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Re-narrating and re-masculating the ‘brute’ in the first season of eKasi: Our Stories

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Wits University, Johannesburg, 2015

Abstract

Hollywood has always paid much attention to black masculinity; depicting black males in ways that demean them to keep them as subordinates. This stereotypical representation of black men, especially in the townships, has been one that South African filmmakers have subscribed to with the constant portrayal of black men as 'as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers' (hooks 2004). A study of e.tv's short film series, *eKasi: Our Stories*, will illustrate how this series typifies what Morrell refers to as 'new masculinities' and furthermore explores black masculinities as multitudinous as "there are many characteristics and experiences that define black men" (Whiting & Lewis 2008). The first season of the series, with five episodes will be critically studied to demonstrate how black masculinities have been reimaged by the filmmakers of these short films. These short films open up spaces for various identities for black men by affording the characters complexity. This will be showcased with a careful examination of the themes of these five stories. Also of equal importance is the characterisation of the black male characters in relation to others and their communities. The study focuses on how the revision of the black man from the township gives back to him the humanity, dignity and most notably masculinity which he had been stripped off since his first appearance on film and television. By employing Harris' (2006) notion of a New Black Cinema, it will be demonstrated that the short film series is in line with emerging theories of the revision of the black image onscreen.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Nande Sulelo

Sign: ……

February 2015

Acknowledgements

‘Mourn for us sold out and chained to devil pictures.’ Amiri Baraka

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Post-apartheid South Africa, most notably after the millennium, has not only been concerned with the rainbow nation rhetoric, but also with numerous attempts at social reform. These range from land re-distribution to BEE (Black Economic Empowerment), cultural conservation projects through heritage sites and many more. It has been at the fore of the ANC-led government's mandate to reconcile the different races, forging a new national identity which was previously made impossible by the government purported tribalism and racism. Part of national reform has been the reform of the country's media; which under apartheid was largely state apparatus (Tomaselli 1988; Hadland, Louw, Sesanti & Wasserman 2008). The country's media has taken this task to unify the people into greater strides, disseminating a discourse of the rainbow nation and the notion of Ubuntu (Ives 2007). This was evinced by the public broadcaster having slogans such as Simunye: We are One. Central to media reform in South Africa in the wake of apartheid is what Saks (2010) terms the race for representation as filmmaking is becoming even more accessible giving previously marginalised groups an opportunity to represent themselves. It is this self-representation in post-apartheid South that this study investigates.

Background to the study

The negative representations of black people were transferred from Hollywood to Africa during the colonial experimentation with film (Diawara 1987). Hollywood which formed a template for many cinemas globally, from its inception was directly influenced by politics of racism. This was signified by the representation of black people in D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). This film was the 'the grammar book for Hollywood's representation of Black manhood and

womanhood, its obsession with miscegenation, and fixing of Black people within certain spaces, such as kitchens, and into certain supporting roles, such as criminals on the screen' bore the template from which blackness was to be depicted (Diawara 1993: 3). These are the images that were to transcend national borders and underpin representation of black people across various cineastes. With this film Hollywood 'defined for the first time the side that Hollywood was to take in the war to represent Black people in America' (Diawara 1993: 3).

Guerrero (1993: 237) adds that "…Hollywood…deployed a variety of narrative and visual 'strategies of containment' that subordinate the Black image and subtly reaffirm dominant society's traditional racial order". These images were to be 'repeated and codified into a formula which is presented as a narrative' (Cripps 1978: 10). These images fixed black characters within stereotypical spaces that ensured their supposed inferiority; portraying them as coons, brutes, barks, criminals and buffoons.

South Africa also adopted these conventions starting from earlier films like *De Voortrekkers* (1916) which Maingard (2009: 18) notes was declared the country's 'national film' and was 'used as a propaganda piece for Afrikaaner nationalism.' This only warranted the exclusion of black people on film in South Africa too. Pichaske (2007) captures this stating that 'the opportunity to experience cinema has been denied to black South Africans for most of the country's history' (2007: 131). This is clearly articulated by the fact that even 'though cinema was introduced to South Africa in 1896, films were not screened in black townships or rural areas until decades later…the films on offer were heavily censored and produced entirely by whites' (Pichaske, 2007: 131).

In 1972 the government 'embarked upon…forms of ideologically controlling and shaping cinema through the introduction of a state subsidy scheme' (Maingard 2009: 07) 'at the behest of white filmmakers who saw an opportunity to make money by producing African-language films starring Africans for mass African audiences' (Paleker 2010). These films were very problematic in terms of representation not only because they were inundated with state propaganda, but also because of the underdeveloped relationship between the producers, actors and the audience. The makers of these films demonstrated little knowledge of black culture and the films were of poor quality. 'Many did not even speak the ethnic languages in which their films were shot and had to rely on actors to translate their own dialogue' (Pichaske 2007: 131). This supported – especially financially- white filmmakers 'with little or no experience to produce low-budget films' for black audiences (Pichaske, 131). The films made focused mainly on moral and health directions to the intended black audience. The brazenly evaded the social injustices experienced by the black population as 'any film that challenged the Censorship Board's guidelines or the government's policies would not have been subsidised' (Archer 2005: 03).

The activities of the B- Scheme subsidy countered earlier attempts of representing realistic representations of blackness as evinced in films like Lionel Rogosin's *Come Back, Africa* (1960) and Donald Swanson's *African Jim* (1949) (Dovey & Impey 2010) and most notably *Mapantsula* (Schmitz, 1987). These films were in the minority as they had black people 'dominate the frame' and therefore subverting the stereotypical relegation of black people to the periphery (Modisane 2010: 68). Also, Rogosin centralised the black plight under apartheid, using a black cast. This was another unusual way of representing black people in cinema. Significantly, these black actors were inexperienced ordinary citizens. Masilela (1991: 65) remarks that *Come Back, Africa*

'uniquely displays a positive image of Africans on the screen from beginning to end'. These are the images the government tried to suppress with the introduction of the ideologically laden B-Scheme subsidy.

By the 1990's some of these negative constructions had begun to be questioned and problematized by a number of new production companies as the reality of a post democratic dispensation dawned. There was a notable shift with regards to black images on screen. These significant shifts were most noticeable in soapies such as SABC's *Generations* and television dramas like *Ifa LakwaMthethwa* and *Hlala Kwabafileyo* (Mhlambi 2012). However the positivity that was embraced by such films was called into question by films such as *Yizo Yizo* and *Gaz'lam* (Smith 2000; Anderson 2004). These refocused the attention to realities of black experiences within a post- apartheid context. The realities that were to hit and shock the South African nation related to crime and the pathology of crime in black spaces. The depiction of such realities necessitated the reintroduction of negative black constructions on television; black people as gangsters and social miscreants. Such images had become staple images as cesspools that are endangering problematic black psychologies. Even though *Yizo Yizo* worked from the same kind of practices, there was now a tendency to glamorise criminality and proscriptive behaviour (Smith 2000; Anderson 2004; Modisane 2012).

The first season of *eKasi: Our Stories* aired in 2009 Monday nights on e.tv provides a valuable case study for the studying representation in contemporary South Africa. Post 1994 television dramas such as SABC's soap opera *Generations* offered new but problematic and highly glamorised consumerist constructions of black people drawn from American representations of

blackness (Ives 2007). Even though these American induced images were seen to be positive as they were the anti-theses of apartheid black image constructions, they were problematic because they did not reflect a reality that is closer to the South African black context. *eKasi: Our Stories*, on the other hand, overlook these post-apartheid constructions of blackness and aim for a broader construction drawn from black people's daily experiences in township spaces. In that way they disrupt both the apartheid negative stereotypical images of drunkards, gangsters, *tsotsis* et cetera as the only entry to black experiences and those of the post-apartheid narratives that aim for overly glamorised and highly commoditized constructions of blackness to sell to an international audience. Compared to the national broadcaster e.tv seems to aim for images that resonate with black experiences and consequently they offered an ideal platform to broadcast these township based films under the title. For example, on comparing their popular soapies, *Generations* for SABC and *Rhythm City* for e.tv, the latter resonates more with black experiences in South Africa than *Generations* with glamorised Hollywood soapie style kind of representations. *eKasi: Our Stories* the brainchild of Seleke Communications' Vusi Twala began to air in 2009, and are in sync with the depictions that can be read from *Rhythm City*.

This research traces some of the flourishing black masculinities found in the township spaces from the five short stories offered in the first season. These are: *Secret Lovers; Mama's Boy; Abducted; A Good Wife* and *Chasing the Truth*. The emphasis is on the thematic fronts of these dramas that locate these new representations of blackness within everyday life experiences. These short stories open up a variety of images of black men navigating their way in black urban spaces.

Statement of the problem

Central to stereotypical images of black men was the idea that they are trapped in a world they have no control over. Conventionally black men are represented as 'violent, hypersexualized or non-men' Whiting & Lewis (2008). These images that 'rarely afford black characters complexity' are repeated in various productions by various cineastes in different parts of the world. (George 2013). Contemporary filmmakers- black and white- have a duty to offer an alternative image of black men; one that is removed from the usual 'submissive, docile Tom or the morally corrupt, conniving, sexually threatening drug dealer' that has come to define a black man in the township. (Harris 2006: 84) In this study the five episodes from *eKasi: Our Stories* are seen to be offering multitudinous masculine identities instead of the few streamlined masculinities that are usually reserved for black men.

Rationale

This research delves into the depictions of gender roles in the series as these are intriguing and challenge conventionalised gender roles, not only in African communities but also those perpetuated by white dominant patriarchy such as locating the woman within the domestic sphere while the man occupies the public space (Prinsloo 2006; Lesejane 2006). Studies in African gender roles have pointed to shifts in the family structure as African communities grapple with colonisation, apartheid and globalisation (Whitehead 2002; Elliot 2003; Morrell & Swart 2005). The current research will note these shifts in *eKasi: Our Stories* and examine how the modern black man in the township negotiates his masculinity in spite of the conventional gender roles.

After South Africa's democracy in 1994 the media went through a transformation (Steenveld 2004). A major factor that characterised this transformation was the 'emergence of the black body from its history of invisibility' (Nuttall 2009). According to Nuttall (2009) the contemporary black youth portray 'alternative politics of style' through self-stylisation. The manner in which the youth define their bodies post- 1994 breaks away from apartheid's fixed identity based on race. This movement to transform the black body can be traced to other social and media forms. The Y culture in urban Johannesburg (Y fm, Y magazine) and kwaito and township- generated couture (Loxion Kulcha) epitomized this. e.tv has widened this scope to television; introducing programmes that depict positive and diverse black identities. One of these programmes is a series titled *eKasi: Our Stories*, which is the object of this study. The television channel has built on past successes of these popular culture mediums expounding on the transformation of black representation.

The title of the series requires some attention as it too points out how the black image is being revised in the series. "eKasi: Our Stories" starts with a small letter to represent the broadcast channel e.tv. and 'kasi' is used to refer to the township; it is colloquial derived from the Afrikaans word 'lokasie' meaning location. "eKasi: Our Stories" has underlying meanings to claim authenticity. The title references the history of the government subsidised B Scheme[1] films which saw white filmmakers with little or no knowledge of African indigenous cultures and languages produce films aimed at an African audience for profit (Pichaske 2007). The short story series emphasises that these stories are told by the people who have first-hand experience of the life depicted and therefore offer a more authentic view into township life. The title also evokes a sense of resonance with the audience by claiming that the stories carried in the series are their own, stories they are familiar with against cheap American imports and the popular Nollywood.

This research examines these stories to note how they differ from the conventional township stories evinced in television dramas like *Yizo Yizo* and *Gaz'lam,* where the black body is depicted as trapped by the township's history of marginalisation making crime an inevitable survival strategy (Mhlambi 2012).

Literature review: Re-masculating black men onscreen

The literature is divided into three sections: a corpus of materials that theorise gender and masculinity, the other section comprise literature on New Black Cinema and third cohort consists of literature that explores issues of black representations, especially the representations of black men. The theoretical foundation of the study is based on the views of Morrell (1998; 2005; 2006) and Elliot (2003) on masculinity within the South African context and Harris (2006) offers pertinent ideas on New Black Cinema which firmly situate the re-narration of black masculinity onscreen. Maingard (2003; 2007; 2009); Mamatu (2006); Jordache Ellapen (2007) and Mhlambi (2012) offer invaluable contributions from which this study borrows to situate the context of the onscreen representations of black men in South African film and television.

Masculinity is a term not easily defined and Morrell (1998) offers a useful account of masculinity describing this as an identity associated with gender and what is expected from this gender in relation to its binary opposite; femininity. He attests that it 'is a collective gender identity and not a natural attribute' (Morrell 1998: 607). What is most significant about Morrell's account is that it recognizes masculinity as flexible to individual and societal change. Morrell opens up the subject of masculinity by claiming that 'there is not one universal masculinity, but many masculinities' (Morrell 1998: 607). This is the very idea on which this study is founded. This idea calls to question the representation of black men as a homogenous entity defined by

character traits layered upon them by popular media. Morrell's claim allows for the exploration of various facets of masculinity.

Morrell (1998: 607) notes that 'in any society there are many masculinities, each with a characteristic shape and set of features'. These masculinities do not co-exist alongside each other, but as oppositions to one that is dominant. Elliot (2003) points to these numerous masculinities, stating that they emanate from contentions from two clusters of philosophies; one being that of the essentialists and the other being of the social constructivists. The former are of the belief that 'gender characteristics are innate essences', while the social constructionists believe that 'gender constructions are purely the result of intersecting, historical social and cultural factors at a particular moment in time' (Elliot 2003: 4). The dominant masculinity, he refers to as hegemonic masculinity and others as subordinate and subversive masculinities. Marginal groups are dominated by hegemonic masculinity on the basis of cultural domination. "In addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy" (Morrell 1998: 608). Apartheid homogenised black men, including all non-white races, into a singular masculinity. The subjugation of a people was deeper than merely economically, educationally and culturally; the dominated black people were domineered in all spheres of life including the men's masculinities. "The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own" (Morrell 1998: 608). As established that masculinities vary according to, amongst other things social context, they each have defining traits. The white hegemonic masculinity that played rule in South Africa was modelled after the

Euro-central ideals of masculinity. Morrell notes that "among its defining features are misogyny, homophobia, racism and compulsory heterosexuality" (Morrell 1998: 608). It was on these grounds that black men found themselves outside the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity.

