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The Transformation of Masculinity in Contemporary Black South African Novels

Nonhlanhla Dlamini

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements of degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2015

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand for the fulfilment of the Doctor of Philosophy degree. It has not been submitted before for examination in any other university.

Parts of chapter two and four have been submitted as part of conference proceedings to Postmable Volume 9.1 and Journal of African Literature Association, JALA.

Signature _____ Date_____

Nonhlanhla Dlamini

Johannesburg, 2015

Dedication

For our son, 'Mpetha' and my mother Nomcebo Mfimfane Ndlangamandla with heartfelt love and gratitude.

Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude and thanks go to my supervisor Professor Dan Ojwang for his mentorship during the entire period of my postgraduate studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Thanks are also due to all the members of the African Literature Department at Wits for their valued support and input during the four-year period of my study. I am also grateful for the financial assistance afforded me by the Postgraduate Merit Award, Harold and Doris Tothill Award, and PhD Completion Grant.

Abstract

The ways in which we have come to know the world through expressions and performances of dominant versions of masculine and feminine gendered identities is challenged, refracted and altered on a daily basis through social interactions. This work situates itself within the various spheres of dominant masculinity production such as neo-traditional African cultural practices, sexuality, the family unit, race and class, as well as other contributory factors such as migration and lack of social advancement opportunities. Through the use of the novelistic genre, this work examines how contemporary black South African novels of English expression engage with the production of dominant masculinity, in order to critique the taken-for-granted access by dominant men to social power over other men, women and children. Not only does this study concern itself with the extent to which core elements of dominant masculinities are being transformed, it tracks transformation in literary figurations of men, and is interested in the alternative masculine identities that these novels proffer. This works' search for alternative identities is predicated on the primacy of a symbiotic relationship between strategies of self re-presentation, personal agency and the power of social structures. This study concludes that the central codes of contemporary dominant black masculinities are forced to change because their legitimising narratives are put under scrutiny. Fluctuating social, political and economic factors also mediate their constant breakdown and recreation. However, the development of the alternative gendered identities imagined in these novels is thwarted by the prevailing socio-cultural practices of the contemporary era.

Authors studied: Kgebetli Moele, Kopano Matlwa, Zukiswa Wanner, Sello Duiker, Thando Mgqolozana and Niq Mhlongo.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Aim and Rationale of Study

Mongane Serote's debut novel, *To Every Birth Its Blood* (1981), closes with a suspended denouement, where the reader witnesses a symbolic, but nameless birth. The nameless birth narrated by Tsietsi Molope, the main narrator in the novel, is symbolic of South Africa's (un)certain future in the sense that Tsietsi paints a word picture where a woman struggles to give birth whilst the onlookers urge her to push. The above birth motif succinctly captures and describes what Peter Horn and Anette Horn (2012:99) term an 'interregnum' state 'wherein the old is dying and the new cannot be born'. Nardine Gordimer (1982) is the first scholar to use the notion of the interregnum in relation to the South African social and imaginary realms. She attributes it to Antonio Gramsci. The state of being or living in the interregnum is also witnessed in the South African social and literary/imaginary spheres with regards to the performances, expression and composition of male masculine subjectivities[1]. South African scholars of gender (Gqola 2009; Strauss 2009; and Ratele 2006) situate the state of interregnum within the disconnection between dominant masculinity's expressions of manliness as well as sexual preference and the gender ideals espoused in the constitution of the country, South Africa. The above scholars use President Jacob Zuma's rape trial and his response to this allegation to gauge where public opinion is and where the constitution would like South Africans to be with regards to notions of morality, dominant/cultural sexual practices and gender equity – all of which are encapsulated in the type of masculinity Zuma embodies and performs in the national theatrical platforms of the judiciary and the media.

Strauss (2009) uses Mr Zuma's response to the rape allegations to question a web of social and political relations that have a negative effect on the realisation of gender equity. Strauss's (2009) article also unearths the intricate relationship between guilt, shame, complicity, speech and silence and how they are appropriated by dominant masculinity in

[1] Subjectivity is widely used in gender and literary studies. In this research project I use it to refer to the 'condition of being a subject: the quality of possessing perspectives, experiences, feelings, beliefs, desires and/or power'. In other words, it is the collection of the perceptions, experiences, expectations, personal or cultural understanding and beliefs specific to a person' (Robert 2005:900). Roberts' definition of the term amply fits in this context because it takes into consideration that culture and subjectivity shape and influence each other, thus opening possibilities of cultural and subjectivity transformation over time and space; and in relation to other entities such as the economy, political and gender institutions, communities as well as the natural world.

order to distort culture, embarrass and intimidate opponents and to garner public sympathy and loyalty. She juxtaposes her critique of Mr Zuma's response with Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent* (2004) and suggests that gender equity and responsibility in dominant masculinity could be attained through the destabilisation of family alliances, silence and cultural modes of shame. She points out that the narrator's, Hambile Kondile, narration of events that culminate to the murder of Mbete, the Janus-faced icon of the antiapartheid struggle; Sindiswa's (her daughter) involvement in the struggle for freedom and her sexual violation which led to her death in Mbete's hands; as well as the subsequent admission of guilt and complicity in crime by Mbete's wife (Zodwa) are necessary steps towards the birth of responsible masculinities and femininities. In a way, Strauss (2009) suggests that gender equity begins with a certain code of conduct and responsibility that masculinities with social legitimacy or currency ought to embrace in order to effect change in gendered practices.

In addition, Gqola (2009) uses Mr Zuma's response to the alleged rape in order to enter into a discussion that seeks to distance expressions of dominant masculinity from a spectacular display of violence or recourse to it as exhibited by Mr Zuma's supporters in a bid to intimidate and demonise the alleged rape victim. Gqola suggests that the tactics used by the president and his sympathisers make the task of normalising freedoms enshrined in the constitution difficult to achieve. Lastly, Ratele (2006) uses the alleged rape incident and dominant masculinity's outlook on sexuality (desire and sexual practices) to express doubt on its ability to carry out the daunting task of ensuring a better life for all if it regresses from the protection of women's rights and minority sexualities through the categorisation of 'normal' and abnormal sexual practices. The bruising of the public's trust and deterioration of national moral fibre expressed in the rape trial, soaring levels of gender based violence, a burgeoning youth underclass, service delivery protests, soaring corruption, contemporary era racism and escalating Xhosa initiates' death toll form the background of the study's engagement with the strategies of representation that contemporary South African writers use to engage with detrimental aspects of dominant masculinity in order to make them amenable to change.

South African literary and cultural spheres shed off blackness as a collective identity used to challenge white minority rule when apartheid officially ended. The aftermath of the democratic elections and the adoption of a progressive constitution marked the beginning of an era where the mask of homogenous blackness yielded to previously effaced and sidelined differences based on gender, sexuality, class, and cultural practices. The debates on these

topics do not only problematise and destabilise these categories, but also signal for their transformation or the birth of 'newer' ways of understanding difference, defining, performing and expressing black[2] cultural notions of being a black South African man and woman in the social and literary spheres. Gesturing at and lobbying for attitudinal changes within the black South African sex and gendered practices has led to the splitting of debaters into two camps: one acting as a midwife for the birth of the 'new' black South African man and woman, whilst the other defends and contests the nature and form of transformation of the gender order in the 'post apartheid[3]' era.

This study is informed by and sandwiched between two contrasting forces. One side critically engages with dominant masculinity construction in order to ask questions that involve blackness as a collective identity in the contemporary era, whilst acknowledging the fault lines of this unity in order to create heterogeneous masculinities and femininities unified at the seam by culture and/or language. The second side defends 'idealised' expressions or performance of black manhood with the belief that it is under attack or a crisis of sorts. These two contrasting voices are captured in the novels under study and are to be treated with caution since they are a reflection of societal views on the subject of masculinity creation. The clash of interest resides in dominant masculinity's deployment of ideologies that underpin the terrains of its reproduction such as the body, family, cultural practices, class, race, sexual division of labour, and sexuality. These are sites that ruling masculinity uses to propagate itself and to determine the amount of social power that men and women access and share (un)equally amongst each other.

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[2]This work's usage of the term black/blackness is in line with Brock's (1999) definition of blackness. She points out that it should not be ' treated as an identical essence of being, but rather as a constituted, and constitutive, performative entity, a socially, culturally and historically contingent representation of the self and self-location' (Brock, 1999: 15).

[3] In this study, 'post aparthied' is used as short hand to refer to the period after the official demise of segregation. The term is used with caution in the study of the black South African social and imaginary realms because of the uneven development. The juxtaposed representation of the Tuscan Villa (Sandton) in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and the *zozo*, township shack built from corrugated iron sheets or any cheap building material, in Niq Mhlongo's *After Tears* (2007) is a testimony of the unevenness of modernity which Cooper (1998) describes as the incongrous positioning of the village and the city world views. In addition, the term is not used to signify a decisive break with the oppressive regimes of colonialism and apartheid, but it is used to denote an engagement with 'complexity and difference' in terms of social-economic backgrounds and masculinity constitution. In other words, the term points at a 'space clearing gesture that challenges earlier legitimating narratives' of a collective of blackness and homogenous gender identities (Magubane, 2005: 131).

This work concerns itself with the contestation, creation and transformation of hegemonic masculinity also referred to as ruling or dominant masculinity. In its undertaking, it acknowledges that there are various versions of dominant masculinity within a locale; and that these are brought into being by social factors, actors/agents and structures that mediate their existence such as culture, gender, class, race and sexual preference. Lastly, it recognises that men and women are the most important actors/agents who create and can transform masculine and feminine identities as well as the social structures within which these identities are formed. The aim of this work is to examine how the contemporary black South African novel in English focuses on the various sites of masculinity production ('traditional' cultural practices, sexuality, sexual division of labour, race, social, political and economic factors such as class and poverty) in order to destabilise and question these sites, thus entering into a discussion about possibilities of transformation so as to provide alternatives that will ensure the achievement of gender equity also translated to a 'better life for all[4]' South Africans. Since this study deals with the interaction of male and female actors involved in mundane activities, it seeks to undertake a close reading that will delineate the particularity of each character's agency and social contexts in order to proffer nuanced readings aimed at stimulating discussion on the path(s) of masculinity transformation or alternatives offered by the novelists as well as the agential constraints coercing characters to create and abandon certain version of masculine identities. Primary novels which form the reading list of this work include the following: Thando Mgqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man* (2009); Zukiswa Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010), *The Madams* (2006), *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008); Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007); Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001); Niq Mhlongo's *After Tears* (2007), *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) and Kgebetli Moele's *Room 207* (2006).

The novels under study were published after South Africa's democratic elections and their publication dates stretch from 2001-2010. Having been published at a historical moment when South Africa is transitioning from apartheid to 'post-apartheid' epochs, they talk to and reflect some of the challenges that masculinities and femininities contend with in the contemporary era. Their selection is for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is to render young black and upcoming writers visible not only in book launches, literary festivals and on

[4] Slogan used by the South African ruling party, ANC, in its election manifesto of 1994. Available at http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/policy/manifesto.html

book advertisement websites, but in the academia in order to recognise the salience of their art and engage with the issues that they represent. The urge to make them visible is partly propelled by the paucity of systematical critical work on the above writers. For instance, Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures* (2003) and Christopher Heywood's *A History of South African Literature* (2004) do not include any of the above writers in their canonisation of works published by both black and white South African writers regardless of the fact that Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) have been published. Zakes Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) is the only contemporary novel that Heywood (2004) acknowledges in the compilation of literary works published in the present. Perhaps Chapman (2003) and Heywood (2004) did not have ample time to include the works of the writers studied in this research work given that their books were published in 2003 and 2004. The omission of the contemporary black writers is also noticeable in Michael Chapman and Margaret Lenta's *SA Lit Beyond 2000* (2011). Though published in 2011 and critically reviewing literary and non-literary texts published after 2000, Chapman and Lenta (2011) do not include Wanner's oeuvre in their compilation. The above observation does not mean that Wanner's novels have not been studied elsewhere. Murray's (2011) article, which hastily lumps together most of the writers studied in this work, mentions Wanner's two novels in passing and analyses Moele and some of Mhlongo's novels through Sam Radithalo. This shows scholarly gap concerning current writing on contemporary black literature in English. This does not mean that my study covers every aspect of black writing or of the novels selected for this research work, but it is selective in terms of what it examines in these novels. My work examines how both men and women grapple with the (re)creation of gendered identities. Therefore, it adds onto the rapid growing body of literary and cultural criticism mounted by Gqola (2013), Spencer (2009), Raditlhalo (2010), Strauss (2009) and many more critics. It offers nuanced insights on black contemporary South African masculinity recreation in the selected novels.

The above novels absence from Heywood and Chapman's works is not the sole criterion for their inclusion in this research project. Their usage of the different narrative styles and creativity that experiment with the auto/biographical genre keeps the reader intrigued. In addition, this gives the stories a cutting edge whose effect is the creation of an illusionary truth telling narration that creates probability and a bond of empathy and sympathy between the narrator and the reader. *Coconut* and *After Tears* use the diary mode of narration; *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* and *A Man Who Is Not a Man* write the protagonists pain in a

way that makes the reader cringe because of the forcefulness with which they narrate the pain and alienation of 'failed' and queer masculinity. *Dog Eat Dog* and *Room 207* use humour, wit, anger and *tsotsi*[5] figure to contest transformation or lack of it through narrating the adventures of the contemporary hustler in the inner city and university campus. Wanner's novels use satire, irony and gender role inversion to narrate the frustrations that male and female characters encounter in the contemporary black middle class family set up as they try to juggle modernity and tradition.

The choice of thematic concerns and the way these are handled call for the widening of the scope of engagement with masculinity. Moele (2006) and Mhlongo (2004; 2007) use class difference and haplessness of the youth to reshape the contemporary hustler into a ghetto intellectual and a tool for contesting economic transformation among some of the poor black people trapped in the townships because of lack of opportunities of self advancement. Matlwa (2007) uses the brown exterior and white centre of the coconut fruit as metaphor to comment on whiteness and its impact on shaping contemporary black male and feminine identities. Duiker (2001) employs sexuality and sexual preference to question the neo-traditional African cultures' homophobia in the contemporary era. Mgqolozana (2009) exploits the facade of Xhosa homogenous masculinity to question the effaced heterogeneity of Xhosa neo-traditional adult masculinity and the subordination of 'failed' Xhosa men. Wanner (2006, 2008, 2010) utilises the family as a site of sexual division of labour which enables and disables the expressions of contemporary masculine and feminine identities. These works broach themes of masculinity from different perspectives and factors such as class difference, race, sexuality, cultural identities, female sexuality and the familial space – all of which are sites or social structures that dominant masculinity uses to produce certain subjects of power and to subjugate the subjects under the power of its social structures. The varied sexual orientation and biological difference of the protagonists represented by these writers offer different points of view on the subject of contemporary masculinities, the challenges they grapple with and their fault lines. Matlwa (2007) and Wanner's novels proffer versions of femininities and masculinities from the viewpoint of the perceived privileged black middle class wife, mother and daughter. Moele (2006) and Mhlongo (2004 and 2007) offer different versions of the township and inner city slum masculinities. Duiker focuses on black queer

[5] The name *tsotsi* 'was Johannesburg patois adopted by the criminals themselves from the American phrase 'zoot suits', made popular by the Hollywood gangsters who wore them' (Fenwick 1996: 619).

desire, whilst Mgqolozana explores heterogeneity and estrangement within Xhosa neo-traditional manhood.

The importance of this study does not squarely reside in making visible the works of 'novice' black writers, or in its involvement with the critique of dominant masculinity, but in that, it offers nuanced literary insights into the understanding of contemporary expressions of black masculinities. The study fits into a minute gap in critical men's studies, a gap uncovered by Morrell (2001), Miescher and Lindsay (2003), and Lahoucine and Morrell (2005) in that it examines masculinity re/creation and transformation through the family and viewpoint of women. It taps into pre-colonial myths to create a space for the representation of African queer masculinities and situates queerness within a continuum of sexualities instead of the binary relationship espoused by Connell (1995) and echoed in Morrell (1998; 2001) and Lahoucine and Morrell (2001). This approach on queer masculinities adds to the growing well of knowledge on African sexualities pioneered by African feminists such as Tamale (2011).

In its engagement with the complexities of masculinity performances and their deployment by individual men, this study grapples with the following questions: to what extent can *A Man Who Is Not a Man* be appraised as a novel about the destabilisation of culture and the ideal representation of a homogenous neo-traditional Xhosa adult masculinity? How does the positionality of the narratorial voice and the author affect the thematic concerns of the novel and narrative techniques? If we consider the negative and positive effects of globalisation on notions of masculinity and femininity performance, the contested and evolving gender relations in Wanner's (2006; 2008; 2010) novels, can we safely presume that domesticity and sexuality are issues that adversely affect women? What literary techniques does Duiker (2001) use to counter neo-traditional South African culture's homophobic sentiments and use of violence as an expression of ideals of dominant masculinity? In what ways do refigured notions of white supremacy detrimentally influence the psyche of the 'born free' generation and its ways of creating feminine and masculine identities? To what extent can we read hustler masculinities in Mhlongo and Moele's novels as a transgressor whose agency is enabled and disabled by contemporary socio-economic structural power relations, as well as shaped and informed by uncertainty of life in the inner city and social advancement of the underclass youths?

1.2. 'Old' and 'New' Masculinities: Historical Convergence and Divergence

Understanding the manner in which masculinity is constructed and expressed in black-authored English literary texts published during apartheid will shed light on the ways in which the contemporary texts under study deconstruct and question masculinity expression two decades after the 'demise'[6] of apartheid. In other words, in order for this study to make claims about the manner in which masculinities and their expressions are being contested, reified and refracted it needs to look back to the past and examine how South African works treated the subject of black masculinities. This will be achieved through an appraisal of some of the works published during the apartheid era. The works of prolific writers such Herbert Dhlomo, Peter Abrahams, Eskia Mphahlele, Ellen Kuzwayo, Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela will be used as a backdrop for the examination of the manner in which masculinity is depicted in contemporary fiction.

Dhlomo wrote a collection of literary works that he could not publish during his life. Nick Visser and Tim Couzens first published his collected works in 1985 under the title *H.I.E. Dhlomo: Collected Works*. This anthology contains plays, poetry and ten short stories. These stories cover a wide range of themes and explore varying geographical contexts. 'The Daughter' is a story whose main theme is an incestuous relationship between a father and his daughter, as well as the agony it causes the mother after its revelation. In this story, Zodwa Valo and Bob Fafa marry at a tender age and both fail to handle the pressure of married life. Bob deserts Zodwa and leaves Durban for Johannesburg. His looks, pleasant personality, adaptable mind and luck ensure that he becomes a social giant in the city and he self-styles as one of the city's leading 'lady killers', a reference to his promiscuous masculinity. After three months of Bob's desertion and cutting ties with the rural reserve, Bob and Zodwa's daughter is born. The mother names her Rose and true to her name, the girl grows up to become as enchanting as a rose. In her youthful restlessness, Rose is lured to Johannesburg by her friend May. May succeeds in using Rose's looks and charm to be acquainted with men she desires. It is within this circle of friendship and meetings that father and daughter meet without knowing. They fall in love and Rose gets pregnant. They both move to Durban with their bosses where the story of their lives is untangled.

[6] I do not use this term to denote the non existence of apartheid in South Africa for Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) shows that the scrapping off of formal segregation gave birth to subtle forms of racism in South Africa. My usage of this term is strictly confined to the marker of time in the literary or social history of South Africa.

'The Farmer and Servant' is a story of the experiences of black workers on white farms. It touches on several themes such as the farm labour system and its effects on the migrant labourer, the double standards of Afrikaner farmers, the violence of the farm *indunas*[7] and the farm bosses towards the farm labourers, objectification of black life, the infantilisation of black men on the farms, the expendability of black life as well as its conflation with animalism. The story advances the highlighted themes through the Second World War that Britain and her allies fought against the Germans in North Africa. Jack Zomba, previously working as a farm hand in Oom Rooi's farm finds himself fighting side by side with Oom Rooi's son, Carl. It scandalises Carl to learn that his former slave is not only a free man, but also a great and brave soldier honoured and decorated for his bravery in the war. The contrast of Carl and Zomba's personalities in the war subtly questions the stereotype of the black man as an inferior being.

'An Experiment with Colour' tackles racism and its effect on Frank's life and psyche. The main character, Frank Mabaso, becomes despondent on his graduation day after the Vice-Chancellor of the South African Fort Hare Bantu College announces that 'the solution to the race problem must be a slow, gradual, methodical process' (p.489). In other words, the Vice –Chancellor stands up and tells the congregation that there is no solution to the colour problem. Black people should be content within their position of servitude in society. Frank's mind is troubled by these words because of the ways in which black personality and life have been constructed by discourses legitimising apartheid. His status of non-entity in the country of his birth forces him to turn to traditional scientific experimentation for clues. He invents an injection that turns him into a white man and traverses the white and black racial boundaries. However, the fluidity of racial lines is not allowed in apartheid South Africa, a state founded on the interpretation of the Bible to justify racial prejudice. The story ends with a badly wounded Frank lying on the floor, and a European laughing madly with a revolver in his hand exclaiming, 'We do not want white kaffirs in our country. Where would our women be?' (p.499).

Dhlomo's works stretch between the 1930s to the late 1940s. His prose is not solely preoccupied with apartheid to a point that the politics in it diminishes his art of storytelling as

[7] Black farm labourers who have earned the trust of the white farm owners. They oversee other farm labourers and ensure the smooth operation in the farm.

well as the literariness of the work. His concerns with the mundane enables him to depict African men and women within the rural and city spheres as well as the issues they grapple with in their immediate environment. Writers (such as Peter Abrahams, Mbulelo Mzamane, Lewis Nkosi, and Mtutuzeli Matshoba among others) who took the literary baton after his demise did not write about the city and the countryside. Rather, they singularly focused on the black urban experience as seen in Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* (1948), for example. Once in the city, the black man refashions and forges a new sense of manliness suitable to the demands of the urban social setting.

Writers such as Mzamane, Abrahams and Matshoba use the 'Jimmy comes to town' trope to depict the manner in which men created their sense of being in the city as well as the effect of city life on African male and female migrants. This trope also portrays the sense of cultural shock, dislocation and ambivalence in relation to gender and power positions. Furthermore, it captures the nervous condition of the black man's psyche once in contact with white culture. Though criticised for marking the countryside as a space preserved for the black man, this trope gives valuable insights in mapping the transformation trajectory of traditional African masculinities. A close reading of *Mine Boy* (1948) shows the manner in which African forms of masculinity are partly eroded and transformed into urban masculinities in the face of hardships faced by black men in the colonial city. *Mine Boy* (1948) is not only a story that protests the exploitation, objectification and infantilisation of black men, but also examines the manner in which the advent of the colonial economy, the mining revolution and apartheid policies impacted on and transformed black African masculinities. Through Xuma, the protagonist in *Mine Boy*, the reader witnesses the destabilization of traditional forms of African masculinity and gender roles. The stock character, Mzala, depicted in *Hungry Flames and Other Black South African Stories* (1986) and Xuma manage to walk the township and city's pavements without making themselves visible. Their invisibility is embedded in the apartheid policies which render the black man sub-human in the eyes of the white man. For instance, Xuma is forced to stand outside the city pavements when he comes across a white person. At first both men struggle to live in the city and the township where their sense of maleness oscillates between power and powerlessness. Xuma and Mzala can only assume a brief status of being grown up men within the confines of the township. This manhood status is short-lived in the sense that even in the township it is undercut by the black police. Matshoba (1979 and 1984) views the temporariness of black manhood and its shifting relations with power as some of the numerous ways meant to 'emasculate' or feminise the

black man. The metaphor of emasculation was used within the contexts of anti-apartheid struggle and Black Consciousness Movement ideologies to capture the powerlessness of the black man.

Objectification, second class citizenship, infantilisation and emasculation are not the only tropes used to depict black masculinities in prose fiction. Es'kia Mphahlele and Ellen Kuzwayo add other tropes such as displaced, dispossessed and absent fathers. In *Father Come Home* (1981) Mphahlele demonstrates how colonisation with its concomitants led to the disintegration of African cosmology and the forced migration of able bodied men, consequently leaving the countryside impoverished and family units falling apart. In the story the protagonist, Maredi, becomes fatherless after his father embarks on a long journey to Johannesburg in search of greener pastures. In the hands of Eliyase, his cruel uncle, Maredi's childhood is suspended; he is forced to grow up to take over some of his father's responsibilities in the family though he is still a child. The city is depicted as a monster with an insatiable appetite. In cases where it cannot swallow the sons of Sedibeng wholly, it ejects them in a state of uselessness like Tintina, the village lunatic.

The trope of dispossession is clearly shown in Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* (1988), Hugh Masekela's *Still Grazing* (2004) and Miriam Makeba's *My Story* (1988). Kuzwayo (1988), Mphahlele (1981 and 1959), Masekela (2004) and Makeba (1988) depict how black men and women constructed their subjectivities after being dispossessed of their land through the 1913 Land Act. Morrell (2001) posits that in the countryside African men derived a sense of worth and manhood through the ownership of land and livestock. Dispossession of land and cattle negatively impacted on African men's senses of manhood and relationships with institutions of gender. *Still Grazing* (2004) is an auto/biographical narration of Hugh Masekela's musical journey. In the book he maps his father's sense of loss and land dispossession onto his own in order to make sense of the self and to explain the turbulence that envelopes his life after he leaves South Africa. Hopane, Masekela's father, suffers from a withdrawal syndrome, loses interest in life and dies after the apartheid government forces him out of his farm. Feeling entrapped and enraged Hugh Masekela leaves the country once an opportunity avails itself.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the publication of the *Staffrider* series. It constructed a contrasting set of masculinity tropes in its representation of some of the challenges facing blacks in the

growing white urban economy. It employed realism to depict the various ways through which black men were shorn of manhood and pride by the white supremacist regime. Heavily influenced by the Black Consciousness ideology which explicitly challenged the binaries which characterised race and gender relations, Mbulelo Mzamane's *The Children of Soweto* (1982) and *Hungry Flames and Other Black South African Stories* (1986) and Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood* (1985) depict the emergence of a black anti-white and black parental control masculinity refashioned by young black male protagonists. Unlike Masekela's *Still Grazing* (2004) and Mphahlele' *Down Second Avenue* (1959*)* which frown upon violence, *The Children of Soweto* (1982) and *To Every Birth its Blood* (1985) legitimate it. The narrator in *The Children of Soweto* (1982: 210) hails the violent youths and views them as heroes, the 'Young Lions', '*amagoraethuokwenene'*. Xaba (2001: 108) refers to this type of masculinity as 'heroic or struggle masculinity'. It upheld the Fanonian view of redemptive violence and struggle for decolonisation as espoused in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967). Its key features include gun ownership, disregard of the rule of law, protection of the township from state harassment and hunting down of 'informers'. The hunting down of the 'informers' was a technique of violence as a cohesive and coercive device that fostered the production of blackness as a homogenous and collective identity.

While the politically charged black youths, men and women struggled to overthrow white minority rule, the apolitical youths engaged in wayward activities such as sitting at street corners, menacing children, the elderly and women. This male figure is classified as a hustler, one that espouses *'tsotsi'* masculinity. Like other variants of masculinity discussed in this chapter, the *tsotsi* type is necessitated by need and prevailing socioeconomic conditions. It is present in literary works published during apartheid and post-apartheid periods. Mphahlele (1959), Masekela (2004) and Bloke Modisane's (1963) auto/biographical fiction depict how the hustler came into being. Their works demonstrate that apartheid policies manifest in job reservation for the whites ensuring that Africans languish in state-sanctioned poverty and ignorance which could be intricately linked to the moral and material deprivation of the blacks. This is expressed through crime and hustling. Robert Morrell (1998:627) emphasises this when he notes that 'urbanisation disrupted the extended family even if it did not end it. Children roamed free and the youth emerged as a new anti-social force'. Vivid features of the *tsotsi* masculinity include:

> Increased levels of violence against one another and against women. The tsotsi did not look at the country side for inspiration or to the elders for leadership. They looked to Hollywood for their symbols and developed a materialistic and consumerist orientation. To be a man according to tsotsi culture was to be streetwise, to be tough, and to fight. Henry Nxumalo, writing for drum in the 1950s, wrote: 'our heroes were boys who could steal and stab. The more stabbings they did, the bigger they were. The biggest shot of all was the one who had killed somebody- either with a knife or a gun. (Morrell 1998:627)

Masekela (2004), Mphahlele (1959) and Modisane (1963) offer different examples of *tsotsi* masculinities that illuminate Morrell's (1998) description of the hustler. In *Still Grazing* (2004) Masekela reflects on and makes sense of the past in order to heal. The novel is an earnest attempt to come out clean and negotiate a new frame of reference and masculinity which simultaneously defines him as a father and husband whilst abandoning the hustler masculinity through the act of 'truth' telling using the auto/biographical novel. In their auto/biographical works, Masekela (2004) and Modisane (1963) construct themselves within the hustler masculinity frame. This helps both of them to temporarily evade apartheid control. However, it re-enforces self-hate manifested in their sexual exploitation of women and drug abuse. Both texts explore the ambivalent positions of power and lack thereof in black urban masculinities. Through the characterisation of Brother Blade and the bands of hooligans who terrorise the neighbourhood and rape women, Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* (1959) shows the expression of *tsotsi* masculinities among the oppressed black male youth.

Mzamane's *The Children of Soweto* (1982) offers another type of masculine subjectivity known as the situations. Mzamane (1982) points out that the situations is a label reserved for black males who are perceived as situating themselves above the average township folk. The construction of the situations is lodged in class difference. Unlike the ordinary township folk that consumed township-brewed liquor and listened to *Mbhaqanga*[8] songs, the situations consumed white[9] liquor and listened to jazz. The label is more than a masculine identity. Both males and females could don the label. It did not only encapsulate a language of exclusion and putting the situations under surveillance, but also marked them for the worst forms of legitimised and condoned violence. The construction of the situations category by the 'authentic' township folk is intricately linked to the contradictory political power imbalance witnessed in the contemporary South African political realm where the dominant,

[8] A style of black popular music of urban South Africa.
[9] Bottled liquor.

but economically impoverished group, also referred to as the masses, wields political power over the economically privileged (black) middle class. In the context of *The Children of Soweto*, the 'authentic' township folk have the power to label the 'Other' who stands outside the gated territory of political and social power. The tagging of the 'less powerful' individuals and/or groups is a form of social control meant to humiliate and pigeonhole middle class blacks also known as the *amabhujwa* (bourgeois) in contemporary township slang. Tagging anyone as a snob is akin to setting him/her up for any form of punishment that the self-appointed 'real' comrades deem fit to be administered upon him/her. This manner of violence is used as a cohesion tool that effaced difference and produced homogenous blackness during apartheid. Krog's (1999) recordings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reveal that some young township men busied themselves with the task of punishing the female 'situations' through rape. The threat to violence or its use to deny difference within the black community has spiralled to other terrains of the South African social and political formation in the contemporary era. Presently, it can be intricately linked to violent attacks on the black 'Other' with higher levels of dark skin pigment or the 'Other' whose sexual orientation is tagged 'unAfrican'. This overview of the types of masculinity depicted in the literary works published during apartheid demonstrates how African masculinities are transformed in response to the harsh conditions of the apartheid city and farms. If the above are types of masculinities produced in reaction to the appalling farm and city conditions, what types of masculinities are depicted in the present where the yoke of political oppression has been removed from the necks of black men?

Critics of the South African literary sphere argue that apartheid is a literary event. Ndebele (2007) posits that the struggle against apartheid necessitated the publication of works whose focal point and audience was the white oppressor. Ndebele (2007) points out that this type of fiction was meant to appeal to the oppressor through showing him the debilitating effects of racism on both the oppressor and the oppressed. The sharp focus wielded by prose fiction and ideology against apartheid effaced the slightest trace of difference amongst black peoples. After the demise of apartheid, writers turned to commenting on several complexities of blackness and issues that had been ignored during the struggle against apartheid. Seidman (1999) points out that in 1985 a leading South African anti-apartheid activist rejected feminist concerns that gender inequality should be part of the struggle. Though she realised the imbalance of gender relations within the movement, she rejected the discussion of gender issues because she feared that this would undermine the struggle for justice by creating

division and bitterness, consequently diverting energies to 'minor' issues. The attainment of democracy catapulted issues of gender and sexuality to the centre such that feminists who had refused to talk about them then, became vocal on gender issues and 'articulated democratic aspiration in explicit gendered terms' (Seidman 1999:287). Seidman points out that the gender ideals that informed the South African democratic process were drawn from local and international contexts due to the availability of international funders who hold the view that gender and economic imbalances immensely contribute to political restlessness. Seidman also adds that

> As newly installed speaker of parliament, Frene Ginwala drew on international feminist discussion on gendered citizenship, insisting that South Africa's new democratic state must address gender subordination at all levels- from establishing a day care centre in the all formerly all-white, mainly male parliament, to creating new institutions within government to remove gender inequality. (Seidman 1999: 288)

The web that connects the new dispensation with interests on gender equity, expressions of gendered identities and the imaginary realm is a complex one. Ndebele (2014) posits that a nation state that seeks to attain and guide itself to greater heights builds certain institutions to help guide it along the journey. In the case of South Africa the country's constitution which is often described as an 'inspirational founding document that allows us to project an image of our society as it would be if we were our best selves' is part and parcel of such institutions (Gqola 2007:112). The judiciary and other statutory bodies assist it. As I have highlighted before, the South African constitution embodies gendered citizenship, that is, it is laid on a foundation that puts emphasis on the idea that people experience forms of national belonging and /or isolation because of their gender. Literature as medium impacts on its audience for it reflects the culture of a people. It uses topical issues in society as its raw material in order to open up discussions, teach, inform, entertain, sway or influence opinion, endorse good deeds and repudiate bad ones. This it does with the aim of reimagining and placing the nation in a state where it should have been if all its citizens behaved in the best possible way. In a way, national literature and its subcategories are always aligned with the aspirations of a nation. It is for this reason that issues of gender expression permeate the print media as well as literature. Issues of how to be, and being a man or a woman in South Africa are catapulted to the centre stage of cultural studies because of the diverse ways through which these identities can be experimented with in the present. The experimentation with new gendered identities takes place on a volatile social ground where neo-traditionalists feel threatened by the new

gender order and defend their 'traditional' beliefs and expressions of manhood. On the other side, the new ways of being a man cannot be fully performed because of an imagined and/or impending threat. Are there readable continuities and discontinuities in the tropes of masculinity representation given that gendered identity 'is not a fixed and stable category, but … is in essence unstable, fluid and ever-changing'? (Shaw, 2005:102).

1.3. Imagined and Alternative Masculinities

A review of the contemporary texts and those published during apartheid shows certain points of convergence and departure in the manner through which the concept of being a man and woman is imaged in these texts. Whilst texts published under apartheid depict ambivalence towards the yoking of violence with masculinity creation, contemporary texts out rightly denounce it. In addition, contemporary texts question the taken-for-granted privileged status of maleness and heterosexuality, whilst older texts seem to shy away from matters of gender and sexuality. This could be attributed to a trend in the socio-political and literary scenes that seek to problematise, unpack and theorise on concept surrounding culture, gender and subjectivity creation in the contemporary era. Mhlongo and Moele's texts point at a certain meeting point with texts published during apartheid in the manner through which they show how state orchestrated capitalists exploitation of black lives ensured that they are padlocked in servitude. These novels also demonstrate past injustices such as black impoverishment and lack of opportunities of social advancement are complexly linked to inherited poverty and hapless in among youth in the present. They establish a link for historicising black masculinities.

From the literary works that form part of the core and secondary reading list of this research, we can infer that masculinity is a sociological concept whose meaning and use depends on how a person acts and presents themselves in interactions with others. Masculinity is a gender attribute for both males and females. It is socially constructed and independent of biological sex. Maclnnes (2001) and Miescher and Lindsay (2003) posit that it is abstract. In this study, the concept is used to refer to 'a cluster of norms, values, and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others' (Miescher and Lindsay 2003:4). We adopt Miescher and Lindsay's definition with awareness that these norms, values and ways of expressing masculinities form part and parcel of social structures that are constructed by people through interaction with one another over time, geographical location, ethnicity, age, occupation, health, level of education, wealth and

sexual preference. In the African setting, the importance of ranks of seniority or titles among men and women, gender and sexuality necessitate a distinction between masculinity and manhood though Hood-Williams (2001) argues that it is tautological to speak of masculinity as distinct from men. Moodie (2001) and Louw (2001), Izugbara (2011), Epprecht (2004) and Miescher and Lindsay's (2003) scholarly research on African masculinities and genders strongly suggests that biological sex transcends gender in varying contexts of interaction. Moodie's (2001:304) stories of mine 'male girlfriends' and 'hubbies'; Epprecht's (2004) historical accounts of African sodomy crimes that were condoned or settled amicably only when they occurred whilst one was asleep, gender inversion and cross dressing in 20th century Zimbabwe; Louw's (2001) research on same-sex marriages of Mkhumbane, Durban; Iguzbara's (2001) account of sexually indiscriminate Nigerian deities as well as Duiker's (2001) writings of bodies that transcend sex/biology through spirit possession are some but few incidents demonstrating that 'masculinity and femininity mean different things according to whether they are lived out in and experienced by male or female bodies. [...] What is mapped on to the body is not unaffected by the body onto which it is projected' (Grosz 1990:74).

Manhood is specifically used either to refer to 'indigenous notions explicitly related to men's physiology, often recognised in terms of male adulthood' or as euphemism for the male sexual organ (Miescher and Lindsay 2003: 5). Manhood is not only a title bestowed on men because of their physiology. Mgqolozana's (2009) novel represents manhood as an individual adult masculine identity that a Xhosa man owns and uses as his own in varying social contexts. Boys are socialised to aspire for it from the earliest age up to the day they undergo the rite of passage, *ulwaluko*. Undergoing the rite of passage does not simply translate to the attainment of manhood, but there are certain procedures that the initiate needs to observe and negotiate before manhood is bestowed upon him. These include manner of sitting, talking when addressing other men and most importantly, the ability to nurse and heal the circumcision wound. It is something that one declares, constructs, reconstructs and defends in the manner that he conducts himself in relation to other men, women and children in the community. Among men there are other ranks of hierarchies arranged according to age and circumcision dates which are in themselves markers of seniority. Manhood is distinct from fatherhood in the sense that one can be a father without expressing in performance the expected behaviour associated with the institution of manhood or having achieved the set standards of 'real' manhood. Fatherhood is attained through the siring of children and performance of the social role of a father.

Morrell (2001) puts forward that not all men hold a similar amount of social power or influence. He points out four positions of social power that men have within structures of power. These are hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalised masculinities. Morrell formulates the power relations among the four types of masculinities in the following way:

> A masculinity that was hegemonic – one that dominated other masculinities and which succeeded in creating prescriptions of masculinity which were binding (or at least partially so), and which created cultural images of what it means to be a 'real man'. There were also three non-hegemonic categories of masculinity: subordinate, complicit and marginalised. Generally speaking, these were masculinities developed outside the corridors of power. (Morrell 2001:7)

This is a type of social power formulation that Morrell (2001) borrows from Connell (1995). It is useful in the sense that it helps to 'identify what forces operate to effect change in masculinities, when, where and how such changes occur, and what their effects are' (Morrell 2001: 7). In addition, it shows the fault lines of a collective masculine identify creation as well as the different sites of masculinity (un)making.

Useful as this idea is, Lindsay and Miescher (2003) warn that Morrell (2001) and Connell's (1995) power formulation should be applied with caution in the African setting because of the uneven impact of colonial penetration. They point out that the economic and social histories of Southern Africa show that colonial institutions such as the church, education, the migrant labour system and the advent of urban economies exerted a huge influence on the transformation of African pre-colonial patriarchies, gender relations and masculinities in Southern Africa. However, colonial invasion did not wipe away all forms of African masculinities that existed before its encroachment. The impact of colonial culture on African cultures created various forms of patriarchies dubbed 'patchwork of patriarchies' (Lindsay and Miescher 2003:6). Some of them were imposed through colonialism, others were locally derived. Morrell (2001) echoes Miescher and Lindsay (2003) on this regard. He posits:

> Colonialism may have destroyed the material base of African economies, but it did not destroy the history which was woven into the myriad of gender rituals which served to legitimate the sexual division of labour and male power. In the country side, older men commanded respect. They were part of a gender system which had, at its apex, the chief. He dispensed rights to communal land to men alone. He was the

> law maker and interpreter, a mediator, a diplomat and later on, a tax collector and co-opted official of the white government. Below him were elders, men with a smaller realm of authority and below them, the adult men and, at the bottom of the male hierarchy, the youth, uninitiated. (Morrell 2001:15)

The co-option of the traditional chief into the white government during the colonial period has made Tamale (2011:20) comment that 'most of what is understood as culture in contemporary Africa is largely a product of constructions and reinterpretations by former colonial authorities in collaboration with African male patriarchs'. Drawing from these scholars and Mgqolozana (2009), it therefore suffices to sum up that instead of transforming all forms of pre-colonial masculinities, colonialism and imperialism succeeded in destabilising them and their economic power base such as ownership of productive agricultural lands and livestock. The dwindling rural economy led to the migration of able bodied men to the city. Morrell (1998) points out that city life and mercantilism required that these men recreate notions of manhood aligned to the precarious city lifestyle. Other notions of manhood based on the appearance of the male body, its walking style, notions of cleanliness/hygiene, relationship with other men and women began to take shape and slowly replaced traditional masculinities. These newly acquired urban notions of masculinities were subsumed under the traditional hierarchies of manhood in the rural areas. This resulted in the patchwork of patriarchies that Miescher and Lindsay (2003) talk about in the African setting. As highlighted by Morrell (2001), traditional dominant masculinity maintains itself through naturalising the power that some men have over other men, women, children and the uncircumcised. This power is maintained through men's control of the means of production such as land, livestock, women, children's labour power, other cultural practices and social structures that ensure men's exertion of power such as *ulwaluko*. Ratele (2006: 56-57) points out that dominant masculinities 'are fundamentally about discursive material power, as well as resistance practices that shape relations that men have in and to the world. These relations cover those arrangements men and women have to institutions, structures, laws and policies over and above males' relations to their own bodies, bodies of other males, and female bodies'. The above quotation points out that one feature of dominant masculinity is to regulate both the strategies of resistance used by othered masculinities and the manner in which men and women imagine and linguistically represent and relate to their bodies in interaction with each other and social structures. Ratele adds that the relationships that men and women have with social structures of power and their bodies is arrived at through

consensus. Thando Mgqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man* depicts the initiation ritual as one of the channels which dominant Xhosa masculinity uses to regulate the ways in which men and women relate to the circumcised male body in the world and in relation to institutions of gender.

This brings us to the interconnection between manhood, culture, masculinity, agency and the male body. Fanon (1967) and Saint-Aubin (2005) connect the black male body to earlier scientific enquiries which sought to legitimate racialism and the alleged superiority of the white race over the black race. The racial categorisation of bodies into hierarchies of power did not only directly affect the construction of masculinities during and after the apartheid era, but placed the primacy of the body and its bodily experiences in the constructions of masculinities. Growing scholarly works on black masculinities began to probe and open up newer ways of thinking about bodily experiences. Ratele (1998) asks questions that remove the blackness and maleness from the umbrella of universalised or collective blackness of the Black Consciousness movement and thrusts it into a labyrinth of identities in the contemporary era. Ratele (1998) points out that the changing gender relations and identities in the contemporary era demonstrate that it has become increasingly difficult to speak of blackness as a bodily or identity marker. The aim of this debate on blackness is to remove the body from the national politics in order to reflect on and open up newer spaces and ways of rethinking about gender and the ways it affects the (re)creation of male subjectivities in the contemporary era. This has given rise to a number of approaches used to read the body and place it within gender studies. Similar to Ratele (2006), Connell (1994) and Butler (1990) place and think about the knowledge of bodies within gender and social structures. They reject cultural deterministic metaphors used in the humanities to represent the body, such as 'a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as an instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself' (Butler 1990:8). Connell 1994:11 says:

> The 'body as landscape' popularly used in the humanities is one of the ways in which body has been read, placed in the gender matrix and used in the imaginary of the body in contemporary fiction. Rather than social arrangement being the effects of the body- machine, the body is read as a field on which social determination runs riot. This approach has its leading metaphors, which tend to be metaphors of arts rather than engineering: the body is a canvas to be painted, a surface to be imprinted, or a landscape to be marked out'.

The metaphor of the body as a passive surface to be inscribed and imprinted on by history and gender regimes is problematic in the sense that it buttresses the biology and culture–is-destiny formulation that monolithically links culture, gender and sexuality. It reinforces the gender and sex binary; presupposes the primacy of culture and social structures and relations over human agents, thereby strips bodies of agential power. If we conceive of social structures as 'the creation of human beings as well as the mold they fit; as enabling as well as constraining, the basis of human power and self-understanding' then we free the body and gender from the clutches of social structures (Hays 1994: 61). We begin to see the body as recalcitrant, unpredictable and 'major bearer of masculine value and symbol' (Morrell 2001: 8). This manner of examining the body, agency and social structures is what this work uses to examine how Mgqolozana's novel offers 'failed' manhood not only as an alternative, but also as a way of negotiating transformation of 'traditional' dominant Xhosa masculinity. The novel seeks to distance traditional Xhosa circumcision from the usual media depiction as a culture that kills and physically disables young men who want to be men. It casts *ulwaluko* as a culture that enables growth and incorporates the initiate into a cohort of men who will teach him how to negotiate his way into manhood from the day of circumcision until his death. *A Man Who Is Not a Man* engages with the cultural definitions and creation of 'traditional' Xhosa masculinity through the male body and culture as symbolic sites and major carriers of dominant masculinity.

Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* examines two locations of dominant masculinity propagation: sexuality and violence. The term sexuality encompasses desire, sexual acts and sexual orientation. Gender and power relations are a threshold into the understanding of the relationship between dominant masculinity, violence and sexual desire. Tamale (2011: 11) explains the relationship between gender, power relations and sexuality in the following way:

> Sexuality and gender go hand in hand; both are creatures of culture and society, and both play a central and crucial role in maintaining power relations in a society. They give each other shape and any scientific inquiry of the former immediately invokes the latter. Hence, gender provides the critical analytical lens through which any data on sexuality must logically be interpreted. Things that impact gender relations, for instance history, class, age, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, locality and disability, also influence the sexual lives of men and women. In other words, sexuality is deeply imbedded in the meanings and gender interpretations of gender systems.

If we simply interpret gender as a system of power dominance based on the sexual division of labour, bodily experiences, desires and performance of sexual acts in human relationships, the link between dominant masculinity expressions and definitions, sexuality and violence can be established. With regards to dominant masculinity and violence, Morrell (2011:9) points out that 'hegemonic masculinity does not rely on brute force for its efficacy, but on a range of mechanisms which creates a gender consensus that legitimates the power of men'. Hays (1994) reiterates the creation of the agreement between the dominant and the dominated groups by pointing out that social structures are concerted products of human interaction and they would not survive without the conscious (un)willingness of the people. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) offer a slightly different conceptualisation of the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and violence. They point out that dominant masculinity does not translate to violence, but could be supported by crude force. In South Africa, a country whose versions of black and white dominant masculinity were birthed through the intersection of race, class, colonial imperialism and anti-colonial forms of violence, dominant masculinities have always resorted to violence to assert themselves on the 'weak' or 'dissidents/unnatural' expressions of masculinities and femininities. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* addresses itself to dominant masculinity expressions and validation which manifest in the form of violence towards men, women and children. The novel contrasts the metaphor of the gun with the penis in order to dislodge masculinity from violence. In its effort to delink dominant masculinity expressions from violence, the novel presents madness as the result of excess use of different forms of violence meted by the dominant on the weak, and in turn depicts Zebron' psychosis as an anti-thesis of 'real' manhood. Ratele (2006) shows that the interconnection between ruling masculinities and violence has made visible hitherto unknown and unfathomable rage against men and women who have confessed being queer.

