zimbabwean political unrest of that time. Similarly, Mukwevho's narrator and protagonist, Gift, links his delinquency to his family breakdown. I find it pertinent to examine notions of criminality so as to locate the self in his or her macro environment and the forces which have led to their criminal identity. Foucault's (1977:252) view that "[t]he introduction of the 'biographical' is important in the history of penality. Because it establishes the 'criminal' as existing before the crime and even outside it", is important in arguing about the role of criminality in the creation of the literary. Moreover, it is clear that criminality is a recurring theme in all the selected contemporary prison narratives. The focus on notions of criminality has not only been to critique the different socio-economic issues which lead to criminality, but also to expose the miscarriage of justice. Both Makholwa and Gappah expose the benighted justice system of South Africa and Zimbabwe, respectively, to show different ironies that exist in notions of criminality. The examination of these narratives indicates a fine line between crime and prison genre literature bearing in mind that prison novels always touch on issues of

criminality. Thus, a contemporary writer of a prison narrative cannot escape writing about crime. While examining criminality in *Red Ink*, issues of misogyny in the post-apartheid South Africa are evident. Makholwa's text shows the prevalence of horrendous gender-based crimes which are mainly directed on innocent and economically vulnerable women. I also argue that *Red Ink* depicts violence and crime as a way of affirming masculinities and dominance over women. The depiction of gender-based crimes has been used artistically and strategically to critique the inequalities which still prevail in the post-apartheid prison society.

In Chapter Three, I examine identity issues and how gender extends into the prison experience. I argue that *A Book of Memory* depicts prison as a gendered space which teaches and reinforces patriarchy through its mode of observation. Scholars like Dobash et al (1986) have argued that prison and its panoptical way of observation is harsher on women than on men. The theme of gender seems to be a recurring motif in all the narratives which I examined. These narratives show that gender is socially constructed and it is not a stable identity. Issues of homosexuality, masculinity and femininity are evident in all the texts. *Red Ink* and *The Violent Gestures of Life* depict the prison as a space where unsavoury sexual practices start in the absence of the opposite sex. It is interesting to note that *A Book of Memory* shows that homosexuality exists even in civil society and it is a criminal offence in a post-colonial society like Zimbabwe. Issues of masculinity are evident in the way Mukwevho links it to resistance. Mukwevho's link of masculinity to resistance stereotypes those who fear to express their discomfort with regard to power and prison. The examination of the selected texts shows no special treatment for either men or women. It shows uniformity in the way prisoners are trained into docile bodies by the panoptical nature of prisons. It is believed women's behaviours in prison are influenced by ambivalence that emanates from their marginality in prison and society. The theme of gender seems to have been inscribed into the prison experience as a way of critiquing and changing the minds of the people in a society concerning the prevalence of gender stereotypes and patriarchy. The relationship between gender and crime shows the stereotypical view of criminal identities. *A Book of Memory* represents post-colonial Zimbabwean society which views certain criminal activities as being associated with either men or women. Thus, gender has been simultaneously used to construct one's self and the literary narrative.

The examination of identity issues in *A Book of Memory* shows that prison is a space for transculturation. This narrative indicates that identities are not linear and fixed; they are prone to change depending on space and time. Prisoners are stripped of their previous identities to

assume new identities. They are introduced to a prison culture and are expected to adopt it upon their arrival. The prison is depicted as participating in the creation of homogeneous identities in the sense that it constructs all inmates as people with abnormal behaviours. The prison experience portrayed in *A Book of Memory* and *The Violent Gestures of Life* is characterised by a need to adhere to the prison culture and resistance. However, A *Book of Memory* shows that issues of adopting a new culture are different when it comes to political prisoners who maintain their identity despite the coercive measures of prisons. These narratives show that although the influence of confinement on identity can be acknowledged, it should be noted that individuals carry their personal history and culture with them inside disciplinary institutions. Thus, these narratives show the subjective experiences of prisoners on how they cope behind the confined space of prison. Prisoners seem to refuse to stoically endure prison life without manipulating it. The prison appears to be a powerful institution which changes one's self in one way or another no matter how prisoners attempt to resist it. It is therefore important to note the role of prison experience in prison narratives. *A Book of Memory* demonstrates that writing in prison cleanses one's soul whose existence has been denied by the society. While the novel shows the treachery of memory in self-writing, it also shows the salience of memory in writing about an identically troubled self and prison experience in general. Using Gappah's narrative I argue that identity is problematically constructed.