For the purpose of this study masculinity will be taken as the identity which encompasses character traits any specific society attributes to and expects from male adults. These include behaviour, mannerisms, careers men can follow and many more.

The literary contributions on masculinity discussed above show that masculinities are not only multitudinous but are constantly being constructed and reshaped to fit current contexts. This study elucidates how black masculinities in the township have been re-dignified through positive imagery onscreen. As will be explicated thoroughly throughout the chapters, some of the traits of white hegemonic masculinity permeated black masculinities. This resulted in the masculinities of black men differing according to the spaces they occupied and manliness being measured by varying factors. The discovery of minerals in Johannesburg, the rinderpest and high taxes resulted in an upsurge in migrant labour (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997).

Migrant labour was born due to increased taxes which forced many to seek work in the cities in order to provide for their families. "Work was a ticket into the city - without work, apartheid officials would imprison and deport African men to the reserves. It was for this reason that work increasingly became a mark of masculinity" (Morrell 1998: 626). With the growth of the black urban population and the installation of the townships to accommodate the workers, urbanisation became a permanent option for the workers (Ellapen 2007). The harsh realities of apartheid soon forged a new urban based masculinity. This later developed various branches. "The youth emerged as a new and anti-social force. Often they became *tsotsis*, petty criminals or gangsters."

(Morrell 1998: 627) As gangsters and *tsotsis* emerged 'the old idea central to African masculinity, that being a man meant to be in control of oneself, not to resort to violence (the eschewal of which was learnt as part of the transitionary rite of passage by which boys became men) and to be wise was replaced with a tough masculinity' (Morrell 1998: 627). This was the black masculinity which came to define black men on screen. All other aspects of black masculinity were eclipsed by this violent form of asserting masculinity. A fervent mitigation of violence being the key representative of black masculinity came to prominence as the post-apartheid landscape saw a rise to the fore of the notion of a united nationhood. With this came opportunities for various masculinities to flourish as the country's media perpetuated new ideas concerning what a real man was.

Morrell's ideas on masculinities in South Africa help situate the understanding of manhood especially in post-apartheid South where a lot has changed in black men's lives since the pre-colonial era. He acknowledges the various backgrounds of South African men and their experiences shape their ideas on manhood and the attributes they associate with different masculinities. Social calamities such as apartheid, migrant labour and unemployment were and still are experienced differently by South African men therefore the manner in which they express their manhood is bound to vary (Morrell 1998). These ideas are crucial for understanding how the masculinities illustrated in *eKasi: Our Stories* assist in re-dignifying black men in the townships.

Stella Viljoen studied the construction of post-apartheid South African masculinities as formulated in male lifestyle magazines; *GQ, Men's Health, Bl!NK, FHM* and *Maksiman*. These

magazines, she found, are based on an overarching ideal masculinity but some (*BL!NK* and *Maksiman*) 'ostensibly challenged negative stereotypes surrounding black masculinity with an ethical and socially responsible black masculine ideal.' (Viljoen 2008: 162). In her study she explores how gender can be 'simultaneously flexible and fixed.' (Viljoen 2008: 155). These magazines have redefined masculinity by constructing an ideal masculinity that is conceptualised on non-racial terms- opening enough room for black men to embody the dominant masculinity so long as they assimilate and carry the necessary features of white masculinity. Walker (2005) in Viljoen loosely describes the ideal man as one "who is non-violent, a good father and husband, employed and able to provide for his family" (Viljoen 2008: 156). These issues are central in the construction of masculine dignity in first season of *eKasi: Our Stories* as they are based on a social behavioural model of the 'new man'.

Harris (2006) propounds an explication of the need for these positive images of the black body with his philosophy on New Black Cinema. Harris remarks that this signifying practice 'emerges from a historic and political awareness of double consciousness in that the initial project is a recoding of blackness and black masculinity, exposing a hypocrisy in representation' (Harris 2006: 97). The same can be said in the South African context where the five episodes of the inaugural season of *eKasi: Our Stories* depict attempts repackaging the black body in the popular imagination of South Africans.

Harris' New Black Cinema bears resonance with Taylor's New U.S. Black Cinema (1983). Both theories are championed by middle class artists from various genres like literature, music and film. They were both from movements that transcended formal generic lines. New Cinema is committed to the expression of social experiences of the black population (Taylor 1983). Though

New Black Cinema as a theory has striking similarities with Taylor's New U.S. Black Cinema Harris credits three scholars for laying the fundamental thinking to his New Black Cinema; these are New Black Aesthetic (Ellis, 1989), new cultural politics of difference (West, 1990) and New Black Realism (Diawara, 1993a).

Ellis offers more fabric from which Harris drew his ideas. Of particular significance about Ellis' New Black Aesthetic (NBA), is that it was about 'artists…defining blacks in black contexts' (Ellis 1989: 238). Ellis defined it as "open-ended…from a few Seventies pioneers that shamelessly borrows and reassembles across both race and class lines" (Harris, 234). The subject of black people who may not necessarily have 'suffered' in the spaces especially demarcated for occupation by black people i.e. townships or ghettoes, did not exclude them from black experience. Of this Ellis notes "you don't have to be black and poor to be black and angry" (Ellis in Harris 2006: 241). NBA offered a blackness that was not defined by white terms or what cultural essentialists thought 'black' ought to be. Ellis emphasized this stating that "we no longer need to deny or suppress any part of our complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural baggage to please either white people or black" (Ellis in Harris 206: 235). The movement was about self-expression beyond what was conventionally linked to art by and for black people.

The NBA propagators were not trying to deny the black plight but to encourage a forward movement that allowed for black expression through art instead of dwelling on victimization. They insisted that they were not denying that racism exists, but that it was no excuse (Harris 2006). This is an element of this theory very crucial in the exploration of *eKasi: Our Stories* as the stories undertake various black experiences instead of a repetition of obsolete stereotypical images of down and out black men. The NBA is a progressive alternative to conventional representations of blackness. Using these ideas the study focuses on the numerous complex

identities presented by various masculinities evinced by black male characters in the series. No longer are black men a homogenised faceless group that could only be delineated as either savages or good boys.

The second theory that Harris borrows from is that of Cornel West. West offers a theory that is not any less important; new cultural politics of difference. This he describes as:

> "The new cultural politics of difference is neither simply oppositional in contesting the mainstream…for inclusion, nor transgressive in the avant-gardist sense of shocking conventional; bourgeois audience. It embraces the distinct articulations of talented (and usually privileged) contributors to culture who desire to align themselves with demoralized, demobilized and disorganized people in order to empower and enable social action and, if possible, to enlist collective insurgency for the expansion of freedom, democracy and individuality. This perspective impels these cultural critics and artists to reveal, as an integral component of their production, the very operations of power within their immediate work contexts."
>
> (West in Harris 2006: 80- 1)

The most outstanding aspects of this theory are the views of opposition to mainstream representation, a break from convention and the purpose of art being to change the situation of the 'demoralized, demobilized and disorganized people in order to empower (them)' (West in harris 2006: 80).

The last theory Harris employs as a base for his New Black Cinema is Manthia Diawara's New Black Realism. This theory is of Africans across the Diasporas who are concerned with 'positive imagery, stereotypes and misrepresentations…" (Harris 2006: 81). Diawara (1993: 1) states that 'whenever Black people appeared on Hollywood screens…they are represented as a problem'.

He adds that ‘independent films provide alternative ways of knowing Black people that differ from the fixed stereotypes of Blacks in Hollywood’ (Diawara 1993: 6). *eKasi: Our Stories* thrive on this, re-imagining black masculinity and black spaces in a different light to counter the popular stereotypes while expressing varying black experiences. A weighty point from Diawara’s theory is that ‘White people and Whiteness are marginalized in these films, while central positions are relegated to Black people, Black communities, and diasporic experiences” (1993: 7). This directly addresses the exclusion of white characters in the first season of the show, with sporadic appearances by coloured characters. Central positions are reserved for black characters, as the stories tell black everyday experiences in black localities.

New Black Cinema, and *eKasi: Our Stories* in particular, are a response to Diawara’s complaint of a lack of ‘simple stories about Black people loving each other, hating each other, or enjoying their private possessions without reference to the White world’ (Diawara 1993: 4). The need for constructive and restorative images of black people is stressed by (hooks 2004: x) when she notes that ‘Seen as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers, black men have had no real dramatic say when it comes to the way they are represented’.

Methodology

This research is principally concerned with how the renarration of the black body onscreen apportions to black men a masculine dignity otherwise denied to them by trapping them within a rigid box stereotypical images designed to pillory them. A thorough critical analysis of the first season is conducted examining the ways in which the conventional representations of black masculinities have been altered to make way for positive masculine identities in the townships.

Through a thorough exploration of the thematic repertoire of first season's episodes, this study seeks to unravel how black masculinity is imagined anew post-apartheid.

As a production assistant during the production of the first season of the series, Duzi Twala offered insightful views on the episodes which better illuminated the questions surrounding the production company Seleke Communications' progressive representation of black masculinity within the township space. Amongst the topics discussed in the semi-formal interview were: the inception of *eKasi: Our Stories*, the significance of depicting quotidian township life, the role of employment in the upkeep of masculine confidence, circumvention of austere township issues like poverty and unemployment, and the focus on the young black male hero in all the episodes.

Using this interview as a point of reference, the study deciphers the thematic evocations of the episodes offered in the first season of *eKasi: Our Stories*. The analysis of the themes of these episodes is key in understanding how the images portrayed form a pivotal part of post-apartheid South Africa's identity negotiation.

Overview of the study

The five short films of *eKasi: our Stories* cited in this study were aired in 2009 as season 1 of the series. These short stories are available to registered users on the broadcaster's website. Using all five episodes of the first season of the series gives an insight into the series as a whole as these five short stories were a prelude to a successful show, with the latest season (Season 5) boasting 52 episodes. Whether or not the show's success rests on the alternative representation of black masculinity is subject to future research.

This introductory chapter outlined the tenets of the new man ideal and the importance of the coalescing of this thinking into post-apartheid South Africa. Chapter one traced the problematic

representations of black men onscreen leading to the race for representation in post-apartheid South Africa. Also noted in this chapter is that masculinities are fluid and multitudinous.

The second chapter investigates the significance of fatherhood as a masculine identity. This chapter demonstrates how the new man model is used as a template for modern equitable parenting. *A Good Wife* provides the epitome of the new daddy and this is discussed in this chapter.

The third chapter examines how crime, which is traditionally associated with black masculinity, has been treated in two episodes from the first season. These episodes are *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted*. Using Harris's (2006) New Black Cinema this chapter expounds on the manner in which these two episodes reimagine crime in the township; subverting the popular images of black youths belligerently asserting their masculinities through violent criminal activities.

It is argued in the fourth chapter that that the township is absolved of stereotypes through the promotion of middle class sensibilities as the dominant lifestyle of the post-apartheid South African township. This is best observed in the episode titled *Secret Lovers*. The chapter reveals how the 'embourgeoisiement' of the township alienates the destitute township majority (Laden 1997).

The concluding chapter offers a brief critique of the image of women against that of the idealised men. As the first season comprises of a mere five episodes all created by the same production company, it was particularly rewarding to draw comparisons between all these episodes to support the postulations made throughout the study.

The next chapter delves on the invigoration of black masculine identities in the townships through the exploration of black males as fathers.

CHAPTER TWO

THE 'NEW DADDIES' IN THE TOWNSHIPS: THE TRANSFIGURED IMAGE OF BLACK FATHERHOOD IN *A GOOD WIFE*

Having argued in the last chapter that the first season of *eKasi: Our Stories* employs the 'new man' model to salvage masculine dignity for black men, this chapter delves deeper into the argument demonstrating how fatherhood is used to this effect. To be examined in this chapter is how the new daddy framework evinced in the episode *A Good Wife* has been employed as a model for modern urban parenting. The consenting representation of black fathers counters the popularised stereotypes of black men as men who have no desire to parent (hooks 2004).

Richter (2006: 64) observes that 'in South Africa, negative images of fathers, especially of black men, are pervasive' consequently 'these images need to be countered while, simultaneously, responsible fatherhood and men's sensitivity to children's needs in both the public and the private realms needs to increase'. The post-apartheid reinvention of the black man sees *A Good Wife* represent exemplary fatherhood as but one of many masculine identities black men have fashioned for themselves. This drive to promote alternative understanding of fatherhood comes with exploratory ideas on fatherhood as one of the identities that make up black masculinities. The selected episode for study in this chapter exhibits these liberal views on fatherhood and this will be demonstrated using three themes. These themes are modern forms of parenting, gender equity and the significance of the father-daughter relationship.

Summary of *A Good Wife*

Ralph Motaung, a father of two and husband to Kate juggles work at his construction company and caring for their children as Kate is often absent. Kate is consumed in her work as she tries to accumulate more money and materials and this leads to her spending more time at the office to the complete neglect of her family. She forgets her children's birthdays and doctor's appointments, rarely ever takes the children to school or put them to bed. With the help of the domestic worker, Rebecca, Ralph prepares breakfast for the children, takes them to school and cares for them in the absence of their mother. The children and their father develop a close relationship with Rebecca, to Kate's fury. Rebecca is fired by Kate when she is found kissing Ralph. Kate struggles with daily parental duties and finding a domestic worker who understands sign language to help communicate with Monde, their teenage daughter. Monde's school work suffers and Rebecca is reinstated. Kate discloses she has breast cancer to Ralph and blames her behaviour on the need to have all of her heart's desires before she dies. The family decides to leave the cities and move to Ralph's family farm.