Ratele (2011) points out that dominant masculinity's investment on how men relate to their bodies, female bodies and bodies of other men has resulted in certain ways of talking about and imagining male and female body parts and desires. Ratele (2011) demonstrates this by showing how the Sotho and Zulu cultures and languages speak about the male and female organs. The penis is called *koto* in seSotho and *induku* in isiZulu both meaning stick. The vagina is called *mokoti*, a hole, in seSotho. On the one hand, the image of the stick accretes a certain degree of activity or liveliness and cultural importance to the penis. On the other hand, it casts the vagina as passive. As a result, the penis is perceived as a tool for filling

(female) holes; and a man who does not fill many holes is perceived as 'unmanly'. Ratele (2011) points out that sexuality is one of the sites of dominant masculinity creation. Morrell (2001) demonstrates that the intersection between dominant masculinity and sexual desire produces a range of subordinated masculinities placed in oppositional relationship to heterosexual dominant masculinity. Such positioning results in contemporary 'traditional' and modern homophobic dominant cultures that present heterosexuality as natural and queer desire as unnatural or unAfrican. The novel uses madness to simultaneously destabilise the universality of the oedipal complex, challenge gender and biological difference of male/female and man/woman and connects the son and mother dyad through menstrual stories. Because of his uneasiness with the contemporary ruling masculinity and modern Africa's homophobic sentiments, Duiker uses arcane pre-colonial mythology on the usefulness of queerness and queer men in ancient times. His mythopoeia links queerness with the spiritual world. The use of the shamanic figure removes queerness from the material to the immaterial world of old where queer masculinities were in an accommodative rather than oppositional relationship with dominant heterosexual masculinities. The novel reinstates queer masculinities into their legitimate gender position alongside rather than in opposition to dominant masculinity. The legitimacy of queer men and women in pre-colonial and post-colonial Africa is attested by Izugbara's (2011) scholarship that shows the sexual ambiguity of Nigerian deities; Epprecht's (2004) colonially criminalised accounts of African male queer desires in 20th century Zimbabwe and their tolerance practiced through collective silence and obliviousness; and Nkabinde's (2008) 'coming out' memoir as a black lesbian *sangoma*, or traditional healer.

In her novels, Wanner (2006; 2008; 2010) foregrounds familial space and sets of relationships within it – husband and wife or sexual partners, extended family, sisters and friends. However, these novels use the female perspective and voice to narrate the events. This is mainly because of the genre, 'chick-lit', which she employs in her craft to broach the subject of dominant masculinity and femininity creation, transformation and/or stasis. Furthermore, Wanner designs and interweaves the lives of her characters within the familial space because it is one of the reproductive sites of dominant heterosexual masculinity/patriarchy. Muchemwa and Muponde (2007: xix) describe it as a 'site for scripting gender identities'. Pilcher and Wheledan (2004:44) observe that the family is a crucial site 'for women oppression, the space where, unheeded by the world outside, women are at the mercy of fathers or husbands; and where the law of 'patriarchy' holds its most

primitive form'. Ndlovu (2011) shows an ambivalent stance towards the institution of the family. On one hand, the family is depicted as a source of affection, succour and safety. On the other, it is the very site of anxiety and unhappiness, 'a place of suffocating, emotional intensity where beneath the surface calm, a nightmare of complicated webs ensnare the members in complex and painful patterns' (Hood-Williams cited in Ndlovu 2011:9).

In a similar vein, Wanner (2006; 2008; 2010) views the family as an agent of socialisation, and a site that entraps and arrests the growth, transformation and recreation of fluid gender roles. The men depicted in *The Madams*, *Men of the South* and *Behind Every Successful Man* are in a state of crisis with regards to their gender role performance because the 'traditionally' scripted gender roles demarcated for men are contradictory to the aspirations of their wives in the cases of Mandla and Thandi in *The Madams*; Nobantu and Andile in *Behind Every Successful Man*; and Mfundo in *Men of the South*. Mfundo's crisis is about his inability to play the role of the financial provider. Andile's is failure to understand that the roles of male as the provider and woman as a homemaker frustrate the business aspiration of his wife. In addition, it thwarts the growth of intimacy between him and his wife, and blunts his parental skills. In a way, it effaces him in his family as he spends most of his time producing wealth for his wife and children. Mandla's back and forth performance of 'renaissance' and 'real' manhood are an indication that domesticity is not female, but a male issue as well. Wanner's (2006; 2008; 2010) novels show that globalisation affects masculinity and femininity performances in diverse ways. It both enhances and /or shrinks the financial prosperity of men and the withal to play the role of the provider or makes men play roles of the provider in oppressive ways within the familial space. As a result, Wanner (2006; 2008; 2010) suggests that the tenets of domesticity be redefined in a manner that allows the achievement of equity, and thereby create male subjectivities that are not oppressive to women nor throw men in a state of anxiety.

An analysis of South African men and women that does not touch on the racial question misses a salient ingredient in expressions of gendered identities in the country. The works of Fanon (1967; 1963) and hooks (1995) on the effects of racism and the purging of colonialism show how race was used by colonial structures to physically and psychologically wound, and create 'real' men and 'desirable' and 'beautiful' women. Fanon (1967: 18) posits that

> Every colonised people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation; that is, the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.

The debasement of African culture and the exaltation of English cultural standards by the Tlou family is a concerted effort encapsulated in Jean-Paul Sartre's (1963:17) preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) concerning the psyche of the blacks/natives. He points out that 'the status of the 'native' is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among the colonized people with their consent'. The white objectifying gaze induces the psychopathology of the black characters depicted in *Coconut*. It leaves Ayanda and Tshepo seething with anger; sends Ofilwe to self-segregation/detoxification in order to rid herself of white imposed inferiority complex and to regain her self-esteem. The feeling of lack/inadequacy is provoked by exposure/contact with white culture of Little Valley Estate keeps Ofilwe' mother too busy and uninterested to talk about the (African) past to the inquisitive Ofilwe. Feeling inadequate and 'emasculated' in the world of Silver Café and culture, Ofilwe's father pursues material gain and indulges in extra marital affairs to make up for the lack of self-integrity/worthlessness.

hooks (1995) adds that white supremacist values also extended to the definitions of beauty and manner of self-presentation in social interactions. It put in place the 'color caste system wherein the lighter one's skin the greater one's individual social value' (hooks 1995: 120). The colour caste system that devalued or overvalued people was put in place in South Africa through the creation of the 'coloured' race that acted as a buffer zone between the blacks and whites (Nuttall 2004). The value attached to lighter skin is depicted in Sello Duiker's works, *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *The Quite Violence of Dreams* (2001). Zebron in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* narrates that he grew up in a violent family where his father repeatedly punched his mother's face because she was Xhosa and more light skinned than the father was. Sabine Cessou, cited in Stobie (2007: 201) also points out that the name Duiker is a common coloured surname that Sello's grandfather used in order to make himself more employable during the apartheid era. To date, white racial and class supremacy still shape social interaction between white and black South Africans. In 2004, Booth commented that 'in South Africa, given our apartheid past, we are aware of "race"- but we do not share the burden equally. Race for whites is not a burden in the same way that "blackness" is, mostly

because the experience of being "white" is still largely that of privilege'(2004: 116). Race is not a burden, but (institutionalised) racism is. Six years later Booth's (2004) observation on race relations is echoed in Raditlhalo views on the subject. Raditlhalo (2010:21) comments that 'for all the high praises that South Africa has garnered in terms of the non-racialism creed, it is near impossible to think that a declaration of multiculturalism is easy to put in practice'. hooks (1995) suggests that the burden of racism is not equally shared because for the most part whites deny that they are racists by pointing out that blacks are also racist. hooks argues that black prejudice towards whites is not racism because 'it is not a system of domination that affords us any power to coercively control the lives and well-being of white folks' (1995: 155). Matlwa's novel depicts that this burden is not equally shared in South Africa because of the assumption that cultural and racial integration could take place in a social context where white supremacy systems are still intact, and attitudes towards blackness and black people are still the same. Cold racial relations haunt the present in mutable ways that cannot be easily interpreted using the older binaries of race relations. The manner in which racial supremacy has been refigured in the contemporary era requires commentary that examines the particularity of black and white social interaction in order to show how it influences identity of the 'born free' black youths who live side by side with white South Africans in their respective social setting. *Coconut* does not represent contemporary racial relations between blacks and whites in essentialist terms. Rather, it does so in a way that shows the ebb and flow of white racial attitudes and black people's accommodation and/or reaction to them. *Coconut* and hooks (1995) suggest that social bonds between blacks and whites offer a threshold into how white supremacy shapes identity construction in black people. These texts also challenge white's refusal to transform their racial attitudes or relinquish white 'normative' supremacy. hooks points out that black and white women do not have healthy mutual relationships based on love and notions of equality because 'institutionalised racism over determines patterns of social relations' (1995: 219). She adds that both groups of women have failed to forge meaningful relations because:

> A major barrier has consistently been the fact that individual white women tend to be more unaware than their black female counterparts of the way the history of racism in the United States of America has institutionalized structures of racial apartheid that were meant to keep the two groups apart. Many white women did not understand how white supremacist privilege allowed them to act the role of oppressor and/or exploiter in relation to black female. To grow in awareness they had to interrogate the ways they use white privilege. (hooks 1995:218)

Though she uses an African American model and an American social setting to discuss the ways in which racialism mutates, both are useful in the reading of the South African social setting in the sense that these two communities have a parallel history of apartheid. Through the depiction of the social relations between Kate Jones, Clinton, Belinda and Ofilwe's relationship *Coconut* demonstrates the minute ways through which 'innocent' racism or white privilege is refigured. By examining the manner through which the 'born free' interact with their white counterparts, we are able to examine how such interactions impact the ways in which they create feminine subjectivities that seek to question and disrupt internalised racism depicted in the novel, *Coconut*. *Coconut* goes beyond depicting the impact of racism on the psyche of the female characters and the anger and hatred that they show towards each other. Snippets of anger, racial and class contempt are depicted through black and black interactions as well as black and white interactions. To a certain extent, the architecture and construction of gated communities attest to classism and the wave of anger in the contemporary South African setting as we shall show in chapter five. *Coconut* can also be read as a novel that explores the precarious condition of the black male psyche in the 'free' South Africa. The impact of white supremacy is examined through the father and son relationship in the novel. Matlwa suggests that the father and son dyad is not a seamless relationship, but it is marked by friction resulting from the manner each of them reacts to the objectifying interaction within their specific socio-cultural contexts.

Lindsay and Miescher (2003) advise scholars of men's studies in Africa about the inherent flaws of Connell's (1995) formulation of masculine access to social power and dominance over other men, women and children. I have pointed out elsewhere in the study that their discomfort with Connell's theories lays in that the uneven influence exerted by colonial and imperial forces in Africa led to the existence of two forms of dominant masculinities. Morrell (1998; 2001), *Drum* magazine stories and male authored literary works of the *Drum* era, that is to say, the 1950s, demonstrate the coexistence of two dominant types of masculinities in urban apartheid South Africa. On the one hand was the adult black masculinity which was viewed by youths as docile, subdued and 'emasculated' by the white minority regime. On the other, was the gangster or *tsotsi* masculinity. Fenwick (1996) traces the emergence, growth and celebration of the *tsotsi* to the early *Drum* magazine era or early 1950s. From Hollywood cinematic representations, the outlaw or gangster figure found fertile ground in the South African apartheid context through the *Drum* magazine. The South African gangster figure became a role model because of his ability to thrive economically and gain social prominence

in spite of the economic and politically oppressive laws put in place by the apartheid regime (Fenwick 1996).

Odhiambo (2011) and Clowes (2008) also point out that *Drum* played a vital role in shaping African social, intellectual and political life. Clowes (2008: 1-2) comments:

> In its advice column, investigative reporting and social commentary, the magazine repeatedly endorsed particular kinds of challenges to the patriarchal and generational structures of authority and seniority typically associated with rural areas. The images and texts produced by the magazine tended to reinforce male authority over women, marginalised homosexual masculinities, and idealised particular construction of domestic masculinity.

With regards to the magazine's contribution to the public intellectual and political life in the continent, Odhiambo writes: '*Drum* contributed immensely to how Africans imagined the emergence of the continent from colonialism and possibly participated in shaping, even if indirectly, its future political prospects, through the articulation of transnational concerns about the continent's economic, cultural and political future from the mid 50s onwards' (2011: 159-160).

Drum magazine is also known as a well from which the literary life of black South Africa sprung. This includes writers such as Don Mattera, Richard Rive, Peter Abrams, Todd Matshikiza, Can Themba, Eskia Mphahlele, Bessie Head, Noni Jabavu and many others. It is not surprising to find literary depictions of the *tsotsi* figure in literary texts published during apartheid. The only difference is that unlike the *Drum* magazine which glorified and celebrated *tsotsi* masculinity, literary writers frowned upon it and used it as a trope to protest the inhumane practices of apartheid. These works used the hustler to depict the type of life that the apartheid state had built for the black population and its generations. Fenwick examines the socio-economic climate which ensured the prevalence of the gangster figure and concludes:

> In effect, *Drum* accomplished with the gangster-image on the level of cultural production what ANC had failed to accomplish with the gangsters themselves at the level of political agitation. *Drum*'s gangster-figure was performative and embodied many of the elements that lay at the heart of the Sophiatown resistance. He was in the

> vanguard of the black struggle for an urban identity from which to oppose white oppression. (Fenwick 1996: 624-625)

The gangster-figure was not only a successful subversive tool on the imaginary realm. Fenwick (1996) cites that the Russians gang were a powerfully subversive force that lay beyond the reach of the law. 'Wholly committed to their agenda, the Russians were most useful to those trade unions that proved themselves capable of defending and advancing the rights of the mine workers' (Fenwick 623). Fenwick's views about the Russians are contradictory to those of the ANC which represented the gang as hopelessly apolitical. In a similar vein, I suggest that the hustler figure depicted in the novels *After Tears, Dog Eat Dog* and *Room 207* is a political and politicised young black man who is constantly struggling with problems facing the black youths in the present. I examine his character against the backdrop of the contemporary economic and social transformation; the manner through which he creates a masculine identity informed and shaped by the need to survive the precarious life of the inner city, cashless life of the university campus, parental as well as peer pressure. We suggest that the novels use the hustler's agency as a way of showing the manner through which apartheid institutionalised impoverishment is woven around the lives of poor black youths, consequently pulling them back to the hapless rural and township life they seek to escape through the attainment of tertiary education. By destabilising the web of contemporary youth haplessness inherited from the past, Moele (2006) and Mhlongo (2004; 2007) show that 'contours of these masculinities change over time, being affected by changes elsewhere in society and at the same time, themselves affecting changes in society' (Morrell 1998: 607).

1.4. Chapter Breakdown

Chapter one beckons back to the depictions of black masculinities in literary texts published during apartheid in order to trace for linkages with the present. It proceeds to the contemporary era where blackness and dominant masculinity forged during apartheid are being contested, broken down, defended and recreated. Their transformation either is partly attributed to their incongruous relationship with the Bill of Rights enshrined in the constitution or is due to their constraining nature owing to the stringent structures under which they are created. It further contextualises the tensions that are taking place between South Africans' lived realities, public opinion on masculinity performance as well as the ideals of the constitution in order to demonstrate how the contemporary novel engages with dominant masculinities. Its discussion on the recreation and transformation of contemporary

black masculinities is taken a step further through African sociological and feminist theoretical insights on the makeup of dominant masculinities, their sites and structures of maintenance. It concludes with a brief discussion of the strategies of representation that these novelists use to engage with the different locations of dominant masculinities as well as the factors that mediate or inhibit masculinity transformation. This work is structured in such a way that each chapter is dedicated to the discussion of a novel or a set of novels that engage with the different locations of dominant masculinity re/production.

Chapter two looks at the interconnection between neo-traditional Xhosa cultural identities, the male body, the initiation ritual and neo-traditional Xhosa manhood in Thando Mgqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man*. This chapter problematises the relationship between culture and the male body. It turns upside-down the theories of structural determinism that cast the social structures, the body/human agents in an oppositional relationship. It views the male circumcision ritual as a product of Xhosa men and women. Because of this point of view, this chapter presents the agency of the Xhosa people as a creative force that can ameliorate the media presentation of the ritual, transform it to a culture that enables masculinity development, and thereby avoid the current disabilities and concomitant deaths of the initiates during the ritual. It looks at how the novel destabilises notions of a collective and homogenous cultural identity.

Chapter three focuses on the institution of the family and the intimate space of the home, because the thematic concerns, novelistic genre, and the narratorial voice enables the author to explore how the familial space inhibit the transformation of the imagined feminine and masculine identities. The family is viewed with ambivalence because of the contradictory feelings it evokes in its members in relation to the invisible barriers and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within the unit. Most importantly, it is read as a site for gender inscriptions that produces the masculine and feminine gendered subjects subjugated by the same institution. By looking at how womanhood and the family shape, or inhibit masculinity creation this chapter presents that, the tenets of domesticity do not only affect women, but also evoke a state of crisis concerning role performance in the family unit.

Chapter four treats sexuality (orientation and desire) and violence as sites of dominant masculinity creation in the fiction of K. Sello Duiker. It is noteworthy to point out that hegemony does not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it means

ascendency achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell and Meserchmidt 2005:832). However, in the South African social sphere that is steeped in violence, dominant masculinity uses the help of varying forms of violence to maintain its power or to silence alternative expressions of masculinities and sexualities. Dominant masculinity's recourse to violence is vividly depicted in *A Man Who Is Not a Man* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*. Duiker does not only attribute male machismo to heterosexual men, but sees and depicts snippets of violence from queer men as well. This chapter links masculinity with sexuality; goes further to establish a relationship between African and Greek mythology, sexuality, madness, African spiritualism and homosexuality in order to examine the ways in which *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* counters arguments on the absence of male queer desires in Africa; and binary oppositional relationship between homosexuality and heterosexuality. By tapping into esoteric Greek and African mythical literature on queer desires, Duiker (2001) shows the importance of men identified as queer in the past and the contemporary era; thereby proffering depictions of queer gender identification refashioned alongside tolerant pre-colonial cultures.

Through the reading of Kopano Matlwa' *Coconut*, chapter five focuses on the connection between the South African socio-economic transformation, mutative cycle of white racism and its concomitants such as, racial and class privileges, black middle class values and the black born free youth's subjectivity creation. Through the focus on the social interaction between whites and the black middle class family, the novel shows how race has been mutated and reconfigured by both blacks and whites. For the whites it is couched through the torrents of abusive words directed at 'black dim wit waiters and lazy employees', negation and overvaluation of black people based on their social standing and mannerism; and their use of the inherited racial and class privilege to assume a position of superiority in their social interaction with blacks. In the black middle class population, it manifests itself through internalised racism evidenced in the female characters, Ofilwe and Fikile, yearning not to pass for whiteness, but to be white. For instance, Fikile buys beauty accessories that will make her white such as emerald blue contact lenses and skin lightering lotion. Ofilwe boasts of her articulate linguistic skills and proficiency in the language of the 'rich and famous', English; and her mother constantly worries about light complexion loss due to prolonged exposure in the sun. Ofilwe compares and contrasts sePedi with English and notes that unlike sePedi, English is the language employed by the rich and famous in television and newspapers. In addition, Fikile notes that one's vocabulary and pronunciation of English places them in upper echelons of the social ladder. These girl's observations do not only

demonstrate that language is an embodiment of culture, but shows the contradictory nature and ironies embedded in the South African language policy. All these incidents show the effects of class difference whose construction was intertwined with racial privilege from the inception of colonial rule. The dialectics of class and racial privilege that equated whiteness with opulence, blackness with poverty resulted in the negation of blackness (culture, language, beauty) which forces the female characters depicted in the book to pursue white values in order to fit into the social and economic realities of the contemporary South Africa. It makes blacks envious of the white world and desire to live in it. This results in the positioning of whiteness and its values at the apex and black cultures at the bottom as witnessed by the fact that the white child Belinda initiates Ofilwe into the white world. By showing these relations, the novel opens up a dialogue on how to deal with or prevent the effects of internalised racism, thus healing the wounded psyche of the characters through the validation of black culture, language, black bodies and hair.

Coconut echoes the observation made by hooks (1995) that internalised racism affects black males and females in varying degrees and both react to it in different ways. Whilst the female characters (un) consciously recruit themselves for the service of white supremacist ideals of beauty, the older black South African male hides his pain and anger through acquisition of material wealth that will display his wealth and validate his adult masculine identity. The young male youths assertively question the status quo. He demands to be treated as an equal through being accorded respect for what he is and has become through history and the ideals of transformation. Matlwa (2007) depicts the brown centred identity as an answer and hope for the ideals of cultural heterogeneity.

Chapter six reads the novels of Niq Mhlongo (2004; 2007) and Kgebetli Moele (2006) as ones that contend with the problems faced by contemporary youths and protest the snail-paced transformation geared towards the social advancement of youths in tertiary institutions. It identifies the common hustler figure within these works. The delineation of the constitution of the hustler and its deployment shows that Mhlongo (2004; 2007) and Moele (2006) use it as a resistance or protest tool. Through a comparison and contrast of character content, agency and the socio-economic factors that birthed the contemporary hustler this work asks if the contemporary hustler should be celebrated as the hustler depicted in literary texts published during apartheid. In addition, should we conceive the hustler as the desired masculinity transformation sought by gender feminist and scholars of critical men's studies? Chapter seven sums up the discussions and main points raised in the entire study and asks

questions that can possibly open up newer nuanced ways of examining masculinity expressions.

Chapter Two

Ironies and Contradictions of Neo-Traditional Adult Xhosa Masculinity in Mgqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man*

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines how Thando Mgqolozana's novel, *A Man Who Is Not a Man* (2009), contests notions of a large, powerful, and intractably indivisible and uniform 'traditional' Xhosa adult masculinity and a homogenous Xhosa 'traditional' way of becoming a man through the depiction of Xhosa circumcision in crisis. The decade 2004 to 2014 has witnessed a tremendous growth of literature, both fiction and non-fiction, which concerns itself with themes of black African masculinities and their expressions in the South African imaginary and social realms. The growth of this body of literature is necessitated by the huge rift between the ideals of the constitution and public opinion about the rights to perform 'traditional' rituals used as ethnicity markers and makers of adult masculinity such as *ulwaluko*. What has placed *ulwaluko* at the centre of the debates on the disconnect between the South African constitution and public opinion is the manner through which the ritual has gained prominence or visibility in the public domain as a ritual in crisis. Such visibility has produced two clusters of participants on the *ulwaluko* debates. On the one hand, there is the state, which through the constitution seeks to protect the wounded initiates and further prevent the loss of life by affording the initiates a chance to choose to undergo the ritual, or not. This casts the ritual as something that kills and maims. The state has also intervened by making the ritual safer through deploying male medical personnel to the places where initiation is taking place.

The other camp in this debate comprises of Xhosa traditional leaders and males who oversee the ritual. Their response to the government's intervention is negative. They perceive it as an intrusion that compromises a tradition that has outlived the onslaught of apartheid. They defend it in a fierce manner because the contemporary era is seen as a space where certain aspects of African masculinities and their expression should flourish because in the past African masculinities were couched in a language that produced inferiority status of adult males, for example, mature black men being called boys. Commenting on these changes and tension, Ndangam (2008: 209) notes that some 'aspects of black African masculinities have emerged as a site where the anxieties, insecurities and uncertainties about the post-apartheid socio-political transformation in South Africa are projected, negotiated and defended'. Morrell (2001) attributes the official demise of apartheid as the source of the tension-taking

place in the sphere of African masculinities and their expressions. He puts forward that the end of apartheid has altered the terrain of gender relations and the definitions of masculinities in the contemporary era.

Morrell (2001) puts forward that masculinity is a gender identity acquired in social contexts and circumstances. He adds that 'it bears the marks and characteristics of the history which formed it –frequently with salient childhood experiences imparting a particular set of prejudices, preferences, joys and terrors. Masculinity viewed in this particular way can be understood as something that can be deployed or used' (Morrell 2001:8). This type of conceptualisation allows for a reading of masculinity recreation hinged on the manner through which an individual man responds to his immediate social environment. 'It also promotes the examination of the micro aspects of masculinity, particularly of the body – that major bearer of masculine value and symbolism' (Morrell 2001:8). Many scholars also stress the centrality of the male body in masculinity expression. Mehta (2000: 81) says the male body is very important in cultural construction of masculinities and sexuality/desire. Michel Foucault (cited in Epstein and Straub 1994: 14) points out that 'the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, train, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies and to emit signs'.

The power that seizes the body produces a subject that is subjugated by ubiquitous power. Morrell (2001: 9) refers to it as dominant social power. Hegemonic power manifests itself in different locations of masculinity constructions – body, sexuality and culture:

> Cultures invest the body with sex and gender significance that generate specific body semiotics, economic structures and power relations. Gender at its most intimate and visible finds the body as one of its important sites. This intimate site is also the most vulnerable because it is also used as a site for dominance, misogyny and othering. (Muchemwa and Muponde 2007: xvii)

This chapter situates itself within the debates on the male body, culture and masculinity construction. It examines how *A Man Who Is Not a Man* (2009) uses culture and the male body as tools with which to interrogate understandings of culture. Morrell observes that 'boys and men are not entirely free to choose images [of masculinity] that please them' (2001:8). Situated within this strand of thought are Debbie Epstein and Richard Johnson's (1998) view which Morrell (2001:8) cites at length and says, 'human agents cannot stand outside culture and wield power as they wish. Power is always limited and shaped by systems of knowledge

that also shape the subjects and objects of power. ...power/knowledge positions us as subjects of particular kinds. They put pressure on us to adopt particular identities'. Morrell (2001) and Epstein and Johnson's (1998) view of the relationship between agency and structures of social power belittles human agency and uses structural determinism which presents people as conduits of social power. Hays (1994) opposes Morrell (2001) and Epstein and Johnson (1998). Hays (1994: 61) puts forward that structures of social power 'should be understood as creation of human beings as well as the mold they fit. Though often operating behind the backs or over the heads of human actors, social structures would not exist without their (willing or unwilling conscious or unconscious) participation'. Hays places social structures on a shaky and contested ground which recognises that identities are processual, contested, defended, broken down and recreated through an interaction between people and the structures of power. Cognisant of these contestations, Goniwe (2005) and Mgqolozana (2009) represent the body as a carrier of sign and meaning, and in turn contest the very signs and meanings it carries.

This chapter also examines how Mgqolozana uses irony, the narratorial voice, and literary genre to challenge the notion that there is only one 'appropriate' manner of becoming a 'true' Xhosa man. In its interrogation of the relationship between bodies, culture, masculinity through the novel's literariness this chapter suggests that the novel decentres the body and cultural meanings attached to Xhosa masculinity construction. It represents circumcision as an enabling and disabling site of masculinity construction that can be transformed. In other words, this chapter puts forward that the novel offers new insights that help explore the complexity of neo-traditional adult Xhosa masculinity. It achieves this through the depiction of a ritual in crisis, a crisis depicted through the dismembered body and scarred psyche of the 'failed' initiate. The depiction of Xhosa circumcision in crisis works as an effective strategy in the narrative because 'of the power inherent in it, crisis. Crisis has the ability not only to provoke (anxiety), but also demand attention and response' (Goniwe and Gqola 2005: 82). In its examination of the debates surrounding adult Xhosa masculinity construction, the body and personal agency, the following questions are raised: What strategies of representation does the novel use to decentre the body and culture in the making of Xhosa masculinities? How does the novel use the state of 'crisis' to invoke a debate on the issues of 'failed' circumcision, thereby destabilise the notion of a homogenous Xhosa cultural way of becoming a 'true' Xhosa man?

2.2. Biographical Data, Genre and the Novel's Reception

In an interview with Thando Mgqolozana, Geosi Reads (2012) reveals that Mgqolozana was born in Cape Town and raised in Engodini, a village in the Eastern Cape where he completed his matric in 2001. Mgqolozana holds a bachelor's degree in nursing and Master of Science degree in the same discipline. *A Man Who Is Not a Man*, a novel that has been primarily read by its reviewers as a novel about botched circumcision, is his debut novel. It was published in 2009 by the KwaZulu Natal University press and launched in the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in June of the same year. Its launch coincided with the Xhosa circumcision season. The novel's launch coupled with its thematic concerns enabled it to reach a status of 'fame'/critical success as a controversial, path breaking novel, and the 'most comprehensive book written about the rite' in a literary sphere where 'very few published texts interrogate this custom in the way this novel does' (Siphiwo Mahala cited in Zvomuya, *Mail and Guardian online* 18/07/ 2009).

The publication of *A Man Who Is Not a Man* and *Hear Me Alone* (2011) earned Mgqolozana the title 'controvertist' (Poni, 2014). The author professes, 'I write about stuff that preoccupies me; and like all writers, I'm always looking for underdogs to defend' (ibid). Indeed his defence of the 'failed' man in *A Man Who Is Not a Man* has 'opened a conversation about the scourge of botched circumcision and aroused anger among traditionalists (ibid). According to Mgqolozana, the novel is important because it helps readers 'make sense of the boy's massacre owing to botched circumcision. All South Africans know this happens; we expect it to be that way because it is coming this month too. But what exactly is going on? I believe the book provides some clues. But the book can be bought for all year round purposes too, because it reflects that just as well' (Mgqolozana cited in Geosi Reads 2012).

I place *A Man Who Is Not a Man* within the intersections of silence or being silenced and the desire to make verbal and shared that which a writer believes in 'even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood' (Audre Lorde 2007: 40). In introducing the novel at its launch in Grahamstown, Mgqolozana commented:

> ... You are, indeed, part of a world whose silence has given licence to a culture to kill and kill some more; and so part of that world which watches while the innocent are dying, endlessly. This disquieting reality has prompted me to break the silence and talk about the cultural practice that I have experienced first-hand. And for this reason alone, I feel like I have more than earned the right to break the silence, and

> start a debate of reconstruction, or perhaps, if need be, total deconstruction of that which kills.... In my imagination it was better to be silent than to be labelled, disowned and criticised. But as the phenomenon has consumed me beyond endurance, the fear is no longer, and so is my silence. (Mgqolozana cited in Zvomuya, *Mail and Guardian online* 18/07/ 2009)

The correlation between silence and the desire to verbally represent one's thoughts at any cost brings this chapter's discussion to the relationship between the biographical genre and the narratorial voice. Zvomuya (2009) views the novel as a brave book, not only for removing the shroud from what happens at the mountains during circumcision but also for its subversive message. Subversion(s) can be read and understood at many levels in this novel. Zvomuya (2009) narrates:

> At the Grahamstown launch a big, imposing man who described himself as traditionalist said his impulse was to 'smack' Mgqolozana because he has mentioned what shouldn't be mentioned in front women and uninitiated. (Zvomuya, Mail *and Guardian online* 18/07/ 2009)

From the above 'traditionalist's' reaction one can discern outrage brought about by speech or the word where there was a void and silence which protected dominant Xhosa masculinity's 'sanctuary' of *ulwaluko*[10]. In this instance, speech is subversive in the sense that it destabilises the silence around *ulwaluko* and botched circumcision contained in the adage: 'what happens at the mountain remains at the mountain'. At another level, subversion is discerned from the fact that this novel speaks about *ulwaluko* to the 'wrong' audience, that is, women and the uninitiated. The narratorial voice is also subversive within the Xhosa commune because the 'failed' man cannot speak about matters pertaining to 'true' Xhosa masculinity construction and its ritual because his failed-man status renders him a boy. A 'boy' cannot speak in the gathering of 'men'. Lastly, the subversion in the book is also found in that it offers alternatives or new ways of being and forging Xhosa masculinity that go against the prescribed script of becoming a man. In a way, it destabilises notions of a monolithic Xhosa masculinity and solidly grounded Xhosa culture by capturing a dissident voice, that of the 'failed' man.

[10] Goniwe (2004:5) defines *Ulwaluko* as circumcision, an initiation ritual performed to transform boys to men, a means of gain adult status and acceptance to preside over sacred ceremonial activities. It serves as a spiritual function to establish links with the ancestor. It is a gaining of knowledge … instilment of moral values and social values as recognise by Xhosa commune. This definition fits in the study' context of use in the sense that it defines the ritual as a process of becoming or negotiating manhood, instead of seeing it as a point of arrival into adult Xhosa masculinity through a cut on the penis.

The launch and reception of *A Man Who Is Not a Man* stirred varying responses and emotions from its readers. For instance, 'Mandlakayise Matyumza, the executive head centre for the book, infused raw paternal emotion into the proceeding when he revealed his anxiety over his son, who, at that moment, was at the mountains undergoing the snip' (Zvomuya 2009). This response is not singlehandedly invoked by the novel, but also by the way visual and print media speak about and depict the ritual. By drawing from media reports on the initiation ritual in crisis, the novel seeks to close the gap between what is depicted in the visual and print media and the possibilities of what could be actually taking place at the mountain.

A Man Who Is Not a Man is a story about a young man named Lumkile Chris Vumindaba Dlamini who shall be referred to as Chris from this moment onwards. Mgqolozana's naming of the initiate is significant in the reading of the character with regard to the genre and voice of the narrator in the novel. The name Vumindaba translates to 'accept your case/admit your crime'. It ironically provokes the traditionalists to take responsibility over the scarring of the body and deaths that feature annually in each ritual of circumcision. Vumindaba is a name that seeks not sanitised propitiation, but a subversion of the practice. It is a prayer, and an invocation, to those sires of tradition to admit their guilt.

The story is told through the first person point of view. In the prologue, the narrator clearly points out what the story is about, 'how I came to have an abnormal penis' (p.1). The aim of this story is to put finality to the process of the narrator's healing. He further adds that by telling his story he hopes to save other young men who have undergone traumatic experiences similar to his. Chris' narrative unfolds through a flashback. He traces his life story from his Gugulethu Township days where he lived the life of a criminal. He possessed two notable talents that made him a renowned young man in Gugulethu: playing football and stealing people's property. His father helped and nurtured the monster in him through his poor parenting skills. Upon hearing about his son's wayward ways, his mother literally rescues him from death and prison, a fate that befell his two companions, Voice and Killer. His mother takes him to her parental home, Ngojini.

At first, he is aloof and distances himself from the village folks. With the passage of time he blends in and realises that his mother has given him a second chance in life. The unavailability of drugs helps him to quit drinking and smoking. At the local high school where he is enrolled, he meets Yanda, his first love. They both appreciate where they are in their lives, how far they have come in terms of having had a rough teenage life. They study

very hard and aim to obtain marks that would enable them to get admission at Wits University. The prospect of obtaining a university entry and getting ready for his circumcision are the most important things that preoccupy Chris's mind in that year. He and Yanda make plans about his circumcision.

Chris is in high spirits and well prepared for his circumcision. The initiate's preparedness for the circumcision is depicted through the positive attitude he has towards the ceremony and his detailed knowledge of the importance and sacredness of *ulwaluko*. In addition, his identification with the Xhosa culture and community is a sign that he takes pride in and knows the significance of circumcision in the life of a Xhosa man. He takes his HIV test, enlists and obtains the help of the most experienced traditional surgeon in the area, Geca. He listens eagerly to his friend and classmate, Mc-squared, who tells him about the importance of observing everything that is done by, and on the initiate's body at the mountain. At home, preparations for the commencement of his circumcision had begun. His grandfather appoints his uncle as Chris's nurse or assistant at the mountain.

Absorbed by the excitement of his impending initiation ceremony, Chris gathers all the information and advice he can get about the role and importance of the initiation ceremony. Mc-squared imparts the knowledge and elaborates on the significance that the ritual carries among the Xhosa:

> The circumcision process is a physical and tangible manifestation of what manhood is really about. It teaches you how to endure, how to manoeuvre your way through and out of the difficult situations that life presents to you. It trains you in the lesson of patience, for it is something that cannot be rushed through but can only be completed step by step. Our process is orderly, and it is this orderly process, which begins the minute you declare yourself a man, that you need to gain eloquence in articulating. (p.65)

The rite of male circumcision is not only a Xhosa ritual of transitioning to adult masculinity, but is also practised in other cultural contexts within and outside the African cultural setting. Mehta (2000), Mhlahlo (2009), James (1998), Shweder (2000) and Kenyatta (1965) demonstrate that male circumcision in Western and non-Western communities is important because it links the body with the spiritual realm. 'The Jews view circumcision as adherence to Jewish tradition and the covenant sworn between God and themselves. To them

circumcision does not necessarily imply cleanliness and health. Instead, it is hallowed as religious act that builds a contract between God and his chosen people' (Aldeeb Abu-Sahliem 2001: 48).

On the contrary, the Kikuyu, Xhosa and the Muslim interpret the ritual on both the secular and religious terrains. According to Mehta (2000), the Muslim interprets circumcision as a domestic group marker and the stamping of the word of God into the novice's body. Mehta (2000) also points out that notions of cleanliness and positive understanding of one's body are encapsulated in Muslim circumcision. Goniwe (2005) and Kenyatta (1965) remark that Xhosa and Kikuyu circumcisions are carried out in order to teach respect for the elderly, morality and establish an ancestral link. The initiate's incorporation into the group entails that he marry a woman, own property and perpetuate the clan and tribe through procreation. Female circumcision (female genital mutilation/modification) is an equivalent or a sister ritual to male circumcision. The Xhosa equivalent of *ulwaluko* is *intonjana* which was phased out and replaced by the various versions of the feminine 21st birthday anniversary (Goniwe and Gqola 2005). However, in some parts of Africa female circumcision is still practiced in spite of the West's damnation of the initiation ritual. Shweder (2001:212) points out that the Kono women of Sierra Leone 'uphold the practice of female (and male) circumcision and positively evaluate its consequences for their psychological, social, spiritual, and physical well-being... [and as such] Kono women feel empowered by the initiation ceremony'. Similarly, the women of Sudan and Somalia who practise female 'smoothing out'[11] believe that the ritual improves the appearance of their bodies. They think that they become more beautiful, more feminine, more civilised and more honourable after they have been smoothened out.

Shweder (2012) and Mgqolozana (2009) concur that both rituals, male and female circumcisions, are important within the communities where they are practised. They empower young adults through integrating them into the community in order to teach them how to become respectable and responsible women and men. According to Kono women cited in Shweder (2012: 219), the removal of the clitoris is 'positively associated with several good things: the attainment of full female identity, induction into a social network and support group of powerful adult women, and ultimately marriage and motherhood'. Similarly,

[11] Shweder (2001) explains that the 'smoothing out' procedure involves a complete removal of the visible parts of the clitoris and most if not all of the labia. The operation is concluded by stitching closed the vaginal opening with the aim of enhancing fertility and protecting the womb.

the Xhosa young man becomes legible to marry and have children after the successful completion of *ulwaluko*. Both forms of circumcision produce 'appropriately' sexualised male and female bodies that fit into the patriarchal system and its hierarchy of gender. One body is made 'more' masculine while the other is rendered 'more' feminine. Feminists' outlook on the manner in which bodies become feminine or masculine is fraught with contradictions that also colour the social relations between Western and African feminists. According to James (1998: 1033), Alice Walker' *Possessing the Secrets of Joy* (1992) casts female genital alteration as a practice that is 'detrimental to the health and well-being of women and girls ... she does so in a way that invites the characterisation of African women as victims without agency'. Duiker (2001) in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* also falls into a similar trend of condemnatory response which views female circumcision as a monstrosity meant to ridicule and subjugate the female body. The thesis of female subjugation through the use of genital alteration is imbued with undertones of sexual deprivation of women through the removal of the clitoris, a perceived source of female pleasure. On the contrary, women who participate in the 'smoothing out' ritual suggest that genital alteration 'is a symbolic action that says something about one's willingness to exercise restraint over feelings of lust and self-control over antisocial desire for sexual pleasure' (Shweder 2012: 219). Male and female sexual organ alteration is a process with good intentions and contributes to the positive development of the participants and the community at large. It enables both men and women to construct positive cultural identities. However, these rituals become detrimental if they are used by society to construct feminine and masculine identities based on defining the self in contrast to the 'Other' whose circumcision has been botched or did not participate in the initiation process.

The manner through which the ritual is carried out within these different communities tends to vary. Mehta (2000) and Calixthe Beyala (1996) point out that the presence of the mother is significant in Muslim and Cameroonian male circumcision, a situation that rebuffs Mhlahlo's (2009: 40) assertion that 'it takes a man to change a boy into a man'. Men preside over male circumcision in socio-cultural contexts where the rite takes place at the puberty stage, for instance in the Kikuyu and Xhosa cultural contexts. In the above mentioned contexts male circumcision is exalted above its sister ritual, female genital mutilation or modification.

A Man Who Is Not a Man (2009) and Beyala's *The Sun Hath Looked Upon me* (1996) present points of convergence and departure concerning their depiction of male circumcision. Both

texts are critical of the manner in which circumcision is conflated with a cut on the penis and transformation of the boy into a man and the semiotics of the centrality of the penis and cultural rites of passage as markers of adult masculinity. The circumcision of Soto in *The Sun Hath Looked upon Me* (1988) is depicted as a farce. The remark that the emaciated child will soon be a real man after the cutting off of his foreskin causes the spiritual narratorial voice to burst out laughing and 'embarks upon a song of the man who wants his worth to be recognised by the length of his sex organ and his quality by the absence of his foreskin' (p.21). Mgqolozana's (2009) text suggests that the presence or absence of the foreskin does not make one a 'real' man because there are many circumcised Xhosa men who behave in a manner that is contradictory to the embodiment of manhood. Unlike Beyala (1996) who takes an anti-patriarchal stance in her novel, Mgqolozana (2009) is in support of the initiation ritual, but is critical of the manner in which the wounded and deformed penis of the 'failed' initiate becomes a scar that haunts and marks him for ostracisation in his community.

Contrary to *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965) which silences contradictory voices in its bid to depict the Kikuyu as a homogenous tribe, *A Man Who Is Not a Man* belies notions of a unified Xhosa cultural identity by depicting the silenced voice of the 'failed' man. In doing so, Mgqolozana (2009) interrogates the Xhosa initiation rite and its deployment as a segregation tool. Mgqolozana's approach demonstrates Xhosa people's ability to collectively effect change within social structures. The novel removes the shroud of silence surrounding *ulwaluko* – the manner in which one can talk about it and who is (dis)allowed to talk about the ritual. Mgqolozana's (2009) interrogation and 'deconstruction of that which kills' (Mgqolozana cited in Zvomuya 2009) does not conceal the 'volatile paradoxes, disjunctions and contradictions' characteristic of all societies (Sider 1986: 7). The novel's depiction of voices of discontent within the contemporary Xhosa community confirms that culture is a language of argument through which identities are contested, defended and reconstructed (James 1998).

Chris identifies certain things that unsettle him as he prepares for his participation in the circumcision ritual. The state of his grandfather's drunkenness and negligence worries him. Also, he points out that his grandfather's insistence that he does not want any man to come near his grandson does him more harm than good as it leads to his isolation at the mountain. The surgeon cuts off the foreskin of his penis, bandages the wound with herbs to help the wound heal. This day marks the moment when his life begins to fall apart. After being cut, he is supposed to spend the first night at the mountain and a temporary hut should have been

built for him. To his dismay, the hut is not erected. His uncle has abandoned him in favour of sheep shearing and his grandfather is very drunk. Oom Dan, his grandfather's brother-in-law helps him erect a temporary zinc structure, *ibhoma*, for him. He also teaches and shows him the herbs to use in order to make the wound heal. He helps him practise how to tie the leather bandage around his penis. Oom Dan instructs the initiate to change the bandage and the herb at five-minute intervals. This means that Chris does not sleep at all. The pain and cold help him keep vigil. In the absence of an adult hand, the initiate manages to cure and heal the wound. However, he ties the leather thong too tightly. Blood circulation and supply to the head of the penis is cut and this leads to the rotting and disintegration of the head of the penis. Alarmed by the rate at which his penis disintegrates, Chris sends his little brother to call for Oom Dan who also sees the graveness of the initiate's situation and calls the initiate's grandfather out of deference because the initiate is not his son, more so because the grandfather strongly warned men against straying to his grandson's hut at the mountain. The grandfather is annoyed by this call. Instead of taking responsibility, he blames Chris for being weak. Upon realising that the boy has managed to heal the wound, he becomes dejected because he sees that the blame squarely lies with him, not the initiate. They both examine the extent of damage done on the penis and agree that Chris needs immediate medical intervention.

Mc-squared had earlier advised Chris that the hospital is the worst place to end up in as an initiate because it is associated with death among the Xhosa. Hospital intervention is regarded as a taboo and marks the initiate as a weakling that has failed to withstand pain. The ability to withstand pain and the cold, keeping vigil over the wound and nursing are regarded as cultural markers of 'real' Xhosa adult masculinity. Such an initiate is accorded honour and admiration and the one who shows 'cowardice' is deemed a man who is not a man. Chris's experiences and unique rite of passage debunk all these beliefs at several levels. Firstly, he does not depict the hospital as a house for doomed masculinity, but a place of restoration of the initiate's health. As a result, he confesses that in spite of being warned by Mc-squared to avoid the hospital at all cost, he is happy to be in the hospital. Chris narrates that he looked at the rate at which his penis was disintegrating and realised that he has two choices: to die at the mountain trying to maintain 'real' masculinity status or to save his dear life by handing over himself to the hospital and carry the label of a 'failed' man. He chooses the latter. According to him, it means that he has been given a second chance. He points out that the label 'failed' man means that he will be the butt of jokes and humiliation in his community.

The disdain and ostracisation meted out to him by his grandfather, Mr Ugly and nurse Yaziyo pales into insignificance when put against the hatred and insensitivity of the men who come to fetch him from the *ibhoma*.

In addition, Chris destabilises the categories 'weak' and 'strong' man because his body shows characteristics of both categories. He is strong enough to withstand or endure circumcision pain. He is principled and depicts he has a system of values, that is, he can initiate planned actions and take them through to the end all by himself. Left alone at the mountain, Chris does not wallow in self-pity and abandons Oom Dan and Mc-squared's instructions. He becomes proactive and quickly learns how to respond to his current environment. He restrains himself and does not falter and fall asleep because no one is watching him. All these are cornerstones or qualities of Xhosa manhood as outlined by Mc-squared. Chris is an embodiment of these qualities, yet his community views him as less of a man. By questioning the tenets of Xhosa manhood and its people's evaluation and definitions of masculinity through Chris, Mgqolozana (2009) seems to be asking, what is a man? Whose standards qualify one a man? The naked irony of this novel lies in that Chris demystifies all the myths about the 'failed' man and shows that masculinity is a complex identity that does not solely rest on cultural practices meant to transform one into a man. One can tick all the boxes of the features of manhood, but fail to exhibit positive traits and expressions of manhood, such as showing respect for other people's preferences and life trajectories.

After being discharged from hospital, Chris resumes the disrupted initiation process and goes back to the mountain. He points out the value of songs sung for the 'new' man during the coming-out ceremony. Under normal circumstances, a group of men would come in jubilation, singing, dancing and stick fighting, showing that they have come to escort a warrior home fetch the initiate from the mountain. However, on the day of his coming out, none of this happens. Instead of jubilation, the men deliberately set dogs on him and his uncle equates him to a dog because he had ended up in hospital. He notes that his coming out ceremony was not marked with excitement. The people were there to fulfil the ritual's requirement, not to play a role. Yanda, his girlfriend, is also absent and he later receives a note from her stating that they could not be together anymore because of her failure to obtain a university exemption and his condition of being a failed man.