The narratives examined in this study represent the prison in two polarities; the powerful and the less powerful. In Chapter Two, through a close reading of *Red Ink*, I also examine the representation of the role of prison in post-apartheid South Africa. It depicts common views held by society about prisons in post-apartheid South Africa. I clearly indicate that *Red Ink* portrays a prison which has a synergetic relationship with the society. It shows a prison which penetrates the society through the corrupt warders, friends and relatives of the imprisoned. Moreover, the prison is portrayed as a powerless institution in the sense that it fails to instil a sense of self-surveillance in the inmates. This representation of the role of prison in post-apartheid South Africa shows the problematic functioning of the panoptic model in some prisons. Also, of note is the depiction of the apartheid prison with specific reference to Robben Island. Makholwa depicts it as a symbol for the liberation struggle where real heroes of South Africa against apartheid were produced. However, *A Book of Memory* and *The Violent Gestures of Life* portray prison as a powerful space which manipulates an inmate's mind in one way or another. The panoptical nature of contemporary prisons discussed by

Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* is evident in these two narratives. While the Panopticon may be considered as an abstract idea, these narratives show that in fact some prisoners live in it. The fact that some prisoners succumb to the panoptic nature of prisons indicates that prisons are powerful disciplinary institutions which control how prisoners should think. The exploration of power in Mukwevho's narrative indicates that much of the prison power is invested in experts like teachers and social workers who play a pivotal role in the construction of a better self after imprisonment. It is also pertinent to note that issues of counter-discourse are evident in the examined texts regardless of the powerful nature of prisons and their coercive apparatus.

In Chapter Four, I examine how issues of power and counter-discourse operate in Mukwevho's narrative. I argue that the prison supports a clear binary between the subject and the subjected. This study reveals the power structures that exist in prison and society at large. The prison is depicted as characterised by unequal power relations. These exist between prisoners and prison guards and also among prisoners themselves. These power relations are portrayed as being marked by binaries, whereby one considers oneself as powerful/superior and the other is considered as inferior or powerless. It is these unequal power relations which prompt inmates to resist and negotiate the power structures which they are subjected to. The power relations depicted in these narratives show that power is relational considering that power struggles are not only visible between warders and prisoners but also among prisoners themselves, especially those who have stayed for some time and new inmates. Struggle for equal power relations between family structures is also evident in *The Violent Gestures of Life*. The narrative shows that power is not absolute; it can be negotiated through direct confrontation with the system and writing. It therefore appears that prisons are sites of power struggles. These narratives, therefore, bear testimony to Foucault's assertion that there are elements of resistance wherever there is power. Some of the characters depicted in these narratives seem to be on the verge of reversing the effects of power on their selfhood. Those who fight against unequal power relations are depicted as also fighting for being the recognisable "other". While acknowledging that power operates in controlling docile bodies, the same power plays a critical role in constructing the subjected to be active agents against unequal power relations.

As evident in *A Book of Memory* and *The Violent Gestures of Life*, the subjectivity that is constructed by imprisonment renders it an incredibly individualised phenomenon. Prisoners seem to experience imprisonment in a different way, hence Sexton (2015:132) argues, "[n]o