Theorising Black Manhood and Fatherhood in South Africa

In theorising the notion of men as fathers, Morrell (2006: 14) differentiates between fathers and fatherhood stating that generally a father is 'associated with a sexual moment and the child that may issue from it' and fatherhood is a role taken up by adult men to provide and protect their families and communities. What is of particular importance in Morrell's description is that fatherhood is said to be a role rather than a status attained by contributing to the biological make of the offspring. A man who has not biologically composed a child could be a better father and assume responsibilities that come with this role. This resonates with other scholars like Clowes

(2006) and hooks (2004) who also agree that 'it is not essential…that men be biological fathers, rather that they offer a child the opportunity to be affirmed and loved by an adult male parental caregiver' (hooks 2004: 98). Fatherhood is therefore the act of affording children male parental guidance, protection and provision whether or not there is a biological tie between father and child. Lesejane (2006: 176) adds that "one (does) not become a father only by virtue of having biologically fathered a child". This is especially true in circumstances where the father has died and uncles take up this role for children need adult guidance.

In America bell hooks blames the poor showing of fatherhood by African Americans to the common belief that men 'breed children they have no intention of raising' (hooks 2004: 98). This may be true to an extent but in the South African context this cannot simply be dismissed on account of lack of interest. The history of black men as fathers in South Africa is one gravely affected by the country's history of structured emasculation by the apartheid government. It has been noted by numerous scholars that remnants of this troubled history still affect present day fatherhood (Ramphele & Richter 2006; Morrell & Swart 2005; Mkhize 2006; Morrell 2006). This history draws back from missionary encounters which Lesejane (2006) fingers as being responsible for the disruption of African ways of life; from the introduction of Western lifestyle through missionary education, the Christian religion at the expense of African beliefs to the division of labour and gender roles.

Lesajane (2006) and Morrell & Swart (2005) report on the nature of fatherhood in African societies before the colonial encounter with the West that subjugated Africans greatly diluting their norms. Lesejane (2006) identifies qualities that African fathers embodied in pre-colonial times. Manhood involved getting married and starting a family, making fatherhood a large component of manhood. The father was the provider for and protector of his family (2006).

Some of the characteristics he identifies include the father being the 'custodian of moral authority and leader with final responsibility in the affairs of the family.' (Lesejane 2006: 176). For a father to be able to carry out his responsibilities towards his family he had to 'literally spend time with his children in order to exercise his moral authority, maintain family customs and law, and be a leader' (2006: 176). Lesejane claims that in African cultures "…a good father was one who could provide for the family, maintain the unity of the family, and assert his moral authority on the family" (2006: 176).

'Colonization and missionary endeavours,' Lesejane (2006: 178) states, 'undermined, and declared as heathen, the cultural practices such as initiation schools. This resulted in disruption of what were stable cultural preparatory and support systems'. He adds that "the mining economy and the resultant migrant labour system literally took men away from their families, making it impossible for fathers to care and nurture their children" (Lesejane 2006: 178). "Households and families were harassed and torn apart by restrictions on people's movements, by migrant labour, by forced resettlement, and by resulting poverty and disarray, in the most painful ways" (Ramphela & Richter 2006 :78) and the rise of political resistance saw youth taking on authority, 'taking over political and community leadership from their fathers.' Lesejane 2006: 179.

Morrell and Swart (2005) add that migrant labour resulted in a change in the role of fathers as the need to provide for their families increased with political and social pressures. The political tension that soon followed, intensifying from the 1960s, made things no easier for black fathers as many were thrust into jails and exile, leaving behind women and children. This further estranged black men as fathers as "the harsh realities of the apartheid system humiliated many

men, effectively undermining their ability to lead and be role models in their families and in society' (Lesejane 2006: 178).

Clowes (2006) notes how the political tension of the 1950s affected the manner in which black men were shaped in the media. She presents a study on the images of black men in *Drum* magazine in the early 1950's. She states that manhood was equated to fatherhood; representing popular male figures as fathers, grandfathers, husbands and sons in interacting with their families within the family milieu. As the political landscape changed, so did the representations- and black men's manhood was stripped of fatherhood as its core virtue, placing it in the public sphere away from domesticity (Clowes 2006).

To this day fatherhood is still not central in representations of men and their masculinities. Prinsloo (2006) reviews the representations of fatherhood in media and reveals that "men are infrequently depicted in parental roles" instead the media provide 'violent masculine role models' (Prinsloo 2006: 132). She further observed that men are rarely identified as fathers in hard news stories studied by *Sunday Times* newspaper; and the few times they are identified as such is when they are dead or have committed atrocities against their family members especially the children. A handful of men are shown as fathers if they are elite members of society compared to women who are regularly represented in terms of motherhood without necessarily being popular. On television Prinsloo (2006: 143) found that the inventory of roles depicting fatherhood is limited and where fatherhood is portrayed the fathers 'are frequently the butt of jokes'. She exclaims that 'the filters and frames for fatherhood are confined they tend to include the ridiculous or the nasty and brutish' (Prinsloo 2006: 144).

The father the provider archetype

The reality for the majority of black South African men is that remnants of colonisation, globalisation and apartheid are key in the problems they face as fathers today (Lesejane 2006; Ramphele & Richter 2006; Morrell 2006). 'Unemployment and poverty, coupled with the social and cultural tendency to define manhood and fatherhood primarily in terms of ability to provide economically for one's family, rob many men of the opportunity to play the fatherly role in the raising of their children' (Mkhize 2006: 184). The core association of the father figure with economic provision results in numerous children growing up without fathers because the guilt and the shame the men have for not being able to provide for their children leads to absent fathers (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka 2013; Morrell & Swart 2005; Ramphele & Richter 2006).

Lesejane (2006) also expresses that women's increased abilities to provide for their children took the father's role as family provider; leaving many feeling despondent and emasculated by the inability to provide for their children as they perceive economic provision to be a father's primary duty. This feeling of failure by 'fathers without amandla (power)' Hunter (2006) leads to numerous problems for these men and their families.

Ramphele (2002) explains this absconding as "'often prompted by their inability to bear the burden of being primary providers. The burden of failure becomes intolerable for those who lack the capacity to generate enough income as uneducated and unskilled labourers. Desertion is not always physical, it can also be emotional. Many men "die" as parents and husbands by indulging in alcohol, drugs or becoming unresponsive to their families'" (Ramphele in Ramphele & Richter 2006: 79). When fathers are physically present in their children's lives but are 'dead' the

relation with their children is often strained as the men tend to be abusive. "There are plenty of homes where fathers are present, fathers who are so busy acting out, being controlling, being abusive, that home is hell, and children in those homes spend lots of time wishing the father would go away (hooks 2004: 96). hooks' assertion bears more resonance as child abuse at the hands of males is prevalent in South Africa as some men do not always take up the fatherhood role honourably. "Once respected in African culture(s) as a man of wisdom, good judgement, care and consideration, the father today is an object of suspicion. Indicted in cases of sexual abuse of women and young children, his reputation is in tatters" (Lesejane 2006: 173). In light of such uncouth behaviour "it may seem (to) make less sense in societies in which the fathers (and other esteemed men, such as teachers) are among the major perpetrators of rape" (Morrell & Swart 2005: 105).

The New Man paradigm

One of the most favourable identities to emerge within South Africa's post-apartheid social sphere is that of the new man. This idea of a new man is tackled by numerous scholars from Keen (1992); Elliot (2003); Morrell & Swart (2005) who all emphasize that the new man is much more involved in activities traditionally dubbed feminine such as child-rearing, are vocal about active participation in gender equality, share domestic duties et cetera. Government initiatives and social awareness campaigns such as *the Sonke Gender Justice Network* and *Brothers for Life* support this idea of the new man. These institutions strive to help contemporary South African society with support structures to assist and guide men in providing hospitable environments for their families and communities. These initiatives provide guidelines to help men provide and maintain an equitable society.

Brothers for Life describe the new man as 'a man who supports his partner and protects his children'. Candidly put by Morrell & Swart (2005), the new man is "a woman-friendly man

wholeheartedly committed to gender equity" (Morrell & Swart 2005: 101). This man is 'introspective, caring, anxious, outspoken on woman's rights, domestically responsible (Morrell, 1998 in Elliot 2003: 7). The new man also turned his back on competitive sport, sexist jokes, violent outdoor pursuits' (Morrell, 1998 in Elliot 2003: 7).

The relationship this new man has with his family is one founded on 'equality, respect, human dignity and freedom' (Lesejane 2006: 180). The father is located within the domestic sphere where he can practice love and care for his family and, by extension, his community. Adding to this, Eddy; Thomson de-Boor and Mphaka (2013) state that the new fatherhood model is one "which emphasize(s) the need for fathers to be involved in all aspects of parenting, including care-giving activities" (2013: 19- 20).

Brothers for Life capture this idea wholly in their 'Yenza Kahle' campaign which describes the new man as:

> "A man who takes responsibility for his actions.
>
> A man who chooses a single partner over multiple chances with HIV.
>
> A man whose self-worth is not determined by the number of women he can have.
>
> A man who makes no excuses for unprotected sex, even after drinking.
>
> A man who supports his partner and protects his children.
>
> A man who respects his woman and never lifts a hand to her.
>
> A man who knows that the choices we make today, will determine whether we see tomorrow."
>
> Brothers for life

This manifesto, it is argued in this study, is the very building block for the men perpetuated in the first season of *eKasi: Our Stories*. It has been packaged in the form of visual entertainment. This research suggests that the first season of the show does more than just substitute negative images of black men in the townships. The notion of the new man allows for alternate images of the black men within the township space. This continuum of identities offered by the new man discourse counters the ill-representations of black men acclaimed by popular media and depolarises black men's experiences.

In the South African context, however, the new daddy model is not easily accessible and its objectives met due to a number of issues but primarily because 'the idea…was really developed for Northern, white, middle class, urban men' (Morrell & Swart 2005: 101) and this leaves out a lot of South African men. Patriarchy, cultural philosophies, unemployment are some of the issues that make this ideal a challenge to implement by South African men. 'The dominance of social representation of fathers as people who work' leaves unemployed fathers believing they have failed their children and therefore disappear or are forbidden access to the children (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka's 2013).

In spite of these challenges, "informal observations in South Africa indicate that men are increasingly attending healthcare centres with children who require immunisation or health care, walking children to and from school, and providing care at home because their female partners are employed…" (Richter 2006: 58).

Modern forms of parenting

A Good Wife employs the new daddy model to challenge the popularised fragmented family structure of black families with households often headed by single parents, youth or grandparents. On the back foot of a troubled history which saw the disruption of traditional African family structures through migrant labour, political unrest and exile, the episode showcases an attempt at a healthy black family in urban post-apartheid South Africa.

The societal changes such as women's entry to the labour market, increased unemployment rates and urbanisation necessitate a change in parenting structures. Families are no longer simply classified by a working father and a child minding mother. Parenthood is no longer guided by strict gender roles shared amongst parents but by the understanding that children need adult care together with everything else parents should provide. Taking this into perspective it is no surprise then that Ralph takes up the domestic duties preparing food for the children, tucking them in bed at night and taking them to and fro school. Ralph welcomes undertaking household duties as part of his parenting duties.

In the short film, modern urban parenting is modelled after popular black sitcom families like *The Cosby Shows* where birthday celebrations and doctor's appointments are part of their daily living (Prinsloo 2006). These are the demands of modern urban parenting that parents need to be met and unlike Kate Ralph never neglects these, proving that childcare does not always come as naturally to women as it is perceived. Women are not born with the ability to care for children better than males, rather these traits are learnt. This is echoed by a respondent in Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka's (2013) study, who claims to have paid maintenance for his child

but the mother used the money to buy alcohol for her friends. This shows that if even mothers can neglect their children, men too, can care for their children in any manner necessary therefore both parents need to be involved in all child rearing activities.

After dismissing Rebecca for kissing her husband, Kate tries to care for her children but goes no further than bathing the younger child. She loses her patience with Monde when the child wants food and Kate does not know where the groceries are kept in the cupboards. Again when Kate temporarily leaves her husband because of his transgression, she leaves her children behind. It is common for mothers to take their children when they leave their husbands, but Kate does not. This emphasizes her lack of concern for her children, or confirms that Ralph is a good father and better parent so she would rather leave her children with the parent that will be able to meet all their needs.

Modern forms of urban parenting require additional help to the two parents when both parents have careers like Ralph and Kate. Ralph and Kate struggle with looking after the children after Rebecca has been fired particularly because of work commitments from Kate. Consequently Ralph has to leave work early to care for the children after school. This is despite the availability of Kate's parents. Effective parenting would include extended family as it is too strenuous to a task to juggle work and parenting. This is a reality of many working parents in South Africa to leave children with grandparents while parents go to work, but this option was not explored in *A Good Wife*. Unlike Ralph, most parents are not business owners who can leave at will and so additional support is needed. Although the film supports working parents, it reproaches parents who pay other people to love their children. Kate works too hard and often points out Rebecca as

the one responsible for domestic duties. Though a maid is necessary for some families, the film states that the hired help should not replace the parents as Rebecca seemed to have done.

The father-daughter relationship

The portrayal of the new daddy in the episode epitomizes reformative ideas on manly conduct within the domestic sphere; condemning the atrocities suffered by South African women and children daily. The depiction of a polite and loving man at home supports the notions of peaceful family life instead of domestic violence, child abuse, absent fathers and many such like destructive habits meted out against women and children.

Both parent-child relationships explored in *A Good Wife* are between fathers and their daughters; Ralph and Monde and Kate with her father. The father-daughter bond is highlighted by challenging the common idea that male children need their fathers and female children can have all their needs met by their mothers. When Monde experiences stomach cramps Ralph rushes her to the doctor unaware that the cramps are a prelude to her first menstrual cycle. Ralph as a man is shown to be out of his area of expertise by taking Monde to the doctor thinking she was ill when in fact she was suffering from period pains. This, however, is not a problem as he learns what had happened and the next time he is faced with a similar situation he will react accordingly. A menstrual cycle is an exclusively female experience and in *A Good Wife* it is the father who helps Monde through this. By so doing, the film boldly refutes the belief of fathers being responsible for teaching only their sons about adolescence, sex education, human reproduction and other human experiences that differ according to gender.