During the coming-out ceremony, his grandfather and uncle fail to take responsibility for what has happened to Chris. The grandfather talks ineffectively about sleeping lions and

cries. Chris feels angry and humiliated by the two men. His mother's love expressed through the song '*ndiza lubelek' usana lwami*[12]', Oom Dan's wise words and gesture console him. Within the context of being labelled a 'failed' man, Oom Dan helps him begin the process of healing and motivates him to want to live on. Oom Dan gives the 'failed' man a new set of looking glasses with which to evaluate himself as he negotiates a new sense of being in his society. These looking glasses offer Chris an alternative way of defining what manhood is. He recalls this defining moment in his life and narrates thus:

> Dan stood there for a moment, leaning on his knobkerrie as he surveyed me through my blanket. Then he said: 'ubudoda licebo, mfowami. A man is a man for his strategy'. I understood it was one of his metaphoric remarks, not meant to be unpacked. I caught his eye and dropped my own gaze, aware that I wasn't allowed to look people in the eye, especially not elders. Dan spoke again: Ndifuna Kanye undijonge. Keep your head up, because I need you to look me through, 'he told me'. … But I read his words differently. It sounded to me as though he was saying: 'We have failed you in so many ways, mfowami. I therefore stand naked before you, surrendering myself to your scrutiny, so that you can see how much I regret what has befallen you'. Rain peeled the blanket so my head could come up and my eyes could meet Dan's eyes. I looked through the blanket, as he had told me to, deep into his soul. The rest of the world was excluded from this moment, and I thought I saw his soul weep. And then Dan did something I couldn't believe, something that marked the beginning of true healing for the chest people. He turned the head of his knobkerrie and handed it to me with both hands, reverently. I took it carefully, reluctantly, waiting for further instruction, not understanding why he was giving me his knobkerrie when he knew I already had my own. My confusion deepened when he turned away and went to assume his position without further word. (p.170-171)

The above lengthy paragraph is significant in the novel in that it depicts a scene where the elderly acknowledge and rectify their mistakes, one of the themes advanced in the novel. It is also a passage that marks the beginning of healing and putting things into perspective for the 'failed' man. It slowly dawns on Chris that through the above gesture, Dan has stripped himself of his manhood and conferred it upon him. He realises that what he has in his hands is not just a knobkerrie; he has been given a privilege to not only handle the manhood of a grown man, but to appropriate it and make it his own. In other words, Dan has dared him to fill in his shoes and be the man that he aspired to be when he underwent the snip and sat in seclusion at the mountain. In essence, Oom Dan and Ta-Rains represent adult Xhosa malleable and subversive masculinities in that they challenge tradition through their

[12] Loosely translated this means 'I will put my baby on my back right now'.

pronouncements on the 'failed' man initiate's status as a 'real' rather than a 'failed man. Dan's wise words stand side-by-side with Ta-rain's proclamation to the 'failed' man: 'remember this, mkhwetha: from today, you are a man in your own right' (p.151). Courageous as they are, the two men's words to the 'failed' man temporarily 'go to waste' because he does not recognise and define himself as a man who has earned the right to be a 'real' Xhosa man. Immediately after his coming-out ceremony, he seeks sanctuary in silence and the city. He escapes Ngojini and moves back to Cape Town because of internalised inferiority complex. Chris' disappearance as a 'failed' man demonstrates the pervasiveness of hegemonic power and the consensus created between dominant power and the oppressed. Morrell (2001) writes that dominant or ruling masculinity is entrenched in violence, but often times it uses consensus to propagate itself and silence other forms of masculinity. In the mountain scene, none of the men threatens Chris with violence, but in their faces, voices and jokes, he detects traces of their distaste for him as a 'failed' man. Afterwards, the aversion of the mob of men, Mr Ugly and Nurse Yaziyo force him to recoil in shame regardless of Dan and Ta-Rains' words. Chris' shame and humiliation as a 'failed' man reveal certain truths about dominant masculinity. It propagates itself through recourse to violence; the silencing and shaming of men deemed 'weaker'. In the narrative Chris fails to escape the clutches of dominant masculinity through his decision to retreat to silence and hide among other men who do not belong to his tribe. However, as time goes on, he explores other avenues of being a man and realises that he needs to break away from his double consciousness dilemma. His narration breaks dominant masculinity's ways of subjugating 'failed' masculinities.

The setting of the novel shifts as the main character changes geographical locations. Part of it is set in Gugulethu Township and moves to Ngojini, a village in the Western Cape, and Cape Town respectively. The geographical placing of the novel in the Western Cape is significant because the region is renowned for the scourge of septic circumcisions, amputation of initiates' sexual organs, death of initiates and other forms of inhumane treatment meted out to the initiates during the initiation ceremonies (Mgqolozana 2009). *Ulwaluko* takes place in the months of June and July and then the November/December school holidays when male Xhosa youths who are ready to be traditionally circumcised are available. The period within which the novel is set coincides with the season of traditional Xhosa circumcision in the regions of the Western and Eastern Cape, where traditional circumcision is commonly practised in contemporary South Africa. It is also around this time of the year that print and visual media news reportage on botched circumcisions takes centre stage (Gqola 2007;

Mgqolozana 2009; and Vincent 2008). The setting of the novel in terms of time, geography and social reality puts it in a suitable position to speak about the subject of 'failed' circumcisions and its impact on the 'failed' man's subjectivity formation. In the novel, Mgqolozana also taps into the media's reports on the subject of botched circumcisions in Western Cape. He situates the protagonist within these contexts.

A Man Who Is Not a Man employs a linear plot structure. The prologue addresses the reader in the present, but narrates past events that have had a negative and positive impact in his life as a man. The narrator foregrounds the opening of the novel on his hospitalisation because it marks him as a 'failed' man in the eyes of his community. This act is of high importance in the novel in the sense that the entire novel ironically subverts the metaphor of the hospital as the 'house of ruins' and destabilises the dominant Xhosa belief that the hospitalisation of the initiates earmarks him as a 'failed' man. Chris tells this story about his passage into manhood that went wrong. He examines the manner in which his past influences the way his society treats and views him. He narrates this story at a stage when he has healed from the trauma of a botched circumcision. According to Chris, speaking about his ordeal at the mountain puts finality to the whole process of healing and helps in letting go of the emotional pain as well as mental scarring. In addition, the narration of his experiences marks the beginning of the appreciation of both the person he has become and the permanent physical scar engraved on his penis. The plot and structure of the novel are very effective in communicating the traumatic effects of failed circumcision on the psyche of the initiate. Its effectiveness lies in that the first part of the novel takes the reader through the degeneration of Chris in Gugulethu and his regeneration at Ngojini. It is ironical that Ngojini is a place of the protagonist's regeneration and degeneration. The irony lays in that the ritual, which is meant to transform and mould Chris into a responsible young man, renders him a man who is not a man. The belief that circumcision transforms a wayward boy into a responsible man is articulated by Ta-Diski, the coach of Shinning Stars Football Club. Chris narrates that besides being the best players in the team his township friends, Voice and Killer, had also perfected the art of thievery. When Ta-Diski hears about the three boy's criminal activities, he subjects them to a long session of belting. Chris adds that Ta-Diski 'was the first to suggest that we needed *ukwaluswa*-to be circumcised. Among traditional people, *ukwalusa* is commonly held to be the remedy for mischievous behaviour like ours' (p.17). Chris's positive transformation from a rogue to a responsible youth who collectively identifies with his people helps him to gain the sympathy of the readers as his grandfather and uncle help him recover from his 'failed'

manhood. The novel allows the reader to compare and contrast Chris's personality before and after his 'failed' circumcision. By so doing, it moves the reader to reflect on the cultural practice of *ulwaluko* as a whole.

A Man Who Is Not a Man is a bildungsroman whose overriding theme is the hero's mission of finding new ways of looking at himself as a 'failed' man, ways that stand in total contrast to societal views on the definition of Xhosa adult male subjectivity. His quest awakens him to the salient fact that the process of manhood attainment only lies in the way that he positions himself in a relationship of deference to cultural institutions of gender. In addition, Chris learns that his worth as a man is not solely mediated by the look or quality of the penis, but largely rests on how he thinks about himself and the manner he translates his thoughts into action towards other men, women and children. Through the hero's quest of subjectivity, redefinition and negotiation, Mgqolozana represents Chris's circumcision as a troubled, disabling and enabling experience. In this biographical novel, Chris explains what makes him talk about his unique trajectory into complex adult Xhosa masculinities. Through the conflicts and complications that mar his rite of passage, culminating in hospitalisation, the protagonist is forced to closely examine and map his path into the 'house of ruins', the hospital, as well as the causes of the gangrenous penis. By reflecting on, and remembering events that brought him to the hospital, he questions deep-seated silences shrouding 'failed' circumcisions, the making of 'real' Xhosa masculinity.

The novel as genre of fiction is used widely because of its 'elasticity and its critical ability to engage with other discourses as part of self-reflexive proliferation' (Gikandi 2014:204). Because of its adaptability, it has undergone various stages of appropriation and perception, hence Mgqolozana's (2009) assertion that 'there is no longer any such thing as fiction and non-fiction, there is only narrative'. Mgqolozana's critical understanding of the novel has enabled him to use it as part of an ongoing conversation with several stakeholders of the initiation ritual such as the custodians who preside over it, parents of the initiates, the media and the 'failed' men. For this purpose, he uses the biographical genre that blends history, memory, and facts with creativity. *A Man Who Is Not a Man* blends facts, that is, botched circumcision in the regions of Eastern and Western Cape and their coverage in the print and visual media with fiction, characterisation, to generate debate on the subject of botched circumcision through the viewpoint of the 'failed' man. This point of view is hardly explored during debates on botched circumcision for various cultural reasons. One of them is the adage that the 'failed' men or uncircumcised have no right to talk about the affairs of 'real' men.

Chris points out that in the media the 'failed' initiate is spoken for and/or about because of the shame that weighs his head down. Mgqolozana's usage of the biographical genre creates an illusion that the reader is engaged in a one-on-one intimate encounter with the unmediated voice of the initiate who narrates his unpleasant experiences at the mountain. This technique creates space for the voice of the silenced initiate to be heard. It retrieves the subaltern voice of the 'failed' man from the domineering voices of the Xhosa elders who preside over *ulwaluko*, parents and the media who occupy a central position on the discussions about botched circumcision. It is for this reason that the novel is hailed as a book that breaks the silence on the scourge of botched circumcision.

The illusionary unmediated voice of the 'failed' man has a profound effect on publics or targeted readers namely, the 0.001% of South Africans who do not know about the scourge of botched circumcision (Mgqolozana 2009: 01). The 'failed' initiate's voice seeks to inform this audience. The second audience addressed by the failed man is the global one – anybody who will pick up and read the book and lives outside the borders of South Africa. To the above readership, the novel offers an insider's view of Xhosa circumcision. Both audiences voyeuristically witness an ethnographic account of the entire shame and resuscitation of the 'failed' man through the narrative voice. Their ignorance is also strongly pitted against the participants' open revelation of taboo. They are chastised for blatantly consigning the construction of the ritual and masculinities in Xhosa society to the realm of the anarchic and the old fashioned. This way, the novel participates in re-inscribing the utility of the rite, including its aberrations. Mgqolozana's (2009) use of the failed man's voice marks a refusal to demonise *ulwaluko* and to consign it to the realm of the archaic and savage. However, the novel evokes such views and emotions from readers. The author unconsciously does this through the introduction of the state's measures to sanitise traditional circumcision, thereby saving the endangered initiates' lives, intervention he feels compelled to introduce because he is a nurse who has first-hand experience of the 'failed' initiate's predicament. According to him, he feels he has earned the right to talk about botched circumcision as a Xhosa who has undergone the same experience and as a responsible citizen of the country (Zvomuya 2009). Mgqolozana's (2009) progressive intervention on the scourge of botched circumcision and the questioning of the ostracisation of the 'failed' man present culture as dynamic and situates it within the struggles of Xhosa male identity construction. He challenges the manner through which his people blindly participate in draping the ritual and its malcontents in a shroud of silence. In effect, this leads to the comparison and contrast of traditional and clinical

circumcision. Because they both share his views and the state's view on the sanitisation of *ulwaluko*, this readership hails the novel as a path breaker.

The novel's status as a path breaker does not lie in its artistic merits, but in the manner in which it talks about the issue of botched circumcision. It cleverly blends facts with fiction, consequently laying bare the contradictions inherent in Xhosa circumcision and definitions of manhood. Furthermore, it challenges the presentation of culture as a stable and static entity depicted in Morrell's (2001) view of culture, masculinity construction and the process of socialisation. Morrell (2001:8) argues that 'boys and men are not entirely free to choose those images which please them. Their tastes and their bodies are influenced; some would say shaped, by discourses of gender which they encounter from birth'. The protagonist of the novel destabilises this thesis in that he dared to imagine an alternative form of neo-traditional Xhosa masculinity that does not use Xhosa cultural definitions of manhood to evaluate his status as a man. In the prologue of the novel he proclaims, 'I don't have to live by the conditioning of my society, which determines my acceptance into it or otherwise. My self-image is no longer dependent on what my society thinks of me but what I think of it' (Mgqolozana 2009: 3).

The novel can further be classified as an activist novel. It tells the story of the self in order to create the illusion that the reader is reading about Chris' experiences. It informs and teaches in order to persuade its audience to take action against the unnecessary killing and scarring of young men who want to be men (Mgqolozana cited in Zvomuya 2009). The novel's activism and intention to teach is portrayed in the novel's plot structure and progression. The narrated events are arranged in such a way that they follow each other in a cause-effect arrangement, such that when a scene or chapter is removed from the novel, the narrative ceases to make sense.

The initiate does not only address the international audience and the 0.001% of South Africans, but also talks to two types of Xhosa identified readership. On the one hand, is the audience made up of narrator's tribesmen who feel offended by his story, because of their judgemental and misinformed opinions about his ordeal at the mountain. This audience holds him in contempt for flouting the sacred custom of *ulwaluko* and for telling his story since it breaks certain codes of silence about (failed) circumcision. According to this audience, activities that take place during the ritual must not be talked about in public places such as the news or in a novel. The culturally imposed silences on the subject sanctify silence even when

the lives of young boys are in danger. It also makes the subject of failed circumcision a taboo subject that is avoided even in the family where the misfortune of septic circumcision has occurred. Instead of talking about Chris's situation, Yanda prefers to avoid him. His grandfather and mother treat him with caution and do not possess the language with which to broach the topic to the 'failed'man. The secrecy and failure to linguistically represent the subject in speech is not only a result of upholding the principles of the ritual, but also shows the elders' discomfort in speaking about matters of sexuality to the boys.

The failure to talk about the root cause of septic circumcision is not only noticeable in Chris's family. It is a national problem. This is portrayed in the media's coverage on the subject. Due to the newly circumcised man's frustration with the silence and inability of his elders to be accountable for the causes of his 'failed' manhood and dehumanisation, he dreams up a scene in which he sets the record straight about the reasons that have brought him to the hospital. After the SABC news report on failed circumcision in the Eastern and Western Cape, Chris dreams talking to the Simunye[13] journalists about his hospitalisation, the anger and shame which weighs his head. In his interview with the journalist, Chris's dream is interrupted and he fails to break the silence on the taboo subject of failed circumcisions. His failure to articulate himself in the dream and in real life oppresses him and influences the way he carries on with his life up to the point where he masters enough courage to talk about his unique path to manhood. Chris's desire to speak out against his maltreatment as a 'failed' man comes to fruition through this novel.

The second audience of this novel is the survivor(s) of septic circumcision whose life might be saved by Chris's life story. Their life trajectories and causes of 'failed' circumcision might be different from his, but they can learn something from Chris's story. The novel links Chris's ability to speak with therapy and healing, a strand of thought that is also echoed in Radstone and Hodgkin (2009: 98). In their examination of the purpose and strategies of narrating trauma, they write:

> The individual who speaks of the suffering s/he has experienced is an iconic figure, and the moment of disclosure, in which the unspeakable tries to find representation in speech, is the central and shattering instance. The relation between speech and silence is figured as one of liberation, both politically and personally: to reveal truths, which have been denied and to remind the world of its responsibilities of those

[13] Iconic theme used by SABC 1 in the 90s to foster the idea of a rainbow and united nation. Simunye means 'we are one'.

> who have suffered, on the other hand; to heal the self by the very act of speaking and being heard. (Radstone and Hodgkin (2009: 98)

Chris' representation of trauma and shame resulting from septic circumcision and ostracisation makes him an iconic figure to other failed men and an antithesis of Xhosa manhood to the people who wronged him and judge him unfairly for turning up at the hospital. He becomes an iconic figure to initiates who have suffered the same fate because he gives them hope and helps them come forward to share their stories, thereby breaking the silence on the subject of septic circumcision and their subhuman treatment by fellow Xhosa men.

2.3. Masculinity, Body and *Ulwaluko*

A number of scholars, Connell (1995), Reid and Walker (2005), Mehta (2000) and Morrell (2001) in the field of men and masculinities studies point out the correlation between the male body, male circumcision (culture) and masculinity expressions and definitions. Their work is useful in the examination of how *A Man Who Is Not a Man* (2009) engages with and challenges the centrality of the initiation ceremony and the penis in adult Xhosa masculinity definition. Michel Foucault observes that 'the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, train, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies and to emit signs' (cited in Epstein and Straub 1994: 14). In this instance, Foucault talks about the different ways through which dominant (powerful) masculinities in any given society exert their force on the body in order to make it 'new'. Goniwe and Gqola (2005)) take this postmodern view of the body and power relations as well as means of disciplining the body in order to make it docile, a step further. In a series of his paintings on masks, the Xhosa male body and *ulwaluko*, Goniwe conceptualises the body as a

> Reference, object, tool, item, thought, theme... it is means but not ends ... it is a problem as well form and way to reflectively negotiate other problems. I take the body as not always a surface on which meaning or issues are inscribed; I consider it substance and conduit that makes as well as unmakes meaning. Thus, meaning is always at stake, invented and reinvented, contested and contesting itself. (Goniwe and Gqola 2005: 80)

Foucault (cited in Epstein and Straub 1994) and Goniwe and Gqola's (2005) strand of thought is further explored by Kizito Muchemwa and Robert Muponde (2007) in their critique of dominant contemporary Zimbabwean masculinities embodied by the state. These scholars concur that the body is positioned at the meeting points of culture and masculinity

production. They argue that culture inscribes itself on the body in order to make it fit into the categories of 'real' masculinity, 'feminine' and 'feminised' masculinities. They write:

> Cultures invest the body with sex and gender significance that generate specific body semiotics, economic structures and power relations. Gender at its most intimate and visible finds the body as one of its important sites. This intimate site is also the most vulnerable because it is also used as a site for dominance, misogyny and othering. (Muchemwa and Muponde 2007: xvii)

The above scholars draw the reader's attention to the realisation that the male body, its contours, organs and the way it is conceived by society is caught up in the construction of masculine identities. In addition, they view the body as an unstable terrain that makes and unmakes meanings of gender power and relations. The male body is not only used as a tool on which power is stamped or to contest or resist power, but also as a contradictory site in which both maleness and femaleness converge and divert. Saint-Aubin (2008) suggests that the body is at the centre of the discourses on black masculinity construction. In discussing the bodily presence in the accounts of gender and masculinity, Connell (1995: 52-3) observes that, 'the physical sense of maleness is central in the cultural interpretations of gender. In many ways it is integral to individual and collective histories, social processes and object of politics'. He further adds that 'the body is unavoidable in the understanding of and construction of masculinity. Masculine gender is (among other things) a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes, tensions, certain postures, ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex' (Connell 1995:56).

The centrality of the male body in the construction of masculinity as an individual and collective male identity in the Xhosa cultural context is depicted through the inscription of *ukwaluswa*, the literal removal of the foreskin from the penis. The process of initiation is not only a socialisation ritual, but a ritual that is realised and inscribed on the body in order to incorporate it within the large community, 'appropriate' sexuality and biological category (Mehta 2000). *Ulwaluko* is imprinted on the male body in order to negatively dismember or destroy it or birth it anew so that it assumes 'newer' gender roles and relationships with power or dominant masculinity and femininity. The centrality of the penis in the novel is underscored by the conflation of the penis with manhood. This is played out at the mountain scene through Ta-Rain's utterance when talking to the initiate about the festering state of his penis. Ta-Rain says, 'there is no point in you staying on here, only to lose the very thing you meant to build here' (Mgqolozana 2009: 110). Before Ta-Rain's arrival, the initiate

contemplates the situation of his penis and the pending possibility of landing at the hospital. He muses, '... or I lost my whole manhood and buried it at the mountain-and, perhaps even my life itself' (ibid 98).

According to the Xhosa 'appropriate' way of becoming a man as outlined by Mc-Squared, the body must manifest certain qualities that will mark and make it a body of a 'true' man. It must be able to withstand circumcision pain without showing signs of vulnerability. The hospitalisation of an initiate is rebuked and labelled a sign of weakness or failure to man up and face harsh conditions that one will face in his life as a man. One of the ways through which the Xhosa commune ensures that the initiate does not exhibit signs of 'femininity' or 'weakness' is through ostracisation and humiliation. The humiliation and maltreatment of the 'failed' man are subtle forms of violence that dominant masculinity uses to silence its rivals or 'deviant' masculinities. In the novel, this form of violence does not manifest itself in physical abuse, but through consensus between the abused 'failed' man and his abusers, the Xhosa community that upholds the ideals and views of dominant masculinity in relation to 'failed' masculinity. In a way, the abuser and the abused share a bond that makes the abused understand that the fault lies with him, not the one who abuses. The 'failed' man becomes complicit in his abuse. Clingman (2005) and Sanders (2002) call this type of bond between the perpetrator and the victim, a sense of being folded together and/or complicity in crime.

After his 'failed' passage into manhood and hospitalisation, Chris vows to commit suicide because of the hatred, and ostracisation he encounters in the hospital and will also encounter after discharge. However, his mother's love makes him resolve to choose life over death. He 'erases' his experiences and hides in the sanctuary of silence. It could be argued that his traumatic memory arrests speech turning him into an accessory in the 'normalised' crimes perpetrated against 'failed' men in his society. Chris's participation in his maltreatment and that of other 'failed' men is cemented through the use of Xhosa cultural folklore and mythology.

His grandfather, Sbenga's son, the man in shiny shoes and Nurse Mrs Yaziyo at the hospital, show the first sign of contempt towards Chris. The village men's contempt and anger does not surpass Mrs Yaziyo's for she even mocks Chris and the other hospitalised initiates through a subverted rendition of the 'Somagwaza' folksong. Chris points out that under normal circumstances, the song is sung during the initiation ceremony, particularly when an initiate has successfully completed the rite of passage. The first rendition of the song is sung

by Bra-Mtyobo on behalf of Chris (p.69). Chris points out that, 'this song takes the form of a warning given by the traditional surgeon to the mysterious Somagwaza that he is going to stab 'this boy' with his assegai right now. He tells Somagwaza that the cowardly boys have chickened out, but this one, the boy here, will be stabbed at once' (p.69).

In Xhosa mythology, 'Somagwaza was held to be the first man ever to be circumcised the proper way, a long time ago' (p.69). He is believed to have circumcised himself by chopping off the fore skin of his penis with a sharp stone. He then nursed the wound to health with traditional herbs (p.69). Xhosa men revere him for his bravery, patience and ability to withstand pain, qualities that the initiate must embody and exhibit in order to become a 'real' Xhosa man. Bra-Mtyobo's rendition of the song fills Chris with pride and sends shivers down his spine. This scene is very ironical in the sense that Chris and his family do not know that he will be 'the coward' cited in the song (p.122). Chris asserts that the songs sung for him by Bra-Mtyobo and his mothers haunt him incessantly, for they are a constant reminder of his 'failure' to become a man in the culturally 'prescribed' manner.

When Chris exchanges his *ibhoma* for the hospital ward, Mrs Yaziyo greets him with her 'corrupted' rendition of 'Somagwaza'. Her performance of the song is directed at Chris's situation. Chris explains that 'the verse she chose to sing was particularly significant, for it is the one that reports to the mythical Somagwaza that the cowards among them have chickened out; 'them being us', of course, the supposed initiates. She was openly insulting us for having landed at the hospital – we cowards!' (p.122). The performance of the song in both scenes is significant in the making and unmaking of Xhosa traditional manhood. On the one hand, the song is sung to celebrate a warrior who has emulated the mythical Somagwaza's manly qualities. On the other hand, the same song is sung to mock the cowards. It reports to Somagwaza that the weaklings have chickened out. It plays a vital role in making men and women accomplices and accessories in the discrimination of other men based on the success and failure of the initiation process. These scenes show the power of folk songs and myths in engendering discourses of masculinity construction among the Xhosa. Furness and Gunner (1995: 3) emphasise that oral forms such as the song are 'not just folksy entertainment. [...] They are themselves invested with power; that is to say, the words, the texts, have the ability to move, to provoke, to direct, to prevent, to overturn and recast social reality'.

Through the depiction of Chris, the novel contests the power imbalance arbitrarily based on the failure and success of circumcision. The novel puts the relationship between dominant

Xhosa masculinity and power under scrutiny. Through appointing itself as an authoritative figure to talk about septic circumcision, dominant masculinity repels and silences 'deviant' masculinity through abuse. The alarming rate at which botched circumcisions occur cultivates anxiety on hegemonic masculinity because it sees this crisis as its inability to propagate itself. The swelling number of 'bogus' men who seek solace in silence and live in fear of being found out are a threat to the contested 'ideals' (bravery and ability to withstand circumcision pain and nursing the wound back to health) of Xhosa masculinity. The challenges and anxiety presented to hegemonic masculinity are seen in the utterances of the chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Mrs Yaziyo, the man in shiny shoes and the mob's treatment of Chris. Behind their behaviour lurk violence and/or coercion used by hegemony to propagate adherence and punish 'deviance'. These are the forms of marginalisation and unfair power distribution among Xhosa men that Mgqolozana interrogates in the novel.

Chris' initiation ceremony, its progression and end results are vital in that they are an ironic destabilisation of a monolithic and 'appropriate' way of becoming a man. Mc-squared outlines all the required qualities that the initiate ought to follow and observe in seclusion. These are 'ideals' already mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. They include patience, respect for the elderly, endurance, the close observance of the aftercare procedures; paying attention to instructions; and the ability to decode the codes or language that is used at the mountain because 'it is the manhood language that you will be expected to use later to explain yourself to others' (Mgqolozana 2009: 64). Mc-squared teaches Chris that masculinity is a winding and thorny road that one embarks on the minute he declares himself a man until his last breath in life. A man must be able to eloquently articulate this process. The absence of a foreskin does not render one a man. Manhood rests on one's ability to articulate the manner through which he attains his manhood.

To articulate and to explain one's manhood to others metaphorically translates to the ability to coherently translate the process of becoming a man through the oral transmission of the knowledge based on one's experiences. It also translates to being able to map one's unique path into manhood. The shame and humiliation that frame Chris's articulation of his path to manhood and his ability to demonstrate and pass his skills to other initiates ironically bursts dominant masculinity construction at the seams. The frames of repentant, intelligent, hardworking, earnest and optimistic young man are put side by side with failure and shame in order for the initiate to mount an effective and affective critique whose raison d'être is the

destabilisation of constructs of a hegemonic Xhosa manhood. These frames of reference are vital because they serve as the narrative's cornerstone, to save a life by urging other 'failed' men to speak out against their maltreatment. This overtly shows the link between trauma, silence, speech and healing which directly shake the fictional foundations of hegemonic Xhosa masculinity such as silence, secrecy, contemptuous treatment of 'failed' men and marginalisation.

By linking his hospitalisation with 'failed' circumcision as an event upon which to frame his life history, Chris ironically questions tenets of 'real' Xhosa masculinities such as withstanding circumcision pain, healing and singlehandedly nursing circumcision wounds at the mountain using traditional remedies and calculating one's risks as a man. By putting these views and definitions of manhood under scrutiny and trial through the portrayal of Chris and his situation, Mgqolozana (2009) interrogates his culture and points at newer radical ways of defining what masculinity is. Mgqolozana (2009) appears to be asking the following questions: who is a 'failed' man? Under what circumstances is he labelled a 'failed' man? Does hospitalisation due to factors outside the initiate's control such as a gangrenous penis render the initiate a 'failed' man? These sets of questions optimistically point to a newer way of rethinking about and redefining Xhosa manhood. They are aligned to Dan's definition of manhood, a strategy open to each Xhosa man to use depending on their context. These questions also challenge the basis of exclusion and inclusion into the boundaries of 'authentic' Xhosa masculinities.

The novel does not only feature the plot of a rite passage gone wrong, its causes and consequences, but also features a plot of love and disappointment. Masculinity construction features in the plot of romantic love between a 'failed' man and a woman in the sense that Xhosa masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity. After Chris's 'failure' to become a man in the 'appropriate' manner, Yanda abandons him because he did not possess qualities of a 'real' man. Her abandonment stems from the deep-seated ostracisation of 'failed' men and the doctrine that the 'failed' man status is equivalent to boyhood, therefore, 'a woman cannot marry a boy because he will scandalise her' (Phathekile Holomisa, cited in Gqola, 2009). Yanda's abandonment of the 'failed' man also shows the manner through which women actively participate in the shaping of masculinities.

A Man Who Is Not a Man also portrays the manner in which definitions of masculinity change due to social location. In addition, the novel shows that there are complex and

multiple avenues that men can use to define and reconstruct male identities. This is achieved through the portrayal of Chris' subjectivity in Ngojini and Cape Town. In Gugulethu, Chris and his friends are portrayed as macho and respected men because of their crude behaviour and soccer skills. When he moves to Ngojini, he becomes a well-behaved young man who no longer has the urge to use drugs, break into people's homes and cars. He uses the word 'softies' (p.67) to describe his newly found rural identity as a 'de-kasified' youth (p.66). The adult Chris also learns that the city simultaneously offers limiting and liberating ways of being a man. As a 'failed' man, the city offers him a space where he 'freely' mingles with men of his ethnic grouping and other races, though his relationship with them differs. He is comfortable with men of other races and ethnicities other than his own. The latter, he lets 'into his space freely. Our discussion about manhood begins on a levelled premise: that we're all of us 'not men' prescribed by my particular culture. So we debate cross-culturally, without the limitations or coded exchanges meant to prove that some are less manly than others' (p.182). In the city, he shares a certain amount of power that hegemonic masculinity bestows upon him as a man while the rural setting limits and dilutes his access to hegemonic power. This makes him live the life of a split man, an identity akin to the African American feeling of double consciousness (Dubois, 1965). Dubois uses the concept to refer to the feeling of two-ness, a sense of simultaneous alienation and belonging, at once as an American and African. The sense of two-ness in the novel is depicted through Mgqolozana's delineation of the narrator's inner and outer reality. The sense of ambivalence is succinctly captured by the novel's title phrase – 'a man who is not a man'. The phrase explicitly captures and depicts Chris' state of (phallic) estrangement, the sense of being a Xhosa man and yet, not quite. Homi Bhabha (1984) talks of being situated at the periphery, not outside the circle and neither inside. His famous phrase in this doubleness is 'almost the same, but not quite' (p.127).

Mgqolozana does not call for a complete overhaul of *ulwaluko* among the Xhosa, but questions and calls his elders and custodians of Xhosa culture to account for the scandal that has marred *ulwaluko*. This is seen in the tone and language Chris uses to talk about the ritual. For instance, he uses the possessive pronoun 'our' to refer to the Xhosa culture and the initiation ritual, to show that he positively identifies with it and sees its importance in the making of Xhosa masculinities (p.73). He holds it in high esteem. The attitude he displays in the preparation for his circumcision shows this. Even though his circumcision 'fails', he still believes in its significance in the making of Xhosa manhood. This is depicted in Chris's

engagement with the traditional Xhosa project of making men at the mountain as both an adult Xhosa male and journalist. In addition, when he wakes up one morning at home, he sees his grandfather working on something. His grandfather shows him the object he is working on, and tells him that his younger brother has matured and he wants to be prepared for the boy's initiation. Chris does not object to his grandfather's announcement. What makes him happy about the family's decision is the attitude that accompanies it. The grandfather's words show a change of attitude and an assurance that he, as an elder and custodian of Xhosa culture, will take responsibility to prevent the scandal of failed circumcision that marred Chris's initiation. The novel's intention to educate and to foster change in the manner in which adults conduct the ritual is evident in this scene.

The point of view of the 'insider', 'informant' and /or 'failed' man used in the novel unsettles a web of deep-seated ostracisation of 'failed' men, condoned mental trauma, physical scarring, and human slaughter that the print and visual media does not talk about in the social sphere because of ethics and their sense of collective responsibility. Mgqolozana (2009) is the only Xhosa novelist who has had the courage to use the initiate's viewpoint to talk about 'failed' circumcision in order to challenge the culturally imposed silence on the subject. The culturally imposed silence on the subject of *ulwaluko* and its details manifests in the use of the dictum 'what happens at the mountain stays at the mountain'. The novel takes what happens at the mountain to the male and female readers and unveils the secrecy around *ulwaluko*. The secrecy behind *ulwaluko* is not fully disclosed in the novel though the self-appointed traditionalists, the 0.001% of South African audience who do not know about botched circumcision and the international audience, think so. Mc-square talks about a code or language of manhood that is used at the mountain, but he does not disclose its contents. Mgqolozana also chose what to reveal and not to reveal for the purpose of advancing the themes of the novel.

The dramatic scenario of the big imposing man whose response is to smack Mgqolozana at the book launch is an enactment of anxiety over what is represented in the imaginary and textual levels. It shows the dexterity with which Mgqolozana (2009) uses the novel to bridge a gap between social reality and the literary realm – a skill he achieves with a story within a story. The anxiety of Xhosa traditionalists is precipitated by their inability to talk about male sexuality in public and to gloss over discussions on botched circumcision because they do not want to admit that their negligence contributes to causes of failed circumcisions. The anxiety

indicates the power of the textual representation in soliciting response, engagement and debate. This anxiety reflects insecurity of masculinity to exposure and public scrutiny, 'for masculinity, like any subject obsessed with authority, becomes paranoid and apprehensive when its source of authority is probed' (Goniwe and Gqola, 2005: 82).

The novel represents a 'true' account of the causes and effects of botched circumcision as it is anchored in reality. Its subject matter, setting and mode of narration provoke anxiety, unmask the potency of Xhosa masculinity, destabilise canonical discourses on who and how one qualifies to be a 'real' man in traditional Xhosa contexts through the use of an illusionary unmediated voice of the 'failed' man. This novel is a lie, a trick with words that blend creativity and reality artistically put together by Mgqolozana. The prologue and epilogue put emphasis on the fictitiousness of Chris's story in that it announces to the reader that this is a confession retrieved from history and memory. In addition, it is the 'truth' as Chris knows it. The 'truth', memory, history, witnessing and narrating is relative and often marred by partiality. The verisimilitude with which Mgqolozana (2009) writes Chris's life changing story in *A Man Who Is Not a Man* is a style discernible in his second novel, *Hear Me Alone*, which disrupts the barriers between facts and fiction.

Chris transcends and shatters the boundaries of culture, self-loathing, shame and silence through narrating his traumatic experiences. In Hove and Masemola (2014), I suggest that gender mediates the manner through which men and women recall and narrate their lived (shattering) experiences. Krog (1998) point out that atrocities perpetuated during apartheid which pertain to sexual humiliation and degradation did not find an appropriate medium of expression either in the familial setting or the Truth and Reconciliation Committee because of the victims' fear of stigmatisation and further public humiliation. However, Chris' narrative destabilises these codes of silence and breaks Xhosa codes of the 'failed' man's shame. He talks about his shame, humiliation and degradation in the hands of the custodians of Xhosa culture in order to shed off his emotional baggage and pain. He points out in the prologue that some of his tribesmen and critics deem his coming out of silence story as 'unmanly' behaviour as it announces to the public that he is a 'failed' man with a deformed penis. *A Man Who Is Not a Man* is in many respects dissimilar to Hugh Masekela's life story in *Still Grazing*. Masekela's novel is an account of masculinity construction based on celebrated roughish behaviour such as hyper sexuality, drug abuse, irresponsible squandering of money up to the tune of $51 million, whereas Chris's story is foregrounded on shame, a shameful experience he transcends through speech. Masekela (2004) narrates his story in his adulthood

stage in order to sanctify himself and take up his new role as a responsible father and husband.

In conclusion, this chapter examined the ways in which the novel uses culture and the male body as languages to contest the definition of Xhosa neo-traditional manhood. It put forward that the novel questions the manner through which the Xhosa community uses the success and/or failure of circumcision to humiliate the 'failed' initiates. It achieved this through the exploration of the novel's plot structure and progression, the narratorial voice as well as its technique of irony. The chapter further looked at the correlation between cultures, the body and definitions of masculinity from a postmodern view of the body as an unstable terrain and culture as a dynamic force. In its reading of the points of convergence and departure between theories on the male body and masculinity construction, this chapter mounted a counter argument against Morrell (2001) and Epstein and Straub (1994) by presenting that men are free to choose images of manhood that appeal to them. In addition, the chapter suggested that men as agents and subjects of adult Xhosa masculine gender can stand outside culture and negotiate alternative identities and access to social power. This is a suggestion inspired by Foucault (1999) and Goniwe and Gqola's (2005) observations that where there is power there is resistance and the body itself is not only a conduit of power, but a resistor, maker and destroyer of power and cultural meanings inscribed on it. By flagging Morrell (2001), Epstein and Straub's (1994) shortcomings on theories of masculinity, this chapter concludes that the novel offers alternative ways of participating in cultural constructions and definitions of masculinity. These ways are not abruptly ruptured from cultural practices, but are built within it for the novel views *ulwaluko* as an empowering ritual. *A Man Who Is Not a Man* invites the participants or creators of cultural structures of power (Xhosa men and women) to intervene in making *ulwaluko* a culture that enables young men to become adult men, rather than its current use as a tool that divides and continues to kill.

Chapter Three

Femininities and Masculinities in Zukiswa Wanner's *The Madams, Behind Every Successful Man and Men of the South*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter closely follows on the previous in that it examines the process of masculine subjectivity formation through the prism of class. It examines how the contemporary black middle class men and women depicted in *The Madams* (2006), *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) and *Men of the South* (2010) create their subjectivities. It differs from chapter two in the sense that it critically looks at the process of male subjectivity formation through the lens of femininity performances within the family unit. In other words, it looks at how the black middle class woman is discursively constructed and positioned within the neo-traditional African sphere of the black middle class family. It probes the contradictory feminine selves created through structural positioning of womanhood and the lived experiences of being a woman, and how these identity positions shape, inhibit and/or transform masculinities within the family unit. The makeup and positionality of the female subject in the home is not only examined in relation to the social power relations that produce her as woman, but in relation to her children. This approach enables me to examine the neo-traditional black middle class woman and the family unit as agents of socialisation and how they influence the child's subjectivity creation.

This chapter adopts Musiyiwa and Chirere's (2007) idea that manhood cannot be analysed independently of womanhood because the two are mutually inclusive: 'Good fatherhood is normally attainable through being complemented by good motherhood' (2007: 156). However, this chapter does not necessarily use Chirere and Muyisiwa's perspective and definition of 'good', which sees the family as a microcosm of the state and associates goodness with how well men or women carry out their social and political responsibilities. Chirere and Musiyiwa's perspective falls short because it freezes masculinity and femininity expression in a culture and biology formulation that tends to reinforce the superficial divisions of domestic and public spheres. The critique of Chirere and Musiyiwa does not ignore the fact that sexual division of labour predates colonialism in Africa. Tamale (2004: 52-53) points out that:

> In Africa, the process of separating the public/private spheres preceded colonisation but was precipitated, consolidated and reinforced by colonial policies and practices. Where there had been blurred distinctions between private and public life, colonial structures and policies focused on delineating a clear distinction guided by an ideology that perceived men as public actors and women as private actors. [...] Thus, womanhood became synonymous with domestic life – childbearing and rearing, cooking, subsistence farming, scrubbing, cleaning and other household chores became their inescapable destiny.

Though not far removed from the above scholars' usage of goodness, in this chapter herein, goodness is used to refer to masculinity or femininity expressions that allow the fluidity of gender.

This chapter stresses the interlock of masculinities and femininities' creation, a strand of thought discussed at length in the chapter. Similar to Musiyiwa and Chirere (2007), I suggest that masculinity is discursively constructed along a continuum of relations with femininity because both entities rub against each other in ways that shape and complement the other. To a certain degree, women play a role in the creation and altering of masculinities and social structures that subordinate them. Wanner's novels show that the make-up of masculinity can be positively altered in the familial space when women are cognisant of how culture and domesticity regiment their lives and gender roles. This chapter seeks to address the following questions: what range of feminine roles and choices does the contemporary black middle class woman have to choose from in comparison to the older generation of women such as her mothers or grandmothers? In what ways do neo-traditional expectations of manhood and womanhood conflict with modern day expressions of womanhood and manhood? To what extent do power structures that prop 'traditional' expression of manhood transform or inhibit the creation of newer forms of being a man in the family unit?

3.2 Biographical Data and Techniques of Literary Representation

Zukiswa Wanner is a journalist, feminist, mother, and an author of several literary works: *The Madams*, *Behind Every Successful Man, Men of the South*, *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), *Maid in SA: 30 Ways to Leave your Madam* (2013) and two children's books, *Jama Loves Bananas* (2012) and *Refilwe* (2012). Also, she has edited and co-authored several literary and non-literary books such as *A Prisoner's Home* (2011) and *Behind Shadows: Contemporary Stories from Africa and Asia* (2012 and is a founder of ReadSA, a writer-initiated campaign meant to encourage South Africans to read more African literature. Her works cover a wide range of subjects but identity in the 'post-apartheid' era is a theme that

runs throughout her works. Her first two literary works, *The Madams* and *Behind Every Successful Man* have gained critical fame through being marketed as 'chick lit', a literary genre that began as a British and American phenomenon and has been adapted by different writers to fit their socio-cultural setting (Ferriss and Young 2006). The genre is precisely known as women's fiction and addresses issues of modern women in a humorous, light-hearted fashion. Narunsky-Laden (2010) and Taylor (2010) point out that one of the negative consequence of categorising 'chick lit' as women's fiction is the trivialisation of women's literary works. Chick lit has been disparaged and labelled unworthy 'trashy fiction', 'froth sort of thing that wastes time' by several scholars of classical literature (Ferris and Young 2006). Doris Lessing remarks that 'it would be better, perhaps, if (female novelists) wrote books about their lives as they really saw them, and not these helpless girls, drunken, worrying about their weight' (Ferriss and Young 2006: 1). The defence and the attack of chick lit is as ubiquitous as its pink and green pastel covers of the books specifically set aside by publishers to mark them off other books because of high figures of sale and consumption. Ferriss and Young (2006:2) use the metaphor 'commercial Tsunami' to capture the commercial success and the consumer oriented fan base of this genre. These two scholars postulate that the disdain for these books stems from their commercial success.

The politics of gate keeping witnessed in the disparaging of chick lit is akin to discounting women's experiences, writing and their readers. Speaking back to the relegation of chick lit to the periphery of highbrow fiction and expressing her feelings about the categorisation of her books as 'chick lit', Fiona Snyckers, the author of *Trinity Rising and Trinity on Air* (2013), says:

> It can be a convenient and recognisable way to brand your fiction. There are certain expectations that go with the label chick lit. One of them is that your book will have a bright-pink cover, possibly even a bright-green cover, and it will be about sex, and shoes, and shopping, and female frivolity, which is fair enough, and my books are about those things. Many people have already made up their minds about what a chick lit book is about and that they will not like it. They have decided it is superficial; that it has nothing of worth to say to them. (Fiona Snyckers cited in Anne Taylor 2010)

Snycker's sentiments are also shared by Wanner. Asked how she felt about her books being categorised as chick lit, she responded, 'my definition would be literature by women on issues that affect women. If you call women chicks, its chick lit, but only in so far as it's a book by a woman' (Margaret Klemperer *The Witness Online*, March 2007). Through this statement, Wanner questions and destabilises the label chick lit. Her interrogation of the label

is further witnessed through her publication of *Men of the South*, a novel based on the lives of three men. Ferriss and Young (2006) are of the opinion that chick lit has matured and changed the focus from a naive white middle class woman to a more experienced black woman opting for the reality of friendship. They also add that in its development, the genre proves to be indebted to women's literature of the past and is independent of it. Because of its parentage, one cannot examine Wanner's works without casting a backward glance to the works of her predecessors such as Ellen Kuzwayo, Sindiwe Magona, Buchi Emecheta and many others.

Ferriss and Young (2006) conclude that chick lit proves that it is a force to be reckoned with and a powerful literary tool that the 'new' middle class woman uses to represent her daily experiences, but certainly not a genre that can represent the future of women's writing. Narunsky-Laden (2010: 64) adds:

> Yet even as they are typically produced and culturally located 'outside the seam' of literary writing per se, laying claim to little artistic refinement and displaying few narrative or other configurations of complexity, ostensibly ideologically 'disengaged' and seemingly at ease with this relative 'disengagement', it is noteworthy that the 'sub-literary status of these novels does not only imply reduced commitment to 'nationally' sanctioned societal and public concerns, nor are they removed from the range of newly imagined South African concerns loosely configured in the context of 'South African studies.

The 'disengagement' of chick lit is a misnomer since Wanner's works advance and interrogate a wide range of national and personal politics in the contemporary era, though the lives of her characters are not fully entrenched in national politics. Wanner appropriates the contemporary chick lit novel, 'sistah lit', to explore pervasive issues that affect South Africans in the contemporary era. Thematic concerns addressed by Wanner's novels include: class mobility, race, identity, culture, feminisms, masculinities, homosexuality, motherhood, wifehood, relationships, consumerism, love, migrancy, negrophobia, exploitation of foreign labour in South Africa, as well as the overlap between African tradition and modernity in the expression and performance of masculine and feminine identities in the home. As a pioneer of ReadSA, Wanner consciously uses accessible everyday life, television and local lingo in her works so that it can reach a wide fan base or audience. Her books use humour and satire to poke fun at the absurdity of the South African contemporary social formation. 'A lot of people read my books for humour. And after that, it makes them think,' she says (Margaret Klemperer *The Witness Online*, March 2007).

3.3 Class, Race, Family Relations in *The Madams* (2006)

The Madams is Wanner's first novel that plays with the interconnectedness of facts and fiction. Wanner points out that *The Madams* and *Behind Every Successful Man* can be read as 'contemporary social commentary of what bothers me as a woman' (Reads 2012). *The Madams* is poised as a memoir of the main character, Thandi, who shares many similarities with Wanner. They are both children of the struggle born in exile, have a shared 'coloured' identity, trained as journalists in Hawaii and both have a son named Hintsa. It is narrated in the first person. The witty, experienced, personally and nationally political conscious black middle class woman, Thandi, narrates her lived experiences as working mother and wife. She uses the words, 'supermom', 'superslut' and 'superslave' to describe herself (p. ix). In addition to these qualities, she is the black and promotable woman at work because she is self-driven.

Thandi tries to juggle the above feminine roles in her life, but falls short of her superwoman powers. She then enlists the help of a house cleaner. Since she cannot boss and order another black woman or sister around, she hires a white house help, a former convict named Marita. The prospect of having a white helper thrills Thandi and she tells her father about her new 'social experiment'. Her father maliciously instructs her to ensure that Marita cleans toilets as well. The father and daughter conspiracy over Marita's race and type of work she will do at Thandi's place is specifically understood when one reads it within the South African social and political formations. Domestic work was a preserve for black men and women during the apartheid and in the contemporary era. White South Africans prefer to be beggars rather than work as domestic help for a black person. In the novel, the white house cleaner and black madam role reversal is a social experiment or a decisive test that Thandi uses to gauge her friend, Lauren's racial stereotypes, to destabilise the racial and social order in the contemporary era and to invigorate debate on the racial difference.

Like Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* (1985), Thandi's memoir disrupts the Western notions of the genre in that it does not focus on her life alone. It also encapsulates the lived experiences of other women whose lives intersect with hers. The narratorial voice is constant in *The Madams* even though the focal point of the novel changes from narrating Thandi to Nosizwe and Lauren's lived experiences. It is a voice that bears witness to the lives of the other male and female characters as it sees them. Thandi's relationship with these women stretches back from the generation of her grandmother, also referred to as '*Makhulu*', her

mother, to Lauren, Nosizwe (her contemporaries, friends, neighbours and Madams), Nosizwe's mother and sister.

Lauren is a white middle class woman who grew up poor because her father drank the family's trust fund. She works for Wits University and describes herself as a 'liberal' white woman. However, her 'liberal' views are only 'liberal' enough to racially accommodate and accept Thandi and Nosizwe as black and human because they are different from 'them', where 'them' unanimously refers to the 'accursed' black lot who 'behave strangely'. Her house cleaner, MaRosie, is also included in Lauren's stereotypes of what blackness and black South Africans are. Lauren's ill-treatment of MaRosie stems from racial stereotypes inherited from apartheid about the sub-human status of the black person.