single prisoner's punishment is identical to another's, because each will have her own lived experiences and expectations". These narratives portray the penal consciousness and the penal subjectivities that the prison creates. The prison is depicted as a space where different subjectivities are produced bearing in mind that inmates experience incarceration in a unique way. Prisoners shift from being mere objects of power to being subjects with agency and power even though their agency is limited. Instead of being passive recipients of power, they appear to be agents of their predicaments who are actively involved in the construction of their prison experience. In Chapter Four, I also argue that some prisoners appear to perceive prison as a hegemonic space which manipulates them to be docile bodies of prison. It is this kind of subjectivity which trains them to be agents of their imprisonment against the treatment which they experience in prison. The issue of prison subjectivity is paramount in the construction of one's self and prison literature as evident in the narratives which I examine in this study. In Gappah's narrative, her narrator, Memory, instead of narrating her experiences which lead to her imprisonment, she finds herself narrating about her life in prison. I have mentioned this example to demonstrate the primary focus of prison narratives. Fictional prison narratives show that prison is a space for the construction of subjectivity. While some prison ideologies and power are physically resisted by prisoners during their time in prison, prison writing is also used as a vehicle to question, subvert and negotiate the prison experience. Pred (1995) notes that subjectivity is determined by social, political and economic forces. Considering the nature of power and subjectivity, the authors of these narratives seem to demonstrate how power operates in prison. Thus, instead of reading the selected texts from a human rights perspective, this study has concerned itself with the construction and representation of subjectivity in prison.

The reading of the selected narratives for this study shows notions of ambivalence towards prison. In some instances, the prison is perceived and portrayed as an oppressive institution which controls the mind and physical movement of the body. It is interesting to note that the same oppressive structure is simultaneously perceived and portrayed as a conducive space for delinquents who would like to reform their selfhood upon their release from prison. These narratives portray some characters as having feelings of attraction and repulsion against the prison. A close reading of Mukwevho and Gappah's narratives indicates that prisons are by nature not oppressive, but are made to be experienced in that way by ruthless guards. These narratives represent prison as a space where notions of selfhood are constructed and modified. It is therefore important to note that the relationship between power and prison

produces ambivalent subjectivities as evident in the examined narratives. Thus, the nature of imprisonment is problematically and ambiguously portrayed in the selected narratives, especially in *The Violent Gestures of Life*.

The post-colonial era has seen some discontinuities in the operation of prisons although there are some continuities which Daniel Roux discusses in his article titled *Inside/Outside: Representing Prison Lives after Apartheid* (2014). Makholwa's narrative indicates a change from the apartheid prison to the post-apartheid prison owing to the abolition of the death sentence–a change that was applauded by Foucault as the Great Transformation. According to Foucault's terms, contemporary prison should focus on the soul rather than the body. However, Gappah's narrative which is set in Zimbabwe shows some continuities. It portrays the death penalty as still existing and used as a means of punishing those who have been found guilty of murder. Moreover, Gappah and Mukwevho's narratives show the use of solitary confinement in post-colonial and post-apartheid eras as a way of punishing and coercing prisoners to follow prisons codes. Therefore, these narratives show a thin line between colonial/apartheid and post-colonial/post-apartheid prisons. It is from these observations that I argue that contemporary prisons are using the colonial prison template. It can also be argued that post-colonial/post-apartheid prisons inherited their dehumanising systems from their colonial masters to emphasise their hegemony. Thus, contemporary prison literature has concerned itself with critiquing prisons which are still operating under the colonial template. Against this background, I argue that these narratives are post-colonial texts which resist and counter prison discourses. Like common post-colonial texts, prison narratives have themes which deal with issues of identity, power and resistance against dehumanising and oppressive systems. With these prison continuities from the colonial era, it seems possible that prison literature will still exist through genres like the prison novel.

The potential existence of prison narratives in South Africa and Zimbabwe seems to lie in fictional works about detention and incarceration. With the demise of prison autobiographical writing, much literary attention should be given to prison novels and anthologies. As part of prison literature, anthologies seem to demand critical attention in order to see the distinctness in them. Contemporary prison literature suggests that the existence of crime and prison will always play a crucial role in the production of prison narratives in Southern Africa. The prison novel seems to be a broad genre which incorporates the crime genre. Thus, it seems impossible for a writer to separate crime from a prison narrative since political prison writing has ebbed. The novels I examine in this study demonstrate the connection between

criminality, imprisonment and the society in which they are produced. Over and above everything, they show the prevalence and struggle for power relations in society and prison.

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