This cross gender bond between parent and child is further emphasized when Kate moves back to her parent's house after having discovered Ralph kissing the domestic worker. Kate's father is the one who advises her about her marital problems. It would be assumed that a woman with marital problems would seek her mother's advice on the matter, but it is the father who is given the key role. The father reprimands Kate for neglecting her family, reminding her of what a wife ought to do.

Kate: He slept with her dad

Father: Are you surprised? Maybe it's what you wanted all along.

Kate is asked to take some responsibility for her shortcomings that may have led to Ralph and Rebecca kissing. Rebecca is paid to do Kate's domestic duties and unlike Kate has a connection with the children making her more appealing to Ralph as a wife than Kate who is often absent. Counsel on a wife's conduct is offered by the father with the mother only bolstering her husband's words by reiterating them. This suggests that Kate and her father have a close emotional connection so much so that the father is comfortable to advise her on such matters.

Both fathers in the short film are shown to be psychological guides to their daughters, crossing gender boundaries to help their daughters. Ralph handled Monde's menstruation incident and Kate's father deals with Kate's marital problems. This suggests that new daddies are not a new phenomenon as Kate's father represents an older generation of fathers who connect with their children on an emotional level. Through highlighting the relationship between father and daughter the short film shows the father to be a kind authoritative figure and not a mere stern moral custodian responsible for training boys to be hard, emotionless men.

The father-daughter relationship and its importance are stressed by Ralph's better communication skills with Monde, their deaf daughter. The child complains of the mother never being interested in her and this is evident as Kate is questioned by Monde's teacher and her father for her inability to communicate in sign language. Monde is 15 years old and Kate has never made an effort to learn sign language in all those 15 years, validating her daughter's claims that she is not interested in her. Ralph is always interacting with Monde and can communicate with her. He helps her with her homework and comforts her when she longs for her mother who never spends time with her. Ralph has invested his time in learning to communicate with Monde and hence they have a connection. This shows Ralph as a patient father who invests his time in the wellbeing of his children.

Gender Equity

The new daddy ideal supports gender equity through encouraging men to share parenting duties equally with women. The shared duties allow for women to leave the domestic space and take up their interests in the workplace. Kate is a successful career woman working at a lucrative advertising company. Her success at the work place is juxtaposed against Ralph's domestic endeavours allowing for Kate to explore her business merit and Ralph to showcase his domestic humility. The short drama supports gender equity both at home and at work. Kate is one of the senior employees at the company she works at because of her business acumen.

The idea of two working parents is tested when Kate and Ralph argue about who works harder because Kate is lagging in her domestic duties. Ralph brings up that he does not only run his construction company but also cares for the family, to which Kate replies: *Akusiyena umsebenzi wakho lokho* (That is not your duty). Kate claims childcare is not Ralph's job but that of the

maid. This indicates that in her eyes Ralph cares for the children voluntarily. Ralph, the epitome of new daddies, does not perceive child care to be a woman's duty, as he never complains about caring for his children. He is involved in all childcare activities, tending to the children before and after school. He has no strict set of gender rules to which he subscribes; instead it is Kate who harbours old notions of family structure and parenthood. But this notion of strict gendered roles at home is discarded as Kate's remarks do not deter Ralph from being a committed father to their children.

Kate's acknowledgement of Ralph as the financial provider telling her friend that she expects Ralph to build her a house bigger than the one they have, and domestic duties not being his primary responsibilities situate her within the community that believes in rigid traditional gender roles. In the short film, men are encouraged to undertake a parenting role rather than a gender determined father role. Less focus on men as economic providers opens up space for less focus on women as child minders. If men are encouraged to take up other parenting duties outside of economic provision this allows for enough room for women to explore other avenues instead of being stuck within the domestic space.

A Good Wife breaks the association between a black man and violence and opens up space for a gentle mannered head of the house who does not aggressively assert his authority at home. It is Kate who identifies Ralph as the head of the house telling her friend that she expects Ralph to build them a house bigger than the one they already have. The short film depicts a black man who is soft, emotionally connected with not only his children but is not aggressive towards the somewhat provocative wife and by so doing manages to displace the stereotyping of black men

as hard, emotionless and aggressive. Kate works long hours and often returns home after children have gone to bed. When she gets home she orders Rebecca around often starts fights with Ralph. When Kate starts shouting Ralph is always cool and tries to end the fights before they escalate into screaming matches. The depiction of Ralph's calm demeanour signifies a disapproval of domestic violence by the short film. Kate is often the one who starts the fights and Ralph the one who walks away.

Conclusion

The short film locates Ralph within the domestic space allowing him to be caring and nurturing. This counters restrictive representations of black men as invulnerable and hard beings who show no feelings (Butler 2009). Through the explication of his relationship with his daughter, his calm nature at home and his attentiveness to modern urban parenting style shows Ralph to be a new daddy.

Good fathers can co-exist with good mothers, and this has not been explored sufficiently. One parent does not have to be bad in order for the other to be good. Although this brings up very good points- that not all mothers are naturally good parents, Kate's character has been burdened with all that mainstream cinema reserves for patriarchy, that is, lack of interest in children and family, working for most of the time at the expense of family time. Another point raised in the short film is that it is not only a mother's duty to care for the children.

The mother in *A Good Wife* is demonised in order to sanctify the father. There should be made room for healthy male parenting to co-exist alongside healthy female parenting. 'Failure to document healthy productive households that do not conform to prevailing notions of the nuclear

family helps to further the erroneous assumption that any household that deviates from the accepted pattern is destructive' (Ngobeni 2006: 151).

Kate is discouraged from fighting for her dream house which is bigger than the one they have. Conversely, Ralph tells her that she has 'a husband, a house and two beautiful children- a lot of people would be content with that'. This means she should be grateful for what her husband can do for her and be a traditional subordinate wife. Her father also tells her about contentment, explaining that marriage is not about happiness but about contentment. Her wings are clipped by the marriage institution.

Such parenting can be attested to by two adults who are no longer in a marriage or relationship but still maintain a healthy parenting relationship. This is also a viable alternative to essentialising a nuclear family as the only means by which men can be responsible fathers because in South Africa 'the majority of black children are born out of wedlock and a minority live in two-parent households. Therefore the nuclear family cannot be assumed as the norm' (Ngobeni 2006: 151).

In the representation of the new man, Ralph wounds up being docilised as his whole life revolves around caring for his children. He is never shown with his friends and the only time he is at work he is talking about leaving early to care for them as they had no help at that time. The short film should market 'fatherhood in a way that does not make fathering seem an unattainable ideal or an impossible responsibility' (Richter & Morrell 2006: 9).

The notion of new daddies on its own does very little to help with the problem of absent fathers as it is not tolerant to the unemployment predicament of black South African fathers or unskilled labourers who are not in control of the hours they work. The short film offers no way of being

the ‘new dad’ for unemployed fathers. Precolonial ideas of fatherhood too cannot suffice on their own such expectations as the physical presence of the father to ‘provide for the family, maintain the unity of the family, and assert his moral authority on the family’ cannot always be possible because such ideas focus on married men (Lesejane 2006: 176). What of teenage boys who are still at school and cannot live up to either of these ideas of what it means to be a father or an unemployed young man whose child lives with the mother’s parents? The role of fatherhood needs to be redefined to suit today’s fathers instead of alienating the masses of fathers who cannot live up to the economic demands of fatherhood.

CHAPTER THREE

REVISUALISING CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN THE TOWNSHIP IN *CHASING THE TRUTH* AND *ABDUCTED*

> 'The reality of South African urban townships is that crime is…a central part of life for many residents. Robbery is common and townships suffer from some of the highest rape and murder statistics in the world' (Hurst 2009: 249).

The above sentiment is shared by mainstream media and has been blown out of proportion in representations of the township space especially in film and television. In South African film and television dramas, violent crimes and overindulgence in alcohol have come to represent the township, whereby the inhabitants are exclusively black. This rendering of "blackness and criminality as inextricably related" (Welch 2007: 280), has become so ubiquitous that, to a large extent, it seems to have become an aesthetic through which to offer an up close insight into urban black masculinities and black filmic constructions generally. The greater effects of such representations are in the stereotypes, regenerated with great impunity, of dangerous young black males in films, even when these films are made by other black filmmakers. Furthermore, such representations have greater damage to the black image in the South African public domain, a point also shared by Mhlambi (2012) when she points out that, it is such ideas that constitute attitudes that support the racialization of crime as a black problem.

This is exemplified by a march in October of 2013 by white South Africans titled 'Red October', urging "the South African Government to take action against: The inhumane Slaughter and oppression of the White South African Ethnic Minority…The killing of our people in on our

farms and in towns and cities."[1] Whether or not the organisation's claims are justified is not for discussion in the current research, the point to be emphasized is that the very idea of brutal crimes being suffered by the white race suggests they are perpetrated by the 'other' and in the South African context the 'other' in white mainstream imagination is the black race. However, in the first season of *eKasi: Our Stories*, the short films *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted*, illustrate representations of crime and violence that allow for an alternative exploration of the centrality of violent crime and liquor-lubricated culture in black townships.

This chapter is interested in how the television series recodes conventional 'codings of blackness' as violent criminals and drunkards by providing constructive counter narratives that allow black men amiable masculinities (Harris 2006: 94). The two episodes to be discussed in this chapter *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted* deal with crime but the manner in which the events on both episodes unfold and conclude is quite different from the conventional township crime narrative. In this break from tradition, what solutions are offered to curb and avoid crime? This will be illustrated using three themes. These themes are pragmatic youth masculinities, amending the township crime story and community oriented crime regulation. These themes elucidate how

[1]According to (www.redoctober.co.za) cited on Nov 12 2013, Red October is "a movement dedicated to raising awareness about the inhumane slaughter and oppression of the White Ethnic Minority in South Africa. We are dedicated to exposing the current South African government for Crimes Against Humanity. We will not be silent until the World takes notice and the Violation of our Human Rights is put to an end. People all over the World will gather, bearing White Crosses in memory of those who have lost their lives and in protest against the inhumane Slaughter and Oppression of the White People of South Africa." On the 10th of October 2013 the movement marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria where they handed over their memorandum and another was taken to Parliament in Cape Town. Their grievances are the attacks on farm owners and the movement clearly states that black people are responsible for what they refer to as a 'white genocide'. They claim as an ethnic minority in South Africa, they are targeted by black people. Amongst the well-known faces in this movement are singers Steve Hofmeyr and Sunette Bridges.

the most common stereotypes about black men and crime in the township have been annulled. The two short films revert the racial stereotyping of young black men as criminals and drunkards through unconventional imaging of the lead characters on both episodes. In place of the prevailing stereotypes of brutal criminal youths, the perpetrators are of an old generation and the youth are the community heroes assisting in dealing with the crime epidemic in the townships. The idea of a young black perpetrator and white law enforcement as the overarching precept too is spurned and non-violent community policing is encouraged.

The Reliance of Black Men on Aggressive Criminal Behaviour to express their Masculinity

Black masculinity is habitually given off as aggressive, violent and without self-restraint and consequently black men are presented as brutes. Clive Glaser (2000) posits the violence in the township as being perpetrated especially by the youth in his exploration of the youth gangs in Soweto in *Bo-tsotsi: the youth gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*. This violence evolved throughout the South African history, and was later fused with political violence. 'Youth gangs were likely to emerge in any urban environment that included a substantial population of poor city-bred youth with limited employment possibilities and a lack of adequate housing, schooling and recreation facilities' (Glaser 2000: 2). According to Glaser, 'a powerful…gang culture dominated the world of township youth from the 1930s to the early 1970s and later towards the end of apartheid the 'black urban youth forced the pace of resistance politics throughout South Africa. The so-called "comrades" were shock troops of resistance: making the townships ungovernable…defying security forces…' (Glaser 2000: 1). These instances marry the townships and by extension black urban youth with violent and criminal behaviour; reinforcing the idea of the 'need of the black body to be policed' (Mamatu 2006: 70).

Morrell and Swart add that "with the decline of work, men have had opportunities to shape their gender identities in new ways." (2005: 104). These ways often meant exerting violence against women and forming gangs. This issue is reiterated in Maseko's 2004 film *Drum*; a film about Henry Nxumalo and the group of journalists who worked for the magazine of the same title in the 1950s. Describing a fight he had seen during the day between two young black gangsters in Sophiatown, Henry Nxumalo (played by Taye Diggs) tells his mistress "…It was more as if they were fighting for a right to be someone…instead of the nameless, faceless kaffirs that the Boers want them to be." Against the backdrop of a hostile government black urban youth 'often claimed the status of manhood by defining themselves violently against their fathers and against authority' (Morrell and Swart 2005: 104).

This has been naturalised into a key aesthetic of the township story as in television dramas like *Yizo Yizo* (Mahlatse, 2001) and *Gaz'lam* (Yazbek, 2003) which were aired by the national broadcaster. These films portrayed township stories where the black youth were the perpetrators of crime, teenage alcoholism and sexual deviancy. Papa Action, a key character in *Yizo Yizo* encompasses all these social ills. He is involved with a group of gangsters and they terrorise not only the school he attends but the entire community. In another case the Oscar award winning film, *Tsotsi*, (Hood, 2005) opens with a crime scene at the hands of a gang consisting of young black youths from the township. The next scene is set at a shebeen. The former scene ends with a gruesome murder of an elderly man by this gang of young black males and the latter with a brutal beating of a friend during a fight between gang members. Even before the story is explored, the audiences are presented with images they are supposed to identify as being typical of the township and therefore conclude on the likely end of the film before they even see the characters' stories unfold. These two scenes are meant to propel the audiences to the heart of the

township by invoking the overplayed 'traits' of the township. These images are borrowed from Hollywood films such as John Singleton's *Boyz 'n the Hood* which showcases the predicament faced by black youths in the projects where being a man is defined in numerous ways but gangsterism is almost impossible to evade.

hooks (2004) stresses the damage of the images disseminated by mainstream cinema saying "Watching television (a young black male) sees that black males are most often the bad guys, and whether bad or good they are the guys who die young" (2004: 117- 18). The production assistant from the production house responsible for the first season of the show in its entirety, Duzi Twala, is of a similar opinion. He believes that on film and television "black people are either in trouble or dying." This is particularly so in *Drum* (Maseko, 2004), despite his excellence in journalism, Henry Nxumalo, dies at the hands of a gang leader who was paid – it is implied- by the white government.