Like Lauren, Nosizwe is Thandi's best friend. Their friendship dates back to their undergraduate days in Hawaii. Nosizwe comes from a rich family whose wealth is attributed to her mother's temper, wit, shrewdness, appropriate economic and political connections and Black Economic Empowerment in the post-1994 dispensation. Though obscured by the ubiquity of BEE men in literary representations and the media, Nosizwe's mother in *The Madams,* Nobantu in *Behind Every Successful Man,* and Dr Maguga in *Men of the South* represent a percentage of women who have been able to break through the masculine standards that operate as 'delicate glass ceiling' hindering women from entering the 'masculine public' sphere of business (Tamale 2004:53). Thandi and Nosizwe secretly hold a grudge against Lauren for her racial stereotypes. They both conceal the news that Thandi has hired a white maid because they want to look at her reaction when she finds out that Thandi is bossing a white woman. Mandla, Vuyo, Lauren's husband and Petunia also form part of the cast of characters in the novel. Mandla is Thandi's husband. Vuyo is Nosizwe's gentleman-thug husband. Petunia is Nosizwe's house cleaner.

The arrival of Marita causes tension among the three friends. Lauren is enraged by Thandi's choice of house help. Lauren's reaction to the news that Thandi has a white maid sets an example of how 'unthinkable' and 'outrageous' it is for a white woman to be a maid in a black household. Lauren disapproves of this arrangement and this leads to a physical fight between her and Nosizwe. At first, Thandi is unwelcoming towards Marita and the relationship is worsened by the latter's lack of domestic skills. However, with time, Marita proves to be the best ally that Thandi has when her husband abandons her for his ex-lover on Valentine's Day.

Marita takes her place in the madams' social order and becomes friends with MaRosie and Petunia. Her arrival in Thandi's household does not only cause tension between her friends, but is fully exploited by Wanner to talk about issues that affect the other two madams (Nosizwe and Lauren) in their families, domestic violence and infidelity. In addition, it offers the three women a chance to confront their racial prejudices, consequently breaking the racial barrier and forging a bond of womanhood and sisterhood that goes beyond colour. Lauren and Nosizwe's fight shows the precariousness of the racial order and the insidious racial question in the 'post-apartheid' era.

Through Marita's careless talk with Thandi, the reader learns that Vuyo, Nosizwe's husband has a sexual relationship with Petunia, the house help. Thandi finds subtle ways of warning Nosizwe about the affair. Nosizwe comes home and finds Vuyo and Petunia having sex on her bed. She draws out her gun and deliberately misses Vuyo's head by inches. She throws him out of the house naked and puts Petunia on the next bus home. Thandi's description of Nosizwe's husband, Vuyo, sheds light on his personality and the type of masculine behaviour he exhibits. Thandi describes Vuyo as a charmer and thug beneath his veneer of courteous behaviour. In addition, he has two children from two different women. He lives with both children in Nosizwe's house. According to the insecure Nosizwe, having her husband's children at her house is a way of ensuring that Vuyo does not have sexual escapades with other women. Forbidden to satiate his sexual appetite elsewhere, Vuyo turns on the household helper who is also Nosizwe's relative. Petunia gets pregnant and Nosizwe takes in Vuyo's third child. This time she thinks it is a way of punishing Petunia. Nosizwe fusses over these children because she cannot have children of her own. Besides her undying love for her womanising thug husband, Nosizwe does not like her only sister and mother because she feels her mother loves her little sister, Nolizwe more than she loves her. However, it turns out that they both meant well. Her mother points out that her stinginess with money was meant to teach her responsibility as a first-born child. Nosizwe's fallout with Vuyo is immediately followed by the introduction of her sister who comes in with the reports that their father is down with full-blown AIDS and her mother will be coming to Johannesburg soon for a medical examination since she is not feeling well. The reader is also introduced to Mandla's business partner, Chukwu, a Nigerian medical doctor who works with Mandla in their hospital in Soweto. They specialise in the treatment of HIV positive patients. Also, the reader is introduced to Lerato and Njeri. Lerato is one of the numerous black South African girls that Chukwu is dating. Chukwu and Njeri's husband are friends.

Lauren's family also comes under scrutiny when the reader learns of the physical abuse that takes place in it. Thandi takes the reader back to Lauren's past. Journeying back to Lauren's past demystifies the widely held opinion that whiteness comes with opulence. Through the novel Wanner opens up a new perspective and voice rarely captured in black female writing in South Africa the 'silenced' voice of the poor white woman. Lauren's life story demonstrates how discourses of racialism and white privilege obscure the lived experiences of white women. The wedge of race and presumed white privilege efface Lauren's experiences from her black female counterpart, MaRosie, to a point that both women are estranged from each other. However, MaRosie does not meet Lauren's racism with contempt. She subtly brushes it aside and loves Lauren and her children the best way she knows. Lauren looks down upon MaRosie and cannot reach out to her for help when her husband beats her. She prefers to put up appearances of superiority that stop her from being helped and worsen her husband's abusive behaviour. By narrating Lauren's experiences, Thandi shows that the interconnectedness of white patriarchy, defacement of white female subjectivity lead to the hatred between white and black women, a strategy that white patriarchy uses to propagate the myth of racial difference and superiority. In her naivety, Lauren also tries very hard to uphold the myth of racial superiority and privilege. On the contrary, Marita takes on a different stance from Lauren when it comes to race and racism. She views the black woman as a sister. She does not only have a black female lover as her partner, but also points out that the black woman showed her love and support in her most desperate moments. Thandi narrates that Lauren's past is characterised by her father's alcoholism, domestic violence and the squandering of his children's trust fund. As a result, Lauren grows up poor and solely relies on University funding to complete her studies. Thandi jokingly points out that Lauren suffers from a type of psychosis, Electra complex, for in adulthood she poses and marries her father in the form of Michael, her abusive husband. Thandi's household is not spared from problems. Mandla disappears in the house in various occasions and claims that work keeps him busy. Later on, Thandi finds out from Hintsa that Mandla is cheating on her. Upon stumbling on Mandla's infidelity, Thandi plans her own revenge. She takes leave from work and travels to Victoria Falls where she sexually satiates herself. This results in their separation.

In its thematic concerns *The Madams* asks the following questions: Does HIV/Aids only affect the younger generation? Is domestic violence a vice of the black and poor? Does whiteness equal class privilege/opulence? In what ways do contemporary black middle class

mother/wife/woman experiences differ or are similar to her older generation of black women? Does she have a choice to choose between being a homemaker or a working mother? To what extent can she help in the positive transformation or alteration of masculine expressions and performances in the home, if at all? Is race still an issue that should concern contemporary South Africans? Can women employ violence as a cohesion tool in the familial set up? *The Madams* explores themes such as sexuality, black middle class lives, consumerism, the lives of domestic helpers, relations, infidelity and negotiation of friendship and relationships.

The Madams depicts the struggles of the contemporary black woman that Gqola (2013:57), Ferris and Young (2006) describe as the 'new woman' depicted in Chick lit and aired in television soap operas in South Africa. Gqola (2013) uses the phrase 'new South African woman' to describe this feminine archetypical figure. According to Gqola (2013) she is a working woman, ambitious and driven. She is a skilled consumer of Western aesthetics of beauty. This is seen in the manner she presents herself, for instance, her well-groomed and artificial manicured nails, exorbitantly priced hair extensions and designer clothes exclusively bought in Africa and/or Europe. Also, she has an address in the desirable suburb instead of a location where she can afford to buy property; she knows where to get accessories that make her fit the profile of a television news bulletin reader though she does not live like one, and she is either married or believed to be a heterosexual. In addition,

> The 'new South African woman is not a feminist because she rather believes in feminine power and does not think women should act like men'. Women characters transform into her time and again in *Generations, Isidingo* and other national soapies and dramas. We read about her in women's magazines we love and see her interviewed, often asked the same questions that start with flagging her status as a 'professional, wife, mother' and 'juggling these'. She may come in as a 'rural girl, 'township girl', or start out as a model, but she soon transforms into the new south African woman and entrepreneur. She may even think of her image as governed more by 'brand' than reputation. (p. 58-59)

Gqola (2013) further comments that the new South African woman's frequent appearance represents her as the feminine blue print that all women should aspire to be. The feminine figure known as the 'new South African woman' is a patriarchal construct shrewdly enacted and ensnared by the ideologies of domesticity as discussed by Tamale (2004) in the subsequent paragraph. The 'normalcy' of the new South African woman explains her ubiquity in Wanner's novels. She is seen in the portrayal of the three female protagonists in

The Madams (2006), in Nobantu in *Behind Every Successful Man* and in Silindile and Mzilikazi's wife in *Men of the South*. The women depicted in the novels transform to her because she seems to represent the 'norm' in as far as black middle class womanhood depiction is concerned. In addition, her frequent depiction and air time shows the extent to which patriarchal ideologies regiment the lives of women. Tamale (2004) and Gqola (2013) put forward that there are certain tools that patriarchy puts in place in order to make women's lives fit into the structures of gender and social power, thereby dominating their lives. Gqola (2013) and Tamale (2004) present the ideology of domesticity as an example of such tools.

> Domesticity as an ideology is historically and culturally constructed and is closely linked to patriarchy, gender [and] public distinctions. The way patriarchy defines women is such that their full and wholesome existence depends on getting married, producing children and caring for the family. In Africa, it does not matter whether a woman is a successful politician, possesses three PhDs and runs the most successful business in town; if she has never married or is childless, she is perceived to be lacking in a fundamental way. Girl children are raised and socialised into this ideology and few ever question or challenge its basic tenets. [...] Thus, the domestic roles of mother, wife, and homemaker become the key constructions of women's identity in Africa. (Tamale 2004:51-52)

The above quote shows the complex web of relationship between social power and sexuality, women's bodies and their reproductive power. Both scholars, Tamale (2004) and Gqola (2013) concur that the concept of domesticity is steeped in women's sexuality. Gqola (2013: 56-57) writes: 'it is not that women are kept in domestic spheres. [...] Rather, it is what happens in the domestic sphere of the home, marriage, reproduction and sexuality that is the most important part of women's recognition as humans in patriarchal societies'. Gqola (2013) and Tamale (2004) critically note that adherence to patriarchal expectations of domesticity burdens and defines women's lives in Africa. It is not enough that Nosizwe, Nobantu, Silindile, Lauren and Thandi are educated and successful women in their own right. Like their mothers and *Makhulu*, they are fully recognised as 'real' women if they put their maternal roles of motherhood and wifehood first. The need to fit into the feminine categories of wife and mother fuels anxiety in Nosizwe who ends up settling for a man she does not deserve, a womanising thug. In fact, she could have lived a happy and childless life. In addition, the need to put mothering first unbalances Thandi's life as well, hence her need for hired help. Her husband does not get involved on the maid-hunting project because of the

notion that household chores are a woman's preserve. Thandi needs the helper more than he does. This shows the extent to which domesticity burdens the lives of women.

The Madams destabilises the notion of the new black woman who juggles work and motherhood or wifehood through the anxieties of the three female characters depicted in the novel. The novel calls to question and challenges the normalisation of domesticity through the archetypical figure of the new black woman. Thandi's inability to cope with the domestic chores and her work shows the contradictions that are encapsulated in the feminine new black female identity. Thandi clearly articulates some of these contradictions through encouraging Mandla to adopt, the 'renaissance man', a man who helps in the domestic chores and parenting.

Thandi Further laments that her worth as a woman is not only evaluated by the fact that she is a wife and a mother. The measurement tools for her femininity are narrowed down to how well she cooks and cleans. She points out that though her husband is a 'renaissance man' she is always coerced to stage an impromptu biology-gender performance when Mandla's relatives and friends from Soweto come to visit. When she complains about having to wear the superwoman cap to please his friends and relatives, Mandla quickly reminds her that this role-play is for their own good image. On the one hand, the role-play is meant to present her in good light: industrious, good, knows her place and has not turned Mandla into a slave through the use of muti, *ikorobela*. In Southern Africa it is believed that *ikorobela* is a certain type of traditional herb that when secretly administered by a woman on her husband, induces docility and he begins to perform domestic chores reserved for the woman in the home, such as looking after children, cooking and cleaning the house.

On the other hand, the biology-gender role-play is a technique meant to assure Mandla' friends and relatives that he is 'in control' of 'his' house, regardless of the fact that Thandi pays half the house mortgage. In this context, in control means that Mandla as a man has access and controls the worlds of business, the domestic sphere, his wife and child, and that in his house gender roles are clearly designated according to sex. This is a 'cultural' notion of what 'real' manhood is. Morrell (2001), Shaw (2005) and Gqola (2005) argue that gender identities are fluid; men and women embody and perform certain types of subjectivities in varying contexts. The complexities of identity fluidity tease out this question: can the change from a 'renaissance man' to 'non-*korobela* man' in the presence of family be accounted for as fluidity of gender roles? It could be suggested that this is an instance of masculinity

refraction, a situation where masculinity expression seems to have changed, but technically remains the same except that it is being examined through a different medium, absence and presence of familial relations. Under close examination, Mandla wants to change and emulate the 'renaissance' masculinity that his wife desires, but cultural practices and beliefs frustrate such efforts. For instance, when Thandi is locked in their suburban home Mandla engages in extra marital affairs and his mother approves because such behaviour, *ubusoka* or infidelity is hailed as 'real' masculinity within neo-African cultures. Dana and Gqola (2013) frown upon it and label it institutionalised male prostitution meant to sexually frustrate and subordinate female sexuality as well as arouse petty competition and hatred among women. What is seen in the depiction of Mandla' masculinity is a situation where older masculine practices are slowly dying and the newer masculinities cannot be easily birthed because of contradictory cultural beliefs and the mindsets of the older generation and culturally myopic relatives.

As Thandi ponders about the possibilities of hiring domestic help, she also thinks about the question of 'choice' or 'freedom' for the contemporary black woman. She first struggles with the label 'traditional' womanhood that *Makhulu* uses to describe the older generation of black women. She reminisces about the lives that her mother and grandmother lived and concludes that both women's lives do not neatly fit into the 'traditional' label because both women occupied and muddled the fuzzy boundaries of the private and public spaces. *Makhulu* was a singer who later turned to illicit beer brewing and selling when her singing career did not take off. Her mother was a secretary, a prestigious job during her lifetime and therefore did not fit into the 'traditional' womanhood label.

Viewing womanhood through the eyes of these two women also compels Thandi to wonder why men's treatment of women has not changed in the contemporary era. Her thoughts on her mother and grandmother trigger a conversation they once had and she uses it as an entry point into the narration of women's lives. She challenges *Makhulu*'s view on the liberation of the contemporary black woman. Thandi wonders why *Makhulu* thinks that the contemporary woman is liberated. She argues that she and her contemporaries are not liberated. However, there are things that she can celebrate as a black woman at her age in the contemporary period. She is empowered through education and has access to some privileges reserved for men, access to the public sphere through remunerated labour and she can use her money to buy a house or a car without a men's consent. In addition, she has a 'choice' to be a professional or a homemaker, including her choice to pay half the house mortgage. She points out that being a housewife or career woman is not a choice but obligatory because of

the haziness of gender roles within the familial space as well as societal expectations of what a woman ought to be versus what she wants to be. Through this scenario, Wanner echoes Tamale's (2004) observation that domesticity burdens the lives of women in Africa in the sense that their identities revolve around being a mother and a working woman who works double shifts at home and work. At the home front, Thandi is expected to play the roles of a 'supermom' and 'superslut' whilst balancing the role of superwoman at work. She is also expected to contribute to the payment of house bills because she works as well. Thandi concludes that she is not free at all. Certain expectations burden her life as a contemporary black woman.

The Madams also shows that the subtleties and intricacies of class difference have a bearing on how women choose which feminine script(s) to perform, thus forcing their partners to forge newer masculine identities that are harmonious with their feminine ideals. Thandi and Njeri's access to material wealth as professionals give them the power to coerce their husbands to recreate forms of masculinities aligned to their feminine identity of choice. On the contrary, Lerato's disempowerment (through the lack of education) robs her of the voice with which to express how she wants to be treated by Chukwu. The concerted efforts of Vuyo, Thandi and Nosizwe become instrumental in changing Lauren and Michael' behaviour and make both of them realise that domestic violence is neither an expression of love nor 'real' manhood. Wanner condemns the use of violence to secure mating rights in *Men of the South* where Mfundo beats the American rapper for 'hitting' on Slindile. After the nightclub brawl, Mfundo is labelled *mogue* (slang for fool) of the week for resorting to the use of violence in a country that is torn apart by varying forms of violence. However, she does not condone Nosizwe's use of gun violence in the Vuyo and Petunia scene. Nosizwe's mother says she would have done the same if put in a similar position as her daughter. In addition, in *Men of the South* Slindile beats Mfundo and lamely justifies it as 'unharmful' compared to the impact that Mfundo's retaliation has on her. Does this mean that violence can be used by women as a cohesion as well as masculinity transforming tool in the home? In both instances, the female characters resort to violence as an expression of discontent on the type of masculinity displayed by their partners. However, it does not succeed as a cohesion tool as Mfundo and Slindile' relationship crumbles after the scenes of violence. Vuyo becomes docile for a while and the readers do not know his and Nosizwe's fate.

The Madams depicts the daily challenges that contemporary middle class women experience in the home. The novel also raises the question of female and agency and masculinity

transformation. Wanner (2006) shows that masculinity construction and transformation is a concerted effort between male and female in the familial space. However, women can be positive accessories in this process when they have access to varying forms of social power and when they use it to negotiate for recreation of positive masculinities.

3.4 Manhood and the Delimits of Tradition in *Behind Every Successful Man*

The Madams' tone and atmosphere is more playful and relaxed, but the same cannot be said about *Behind Every Successful Man*. The poem, 'I have been a woman for too long', by Criselda Kananda sets the novel's rebellious tone and atmosphere. Criselda Kananda is a South African radio DJ, motivational speaker, counsellor, ex- nurse, television presenter, HIV/AIDS activist, and feminist. In the context of the novel, the persona in the poem is a woman who is coming out of her domesticity shell into realising that she can do and achieve more in life than being 'woman' (also read as mother, housewife, non-citizen and subservient to husband and her mother). The poem is relevantly placed in the novel's prologue for it succinctly depicts Nobantu's disgruntlement in her own marriage, ideals of womanhood and how her neo-traditional mother and husband usurp the same in order to fit her into the neor-traditional homemaker role against her wishes. The novel is also punctuated by a rendition of Simphiwe Dana's jazz tune, 'Zundiqondisise' that loosely translates to 'understand me'. Dana's song apostrophises an imaginary audience, presumed to be a man and she sings, 'You are not my dream/You are not my sustenance/ I never said I could not/You treated me like a child/ I've got my own way of going/I've got my own way of coming' (p.49). Dana's song has been translated from isiXhosa to English.

In terms of plot structure, the novel starts in the middle of narrative and traces back the protagonists' life from her teen years to the present, her thirty-fifth birthday party and its aftermath. The story is told in the third person limited omniscient viewpoint and its perspective varies with regard to the different life stories it captures. It mostly focuses on Nobantu and her husband. This is meant for the reader to understand the psychic formations of these characters to enable an understanding of why they act in particular ways and not others. In a way, this enables the reader to examine how their masculine and feminine subjectivities are informed and shaped by 'cultural' understandings and constructions of the female and male subjects.

Nobantu grows up and marries her first love at the age of nineteen after the birth of their son, Xolani. The narrator points out that she did not want to get married, but Andile, with the help

of her mother forced her to go through with the marriage. Her mother reasoned that it would embarrass the royal family if her daughter gave birth to a child out of wedlock. After Xolani's birth, Nobantu takes some time out of her studies to raise the child whilst Andile remains in Johannesburg and works as a lawyer. Later, Nobantu joins Andile in their rented cottage in Melville and finishes her bachelor of commerce degree. After the completion of her studies, she works briefly for the infant BEE entity, MAPAMO. Once the company becomes a giant, Nobantu retreats to her domestic role of being a mother and housewife. Her mother keeps telling her that these are the most important duties for a woman. However, Nobantu feels she has been a woman for too long. She feels she has lived a life that is not her own – that she has stuck to the popular femininity script written by her mother and husband in accordance with patriarchal definitions of what femininity is. She feels empty and consequently decides to find her niche and passion that will lead to self-actualisation. The reader meets Nobantu at this stage of her life, her thirty-fifth birthday.

The story begins with a summation of Andile's life story and then shifts focus to Nobantu's thirty-fifth birthday celebrations and traces her life back to her youth and present. Nobantu is married to Andile Makana, a black economic empowerment (BEE) tycoon and shareholder at MAPAMO holdings, a mining company. In the exposition of the novel, the narrator introduces the reader to the Makana household. The reader catches a glimpse of Andile reminiscing about the 'show off' party and his wife's gift for her thirty-fifth birthday. Both Nobantu and Andile privately acknowledge that the gift, a Jaguar, and the exclusively high note party were meant to show off MAPAMO holdings to would-be investors prior to its registration at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

The conflict of the story centres on the snide comments that Andile makes about Nobantu at the party. One of Andile's clients asks what Nobantu does for a living. In his drunkenness, Andile does not give Nobantu a moment to reflect on the question and reply, but blurts loudly, 'Eish, sisi, our Nobantu here does nothing, she is just a house wife. *She is just a house wife' (emphasis in original)*. Upon hearing what her husband thinks and says about her, she feels humiliated and immediately leaves the party. The narrator points out that Andile's words 'had cut to the core', hence the emphasis through repetition and use of italics to underscore the brutality of his words on her (p.25).

Prior to this humiliating event, Nobantu had relentlessly asked for Andile's permission to venture into clothing design business, but he would have none of it because people would

think that he had failed in his 'manly' duty of providing for his wife and children. Andile had told Nobantu to consider working for charity rather than for money. She had objected to this suggestion because it would not make her happy; moreover, she sees it as a calculated move by Andile because it would boost his company's image to have a wife who works for a charitable cause. There are two significant reasons that coerce and propel Nobantu to dream of launching a clothing business. Firstly, it is her need to be independent from her husband – to derive pleasure, satisfaction as well as self-actualisation in doing what she likes best as an individual. She wants to succeed on her own, not as Andile's wife. Secondly, she wants her daughter Nqobisa to perceive her in a positive light and view her as the type of woman a daughter would love to emulate and embrace. Nobantu's status as a mother and housewife who relies on her husband for financial assistance results in a conflicted relationship between her and her daughter Nqobisa. In one of the parties that Nobantu takes her child to, Nqobisa tells the host that she does not like the type of woman that her mother is. Nqobisa's innocent disclosure embarrasses Nobantu who later confides her humiliation to her friend, Ntsiki. Wanner (2008) writes:

> The hostess had enquired of Nqobisa, in that patronising manner that adults have, 'and you, young lady, what do you want to be when you grow up?' She confidently answers; 'I haven't really thought about it. Maybe I'll own a company like my father or be a doctor like Aunt Nazli. [...] But I know what I don't want to be. I don't want to be like my mother. She does boring stuff like going to the saloon and getting her nails done all day. She just waits for dad to pay for everything'. (p. 44-45)

Mortified by her daughter' words above and hurt by Andile's response during the party, Nobantu vows to defy her husband who threatens her with divorce if she dares to start her business. Nobantu's dream and need to succeed in the world of business on her own evokes masculinity 'crisis' or anxiety in Andile because he had constructed his male identity on the basis of providing for his wife and children. Under the cloud of uncertainty and 'what ifs' that punctuate every thought and sentence in Nobantu's mind, she leaves her marital home to fulfil her dream of becoming a business woman in spite of the lack of financial and emotional support from her husband. After Nobantu leaves her marital home, Andile informs his mother-in-law. Nobantu's mother is appalled by the ungrateful and rebellious nature of her daughter. She promptly leaves Cumakala for Johannesburg to reprimand her wayward daughter. Upon arrival, she finds that Nobantu has changed and does not want to do what she

is told by her mother and husband, but does what she wants and puts herself and her work first. Contrary to Andile's claims, Nobantu discloses that she would like to go back to her marital home if her husband allows her to pursue her dream. After much thought, deliberation and advice he gets from his Indian partner, Anant, and his mother in-law, Andile and Nobantu reconcile their differences, and he agrees to help and support his wife's dream.

Like *The Madams, Behind Every Successful Man* is packaged and presented as a 'chick lit' novel with its pink pastel cover, a picture of the new woman draped in fashionable pink dress accessorised by pink lipstick, a cell phone, a hair weave and long legs in designer boots. It handles the themes or issues that affect women in the familial space such as the yoke of domesticity that hinders Nobantu from achieving her dreams. The novel shows that upward social mobility through marriage, wifehood and motherhood are not the only things that women dream of. In the novel, Nobantu is not contained by the fact that she is married to a BEE tycoon. She dares to challenge neo-African patriarchal construction of what manhood and womanhood is by breaking the yoke of domesticity and venturing into business, a space that her husband thinks is reserved for masculine figures like him. By focusing on the Makana family, the novel's plot does not only focus on issues that bother Nobantu in her marriage, but hurdles that Andile experiences as a 'traditional' man in his marriage and household.

Wanner's (2008) focus on the Makana household depicts the importance of the familial space in the construction of domesticity. She presents the family as a site fraught with contradictory cultural practices that put the performance of masculine and feminine identities in a state of crisis. On the one hand, it is a 'source of affection, succour and safety, while on the other hand, 'the family is the very site of anxiety and unhappiness, a place of suffocating, emotional intensity where beneath the calm surface, a nightmare of complicated webs ensnare the members in complex and painful patterns' (Hood-Williams cited in Ndlovu, 2011: 9). Family units comprise of members who relate because of blood and family structural connections. Whether related by kin or seniority the relations in the family unit are arranged in a hierarchical order and set of expected gender responsibilities that a family member plays within the family unit. Speaking of the sexual division of labour in the family both Ndlovu (2011) and Goode (1964) concur that

> Almost everyone lives his life enmeshed in a network of family rights and obligations called role relations. A person is made aware of his role relations through a long period of socialisation during his childhood, a process in which he learns how others in his family expect

> him to behave, and in which he himself feels this is both the right and desirable way to act. Some, however, find their obligations a burden or do not care to take advantage of their rights. (Goode 1964 in Ndlovu, 2011: 9)

Tamale (2004) points out that it is within the network of family rights, obligations and role relations that women's and men's lives and subjectivities are constructed. The novels under discussion call to question and challenge the process of socialisation of the girl child, the notion of family rights, roles and obligations. Wanner's (2008) depiction of the outer and inner realities of Nobantu, Andile and Nobantu's mother's notions of femininity positions the female protagonists against 'traditionally' held notions of masculinity and femininity construction. This strategy works well in the novel for it upsets the tenets of patriarchal definitions of man and woman. Nobantu's deconstruction of femininity arises out of her struggle to attain voice by redefining what womanhood is to her daughter as well. Coullie (1996) points out that black women can destabilise the manner in which domesticity positions them in relation to social power through attaining voice and a sense of self which challenges ruling masculinities. She writes:

> One achieves voice – or attains subjectivity as an individual – at the point where one recognises the ways in which one has been subordinated by a political system, and thus made to fit a political category at odds with ones' own experiences of and aspirations in the world. ... [S]ubjectivity (or voice) depends on placing oneself as cognitive subject in language. This means recognising the ways in which one has been constituted in terms of specific discourses and disassociating oneself from them while at the same time claiming a particular and different place within language. (Coullie 1996: 139)

The above is an excerpt from Judith Coullie (1996). In it, Coullie argues that for a woman to destabilise patriarchal construction and definitions of woman, she first needs to be aware of how patriarchal ideologies collude with social and political power structures to construct and produce the subject woman because the subject is a product of social structures, epistemes and discourses (Bevir 1999:347). Nobantu understands the manner through which the epistemes of domesticity are used by her husband and mother to justify their hindrance of her aspirations in the world leads to the recreation of a different frame of reference or feminine identity that disassociates and places womanhood against the dominant discourse used to define womanhood. By venturing into business and following her passion as a woman, mother and wife, she gains a voice with which to challenge Andile's 'traditional' understanding of manhood and womanhood, consequently achieving 'freedom' for 'freedom

lies in our capacity to discover historical links to domination, and to resist the ways in which we have already been classified and identified by discourses. This means [...] refusing to accept [the] dominant culture's characterisation of ourselves' (Sawicki 1988: 186).

Nobantu's defiance and process of female subjectivity recreation positively influence Andile and forces him to change his perception and definition of manhood and place in his family as a parent and lover, rather than being a paycheque dad and husband. Each time Nobantu raises the subject of her passion to launch a clothing business company Andile either makes fun of her or condescendingly tells her that she is only good as a mother and housewife. At times, he threatens her with divorce. After the humiliation on her birthday, she leaves her marital home and Andile becomes a parent to his children for the first time. The narrator points out that he does not know minute details about his children, such as Xolani's mode of transport to school, Nqobisa's pick up time after school and their routine in the house. In Nobantu's absence, he also loses the sense of time in the morning to an extent that Nqobisa misses her breakfast and he gets to work late. He finally admits that he cannot deal with the children alone. Anant intervenes and Andile tells him the whole story. Andile confides in Anant that his wife's idea of being a businessperson scares him because it erodes his purpose and duty in life. He says,

> but letting her do this...it will appear as though I cannot take care of her as I should ... I keep thinking, if she does this thing and becomes her own woman, where do I fit in? What can I give her that she cannot give herself? You see Anant, my role has always been that of provider. I was the guy in the driver's seat. Now, suddenly, she doesn't need me. This business thing has destroyed the fabric of who I thought I was in this relationship. I mean, Anant, have you seen those executive bitches that we have to deal with? What if she becomes one of them? (p.139)

At the heart of this exchange lies Andile's fear and anxiety arising from 'cultural' beliefs and sense of self-worth hinged on manhood and fatherhood as the financial provider of the family. Oupa[14] and Andile use the man-as-provider crutch to construct their sense of worth as men. Oupa also uses it to justify his marriage to Plastic Penny, his 23-year-old mistress he turned into a wife after his divorce from Tsholo. Anant, Oupa and Andile's friend and business partner disagrees with their views on masculinity and femininity construction in many levels. Firstly, he reasons that women can marry younger men if they like. Secondly, he

[14] Oupa is one of the 'heroes of the struggle' with 'appropriate' political connections that help to boost the growth of MAPAMO holdings as a BEE entity. He is also a founding member of the company.

is of the view that a brilliant woman who holds a degree like Nobantu cannot be entirely tied down to being a housewife all her life. Andile and Oupa casually accuse Anant of being more feminist that the POWA[15] women. Jokingly, Oupa alleges that Nazli, Anant's wife, has bewitched him with *ikorobela*. The *korobela* accusation may appear as a joke, but beneath it lurks Oupa's anxieties about the shifting gender relations that Anant's views and Nobantu's pursuit of her dreams allude to.

Anant shakes Andile out of this stupor by pointing out that Nobantu' venturing into business is her dream and it has nothing to do with him. He points out that Nobantu is a brilliant woman: 'It is understandable that she would get tired of being nothing more than the woman you would want at your beck and call. Would it hurt you if you give her the same support she has given you throughout your marriage?' (p.138). Anant also reasons that Nobantu would ordinarily get bored of being just a housewife because she settled for marriage at a tender age when she should have been discovering herself and place in the world. Nobantu's wish to fulfil her need to be and to stand on her own ground coupled with Anant and Andile's mother in-law's 'new' perspective on this matter transforms Andile's subjectivity and sense of worth in relation to his wife and children. Andile gains new insight of what manhood entails. He begins to offer support to his wife and rekindles the long lost romantic connection in his marriage. There is no doubt that Nobantu's defiance will also shift Nqobisa's earlier view of her mother as a dependent housewife given that the Nobantu becomes a successful business woman and role model.

3.5 Domesticity, a Bottleneck for Women? Gender Inversion in *Men of the South* (2010)

Men of the South is divided into three sections, each narrating the experiences of three men: Mfundo Dlamini, Mzilikazi Khumalo and Tinaye Musonza, using a male perspective. Its use of the male narratorial voice sets it apart from *The Madams* and *Behind Every Successful Man*. This section of the chapter looks at the first section of the novel, Mfundo Dlamini's memoir, which narrates his lived experiences as a kept man and a father as well as the life of Slindile Maguga, his stay-in partner and mother of his baby Nomazizi. Mfundo's life story also touches on the lives of Mzilikazi and Tinaye. The former and latter are connected to

[15] POWA is an acronym for a non-governmental organisation of People Opposing Women Abuse undertaking research on gender based violence in Africa.

Slindile through platonic and sexual relationships. In Klemperer (2007), Wanner points out that *Men of the South* is the only novel she has read post publication. She further adds that she uses it as a mirror to judge and evaluate her growth as a writer. According to her, *Men of the South* is an interesting work of art that was difficult to write because she had never used the male perspective in her writing career. '*Men of the South* is the male answer to *The Madams* and *Behind Every Successful Man,* but this time not as spoken by what some women might think is a biased male voice but more from another woman writing in a way she perceives men kind' (Reads 2012). *Men of the South* depicts a transgression of genre in the sense that Wanner employs the genre popularly and disparagingly labelled 'chick lit' to address issues affecting contemporary black middle class men. These issues are narrated in the first person voice that creates high levels of intimacy with the reader or intended addressee of his life story. In the novel Mfundo opens up to the reader and tells him/her things he cannot express to Slindile. This creates a bond of trust and empathy between the reader and the narrator.

Mfundo who is currently a father to Nomazizi and Slindile's stay-in partner narrates the novel in retrospect. He maps his life from childhood, manhood and fatherhood. Mfundo grows up in Soweto, Orlando West alongside his friend, Mzilikazi who hails from Dube. Mfundo comes from a 'respectable' (p.12) middle class family. His mother is a teacher and his father is a lawyer who worked as a court clerk due to apartheid racism. He has a brother named Sindiso and a sister named Buhle. Sindiso drops out of school at an early age and later escapes to exile when he learns police are about to arrest him for car theft. Sindiso's timely escape is shortly followed by Mfundo's father's mysterious disappearance because of his political affiliation and activism. Mfundo and Mzilikazi allege that James Congwayo is implicated in his disappearance. James Congwayo is Mzilikazi and Tinaye's boss at Afri Aid, an NGO where Mzilikazi worked prior to his relocation to Cape Town. The depiction of Congwayo in the novel mocks the naivety of black South Africans in seeking and creating heroes of independence. The questioning and mockery of the single sided ANC nationalist narrative, idolisation of heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle is further depicted in Mhlongo's *Way Back Home* (2014). James Congwayo was a Special Branch man during the apartheid years and in the new dispensation is ironically celebrated as a hero of the struggle. The disappearance of both elder members of the family leaves Mfundo as the only man of the house, a role his mother encouraged him to play. Mfundo confides to the reader that 'it was a difficult role, too, since in my neighbourhood it was never defined what it was that men did

exactly' (p.19). The 'masculinity crisis' that he suffers from at an early age resurfaces in adulthood. However, at adulthood it is not brought about by absent fatherhood. It is precipitated by his partner's conflation of fatherhood and manhood with money. Slindile nags him about his inability to provide for her and her daughter. Slindile forces Mfundo to search for a job. He is thrown off balance since he equates fatherhood and manhood with a man's ability to unconditionally love and care for his family regardless of the amount of money he brings on the table. Their conflicting views on manhood make him to ask questions about what manhood is. In his quest for 'good' fatherhood and manhood, he looks back at the types of men he encountered when growing up as a child in Soweto. He notes:

> There were two types of them, you see. There were the 'happy-go-lucky men' in the neighbourhood who would send me to buy them some loose skyfs at the nearest spaza shop as they sat drinking all hours of the day. Then there were the 'salt-of-the-earth' type of men like my father and Mzi's father, who looked after their families and came home on time. But these men were dictatorial. Their wives feared them, their children feared them. I never wanted to use either of the two groups as a role model. What examples of men do I see? I once asked Mzilikazi. How am I to turn into a better man if these are the only men I am encountering? (p.17)

Mfundo recalls that he met Slindile when he was doing standard 9. They date for a while and broke up because of class difference. He argues that their relationship could not grow back then because of their different social backgrounds. Slindile is from an upper middle class family whilst Mfundo hails from the township. Unlike the township youths, he manages to go to college and studies sound engineering. Slindile becomes a medical doctor after graduating at the University of Cape Town. Mfundo doubles as a sound technician at the South African Broadcasting Cooperation and a brilliant trumpeter who features in a renowned artist's recordings. He moves into Slindile's town house and they live a life of bliss that is shortened by Mfundo's fight with an American rapper who flirts with Slindile in his presence. In his drunkenness, Mfundo beats the rapper. This fight ensures that his career as a technician for the sole SABC and budding Hugh Masekela of the born free generation reaches a dead end. His work contract is not renewed at the station and his recording deals do not materialise. His job loss coincides with Nomazizi's birth.

He conceals this bad news and looks for another job opportunity. When this fails to materialise he then discloses the news to Slindile.

At first, Slindile understands the situation and empathises with Mfundo. Little does she know that Mfundo will use this to his advantage and 'at her expense'. During his joblessness, Mfundo looks after the baby, cleans the house, cooks and composes music for his upcoming album. Slindile enjoys what Mfundo does at home and brags to her friends about having a caring stay home lover. However, the prolonged period of having a househusband puts a strain on their relationship. Slindile complains about it to Mzilikazi and asks him to encourage Mfundo to get a job. Slindile's worry and grumpiness about Mfundo's joblessness is evoked by their friends' views and mockery of the househusband. They call Mfundo a wife and Buhle argues that Mfundo is financially draining Slindile.

Mzilikazi discloses that Mfundo has become very comfortable in his domestic role as a house husband, cleaner and nanny. Mfundo discloses to the reader that being a stay home dad gives him pleasure as he is able to bond with his daughter and watch her grow. He earnestly derives pleasure in playing a vital role in his child's life. Mfundo sees nothing wrong with the arrangement because he does all of the house hold work while his partner is at work. On the contrary, Slindile, Buhle and Mfundo's mother argue that Mfundo's behaviour is not manly. Slindile urges him to find work very soon, any type of work as long as he is out of the house. Mfundo's mother speaks from a position of a parent with a cultural conviction of what manhood is. Sibling rivalry and notions of feminism drive Buhle's disapproval of Mfundo's role as a househusband. Mfundo points out that his sister has always hated him for being their mother's favourite child. His mother's love could be attributed to the loss of her object of affection – the children's father. As a result, she directs her affection to her son in the house since Sindiso's escape to exile.

Both societal notions of manhood and consumerism motivate Slindile's condemnation of Mfundo's chosen career as a stay in husband. She forces Mfundo to find a job in order to dress up in designer labels, be wined and dined in restaurants of her choice as they did before. The tense atmosphere at in the household coerces Mfundo to ponder on the societal meanings attached to fatherhood and manhood. He wonders if a pay cheque or deeds qualify one as a 'true' man and father. In a bid to urge Mfundo to get a job, Slindile arranges that they both visit Mzilikazi in Cape Town so he can talk to Mfundo. The Cape Town trip becomes Mfundo's opportunity to sell himself as trumpeter. He meets a German producer who takes his demo compact disc (CD) and later launches him as a sought after musician worldwide. Mfundo's hurt and frustration are precisely captured in the lines of Don Matterra's poem, 'Degrees', from the anthology, *Azanian Love Song*. The poem is featured in the prologue of

the novel. In it the persona says, 'there is no hurt quite, like being unloved, unwanted, among one's own, in one's own land'. The poem sums up Mzilikazi and Tinaye's lives, the former as a black gay man and the latter as a foreigner in South Africa. It seems Mattera penned this poem after his banning, an order lamented by Mongane Serote in 'For Don M. Banned'. Mfundo feels unloved and rejected as an artist because his fellow South Africans could not confront the man who ensured the death of his career, Emzee. After the Cape Town trip, Slindile and Mfundo's imminent break up takes place.

Mfundo's memoir in *Men of the South* shows the links between domesticity, masculinity and femininity construction, masculinity transformation and its hindrance. It also seeks to examine and turn upside-down certain tenets of domesticity such as the evaluation and market value of domestic labour. In its examination of the linkages between masculinity construction and domesticity, it asks the following question: is domestic work a preserve for females? Does a man cease to be a man because of being a househusband who sits at home and does what female homemakers do? Is the cumbersomeness of domestic chores gender specific, that is, only cumbersome when performed by women and not by men? Is there a relationship between masculinity and femininity construction, consumerism and male wage labour?

Tamale (2004), Lindsay (2003), Cornwall (2003) and Wanner (2010) show that imperial culture, mercantilism and the shifting economic terrains under colonialism gave rise to superficial demarcation of the private and public domains. It further allowed men to dominate both spheres. Lindsay (2003) points out that before the advent of urbanisation/railway line construction in South Western Nigeria, women were renowned for their history of market trading and financial independence. Alongside the thriving female market economy was cash crop farming, a preserve of men. Their access to land and money granted Nigerian men an opportunity for self-aggrandisement through the construction of the 'big man' status expressed through flaunting of wealth which bought the 'big man' more followers (Lindsay 2003). Manhood was not constructed and defined by the paycheque yet money was the only currency that ensured the prosperity of the market economy, cash crop farming and the big man status. Lindsay (2003) points out that the construction of the railway line changed the way in which Nigerian men and women construed their masculine and feminine identities in relation to money. Men migrated to the growing urban centres with their wives. 'Officials hoped that worker's wives would socially reproduce the male labour force through unpaid

domestic labour and raise the next generation of urban workers in a modern 'milieu', acculturated to urban living' (Lindsay 2003: 139). The movement of the market woman/female vendor from the rural to the urban space curtailed her social and financial independence. She became confined to domestic work because of lack of social and market networks in the new area. Lindsay (2003) demonstrates that because of the dwindling market economy and the steady pay cheque of the employed husband, the relations between the man and his wife changed drastically. Because of these changes, masculinity construction and definition was conflated with man as the provider/ breadwinner because:

> Male wage labour contributed to new domestic patterns, both because of changing conditions of work and because of pre-existing notions of linking money to gender status; wives of wage earners actively participated in the creation of male breadwinner ideal as part of their financial strategies; and workers used the discourse of breadwinner instrumentally to advance wage and benefits claims disputes with their colonial employer. (Lindsay 2003:139)

Beneath the promotion of the nuclear family unit and the confinement of wives in the domestic sphere lies black and white patriarchal need to control influx of independent women into the growing urban centres. The narratives and factors facilitating the linkage between masculinity construction and wage labour are typical but vary according to socioeconomic and political factors. In *Men of the South* Wanner paints a similar story through the depiction of Mzilikazi's short family history. Wanner traces the movement of Mzilikazi's father from KwaMntungwa, a fictitious Zulu village, to the city of Johannesburg. She depicts that the discovery and subsequent mining of gold attracted throngs of black men and women to come and work in the city. Mzilikazi's father is one of them. He first works as a miner and advances himself through education to a point where he becomes a schoolteacher. He remarries in the city. The city provides him an opportunity to reinvent himself. Having grown up in the village when his mother was alive and uprooted to the city after the death of his mother, Mzilikazi notes that his father in the city is different from the kind of man he is at KwaMntungwa. Mzilikazi' mother in the city is a nurse. Kuzwayo (1985) depicts that besides being nursing sisters, black women in the city worked as nannies, brewed and sold illicit liquor to supplement the meagre family income. Even in the South African context, the ideal of man as the provider and breadwinner was operational.

In her depiction of Mfundo as a kept man, househusband, enlightened man and Nkrumah of equal rights and empowered women's generation, Wanner upsets the complex web of

relations that conflate wage labour with fatherhood and manhood. Contrary to Tamale (2004) who views domesticity as inhibitive to women's economic and social independence, Lindsay (2003) and *Men of the South* demonstrate that some tenets of domesticity benefit women. In her argument, Lindsay (2003) points out that the man as provider ideal of manhood and fatherhood construction is exploited by women in their financial strategies. Though the women of railway labourers accumulate money from the market economy/vending of their wares, they still exhort money for school fees and the household from the man and want it reimbursed when they have used their own money. In a similar vein, Slindile forces Mfundo to get remunerable work as an expression of manhood and fatherhood, not because she earns less and cannot support his staying at home. Her conflation of manhood and fatherhood with paid labour is motivated by her dreams to live the South African dream, to participate in the culture of consumerism.

In *Behind Every Successful Man* Plastic Penny, Oupa's newly wedded wife offers another example of women's superficiality and the influence of consumerism in the creation of masculinity and femininity. It is rumoured that in order to spear head her marriage to Oupa, Plastic Penny leaked her pictures with Oupa to a certain newspaper. These intimate pictures infuriated and humiliated Tsholo, Oupa's wife, and she filed for a divorce. Once legally married, Plastic Penny ensures that Oupa pays for her luxurious life style that includes wearing designer labels, shopping and travels to Brazil for her plastic surgery. Her name is derived from her obsession with artificial beauty. Oupa defines his relationship and relevance to Penny's life through his ability to financially provide for her. Because of such cultural construct of man as the provider Slindile and Buhle frown upon kept men because such men's labour in the household is unpaid for, and therefore does not bring in the money needed to buy household needs or the extra income needed to ensure that the household unit lives in opulence. One major reason that coerces Slindile to throw out Mfundo is that his joblessness robs her of the life she dreamed they would have if they both worked and contributed money to their household. Wanner's novels, *Men of the South* and *Behind Every Successful Man* are novels that show that the process of masculinity construction and recreation ought to involve men and women because both genders actively participate in shaping definitions of masculinities in different economic and social spheres. Wanner does not disparage Plastic Penny and Slindile in both novels. This can be attributed to the fact that both women are a product of an artificial society driven by a penchant for contemporary Western soapy ideals of womanhood and motherhood. These women are forced to live the

South African dream of black class womanhood. As a result, Plastic Penny stalks and falls in love with an older married man who can provide and Slindile chases away Mfundo when he can longer provide for her and their daughter.

Mfundo's memoir also advances the theme of black masculinity in 'crisis'. Mfundo's crisis does not emanate from the ascendency into higher rankings of social power of the women around him. He is content with his diploma, moving into Slindile's house, possessing a diploma and being the low-income earner in their household. As a man raised by a working mother (teacher) in the absence of his father and seeing the social and economic advances that black women have made in the contemporary South Africa, Mfundo is not thrown off by these advances and the broader gender shifts in society in general. His crisis comes from his 'inability' to fulfil manhood and fatherhood gender roles according to his mother, Mzilikazi, Buhle, Slindile, Slindile's friends and the waiter at the restaurant. Mfundo's concerns about the precariousness of life and role of men in society are articulated to the reader after Slindile asks him about his preferred sex for their child. To Slindile he blurts out the standard reply, 'I'll be happy with whatever gender that the child is so long as it's healthy' (p.39). After this conversation, he turns to the reader and says, 'the truth is, I hoped it would be a little girl. Life would be easier for her in South Africa. I am not minimising women's issues, but lately it seems as though being a man is not as great as it was fifty years ago'(p.39.

This chapter raises a number of issues regarding the positionality of women in the familial sphere and masculinity recreation. Wanner's (2006; 2008; 2010) novels ask the taken for granted question of structural determinism over masculinity and femininity performances in the family unit. They address the question of choice and liberation of contemporary black women from the dogmas of domesticity; the question of self-actualisation and aspirations of women, a question that destabilises notions that child bearing and middle class life are all that matters in a woman's life. In addition, Wanner's works subtly put femininity and masculinity recreation at a point where they intersects with neo-traditional South African culture and consumption patterns of the black middle class. In doing so, Wanner suggests that class changes in the performance of gender subjectivities. These novels underscore the ambivalent position of the feminine character concerning structures of power that create and subjugate her. Wanner flips the coin around and shows that the dogmas of domesticity subjugate both men and women in the family unit. On one hand, women can use the man as provider rule to commodify womanhood and fatherhood in a way that is beneficiary to her, whilst she acts as

subordinate. Slindile plays both parts brilliantly in *Men of the South*. She is simultaneously the subordinated sister who does not want to be mooched by Mfundo and the empowered woman who works, does not need any one's money, but wants it from Mfundo as a marker of her husband's manhood. On the other hand, the man as provider rubric brings conflict of interest in a relationship. It can be used to evoke anxiety on manhood or thwart dreams and frustrate a woman with ambition. *Behind Every successful Man* depicts such a scenario. Nobantu does not want to be confined to the housewife role anymore, but Andile thinks his wife must be confined to the domestic space because people will think that he cannot take care of her. In addition, he grew up knowing that the role of a man is to provide. If this is taken away from him through Nobantu's venture into business, his sense of being will be destroyed. The man as the provider dogma of manhood destroys man the lover, caretaker, the father and guardian in Mfundo. Through Nobantu's arrogance, we witness the birth of the recreation of man as the lover, emotional supporter, nurturer and lover in Andile. Lastly, Wanner exposes the backlash of 'cultural' content of black middle class masculinities and their artificialness. She intertwines this with the question of choice and liberation of the contemporary black woman. *The Madams* concludes that women are liberated to a certain extent, but they remain shackled by the fuzziness of gender roles, and more so by cultural practices, such as the belief that a man who helps with household duties is bewitched and societal sanctioned male promiscuity. As a result, Mandla oscillates between renaissance and 'real' masculinities in the presence or absence of his relatives.

Chapter Four

Negotiating legitimacy: Writing Black Male Homosexuality through Mythopoeia, Madness and Surrealism in Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three suggests that women participate in the making, and/or hindrance of masculine identities by subscribing to and exploiting certain dogmas of domesticity to their advantage. Though women contribute to the bits and pieces that make up masculinities, fatherhood and manhood, they do not directly participate in the construction of gender hierarchies that place men at the top and women in subordinate position. Ratele (2011:414) points out that 'the common thing among the stuff of masculinity is a claim to authority that puts men at the top of the hierarchy'. In any given community or social context, several forms of masculinity expressions can be used to define what masculinity is, but one form is exalted and most men use its core expression to access social power. Scholars of critical men's studies label this form as hegemonic/dominant/ruling masculinity. Scholarly works of Morrell (1998, 2001), Ratele (2008, 2011), Moodie (2001) and Louw (2001) demonstrate that dominant masculinity is not homogenous as its exponents want it to be. It is frayed by contradictions that tear it apart along the lines of objects of sexual desire and sexual identification. In order to seal off the differences that fracture it, dominant masculinity constructs narratives that anchor and legitimate its normalcy and power among men and women as well as young boys and girls. One of these narratives is exclusive heterosexuality. As Morrell (19998: 608) observes, 'dominant masculinity silences other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency'. Louw (2001) further explains that dominant masculinity constructs itself in opposition to other masculinities in order to cancel them out. Louw (2001) cites gay masculinities as an example of a masculine identification that is positioned in an oppositional relationship to dominant masculinity because it presumes that all men are exclusively heterosexual.

The deployment of sexuality and desire as a cornerstone to mark dominant from subordinated masculinity demonstrates the centrality of sexuality in the construction of masculinity. Ratele (2011) suggests that masculinity expressions that vary along the lines of sexual orientation

and desire must be affirmed, talked about and incorporated into the contemporary black South African social sphere to avoid unpleasant scenarios that may occur when other masculinities are expressed. This chapter examines how Sello Duiker uses *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* to challenge claims of the absence of male queer desire and pleasure and to question the heterosexual privilege that places heterosexuality at the top of the masculine gender hierarchy, thereby subordinating other masculine genders and expressions. This chapter submits that *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* uses contemporary South African discourse on the absence of indigenous forms of queer desires to challenge societal bias on the subject. The novel enacts and disrupts the dichotomies of heterosexuality/homosexuality and masculinity/femininity in order to legitimise and inscribe black queer desires onto the contemporary South African social sphere.

Duiker uses the novel as an instrument with which to engage anti-black queer views and sentiments to facilitate the accommodation and the expression of queer desire, hence the use of the title 'negotiating legitimacy'. Duiker's (2001) novel uses the 'legitimate' sites of African pre-colonial history, spirituality and mythologies in order to carve a niche for queerness in the contemporary South African realm. The space of 'legitimacy' that the novel creates for male queer pleasure is also depicted through the protagonist's life trajectory and his views on sexuality. In the denouement of the novel, Tshepo embraces a shamanic role and views same-sex love differently. The novel uses varying literary techniques such as madness, mythology and magical realism to problematise gender dualism, thereby incorporating expressions of black male queer desires into the imaginary and social realms. In its rewriting of black queer masculinities the novel does not only blur dichotomies but also depicts the overlap between maleness and femaleness. In its interrogation of the alleged absence of a queer black South African male , the novel speaks back to Mbulelo Mzamane' *The Children of Soweto* (1982) which tags male homosexuality as white perversion. Some of the questions that this work probes are: what expressions of masculinity does the novel use to dislodge the metanarratives of dominant masculinity construction? What is the importance of linkages and (dis)continuities between the past and the present and the 'sacred' and the 'profane' in the negotiation of a space of 'legitimacy' for the black male homosexual in the contemporary era? What strategies does Duiker employ to question and destabilise gender and sexual identity paradigms within which the black male subject is immersed/interpellated into?

4.2 Plot Summary

Tshepo's story begins as a narrative that unfolds between him and his friend Mmabatho. In his explanation and narration of the events that have culminated in what he is at the time of narration, Tshepo is angry and disappointed with life in his prime and uses the phrase 'washed up' to describe himself. The reader meets him at a time of his psychotic relapse when he is headed for Valkenburg mental hospital. He opens to Mmabatho about his life and the events that have overwhelmed him after his escape from Valkenburg. In his narration, Tshepo concurs with Mmabatho's conclusion about the cause of his mental instability. He narrates that he had a first mental breakdown when his mother's coffin was committed to the ground. His mafia father is cited as a cause of his mental instability. When he is 15 years old, his father hires men to kill Tshepo's mother. Before the five men kill Tshepo's mother, they also rape her and Tshepo. The mother is hastily buried and Tshepo connects the incidents that led to her murder. The gruesome discovery led to the beginning of intense animosity between Tshepo and his father.

After his mental relapse, he deregisters from college and his roommates throw him out of the commune. He finds accommodation at Peter and Akoussa's flat. He relapses and the police take him back to Valkenburg. At this time, he does not run away but confronts his demons and allows healing to take place. Tshepo's prolonged stay at Valkenburg also helps in the delineation of Zebron's character, that is, his inner and external realities. Zebron is one of the five men who killed Tshepo's mother. Weeks after his release from Valkenburg, his father resurfaces in Cape Town. After his discharge, Tshepo works as a waiter at Water Front and shares a flat with Chris, a former convict who served time at Pollsmoor for manslaughter. Mmabatho is critical of Chris' personality and Tshepo does not see anything wrong with Chris because he is blinded by the love he has for him. Chris confesses his dislike for Tshepo because of his middle class mannerisms and education. His hatred emanates from inferiority complex. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* depicts nuances and complexities of masculinity expressions and the ways in which men manoeuvre themselves in relations to other men. Fused with Chris' inferiority are stereotypes of the Cape Flats coloured masculinity and his efforts to distance himself from these stereotypes as a 'new' man from prison. Valkenburg and Pollsmoor exist side by side and often, the incarcerated persons occupy the same spaces. The personality of these institutions of repression, surveillance and order is mostly depicted in Chris's repulsive obsession with discipline, cleanliness and orderliness of things. Chris's violent behaviour finds expression on Tshepo's body and results in the latter's joblessness.

Chris badly beats Tshepo on the eye for failure to properly clean the ablution room in accordance with his meaning of cleanliness acquired at Pollsmoor. Tshepo's eye turns blue and as a result, fails to report for duty. In his absence, Chris tells the manager that the police seized Tshepo for drug possession. Tshepo loses his job and stays in the flat. His joblessness troubles Chris's conscience. To expel him from the flat, Chris orders two of his gangster friends to rape and rob Tshepo of his possessions, clothes and other household stuff. Tshepo temporarily lodges with Arne and Mmabatho. Arne is Mmabatho's German lover who impregnates her, but they separate because he is not ready to marry her.

Tshepo conceals his rape. He looks for a job and finds none. He browses the classified advertisements section of the newspaper and is fascinated by the sexual labels that people use to describe themselves. The Steamy Windows parlour advertisement grabs his attention. His curiosity encourages him to call the parlour and try this sort of work. At the parlour, Tshepo meets other male sex workers, Sebastian and West, who become instrumental in introducing him to the world of same sex love and sexuality through the vantage point of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. While working in the parlour he uses the pseudo name Michelangelo or Angelo in short. His work as a black male sex worker who services men opens up his eyes and he embarks on a journey of discovering the world of desire, sexuality and its importance at personal and communal levels. The level of maturity that Tshepo attains as a sex worker startles Mmabatho. Angelo works as a sex worker for a short time and his father dies. The death of his father causes him another mental relapse. The narrative changes from erudite theories on homosexuality to magical realist mode where Angelo takes us back to his spiritual origins through the use of Egyptian mythology. His fit of madness and wandering leads him to Nyanga Township where he meets his spiritual guide, Naisuib. Naisuib advises him to relocate to Johannesburg because his time in Cape Town is over. Tshepo moves to Johannesburg where he works as a caretaker in a children's home. The pay is miserable, but he stays on the job because of his love for the children and that it fulfils him. In addition, he continues to work as a caretaker because it allows him to assume his shamanic role. In the ancient historical times of the san and the Koikhoi, a sexual ambiguous man who acted as a spiritual medium within the group took this role. He presided over rituals and passed wisdom to a new generation.

The novel foregrounds expressions of contemporary masculinity. It advances the themes of black male homosexuality in a way that belies the narratives of unAfricaness of black male

queer desires. It also broaches the theme of dominant masculinity and its use of varying forms of violence to assert itself. Racism, class difference, the maltreatment of mentally unstable people, faltering unity of gay men along racial and class lines, township squalor, haplessness of township life, negro-phobia, forgiveness as therapy and expressions of African queerness rooted in African neo-cultural practices are also some of the thematic concerns of the novel.

Narrated in an ardent melancholic tone that Sebastian, West and Angelo use to respond to compulsory heterosexuality, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* portrays the life of a 23-year-old black queer man struggling to exist in 'post-apartheid' Cape Town. The force employed by Duiker in this novel is akin to the forceful and angry writing that Viljoen (2013) discerns in Richard Rive's literary works. Richard Rive and Sello Duiker's struggles with racism and ostracisation are witnessed in the manner in which they write about the subjects of racism and sexuality. Though Rive's estrangement from his family was a result of his blackness and homosexuality, he was reticent on the matter. 'He decided, it seems, not only to keep his sexuality an intensely private matter, but to deflect it by recreating heterosexual stances that could be perceived as indicating his "normality"' (Viljoen 2013, 68). Apart from the depiction of the city's scenery (Island, sea and the table mountain) as breath taking, and its culture as European inspired, Duiker represents the city as a place of dependency and dislocation; a world torn apart by different forms of 'apartheids' predicated on a language of 'legitimacy'/ 'illegitimacy' and 'exclusion'/ 'inclusion'.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams is an autobiographical novel that details the disrupted childhood and development of the protagonist, Tshepo. It also focuses on the lives of other queer men, male sex workers. Its plot unfolds through a cast of ten characters who use the first person voice of narration to talk about Tshepo's personality as they are his acquaintances. In their description, they unanimously point out his character traits such as naivety, good middle class mannerisms and education, his love for books and eyes that reveal too much about his difficult childhood, vulnerability and instability of mind. West, who has had an intimate homoerotic encounter with Tshepo, also adds that Tshepo's touch on his skin feels too light and concludes that this says a lot about his sensitivity. In addition, Tshepo relates to his friends in a way that shows his vulnerability and outcast status.

The novel presents itself to the reader as a fictional work but a close examination shows that it straddles the worlds of facts and fiction. Nichols (2005: 176) also notes the novel blurs the fact/fiction binary. In her appraisal of Mpe and Duiker's novels, she writes:

> I am used to keeping literature and the lives of authors distinct. After all, authors can imagine as far as their abilities and skills allow them to, anyway we cannot assume that they write what they intend to write. So we read and discuss textual representation, on its own terms, without making casual connections to the writer's actual lives. However, in the case of Phaswane and Sello, this smug critical distance is challenged.

Thepa (2005: 202) also echoes Nichols's words when he points out that Duiker 'wrote as he lived and lived as he wrote'. Thepa (2005) equates Duiker to other writers of contemporary African Literature in English such as Phaswane Mpe, Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera. Thepa points out that the above mentioned writers did not wear the artist's mask, but probed their lives through writing them into books, thereby suffering the wrath of the gods through the various deaths that befell them. Similar to Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978), Duiker's main character, Tshepo, is modelled after Sello Duiker. For instance, they are both products of Rhodes University and obtained the similar degrees. They have similar traits such as bulging eyes that reveal almost everything about their personality, protruding nasal hair, and are outsiders in their respective social milieu. Both have identity crises that lead to their mental breakdown. On the one hand, Tshepo is neither Xhosa nor Sotho. On the other hand, Sello Duiker's 'life was marked by various identity crises, seen for instance in the very name Duiker itself, a common coloured name adopted by his black grandfather to render himself more employable. ... Duiker was caught between two cultures, and feeling compromised because of his promotion of English culture' (Sabine Cessou, cited in Stobie, 2007: 201). Like Tshepo, Sello was also trying to deal with his sexual identity and a mental breakdown he suffered in 2004 (Stobie 2007: 201).

Tshepo is not only an outsider in the eyes of Mmabatho, Zebron, Akoussa, Peter and Chris. His choice of sexual desire and job (as a stallion[16]) positions him at the periphery of black

[16] A stallion is a male horse that has not been castrated. It is associated with elegance, endurance, consciousness and agility. In the European (Judeo-Christian) tradition, it is a symbol of sexual erotic life or unexpressed sexual desires. In the novel, the term is used to refer to male sex workers. Another usage of the term is found in Fanon (1967). Fanon uses the term to refer to the European male and female construction of black masculinity and the anxiety it evokes in their psyche.

masculinity construction. Because of this marginality, he is disappointed and feels cheated of black male role models that he would like to emulate as a young queer man. In a similar vein, Mfundo in *Men of the South* also decries the lack of male heterosexual role models and asks: 'what examples of men do I see? How am I to turn into a better man if these are the only men I am encountering? (p.17). In Tshepo/Angelo's case, the only black queer men he sees are schizophrenic dancing queens who are queer by night and heterosexual by day. Both novels, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* and *Men of the South*, allude to the existence of masculinity crises that emanate from the protagonists' confusion in relation to gendered roles and subjectivity creation. Because of the marginalisation of black male queer desires in the contemporary South African setting, Duiker's novel reclaims precolonial history and mythology and uses these in a way that rewrites, 'corrects' and destabilises the inherited European biases of an exclusive heterosexual Africa used by dominant African masculinity to suppress marginal sexual expressions and identification. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* does not only advance the themes of denied sexual heterogeneity in contemporary South Africa, but also depicts and challenges dominant masculinity's use of violence to assert itself.

4.3 Delegitimising the 'Legit': Dislodging Violence from Dominant Masculinity Constitution

Morrell (1998: 609) points out that usually hegemonic masculinity operates without resorting to violence, but the capacity and threat for violence underpins it. He reiterates the above statement by further pointing out that 'violence is not always functional to the maintenance of the hegemony of a particular masculinity and that violence is legitimated by gender practices and discourses' Morrell (1998: 609). Morrell's statement is true to a limited degree because when it comes to the assertion of power and cultural dominance, ruling masculinity resorts to violence to assert and express its presence. Morrell (2001) attests to this when he charts the history of black and white masculinities in the Southern African socio-political contexts. He notes that the racialised nature and gender relations in South Africa yoked violence with masculinity construction both in the mines and in rural life. Xaba (2001), Mzamane (1982), Nyoka (2004) and Serote (1981) demonstrate the link between the assertive black hegemonic masculinity construction, struggle masculinity, and violence. In their works Mzamane (1982), Serote (1981) and Nyoka (2004) hail struggle masculinities displayed by the black youths

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Europeans' conflation of black masculinity with a big penis and hyper sexuality conjures the term stallion. The former and the latter's use of the term conflates the sex workers with the genitalia or sex work. Perhaps, this is the reason why Tshepo outgrows the label and embraces the shamanic role instead.

during the anti-apartheid struggle. Similar to Fanon (1963), the three scholars just mentioned justify the use of violence to purge colonial violence and its concomitants such as the sub-human status of the colonised men. According to Fanon (1963), the overturn of the colonial order can only be achieved through violence since it was installed through it. Often times, the conflation of white and black masculinity with violence exonerate black and white women from violent acts, thereby constructing violence as a male vice. Xaba (2001) points out that the violence of the yester years that characterised black and white masculinity expressions is slowly being transformed due to the changes in gender relations brought about by the new dispensation. As the older forms of violence disappear from literary depictions and scholarly research, newer forms of violence find outlets in gendered relations among men and women.

The *Quiet Violence of Dreams* is an example of a literary work engaged with delinking masculinity and violence through the use of madness and the family as the microcosm of the nation. Duiker links the various types of mental afflictions of his characters to dysfunctional families and the nation. Fanon (1967) sums up the relationship between family and the nation in the following manner:

> There are close connections between the structure of the family and the structure of the nation. Militarisation and the centralisation of the authority in a country automatically entail the resurgence of the authority of the father. In Europe or and in every country characterised as civilised or civilising, the family is the miniature of the nation. As the child emerges from the shadow of his parents, he finds himself once more among the same laws, the same principles and the same values. A normal child that has grown up in normal family will be a normal man. (Fanon 1967: 141-142)

The novel begins with Tshepo trying to explain his mental condition to Mmabatho. He tries to convince Mmabatho that he suffers from cannabis induced psychosis. Mmabatho discloses that she does not believe what the psychologist says about Tshepo's condition, but she will believe the lie for Tshepo's sake. Though Mmabatho knows little about her friend, she tells the reader that what ails Tshepo has nothing to do with dagga, but says a lot about his character constitution and personality. As the novel progresses, Tshepo confirms that his madness is a result of family instigated violence he suffered during his teen years. He narrates that at the age of 17 his mother found out about his father's criminal schemes of making money. She then asked his father to refrain from such behaviour. She threatened to report Tshepo's father to the police. These threats annoyed Tshepo's father. He then hired hit men

to kill his wife. However, these men, Zebron and his friend, veered off the plan and decided to rape her first. Tshepo was also raped on that fateful night. In his narration of his family to Mmabatho, Tshepo traces his father's violent behaviour back to his mother. Tshepo describes her paternal grandmother as a sadist matriarch. One of her incidents of sadism is a rape scene narrated by Tshepo to Mmabatho. On a particular day, she ordered Tshepo's father to rape her sister, the result of which is another wayward child, Mpho, who is involved in car hijacking and drugs in Johannesburg. Tshepo labels Mpho as anti-Christ. His father plays a major role in Mpho's criminal life. Like Fanon (1967), Duiker (2001) suggests that violence begets violence. A family or nation founded on pillars of violence will breed violent citizens. The spillage of violence from father to children is also seen through Zebron.

Zebron is one of the fully developed characters in the novel. Much of what we know about him is heard from his confessions to psychologists or through what he says and does during his moments of reflection. Duiker uses the stream of consciousness and flashback to depict Zebron's character and life history. Through what he says to his psychologist and his observations of other patients at Valkenburg mental asylum, we learn that Zebron is not 'mad' but is a very cold psychopath who uses intimidation and violence to assert himself and to subordinate other people. He admits to being an accessory in Tshepo's mother's rape and murder. Readers are fully introduced to Zebron when Tshepo is admitted to Valkenburg for the second time after his escape. Zebron suffers from schizophrenia. He is haunted by the various voices of the women he killed and abused in his life. He mentions that the women he killed with five other men haunt him in his sleep.

His representation in the novel presents the convergences and departures of both the apartheid and 'post-apartheid' national memory and masculinities. Niq Mhlongo in *Way Back Home* (2014) deploys the stream of consciousness to depict a case of haunted masculinities that cannot effectively perform their duties in the present because of schizophrenic attacks. Similar to Zebron, the protagonist, Kimathi, is troubled by voices from traumatic and repressed violent acts committed in the past. In both cases, Zebron and Kimathi found it legitimate to commit these acts because of gendered practices inherited from their respective families. In both novels, the familial space of the diaspora and the nation are steeped in the violence accompanying the decolonisation process. Zebron bridges the past with the present in that the apartheid past in which he is born is characterised by dehumanisation through colonial, decolonisation violence, and the use of violence as a site and language of

masculinity expression. Furthermore, Zebron presents the present's departure with the past in terms of the contemporary era's condemnation of violence. The contemporary era distances itself from violence through a range of private and collective therapeutic interventions in order to heal the mind and restore the fissured institutions of manhood, fatherhood, childhood, the family and the nation. According to Duiker, one of the most important pillars of such therapy is forgiveness. This is not to say this novel represents Duiker's search for fatherhood or manhood. In many respects, Duikers works represent a quest for a community of humanity guided by the principles of humanism/ubuntu: forgiveness, love and caring.

Duiker's (2001) linking of violence, madness and masculinism is echoed in Garde (2003). Garde (2003) puts forward that there is ample evidence to suggest that male lives have been, and are, fraught with extensive, severe, homogenous difficulties that are distinct from, though related to, those that arise due to their agential role in patriarchy (Garde 2003:6). Zebron is not only a perpetrator of gender based violence, but a victim as well. In his conversation with his psychologist, Mrs Brooks, he discloses that he grew up within a familial life steeped in racial and gender based violence. He recounts how his father used to beat his mother because of the tone of her skin; she was Xhosa and much lighter than her coloured husband. During the festive season, his father would take leave of his violent friends and spend his time playing happy family and drinking at home until he passed out. During his unconscious moments, the entire family would beat him to pulp for all the violent acts committed against them in that year. Zebron also discloses that whenever life beat him down, he would let off steam by raping and beating his sister. He ends up in the madhouse because of excessive use of violence to express himself and to subdue those he perceives as weaker than him. Duiker uses madness to dislodge masculinity construction from violence. He depicts madness as an antithesis of masculinity in the novel. Speaking of the relationship between masculinity and madness, Garde (2003:8) writes that, 'for males madness is not only disturbing in its own right, but because of its socially ascribed feminine nature, registers as a fundamental threat to male identity' (Garde 2003:8). In between moments of sanity, Zebron reflects upon his life and thought processes. He discloses to the reader that he becomes fearful during his schizophrenic moments because he cannot control and conceal his thought processes and in a way he becomes vulnerable, hence the use of intimidation tactics to his psychologists and other patients.

On several occasions, Zebron reflects on his life and talks about what has brought him to Valkenburg. He blames it all on his excessive use of violence and living the life of a 'real' man. In retrospect, he looks at his former and present life and juxtaposes it with Tshepo's life and the type of masculinity that Tshepo embodies and points the differences as follows:

> People like Tshepo make perfect targets for sarcasm or butts of jokes. At least they grow up to be men unlike the rest of us who grow up fearing our kids so much that we end up beating them. And life beats us and we take it to our own wives. That's why I can never truly like someone like him. He reminds me too much of the distance between us, the gulf that seems to stretch forever. Tshepo will always do right. He has that stubborn streak in him, that nauseating capacity that we all think is for sissies and moffies. (p.50)

The wedge between himself and Tshepo is manifest in the type of masculinities they embody, that is, the 'macho' and the 'feminine' masculinities. Though he hates the sissies and the 'moffie' men, he represents them as people who grow up to be 'real' men. Moffie is a South African coloured slang word used to label a man perceived 'homosexual' or 'effeminate'. Over the years the term has been used in a derogatory way to refer to 'homosexual' men. Recently, queer men wear this label to accept the contradictory nature of their sexuality, affirm it and to ward off homophobia, consequently empowering themselves in the process.

In the novel, Duiker (2001) defines 'real' masculinity as a process of character development/growth. According to him, true manhood requires a certain level of self-awareness as a man. This is derived from the knowledge and manipulation of one's sexuality, body and consciousness of the consequences of one's actions. It takes Mrs Brooks, Zebron's newly assigned psychologist, to help Zebron's character grow. Under the care of Mrs Brooks, the facade of an indomitable gangster crumbles. He relents and changes from being sadistic and cold. He becomes willing to talk about his emotions, fears, and dreams and takes responsibility for his violent behaviour. Mrs Brooks unflinchingly tells him that

> There are worse things than not facing up to your feelings. [...] You must go back to those women, to your sister. You must hear their cries, the terrible things you did to them. You must feel a bit of their pain, their fear. You must see the man who did this. It takes courage to be weak. You must ask for forgiveness. (pp.142-143)

The notion of self-awareness as a man is core in Duiker's conceptualisation, construction and definition of a male masculine identity. It resonates with the notion of self-introspection that Mrs Brooks asks Zebron to do when she says, 'you must see the man who did this' (p.243).

Zebron's ability to see this man entirely lies in his ability to distance himself from violence. After the above exchange with Mrs Brooks, Zebron confides to the reader, 'it is as though she is giving me a remedy, a magic cure. This is what has been holding me back' (p.143). Though we cannot measure it, the process of Zebron's healing has begun. It is a process that requires him to put himself into a position of powerlessness and humility, a position his former self despises because it is a preserve for moffies and sissies. He allows himself to journey into the darker parts of his soul and confronts the worst fears about himself. His failed attempts at crying and asking for forgiveness from Tshepo are some of the efforts he makes to salvage himself from the fermenting barrel of violence, ugliness and hatred of humanity he has lived with from childhood.

The link between the violence that characterises the nation and the family is articulated towards the end of the novel when Tshepo proclaims that 'we must face our past boldly if we are to progress. [...] To be weak is a step towards forgiveness. And this much I know; forgiveness is bestowed to those who ask for it' (p.453). Duiker takes the process of forgiveness from a private familial level and projects it onto the national level. He writes and projects the violence of the state through the family. Through Zebron and Tshepo, as well as their families, he shows that the culture of violence that has characterised South Africa's past cannot be dealt with through Western models of medicine/therapy, but can be 'cleansed' through different traditional/communal therapy and forgiveness. However, Duiker does not flatten the process of forgiveness. The complexities of reconciliation and forgiveness are teased out when Tshepo points out the differences and tensions that characterise racial relationships and identities forged by black South African youths. Duiker's use of forgiveness is connected to a form of godliness than to the Christian faith. In the novel his mouthpiece, Tshepo, speaks mostly of the idea God and gods and links these with creation and humanity. He is suspicious of modern/postcolonial African cultures and Christianity because of their gender rigidity and homophobic sentiments.

Duiker further questions the conflation of violence with masculinity through the critique of the South African cultural symbol used to signify and celebrate 'real' manhood, the gun. Ratele (2011) demonstrates that the term manhood is fluid. It's meaning changes according to utterance and socio-cultural contexts. Ratele (2011) points out that it is associated with the male staff, *induku,* the institution of manhood and the penis. The racialised gender order of the apartheid and anti-apartheid movements deployed the symbol of the gun for different

purposes. The former used the symbol of the gun and the horse to evoke and represent hard right wing Afrikaner masculinism and to propagate myths on Afrikaner nationalism and superiority that justified racism (Swart 2001). The latter's relationship with the gun grew out of reaction to state harassment during apartheid years. The relationship with the gun, AK-47 in particular, intensified in exile where these guns were arbitrarily handed to *Mkhonto weSizwe* cadres in exile to protect their camps against Boer commando raids (Mhlongo, 2014). The machine gun, AK47, became the symbol of 'real' manhood in struggle masculinity/ies and the resultant violence in the apartheid and 'post-apartheid' periods (Xaba 2001 and Gqola 2009). Duiker destabilises the conflation of the gun with the penis through West and Sebastian's views on the use of the gun as a metaphor for the penis. West demystifies the linkage in the following utterance:

> Perhaps some people have looked at that thing only with dark eyes. A gun is the ugliest realisation of that thing between my legs. A gun is a half man realised. But that is not how I have learned to communicate, how I have learned to use that thing. There is tenderness between my legs. That thing is not a weapon but a beautiful instrument, a strange melody maker that fills men with passion. (p.325)

According to Sebastian, masculinity and its celebration rests on one's self-awareness as a man, a consciousness based on knowing and being comfortable with what or who one is as a man rather than being in position of power. Sebastian echoes West's views on maleness and self-awareness. In the above excerpt, West says 'gun is a man half realised'. Unlike a man, the gun lacks self-awareness, it 'emits fire that maims lives and kills' whereas a 'real' man is tender (p.325). Male self-awareness and the sense of being an 'appropriately' sexualised being is inseparable from sexuality or 'understanding what that thing between the legs is' (p.302). Sebastian, West and Angelo view the penis and sex differently. Their view is articulated through the brotherhood bond which finds its inspiration from the Pre-Raphaelites. Unlike Shaun who uses the label stallion to market the male sex worker', they use the term to empower themselves and to connote a sense of unexpressed sexual desire coupled with love and tenderness among men, themselves and the clients. Sebastian and West say the men who come to them do not only come for sex, but also look for solace and understanding from another man. To them, sex has transcendental and pacifying powers and the penis is viewed as tenderness rather than an invasive weapon such as the gun.

> You don't have to be a gun-toting idiot to celebrate masculinity. Violence is not a solution. To be a man you must be fully aware and

> you can't be that when you are violent. Violence and masculinity- that's just a myth that straight men have stupidly accepted, very Neanderthal. Who says violence has to be synonymous with men? (p.303). There are too many idiots wielding guns; I would rather be an insatiable hedonist. So I masturbate instead of joining the ranks and carrying a gun. Every day I do this faithfully. It's my ritual. Instead of spilling another's blood I spill my own seed, gladly, passionately, wastefully. (p.335)

Duiker's critique of heterosexual violent masculinity does not necessarily conflate homosexual masculinity with pacifism. Perhaps his focus on delinking men like Zebron, his father and Chris from violent acts is attributed to the ubiquity of patriarchal violence and its use as an assertion tool in contexts where it feels threatened.

Duiker does not seem to spare homosexual masculinity construction from violence. In the scene where Chris and his friends rape Tshepo, he angrily tells Tshepo that rape is one of the ordeals he faced during his time at Pollsmoor prison. The three gang members (Chris, Brendan and Virgil) show him their gang number, 28s. Steinberg (2004) points out that South African prison gangs are organised into quasi-military units under various gangster labels. The 26, 27 and 28s modelled after Nongolozana's banditry system. Nongolozana, also referred to as the 'King of the Nineveh' in Louw (2001:293) is cited by Steinberg (2004) as one of the prolific anti-apartheid gang leaders that ruled the Witwatersrand in the 1900s. He is reported to have ordered his recruits to have sex with men for women harbour venereal diseases. He transposed his homoerotic desires to prison upon capture. The 28s were the only group of prisoners permitted to take 'wives' and protect the other gang members. Some members of the 28s were used a sex slaves within the gang. Chris is a member of the 'feminised' group of men who served as wives for the 'real' men in prison.

Duiker's depiction of the homosexual violence underscores the ways through which 'straight' and queer men use rape as a tool and language to ridicule, humiliate and feminise other men. Duiker (2001) depicts this through Tshepo's second rape ordeal. Chris and his friends rape Tshepo under the pretext of teaching him a lesson. Chris justifies this abuse by lamely pointing out Tshepo's joblessness as its cause, even though Tshepo tells him that he has a job and will ensure that rent is paid on time. In essence, the rape is meant to humiliate and feminise Tshepo. This is seen in the expression used by Chris and his friends when raping Tshepo. He calls him 'poes', Cape coloured slang for vagina (p.213). Also, Chris is aware of the negative impact of the violence he and his friend are meting out to Tshepo. He knows its

silencing effects. He warns his friends against beating Tshepo because the bruises on the body can give Tshepo notions of pressing charges against him, while the rape will go unreported because it is humiliating for homosexual men to report rape cases to the police. Sebastian says the 'police snigger when we report rape' (p.339). Sebastian narrates his harrowing experience of violence at the hands of his 'appropriately gendered' peers who suspected him of being queer. Instead of reporting this incident to the school authorities or the police, he seeks solace in silence and drops out of school because of shame and fear.

The novel and other literature on homoerotic desires and relationships depict that queer men are also prone to the use of violence to assert their power on their 'wives'. Ngcobo and McLean (1994) use Foucault (1979) as an entry point into the relationship between queer men and gender based violence. Unlike Winnie-Mandela (cited in Holmes, 1994: 284-287) who links black queer desires with colonial exploitation, madness and perversion, Ngcobo and Mclean (1994) distance it from early childhood rape, mental instability and perversion and connect it to desire, pleasure, choice and play with gender roles and identification. Their informants confess to have had a sexual attraction to other boys or loved to play a feminine/passive role in early childhood house games. Later in life they identified themselves as queer. Their relationships with other men tend to be modelled along patriarchal models of man and woman. This kind of arrangement belies the naturalness of gender roles and labels such as man and woman. It also renders queer relationships as spaces of violence versus their construction as spaces of gender equity. It is through this kind of arrangement that the Foucauldian analysis of power and pleasure is reinforced and realised in sexual relationships. Foucault (1979) observes that pleasure and power do not cancel each other; but they seek out overlap and fortify one another. This means that it is pleasurable to exercise power; pleasurable to evade and subvert it; and controlling pleasure also gives power.

Labels such as *skesana*, *injonga* and *pantsula* are words that queer men use to exercise power, evade it and control pleasure. *Skesana* is a man who plays a passive role during sex or plays the feminine gender role in a homosexual relationship. The *pantsula* is a man who defines himself as straight, but has sex with the *skesana*. *Injonga* is an active homosexual partner, the 'man' in the relationship. Like the *pantsula*, he defines himself as a straight man because he is not sexually penetrated by the *skesana* (Ngcobo and McLean 1994). The use and occupation of these positions of power, pleasure and its control show that gender is a system of power used by queer men to dominate their partners. Ngcobo and Mclean (1994)

point out that it is within the gender-power nexus that the *skesanas* are physically abused in queer relationships. West narrates an incident of a stallion's abuse at the hands of a regular client, a German lover, who had taken the stallion to his native Germany to start a new life together. The relationship only lasted a month because of the cited abuse. West also perceives a similar horrid embodiment of violence in most of Storm's regulars. West discloses his worry about Storm to the reader because of the latter's reliance on drugs, ill health and willingness to settle down with one of his regular clients who has promised him a house and a car in Hermanus. West points out that these relationships become problematic because one is expected to surrender their freedom to the 'man' who will call the shots in the relationship, and often times, these tend to use force when things do not go their way. Nongolozana Mathebula and Cecil John Rhodes serve as examples of the most well-known queer male figures who were feared and revered by black and white men in the history of Witwatersrand.

Gender based violence in relationships is not based on ones' sexuality, but could be based on the gendered positions assumed by either men or women in their respective relationships. Women are equally violent except men do not disclose the physical abuse of men in heterosexual relationships because of the cultural adage that a man who is beaten by a woman is not a 'real' man. In addition, female to male violence has not been theorised by feminists because for a long time, men have been read as perpetrators of physical abuse of women and children, rather than as victims of gender based violence. Lastly, very few depictions of female-male gender based violence have been represented in either male or female-authored fiction, with the exception of Wanner's *Men of the South* and *The Madams*. Even so, Wanner does not delve on these depictions of female-male violence.

4.4 Black Homosexuality Socio-Cultural Inscription through History and Mythology

Sexuality is not only a site of pleasure and perpetuation of the human race, but has also become a 'cultural and religious battleground'; a location of men and women's domination and helps bolster certain claims about hetero-patriarchal masculinity construction and expressions (Ratele 2011:405). Reid and Walker (2005) and Tamale (2011) posit that discussions around matters of sex and sexuality evoke anxiety in Southern Africa and Africa as a whole because of secrecy and silence around matters of sexuality. Moreover, debates on sexuality generate nervousness because of the upsurge of queer visibility and expressions

witnessed in South Africa in the past two decades of 'democracy' due to queer rights enshrined in the South African constitution. The disturbances that homosexuality brings about in the continent depict neo-traditional patriarchy's investment in the bolstering of a presumed heterosexuality. The erasure and denial of the existence of alternative sexualities in the South African social sphere and literary imagination can be read in *The Children of Soweto* (1982), The Delmas 22 treason trial of 1986 is narrated in Nkoli (1994) and Winnie-Mandela's trial in 1991. All these incidents cast and link African queerness with colonial sexual perversion, rape and madness. Ratele (2011) asserts that dominant masculinity and alternative sexuality expressions intersect in many ways. He sums the relationship thus: being a 'real' man is hinged on the possession of a number of (beautiful) female sexual partners, the size of the penis and sexual virility. Ratele (2011) points out that these barometers of manhood are positioned in such a way that men who fall outside them such as men who do not desire women, do not believe in and practise promiscuity, and are not concerned about sexual agility, number of rounds they do during sexual intercourse and the size of the penis are deemed 'unmanly'. The other groups of men who are not promiscuous, not interested in sexual ventures and conquest of female bodies and do not dominate women are tolerated by hegemonic masculinity because they do not present a threat to its power. Woe unto men who desire other men for they mobilise against hegemonic masculinity structures (Ratele 2011). Ratele (2011) sums the antinomy relationship between queer and dominant masculinities in the following paragraph:

> The mere existence of male-to- male African sexuality makes those who swing that way objects of fear and hate within dominant sexual systems. Males who like penises rather than vaginas are made into outlaws. Where it does not attract overt loathing and phobia, the sexual love of a man for other men almost always makes the man a marginal figure, an outsider within those societies in which patriarchal heterosexual masculinity is normative. Men who love other men end up as objects of homophobic rage because such love disturbs the cornerstone of patriarchal heterosexual power in that it shows that men are not of the same mind and feeling when it comes to sexuality. (Ratele 2011: 408)

Mathuray (2014:643) posits that African leaders, writers and critics' edginess about African homosexuality stems from the connectedness of masculinity and nationalism. He points out that by imagining and representing colonialism through the trope of sexual 'rape' 'third world' women were disqualified from the role of reproducing the postcolonial nations (ibid). As a result, anti-colonial discourses were couched in masculinist terms that sought to

simultaneously overturn and reinforce European perception of African sexualities as close to nature and free of homosexual tendencies. Exclusive heterosexual African masculinity was used to construct an African masculinity 'distinctive from European import' Mathuray (2014:643). Resistance to imperialism is 'used to stage masculine acts as it performs nationalists ones' (ibid). Heterosexual normalcy is achieved and its realisation cemented through the family unit as the basic socio-economic unit of socialisation. This kind of arrangement casts homosexual desires as the enemy or outlaw since it destabilises the illusion of a homogenous sexual Africa. While *The Children of Soweto* falls within the project of African masculine siring of the 'post-apartheid' nation, *The Interpreters* (1965), *Men of the South*, *Defiant Desire* (1994), and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* are books that shake Africans from their delusion that casts homosexuality as foreign.

The Interpreters, a novel that depicts the intellectual's disgruntlement with postcolonial elites in Nigeria also depicts the arrogance and intolerance of the intelligentsia been-to. It shakes its foundations of masculinity to the core through the disclosure of Joe Golder's sexuality. His homosexuality hits the interpreters on the face and Joe forces them to acknowledge different forms of sexuality practiced in pre-colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. Sagoe insists on believing Joe's heterosexuality in order to uphold his sense of masculinity.

Set in the 'post-apartheid' epochs, *Men of the South* and *Defiant Desire* offer depictions of male and female sex desire in South Africa. *Defiant Desire* comprises memoirs and testimonies of men and women who identify themselves as either gays, lesbian or men and women who love people of the same sex. *Men of the South* is represented as Mzilikazi Khumalo's memoir. He introduces himself as 100% gay, 100% Zulu man who can out-Zulu Shaka Zulu in every way. This introduction depicts not only the contradictory nature of manliness and sexual identification, but also locates African queerness within the African socio-cultural spheres.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams has a fragmented plot that could be subtly connected to the protagonist's fractured body, mind, socio-political environment and unresolved gender identity. The plot progresses through dialogue rather than the narratorial voice. Every character's speech is delivered in the first person in a way that changes perspective or focal point of the novel to that particular speaker at that opportune moment. The conversation is delivered in a way that bears witness to one's experiences or Tshepo's life in a subjective

way. However, this mode of narration changes from bearing witness to being subjective and personal, charged with anger and vehemence when the novel uses the sexuality and sexual lives of the male sex workers as the focal point. It is within their dialogue that Duiker (2001) spells out the major thematic concerns of the novel: to 'correct', challenge and question 'bigots, hypocrites, hetero-fascists who only want to further their own prejudices and intolerance of life' through arguing that homosexuality is un-African (p.334). In order to achieve this aim, Duiker (2001) uses the surreal, madness, mythology and history to carve a niche or space of 'legitimacy' for the black queer man.

Duiker (2001) seems to be aware of the complex dynamics of gender and masculinity construction. He uses the gender binary system to enter into the debates on gender inversion and the 'illegitimacy' of African queer desires. He positions his characters within the 'clear cut' gendered identities of gay and lesbian. None of the characters depicted in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* occupy a middle gendered space. For instance, Mmabatho is heterosexual; Angelo is described as a 'slut' by West; the descriptor 'effeminate' is used to describe Sebastian and he calls himself a queen, sissy, moffie. West admits that he is heterosexual, but loves having sex with both men and women and Mmabatho describes her ex-lover, Karuna as lesbian. The kinds of contradictory gender identification and performances embodied by these characters depict the murkiness of sexuality even within the group of people lumped together as homosexuals. The nomenclatures gay and lesbian conceal the existence of varying shades of queer sexuality and sexual pleasure experimentation and expressions. Duiker (2001) enacts the above 'illegitimate' and contested gender categories in order to show their limits, thereby allowing the characters to create and name their own terms of reference or subjectivities based on their bodily experiences.

In moments of despair when Tshepo feels that no one understands his psychological pain, he confides to his dead mother through numerous letters he writes to her, addressing her as Isis. By hailing his mother as Isis, Tshepo infers that he is Horus, a name that Naisuib addresses him with towards the end of the novel. Naisuib is a queer Ethiopian male acquaintance that Tshepo meets after the death of his father. Naisuib occupies the spiritual and the corporeal as well as the past, present and future in the novel. He is instrumental in Tshepo's relocation from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Budge (1904: 203-204) describes Isis thus:

> Isis was the greatest goddess of Egypt. Isis was the great beneficent goddess and mother, whose influence and love pervaded all heaven, and the abode of the dead; she was the personification of great

> feminine creative power which conceived and brought forth every living creature and thing, from the gods in heaven, to man on the earth, and to the insect on the ground. What she brought forth she respected, cared for, and fed, and nourished, and she employed her life in using her power graciously and successfully, not only in creating new beings but in restoring those that were dead. She was besides these things, the highest type of a faithful and loving wife and mother, and it was in this capacity that the Egyptians honoured and worshipped [her] most.

The qualities of the fecund mother admired by the ancient Egyptians embodied by Isis are the same character traits that Tshepo admires about his mother. Stobie (2007) contends that this admiration fixes Tshepo's mother to the position of nurturer thus robs her of her agency. In this discussion, we suggest that the identification with the mother as caregiver and symbol of eternal love stops Tshepo from falling into the abyss of depression and madness during difficult times.

Though privileging the African pre-colonial view of homosexuality, the novel is subtly layered with a Freudian conceptualisation of the homosexual subject through the use of a 'corrupted' version of the oedipal complex. According to Freud (1935), sexual identification in children develops at early childhood. At the age of six, the boy or girl child identifies with the parent of the same sex in order to develop into a 'normal' sexualised being. A foiled attempt of the oedipal complex results in sexual 'deviancy'. Though Freud claims the universality of the oedipal complex across cultures, some scholars contest this idea due to varying social and political contexts. With regards to the occurrence of the oedipal complex among the blacks Fanon (1967: 151-152) comments that, 'like it or not the Oedipus complex is far from coming into being among Negroes. It might be argued, as Malinowski contends, that the matriarchal structure is the only reason for its absence'. Fanon points out that the 'emasculation' of the black man through colonialism makes the son denounce the father figure and identify with white men over the possession of the white woman. Fanon's (1967) denial of variant forms of the oedipal complex among the Negroes could be read as a sign of erasure and denial of queer desires given that his task and form of work serves the purpose of siring a postcolonial nation. Gopinath (2005) puts forward that the son and father identification is not a seamless effort because of the complexities of cultural domination and representation of minority cultures and sexual identification.

Tshepo's relationship with his father is conflict ridden. He points out that growing up an asthmatic child ensured that he stayed by his mother's side, resulting in a strong bond between the two of them. His father's involvement in his rape and mother's murder estranged

him from his father. Duiker' (2001) representation of Tshepo's sexuality complicates the transposition of the oedipal complex to the African context because of the connection between the sexual and spiritual realm. By establishing such connections, Duiker (2001) removes queerness from neo-traditional and Western cultural gaze and places it in the pre-colonial contexts that allows for gender ambiguity.

The closeness between the mother and the son foreshadows a bodily bond and experience that the son shares with the mother - menstruation. Menstrual stories and menstrual cycles are experiences that a mother and a daughter share in a way that no man can understand. The indecipherable woman's ability to rejuvenate and procreate makes men equate femininity to nature, hence the linking of femininity with madness, irrationality and hyperactive sexuality (Garde 2003). This discourse feeds into two strands of thought. Firstly, it feeds into colonial masculinity's construction of black masculinity – gender hierarchies where black man and woman occupy infantile positions and the justification for imposition of colonial rule (Gqola 2009). Secondly, it feeds into heterosexual stereotypes about 'queer' masculinity. However, the bond of menstrual experience rather than the oedipal complex connects Tshepo to his mother and he confides:

> I'm changing, I'm evolving. [...] I have become sensitive to the presence of women. I know I have always been close to women but something has changed. They have infected me with a virus I don't understand. [...] My body is changing, in very subtle ways, Mama. It hurts me to keep it inside. My body is changing. It is embarrassing to even contemplate this but I must release this thought. [...] It is like this, I have started bleeding, like a woman. But not at the obvious place, at the other place. I know people call this piles but it is different because it comes and goes like a cycle, a strange mutated cycle. Perhaps what I am proposing is blasphemous. Perhaps it is an insult to women. But my body holds this pain sacred. *Perhaps the difference between a man and woman is not that far.* (p.139; emphasis added)

Through this 'blasphemous' bodily experience and sexual transmutation, Tshepo becomes an interstitial subject on the boundaries of maleness/femaleness, and has a 'receptacle but not like a woman's (p.445). Through this revelation, Tshepo refuses to wear the labels male or female. He situates himself in between the frames of maleness and femaleness, a 'novel subjectivity configuration' birthed by the queer project in its response to the negation of inserting bodies within boxes that mark them for homophobic hatred and or abuse (Coullie 1996: 131). The essence of queering gender identities is akin to a refusal to confess one's sexuality or 'coming out'. Foucault (1978) and Kopelson (2000) point out that the coming

out narrative or confession is an exhaustive power game that fixes marginal sexualities at the margins of power because a confession is admittance of performance of acts contravening the law, therefore seek to transform desire. The coming out narrative is related to structures of power in the sense that it seeks to transform one's desire into discourse so as to repress 'deviant' desire and assign the body with the appropriate gender role which fixes the body into the spheres of the family and (re)production (Foucault, 1978). Duiker's (2001) queering project is a feature noticeable in two of Duiker's works whose theme is sexuality. Azure, the child protagonist in the novel, *Thirteen Cents* (2000), refuses to be pigeonholed into the moffie category. When Shaun asks Angelo about his sexual orientation, the latter avoids answering this question. By referring to Angelo as a slut, West confirms that Angelo is queer. In an interview with Victor Lackay, the same question is asked Duiker and his response is: 'I really don't want to be pigeon-holed (Lackay 2005:19-20)'. Duiker's refusal to have his sexuality conflated with and reduced to his identity could be attributed to Williams's (2010:6) assertion that 'to speak of a *person* as "homosexual," "heterosexual," or "bisexual" is to trumpet an ideology' (emphasis in original). The novel enacts gender categories without the aim of inhabiting them. In cases where the characters deploy the lesbian and moffie gender categories for identification, they do so in a context that empowers and allows them to use these labels as political categories that resist and question their use to subordinate queer individuals. The novel also utilises madness to destabilise gender binaries.