Black men on film have been inherently linked with alcohol abuse. Alcohol, which black people are said to have no control over is tantamount to disruptive and abusive behaviour; again another reason- besides the crime- for the omnipresence of the white male around the black man to deal with such situations. Alcoholism in the cities has been exploited in a popular series *Umuzi Wezinsizwa* (Shabangu, Pixley & Sidney 2000), a sitcom depicting male hostel dwelling in the townships, through the character of Sibeko. This man is shown to be intoxicated at all times. Even though not all characters drink excessively but it is significant of all black men because 'one corrupt black male stands for every black male, (whereas) one corrupt white male is merely seen as an aberration' (Mamatu 2006: 60). Sibeko's excessive drinking is naturalised into the setting (mineworkers' hostel) and there is nothing out of sorts about his behaviour in the given environment. 'The abuse of alcohol within the narrative posits the black male as socially

disempowered' (Mamatu 2006: 70) and this implies a need for the white man to save him by employing him, educating him or imprisoning him for the good of the majority.

If Harris (2006) is taken into consideration, then the notion of urban crime being associated with the black man is being rectified by creators of the first season of *eKasi: Our Stories*. Through the application of New Black Cinema, the filmmakers have taken a different approach to imagining the burden of crime in the townships. Harris (2006) defines the New Black Cinema as a "project of cultural intervention and the recoding of blackness, revising the visual codes surrounding black skin on the screen and in the public realm' (2006: 97). *eKasi: Our Stories,* as an art form, is used for the nullification of stereotypes about black men onscreen and in popular imagination. This theory is supported mainly by independent filmmakers whose primary objective is to re-narrate the various encounters of black people on screen. These independent filmmakers 'present blackness and black masculinity as a site of interpretation, critique, and ethical engagement' (Harris, 94) because this is 'a cinema in which Afro-Americans are both the subject and the object of consideration' (Taylor 1989).

These narratives usually 'focus on family, the black middle class and female centred narrative(s)' (Harris 2006: 97). This is particularly true of *eKasi: Our Stories* where all these themes have been explored- with varying degrees of success- in the five short films that the first season comprises of. The focus on black people and their experiences allows for the exploration of different thematic contexts of black masculinity without comparison to other masculinities, particularly the dominant white masculinity that has long emasculated black men in South Africa.

The aim of New Black Cinema is to reconfigure the existing images of blackness, 'informing the symbolic with the social and cultural sensibilities of black culture …and the everyday

experiences of black people' (Harris, 94). Harris argues that New Black Cinema comprises social commentaries, indictments of racism and depictions of 'everyday' African American lives' (Harris 2006: 83). This, in the African context, is supported by Karin Barber (1987; 2000) and Mhlambi (2012) with their discussions of African narrative aesthetics. The exploration of quotidian experiences is an essential signifier of African aesthetics (Mhlambi 2012; Turner 1984). The stories usually follow the daily happenings in ordinary people's lives. Social commentary is another integral part of African narratives aesthetics and is often symbolised by the griot. When stories are centralised around the everyday activities of black communities and their members they no longer succumb to the stereotypes of writing black people into linear roles that are either too good or too grotesque or 'failures/success, good/bad, civilized/primitive' (Hall in Mamatu 2005: 70). This dimension of regularity for black lives allows for the exploration of more human complexities experienced by black people such as vulnerability, love, fear, hope, greed et cetera instead of a people being represented by a gun swinging fearless and faceless being.

Harris further states that New Black Cinema 'reveals incompleteness in the social formations of black men, a sub-personhood in the representation of black masculinity…' (Harris 2006: 97). It is such incompleteness that the short story series seeks to satiate by showing images that buttress 'many characteristics and experiences that define black men' (Whiting and Lewis 2008: 1). Harris adds that New Black Cinema allows for brazenly 'celebrating a complicated and confrontational blackness' depicting a repertoire of experiences that make up the black culture (Harris 2006: 80). This theory requires "…cultural practitioners…to question the modes of representation in terms of their production" (Harris 2006: 81). *Chasing the Truth and Abducted* offer an ideal site for the exploration of representation of blackness in South African townships.

Summary of Chasing the Truth

When Nathi's uncle, Uncle Clive, who has recently been released from prison is murdered, Nathi seeks comfort in her boyfriend and colleague Percy. Being the inquisitive investigative journalist, Percy enlists the help of his detective friend Mike and they embark on a journey to solve this mystery murder of Uncle Clive. He learns of Tony, a local corrupt policeman and his crimes. It is while investigating the crime that he finds a link of Suzanne and her sister, Winnie. These young women live alone and are often shown drinking beer. Their father is in prison and had given a letter to Uncle Clive to give to his daughters. The girls are Tony's step-daughters and they were to receive the letter from uncle Clive but Tony confiscated and burnt it before killing Clive; all in a bid to avert the case of his wife's death being reviewed. As the clues come together, Percy has to look over his shoulder and also protect Suzanne and his girlfriend, Nathi, as Tony keeps intimidating them. After visits to a retired policeman, Victor, and Tony's first wife, Percy and Mike eventually had enough evidence to have Tony arrested for drug smuggling and theft amongst other crimes.

Summary of Abducted

Bongi is a refugee living with her sisters in a Sowetan township who earns a living by going door-to-door selling brooms. She encounters Brian on one of her ventures and he is immediately smitten with her. They agree on meeting later and Brian soon finds out about Richard, Bongi's extremely possessive, lustful and jealous landlord. Richard wants Bongi to himself yet she wants nothing to do with him. He tries to rape Bongi but her sisters come to her rescue. After the fierce encounter with Richard, Brain invites Bongi to move in with him. She agrees and Brian is to come for her the following day but Richard abducts her and takes her to a scrap yard. After waiting for Bongi where they agreed to meet, Brian grows impatient and braves an encounter

with Richard by going to their home. He meets her sisters who also have no idea of Bongi's whereabouts as they thought she was with Brian. They all go searching the area to no avail and Brian enlists the help of his detective friend, David. They get nowhere with the investigation as Richard kicks them out of his yard. They agree to continue with the search the following day but as Brian gets home he is attacked by Richard. He escapes with minor injuries and is back on the search for Bongi the morning after. David leads them to Richard's associates and they wound up at the junk yard but they still do not find Bongi or clues of her whereabouts. David is ready to give up but Brian's intuition has him searching the old cars. He refuses to leave because they found out Richard was once imprisoned for stealing cars so he believes the scrap yard is where Bongi is being held. Almost ready to give in and leave the place he notices a pile of old metals stacked and upon moving them he discovers an old refrigerator in which an unconscious Bongi was enclosed. Richard is immediately arrested.

Re-narrating the township 'thug'

As the images on South African screens were imported from Hollywood, the stereotypes too were acquired. The racially perpetuated stereotypical images of black man as 'as a violent and menacing street thug' may have been pilfered from Hollywood, but in the South African context they have been imparted as the reality of black people (Welch 2007: 276). Films like *Yizo Yizo* and *Gaz'lam* introduced images that borrowed from the American Ghetto genre which sex, violence and drugs. Black male behaviour is "deemed violent, rapacious, and purloining" (Whiting & Lewis 2008: 3). Consequently, the images of black men as criminals on film and television are at times used as a claim to realism, an authenticity much advocated for by essentialists who have rooted their work on racial stereotypes; where a township is signified by social mishaps, occupied solely by the black body and a menace to the white male who has to

keep it under constant surveillance. Teer-Tomaselli (2005: 560) asserts that *Yizo Yizo* is posited as one of the local drama series that had a legitimate claim to realism, dealing with 'gritty, sometimes terrifying circumstances facing the younger generation of viewers, while at the same time providing positive role models and coping strategies for those facing gang violence, substance addiction, domestic abuse, teenage pregnancy, and the other challenges of a fast-developing society in transition.' Clive Barnett (2004) also approves of this association of the township and its inhabitants with social evils.

It is correct that the townships are marred by various intricate mishaps but that is not all there is to them and the representations of the inhabitants as being lacklustre are nothing more than stereotypes. Welch rightfully states that 'public estimates of Black criminality surpass the reality' (2007: 286). From film to television, the township space has been marked by violence perpetuated by black male youths. Welch highlights this claiming "the stereotyping of Blacks as criminals is so pervasive throughout society that "criminal predator" is used as a euphemism for "young Black male" (Welch 2007: 276). These are the stereotypes that have long been disseminated by media and as such, violent crimes are associated with young black males (Swartz 2007). Glaser believes the youth to be the chief instigators of disruptive, aggressive and brutal behaviour stating that 'observers have become concerned and often bewildered by the extent of anomie and criminality among black youth.' (Glaser 2000: 1).

When first aired in 2001, *Yizo Yizo* generated more attention as the public protested against the gross violence depicted in the show. Central to the public debate were fears of the show doing more harm than good by encouraging criminality amongst school going youths (Barnett 2004).

For scholars such as Clive Barnett, these graphic images of violence by the youth in the townships were used as a claim to realism (Barnett 2004). It was the show's close resemblance to reality, Barnett states, which sparked the public outcry. Such comments on a show that depicted sexual abuse and crime by black youths reinforce the association between the black township youth and such uncouth behaviour. Welch remarks on this idea stating that 'a prevalent representation of crime is that it is overwhelmingly committed by young Black men' (Welch 2007:276).

South African film and television portray township youth that epitomise the 'lost generation.' They are the common criminals who loaf around all day not going to school or if they do attend school they are seriously disruptive. These stereotypes are perpetuated by mainstream media to 'maintain the negative image of black neighbourhoods and localize most of the crime associated with these establishments in black neighbourhoods and you have what appears to be proof of black behaviour being inferior to whites' (Kinkead & Wood 2003). Ellapen (2007: 104) remarks on the notion of fixity in cinematic representations and in everyday experience and states that this idea "is more about stereotyping and maintaining the marginal position of the 'Other'." *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted*, along with the other three episodes making up the first season of the show, defy this cinematic fixity by exploring not only various masculinities within the disparaged townships but also various experiences.

Chasing the Truth presents a young man from the township, Percy, who is not the hackneyed young black man from the township. The story of the black male youths is often reported as one of a struggle for masculinity against oppressing forces. Percy goes without the most common of these oppressing forces such as unemployment, poverty and a destiny of crime. He is educated,

that is evident from his career as an investigative journalist. Brian too, from *Abducted* is as neat and prudent as Percy. He too has a fine career; this is evident in the lifestyle he lives. He lives alone in a huge high end house and drives a swanky car. Both these young men do not have poverty as a spurring incentive to get involved in criminal activities.

Not only are they not criminals but as part of protecting and caring for those they love, they risk their safety by facing the dangerous criminals.

The extrication of the leading young men from crime is sustained by their use of standard forms of languages. Neither of them speaks any of the colloquial linguistic variants known to township youth such as tsotsitaal. Percy crosses between standard Zulu and English. The colloquial speech variants in the townships have long been associated with delinquent youths and the clean speech of these two characters purges them of this association. Mhlambi (2012: 159) notes that 'tsotsitaal's origins denote resistance and defiance… (because it) developed as an argot, a criminal language'. Percy and Brian both have nothing to defy so they make no use of the colloquial languages that would give them street credibility it is known to afford township youth (Butler 2009). Also, their dress code is nothing similar to petty township criminals. As a working professional, though not in suits and ties, Percy does not wear saggy clothes; which are often linked to township youths. Brian, on the other hand, is often in formal wear representing his career and further distancing him from township gangsters known for casual flashy wear.

Describing the life of an ordinary young black man from the township, Butler (2009) states that:

> "There are two worlds which a black man inhabits, the first being the home in which respect is always given to elders, for example, taking hats off in their presence and being

> careful with the language that is used around older people. Secondly, there is the world outside of the home in the streets. In this world gaining respect is necessary otherwise any peers in the community will show you disrespect."
>
> (Butler 2009: 7)

These worlds Butler refers to denote the various masculine identities black male youth take up depending on the environments they occupy at a given time. What is of note is that Butler identifies men who are humble and gentle at home and are hard and perhaps aggressive outside the family unit to maintain their street based manliness. Percy and Brian both typify these worlds Butler refers to, but what is significant is that they are not aggressors in a bid to protect their manhood. Instead, they risk encountering uncouth criminals as they go out of their ways to protect those they love from these men. Brian is a polite man who confronts Richard who is much bigger physically and more aggressive. Though he is aware that Richard is not a particularly amiable man, Brian is not armed with any weapons as he does not envisage a physical encounter. He understands that violence solves nothing and only gets physical in self-defence when Richard attacks him outside his own home.

Another symbol used by popular media to censure the black youth is the idea that they have no concept of social drinking and alcohol 'seems to form the basis of most township recreational activities' (Swartz 2007: 140). This idea as a signifier of black masculinity is nullified. Alcohol is not menaced as the source of all evil and disruptive behaviour or the cause of any of the troubles encountered by the characters in the episodes. However, excessive drinking is not characteristic of any of the main characters. This defies the stereotype of black men – especially

in the township- who are always overindulging in alcohol. Mamatu (2006) criticizes this notion in Teddy Materra's *Max and Mona* claiming 'the abuse of alcohol within the narrative posits the black male as socially disempowered' (Mamatu 2006: 70) and therefore the film fails to use the stereotype combatively and reclaim blackness in an alternative manner. Although alcohol is featured as a character trait for some characters, this is done to reproach alcohol abuse and clearly mark the different manners in which alcohol is consumed.

Percy's detective friend Mike always talks about getting a 'cold one' and Percy responds with "I never say no to free beer" but they are never depicted actually having the beers. Mike, being a tad clumsy mentions on one of their ventures that he has to go home and change because he spent the whole night at the shebeen. Though this is not a display of good character, it is defused by the fact that it is Mike the clumsy one who is forever eating and speaks with food in his mouth who spends the night in a shebeen. Also, the fact that he is ready to go out and tackle criminals in a quest to solve the mystery death of uncle Clive the morning after spending the night at a shebeen; means that he is able to control his liquor intake. His commitment to his career overrides the sloppy behaviour and therefore alcohol is not detrimental to his life. Even though Percy consumes alcohol and smokes, it is never excessive and he is extremely neat.

Suzanne and her sister Winnie are the other characters shown drinking. This is to stress the moral deviance of youth without parental guidance (Mhlambi 2012). Their mother died and their father was sentenced to a jail term. This is further supported by the fact that while Suzanne stays with Percy, Nathi and Mike, she does not drink alcohol despite its availability. When Mike offers

Percy a beer Suzanne is left out. She does not even seem interested despite having drunk beer the first time she met Percy. The idea of her not drinking beer at Mike's house is not her being pretentious and hiding that she actually takes liquor. This suggests that she may have been influenced by Nathi who is never shown taking any liquor and only offers Suzanne coffee. This implies that at home she only drinks due to the influence of her morally ineffectual elder sister. But because their father is released from prison, he will bring strong moral uprightness and Suzanne will have no reason to drink alcohol. The foremost men in these short stories are in control of the liquor they consume and because it does not affect their rationality nor trigger unruly behaviour then the stereotype of a black man's dependence on alcohol is done away with. Characters that do not drink cautiously are those who are morally inept. Careless alcohol consumption signifies rather than causes this.

The use of crime as a plot for the signification of black men as criminals

This inference and the next authenticate that the exploration of crime and alcohol in these short stories was not a blind repetition of the aged stereotypes. *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted* offer alternate narratives that do not prophesy of jail bound youth. Though crime is used as a subplot, what is of particular note is that the crimes and gangsterism are represented by an older generation implying- perhaps wishfully- that a forceful younger generation can purge the community of such. Percy, the journalist who ends up solving the mystery murder, is a generation younger than the corrupt cops turned gang members and their ring leader Tony. The gang of renegade cops led by Tony is made up of a handful of youths. One of the younger members of this cartel was working undercover and when he exposed Tony to their superior, who is much older than Tony himself, he was betrayed and led to a trap where in the end Tony killed him. Two crucial points emanate from this. Firstly, it is suggested by this betrayal that the

much older police superior was responsible for affecting Tony's deviance and that they are passing on their sleaze down the generations. Secondly, this incidence reveals the defects within the justice system. This will be delved into towards the end of this chapter.

It has been observed by Mhlambi (Mhlambi 2012b:173) that "crime is sometimes tolerated, celebrated, accepted and endorsed in post-apartheid society". This celebration of criminality has been central to the association of black masculinity to excessive aggressive behaviour on film and television. It is customary to portray criminals as daredevils who own flashy cars and have accumulated plenty from their undertakings. Fela (played by Bonginkosi Zola Dlamini) in *Tsotsi* epitomises this phenomenon. The same actor plays a similar character in the film *Drum* and is still represented in this manner. Even on television, gangsterism is still celebrated as a much more attainable means to escaping the clutches of poverty in the townships. This comes to life in television dramas like *Yizo Yizo* with their portrayal of Chester and the same can be said for *Generations'* Sibusiso Dlomo (played by Menzi Ngubane). In both *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted,* crime is neither revered nor tolerated. The offenders are not glamourized with fancy clothing and jewellery. They do not have alluring possessions that are often tempting to the poor township youth. Tony and Richard from *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted* respectively, are depicted as a thorn to society. Although Tony has accumulated more money from his dealings, he is never shown enjoying the pleasures that usually come with that kind of lifestyle. This criminal figure is denied being the centre of attention and thereby the envy of the poor. Both Tony and Richard are deprived of the 'benefits' that crime affords the perpetrators.

This crime-does-not-pay approach to the representation of criminal activities in the township divulges the "interventionist strategies aimed at youth cultures in order to change them from within and from the ground up" (Mhlambi 2012:174). Conventionally, crime is sold as a survival

strategy necessary for the survival of both family and community (Mhlambi 2012b). The crimes committed by the reprobates in the two short films seem pointless as seemingly the perpetrators do not have anything to gain. This nullifies the notion of township crime being committed by disenfranchised youth who have something to gain because of "their dependence on criminal earnings for their daily…survival" and the "perception of social inclusion and success in mainstream culture (being) intricately woven into a criminal way of life" (Mahlmabi 2012b: 174). Crime is represented in *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted* as a human weakness rather than a genetically encrypted trait of black people; as such an exploration of this social ill is nothing more than an exploration of everyday human experiences. The township folk are not homogenised as a group of helpless and destitute criminals who are victims of their circumstances.

Unlike dramas that clutch on to the exploitation of crime as a township story, these two episodes are not centralised around crime, but around the problem solving skills and valour of young men to do whatever it takes to protect those they care about. Crime is not glorified but treated as a social nuisance that can be managed with the help of dedicated community members.

Shifting scales: from white legal frameworks of policing black bodies to black bodies policing other black bodies

In mainstream cinema blackness and violence have always been shown to be synonymous; clearly accentuating the 'need for the black body to be policed' by the gallant white male (hooks 2004; Mamatu 2006; Welch 2007; Whiting & Lewis 2008). Mainstream cinema knows a black criminal and a white policeman. This underscores the preconception that black male youths cannot escape their fate which is due to their violent behaviour taken to be a "biological flaw" (Welch 2007: 277). Historically, the South African police have not enjoyed the trust and respect

of black South Africans as 'they have been viewed as security agents of apartheid government' when black people were subjected to brutal violence by the apartheid police (Mhlambi 2012). This, Mhlambi adds "produced a culture of retribution accompanied by a diminished respect for the law" (2012: 170). Not much has changed as the relationship between the general black population and law enforcement is still strained. Utterances such as those of former police commissioner General Bheki Cele who called on the South African police to 'shoot to kill' do not help the situation. Innumerable instances of police brutality have been linked to this statement amongst those are the killings of protesters most notably in Marikana[2] and Andries Tatane[3] and many more.

This lack of trust in the police is evident in *Chasing the Truth* as the intended protectors are the very perpetrators. Soon as Nathi's uncle is murdered, Percy heads up his own investigation and the fact that the case was solved by an investigative journalist and not a member of the police force clearly states the mistrust between the community and the police.

Police incompetence, which is another issue with the country's police, is also brought to the fore. Tony murdered his wife and framed the wife's ex-husband and the case was closed with the sentencing of an innocent man. Tony, being a policeman himself, uses his position for his own benefit - to get money seized as evidence and to manipulate the system to cover up his own transgressions. This callousness illustrated in *Chasing the Truth* shows how the police have failed the community and that they are not to be depended upon. It is only attentive young Percy and his detective friend Mike who expose Tony and his gang. Again in *Abducted* Brian, an ordinary guy pesters his detective friend, David to help him find Bongi who has been abducted by Richard. Brian enlists the help of David not because David is a detective but because they are

friends. This is made evident by the fact that they were shown earlier spending some time together like any friends and discussing relationship troubles. Also, David's detective skills fall short as it is Brian's intuition that leads to the discovery of Bongi just in time. It is implied that even though police can help, it is the community- led by brave youths- that can solve the problem of crime. Police are not reliable as they can be corrupt like Tony, clumsy like Mike or uninspired like David.

It is the youth and their will to do right that will help curb crime. The crimes are solved by dedicated and valiant black youth from the townships with not much help from the white police. Instead, it is the law that needs help from community members as it is ordinary community members who bring perpetrators to the police. Mhlambi (2012) noting 'the fall from grace' of Chester's gang in Yizo Yizo describes that 'the community finds ways to apprehend the culprits and hand them over to the police' (Mhlambi 2012: 181). In recent years mob justice has been popular in South Africa but the show makes it clear that this is no way to solve the plight of crime. None of the criminals in the short films suffer at the hands of mob justice and neither is the idea evoked despite its popularity amongst township dwellers. Residents are encouraged to hand over the criminals to the police. Mhlambi (2012) concurs with this assertion, stating that "the responsibility of dealing with crime cannot be placed solely on the community policing forums, as at times the community is overtaken by anger which easily translates into mob justice. This invariably propagates violence and criminality in a society resulting in complicated irresolvable case" (Mhlambi 2012: 200). After Percy's investigation, Mike comes in right on time to arrest Tony. In *Abducted,* Richard's never-die attitude leads to the recovery of Bongi and David swoops in and makes the arrest.

Crime, an evil associated with the black men, is used in the stories not to regurgitate the stereotypical imaging of black men but to repudiate the idea of all black men being criminals. Young and sharp black men take upon the criminals without hesitation and save the lives of those involved. There was no need for a white policeman. The conventional idea of the white hero being the only hope for the black men- without whom they are villains with no self-restraint is eradicated. This results in the annihilation of the idea of the black man demanding constant policing by the white man. Brave young men from the community solve the crimes and the judicial system is relegated to the periphery. The stories suggest that crime can be dealt with by active community members- black as they are because not all black men are criminals.

The elimination of police suggests that the townships do not need to be policed; should there be any disturbances the community will take care of it. The judicial side is but a formality, the community resolved the issues without seeking help from the law. The community is given prominence ahead of the police and heroism is not reserved for white males. Doing away with the police and relying on the community to solve its problems is not too far from the idea of traditional African societies ruled not by outside authority but by communal authority. However, as Lesejane (2006) has rightly stated, pre-colonial mannerisms cannot simply be exported from the past and be fitted seamlessly into contemporary South African society. *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted* are of similar views as the police are represented by the detectives, but their job is minimal. Solving crime rests heavily with any community that houses these criminals, working together with the police can put a stop to crime.

A significant point noted by Diawara (1993a in Harris 2006) is that "to be a man is to be responsible for the Black community, and to protect it against…dangers (such as) genocide, drugs, the police, criminality" (Harris 2006: 82). Young Black men are given credit for the roles they play in their communities instead of reserving all brave heroic imagery for white males. Considerably, their masculinity is accredited to their commitment to care for their community rather than belligerent conduct.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the question of the viability of the images of the equable men presented in the show is addressed simply by the producer of the first season of the series. He exclaims that: "Every township has crime, violence but we also have family, we have stories, comedy… these are part of everyday life." He went on to express his disapproval of focusing on one aspect of human experiences over another. Films, he believes, should not concentrate on portraying townships as either solely harmonious or exclusively precarious because "township dwellers do not have only bad memories of their life in the township".

Alcohol does not result in criminal behaviour as it can be consumed with caution as a social lubricant. Where it is signifier of bad behaviour, it is only to underline different identities of the population of any community. Not one character is shown drinking himself into a stupor. This dissembles the idea of black people and their dependence on alcohol. Though some characters do drink alcohol, they never drink excessively they are responsible. The township youth standing firm against the corrupt elders at their own peril references a pivotal point in South Africa's history. The youth of 1976 united and took a stand against the apartheid regime. However,

subtly, the short films invoke this drive from the township youth to unite against crime no matter who the perpetrators may be. The representation of crime as perpetrated and solved by a community relegates crime from a state of black epidemic to a social deficiency experienced by any community.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ENDORSEMENT OF MIDDLE CLASS IDEALS AS THE NEW IDENTITY OF THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIP IN *SECRET LOVERS*

Post-apartheid South Africa has seen a great surge of black South African filmmakers who can now tell their stories the way they see themselves opening up new ways of imagining the township. Taking after the immensely successful Nollywood low budget films by blacks have become prominent in South Africa too; *E-bioskop* (Soweto TV), *Lokshin Bioskop* (Mzansi Magic) and the subject of this thesis *eKasi: Our Stories* (e-TV) are the most popular amongst these. Of particular note about the films made under these series is the manner in which the township is depicted.

Throughout history, South African film demonised the township as a space infested with vagabonds and youths with an exceedingly thin moral fibre. At the hands of the economically empowered segregationist government, South African film and television were key in the denigration of the township space. The ruling National Party's ideology of racial inequality saw the townships disparaged on film to maintain this social injustice (Tomaselli 1980, Ellapen 2007, Pichaske 2007). *Cry the Beloved Country* (1995), *uDeliwe* (1975), *Jim Comes to Joburg* (1949) are a sample of films that epitomised the dangers posed by the cities to the black newcomers from the rural areas. Consequently, the suggested solution at the end of such films was that Africans eventually return to their homelands because the cities, and by extension the townships, were not their home. More often than not, mainstream cinema, which in the South African context is still largely white owned, portrays a post-apartheid township that is marred by intense social ills especially violent crimes, unemployment and youth delinquency. The space is still

stereotypically characterised by marginality and a short supply of basic human facilities in films like *Tsotsi* (Hood, 2005) *Jerusalema* (Ziman, 2008) and *iNumber Number* (Marsh, 2013). The representations of the township exhibited on popular film and television show that the film industry still subscribes to the apartheid ideas of what constitutes the townships; representing this space as one impoverished and plagued by social ills (Bond 2007).

Having previously had identity bestowed and fixed upon them by a totalitarian government, South Africa has seen identity formation central in most debates post-apartheid. Ellapen (2006: 1) notes that 'in post-apartheid South African society, there appears to be the recuperation of the 'township space' in the popular imagination of South Africans. The recuperation and sanctification of the 'township space' is increasingly apparent in its cinematic representations in contemporary South African cinema'. The post-apartheid South African township seeks to redefine itself as it stretches beyond the bounds of its fixed identity as a temporary lodging for black migrant workers (Ellapen 2007; Schensul 2009). This space, at least in South Africa, keeps evolving with the times assuming various faces that reflect the present. *Secret Lovers* seeks to shed the classification of this space as poverty-stricken, over-crowded and violent since the struggles against black oppression. In so doing, the episode propagates middle class ideals in a bid to humanise this space.

The first season of *Ekasi: Our Stories* offers a different township to that we have come to know on South African film and television. Historically, the townships have always been banded together by mainstream film and television under a singular brand as vile, uninhabitable and highly dangerous. *Secret Lovers,* the first episode of the season, proves an expedient source for the exploration of the tensions that arise from the co-existence of various classes within the

townships. The quasi-suburban areas of the township negate the traditional depictions of the township as they boast luxurious houses instead of the common shantytowns townships inhabited by common thugs struggling to make a living. Displaying the quasi-suburban milieu opens up space for the exploration of the men who occupy these areas.