By depicting the inadequacies of the gay and lesbian labels in capturing the nuances of African sexualities, the novel proffers indigenous postcolonial queer identities socially positioned alongside patriarchy and tolerated by contemporary neo- South African cultures. To achieve this aim, Duiker uses ancient mythologies depicting queer visibility, tolerance and importance. Through the spurious arguments on male homosexuality evoked within the setting and the work of the stallions in the parlour, Duiker (2001) filters in mythical discourses on the importance of homosexuality and homosexual men in 'primitive' or ancient civilisations of the pre-colonial era by referencing Vikings and the Greek. In addition, Duiker's (2001) usage of mythology accounts for bisexuality and homosexuality in humans. Mythopoeia destabilises grand narratives on the totalities and distinctions between sexes and gendered performances. In other words, it puts gender and sexuality distinctions on relational as opposed to oppositional terms. The reliance on mythopoeia effectively disrupts the linear progression of events, history and time. This disruption results in the overlap, mingling of the

city (modernity), African traditions, mythology, and madness/spirit 'possession', all of which are features depicted in Duiker's works. *Thirteen Cents*, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* and *The Hidden Star* (2006) represent the past, present, and future as multi-layered or as a cacophony of discordant eras all vouching for a stake in the contemporary era. In all these novels, Duiker fuses mythology with magic realism in order to grapple with issues that contemporary South Africa and Africa contends with – intolerance.

In his bid to blur gendered identities Duiker uses the African pre-colonial past. Epprecht (2004) points out that queer identity found tolerance and expressions in the pre-colonial Africa. He ushers in this discussion through a comparison of the manner through which Western and pre-colonial/'primitive' cultures viewed sexuality and gender performances. In the contexts of the novel and this discussion, 'primitive' is not used in its derogatory sense associate with colonial prejudice. Duiker (2001) uses the term to refer to cultures that do not function in the same modes as the West for instance, Indians from the Amazon jungle or the Xhosa in the Transkei (p.249). He points out that pre-colonial cultures were more sexual, that is, more open and aware of gender fluidity.

> In so-called primitive societies a man, even a boy, knows what he is doing when he puts his penis inside a woman.... And the women too, they are aware of themselves, of how weak they are against a man's strength and how to use sex in their favour. ... What I am trying to say is that so-called primitive people understand gender roles and the ambiguities of sexualities better than Western people give them credit for. [...] People always say that black culture is rigid and doesn't accept things like homosexuals and lesbians. You know the argument- it's very un-African. [...] Long ago, long before whites, people were aware of the blurs. (p. 249-250)

Epprecht (2004) in *Hungochani* reiterates the above argument. Epprecht points out that the ancestors of the pre-colonial Shona people were more open about sexuality and put high significance on heterosexual acts that resulted in pregnancy. Their openness and valorisation of heterosexual sex is seen in the various clan praise poetry and poems such as *madanha emugudza*, 'endearments of the blanket', 'songs focused on the virility of the husband and his ancestors with, hopefully, erotically stimulating effect' (2004: 30). A great deal of importance was also put on the man's semen. It was linked with the spiritual realm. With regards to gendered and sexual 'transgression/deviancy', he comments that, 'conformity to heteronormative sexuality was over determined by lifelong socialization and by the intricate

web of moral and material obligations that made nonconformity difficult to conceive as an option, or let alone to enact' (2004: 33).

The policing and containment of sexual contravention was achieved through fines, expulsion from community and death penalty. However, nonconformity to societal sexual norms was witnessed. Cases of sexual 'deviancy' included female adultery and sexual brazenness stemming from several spirit possessions such as the *muroyi* (witchcraft), *ngozi* (avenging spirits) and '*tokoloshe* (a well hung-imp, which nocturnally visited women at night to stimulate them sexually' (2004: 34). Epprecht (2004) echoes Duiker's proposition on the existence of same-sex relationships in pre-colonial cultures, specifically the Shona of Southern Africa. There were certain ways of dealing with flouting of sexual 'mores'. Epprecht elucidates:

> Same-sex sexual infractions traditionally had several possible causes and consequently were regarded with ambivalence. For example, what we today would now term homosexual orientation or transgender identity was not necessarily an offence at all but a respected attribute if caused by certain types of spirit possession and manifested in certain ways. This would have included rare cases of physiological hermaphrodism as well as possession by benign spirits of the opposite sex. Such explanations of course removed blame from an individual, and same-sex couples so possessed could live together as husband and wife without attracting opprobrium. [...] Even in cases involving otherwise normal males beyond the years of acceptable experimentation, same-sex sexual acts were not necessarily taken as serious breaches of morality. (2004: 35-36)

Pre-colonial cultures were conscious of gender ambiguity and the existence of alternative genders and allowed these variations to exist alongside patriarchy rather than in opposition to it. Williams (2010) posits that the so-called 'homosexual' man's identity was not construed in opposition to patriarchy, but he was mocked, for among the ancient Romans and Greek being sexually penetrated by another man invited butts of jokes since it was a sexual role preserved for the 'effeminate' boys and women, not 'real' men. Sebastian in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* also discloses that in his recent visit to Transkei, the people discerned his queerness and laughed it off not in an offensive way, but in a manner that shows warmth and acceptance.

Scholarly work on African sexualities, masculinity and femininity expressions demonstrate that the advent of colonialism and the Christian church altered the pre-colonial communities'

views on the body, bodily experiences (sensuality), desires and thoughts about sexual expressions. Nyanzi, Nassimbwa, Kayizzi and Kabanda (2011) point out that Baganda twin parents celebrated the twin 'ritual sex' as a way of celebrating the birth of twins and ensuring that the twins lived well after birth. However, the Baganda of Masaka district's perceptions of the ceremony changed 'because the colonial missionaries openly condemned twin ceremonies as satanic and barbaric celebrations, involving traditional ancestral worship and characterised by filthy obscenity as well as indulgence in promiscuity. Thus they lured colonial anthropologists to produce ethnographic accounts' (Nyazi et al., 2011:566). The casting of the Baganda sexual practices as satanic was also accompanied by the twin's parent's confession of having been part of the ritual. Nyanzi et al. (2011) point out that the confessions succeeded in undermining the cultural practise. Confession is one of the numerous repressive ways used by colonialism and Christianity to transform the 'lascivious' sexual desires of the Africans. By confessing and renouncing the twin ceremonies, the contemporary Baganda Christians 'deny themselves and their kin the authentic Kiganda savour of heightened awareness of sexuality, or cultural licence to articulate passion, lust, love, desire and desirability ' (Nyanzi et al., 2011: 556). The examination of colonialism and Christianity's impact on the Baganda 'sex rituals' by Nyanzi et al. (2011) gestures back to the past and shows the cause-effect relationship between pathologisation of black sexual pleasure and the morality narrative in order to 'retrieve' African sexualities and practices from the abyss of 'deviancy'.

Juxtaposing the past and the present in the exploration of black homosexuality is meant to map the attitudinal changes in the perception and construction of the homosexual. To achieve this, he uses the past to look at the present with the view of 'correcting' and challenging homophobic attitudes camouflaged through morality in the institutions of black manhood and culture. Tamale (2011:20) posits that 'most of what is understood as culture in contemporary Africa is largely a product of constructions and reinterpretations by former colonial authorities in collaboration with African male patriarchs'. Locked within the colonial and African patriarchal understanding of what culture and 'real' masculinity is, is the body and sexual pleasure. Because of this, Gopinath (2005) suggests that the black body is a sphere where romanticised versions of an exclusive heterosexual past are imagined and realised in the postcolonial imagination and construction of queer desires. To accomplish his aim, Duiker (2001) compares and contrasts Western morality with ancient African morality; the uses of homosexual acts within the specific cultures in which they occurred, as well as the

identity labels used by persons who engaged in these sexual alliances. This involves intertwining (homo)sexuality with the spiritual realm through the use of mythopoeia.

According to Lincoln (2006), mythology is ideology in narrative form, 'a sacred narrative explaining how the world and humankind assumed their present form ...' (Dundes 1984: 1-3). It may arise as either truthful depictions or over-elaborated accounts of historical events, as allegory for personification of natural phenomena, or as an explanation of ritual. Myths have been used to explain and validate the social institutions of a particular culture, as well as educate the members of that culture (Pequigney 2002). Pattanaik (2001:3) asserts that 'myths 'capture the collective consciousness of a people', and this means that they reflect deep-rooted beliefs about variant sexualities that may be at odds with repressive social mores'. This societal role has been posited for stories that include samesex love, which educate people as to the correct attitude to adopt towards samesex social activity and gender constructions (Zimmerman and Haggerty 1999). Myths often include homosexuality, bisexuality or transgenderism as a symbol for sacred or mythic experience (Spark 2002). Some myths have been denoted 'queer' for their rejection of heteronormative and binary views of gender (Pattanaik 2001). Consequently, Barthes (cited in Abodunrin, 2008:53) contends that 'myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession; it is an inflexion'.

Izugbara (2011) brings the subject of mythology, spirituality and sexuality closer to the African setting. Ozugbara (2011: 534) posits that:

> In Africa, the belief in the supernatural forces is omnipresent and long-standing. Regardless of religious predilections, education levels, class and other differences, Africans generally tend to believe in the existence of a pantheon of acting beings and forces operating in the realm of the super natural. Not only are these forces unavoidable; they permeate the understanding of phenomena in the continent.

Izugbara (2011) adds that the supernatural does not only permeate the mundane and shape its daily manifestations, but is also deployed by the poor to subvert hegemonic power. Sexuality is one of the terrains that intricately link the supernatural with everyday bodily pleasure, experience and expression in non-Western societies.

Izugbara (2011) points out that the relationships deities had with humans present one of the ways of understanding the links between sexuality and supernatural spheres. The

connectedness of certain forms of coitus with sacred power functioned as means to curb deviance, excesses; to unite the collective and reinforce the need for socially acceptable behaviour. However, deviance and excesses were permitted and explained through the viewpoint of the supernatural. Izugbara (2011) suggests the existence of inter-sexed deities that blurred gender lines in the Nigerian cosmology. He writes that 'although popularly imagined as female, Mami Wata does not really have a familiar sexual orientation; rather, she claims human spouses indiscriminately, regardless of their gender' (2011:543). *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* taps into these ancient mythologies in its quest to situate alternative sexualities in the contemporary social context. Duiker's (2001) usage of mythopoeia works at different levels. Firstly, it destabilises the gender binary system. As part of his spiritualised sexual quest to challenge gender dichotomies, Angelo offers a new myth of the origins of sex, 'largely a synthesis of the myth offered by Aristophanes in Plato's *The Symposium*' (Stobie 2007: 204). He suggests that:

> The first universal human beings were born of three sexes from the Sun, Earth and Moon. There were men. Women and hermaphrodites, each of these three sexes doubled over and united as a whole. At some point in the unknowable past they were brutally cleaved in two, doomed to go through history suffering the violence and anguish of separation, constantly longing to be united with the lost half of the self, the better self. Being cut in half resulted in the forms of heterosexuality from the hermaphrodites and homosexuality in both female and male forms, the amnesia of the brutal separation mutating into bisexuality in others. And since then we have all suffered the same fate. That is why some of us are what we are. That is why we are called moffies and faggots. Perhaps we took secret oaths with ourselves before we got separated, so that we would stubbornly remember that we were incomplete, the clue that it is someone of our own sex. (p. 380)

The above myth of the origin of sex accounts for the existence of alternative sexual identities. It is suggestive of the need to conceptualise sexes and their differences in a manner that does not put them in intelligibly neat compartments. Duiker sums up this myth by pointing out that 'the differences between men and women … are hard to resolve' (p. 380).

The contestation over the existence of two sexes and failure to conclude sexual differences is represented through Sebastian's characterisation. Similar to St Sebastian of Milan in Greek mythology, Angelo views Sebastian as a gay icon and a trendsetter who blurs sex and gender roles. Of himself, Sebastian says:

> I find pleasure in men. I'm considered a sissy, a queen, and I revel in the blurry path I travel. The men that come for me are not looking for a

> woman. Sometimes they are not even looking for a man. Perhaps they want someone who can resolve the differences between the two sexes. Perhaps they want a woman who ejaculates like a man. Or a man who can be penetrated like a woman. (p.337)

Secondly, Duiker's use of mythology also shows the importance of homosexual acts and men who were neither men nor women in ancient communities. In his employment of these ancient stories about homosexuality, Duiker (2001) avoids making absolute claims about homosexuality. He and his characters refuse to pin it down and wear it as a concrete sexual identity label. Though Sebastian revels at being a queen, he unsettles this identity and discourses around it through the use of statements that show both vagueness and precariousness of his claims. Every utterance he makes about homosexuality is marked by phrases like 'perhaps', 'I think', 'maybe', 'I am willing to bet that I am wrong'. Also, Angelo describes Sebastian's claims on homosexuality and mythology as erudite, spurious and esoteric as they unnerve anti-homosexual and heterosexual paradigms.

Duiker's resort to old myths on sexual ambiguity seems to indicate his unease with the biopolitics of colonialism and the contemporary cultures that straightjacket identities as means for erasure and subordination. Tamale (2011) explains that the freezing of sexualities and demonisation of pleasure was also fostered by contemporary research that tends to focus mostly on biomedical science, disease and violence. In the continent, the prevalence of HIV infections and death, which was largely attributed to African sexual practices and culture, brought back the subject of sexuality to the centre. The escalating rates of child and 'corrective' rape in South Africa also drew scholarly focus on the study of contemporary masculinities via the model of 'masculinity in crisis' (Reid and Walker 2005). In cases where researchers examined the topic, they shied away from the gendered aspect of sexuality, consequently missing its 'nuanced pluralities and meanings within communities' (Tamale 2011:23). The novel's examples of myths that demonstrate the connectedness of the spiritual and the corporeal as well as the sacredness of male homosexuality are fetched from very remote civilisations of the Greeks, Vikings and unspecified tribes of the pacific. Sebastian alludes to a certain tribe in South Pacific that practices fellatio as a ritual to strengthen warriors before a battle. In this myth, the warriors are separated from women and stay with younger boys to clean their compounds and to service them sexually. He also makes mention of the Greek god, Zeus, who in Greek mythology is depicted as father of gods and men. He equates the fellatio practiced by the tribes of the pacific to the Greek sexual relationship

between a man and his catamite, who was usually a male youth. According to Duiker's version, 'Zeus turned Ganymede into an eagle so that he could be his catamite, so that he could love him body and spirit because he was captivated by his beauty. He fell in love with him...' (p. 251). The names Horus and Michelangelo that Tshepo often uses to refer to himself in the novel are suggestive of his sexual ambiguity as well as the connection between the sexual and spiritual realms. Horus is an Egyptian god who had a sexual relationship with another god, Seth (Roscoe 1997). Michelangelo was a celebrated sculptor and poet of the renaissance period whose life and verses are characterised by sexual ambiguity. In the novel, Duiker points out that in cited instances, the men involved in these sexual alliances did not define and identify themselves as homosexuals. They were married and had children and the boys who fellated them grew up and assumed heterosexual married life.

In these myths, Duiker does not only demonstrate the importance of homosexual acts, but also the significance of bodily fluids. He adds that men

> Understand what semen is, what it does, what it means. Maybe by those young boys ingesting that semen they are ingesting something about the elders, the warriors. Maybe information is being transmitted. It's so ritualistic… celebrating the phallus. Perhaps the boys are in turn giving the men strength by doing that, honouring the phallus, which is really a hot sport energy. ... That suggests to me that people have always been aware of what feeding off each other meant. You know, to put it crudely, they understood the power of bodily liquids and secretions. Throughout history and time, semen, the preservation of semen through abstinence was encouraged by the wise. Goethe is said to have remained celibate while writing and countless other artists shut themselves away to draw on their own strengths, their own semen. And talking of the so-called primitive culture, some people have suggested that perhaps the Vikings were successful because they were friendlier than other people thought. You know, that away from home, family, wives, kids, and with the sea as a harsh companion they sought comfort and strength from each other by fellating each other. (pp. 151-152)

Epprecht (1994) also emphasises the sacredness of bodily fluids. He points out that the ancestors of the Shona people valorised semen. In the above myths, Duikers' 'fabulism' is that he has elevated the ancient worldview over the contemporary Cape Town setting (Cooper 1998: 16). According to Cooper (1998: 16) the multilayerdness of the village viewpoint, the past and the present enacts a situation where 'the impossibly old struggles with the appallingly new' homophobic sentiments. This is Duiker's way of creating a space of cultural 'legitimacy' for the homosexual black male in the contemporary era. He uses the past as a focal point of re-writing back variant forms of black male homosexuality into the socio-

cultural script of contemporary South Africa. Epprecht (2004) in *Hungochani*, Louw (2001) and Moodie's (2001) research on samesex relationships in the Witwatersrand and Mkhumbane, Durban, coupled with the latter scholars' depiction of Nongolozana demonstrates that homosexual acts and practices need not be thought of as practices of ancient civilisations. Pointing out homosexual sex acts within the 19th century African setting subverts the notion that homosexuality is un-African.

Epprecht's (2004) study offers examples of black homosexuality and its importance in the Southern African region, particularly Zimbabwe and South Africa in the 19th century. Epprecht (2004: 40-47) posits that various forms of homosexual acts/*ngochani* and sexual taboos such as ritual incest between a man and his sister/daughter were useful in strengthening the power of institutions of governance, such as the regiment and/or an increase of a man's personal wealth. In short, he writes that sexuality in pre-modern Zimbabwe clearly did not conform to the idealised heterosexuality that contemporary African leaders prefer to claim as African tradition. 'Certainly ancestors of the Shona and Ndebele of today placed great emphasis on sex as means of reproduction. The transgression of sexual norms could generate *muti* for good or evil' (Epprecht 2004: 48). In addition, Duiker suggests that in the past, sexually ambiguous men played a very important role in their societies. He cites an example of the berdache among the Native Americans. In a similar vein, Izugbara (2011: 544) points out that

> In Africa, homosexuality is also deeply surrounded by the supernatural belief. Among the Dagara of Burkina Faso, gays, lesbians and transgendered people are considered key to society's psychic balance. In the indigenous background, a homosexual Dagara occupied a performance role of intermediary between the world and the otherworld, sort of a gatekeeper.

The essence of Eppretch' (2004)argument is to show that '*hungochani*, a state of being intrinsic nature, rather than an opportunistic life-style choice' is as old as human kind, except it is read and interpreted differently within the specific communities in which it occurs' (Epprecht 2004: 3). The ancient peoples of Native America, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso and Rome understood it, and 'were willing to let it do its own thing' (p.255). Schnarch defines the berdache thus:

> The berdache is a person who is usually male but sometimes female or intersexed. This person assumes at least some of the occupations, dress, and other behaviours associated with the "other" (or different) sex, at least some of the time. This type of person is labelled by Native

> American societies with a title distinct from "man" or "woman," and the berdache has a recognized and accepted social status which is frequently rooted in mythology. They often serve a meditating role between men and woman; a position afforded by their distinctness and special spirit. This distinct and even unusual status also affords the berdache special spiritual power as the mediator between the spiritual and physical worlds. (1992: 110)

In addition, the berdache was honoured with the privilege of being a village shaman. The shamanic role allowed them to look at the social welfare of the community. They 'looked after children, gave advice, saw things that people didn't because they took them for granted' (p. 255). His relocation to Johannesburg offers Tshepo the Shamanic role. The money is not good, but he is happy to mend and care for children who come from the streets and dysfunctional homes. He sees a great treasure in them and commits himself to teach them the simplest things, for example, the worthiness of a smile, saying thank you and learning good manners. Apart from Tshepo and his role as a shaman, Duiker suggests that gay men are important and relevant to contemporary civilisations. He argues that unlike heterosexual married men, who are exhausted by various responsibilities in the family sphere and at work, gay men have a great deal of energy that they can use to plough back to ailing economies. Sebastian, West and Angelo reiterate this point through pointing out that most of the gay men who have come for their services boast of good education, money and influence and are achievers. The novel ends with the reconnection of Tshepo and Naisuib. Naisuib is a gift from the ancestral world and he guides him through his last days in Cape Town and urges him to relocate to Johannesburg. He tells Tshepo that in Johannesburg, he will meet men from far places and each one of these men bears certain gifts for him.

This chapter raises several complex issues regarding the expression of masculinities. These include contemporary neo-traditional cultures' homophobia; use of violence as an antithesis of 'real' masculinity; and varying forms of violence meted out on people conceived to be homosexuals. The different narrators' proximity in relation to the events narrated in the story and the vigour with which they challenge exclusive black male heterosexuality stand out as a sharp tools for confronting homophobia in the novel. Duiker (2011) uses madness as a two edged sword. On the one side, it cuts dominant masculinity off from violence. Duiker (2001)' representation of madness is used as a contrast to 'real' manhood. On the other side, he presents madness as a tool for blurring gender and biological difference. The blurring of sexual and gender boundaries ushers in pre-colonial esoteric views on homosexuality. These are views taken from ancient cultures of the Greek and the tribes of the Pacific.

Duiker uses farfetched examples of queer identities because of the view that contemporary neo-traditional African cultures have been corrupted by the homophobic biblical version of the Anglo-Saxon. Tshepo/Angelo does not end up as a male prostitute. Naisuib removes him from the stallion stable, rehabilitates him and he takes on the role of the shaman upon his arrival in Johannesburg. This opens up a complex web of queer identification and visibility that counters the western terms such as 'lesbian' and 'gay'. In addition, it places African queerness in a relational sexual continuum with heterosexuality. This conceptualisation contradicts Connell (1995) and Morrell's (2001) theorisation that presents queer masculinities in opposition to heterosexuality. The novel opens up newer spaces with regards to queer visibility in South Africa. A similar stance is found in female *sangomas*, traditional healers who do not identify themselves as lesbian, but as ancestral wives. The term, ancestral wife, is pervasive among *Sangomas* in Southern Africa. However, the sexual orientation of the ancestral wife is shrouded in secrecy in order to preserve the 'respectability' of *sangomahood* institution.

Much as Duiker's (2001) novel is persuasive, its sharpness is compromised by its failure to foreground itself on the diverse Southern African pre-colonial queer histories and mythologies. Gopinath (2005) suggests that the idea of situating queer desires within the oppressive structures is effective in the fight for queer visibility. Gopinath (2005: 14-15) points out that 'for queer racialised migrant subjects, "staying put" becomes a way of remaining with the oppressive structures of the home – as domestic space, racialised community space, and national space – while imaginatively working to dislodge its heteronormative logic'. Duiker's imagining and positioning of queer desires within the sacred space of shamanism embraced by Tshepo in Johannesburg is met with difficulty. Tshepo feels alienated by South Africans, but feels at ease with the different nationals he interacts with in Yeoville. As a result, the protagonist looks elsewhere for a source of inspiration and sustenance.

Chapter Five

Race, Social Mobility and Contemporary Masculinities in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the issues of gender inequality through the viewpoint of sexual multiplicity. The concerns of economic disparities, skewed racial relations, acculturation and contemporary middle class youth culture were mentioned in passing. This chapter builds its discussion on the above themes as they are implicated in the making and recreation of contemporary feminine and masculine 'coconut' identities. The metaphor of the coconut fruit with a brown skin and white interior is used to refer to a black person who has internalised white values/culture. Within the contemporary black youth culture, 'coconut' connotes 'ways of naming and labelling that both acknowledge and resist racial integration and assimilation to white culture'(Stadler 2008:355). In addition, this chapter examines the detrimental impact of internal colonisation with regards to the (re)creation of notions of black masculine and feminine subjectivities. It concerns itself with the examination of the above factors because they mediate in masculinity recreation across the spectrum of age, class and race. Specific attention is paid to 'coconut' strategies of masculinities and femininities creation and the father-son relationship. The father and son dyad and impact of internalised racism on the construction of identities are both read within the detrimental impact of racism on the black psyche as theorised by Fanon (1967) and Vincent (2008). The aim is to explore how Matlwa intervenes in the devaluation or overvaluation of blackness by white supremacist backlash in contemporary South Africa.

The contemporary literary sphere is not only used as a sphere to contest and defend the varying expressions of gendered identities. The domain of the mind's eye also tackles debates on cultural integration, economic transformation – its success and failure, media's representations of black and white cultures in the newly constructed suburbia enclaves, townships and desegregated city spaces. *Public Culture* (2004) is one of the scholarly journals with a special issue dedicated to the purpose of demonstrating that the 'post-apartheid' social and economic spheres have drastically changed since 1994 to the present, and continue to undergo the process of change. Contrary to the issue's proposition are Attwell and Harlow (2000) who describe the South African society as a society whose

mindset remains unchanged with regards to racial relations. In their research on *Mass Media, Culture and Identity Studies,* Jacob and Wasserman (2003) reiterate Harlow and Attwell's (2000) point of view. They put forward that 'exclusionary notions of identity, based on race and ethnicity, are still operating among certain sectors of post-apartheid South African society' (Jacob and Wasserman 2003:1). However, Nuttall (2004) takes a contrary view as she writes:

> This may be partially true in the economic sphere, although even this is not entirely accurate since, for instance, very recent studies are showing that South Africa's black middle class is now, for the first time, larger than its white middle class, a statistic which hardly suggests a stasis in the social structure of South Africa. *Certainly, neither recent South African fiction nor popular culture would suggest that this is the case*. (Nuttall 2004: 731-732) (added for emphasis)

It is worthwhile to note that as early as 2001 there were literary texts that refuted Nuttall's claims such as Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001). Some of these works include the film, *Miners Shot Down* (2014), and novels such as *Coconut* (2009*), Way Back Home* (2014), *Shameless* (2008), *Dog Eat Dog* (2004), and *Room 207* (2006) to name but a few. *Coconut* (2009) and *Miners Shot Down* (2014) depict that BEE policies economically benefit whites more than their black counterparts in South Africa. Cyril Ramaphosa in *Miners Shot Down* (2014) puts forward that BEE also birthed a new upper middle class of black men and women who front white businesses and are not in a position to make major decisions in these companies. These BEE executives act as a go-between the employer and employee. *Coconut* offers an example of Fikile's uncle who doubles as Silas Nyoni, CEO, and security guard at Lentso Communications.

Nuttall's (2004; 2009) optimistic but highly contested outlook on the contemporary era's transformation could be applauded for pointing at newer ways of reading the impact of colonialism on contemporary culture and identity formation. Nuttall (2004) proposes a manner of reading which does not reduce colonial confrontation and racial relations between the Europeans and Africans into binary opposites and proffers the concept of creolisation. Erasmus cited in Nuttall (2004: 733) defines creolisation as 'cultural creativity under conditions of marginality'. Nuttall (2004: 733) suggests:

> It seems to me that a 'creolite hypothesis' can be applied to aspects of South African culture archive, proposed as one set of questions amongst others in relation to the shaping of racial and cultural identity in South Africa, and offers a programme of possibility in relation to

> neglected questions and a point of interrogation directed towards a richly complex and extremely conflictual history in a future-oriented way.

Nuttall's (2004) proposed use of the creolite hypothesis in the reading of contemporary culture puts more emphasis on the violence which accompanied the process of creolisation, but seems to gloss over the negative psychological impact of creolisation on the creolised subject. Commenting on the process of creolisation in the American slave plantations, Hartman (1997) points out that the merging of the black and white cultures took place in the context of deep loss – loss of home, loss of rights, political status and overall terror. Nuttall (2004: 734) acknowledges that 'when considered historically, then, creolisation relates to the worst that *we* are capable of, the maintenance of human beings in the shadow of life and death' (emphasis added). Dyer (1997) expresses pessimism towards Nuttall's (2004) argument on racialism and shifting boundaries. Dyer argues instead that '*We* are often told that we are living in a world of multiple identities, of hybridity, of decentredness and fragmentation ... yet we have not reached a situation in which white people and white cultural agendas are no longer in the ascendant' (Dyer 1997:13). At the centre of these contrasting views on the process of creolisation is the politics of representation. Hall (1990:222) points out that 'though we speak, so to say, 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless, who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place'. It seems the 'we' represented in Nuttall (2004) speaks from a position of white and class privilege, whilst the 'we' in Dyer (1997) speaks from a position of the 'underprivileged' and is subjective in the sense that it speaks about the 'creolised' subject. However, this subject position is not treated as racial and class representational. Matlwa (2009) probes the creolised subject and interrogates the psychological impact of the process of creolisation in order to examine the manner in which coconut youths form ideas of the self and their culture in the contemporary South African era

In order to speak of attitudinal changes with regards to racial relations, the economy and cultural integration, this chapter examines character depictions from external to inner realities. This approach offers psychological insights of the characters' psychic formation which helps in delineating social interaction and relationships among blacks and whites depicted in *Coconut*. In addition, it also examines the negative impact of cultural hybridity and explores the complex ways of subjectivity creation used by the creolised subject to counter contemporary racism. This chapter tries to grapple with the following questions in its examination of the manner through which race and class mobility impact the creation of

youth male and female subjectivities in the novel: to what extent can we claim that contemporary white supremacist aesthetics of beauty are sexist and gendered, that is, do they psychologically affect black young males and females in a similar manner? Does race matter in the subjectivity creation of the 'born free' generation also referred to as the 'coconut' youths?

5.2 Novel Appraisal and Plot Structure

Kopano Matlwa is a medical doctor and author of two novels, *Coconut* and *Spilt Milk* (2010). *Coconut* is her debut novel. Both novels are similar in that they broach the themes of racial relations and their impact on the psyche and the South African social sphere. *Coconut* concerns itself with the cultural identities and the future of black South African 'coconut' youths. The novel excels as a literary text because of its effortless narrative technique. The story flows effortlessly without the writer's intervention and characters interaction and dialogue are probable. Matlwa identifies the reader of *Coconut* as 'child of my country', and dedicates the novel to this child. She envisages her readership to be young, black and born after 1994 when the collapse of apartheid opened doors to various forms of identification, racial interaction, black social mobility and the constitutional equality of cultures and languages. The contradictory nature of the present is one of the propelling factors that motivated Matlwa to write and dedicate *Coconut* to an imagined child of South Africa. Matlwa's 'child of my country' struggles with the complex and contradictory nature of cultural identities in the 'post-apartheid' era.

Coconut is a diary of two black teenage girls written/narrated through their different viewpoints on the issues of beauty, cultural assimilation, whiteness, blackness, opulence, poverty, family relations and desire. The two female protagonists in the novel, Ofilwe and Fikile, live lives that depict one of the troublesome wedge that separate the lives of contemporary South Africans – class. The former lives a plush Tuscan villa life at Little Valley Estate, while the latter lives a life of bare existence with her sexually abusive uncle at Mphe Batho Township. Fikile shares a one-roomed house in the backyard of Tshabalala's household. Ofilwe and Fikile' radically different life stories and experiences intersect at various points with regard to their outlook on South African white culture versus divergent neo-traditional South African cultures, language, aesthetics of beauty, racial relations, love and the media's role in the depiction of black and white lives.

Ofilwe and Fikile's characters converge and diverge in interesting ways that show the paradoxes of the contemporary 'post-racial' South Africa. The commonality between the two girls is that they both come from a society well described by hooks (1995:124) as a society where 'black acceptance of assimilation meant that a politics of representation affirming white beauty standards was being re-established as the norm'. This is also a social milieu where 'the needs of children who suffered various forms of discrimination and were psychologically wounded in families and/or public school systems because they were not the right color' are not addressed (hooks 1995: 122). Their parents neglect Fikile and Ofilwe. Fikile's mother committed suicide, thus leaving her in the care of a molesting uncle. Ofilwe has both parents who do not care about her. Her mother neglects her questions about her identity, culture and religion. She deems such matters as irrelevant. Her father is constantly absent, playing golf or meeting his other lovers. Both parents are immersed in their pretentious middle class life and trying to forget the past. Both girls bear psychological scars that are repercussions of racism in the contemporary era. Their neuroses result in self-hate seen in their need to be white. They both realise the effects of internalised racism in that Ofilwe embarks on a renunciation of whiteness and Fikile resigns herself to a refusal to confront the mess in her head. They also share an intense hatred of the other. They differ in that Fikile comes to serve Ofilwe and her family at Silver Spoon restaurant, a symbol of black middle class social mobility.

Coconut is episodic. It does not have a definite plot structure and ordering of events. The novel relies on the stream of consciousness and the diary modes of narration in order to create a sense of unity of place and time, with a view to link the past with the present. These techniques historicise the characters' lives. An incident that takes place in the present in the lives of the protagonists conjures other similar incidents and is used to speak about other similar or varying incidents. This mode of narration also helps create an illusion of a truthful depiction of the character's lived inner and external realities. These incidents are presented as Ofilwe, Fikile and Tshepo's journal entries – thought processes of the narrators and their dramatic enactment of exciting events in their lives. The plot of the novel is theme driven in the sense that each incident treats a certain theme in the novel. The thematic progression of these incidents lends the novel a convoluted plot structure.

Siponono's hair incident in church opens the novel. Ofilwe watches as the child plays with her hair plaited in cheap synthetic fibre. She accidentally pulls off a tuft of hair from her scalp and she cries. This hair incident reminds Ofilwe of the excruciating pain she experienced

while relaxing her hair as a child. She was forced to undergo this pain because her grandmother conflated beauty with straight long hair. This incident uses hair as a focal point because hair holds a significant position in racial identification politics and dominant views on the aesthetics of beauty. This scene confronts the reader with the taken for granted symbol of beauty and how it has been used to make the black woman feel odd and demeaned about her blackness. It confronts and shows the reader the limited options that black women have when it comes to the wearing of their hair. Hair and the way it is worn play a vital role in the staging of identity politics in South Africa and America. Apartheid South Africa used the pencil hair test to classify peoples and to determine racial (un)belonging (Nuttall 2004). Hair plays a major role in racial debates because black girls and women are discriminated at work and school due to having kinky hair. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) also grapples with the issue of black womanhood, aesthetics of beauty and identification in America. The protagonist, Ifemelu, is forced to relax her hair in order to get a job that she would not have otherwise got if she had attended the interview in her natural hair. After having her hair damaged by the relaxing cream, Ifemelu's white colleague at work quickly points out her 'uniqueness' as a black person because of the straightened hair. The uniqueness emanates from her acceptance of white standards of beauty, a flowing body of straight(ened) hair. Both novels challenge self-hate ingrained in black women, the notion that it is wrong for kinky hair to grow out of a brown little girl's scalp, therefore every tiny kinky hair must be singled out at Ous Beauty' salon and straightened with the pungent cream relaxer. Ofilwe sees this as a way of socialising Sponono into white culture through a negation her kinky hair. As result, she wonders what the parents are doing to the little brown baby.

After the church service, Ofilwe and her family go to eat breakfast at Silver Spoon, an up class cafe where all the most important people in Johannesburg meet for food and to negotiate high profile business deals. This is also a place where Fikile works. The Tlous eat their Sunday breakfast in this cafe. Ofilwe points out that her family is now short of one member, Tshepo, her older brother. He has stopped going to church and having breakfast with them. Tshepo's absence from these familial events stems from his discomfort with the cultural imperialism he sees in his community. Tshepo talks to Ofilwe about his distrust of the Christian religion and its relegation of Pedi pre-colonial spiritual beliefs to the periphery. Tshepo does not patronise the cafe anymore because he argues that Old Virginia's home cooked thin porridge is more satiating. Old Virginia is the Tlou's house helper. For Ofilwe,

eating at the cafe is a humiliating experience for her family. She points out that after so many years of patronising the cafe, the Tlou family still does not fit into the structure of the establishment. The cafe represents itself as a small environment and the owner, Miss Becky, knows everyone and relates to them very well through small conversations. However, she seems not to notice the Tlous. Also, the other patrons are oblivious of the Tlous' presence in the cafe. It appears this family are forcing themselves on the environment of the cafe. Gemina, Ofilwe's mother, has not yet learnt how to use fork and knife. Ofilwe's observation about her family's ill reception at Silver Spoon is reiterated by Fikile. She describes their reception in the following way: '"Fiks!" Miss Becky yells, pushing them towards me, clearly uncomfortable with the family' (p.165). The treatment of the Tlous at Silver Spoon brings to mind the struggles of the Younger family in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1995). Like the Tlous, the Younger family in the play battles with lack of acceptance in the white neighbourhood where Mama, the family matriarch, bought them a house with a life insurance check from the death of her husband. Before this family moves into the house, a member of the white neighbourhood comes over and tells them that blacks are not welcome. In the novel, Ofilwe points out that the whites in South Africa do not have the audacity to say it, but they do in the way they stare. Tshepo defines it as a blank stare that looks through him as if he does not exist. Ofilwe feels embarrassed and trapped within this place. These are some of the things that Tshepo is aware and critical of, hence his withdrawal from these degrading events.

The Tlous find the cafe filled to the brim and they do not have a place to sit. Miss Becky improvises a place for them and places them behind the door. Fikile who is the only waitress within vicinity ignores them and does not want to serve them as she continues to flirt with some older white male patrons. Miss Becky draws her attention and she reluctantly attends to them. She points out that she hates this particular black family because they smell of new money. They are a constant reminder of how far she is from her Project Infinity. Project Infinity is a timeless and long term project of self-reinvention that Fikile embarked on after she dropping out of high school. The aims and goals of this project will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs. Fikile points out that Ayanda, the absent male waiter, loves the Tlous. To Ayanda, the Tlou family represents the realisation of freedom and social advancement for the few black South Africans in the contemporary era. Their ill acceptance at the cafe which symbolically represents the economic capital of South Africa is the depiction of the contradictory nature of affirmative action through BEE which the economically dominant

whites created to advance the blacks, thereby trying to close the economic discrepancies between the two races in the contemporary era.

Ofilwe looks at Fikile's contemptuous attitude towards them and her mind picks up some of the humiliating incidents she endured at the hands of the world of whiteness which lures Fikile. Ofilwe wonders why Fikile is flirting with older white men in stale clothing. The manner in which Fikile treats them also reminds her of the story about pears and green apples that Old Virginia told Tshepo. The narrative uses an allegory of sameness and difference of a pear that despised other pears to appease apples. As these two fruits grew on the same tree, one apple plucked the traitor pear and it smashed to the ground. Ofilwe seems to create this story based on her experiences as a child steeped in white culture and friends who appraised her as a unique black girl who unlike the other black girls, seemed 'cool'. She received warnings from her peers and brother Tshepo about her naivety, but did not heed such warnings. Her comfort within her white friends is cut short by Clinton's evaluation of her lips and the laughter that follows it. The short story teaches a lesson about the effects of self-hate and the brutality of white culture that lures black youths and abruptly shuts them out because of blackness that marks their skin.

Ofilwe recalls that she and her family moved from Mabopane Township to Little Valley Estate. She and her brother began schooling at predominantly white schools. Tshepo goes to a boys only school where he is forced to begin in the first grade because he does not speak English to the satisfaction of the school's administration. Both children's lives are immersed in white culture. Ofilwe's immersion in white cultural values marks a childhood and early teen stage littered with episodes of humiliation at the hands of her white friends. She narrates two significant scenes that left her traumatised. The first is the kissing game, spin-the-bottle. In this game the players form a circle and one player in the middle spins a deodorant can. The spinner kisses whoever the bottle points at. Clinton Mitchley spins it and it points at Ofilwe. She reluctantly goes to the centre, closes her eyes tightly and pouts her lips in preparation for a kiss. Whilst in that position she hears Clinton protest: 'no ways! Her lips are too dark!' (Matlwa 2009: 45). In response to this protest Ofilwe says:

> I shifted back to my ready spot (No ways! Her lips are too dark!), unsure of what to do next (No ways! Her lips are too dark!), whispering the words to myself (No ways! Her lips are too dark), not believing that they were spoken words (No ways! Her lips are too dark!); live words (No ways! Her lips are too dark!); words that had

> been followed by an explosion of general laughter (No ways! Her lips are too dark!). (p.45)

The above incident captures the moment of the objectifying gaze which crudely shakes Ofilwe into the realisation that she is different from the rest of her peers because of her black lips. Fanon (1967) points out that the objectifying gaze ensnares and diminishes the ego in the sense that the black other becomes an object of perverse inquiry on racial difference and its connotations.

Fanon (1967) offers remarkable insights on the relationship between the psychology of the oppressed, cultural imperialism and language. He points out that one of the things that colonialism did was to possess the mind of the colonised, empty it of all its sense of the native culture's appreciation and content by denigrating it and casting it in terms that would relegate it to the margins. The Christian religion's sense of morality and decency took the place of most of the cultural practices of pre-colonial cultures. The colonial schooling system also played a significant role in the belittlement of pre-colonial languages by replacing them with the official language of the colonising culture. Fanon (1967: 18) remarks that 'a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards'. In the light of such propositions it is not surprising that Belinda, Ofilwe's friend, finds it imperative to teach Ofilwe the 'appropriate' English pronunciation. According to Belinda, it is important for Ofilwe to learn how to speak 'properly' so that other white children do not laugh at her. Ofilwe is undergoing a process of recreation following English cultural standards, a process similar to Toundi's in *Houseboy* (1966). After her mastery of the language, Ofilwe's world view, her relationship with her mother, brother and black peers is altered. She looks down upon her mother and describes her spoken English as ghastly. She cannot help her mother stand in a long bank queue because:

> I am smart and speak perfect English. [...] I spoke the TV language; the one Daddy spoke at work. I knew from very young age that Sepedi would not take me far. How Can I possibly listen to those who convince me otherwise? What has Sepedi ever done for them? Look at those sorrowful cousins of mine who think a brick is a toy. Look at me. Even the old people know I am special. At family reunions they do not allow me to dish for myself. (p.54)

In the above quotation, Matlwa presents the different ways in which language is used as a tool to denigrate African cultures, exalt colonial ones, discriminate, and wound the

'backward' non-speakers of English. The varying forms of humiliation and wounding that Ofilwe goes through at the hands of her white friends prompt her renunciation that ends with her separation from Belinda.

Ofilwe and the elderly generation's denunciation of Sepedi, its philosophy and cultural values is one of Matlwa's major concerns about the contemporary South Africa. However, she manages to shift this kind of thinking through the regeneration of Ofilwe and Fikile. It takes her brother Tshepo and some of her 'coconut' peers to awaken Ofilwe at her 16th birthday. Siphokazi and the other peers who have come to celebrate her birthday suddenly change the topic, languages flare from Zulu, sePedi, Setswana and Xhosa, and she feels left out of the vibrant conversations memorying home and distant cousins. She vows to collect every word diurnally. This is accompanied by her jettisoning of tenets of cultural imperialism couched as integration. Ofilwe rids herself of self-hate and denigration. Perhaps her father is aware of the contradictory identity lines that his daughter straddles but he turns a blind eye because he is hypnotised by newly acquired money and class status that make him strongly believe in white people's wit. In addition, these issues have no priority status for Mr Tlou because he is aware of the sacrifices that the older generation made towards the present and he wants to cement his gains. He tells Ofilwe that she must revive her relationship with Belinda because white people can teach her valuable lessons on the accumulation of wealth. As proof of Belinda's cleverness, he points to the huge tracts of land her family owns.

As Ofilwe renounces Englishness, Fikile tries hard to embrace it. She uses Project Infinity as her starting point. Project Infinity is hard to exactly pin down in terms of a working definition. According to Fikile, it represents 'something so endless and boundless. It came to represent all I strove for in life. It became a secret word, a charm I hung around the neck of my soul, the key to something limitless ... I was not exactly sure what Project Infinity was' (p.171). In summation, it is a quest for self-reinvention, whiteness and opulence whilst renouncing blackness and what it represents. Fikile uses the 'Manichean delirium' to differentiate between what she aims to be and achieve within her project (Fanon 1967). She tells teacher Zola that she wants to be white. According to Fikile, whiteness is associated with cleanliness, suburbia, and participation in the public sphere through the consumption of cultural artefacts that insinuate wealth. She associates blackness with the township space, dirt, theft/immorality, crudeness, poverty, weakness of the mind and laziness. Fikile offers an example of a 'sick' psyche whose disease is self-hate inculcated by exposure to English culture through popular magazines such as *Body, Catalogue Girl, Fly Girl, Allure, Panache,*

Spoilt!, Chic, Live Life, Gloss and *Girlfriend* which she has been reading since the age of 13. The names of these magazines allude to new self-stylisation of the feminine figure that Gqola (2013) calls the new South African black woman. The titles are also sensational as they allude to a life style larger than life through false promises of achieving riches and flamboyance. The consumption of these magazines makes her delusional. Of the magazines she says, 'the more I read, the more assured I was that the lives in those pages was the one I was born to live.... I'd seen pictures of another life, a better life, and I wanted it. So I walked out of school gates and never went back' (p.168). The magazines hastened and catapulted the beginning of Fikile's self-invention.

Through Ofilwe and Fikile, Matlwa (2009) offers a critique of a postcolonial nation which allows the denigration of its cultures and languages by opting for universal ideals of a global village culture. Both girls read these magazines. Though Ofilwe does not hold them in high esteem them the way Fikile does, she consumes and uses the magazine's ideals in a similar way. Ofilwe mentions that when she was a lot happier than her politically conscious self, she papered her room with posters of white faces who mattered in her life and the world. Stadler (2008) points out that the idea of a global village, universal culture and language is dystopian at its best. It is a new form of cultural imperialism in the sense that the exchange of languages and cultures is not symbiotic, but unidirectional with content moving from the centre to the periphery. This leads to the commodification of cultural practices.

Pecola, the child protagonist in *The Bluest Eye* (1970) wishes for long straight blonde hair, a pair of the bluest of eyes and a lightened skin so that she can be viewed and accepted as beautiful among her peers and neighbours that currently view her as ugly because she is too dark. To commence her assimilation project, Fikile buys herself a pair of blue contact lenses and long fake blonde hair. She also uses lemon light skin lightening cream. Marechera in *The House of Hunger* (1978) portrays a similar scenario through his depiction of female characters. He also points out that the effects of colonial subjugation on the male and female differ drastically though they are manifest at the psychic level. Matlwa (2009) concurs with Marechera (1978) on this issue. However, Fanon's (1967) view of magazines and comic books seems to show that humans are impressionable beings whose view of the world is interpreted through popular culture. Stadler's (2008) recent research on male magazines, masculinities and self-identification shows that masculinity expression is mediated by popular culture. The metrosexual male figure offers an example of a masculinity bombarded and shaped by imperial and capitalist meanings of manhood. Simpson (cited in Stadler 2008:

315) defines metrosexuality as 'the disposition of modern, urbane men who embrace the dandified accoutrement of self beatification'. Simpson (2008: 315) describes the metrosexual man as a young man 'with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis-because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are'. The existence of this male figure is evidence of the link between consumption and masculinity construction.

Critical readings of *Coconut* use racial tension, the contradictory and conflict-ridden processes of female identity re-creation, aesthetics of beauty, the privileging of whiteness over blackness, language and culture dialectics in the 'post-apartheid' South Africa as the focal points of scholarly engagement with the novel. Most attention is paid to the effects of acculturation on Fikile and Ofilwe. These readings problematise the exaltation of whiteness and the effect it has on the black female protagonists in relation to their identity formation (Spencer 2009; Raditlhalo 2010; Hlongwane 2013). Very little scholarly attention is paid to the psychological impact of white supremacy on the male characters although the effects of colonialism on the male subject are extensively examined and discussed in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). In the discussion that follows, we submit that *Coconut* does not only depict the nervous condition of the black female subject, but goes further to represent the psychological struggles and coping strategies that Ayanda, Tshepo and Mr Tlou invent when faced with crude and subtle forms of racism. The examination of the relationship between Tshepo and his father sheds more light on this matter.

5.3 Racialism and the Father-Son Dyad

The father and son familial bond in *Coconut* is depicted through the type of relationship that Tshepo and his father have, the type of masculinities they embrace. The type of relationship and masculinities that these two men embrace are both mediated by the socio-economic context of Mr Tlou's and Tshepo's work places. Mr Tlou co-owns Instant IT, a company that has recently won a post office tender through expensive bribery. After his grade 11 examinations, Tshepo works part time at Instant Fried chicken, first as a waiter and delivery boy. Instant Fried Chicken is not part of Little Valley Estate. It is located in Pine Slopes, 45 minutes' drive from Little Valley Estate. Matlwa (2009) uses Ayanda and Tshepo's employment to broach the issue of unchanging racial prejudice of the white population who patronise the hospitality industry in the novel. Matlwa's (2009) use of the private/public space of the hospitality industry is vital as this industry's management is predominantly white and the waiters are all black. Matlwa (2009) depicts this space as the most abusive towards black employees. Silver Spoon cafe and Instant Fried Chicken premises are private spaces in

that the waiters interact with the patrons on a private or individual level while serving a particular table. The novel, *Coconut* depicts scenes of covert and overt contemporary racism through clandestine utterances and ill-treatment of black employees by the white employer and patrons.

The reader learns of Tshepo's horrendous experiences at work through Ofilwe. She first mentions that Tshepo has a part time job and she wonders why because he is the type of person whose existence depends on things that challenge his intellect rather than following orders as his present work dictates. On his first day at work, Tshepo comes home and tells his mother that he had a pleasant day. Ofilwe does not believe it. She reasons that there is nothing to feel great about when one cleans restaurant tables. Her suspicion is confirmed when she 'stumbles' upon Tshepo's diary. She reads it and tells the reader about her brother's actual experiences of his first day at work. In his diary, Tshepo records the abuse of the staff by the management of Instant Fried Chicken. He notes down that on the first day at work he did not find Isabella, the lady who offered him the job through the email he sent. He finds a short Indian man who introduces himself as Sir Jonathan. After a while, Isabella arrives and the atmosphere in the kitchen changes. Tshepo says,

> The room temperature plummets. I feel her before I see her. The chorus comes to an abrupt stop. Sis Giant, attempting to jump off the counter and throw her coffee down the sink at the same time, causes everything around her to vibrate violently. Poor Pinki drops a tray of breasts into the searing oil. Jonathan yells ... She is irritated. She screams in an unfamiliar accent, that table No. 5 asked for lemon and herb, but we gave them schwit Chilli. Schwit chilli? She asks us in between profanities, why is it that we have difficulty distinguishing between the two, and whether it is because we have a crèche-school level education. (p.27)

Isabella's language abuses, wounds and marks off the black employee as the 'Other'. She casts the 'Other' as impolite, uncivilised, 'lazy, ungrateful people who deserve nothing' (p.28). Tshepo feels enraged by Isabella's attitude towards the staff. He goes to the kitchen and urges the staff to urgently raise this issue with Isabella. They unanimously agree that what he is saying is true, but they lack the power to confront her about the abuse. Vincent, the elder male worker says to Tshepo, 'these Model C children know nothing of the real world. They are shocked by the ways of Umlungu' (the white person) (p.29).

Tshepo steps out of the kitchen and waits tables. The contemptuous attitude confronts him once more. He records,

> She looks up. Our eyes meet or at least I think they do. 'Good morning ma'am', I genially greet, picking up the salt cellar I am sure she does not know has dropped off her table. Does she not see me? Perhaps she has a great deal on her mind. That look, or rather lack thereof, sticks with me throughout the day, maybe because it is foreign or maybe because it is one I get over and again as I move from one table of milky faces to another. Do these people not see me, hear me, when I speak to them? Why do they look through me as if I don't exist, click their fingers at me as if it is the only language I understand? (p.29)

Alongside Tshepo is Ayanda. He also has a privileged family. Ayanda co-works with Fikile at Silver Spoon. His experiences at work are similar to Tshepo's. Fikile and Ayanda's relationship is not a congenial one because he is critical of the way Fikile is treated by whites and her obliviousness to the skewed nature of the relationship. Fikile dismisses him and captures a dramatic scene between Ayanda and a white lady. It is dramatic in the sense that Matlwa (2009) presents it in a dramatic mode where the narrator's voice is suspended in favour of dramatic dialogue between the characters. The argument between Ayanda and the white lady breaks out because of the lady's impossible order. She wants a cheese sandwich without dairy products. Ayanda tries to explain, but the lady concludes that she is in the right and Ayanda in the wrong because he belongs to the group of 'you people' who cannot follow instructions (p.150). Like Tshepo, Ayanda feels that he needs to teach this lady a lesson on black dignity and respect. Ayanda backchats the white woman who seals the exchange with tears. Fikile rescues the day and plays the black woman's role of emotionally and socially looking after the white woman. Fikile is not spared such abuse; she is too naive to read it as such. Perhaps she plays the clever fool because she does not know the manner through which Project Infinity will present itself. She is the clever fool in the truest sense for she has convinced herself that Paul, the old white man in stale clothing, is a version of her dream project though Paul's friend tells her that Paul's sexual advances towards her are signs of jungle fever. Jungle fever refers to a scenario where a non-black person is sexually attracted to black people. Originally, it was used when a white woman dated black men, but now it could refer to a white man who thinks black women have heightened libido and hence dates them. Fikile represents the psychopathology of the colonised subject in Fanon (1963). Upon exposure to the white world at 13 years old, she becomes envious of Uncle. To satiate her envy, she throws herself into the world of magazines and Silver Spoon that push her to want to possess not only the opulence that comes with white privilege, but the white man.

The above narrated friction between Ayanda, Tshepo, the patrons of Instant Fried Chicken and Silver Spoon points out that apartheid shielded black and white people from acknowledging and confronting their differences before the demise of 'post-apartheid'. The new dispensation opened up varying forms of racial prejudice and stereotyping that both races concealed from each other. When these 'truths' about the other are played out in the 'post-apartheid' era they leave people bruised. Tshepo, Ayanda and Fikile's bruises are not different from Lauren and Nosizwe's. Speaking of apartheid and its delusionary ethics or lies, Vincent posits that:

> One of the things that apartheid did, as the word implies, was to separate people spatially. It was one of apartheid's obvious and axiomatic 'achievements' that blacks and whites had limited experience of one another. It is often assumed that it was only whites who lived 'sheltered' lives during apartheid but the reality is that the whole point of apartheid was to separate everyone from everyone else. This had many obvious unfortunate effects but, apartness was also a kind of protection. ... It is one of [the] ironic features of apartheid's demise that this form of protection has fallen away and the full brunt of racism is experienced in situations of contact with the racial 'other'. If apartheid was about keeping people 'in their places' then the present moment can be understood as characterised by struggles to define place. These struggles include the processes of withdrawal, renegotiation of meaning, appropriation, and, [most] importantly, the emergence of new legitimizing narratives of separation and exclusion. (Vincent 2008:1442)

The above quotation is taken from Vincent's 'The Limitations of 'Inter-Racial Contact: Stories from Young South Africa'. In this article, Vincent discusses the impact of interracial contact among university students. Vincent's (2008) point of view on apartheid and its functions theoretically illuminates certain areas pertaining to interaction between the black and white characters in *Coconut*. The friction witnessed between Ayanda and the white woman patron at Silver Spoon offers an example of such. The racially perceptive youths feel the brunt of racial prejudice and its dehumanising gaze outside their familial spaces at work where they interact with white people. Vincent points out that the protection offered by the space of the home is temporal and meaningless if examined in the broader context of apartheid in South Africa. The same could be said about the protection that home offers to the characters depicted in *Coconut*. Because of the temporality of the protection, Vincent's (2008) respondents point out that they only feel black and coloured in the proximity of white people.

Though useful to a certain extent, Vincent's (2008) thesis glosses over the foundational fictions that supported apartheid and its psychological effects on the colonised when she argues that apartheid protected people from each other. Fanon (1967) puts forward that the inferiority and dependency complex of the colonised is as a result of contact with white culture which always constructs the identity of the native in opposition to itself. The colonised 'other' is deemed inferior, made aware of it, and told that s/he needs to conform to the coloniser's culture to be deemed human. This results in neurosis, an affliction of the mind the colonised lives with on a daily basis. Neurosis is not only triggered by physical contact with the white culture. The shared stories of abuse narrated in the township also shape the manner in which the black child reacts to physical contact with whiteness.

From the depicted youth's experience, it is apparent that the process of subjectivity formation links the psyche and the physical realms. *Coconut* represents the varying levels of apartheid's impact on both races which gets dramatised in the 'post-apartheid' era. In the contemporary epoch, it comes in the form of amnesia which signposts the mourning of the passage of a history and time when whites were in control. The amnesia and need to forget is witnessed in the use and occupation of space. Social space and the manner in which it is used and experienced by South Africans in the present era plays a vital role in identity re-creation (Vincent 2008). Mbembe (2004) adds to this point by pointing out that in the wake of the collapse of apartheid the contemporary city space has opened up ways to express nostalgia, amnesia, displacement, substitution and hysteria. The use of space in the novel expresses 'displacement 'and clash of identities and cultures. Ofilwe points out that unlike the other houses from which waft the smell of sautéed prawns and ricotta stuffed pasta with mushroom sauce into the drive way, the inside of Mr Tlou's Tuscan brick villa sends off a sharp and contrasting smell of *mala le mogodu* (tripe). Ofilwe is conscious of what other people see and smell when they peep through the walls of the Tlou residence. The cultural clash witnessed in the novel also depicts the entrapment of the Tlous in the villa. It is ironic that this family relocated in search of freedoms, social mobility and cultural integration offered and guaranteed under the new dispensation. However, the relocation from the township becomes displacement in the sense that it limits the promised freedoms. Mr Tlou is reminded that he is not free to practise his culture as it clashes with the dominant white culture of the estate. His performance of a rather corrupted version of the traditional thanksgiving ceremony violates rules of the Tuscan Culture. The contemporary Tuscan architecture that characterises the new built environment of the 'post-apartheid' Johannesburg

represents amnesia in that it recaptures and relives the lost glory of ancient Eastern European civilisations. Mbembe (2004) puts forward that this type of architecture symbolises the white's hysteria and denial of passage of time and history. The occupation of these enclaves such as Little Valley Estate offers amnesia to its occupants. To the Tlous, it offers amnesia from the apartheid past. Ofilwe points out that the common denominator amongst Gemina and her friends is the need to forget.

Though unaware of his children's frustrations, Mr Tlou is aware of his family's entrapment. He wears a veil of pretence and is perpetually absent from his home. Ofilwe says her father plays golf on weekends. It is apparent that he does not only play golf on weekends but entertains mistresses. Instead of engaging with the challenges he is facing, Mr Tlou effaces himself from his family and the narrative. He intoxicates his mind with another different sort of power – pleasure and material things, to a point that his wife and the other women he sees function as objects for nursing his fragile and bruised ego. His ability and power in the game of pretence is well illustrated by Ofilwe in the following paragraph:

> Through the window I see Daddy in the garden. It is a deliberate garden, meticulously arranged into several mazes of cleanly trimmed hedges bordering rugs of intense red and pink flowers which flatter the terracotta tiled roof when they are in bloom. Standing in the heart of if it in his Sunday suit, where all the mazes lead and where a clay boy wees into a stream of stones and pebbles below, Daddy resembles a character in a world of pretend ... I know my father is on his cellular phone. I have known him for too long to kid myself into believing he is enjoying a moment of respite among the birds and shrubbery. Oh, how picaresque it looks, Daddy, at home in the garden. (p.78)

Pretence is the most defining feature of middle class life depicted in the novel. Ofilwe and Fikile dismiss Mr and Mrs Tlou because of such pretence. Fikile and Ofilwe are not spared from this vice, though they both transcend it. The white lady who orders a cheese sandwich without dairy products and claims to be more educated and knowledgeable than Ayanda offers another case of appearances and reality.

The literary works published during the apartheid era renounce the township space as a black residential area. But they subtly point out that to a limited extent, the township protected the black subject from white harassment and racial objectification. The barricaded township in *Hungry Flames and Other Stories* (1986) temporarily provides a place of safety for the school children activists. The same can be said of the South African rural space. However, because of the Boer and the British's laziness and high dependence on black labour, the

blacks were exposed to the dehumanising effects of the whites' culture of apartness (Mbembe, 2004). Apartheid helped to foster certain myths and stereotypes of blackness and whiteness as seen in the privileging of whiteness over blackness in the novel. *Coconut* dramatises and critiques these myths. It also offers alternative identities that the characters can recreate. At home Ayanda and Tshepo feel better because they become visible to their siblings and feel human again, but the dehumanising invisibility they are subjected to affects them. They devise coping strategies which enable them to carve their place and sense of being. As a result, Tshepo writes his pain in his diary; his father effaces himself from the family and directs his anger/energies elsewhere, including extra marital affairs; Fikile's uncle pathetically cries most of his evenings and channels his anger into the sexual abuse of his niece, Fikile; and Ayanda uses confrontation to assert himself. How does the process of a new subjectivity re-creation impact on their relationships within the private and public spaces of work and home? An attempt at answering this question will analyse the father-son relationship as depicted in the novel.

Fanon (1967) and Gopinath (2005) offer valuable insights that shed some light on the understanding of the father-son dyad depicted in the novel. These scholars also demonstrate how the colonial and postcolonial social and economic contexts impact the father and son relationship and their re-creation of masculine subjectivities in the private and public spheres. Fanon and Gopinath make sense of the father-son relationship via the Freudian oedipal complex. Fanon (1967) points out that though the oedipal complex has been put forward as a universal phenomenon, it does not directly apply to cultures that have suffered colonial onslaught. Fanon puts forward that in the case of (post)colonial contexts, the son and father dyad is fraught with contradictions because of the father's phallic estrangement. In the (post)colonial contexts, the son cannot identify with the father figure because the black father has no authority. Ndlovu (2011) puts forward that the son rebels from the father because of the manner through which the father appropriates negative remnants of (post)colonial masculinities such as violence and absenteeism in the home. A father can be absent because of neglecting his parental or conjugal roles in the family. Earlier on I highlighted Mr Tlou's absenteeism in his family as due to his interest in golf and extra marital affairs. Because of his absence, the mother, Gemina, becomes a central parent in the lives of the children. Ofilwe points out that Tshepo is her mother's favourite child. Ofilwe and Gemina are both aware that Tshepo is brilliant and multi-talented. In his dairy, Tshepo talks about his mother a lot. He mentions that his mother says he can be anything he wants to be. Some of Tshepo's diary

entries are represented as epistolary notes addressed to the mother, for instance, his first awful day at work. In the diary, he opens up to his mother and tells her the truth as opposed to the lies he tells at the dinner table. In this instance the reader witnesses the son's identification with the mother figure. The mother and son identification does not translate to Tshepo's libidinal investment in the father figure, thereby resulting in queerness. The Freudian oedipal complex does not apply in this scenario. In the novel, the son and father relationship is thwarted by the masculine ideals embraced by Mr Tlou. The same can be said of the father and daughter relationship depicted in the novel. Mr Tlou's subjectivity is linked to the urban space and the unlimited opportunities it seems to offer. These include immersing his children in white culture and inculcating it in them through taking them to exclusively white schools, encouraging them to have white friends and to take part in the cultural traditions of the Estate such as sleepovers and his family's patronage of Silver Spoon cafe. Unlike his wife who maintains ties with the Township through attending funerals and acting as a midwife, Mr Tlou cuts ties with the Township and its people altogether. Like Ofilwe says, the relocation to Sandton is his 'rustic escape from the rat race' (p.75). Mr Tlou's outlook on whiteness and its culture depicts the 'nervous condition' of the black man in the contemporary era. His constant reminder to Ofilwe of how good the Johnsons are reveals his subconscious yearning for whiteness. His consumption of material goods – type of car, music, career path for his children, and choice of leisure and sporting activities are ways of making up for his inadequacies, failure to fit into the world he has immersed himself in.

Though Mr Tlou has everything that suggests wealth and economic stability, he is like any other black man such as Tshepo and Ayanda who are carrying racial baggage. They constantly have to prove to the white world that they are intelligent, if not better than the white person. Vincent (2008:1444) outlines three different ways used by black people to engage racism, such as yielding to the dominant culture; a simultaneous rejection of the dominant culture and restoration of a romanticised version of the native culture; and 'radicalisation in which individuals come to engage with the dominant culture on more equal terms'. Mr Tlou has surrendered to the dominant white culture and strives to fit in, though his freedom is limited by it. His son is aware of his father's failures hence the rejection of the father figure. He is aware of the fact that his father is a misfit in the microcosm society of Little Valley Estate. The lack of his father's authority is proven when Tshepo receives a letter that states that his family has contravened the laws of the Estate by slaughtering animals during the thanks giving ceremony. The family members disperse after this letter and the

traditional beer brewed for the ceremony is accidently spilt. All these events unfold at a time when Tshepo's consciousness about cultural imperialism has been awakened by the racist gaze and Isabella's indifference towards the workers.

In his bid to reclaim a new Pedi culture identity and denounce white culture, Tshepo uses mysticism to invoke a romanticised 'African' culture through poetry that seeks to rebuild a pre-colonial past which dignifies blackness and what it stands for. His choice of career paves a path into this process. However, Mr Tlou sees Tshepo's career as a disgrace, probably because in Mr Tlou's eyes, cultural workers do not make the same amount of monetary success as actuarial scientists. Also, he considers African Literature as less challenging, hence his labelling of Tshepo as a coward who runs away from challenging situations. Two notable things happen in the scene where Tshepo, Gemina and Tlou disagree on Tshepo's choice of career. Mr Tlou uses monetary gain to prove to the whites that blacks can be a success story just like whites and that is why he wants his son to study actuarial science. Tshepo is aware of his capabilities as well as his father's. He is appreciative of his achievements at high school such as his private school acquired articulation and diction. He wants to use these to show Isabella that he does not have crèche level of education. However, Tshepo wants to use his education in a different way – to write and to speak to people about the importance of black cultures and contemporary racism. The use of education and success subtly depicts a sense of 'disidentification' (Gopinath 2005: 68). According to Gopinath (2005), disidentification is 'the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works for and against dominant ideology' (p.68). The son rejects the narrative and masculinity that possess economic 'success' but lacks cultural freedom. Tshepo's rejection of the type of masculinity that his father espouses is based in that men like his father are co-opted in the denigration of pre-colonial languages and cultures. Sky, Palesa's father, embraces Thepo's consciousness concerning cultural assimilation. He thinks of home schooling his little girl because he is worried by his daughter's refusal to speak a single Xhosa word. Sky tells Fikile that he was frightened by what he saw at Palesa's school. He says, 'standing at the edge of the playground, I saw tiny pieces of America, born on African soil. I saw dark skinned- people refusing to be associated with the red soil, the mud huts and the glistening stone of beads they once loved' (p.190). Tshepo's rejection of his father's success and acculturation does not re-situate or tie black South Africaness to the township as symbolised by Mabopane. His search for the past re-creates a different version of 'coconut'

masculinities. He offers an alternative' coconut' identity grounded in neo-black African cultural identities, a version of masculinity described by Stadler (2008:355) as 'coconuts that do not have white centres: they are chocolate all way through'.

In this chapter, I looked at the various levels at which Matlwa engages contemporary racism and acculturation. I presented that the issue of the nervousness of the 'coconut' and older generation's psyche is visible in both males and females in the novel. The difference lies in the strategies used by each to counter the denigration of African languages and neo-traditional cultural practices. The novel's focus is on the ways through which the coconut generation recreates their subjectivities in the face of contemporary white privilege and racism. Matlwa does not offer solutions to the problem of acculturation, but offers unsettling alternatives that question the uneven development of the contemporary South African school curriculum. Palesa's father is pressed between the two contradictory alternatives. On the one hand, is home schooling that does not fully nurture the cognitive development of the child. On the other hand, is the Model C School that equips the child to equally compete against white children of her age, but teaches him/her to look down upon her mother tongue, like Palesa does. The second alternative involves a recreation of the 'coconut' masculinities and femininities. Matlwa (2009) presents the reader with newer 'coconut' identities in the four youths – Ofilwe, Ayanda, Tshepo and Fikile. These 'coconuts' are brown inside and out. They are brown inside and out in the sense that they are grounded in neo-traditional African values though immersed in the white culture.

Chapter Six

Masculinity Re-creation in the Post-Apartheid City Novels of Kgebetli Moele and Niq Mhlongo: *Dog Eat Dog*, *After Tears* and *Room 207*

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters focused on the deconstruction of whiteness by depicting its negative psychological impact on the 'born free' youth. I suggested that the novel proffers a brown centred coconut as an alternative to cultural homogeneity and universalised blackness. Whilst *Coconut* uses black class privilege, race and a predominantly female psyche, voice and viewpoint to contest the nature of contemporary transformation in South Africa, the same cannot be said of Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) and *After Tears* (2007) and Moele' *Room 207* (2006). The three 'post-apartheid' novels discussed in this chapter contest the nature of transformation and/or lack of it from the viewpoint of the underprivileged black male youths. Whereas *Coconut* captures the voice of the 'born frees', the above three novels capture voices of young men born during apartheid, but who come of age after the official demise of apartheid. These male youths look forward to reap the rewards and promises of the newly 'democratic' society in their lifetime. For these youths, the city does not only offer freedom from parental guardianship, but offers new opportunities of social advancement, financial success and independence meant to improve their lot. In addition, it is also seen as a gateway to the re-creation of a youth culture and identities aligned with the times and city environment.

In these novels, the assertive black male figure is used as a barometer to gauge and contest the nature of social and economic transformations. These novels do not primarily use construction of gender and its expressions as a focal point. But if we look at masculine and feminine identity expressions as repetitive acts within the various sets of relationships that the young men and women have amongst themselves and social institutions, then these three novels have something to offer with regards to construction of gendered identities among the youths. This is more so because literary works about citiness in the colonial and postcolonial era depict city citizenship as a gendered phenomenon. This chapter examines how the city space and youth culture shape contemporary black youth identities. This is studied through identity mediating factors such as popular media and culture, space occupation and use, class, epistemes of gender, contemporary social, economic and political (un)transformations.

Contrary to the previous chapter, this one examines youth masculinity (re)creation outside the objectifying racial gaze and white culture. This is not meant to conceal the influence that race and racism continue to exert on the construction of black masculinities in the contemporary era. Though the racial past is depicted as one of the ways through which the youths have come to know themselves and their relationships to the urban economy and to stage a contestation of their marginal existence, it does not pervasively permeate the mundane. This approach constructs the youths as agents in their own lives, agents who do not act impulsively in reaction to imagined racism. Consequently, they take responsibility and improve their circumstances by staging a contestation of transformation in the economic and social realms.

The prominent feature among the novels under study is the ubiquity of the *tsotsi* (hustler) depicted through the characters of Dingamanzi Mhlongo, the protagonist in *Dog Eat Dog*; Bafana Kuzwayo, the protagonist in *After Tears*; and the six male protagonists in *Room 207* namely Noko (the narrator), Sibusiso also known as the Zulu-boy, Modishi, Molamo, D'nice and Matome. This chapter suggests that Niq Mhlongo and Kgebetli Moele use the contemporary hustler as a trope of masculinity expression that seeks to question and contest the nature of contemporary economic transformation using the viewpoint of black youths from underprivileged backgrounds. By presenting this proposition, this chapter signals that the study of the contemporary hustler as a trope of masculinity expression and contestation of transformation in fiction is linked to the earliest depictions of the hustler in popular culture and media such as in the *Drum* magazine. In our attempt to read the hustler as a subversive male figure in the contemporary fiction and how it is used to question the perceived lack of economic transformation, this chapter grapples with the following questions: what sort of socio-economic factors shaped the creation, use and celebration of the hustler figure in fiction and popular media published during apartheid? To what extent do the contemporary socio-economic spheres resuscitate and propagate the hustler? How do these novels use and celebrate the hustler as a subversive figure? How do the contemporary inner city and township spaces reshape the hustler's personality and relationship with other men, women and institutions of gender? Can the new hustler be celebrated as a newer masculinity alternative such as the renaissance man or brown centred coconut?

6.2 *Dog Eat Dog* and *After Tears* - Plot Summary and Thematic Concerns

Nicholas Mhlongo who was launched to his readers as Niq, is a Soweto born journalist and novelist. He has published three novels, testimony to his growing literary prowess. His debut

novel, *Dog Eat Dog*, was published in 2004, *After Tears* in 2007 and *Way Back Home* followed it in 2014. His novels are about Soweto and the people of Soweto. Mhlongo's publications of the first two novels filled a void left by two notable South African writers, Mpe and Duiker. In subsequent years, Mhlongo was joined by a host of other black South African writers such as Kgebetli Moele, Siphiwo Mahala, Nthikeng Mohlele, Fred Khumalo, Mtutuzeli Nyoka, and Thando Mgqolozana to name but a few household names in South African literature of English expression.

Mhlongo considers himself a mouthpiece of the downtrodden ever since his undergraduate days at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) between 1994 and 1997. It does not come as a surprise that Bembe (2011) dubs Mhlongo the 'poignant voice of the young post-apartheid South African kwaito generation writer'. *Kwaito* is a musical genre that emerged in Johannesburg, South Africa in the 1990s. His works are described as a 'poignant voice of the *kwaito* generation' in the sense that Mhlongo and his peers came of age during the golden days of *kwaito* music. This musical genre became a signature for South African symbol of blackness and 'authenticity'. In addition, it celebrated the township youth culture in the aftermath of apartheid. Mhlongo uses snippets of famous *kwaito* songs in the novel, *Dog Eat Dog*. At another level, his works are hailed as 'poignant' in that like Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969), Mhlongo's oeuvre depicts the dystopia that the ideal 'rainbow nation' has become under the leadership of the ruling black elite. In his works, he suggests that the 'official demise' of apartheid has opened up newer forms of apartheid in South Africa structured around class.

The novel's title, *Dog Eat Dog*, alludes to the hard knock life of black students inside and outside the university. Through the depiction of financially struggling students and those who have taken to street vagrancy after exclusion from Wits, the novel shows that life outside the 'comfortable' Wits University campus is hard for poor black students. The black students are segregated by the university's administration in racial and financial terms. The lecturers are implicated in subtle racism. Dingamanzi suggests that the phrase 'non-racial democracy' is illusive in the lecture halls because of the unequal treatment of black and white students by white lecturers at the university. The name Dingamanzi is very ironic when one reads it against the backdrop of the novel's contestation over social and economic transformations within and outside the university campus together with the experiences of the protagonist. The name, Dingamanzi, is a Zulu word that translates to 'the one who needs water'. In the context of the novel, the protagonist is in a quest for different forms of water. Dingz, as he is

popularly known among his peers, is in the quest for life sustaining water in the form of tertiary education. The plot of the novel and its events are centred on the manner in which he ensures his stay on campus in spite of his shortcomings and 'irresponsible' behaviour. The novel stresses the importance of education because it is the only way that Dingz can access the South African dream of success through social mobility.

Dog Eat Dog is an urban thriller novel based on the experiences of the rogue or hustler, Dingz. It uses suspense, thrill and humour to engage with problems of 'post-apartheid' social formation. More than anything, this novel contests the disparities between the city and the Township as well as subtle forms of racism witnessed in the 'post-apartheid' era. It treats black male identity formation as a secondary theme. Because of its fast-paced style and the need to capture the adventures of Dingz, the novel touches on an array of subjects and features too many voices at once. For example, it captures the voices of voters, their reasons for voting and notions attached to the concept of freedom from a beggar to intellectual understanding of the term. As a result, it neither engages with the issues it raises nor fully develops its characters. The novel broaches themes such as xenophobia, campus racism, university failure, peer pressure, acute poverty of some black students on campus, sex, HIV/AIDS, poverty of township life, love, friendship, crudeness of taxi drivers, the life-threatening conditions of the taxis, violence as a means of expressing manhood and expectations of the poor electorate post-1994. The novel's concern with the meaning and definition of freedom and democracy from the viewpoint of the public and its expectations as well as the philosophical point of view render this novel a sharp tool for questioning and contesting transformations. The background of *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) is the 1994 first democratic election in South Africa. This is marked by Dingz's excitement about casting his vote for the first time, the elections after party to be held in the Township, and the prospect of getting a lover to celebrate the day.

Dog Eat Dog (2004) is the story of a young man caught between two worlds. On the one side is the city, (Wits University campus, the YMCA university residence quarters for male students also known as the Y), with its vibrant youth culture and opulence. On the other side is the township with its concomitants such as poverty, drudgery of the township life, drunkenness and appalling squalor. The pathologisation of the township is a political stance whose history spans the apartheid days to contemporary black South African fiction and music. It is a contestation of space and its occupation legislated through the group areas act of 1950. It marked the developed sections of the city as a preserve of white occupation, whilst

earmarking the underdeveloped homelands and reserves as well as the crowded township for black occupation. *Dog Eat Dog* and *After Tears's* unpalatable depiction of the township connotes the rejection of the township as a space that signifies black authenticity; and contests its underdevelopment.

The novel opens with a scene in which Dingz is reading a third letter from the Wits bursary office informing him that he does not qualify for funding. He motivates himself through reggae music and resolves to go back to the office to appeal the decision. Armed with anger, courage, wit and lies, he storms the bursary offices. According to him, lies are the only language that the whites of South Africa understand. This statement alludes to institutionalised lies used by the Afrikaner minority rule in South Africa and as a justification for racism. Various forms of emotional blackmail couched in the contemporary racial politics accompany Dingz's lies. He creates a scene at the bursary office and accuses the junior officers of a racial slur. He does this fully knowingly that though racism was a white creation, none of them want to publicly associate themselves with it in the contemporary era. His skilful manipulation gets him the desired response from Dr Winterburn, who is in charge of the bursary office.

Because of the novel's backdrop, voting euphoria and festivities accompanying it provide an exciting prospect for Dingz at political and social levels. The election's after- party is central to the narrative as it holds the plot together and helps introduce some major characters in the novel such as Dunga, Thekwini, Vusi, Themba, Nkanyezi and other minor characters. Dunga and Thekwini are Dingz's friends. The former works as a lawyer and the latter is a student at Wits. Nkanyezi is Dingz's would be lover that he meets at the party. Themba and Vusi are Dingz's Soweto friends that the reader meets at the party as well. As Dingz and Thekwini go home to Soweto, the readers are introduced to the Johannesburg-Soweto physical map, various street cultures of the township and the city, the presence of foreign street vendors trading in counterfeit wares and the crudeness of the black men in the taxi industry. The trip to Soweto also highlights the precariousness of commuter's lives in the taxis described as death traps and in the hands of the injurious taxi drivers. Mhlongo also touches on the prevalence of car accidents and their alleged causes – a racketeering of the tow vans and street children. Dingz alleges that the tow van owners pay the children to destabilise the traffic lights, making them faulty so that cars can crash into each other, thereby ensuring that these vans stay in business. Road rage and disrespect of road rules is cited as another cause.

The trip to Soweto also depicts the significance of the street in the township. It acts as a community hall, business centre and a space for masculinity re-creation and expression. The election after party is held in the street where various community members meet. A malignant taxi driver who splashes muddy street water on them before robbing them mugs Dingz and Themba. Themba refuses to hand over his wallet, but Dingz hands over his in fear for his life. His fear emanates from a previous life-threatening incident with a group of taxi drivers who wanted to kill him for asking for his change. The street is depicted as a male domain and it is unto man that other men pay money for protection from other street gang members. Dingz pays Neo for street protection. Hierarchies of masculine power and group membership are constructed in the street. Violence is the only way used to achieve and install a hierarchical masculinity system. Masculine hierarchies are also built and expressed through the possession of money and guns. Vusi, a former Mkhonto weSizwe cadre and a soldier in the contemporary era, brags to his friends about his skills of assembling the gun and involvement in sabotage against apartheid while in exile. Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) *Way Back Home* (2014) and Mohlele's *Small Things* (2013) show that in the contemporary era the exilic experience ensures one's access to economic and political success in the contemporary era.

Dingz and Nkanyezi's relationship leads to his expulsion at the Y. The priest expels Dingz for 'smuggling' Nkanyezi into his room. He also contracts an STI after a stint of unprotected sex with her. His expulsion forces him to commute between Soweto and the campus. His expulsion from the Y makes him to count his blessings and dread the kind of life he will live at his Aunt's house in Soweto. Some of the luxuries he enjoyed at the Y include having three healthy meals in a day, privacy, nearness to peers and campus. Such comparison enacts a sharp contrast between the city and the township life.

Commuting between Soweto and campus coupled with lack of study both result in low marks for Dingz. During one of his exam papers, he feigns a blackout and sneaks out of the exam room. He consults the campus doctor for back up, but receives none. The doctor gives him a letter that says he has been to the clinic, but says nothing about his 'ill health'. He takes the letter to the dean of faculty in order to request an aegrotat. The dean looks at the scantily written letter and tells him that it is insufficient. Dingz quickly makes up a story about being unable to sit the exam because of bereavement. The dean asks him to bring the deceased's death certificate. Dingz complicates his situation by saying that he can only bring it after a

month since in his culture the deceased's property is regarded sacred for about a month after burial.

As he walks out of the dean's office, he meets his classmates, Nikki, Rob, Thekwini and Rutherford. Through Dingz's encounter with his white friends and the revelation of a romantic breakdown between Thekwini and Dunga, Mhlongo humorously enacts a Fanonian critique of the psychopathology of the oppressed. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) Fanon points out the material deprivation of the African reserve and contrasts it with the white suburb. He continues and says that the black man looks at the white world with envy. He wants to possess it and live the life of the white man. A similar scenario takes place in the novel. Dingz points out that Thekwini has dumped Dunga for Rutherford. Nikki shows a bit of interest in Dingz though he is hesitant to declare his love for Nikki. In the light of these developments, Dingz and his friend Dworkin become jealous of Thekwini's closeness to their white classmates. They envy her because of the dazzling material wealth found in the white quarters, through Nikki's wallet that is full of money. They joke that Thekwini wants to change her surname from Mkhwanazi to McNizze in order to be fully assimilated to Rutherford's Anglophone tribe.

Race, culture and class dynamics are also staged in this encounter. Dingz gathers that Nikki and Rutherford have been granted a deferred exam because they have supplied the dean with letters from their family doctors supporting that they were not fit to sit exams due to emotional and psychological stress. Dingz inquires why they both missed the exam. Rutherford explains that he was emotionally supporting Nikki who was emotionally distraught after her dog, Tarbo, was involved in a car accident. Dingz feels anger towards his white colleagues because of racial and economic tensions. He realises that they are rich and can afford the luxury of family doctors because of racial privilege. In contrast, he has been denied an aegrotat because of poverty. The only doctor that his family can afford is the traditional healer whose credentials and letter will not be accepted at Wits. Tarbo is within vicinity in the course of Dingz and Nikki's conversation. Dingz looks at the dog with disdain. According to him, a dog connotes terror and the brutality of the apartheid police because dogs were used as instruments for terrorising black. He narrates how a white farmer's dogs set on her for collecting cow dung in the farmer's field bite his mother's leg. Disgusted and angry, Dingz leaves his classmates' company to meet Dunga downtown.

Dunga and Dingz need to find a death certificate for any person who bears the surname Njomane. On his way to meet Dunga, Dingz comes across a gay pride march counterpoised by a heterosexual march denouncing queerness. The themes of HIV/AIDS and religion are broached through Dingz's train ride to Soweto that afternoon. After talking to Mr Sikhosana of Masakhane funeral parlour, the two friends get hold of Ntokozo Njomane's home address. Ntokozo is a daughter of a certain Mhlongo lady. She died in April and left three fatherless children. They pose as ANC officials and she gives them the needed information for Dingz to get the death certificate at home affairs. A manipulation of the woman's poverty and the promises of the ANC to the electorate buys them the family's cooperation on this matter. At home affairs, Dingz poses as a lawyer and gets the death certificate. He then submits the certificate to the dean who dismisses the certificate because of the contradictory dates. The dean points out that the date on the certificate shows that the deceased died on the 17th of April, long before the exams were written. Dingz entangles his explanation with the dean's ignorance of black lived realities of poverty and cultural practices. He peppers his lies with anger. What angers Dingz the most are certain life prospects that lie ahead of him. He compares his experiences with Nikki and Rutherford's and concludes:

> Although I had produced a sham certificate, I was angry that the dean was talking arrogantly to me. I didn't feel sorry that I lied to get it. Lying to get a death certificate was a practical affair to me. My world at that moment was simple- no lie, no certificate, no exam, no degree and back to the township, as simple as that. *What was the difference?* I asked myself disgustedly. *Mine was a sham certificate, but some students like Paul and Nikki were permitted to write a deferred exam with trivial and frivolous aegrotats*. (p.211) (emphasis in original)

After playing the race card on the dean, Dingz relents and they amicably conclude their meeting. He succeeds to sit for a deferred exam and manages to get readmitted to Wits the following year, though he and his friends fail a few courses, except for Thekwini who performs fairly well.

The theme of university failure is a theme that is first advanced in *Dog Eat Dog* and fully developed in *After Tears*. *After Tears* narrates the story of Bafana, a failed law student from the University of Cape Town (UCT). After failing all his law courses in his final year, Bafana stays in Cape Town for a while with the hope of getting employment. When the prospects of finding a job dry up, Bafana returns home to Soweto, Chiawelo. While in Cape Town he thinks about his situation and searches for the appropriate manner and language with which to disclose his failure to his mother and uncle. He weighs his options and observes that his

mother and uncle, Nyawana, are not ready to hear the truth about his performance. Their pride stops him from disclosing his failure. On the one hand, there is Nyawana who insists on introducing him to his friends and people of Chiawelo as a lawyer. He addresses him as 'advo' instead of his given name, Bafana. On the other hand, there is also Rea, his mother, who floods Bafana with job advertisements seeking the services of a lawyer. Referring to the advertisements, she puts more emphasis on the amount of money that Bafana will make if he chooses one law firm over another. Both parents have no room for hearing about failure. Out of fear and pressure from his parents, Bafana basks in his newly acquired and false glory of being an advocate.

Asked by his mother about his results, Bafana says that UCT has not yet released them because he has outstanding fees. His mother plans to sell the family house so that they can raise the money. The preparations of the sale reveal deep-seated family secrets and corruption. Bafana learns that the house that his mother wants to secretly sell without the consent of his brothers does not legally belong to the Kuzwayo family. In addition, Rea wants to sell the house based on false information from Bafana. She wants to sell the house under the impression that once her son's results are out, they will buy a better house in a better location from Bafana's salary as a lawyer. Through her stokvel, Bafana's mother manages to raise a sum of R 22 000 and gives it Bafana so he can pay the university fees. Throughout her efforts, Rea is confident that her son passed graduate, a graduation that she is already planning for.

Bafana takes the easy way out of his misery. He contacts Yomi, a Nigerian Internet cafe owner he meets through Vee, his Zimbabwean friend from UCT. Vee, a UCT graduate has work permit problems that force her to intermittently renew her permit every six months. Bafana meets Yomi and tells him his worries. Yomi advises Bafana to buy the UCT law degree from some of his friends. Yomi and Bafana set up an attorney's office and internet cafe in Chiawelo. He uses part of the money to pay rent and to buy formal clothes that will go with his status as a lawyer. Upon setting up office, he gets a steady stream of clients. He attends to minor cases whose outcomes are pre-concluded by him and the prosecutor. Bafana's fraudulent practice as a lawyer exposes the loopholes in the judiciary system. He makes a verbal agreement with sergeant Nkuna who promises to give him clients for a commission of R 100. He learns that the courts do not screen the lawyers beforehand.

Bafana helps very few poor people who pay him in instalments and this results in cash flow problems. This opens him up for further corruption through a wedding sham between him and Vee. Vee proposes to marry Bafana for R15 000 so she can solve her permit problem for the last time. His mother and her friend, Zinhle, interrupt their fake wedding. Rea is angry that her son is marrying Vee without her consent. What enrages her more is that she has found out that Bafana has been lying to her all this time. She found his UCT statement of results in one of Bafana's trousers meant for laundry. After this incident, Bafana becomes a fugitive at a squatter camp in Diepsloot for a period of two months. Vee is deported to Zimbabwe and plans to migrate to London. Rea gives birth to a nameless baby boy. The story ends with Bafana losing half his money to Yomi who introduces him to a Nigerian racket in Durban. Armed with his fake statement of results and certificate, he hopes to start a new life in Durban.

After Tears (2007) is a hilarious novel which uses humour and suspense to advance the themes of and disclosure and/or concealment of failure at tertiary; objectification of women and their bodies; xenophobia; and the whites' exploitation of black workers due to the availability of foreign nationals who are willing to work for meagre salaries, thus leaving the South Africans unemployed in the process. It also advances the theme of HIV/AIDS and its denial even in situations where the pandemic's devastating effects are overt. The contradictory nature of gendered relationships between males and females in the contemporary era is also explored in *After Tears* (2007).

6.3 Hustling Soweto

In the contemporary world of exuberant youth culture, male glossies, gangsterism and idolisation of popular media personalities, it is undeniable that consumerism, print and visual media continue to play a significant role in the production of black masculine identities. Drawing from the study of black masculinity depiction in *Yizo Yizo* and *Hijack Stories*, Haupt (2008) points out that these commoditised cinematic representation of black masculinity do not only act as a midwife in the self-stylisation and re-creation of black masculine identities, but offer 'limited subject positions for black subjects' (2008: 378). Haupt (2008) adds that often times, films that depict black masculinities depict black men as brave, violent and angry rapists to an extent that the films fail to turn these stereotypes unto themselves to depict the nuances of black masculine subjectivities. Haupt's (2008) critical observation has some truth in the sense that mainstream cinematic representations of black culture and life are subtly laced with 'power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other', more so because

'every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet of power/knowledge' (Hall 1990: 225). In effect, the typecast associating black masculinity with violence and crude behaviour gains more airtime, thus pathologising black masculinities and the cultural philosophies that inform their cultural practices.

Perhaps if we to turn to Hall (1990) and tap into his views on enunciation and cultural identity recreation, we can appreciate the role played by print and visual media in the recreation of black masculine identities that question certain forms of domination as depicted in *Dog Eat Dog , Room 207* and *After Tears*. In his discussion of the excavation and use of cinematic representations of the Afro-Caribbean cultural identities in the Diaspora, Hall (1990) mentions three vital things that are important in this chapter. Hall (1990) talks about the position from which the cultural worker (writer or photographer) speaks, problematises claims of a stable cultural identity, and the use of excavated cultural identities in the postcolonial contexts. He adds:

> Though we speak, to say, 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place. Identity is not transparent and unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking about identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity', lays claim. ...We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from history and a culture specific. What we say is always 'in context', positioned. (Hall 1990: 222)

In the above quote, Hall (1990) alludes to the contradictory and different subject positions and identities that a writer or his mouthpiece occupies when they make certain declarations in a literary piece. However, Mhlongo's background of being underprivileged informs most of his works and he speaks about such a background and his experiences, the well-travelled and learned writer that he has become speaks from a different class position of the hustler and the people of Soweto he writes about in his novels. Though he speaks from a different class position, the subject he broaches in his work and the manner through which he depicts black masculinity is not derogatory or imbued with power nuances that cast the youths as the 'other' underachievers. The same can be said of Kgebetli Moele's oeuvre. In *Dog Eat Dog* and *After Tears* Mhlongo politicises, historicises and places the hustling Soweto generation within the contested structural transformations, which coerce the young black youths to

hustle. Such positioning excavates an older trope of black masculinity hustler, in order to challenge newer forms of apartheids that have continued in the contemporary era, namely class and subtle forms of racism. By so doing, Mhlongo sanitises the hustler in *Dog Eat Dog* and *After Tears*. Rather than being a trope that limits the black man's agency, it becomes a resource, a resistance tool. In order to recognise the full worth of the hustler trope as a resistance tool which amplifies the agency and subject position of the black man, we need to examine this trope within the apartheid and 'post-apartheid' contexts that (re)produced it.

The void left by the collapse of rural traditions in the city, the contestation of city occupation between the black and the white, and the harshness of city conditions brought to bear by capitalist exploitation, mediated the birth of the black male hustler/*tsotsi* masculinities in the earliest formative years of the urban economy in Southern Africa. Reminiscing on black South African literature and culture around the 1950s and 1960s, Nkosi (1981) points out that the inadequacies of rural tribal customs and life to withstand the complex pressures of urban living coupled with the conscious rejection of the tribal way of life among the black urban population left a cultural void that was filled by American culture and literature. Fenwick (1996) points out that the consumption of Hollywood gangster films birthed the serialised depictions of appropriated gangster narratives in popular media such as *Drum* in the 1950s and 1960s. Though the etymology of the word remains the same, the contexts and content of hustler and hustling seem to have been altered, at least in the literary and imaginative realms. Whilst the older hustler was respected for his crudeness and lawlessness, the contemporary hustler frowns upon these and presents them as unmanly values. The contemporary hustler lives in and operates between the grey areas of the law, and is the streetwise man who uses persuasion rather than violence to get what he wants. The new dispensation that seeks to distance itself from a past steeped in violence and lawlessness exerts certain influence on the imagination and depiction of the hustler in contemporary fiction. As a result, readers tend to come across redemptive qualities of the young black hustler in both South African literature and film.

Though dismissed by Mphahlele (1962) as escapist fiction, the *Drum* gangster narratives provided the urban black proletariat with heroes to celebrate and emulate. To the newly established populations of black urban dwellers who were exploited by white capital and denied a living space in the city, the gangster was viewed as transgressor, an epitome of economic freedom and political freedoms and an embodiment of agency. Speaking of the hustler as a renegade with a cause, Fenwick points out that the city, 'a space created by the

industrial man, was seen as a space beyond the control of the individual, and it imposed its own harsh will on the urban dwellers' (1995: 625). He continues:

> In this milieu, in which blacks felt their future lay, gangsters thrive and prosper despite the economic hegemony of the whites. As a result, the inhabitants of Sophiatown and other black centres looked to gangsters as 'leaders of their own 'shebeen society', culture heroes courageous and clever enough to become wealthy at the expense of the whites. Drum gangster-figure was performative and embodied many of the elements that lay at the heart of the Sophiatown resistance. He was in the vanguard of struggle for an urban identity which is opposed to white oppression. (Fenwick 1996: 625)

Appropriated from the Hollywood cinema, the township gangster found favourable conditions to flourish in the South African social and imaginary realms. The *tsotsi* marked the emergence of a newer masculinity that stood in opposition to white oppression and traditional leadership. He evoked mixed feelings from his community. On the one hand, he was admired for his opulent life style and his ability to evade power. 'Henry Nxumalo, writing for *Drum* in the 1950s wrote: Our heroes were the boys who could steal and stab' (Morrell 1998: 627). On the other hand, the *tsotsi* excited the revulsion of community members, for he visited violence upon fellow community members because 'to be a man according to *tsotsi* culture was to be streetwise, to be tough, to fight' (Morrell 1998: 627). The hustler figure was also enmeshed in literary and intellectual activity that sprouted from the 1950s, consequently finding its way into black urban fiction of the time in publications such as *Down Second Avenue* (1959), *Still Grazing* (2004), *Mine Boy* (1948), *The Children of Soweto* (1982), *My Cousin Comes to Jo'burg and Other Stories* (1981), *Mzala* (1995) and many more. These literary works have historical links with the *Drum* era and Sophiatown resistance. In the above works, the hustler is used to depict the negative effects of apartheid on the black urban population.

Contemporary black South African Literature in English has reproduced a complex myriad of 'newer' representations of the hustler and gangster trope that converges and diverges with the hustler of the 'old'. Mhlongo (2004; 2007), Mzobe (2010), Mgqolozana (2009) and Moele (2006) offer nuanced depictions of a hustler that carefully straddles varying identity lines at once. The hustlers depicted in these novels possesses redemptive qualities that make them seem ordinarily complex in the sense that they do not act out of impulse, but weigh their options, take risks and act in accordance with their agential constrains. Armed with his wit, political rhetoric of the time and anger after being served with a letter denying him

scholarship and a deferred exam under culturally and racially biased circumstances, Dingz in *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) resorts to intimidation, lies and fraudulent representation of his identity. He appeals his case of scholarship denial by playing the race card whose effect is shame and guilt on whites. The effects of accusing whites of racism are seen in the drama that unfolds at the financial aid office and the incident at the Automated Teller Machine (ATM). Ms Steenkamp, Rachel and the blond woman cower when Dingz accuses them of racism. According to him, whiteness stands for racism and the whites are trying very hard to absolve themselves of it. In so doing, they leave room for varying forms of abuse and black mail from their black counterparts. Dingz adds that this kind of blackmail that involves racial accusations has found way to parliament. He says:

> I had been told that playing the race card is a good strategy for silencing those whites who still think they are more intelligent than black people. Even in parliament it was often used. When white political parties questioned the black parties they would be reminded of their past atrocities even if their questions are legitimate. Then the white political parties would have to divert from their original questions and apologise for their past deeds. (p.35)

When confronted by the mammoth task of revealing his failure and risk shattering his mother's pride, Bafana in *After Tears* (2007) turns to lies and poses as a lawyer. To look the part, he gets a fake law degree certificate and formal clothes. Parental hunger for a better life after their child's education process is complete, prevalence of corruption precipitated by negrophobic 'post-apartheid' foreign and domestic policies and the slack judiciary system are some of the factors that mediate Bafana's hustling in the novel. At the centre of these factors stands the contemporary South African dream of attaining financial success and independence that is tied to dominant narratives of masculinities construction. Dingz points out that he cannot let minor factors such as lies or truth stand in his way to attain a good education that will ensure that he does not belong to the mass population of uneducated, unemployable youth languishing in the township. Bafana is lured into fraudulent activities by his uncle and mother who have a strong yearning for this dream and he falls for it.