Three key themes will guide the exploration of the manner in which the township has been refurbished in the popular imagination of South Africans through progressive middle class representations on *Secret Lovers*. These themes are post-apartheid nouveau riche sensibilities, space accredited masculinities and the alienation of the township underclass. In this chapter, it is to be argued that the episode alludes to a stabilised post-apartheid township by perpetuating middleclass ideals as the key identity of the contemporary South African township. Through the radical representations of the township depicted in *Secret Lovers*, black masculinity is afforded credence and variety it was otherwise previously denied. Lastly to be asserted is that the perpetuation of middle class ideals as the grand narrative of the post-apartheid South African township seems to be normalising this historically problematic space leaving it devoid of its current social ills thereby alienating the township underclass.

The Changing Face of the Township

The township space has always been defined by its lacks, the undifferentiated bodies it was developed to house and the unruly behaviour that came about with the political unrest and gangsterism. Ribane defines the townships as:

> "Urban settlements, usually impoverished and under-resourced that, during apartheid, were designated as 'temporary' African living areas. Usually situated on the outskirts of White cities

> and towns, they could not be upgraded since official policy was that Africans were only temporary sojourners there."
>
> (Ribane in Ellapen 2007: 1)

Another such definition is offered by Swartz (2007) describing the township as:

> "A world where people walked rather than drove, where they bought meat on the street rather than from supermarkets, where chickens were slaughtered in backyards and sold at the taxi rank, and where goats and cattle crossed the road with impunity to the blare of car and taxi hooters."
>
> (Swartz 2007: 114)

In contemporary South Africa, such definitions prove misleading in many ways as the township has reinvented itself in numerous ways. Ellapen (2007) rightfully objects to such rigid descriptions claiming that 'space within post-apartheid South Africa has become democratized and resists any strict boundary and definition' (p. 78). This is because the transfer of political power to the black majority in 1994 has seen a number of blacks enjoy economic success and a number of them reside in the townships where none of these deficiencies affect them directly. This will be discussed in detail later. The present issue is a lack of a definition that encompasses the true nature of the township as is in present day South Africa. For this chapter the township will be treated as a residential area on the outskirts of cities occupied largely by black people of various backgrounds, cultures and classes.

Despite the abolishment of apartheid in 1994, inequality remains a large part of post-apartheid South Africa (Seekings 2003, 2010; Bond 2007; Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell 2000; Schensul 2009). This is due to the fact that highly income driven South Africa is plagued with

unemployment. The inegalitarian government orchestrated racial segregation coupled with severe economic exclusion that saw the white race proliferate at the expense of the poverty stricken non-white majority. The post-apartheid government "inherited (this) society where inequality could not be reduced to race alone" (Seekings and Nattrass 2002: 1) with class another important issue that maps out the inequalities among the South African citizenry.

Southall (2004) and Modisha (2007) note that towards the end of the apartheid, blacks had already started infiltrating the labour market previously reserved for whites in managerial positions giving rise to a class that was economically superior to the majority of manual labourers. As a result, the political overhaul saw another group join this prestigious black middle class as the political elite (Southall 2004). Another group from the previously disenfranchised black community that saw economic prominence in post-apartheid South Africa was that of the BEE propelled entrepreneurs (Seekings 2010; Seekings and Nattrass 2002). Sonja Laden adds to this list of black elites media personalities who she claims "use the images they convey as a means of reinforcing their own status as established members of an elite bourgeoisie" (1997: 131). Seekings (2010:2) remarks that "In Johannesburg, a prosperous middle class lives in elite suburbs within Soweto" and the existence of various social classes within mono-racial townships amplifies the stark differences between classes as race is not a factor.

During apartheid, the townships were denigrated in media as an effort by the government to uphold the gross social domination of non-whites and justify the need for the black body to be policed (Mamatu 2006; Mhlambi 2008). Ellapen (2007) expounds on this noting that:

> "The township space became associated (with) underdevelopment, informal shack dwellings, dirtiness, death, decay, violence, criminality and danger. Over time these stereotypes have informed and determined the overall identity of the township in South Africa. These 'place-images' came about through labelling, stereotyping and reducing the experiences and inhabitants of this place to only one type. Years of perpetuating myths about this place has resulted in the 'freezing' of the South African township's identity and cinemas current fascination with this space as a space described above."
>
> (Ellapen 2007: 92)

Ellapen's (2007) ideas about township spaces bring renewed notions of blackness and black spaces such as townships to the fore. His account of black representations, particularly black masculinities, proves the most useful source in the South African context. He comments that: 'The current trend in South African cinema and television is for filmmakers to represent the 'township space as the only accessible zone through which an *authentic black identity* can be located' (Ellapen 2007: 4). Stuart Hall in Gillespie (2007: 3) warns against over idealisation of the concept of the black experience. He asserts that "what is the issue…is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black.'"

This is maintained by Ratele (2002) when he reinforces the importance of acknowledging differences within the South African 'black experience'. He stresses that "it is ever more urgent to look at black men as men with differing personal histories, personalities, desires, and class positions in theorizing and re-constructing South African society" (2002: 237). This is particularly true in an environment like a South African township where race alone is not enough

to strap people to a singular identity despite their shared experiences (Ceruti & Phadi 2011). This is an imperative point indicating that shared experiences by black men in the township do not confine them to a singular masculinity. Their masculinities vary as do their personal experiences shaping their identities. It is without doubt that black men have had similar experiences but the effects are unique to each individual, family, and society.

Arguably, this pervasive notion of a singular black identity has resulted in the social ills of the township being associated with the black race. However, South African mainstream cinema does not only disseminate these problematic images of black people in the township spaces but also presents them as the only true identity and natural place for all black people. They have been presented as the true representations of authentic black South African experience. This alone demands the revision of the images of the township projected by mainstream media. "The 'township space' characterised by homogenisation of black identity and black culture during the apartheid years has evolved into a space or "site of multiple identities, moving into many directions all at once" (Bremner 2004:155 in Ellapen 2007: 35).

Social stratification is at the core of this discussion of the representation of the township space. Without getting deep into the debate of the different approaches to analysis of social stratification by class the present discussion will use a general criterion to distinguish between middle class and the underclass. The main reason for sidestepping the debate on social stratification methods is that the townships - as will be shown in this chapter - defy these normative class categorisations. Ceruti and Phadi (2011) found that in Soweto, 'the material available to fill the symbolic container ''middle class' differs according to social position;' the

very people being categorised into various classes have different ideas of what constitutes 'middle class' (2011: 102). The criterion to be utilised for the purposes of this chapter is heavily indebted to Marxism because this chapter is principally concerned with relations between two main classes of the haves and the have-nots. The general criterion used owes to Seekings' (2003 examination of class differences.

Middle class will be identified as:

i) Those with business activity as owners or managers;

ii) Own property and assets; and

iii) Employers of the underclass.

The underclass is on the opposite end of the above criteria as:

i) Unskilled or manual labourers;

ii) Those without property or assets; and

iii) Employees of the middle class.

The investigation of class differences in *Secret Lovers* reveals that black middle class in the townships are fighting for their own identity, one esteemed and separate from that of the township underclass.

Summary of *Secret Lovers*

Portia Mohape is a middle aged woman who leads a lavish lifestyle thanks to the industry of her businessman husband Martin. She partakes in extra marital affairs leaving bedridden Martin to the care of their hired helper. Despite being a communications consultant at a family business, she is frantic trying to find out if Martin has made any changes to his will as she suspects he

might have left her with nothing. She is desperate to find the will so she can get Martin's money and move to Mauritius with her lover. The will is delivered to the house in her absence and Martin asks the hired helper to safeguard it. On her way back from the mall where she was stood up by her lover, she meets Ronnie working on her friend Dodo's garden. She invites him over to work at her house where she offers him an additional job of painting their double storey house provided he works alone. Soon after showing him the house and she takes Ronnie into her bedroom where they make love. Ronnie is immediately taken with Portia and soon he leaves his friend's shack and moves in and Portia buys him new clothes.

Having learnt from the hired helper of Martin, he wanders off into the room where Portia had warned him not to go into where he discovers a bedridden Martin. Hysterically, he runs upstairs back to Portia's bedroom to ask about Martin. When he tells Portia that he thinks Martin saw him, Portia panics and asks him to leave because Martin will divorce her and leave her with nothing. Portia suggestively mentions to the smitten Ronnie that the only way she could get anything is if Martin is killed accidentally by burglars. Ronnie offers to find people who can stage a burglary but Portia disagrees and takes Ronnie away.

A single man storms the house steals a DVD and bashes Martin to his death after knocking out both the hired helper and Portia. Portia is advised by her other lover to transfer ownership of her Audi TT, jewellery and the money in her account to him so as to keep them safe should the insurance company want to seize her assets. During the police investigation the police find Ronnie's fingerprints all over the house and start to investigate what the gardener was doing

inside the house. It is revealed that Ronnie is in fact on the run after stabbing a security guard who discovered him stealing money from the restaurant he worked at in Cape Town. He is arrested and he reveals that it was Portia's idea who too is arrested while her other lover leaves with all her assets and leaves for Cape Town with his actual girlfriend.

Nouveau Riche Masculinities in the township

Through visual defamiliarisation *Secret Lovers* creates a suburban aura within the township space to emphasise a claim to a black middle class. This was achieved by a visual revolution; eliminating and/or re-appropriating popular township aesthetic symbols such as "tiny tin shacks on dirt roads" (Bond 2007: 1) and "haphazard architecture and the lack of any formal urban planning" (Ellapen 2007: 79). This visual overhaul has seen the township being represented by shopping malls and fancy restaurants in place of the usual intimidating shebeens as a place for socialisation.

Property ownership in the townships was initially rare as this space was developed for lodging African migrant labour on a temporary basis. Due to political pressure, the government started allowing for property ownership by civil servants who occupied the middle class of the black strata as nurses, teachers and clerks (Schensul 2009; Modisha 2007; Seekings 2003). Property ownership in the township is no longer an important signifier of class as the ANC-led government, through low cost housing projects, offers houses to the poor in a bid to eradicate informal settlements (Seekings 2010; Bond 2007). The middle class in the townships occupies the quasi-suburban areas where overcrowding and decay are a non-occurrence. What is of particular note about property ownership in post-apartheid townships is the architecture, the size of the house (against the 'matchbox' houses by the government) and the location within the township.

Many chose to leave the townships when they have the means to do so but others remain (Modisha 2007; Seekings 2010; Phadi and Ceruti 2011). Townships are often juxtaposed against the modernisation of cities whose outskirts they border. *Secret Lovers* flaunts township opulence with the opening scene being at Soweto's lucrative Maponya Mall doing away with the identification of the township as inadequate next to the incomparable city. The episode displays township wealth and forges room for this black middle class in the townships giving off this township as an alternate space of modernity" (Ellapen 2007: 76). The episode **a**cknowledges the township as a home but one chosen and not occupied because of circumstance; and as such spurns the popular connotation of black success, "namely how important it is to escape the township" (Bond 2007: 1). If inhabitants can afford to leave the township but opt to stay, this certifies that the township is a good enough milieu for human settlement.

Assets are just as important as property as they also give indication to an individual's class. Ellapen (2007) observes that the "presence of cars, modern appliances and fashionable clothing within the 'township space' reflects both the hybridity of this space and also references materiality and access to capital" (Ellapen 2007:82). Portia drives around in various cars including a Mercedes Benz and Audi and her friend Dodo drives a BMW. They cannot merely afford cars but their access to capital is such that they can afford luxury cars clearly setting them apart from those without. Materialism is a big part of being a middle class resident of the townships as Portia takes Ronnie on a shopping trip buying him expensive clothes so he can be good enough to be with someone of her social standing. Ronnie's gentrification by Portia so he can look middle class challenges the neat and strict social stratification approaches that have profession as an entry to middle class. Ronnie enters a class above his own through his relationship with Portia. Though only temporarily, Ronnie becomes a middle class man living in

a double storey house and is chauffeured by Portia in her luxury cars. Ronnie oscillates between classes emphasising the indistinct boundaries between classes in the townships.

Most importantly, identifying with middle class means employment. The middle class strata is made up of those who own their businesses like Martin or those with high paying careers. Manual labourers make up the proletariat. Without his career as a businessman, Martin would not be able to afford the lifestyle he leads with his wife and this stresses the importance of corporate employment or business ownership as entry to middle class.

'Notions of black masculinities are implicated by notions of space'

The transformation of black masculinity is represented on the physical geography they are afforded the dignity that comes with middleclassness by locating them in well planned and clean settlements. The recuperation of the township space is central to that of black masculinity because "notions of black masculinities are implicated by notions of space" (Ellapen 2007: 48). The space black men occupy give indications to their masculinities. "Place-circumstances of a community determine the type of individual that arises from that community" (Ellapen 2007: 90). Much as slums denote crime and poverty in stereotypical representations of the township, luxury denotes success in this episode. This view suggests that the identity individuals fashion for themselves is directly linked to the community they occupy.

Morrell (1998) identifies employment as being one factor that gives men some sense of power. This is because 'modern masculinities are centrally constructed around work' and this is clear in *Secret Lovers* (Morrell and Swart 2005: 102). Masculine dignity is attributed to a man with economic means because "affordability is linked to self-sufficiency, which in turn denotes dignity…" (Phadi and Ceruti 2011: 100). Simply put by Duzi Twala, a man in control of his

finances is one in control of himself; therefore, he is not a victim of circumstance. Judging a book by its cover, one can conclude from just seeing the lavish double storey house, the Mohapes own that Martin, the man of the house, boasts a "triumph of individual virtue which includes good money management" (Urciuoli in Phadi and Ceruti 2011: 91). This is stressed by Martin being treated at home instead of being at a hospital. If Martin had been a typical poor man from the township his sickness would have been linked to his community. He is a businessman who can afford the best medical care and hence his ailment at his home is reference to his financial stability and by extension the masculine power that comes with his industry.

Business ownership and corporate employment qualify the men to be middleclass citizens and their resources go a long way in shaping the masculinities they can fashion for themselves. The venerated image of the township is centralised around work and therefore, non-manual employment is sold a vehicle to masculine nobility. This comes when men take upon the provider role for their families and are afforded decent living conditions which are testament to their industry and therefore prove them to be 'real men' (Morrell & Swart 2005). The provider role embodied by Martin is another aspect of masculinity evoked in the short film because his wife and servants depend on him financially.