Mhlongo's novels do not only contest the nature of transformation from the viewpoint of the poor black male, but also act as social commentaries. Through Bafana's depiction, Mhlongo suggests that the hustler succeeds to con people because the contemporary South African social realm offers him favourable climatic conditions to thrive. Bafana hoodwinks everyone about his results because of their gullibility and hunger for role models. Dingz and Bafana's

depictions also suggest Mhlongo's grappling with the autonomy of the hustler. The historicisation of the hustler figure shows that his production in the older days and reproduction in the contemporary era are structurally imposed by economic and racial factors. Though acting as an autonomous being and out of will rather than socially determined structures, his agentiality is curtailed by social realities that surround him.

6.2. *Room 207's* appraisal and plot structure

Kgebetli Moele is a South African writer from Polokwane. He studied communication science but has worked in the entertainment industry for the better part of his life. At present, he juggles writing and part time taxi driving in order to pay rent. His recently published novel, *Untitled* (2014), is proof that he is becoming one of the notable literary figures in the country. He launched himself into the literary arena through a provocative and angry novel titled *Room 207*. *Room 207* subtly attacks the remnants of apartheid that still control black lives in the present. The *Book of the Dead* shortly followed his debut novel. *The Book of the Dead* is a shocking and nihilistic novel that slaps the reader out of their stupor and denial of HIV/AIDS in spite of its overt devastating effects in South Africa. In its quest to mirror the horror of the disease, the novel does not offer any doors of hope and redemption for its characters. All of them die of the boastful HIV that has a life and voice of its own in the novel.

Moele (2006) offers a slight variation of an imaginative construction and interpretation of inner city slum life that is built on the margins of 'main stream' city culture of opulence. The discussion of the *Drum* era and its culture demonstrates that what is often created as culture and forms of existence on the peripheries gains prominence and cancels out the distinctions of high and low culture. Moele's depictions of inner city life through the life trajectories of his protagonists complement Mhlongo's (2004) depiction of the hustler in Soweto in the sense that he depicts the hustler outside the university campus and parental guardianship. In addition, the novel follows on and fills a gap left by Mpe's (2001) tradition of depicting the lives of the Hillbroweans in their environment through the viewpoint of an insider or Hillbrowean.

Room 207 is a novel that tells life stories of six youths – Molamo, Modishi, Matome, D'nice, Zulu-boy and Noko the narrator. The story covers snippets of the life shared and lived by these youths for a period of eleven years crammed within a tiny rotting former hotel room,

room 207, located at the corner of Van de Merwe and Claim streets, Hillbrow. The events narrated in this novel unfold through varying points of view ranging from the first person, 'I and we', the second person 'you' and the third person limited omniscient points of view. The life stories of the six youths in the novel are characterised by restlessness and anxieties evoked by city culture and life. The plot of *Room 207* features the story of love, gloom, hope, happiness, disappointment, failure and success of dreams, anguish, dependency, dislocation, resilience, corruption, creativity and reinvention of subjectivities in the face of haplessness and uncertainty of life. Unlike 'chick lit', which celebrates blackness as a 'cool' and 'desirable' thing and depicts contemporary black youths as people who 'have nothing to feel bad about, nobody to hate or envy anymore' Moele and Mhlongo cast blackness as a curse (Milisuthando Bongela in Narunsky-Laden 2010: 62).

The youths in room 207 are not only united by the shared space, but are unified by their experiences in the city. They all come to the city in pursuit of the South African dream of financial success and status. The initial plan was to access it through education since Moele points out that 'there are no quick bucks' (p.48). They all register for various courses that are of interest to them because they promise a quick way to financial independence. Molamo saves money and registers for a law degree at Wits, but he is barred from the institution before his second year exam because of lack of tuition fees. Zulu-boy, Modishi and Molamo study sound engineering but they all drop out.

Modishi registered in one of the unreliable institutions that defraud people. He discovered during the examination period that the institution was not registered. Instead of giving up, he pursued music. The narrator reveals that he does not like Modishi because he is not interesting in his eyes. His lack of interest in Modishi is couched in ambivalent terms that reveal his ambivalence regarding manliness. He says, 'Modishi was the one upright and honest man that Solomon spoke of. I sometimes felt sorry for him, for what he stood for and believed in, because it wasn't something of this world. But, most of the time, I envied him. He was a three-and-a-half-year-old toddler in the body of a twenty-three-year-old man' (p.61). Modishi does not harbour impure thoughts about anyone and is quick to forgive.

Domineering, macho, thuggish, not good to look at, yet caring and soft centred is Zulu-boy. He comes from a celebrated family and expects to be a trendsetter among his peers. In his first years in the city, he was a student at a technical college studying sound engineering. He got involved in petty crime in order to attract attention. After his nine months confinement for

drugs, he vowed to part ways with crime. The narrator, Noko, describes Zulu-boy as a double drop out. He drops out of college and fails to rise up to the challenges of peer pressure, such as the desire to wear designer clothes and to live a flashy life style. After his failure at school, he tries his hand at music that leads to his collaboration with Brenda Fassie, though his song is not a hit.

D'nice is the only one in room 207 with a university degree. He obtained it from Wits. After a stint at the institution, he worked for a very short time and resigned. He follows his passion for music unsuccessfully. His failure and pending birth of his first-born child force him to quit his dream and go back to his old job. Molamo, a 'thank you man' (p.45), restless former truck driver, ghetto intellectual, writer-cum-poet and an aspiring law student came to the city to study law at Wits. He paid the first year tuition upfront and his funds ran out in the second year of study. Wits barred him from the examination hall, thus his drop out. His lack of transport fare back home ensured his bondage to the city. He tried his hand at script writing, drawing and poetry. His life is partly summed up in the adage: a ghetto is an unhappy man. He is a father of four children from four different women. When overpowered by alcohol he cries over his failure to provide for his children. He strongly believes that humility is the strongest weapon to survive the harsh life of the city. He sums his thank-you-man philosophy in the following way: 'my ladder to the top, every step that I have passed, has a face that I have thanked, and those faces are holding me, this ladder together' (p.44). He continues and says, 'when you are with people, don't act powerful, be humble and weak; your body language should ask for protection, and you'll see much of the good in people' (p.45).

Room 207 is rented under Matome's name. The narrator describes him as the 'wife' for being responsible in the room. He makes note of what has run out and reports on time. The narrator describes him in a way that shows his respect and deep love for Matome. He is ranked among revolutionary figures such as Che and Jesus. He also uses the metaphors man of all seasons and the baobab tree to describe Matome. His different views on sex and love depicted in his identity are sharply contrasted with Molamo and D'nice's masculinities. Moele's (2006) use of Matome as Molamo's foil questions some of Molamo's tenets of masculinity, such as the sexual conquest of female bodies and absent fatherhood. He is asexual. Matome reasons that love is an ending process, whilst sex is an act that he can buy anywhere in Hillbrow and he wants to be loved. His sexual act will be a statement that he wants to be a father. In addition, what makes him different is his temperament. Always calm and smiling in all situations.

After his failure to get a degree in sound engineering, he launches his own recording company in down town Johannesburg. His belief in himself leads to his success.

Noko came to the city to complete his education like his peers. He enrolled for broadcasting which also turned out to be another story of failure. He dropped out because of funding. Of all the six occupants, he is the only one who accepts failure and defeat. The novel ends with him at park station crying the whole morning and afternoon and dreading to go home. Contrary to what he had promised himself when he came to the city eleven years ago, he goes back home in a taxi rather than his own car.

Through its complicated plot structure the novel straddles the present and the past. Both historical periods in the history of the country are linked in a cause and effect relationship. The present is a result of the past and therefore the past is not forgotten, though Matome erases and suppresses it in his life. The past eleven years spent by the protagonists in room 207 and Hillbrow is littered with the harsh realities of the city that have forced each and every character to reinvent subjectivities in relations to each other, women, the city and its economy. After their union, the six youths make several observations about themselves and Hillbrow. They dub their room, a haven, place of temporal refuge in the city. They point out that they don't like the place, but they are going to make the best of it. They promise each other to extract happiness even though what is brewed in it is pain, death of dreams, corruption, poverty, uncertainty of life because of crime, dirt and restlessness. Because of these characteristics of Hillbrow, they want to leave it for the Northern suburbs. However, for them to do so, they need to succeed in pursuing their dreams. Once this task is accomplished they will move out of Hillbrow. However, this does not happen. Only the strong willed and disciplined Matome makes it out of the dreaded inner city slum. The rest of room 207 occupants exit Hillbrow after Matome. Modishi leaves because his lover, Lerato, has finished university and has a well-paying job. D'nice moves in with his girlfriend as well. Zulu-boy joins his girlfriend and later commits suicide as he had promised to. He told his friends that he would throw himself from Ponte House when he found out that he was HIV positive. True to his word, he invites all his former housemates for his funeral before the fall. Molamo joins his lawyer girlfriend, Tebogo and becomes *rra baki*, a man who brings his suits to an already established home. The narrator leaves room 207 for another filthy and neglected building. His movement from room 207 to his new place of residence marks certain levels of loss in his life, such as material things lost to the thieves he shares a house with, loss of integrity, fiancé, and hope in life.

The novel touches on complex thematic concerns such as the disillusionment of the black youths with the philosophy of democracy, the rainbow nation and reconciliation in the South African context. Mhlongo (2004) also touches on this theme. Mhlongo (2004) highlights that democracy runs counter to the expectations of the electorate in the sense that it protects the interests of the owners of property and capitalism. Simphiwe Dana in her song 'State of Emergency' defines it as 'white institutionalised deceit in our constitution'. Moele (2006) terms it black betrayal. According to Moele, black betrayal is when a fat Xhosa cat is honoured all over the world for letting down the black peoples of South Africa because of money. Moele's (2006) stance shows his ambivalence towards contemporary South Africa. He tries to avoid the question of the apartheid past, race relations and focuses on the present, but certain structural constraints draw him back to it. These include the multitudes of black people who live bare lives such as '*Bomahlela*', multitudes of three digit IQ black youths who are barred from higher institutions of learning because of lack of funding, and the few blacks who have made it to the top of the ladder because of imposed glass ceilings that keep the majority of the black population in poverty. Moele's (2006) depiction of blackness as a curse alludes to the above facts of blackness which intersect with class distinction; you are black because you are poor; and you are rich because you are white. He reads this as black betrayal in the sense that whites continue to benefit from the legacies of apartheid whilst blacks suffer because of it. The novel suggests that whites' continued benefit from apartheid and letting just a few blacks to top positions through BEE is one way of their refusal to relinquish and disown apartheid.

Peer pressure is among some of the themes advanced in the novel. Moele (2006) points out that peer pressure is one of the diseases that afflict the youths. As a result, they lose direction and purpose in life. In the absence of negative peer pressure Zulu-boy, Justice, the homeless university drop out, Modishi and D'nice would have become the best possible versions of themselves. The narrator points out that Modishi is not exactly poor. Peer pressure plunges him into poverty and cripples his growth. Zulu-boy gets entangled in petty crime in order to show off, and this derails him from his initial plan of acquiring an education. D' nice survives it, graduates from university, but peer pressure sees him quit his job to chase a dream in music.

Whilst Mpe in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) uses walking to spatially link Hillbrow with other places, Moele (2006) uses walking to explore the themes of corruption, to depict intra-personal relationships between men and how masculinities are enacted and expressed on the

streets of Hillbrow. Walking as means of plot progression is also linked to the addressee of the novel, who is hailed into room 207, tours the room and is introduced to the occupants of the room. The imagined addressee and reader of the novel is 'You'. The 'you' is spoken to through the subjective first person singular and plural, 'I' and 'we'. He is also spoken to through the limited omniscient 'he'. The first person is used to create an illusion of a factual account of the six youths' lives, bearing witness of sorts. Moele's (2006) use of the second voice of narration, 'you', blurs the boundaries between the supernatural and physical worldly realms. Matome welcomes the narrator to Johannesburg after he is beaten and robbed in Zulu or by Zulu boys. Seated in the city's libraries, the narrator reminisces about the incident and he suddenly hears a voice saying, 'Welcome. Welcome. Here you'll have a home. Don't let anything scare you, you are home now. Welcome' (p.71). He sits down and confirms, 'God, when He comes, comes as voice as well' (p.72). However, Moele (2006) does not effectively explore the supernatural realm as a narrative mode in *Room 207*.

Moele's (2006) use of the second voice of narration creates a space of intimacy, that is, strikes some sort of friendship with the reader or listener of the story as this story is told through word of mouth though coded in the written medium. The narrator in the novel blends the African traditional story telling with the written word and the act of walking. The narrator welcomes the listener into the safe haven, room 207, lives with him and takes him for a walk. They become fellow roommates and walkers in the streets of Hillbrow and he tells him, the addressee, 'keep walking, notice, see, and observe with me here' (p.157). The addressee of *Room 207* is a male. This is evident in the narrator's usage of the phrase 'brother you are home' (p.15). The addressee is also identified as a 'you' who loves members of the female species (p.27). By so doing, the story reproduces a colonial androcentric mind-set that marks the city and/or specific areas in it as a preserve of males. Though he refers to the female characters as 'Helen of Troy', he further divides them into two categories: the 'sisters living hard'/'angels of the night'/'*lekgosha*' and the delicate beauties from the suburbs such as Tebogo, Lerato, Lebogang and Basedi (p.115-118). Helen of Troy is a Greek mythical figure who was considered to be the most beautiful woman. The angels of the night or angels of the streets' identities and bodies are interpellated within the rot, grime and crime of the inner city slum. Onto this pile Moele adds the multitudes of corrupt Nigerians who act as a conduit for the traffic of drugs, money and stolen goods, petty criminals such Moloko, the occupants of room 207 as well as a host of youths who came to the city in pursuit of elusive dreams. Lerato 'was born in the suburbs of western Johannesburg, where her mother had

been a maid all her life. For a suburb girl, Lerato was amazing. At first I thought she was from somewhere-somewhere in Soweto' (p124). Alongside Lerato is Basedi who is described as a good doctor, a queen who is brave enough to come to Hillbrow, park her car and walk herself into room 2007. The depiction of Hillbrow and the life lived in it works in a way that endorses and normalises certain forms of femininities whilst marginalising others. The angels of the night and the over made up women that the narrator encounters in Hillbrow remain marginal in the story and in the lives of the six youths. They only work as objects of sexual relief for free. Zulu-boy is revered and praised for loving a prostitute as though she is not worthy of love. Even when the relationship is serious, in the eyes of the narrator she remains a prostitute. Matome loves Basedi for her role as a producer of children and she is labelled a golden incubator. The novel reproduces the patriarchal ideal that defines women's bodies and sexuality in accordance with the manner through which they use them. If women desire to place their bodies and sexuality in the spheres of the family and procreation, they are labelled golden incubators. Nevertheless, when they put their sexuality and bodies in the pleasure and commodity spheres, they are rebuked and cast as prostitutes. In addition, the novel shows how women create their agency within constraining social structures of capitalism and alienating foreign policies that regulate the social spheres. Lastly, it depicts that city citizenship is experienced differently across gender lines.

Though the novel's weakness lies in the reproduction of gendered stereotypes, its strength is also drawn from its ability to turn stereotypes unto themselves, thus challenging and emptying them of meanings they carry. *Room 207* (2006) relies heavily on the use of stereotypes in order to engage with the subject of Hillbrow's depiction in the media which is often couched in a language that represents the place as a space of prostitution, moral denigration, drug dealing, corrupt foreigners, and violence. In general, stereotyping is one of the most general ways of flattening out a rather complex set of things for the ease of cataloguing or labelling. Dyer (1977) outlines stereotyping as: (a) an ordering process; (b) a short cut; (c) referring to the world; and (d) expressing 'our' values and beliefs. Lippmann (1956: 96) in Dyer (1977) further adds:

> A pattern of stereotype is not neutral. It is not merely a substituting order for great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are

> the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defence we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the positions we occupy.

Though necessary for our ability to make sense of the world, stereotypes have certain ideological implications and limitations. Dyer (1977) points out that they mark visible and invisible boundaries between those who belong and those who do not belong to a social group. Postcolonial theorists in the field of critical men's studies add that stereotypes help in the construction of colonial male and female subjectivities because by casting the 'Other' and their culture as alien, colonialists were able to construct their own identities. However, the newly constructed identities conveyed the obsession and neurosis of the observer rather than the observed (Fanon 1967). Zulu-boy recounts his mother's stereotypical depiction of Hillbrow and Hillbroweans in the following manner:

> The first time I came here, like so many of us had heard stories about Hillbrow being the capital of sin. "Stay away from the ways of the city, my child; you are there to get an education and not to get the ways of the city. Don't let the ways of the city into you", my grandmother told me when I was leaving home for the city. (p.65)

The above is a stereotype of Hillbrow. In this context, it portrays him and his grandmother as morally upright, and the Hillbroweans as morally bankrupt. Moele (2006) does not dismiss falsity or the truthfulness of the above utterance. Instead, he welcomes and hails 'you' into 'our locker room away from home ... our safe haven during the lighted dark nights of the dream city' (p.13). The 'you' hailed into Johannesburg, Hillbrow, and our safe haven is the same 'our' and 'we' implicated in Lippmann's (1956) construction of stereotypes. Stereotypes are arrived at through society's implicit consensus because stereotypes make 'us' feel safe in 'our' position. By stereotypes, Moele (2006) engages the reader, 'you', in the destabilisation of several stereotypes about Hillbrow and Hillbroweans. Casting Hillbrow as the capital of sin implicitly depicts the rural area of KwaZulu Natal as a heavenly paradise inhabited by morally upright people. Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) and Moele's *Room 207* (2006) contest this depiction. Mpe (2001) shows that this is a false dichotomy in that the deaths that occur in the city originate from Tiragalong. The villagers come to the city to settle their own scores through spilling the blood of fellow villagers and make it seem as if the people of Hillbrow are responsible for such crimes. Zulu-boy's arrival in Hillbrow, room 207, opens up his eyes about his grand mothers' misconceptions about Hillbrow and Hillbroweans. He soon finds out that Hillbrow has a fair share of its morally upright people such as Matome, Modishi and the prostitutes with whom he shares his passion, ecstasy and a

living space. As a result, he falls in love with Ntombifuthi. In addition, he renames Modishi 'John the Baptist' because Modishi felt uncomfortable to do anything that is against his conscience (p.47). The narrator also suggests that Hillbrow is not a capital of prostitution. He repudiates the prejudice as follows:

> Well, lets' be honest, the average Hillbrowean has never seen the thong of a single *lekgosha* because the average Hillbrowean has average morals. Come to Hillbrow in the early morning and take a look at the customers and you will see that they are definitely not from Hillbrow. (p.115)

The novel ends up with the out-of-Hillbrow party and the scattering of the six youths to the different parts of the city. The theme of the out-of-Hillbrow party that the occupants of room 207 anticipate at the beginning of the novel revolves around detoxifying their blood stream of Hillbrow. Though they live in it, they don't like it and what the place represents to them. They associate Hillbrow with failure, neglect and loss of black dignity. Hillbrow depicts the failure of the contemporary dispensation to provide a decent life for the downtrodden. It is a place of failure in the sense that the youths are crammed in it because of their failure to attain their dreams. It is a metaphor of neglect and lack of self-love among blacks in the sense that the place is filthy. The black people assigned to clean it fail to do their job, yet they are able to leave the white suburb spotlessly clean. Zulu-boy wonders why black people live in dirty places when they are the largest population of cleaners worldwide. In spite of all these, the occupants of room 207 resolve to extract some beauty, happiness and crispy fresh air within the dirt and uncertainty of life that engulfs the place. Zulu-boy reasons that they make the best use of it now that they are in it. Of all the resident of room 207, he learns to love the place. After Matome's out-of-Hillbrow party, Matome buys a house in Centurion and marries Basedi in a ceremony that marks the end of his relationship with Molamo. Molamo perceived Matomes' act of marrying his ex-girlfriend as a sign of disloyalty. Molamo moves in with Tebogo as a househusband. Through Tebogo's financial assistance, Molamo resumes his abandoned law degree at Wits so that he becomes an 'appropriate' father and role model to his son. Modishi moves in with Lerato as a kept man. Lerato also pays for his part time studies. Modishi later sells his piece of land and buys his family a bigger house. Lerato gives birth to Lerishi. Their relationship is punctuated by Modishi's violent outbursts and Lerato's forgiveness. Lebogang and D'nice's relationship is also modelled along Modishi's in that it too is characterised by violence. Zulu-boy commits suicide after the discovery that he is HIV

positive. The narrator changes residences after room 207 and he gives up dream chasing and goes home.

6.3 The Hustler's Agency in *Room 207*

> *'I can see and respond to any situation in the way that suits me, and I don't want to respond to my life in your own way' (p.126).*

The above utterance is an extract from a conversation between Molamo and Modishi. It depicts one of the scenes where Molamo wants to change Modishi from what Modishi is to what Molamo is. The caption speaks more about Modishi's agency, his ability to respond to life situations or social structures in a way that empowers him. The question of agency is important in this discussion because I want to use it to try to answer two questions: the question of 'post-apartheid' social structures that Moele (2006) indirectly critiques through the use of the hustler figure; the question of agency and how it shapes masculinity production, and how the city shapes agency. The concept is widely used in feminist studies to account for women's ability to make individual choices within the subordinating structures of patriarchy. This conceptual formulation of agency is limiting in the sense that it contrasts agency with social structures, thus represents agency as freeing and social structures of patriarchy as limiting whereas this is not often the case.

Hays (1994) offers a nuanced way of defining agency in a manner that shows a connection between agency and social structures in society. Social structures refer to 'those patterns of social life that are not reducible to individuals and are durable enough to withstand the whims of individuals who would change them; patterns that have dynamics and an underlying logic of their own that contribute to their reproduction over time albeit in slightly altered forms' (Hays 1994:61). She continues to point out certain features of social structures. Interaction between people leads to the production of certain social structures and these in turn produce certain types of people the same way apartheid and capitalism produced blacks and whites/ rich and poor/ heterosexuals and homosexuals/ man and woman etc. Hays (1994) adds that these structures of power do 'not only limit us, they also lend us sense of self and the tools for creative transformative action, thereby make human freedom possible' (Hays 1994:61). From this understanding of social structures or power, we can begin to map a connection between

agency and structures of power and think about ways through which *Room 207* (2006) seeks to engage with the 'post-apartheid' transformation or its absence. According to Hays:

> Agency explains the creation, recreation, and transformation of social structures; agency is made possible by the enabling features of the social structures at the same time as it is limited within the bounds of structural constraints; and the capacity of agents to affect social structures varies with the accessibility to power, and durability of the structure in question. (Hays 1994: 62)

Hays further breaks down agency into two categories: structurally reproductive agency and structurally transformative agency. Structurally reproductive agency is derived from the notion that people produce social structures and they produce a certain calibre of people. Bafana in *After Tears* (2007) goes to University of Cape Town to acquire a law degree, but fails. Instead of disclosing his failure and asking for money to repeat the failed course, he tells lies. He acts out in a manner that shows creativity in the face of overwhelming odds: his mother's pride and humiliation in Chiawelo. The irony of this choice is that it is unreflective. In the end, it pushes him down to the level of the unemployed illegal squatters he shares shelter with before fleeing to Durban. His choice of action reproduces the same structures of social class difference that Mhlongo (2004) and Moele (2006) question in their novels. Structurally, transformative agency questions and reconstructs structures of domination. 'It is made possible under particular historical circumstances – when portions of what were once deeper social structures become particularly malleable and provide occasion for significant collective refashioning' (Hays 1994: 64). These two types of agency are 'socially shaped' and this means that 'choices that agents make are always within the realm of structurally provided possibilities, and therefore *patterned* and comprehensible (though only rarely predictable)' (ibid, p.64; original emphasis).

Room 207 (2006) depicts the sad stories of six black youths who are intelligent, with a hunger for education, but cannot acquire it because of structural constraints inherited from the apartheid past. Though the novel is not about the past, it refers to the past through phrases such as 'those days that the rulers of this land don't want you to forget' (p.13). The youths' inability to forget the past emanates from their present state of bare existence, a result of racist policies that ensured impoverishment of the non-white population through exploitation, remuneration of meagre salaries and job reservation for the whites. In the contemporary era, Molamo who conceives blackness as a punishment from God feels these effects. Molamo questions the meaning of democracy or white transformation. To a certain degree, the youths

conceive South African democracy as the transformation of whites in the sense that the first elections marked a period in the social history of the country where white relented to black collective resistance by questioning apartheid and calling for its end. A section of the white population transformed their minds with regards to racism and became much saner. That is why Molamo describes democracy as a web of white lies meant to keep the masses suffering. Malamo tastes the brutal force of suffering the day he is barred from Wits University exam room because of the lack of tuition fees. Poverty puts him in room 207, a space that he shares with six men and the women who come to visit. He points out that such kind of sharing violates one's sense of privacy which leads to Lerato stripping naked in front them. Within the constrained choices that he has, Molamo turns to writing and painting and hopes that one day he will write a script that will be turned into a successful movie. The city landscape and its culture also shape the way Molamo recreates his masculinity and his relationship with his girlfriend Tebogo.

Noko describes Molamo as a 'thank you man'. A thank you man destabilises the *Drum* notion of the hustler. The punitive and precarious city life exposes Molamo's vulnerability and shows him the humanity of the city dwellers. Molamo exploits this to his advantage within social interaction in order to receive protection and kindness. Molamo seeks this kindness in his relationship within institutions of gender or male-female relationships. In the company of his roommates, he depicts women as whores who prostitute themselves because it is in their nature to do so. Molamo's demeaning linguistic representation of women subtly mirrors his socialisation. It takes the disappearance of Modishi, Matome, Zulu-boy and D'nice for him to quickly disapprove of such a definition of womanhood. He beats Noko for calling Tebogo his whore. He admits to the narrator that he is grown up and part of the growing up process requires him to realise that he has a son that he must take care of, as well as a wife; therefore, he must take his rightful place and carry out these duties. However, he fears that 'the khayalami he was going to wasn't his place, it was Tebogo's place, and she had worked very hard for everything in it. […] Lost in thought, then he mocked himself: "Rra-baki"' (p.220). Rra-baki translates 'to a man who came into an already established home, he came in with just his suit' (p.238). The self-mockery comes from the realisation that though he is a husband to Tebogo and a father to Molamo, he cannot be a proud father and husband: he does not have money and career with which he can provide a home and support his family as expected of 'real' masculinity espoused by his consciousness. His 'thank you man' masculinity recreated to face the harsh life in the city becomes handy in his relationship with

his partner and child. The self-mockery is an acceptance of his subordinate role as a house husband. Such gendered performance contradicts the macho masculinity construction, but helps him become a better man and father compared to his former roommates, Modishi and D'nice. The latter become husbands and fathers who subdue their wives by beating them. In the analysis of Molamo and his personal responses to the challenges of the city, we examined how social structures shape one's agency and lend shape to a different masculine identity which contradicts normalised notions of the man as the provider in the familial space. Molamo's characterisation provides an example of what Hays (1994) calls transformative agency in the sense that Moele (2006) uses this character to: question the 'democratic' dispensation for betraying the dreams of the phenomenal youth from underprivileged backgrounds through failure to provide comprehensible tertiary education; and to demonstrate that the older ideals of masculinity cannot be firmly sustainable because of a shift in monetary fortunes which seem to favour women.

In the novel, all the women who date men who dwell in room 207 grow up and become economically and socially successful compared to the males, and financially provide for the male youths. Celibacy rather than being *isoka* or male promiscuity, is validated through Matome' sexuality. It is not ironic that "thank you man" and the celibate man epitomise the successful expressions of manhood and fatherhood in the eyes of the narrator.

Machismo has no room in the lives of these youths. Zulu-boy is depicted as a rough guy, but beneath the facade of the tough guy is a caring young man with a predisposition for making the wrong choices in life. He accuses Molamo of sensitivity when he cries over his 'accursed lot' – blackness and poverty. However, his emotional delicacy is exposed when the roommates discuss black love and self-respect. The subject of the expendability of black life, lack of self-respect and love among blacks makes him break down and cry. Zulu-boy suggests that the dirt in Hillbrow cannot be fully explained through debates on service delivery, race and or economics, but is a sign of lack of self-respect and love seen in the blacks which gets imprinted at the national level through inhumane acts such as the rape of a three-month-old baby allegedly by six grown up men; and the senseless killing of a black person by another which is witnessed in Hillbrow on a daily basis. In tears, he questions a society that brings out men who rape infants, kill each other mercilessly, and disrespect black people by not cleaning the inner city yet keep the white suburbs clean.

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that *Room 207*, *After Tears* and *Dog Eat Dog* are novels depicting that constraining social structures also give room for creativity and critique of the very same structures. I suggest that the reproduction of the hustler-figure in contemporary fiction is a literary technique meant to critique the 'post-apartheid' black-led regime for letting down the determined and multi-talented youth through inadequate provision of opportunities of social advancement through education. I have pointed out that though the hustler is not a new phenomenon, the contemporary hustler is depicted in a way that diverges from the hustler of old. The novelists, Mhlongo (2004) and Moele (2006) depict hustler masculinities in a different manner. They also show that the conditions responsible for the bloom and celebration of such masculinity and its use as a renegade figure in the imaginary and social realm are still noticeable in the contemporary era. In terms of masculinity transformation, these novels also offer alternative hustler masculinity that is shaped by the contemporary era's setting which impacts on masculinity creation. These factors include class or attainment of education as a ticket to social advancement since Moele and Mhlongo remind the youths that there is no such thing as a quick way to financial independence.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This work demonstrated and discussed the different ways used by contemporary black South African novelists to critique certain cultural mores and dogmas that give life and support to dominant versions of masculinities that have a negative impact on the lives of some men, women and children in order to positively transform them. In addition, it acquainted us with the concept of dominant or ruling masculinities; its various sites of maintenance; its deployment by some men in order to access social power and wield it against other men, women and children. Though useful to a certain degree, the concept has its pitfalls when applied to the African social setting. The novels discussed in this study show that the concept is flawed in that in Southern Africa, various versions of dominant masculinities co-existed and continue to live side by side in both harmonious and acrimonious ways. Mgqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man* depicts a scenario where having failed to access social power through becoming a Xhosa adult man through the 'appropriate' 'traditional' Xhosa ritual of circumcision, the protagonist vows to acquire education up to Doctoral level in order to intimidate some of his village folks who know about his status of 'failed' masculinity. This represents the complex folds of the notion of dominant masculinities. The survival of the Xhosa traditional rite of passage into adult masculinity and its use as a cultural marker of manhood demonstrates the co-existence of various forms of ruling masculinities. The ritual's survival of the apartheid's onslaught forms part of the reason why Xhosa 'traditionalists' defend it in the contemporary era.

With regard to deviancy, researches in African sexualities show that certain levels of sexual 'deviancy' were made possible. The various types of 'deviant' sexual and masculinity expressions were not deemed as such, but were viewed differently and as a gift or curse from the ancestral realm. As a result of this outlook, pre-colonial cultures showed tolerance towards different forms of male and female sexual 'deviancy'. This was expressed through silence. However, it was not silence which erased such sexualities from existence; it was silence which meant tolerance of such sexual expressions. It is for this reason that some of the literary works in this study critique contemporary African cultures. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* shows a distrust of and contempt for contemporary South African culture because of its homophobic sentiments. Part of it comes from the fact that what is poised as African cultures today are remnants of European and African patriarchal interpretations of pre-

colonial African cultures (Tamale 2011). The Western 'corrupted' versions of African cultures did not only demonize expressions of African sexualities and rituals accompanying them, but also changed the constitution of African pre-colonial traditional hierarchies through the introduction of education and the urban economies, a result of which was the replacement of traditional African notions of domesticity with Western ideals of domesticity. Lindsay and Miescher (2003) and Wanner's novels (2006; 2008; 2010) demonstrate that the dogmas of contemporary forms of domesticity couched as African middle class values, culture and feminisms simultaneously facilitate the recreation of materially successful masculinities and femininities, but hinder the recreation of gender roles that promote harmonious familial ties between fathers and children, and fathers and mothers in the family. Failure of such relations to take shape renders the familial space a conflict ridden site where men and women are trapped by the gender rigid roles.

The first chapter also demonstrated that white privilege and class difference continue to be a salient factor in as far as masculine subjectivity re-creation and social relations among black and whites are concerned. The interconnectedness of class difference and material wealth is on the one hand linked to racial difference and the creation of black urban masculinity and its variants such as the hustler figure. Fanon's (1967) analysis of the psycho-social effects of racism on black men and women in the African social setting, and hooks' (1995) critique of subtle forms of racism in 'post-apartheid' America seen through the normalization of white values, gendered aspects of internalized racism form the basis of reading Matlwa's *Coconut*. Contrary to the Fanonian Manichean world of black and White and its prejudices, Matlwa's novel depicts the various overlooked processes of social interaction among blacks and whites to offer a critique of the subtle ways through which racism has been refigured and used by whites, and appropriated and used by blacks as a way of measuring and exhibiting social mobility. Although *Coconut* is not precisely a novel that broaches the theme of masculinity as a central theme, it does so in an indirect way. It critiques normalized white supremacy/privilege in order to show its psychic effects on blacks who interact with whites.

The past and the contemporary South African urban social and economic spheres cannot be reduced to the question of race and its accompanying effects. The effects of the apartheid past are depicted in the contemporary era through the novels of Niq Mhlongo (2004; 2007) and Kgebetli Moele (2006). In a way, the set of novels read under this study show an engagement with the past through different ways. Mhlongo (2004; 2007) and Moele (2006) use the contemporary hustler figure to question and depict the challenges that black male youths are

faced with in the present. Morrell (1998) and Fenwick (1996) trace the emergence of the hustler figure in the South African cultural and literary spheres to the 1950s. They suggest that the social prominence of this figure could be attributed to the apartheid policies meant to entrap the black population in perpetual impoverishment. The hustler's material success through unlawful means made him a political and economic hero of his time. His deployment in Moele (2006) and Mhlongo's (2004; 2007) urban novels is viewed as a protest tool in this study. However, this approach does not overlook the uneven social and economic transformation in the South African literary and social spheres and the importance of the youth's agency in the re-creation of masculine subjectivities in the university campus, the inner city and the township.

Chapter two demonstrated the correlation between the male body, Xhosa male circumcision and the (re)creation of adult Xhosa masculinities. *A Man Who Is Not a Man* underscored this linkage and further destabilized it. Unlike *Facing Mount Kenya*, which represents the relationship between the male body, cultural circumcision and the passage into adult masculinities as a seamless transition, in its depiction of the Xhosa rite of passage, *A Man Who is not a Man* depicts the rite of passage as a bumpy road. The novel uses the state of a ritual and adult Xhosa masculinity in crisis to evoke a discussion on the subject of failed circumcision; to question and call on elderly men who preside over this rite of passage to take responsibility in the shame that has engulfed the ritual in order to ameliorate it. Contrary to *The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me* which depicts male circumcision and the virginity test as patriarchal farce meant to subjugate women and privilege men's sexual expressions and pleasure, *A Man Who Is Not a Man* and *Facing Mount Kenya* depict male circumcision as an important rite of passage which does not only enable the growth and incorporation of the young adult male into the community of elders who will help him re-create adult male masculinity, but also link the young male with his ancestors, cultural beliefs and mores of his society.

Tapping onto the media's portrayal of the initiation rite in crisis does not only generate debate around the causes of the failure of the ritual which results in possible deaths and the mental and physical scarring of the 'failed' initiates; it further facilitates certain levels of destabilization of the following: Xhosa culture as a homogeneous and collective male identity; the depiction of the body as a canvas on which culture imprints itself; and Morrell's (2001) view that men and boys are not free to recreate masculine identities that are outside cultural institutions. Mgqolozana's (2009) anchoring of the story of the 'failed' man in the

South African social reality, the positionality of the narrator in relation to the events narrated in the story, and the sequential arrangement of the narrative in a cause-effect relationship worked effectively as strategies of representation in the sense that it lends shape to the genre of the narrative and rehabilitates *ulwaluko*. Though Mgqolozana (2009) succeeds in questioning the codes of neo-traditional ruling Xhosa masculinity, he falls short however, of situating the 'failed' man within the Xhosa commune. The 'failed' man overcomes his mental and physical scarring. His predicament ensures his grandfather's preparedness for his younger brother's initiation. He helps in giving care and advice to initiates undergoing circumcision, but distances himself from his regiment of circumcised men during the coming out ceremony. The novel suggests that the failed man does not have a place among the ranks of 'real' Xhosa men.

Novels discusses in Chapters three and five use humour and irony to question the manner through which racism and white privilege permeate black and white social relationships and/or social interaction. The novels discussed in both chapters depict the psychic effects of internalized racism on the blacks, and the normalcy with which whites use white privilege, a subtle form of racism, to place themselves in socially privileged positions in their relationship with black people. *The Madams* uses Laurens' relationship with her friends and her reaction (rage) towards Marita's status as a white maid for a black madam to question subtle racism in the contemporary era.

In addition, chapter three demonstrated that domesticity is not only a problem that affects and ensnares women within the familial space. The philosophies of domesticity also inhibit the re-creation of newer forms of masculine identities such as the 'renaissance man', a man who helps in the care of children and domestic chores in the home. In its examination of the manner through which western and traditional African ideals of domesticity are couched as African middle class family values and culture, this chapter relies on the work of Lindsay and Miescher (2003) and Tamale (2004). Lindsay and Miescher (2003) point out that the advent of the urban economy transformed African pre-colonial social and economic spheres and expressions of manhood. By situating men within the growing urban economy as miners and/or railway workers, it emphasized the notion of the man as the bread winner or economic provider in the family, thus placing the woman in the domestic sphere as the bearer and nurturer of children who would provide the urban structures with the needed future labour. Tamale's (2004) dissection of the linkage between tenets of domesticity, women's sexuality, gender power relations, neo traditional African culture shows how African patriarchies

deploy the combination of these entities of social and economic power to control the lives of women through socialization and consensus among men and women. Wanner's (2006; 2008; 2010) novels push the boundary further to incorporate the subject of masculinity re-creation in the home and the manner through which codes of domesticity are used to subjugate men in the familial space. Chapter three suggests that certain brands of feminism and femininity creation can be used to women's advantage, and in the process enforce the rigidity of sex-roles in the family as depicted in Slindile's enforcement of the man as the financial provider in the family unit. On the other hand, the role of man as the provider in the unit is also used by male and female patriarchs to oppress women and to throw men into a state of anxiety in cases where women become financially successful like her husband as seen in *Behind Every Successful Man*. Chapter three presents that certain cultural practices within the home frustrate the growth of loving and caring masculinities due to the monetization of social institutions and cultural practices meant to perpetuate ruling masculinities.

Chapter four discussed the techniques used by Duiker (2001) to dislodge dominant masculinity constitution from violence and to passionately critique contemporary South African culture's homophobia. Connell (1995) and Morrell (2001; 1998) point out that dominant masculinity is not maintained through violence, but through a consensus between the dominated and the dominant. But in the South African social and political contexts where black and white masculinity assertion is steeped in violence because of its legitimization in the anti-apartheid struggle, manhood is synonymous with violence. The novel represents two types of gender based violence. One stems from the use of physical force to subjugate, wound and kill. The other type is instigated by homophobic sentiments. The novel depicts madness resultant from excessive use of violence on Zebron's part. Madness and/or possession are also used as an antithesis of 'real' manhood and as an African pre-colonial traditional queering strategy which destabilizes gender and sex binary relations. Duiker's (2001) distrust of contemporary neo-African culture's intolerance towards 'deviant' sexualities prompts him to rely on ancient history and cultural mythologies which were more tolerant towards the notion of plural sexual desires and expressions. This problematises the usage of western nomenclature such as gay and lesbian to express and label African notions of queer desires. However, Duiker's (2001) imagined traditional male queer desires expressed through the depiction of a shaman figure does not fully blossom on the contemporary South African social sphere. Tshepo-Angelo relocates from Cape Two to Johannesburg in order to remove the black male queer figure from the commercialization of sexual desires and to situate this

desire within its 'legitimate' shamanic position or village seer. In Johannesburg, Tshepo does not feel welcomed by his fellow South Africans, but feels at ease with the different African nationals in the city. Also, he finds his gifts – blue prints of survival – from men who come from distant civilizations. This shows the bleak future for the black South African queer male. The strength of Duiker's (2001) work rests on his use of pre-colonial culture's tolerance towards 'deviant' sexualities. This belies contemporary neo-African culture's claim of queer desires as unAfrican. Duiker's (2001) situating of queer desires outside the South African history and cultural mythologies stems from his discomfort with contemporary dominant South African homophobic masculinities, but this leads to the feeling of alienation of his mouthpiece, Tshepo-Angelo. Gopinath (2005) points out that though the domestic space, home or national boundary, is viewed as a site of clamping down of queer desires, and the diaspora as a space which offers the freer expressions of queerness, the home/ national boundary is effective in mounting a critique of the denial or erasure of queer desires as this challenges homophobia from within or through the use of the author's positionality within his own history and culture.

Chapter five looked at how contemporary racism detrimentally impacts the formation of male and female subjectivities in the born free generation. The chapter paid a great deal of focus on the black and white social interaction in the form of the alliances that the protagonists make with their white acquaintances at school and in the work place. Though informed by the Fanonian (1967) psychopathology of the colonized, this chapter did not rely on the binary opposition of racial relations, but adopted hooks's (1995) analysis of black and white social relations. hooks (1995) points out that racism in the post emancipation periods is reached through a consensus manifest in internalized racism and normalised white privilege. Such forms of racism are to be found in subtle racial jokes, the privileging of white culture and its aesthetics of beauty, negation of blackness and devaluation and/or overvaluation of black bodies due to their light or dark toned skin. Matlwa's *Coconut* suggests that the effects of internalized racism are felt differently across the gender difference. In the South African social setting, Matlwa (2009) shows that the racial question matters the most in the creation of male and feminine subjectivities in the youths born post-1994. She shows that its effects are depicted in the negation of the different versions of black beauty in females. In males it is shown in the disruption of the father and son relationship. Mr Tlou feels the coldness of white supremacy behind the back door table at Silver Spoon, but overlooks it because he has material wealth with which to make up for the loss of self-dignity. His substitution of the

quest for the dignity of blackness and what it represents with the pursuit of material wealth coerces him to constantly prove his humanness to the whites and to view them as imbued with wit. As a result, he forces his son to study actuarial science instead of a degree in humanities. Feeling exploited and objectified by the treatment he gets from the white people at work, Tshepo is propelled to learn about African cultures and wants to write in order to speak to his audience through books in the privacy of their minds. The conflict of interest leads to the conflict between the son and father relationship. This conflict is mediated by the impact of contemporary racism and the feeling of supremacy of the whites that Tshepo interacts with at work.

In order to shield themselves from racism, Ofilwe, Tshepo, Fikile and Ayanda use different strategies. Ofilwe embarks on a 'detoxification' exercise and the learning of sePedi at her pace. Tshepo resorts to mysticism and wants to challenge racism through an assertion of blackness and its beauty. Ayanda throws a tantrum and stampedes to the kitchen area, away from the lady who made unpalatable remarks about 'you people'. He quotes the constitution and tells the staff about the crude way that blacks are treated in his immediate environment. His misdirected anger does not challenge contemporary racial bias in the sense that he does not address the white lady, but throws a tantrum in front of the staff members who have resigned themselves to silence, fake smiles and 'appropriate' black behavior to ward off racism and to protect their jobs. Upon realizing her naivety regarding the exaltation of white values, Fikile points out that her head is messed up, but is not keen on revisiting and sorting out the mess. However, she feels at peace to be at home after the short train ride with Palesa's father. Through these characters, Matlwa shows the psychopathology of both blacks and whites in contemporary South Africa. She shows the façade of black elite middle class values depicted though Mr Tlou, Mr Tlou's mother, Gemina and her women friends. Ofilwe and Fikile point out the fakery that characterizes these characters. Paternalistic attitudes and anger towards the loss of the glorious apartheid past are depicted towards Miss Becky's treatment of her worker, Fikile. This venom also seeps through Isabella in the form of insults she hurls at the workers at Instant Fried Chicken and the white lady who ill-treats Ayanda at Silver Spoon. The contemporary South African architecture of the gated middle class enclaves, residential areas such as Little Valley Estate, also displays the loss of time and history. For instance, Little Valley ensures that residents adhere to white values though they come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Though represented as gems and safe havens from contemporary city crime, Ofilwe points out that gated communities such as the Little Valley

are a way of escaping the poor blacks. Whites and elite/middle class blacks show contempt for the South African poor. Having pointed out and questioned the effects of apartheid, *Coconut* suggests the various ways to heal the psyche of blacks and whites in contemporary South Africa. Matlwa seems to suggest that an appreciation of various shades of blackness is the solution. Ofilwe and Fikile present a plausible way of re-creating subjectivities compared to Tshepo and Ayanda. Wanner's *The Madams* (2006) and Matlwa's *Coconut* call for whites to question their inherited bias towards blacks and to recede from their position of superiority in order to transform their behavior, thus building mutual relations with blacks. Matlwa (2009) shows that the process of reversing internalized racism is contradictory and complex. Palesa's father is caught between home schooling his daughter and the cognitive disadvantages of such a move on the child.

Chapter six's reading of the male authored novels of Moele (2006) and Mhlongo (2004; 2007) points out that material wealth or the lack thereof mediates in the recreation and performance of masculinities. In addition, it looks back to the *Drum* and literary era of the early 1950s and suggests that the reemergence of the outlaw/hustler male figure in contemporary fiction is used by Mhlongo and Moele to contest the lack of economic transformation within the majority of underclass black South African youths. Similar to Fenwick (1996) and Morrell (1998), Moele (2006) and Mhlongo's (2004; 2007) novels studied in this chapter show that the hustler figure is a form of masculine identity created by the youths in order to deal with the harsh university life, peer pressure, and lack of opportunities for social advancement through the acquisition of tertiary education. These novels show that white economic transformation which has led to the creation of a black middleclass though BEE policies has left the majority of poor blacks languishing in a state of impoverishment. As a result, the male youths resort to hustling.

Mhlongo (2004; 2007) and Moele's (2006) novels do not gloss over the gender imbalance within their social settings, but show that the contemporary social and economic transformations have impacted the manner through which males and females express their masculine and feminine subjectivities. Mhlongo's *After Tears* depicts the fears and anxieties experienced by the black underclass males when they witness the economic advancement of BEE masculinities and femininities. Moele's protagonists in *Room 207* do not view themselves as sexual conquerors of female bodies, but represent these relations as equally exploitative. In a similar vein to Oom Dan in *A Man Who Is Not a Man*, Moele' *Room 207* suggests that manhood is a strategy and each man responds to the process of masculinity

construction in his own way. As a result, the six youths' strategies of being seem to question and contradict dominant masculinity's ways of expressing manhood. Zulu-boy sees his Swazi girl friend who is a prostitute as worthy to be loved the way she is without forcing her to exit the Hillbrow sex market. Molamo and Modishi become kept men who later on advance their lives through the financial assistance of their lovers. The man as provider narrative is turned upside-down.

This study shows that black masculinities are being defended, challenged, broken down, and recreated in different ways in daily interactions among men and women. Perhaps the faultiest way of reading these transformations is an analysis that compares and contrasts these changes with the constitution and neo-traditional cultural practices and expressions of manhood. An analysis of the motives and psychological underpinnings of acts of masculinities could open a threshold into a closer examination of masculinity expressions that puts more emphasis on one's agency and the context within which gender identities are recreated. The novels under study show that though contemporary writers use masculine identity creation to engage in negotiations that seek to transform detrimental mores of dominant masculinities and protest socio-economic transformations, the imagined masculinities seem not to have a place to blossom in the South African social realms. As a result, we witness masculinity crisis and disrupted masculinity transformation.

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