Employment as signifier of manhood as men can be providers but this manhood is limited only to those within the middle class. Ronnie's employment as a landscaper is not enough as he is dependent on his salary making him vulnerable to Portia's schemes as she only wants to use him to get her husband's money. His financial dependence on his salary, paid by Portia, renders him vulnerable to her trickery putting his masculinity in question. Ronnie's indigence has him doing everything to please Portia and Martin. On the contrary, he is in bed and does not even see Portia's comings and goings but he is the one who can has control over what decisions Portia

takes about her life. As such, even in spite of his illness Martin still warrants more masculine influence than Ronnie because of the accreditation of masculinity by one's access to money.

Martin's wealth means he is empowered even in that state of being bedridden because he can influence the lives of those around him so he is still the man of the house despite his stroke from which no one knows if he will ever recover. Portia threads carefully not wanting to be discovered that she is bringing lovers to their house for fear of being divorced and left without any money. In addition, the hired helper did not leave after her brother's dismissal by Portia because Martin implored her to stay on. Even in his state, he can still control his wife.

Employment also represents responsibility towards the community. Being employed is being responsible for the community because it is assumable that employed men refrain from crime and misdemeanour because poverty is always credited as a stimulus for criminal activities (Bond 2007; Swartz 2007). This is evinced by Ronnie's desperation to kill Martin when he is told by Portia that with his accidental death they can have "the kind of money that will make us happy for the rest of our life". If Ronnie has skills that could acquire him a well-paying job, it is suggested, he would not be killing to get Martin's wealth because 'we would expect to see moral depredation greatest among the most vulnerable members of society, who lack resources to inoculate themselves against environmental influences'" (Hertzke in Swartz 2007: 113).

The quasi-suburban townships allow for multitudinous identities which black men were previously denied. Financial freedom, as evinced in the Mohape's property and assets, affords the middle class the choice of which spaces they want to occupy. Financial freedom has given them freedom of movement. These liberties are enjoyed because of the characters' location

outside the slums which always denote township disenfranchisement in conventional representations. A dignified community fosters numerous masculinities which black men can embody, instead of a singular fixed masculinity of dangerous black bodies being bestowed upon them.

The Othering of the Township Underclass

In *Secret Lovers*, the stereotypes common among representations of the township are not out of the picture; they have just been placed elsewhere. The middle class is elevated at the expense of the underclass as all the stereotypes associated with blackness on screen have been transferred to the underclass as the way the poor experience the township. Crime, poverty, manual labour and lack of housing have all been packaged as the character traits of a single character, Ronnie. The episode "sustain(s) bourgeoisie social relations by representing them as normal and others as deviant" (James 1989: 10).

Ronnie is shown bunking with his friend before moving in with Portia. Ronnie's friend's shack is new and it is not made of corrugated iron sheets but new ones with no newspapers filling the holes on old iron sheet walls. This serves to flag Ronnie and his friend as newcomers to the city; locating unemployment outside the township space as a foreign concept brought about by the economically inept. The two men are eating a bunny chow[4] and this signifies that they live alone with no women to cook for them as commonly associated with migrant workers. It can only be assumed that women are back home in rural areas where these unskilled labourers come from.

After moving into the Mohape household, Ronnie discovers Martin and Portia takes him to where he will be until further notice for fear of being divorced by Martin. She drops him off at a

busy and filthy street with a lot of people. This emphasizes his lack of property ownership and his class standing because at the beginning of the film she is shown waiting for her other lover, who eventually cons her off of everything she owned at a mall. Again, when Ronnie is apprehended he is at a dark overcrowded bar drinking himself into a stupor. The stereotypes of helpless black men overindulging in alcohol are linked to Ronnie. It is revealed that he is a criminal on the run for crimes committed in the Western Cape. This situates crime outside the harmonious quasi-suburban environment of the patrician Mohapes.

Another way in which *Secret Lovers* furthers the gap between the middle class and the underclass is through the identification of Portia's house as located in Southgate to which Ronnie's friend exclaims "Southgate? That's in town" when in fact the entire first season was shot in Soweto. This does not only excite Ronnie and his friend as they are impressed by the 'suburbs' but this also demands a lenient view of the affluent Mohapes. However, they are not to be seen in the same manner as ordinary township folk because they stay 'suburbs' and hence they can afford luxuries such as having a gardener.

The gardener is a luxury not known to be afforded by township dwellers but one that creates this chance encounter between Portia and Ronnie. Black people's identity was in the hands of their white counterparts who had control over all means of production and thereby total control of black people's representation and portrayed identity. The masculine identity fashioned for the black body was one of a feeble minded physical labourer. This has been shifted to the underclass. Ronnie believes Portia, despite having a husband loves her and he is taken with her. She can

manipulate him and has him doing as she pleases and this evokes the stereotype of feeble minded labourers who have just come to the city from the homesteads. This stereotype is emphasized by his revelation that is from the Eastern Cape; this marks him as a country bumpkin compared to conniving Portia from the city despite having lived in the Western Cape. Portia uses her economic power to manipulate Ronnie who depends on her money as the employer for his survival.

It could be argued that employment is not a defining factor of black identity on film. But when investigating the motive of the racially segregationist white supremacists representation of blacks on film, it is clear that they wanted to control who the black men were and could be and this they executed through defining the work spaces accessible to black men. Following the eventual introduction of television in South Africa in 1976, it was decided – after initial total exclusion - that black people were to have their own channel later on. But this could only be if black people "fulfilled their accepted roles in the division of labour; for example, as domestic servants, labourers or mine workers, and the occasional affluent individual" (Tomaselli & Tomaselli p. 134). The very notion of black people having a television channel being based on their acceptance of their representation especially in terms of their employment testifies to the significance of employment in identity formation.

This very idea is seamlessly articulated in the film by British filmmaker Anthony Fabian. His 2008 film *Skin* is based on the life of Sandra Laing, a South African coloured-looking girl born to white Afrikaner parents. The film follows her struggle for identity and acceptance in a racially hostile country. But the most pertinent idea from the film is in a classroom scene where a white 'onderwyseres' (teacher) explains to the pupils the differences between black and white people by having them identify the jobs suitable for each race. Mineworkers and farmer workers are

among the jobs identified to be for black people with the students being commended when they give answers such as "they work in the mealie fields mevrou"; "and in the mines." Professional jobs such as doctors and nurses are reserved for the whites. Later Sandra's father exclaims that a shop is 'no place for a young lady…maybe you (Sandra) can work in an office one day.' This emphasises the importance of the type of work done by non-whites in apartheid South Africa. The jobs black men were afforded were meant to have them dependent on the white master; male or female.

Though the first season was created solely for entertainment purposes, Eagleton (1976) claims:

> "Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of an age."
>
> (Eagleton 1976: 6)

Seleke Communications alongside numerous other black filmmakers have in post-apartheid South Africa been able to narrate their own stories about the black community. With production means, they are members of the middle class as owners of a production house and they have the power represent not only themselves but the rest of the township population as they imagine them. The ideology under which they operate is that of a black elite that seeks to be exempted from the stereotypes associated with the township while simultaneously trying to maintain a connection with the space. As expressed by van der Waal (2008), 'the media are useful tools in the hands of the ruling elites, or of contesting elites, to promote a specific set of assumptions about social identity categories and their place in the world' (van der Waal 2008: 56). James

(1989: 174) adds that 'dominant cinema cannot truthfully or adequately represent the social issues faced by the marginalised without coming into contradiction with itself' and as such black 'embourgeoisiement' is propagated at the expense of austere social issues faced by the masses (Laden 1997).

Repudiation of class mobility

The short film fails to encourage class mobility. If occupation is one factor that determines an individual's class, then skills and education can be attained but the film – all five episodes of the first season- make no reference to this; snuffing any possibilities of class mobility. This is evident in *Secret Lovers* as unemployed people disappear from the scene without trace, they do not linger around the cities for opportunities that will enable them upward movement. For example, the maid tells Ronnie that her brother used to do the Mohape's landscaping for three years before being dismissed on suspicions of theft. No mention is made of where he is now and having spent three years at the Mohape's residence, it is only natural to assume that after his dismissal he was without accommodation and perhaps went 'back home' to rural areas.

This could have been as a result of unemployment and the underclass which have been presented by the film as foreign concepts to the middle class space depicted. Portia Mohape is another victim of this denial of opportunities for upward movement. Despite her white collar job, when her inheritance from her husband is revealed to be only a car and jewellery which she has given away to another lover together with all the money in her account which was R2 million she is already on her way to jail. This removes her from the society she inhabited when she had the means closing the doors on any other form of upward mobility from her either by accumulating

her own wealth through her occupation or marrying another rich man (Seekings 2010). Ronnie too is arrested and this neatly tucks away the problem of unemployment and financial lack as the characters that represented these have been removed from the elite community. In a somewhat extreme manner this obstinate denial of upward mobility could be likened to the apartheid laws that saw blacks either thrown into prison or deported back to their homelands when they had lost employment in the cities (Seekings 2010).

Conclusion

The progressive imagery presented in *Secret Lovers* allows for a spectrum of masculine identities black men from the township can embody. But this visual veneration and the dignity it carries are limited to middle class and the aged stereotypes about the township are recycled as signifiers of the township underclass.

The middle class do not attach to the city opulence nor associate with the township indigent. This is shown through socialisation within their locale as Portia shops and meets with lovers at Maponya Mall. However, her money does not draw her away to upmarket shopping malls outside the township. Furthermore, the association with the township does not translate to an association with ordinary township folk. A claim of middle class is used to distinguish those who embody this identity from mediocrity (Ceruti and Phadi 2011: 99). Portia's consumer culture evinced by her assets such as luxury cars and jewellery distinguish her from the township indigent.

Secret Lovers exemplifies how the first season defines black men's masculinities through employment yet the reality is that unemployment is rife in South Africa. Middle class status is attained via business ownership so the "dignity" that it conveys is limited only to the aristocrats. Because 'middle class often implies dignity in the township setting' (Ceruti and Phadi 2011: 102), those of a lower class go without that dignity as they are still suspect to stereotypical representations. The major problem is that *Secret Lovers* offers no clear pathway (mention of education, qualifications or attained skills set) of moving from township peasantry to middleclass and therefore come off as ignorant of the struggles of the township majority.

Portia is heavily maligned, like all the other leading women in the entire first season as will be illustrated in the concluding chapter. She is labelled as sexually insatiable, evoking the stereotypes surrounding black women's sexuality onscreen (Jones 1993).

Portia typifies the sexually deviant woman popular in stereotypical filmic representations. Films often restrict women's sexual inquisitiveness by presenting catastrophic consequences for women who seek sexual liberation (Manatu 2011) and this is reflected in *Secret Lovers* as in the end Portia is left with no money by Martin in his will, she loses all her personal assets having given them to her lover and is apprehended. This seeks to claim that men do not dominate their women it is the women who are so devious that the men's actions are given off as necessary reactions. When Portia is left with just the car and jewellery she has given away to her lover, the audience is encouraged to celebrate her loss as deserving of a woman with thin moral fibre.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In post-apartheid South Africa where blackness is continually being redefined due to the influences of political and the consequential social and economic change, it is pivotal that the images surrounding black men on screen be revised to afford them the dignity previously denied by emasculating stereotypical images.

It has been established throughout this study that the five short films offer images of black men that afford them dignity through various masculine identities that have been made available within the township space by promoting "models of masculinity that … (stress) tolerance, peace, democracy, domestic responsibility, (and) sensitivity" (Morrell 2005: 85).

These representations of non-violent black masculine identities allow for recognition of black men as individuals who can negotiate their way well in the modern world without depending on criminal income. The show offers a whole spectrum of black masculinities without removing the black men from the space that was used to denigrate their masculine identities.

This research started by establishing the need for the revision of images of black men by recounting how negatively they have been conventionally portrayed by popular media. The concept of the New Man was introduced as an overarching theme that is exemplified by the men portrayed in the first season of *eKasi: Our Stories*. It is argued that the New Man paradigm allows for the exploration of the 'heterogeneity of Black lives' (Diawara 1993: 6). The re-

narration of black men, exploring the everyday complexities that make black men's various experiences affords them masculine identities previously denied them by stereotypical images.

The second chapter analysed the manner in which the role of fatherhood exonerates black men from their portrayal as 'ignorant, sexually immoral, animalistic, and inherently criminal' by locating them within the family space where they care for the family (Kinkead & Wood 2003). Through the application of the new daddy model, black men are exemplified by a man who has a connection with his children, specifically his daughter nullifying the belief of fathers being needed primarily by their sons. The new daddy model allows for black men to be viewed as loving and caring.

The new man evinced in *A Good Wife* holds a democratic outlook on gender roles. His manhood 'is often associated with becoming a father, and being responsible for, and loving towards children (and this) is one way of contributing to a new, equitable gender order' (Morrell 2005: 8). The care for the family posits black men the masculine grace equated to manhood in pre-colonial African societies (Morrell and Swart 2005; Lesejane 2006; Mkhize 2006). Morrell (2005) sums up the key ideas studied in chapter two, stating that:

> "When males appreciate fathers and aspire to fill the fatherhood role, they benefit individually, and society benefits as well. Fathers who are positively engaged in the lives of their children are less likely to be depressed, to commit suicide or to beat their wives. They are more likely to be involved in community work, to be supportive of their

> partners and to be involved in school activities. When fatherhood is woven as a desirable feature into the fabric of masculinity, everybody benefits"
>
> (Morrell 2005: 86).

Crime was investigated in the third chapter and it was revealed that the conventional crime story of the belligerent black youth and the gallant white policeman has been rebuffed in *Chasing the Truth* and *Abducted.* The white police are removed from the frame of the township crime story doing away with the notions of the need for the black body to be policed. The lack of community trust in the police is highlighted by them being afforded little input in the resolutions of the crimes as they were the very perpetrators. Prominence reserved for the brave young men who fearlessly protected their loved ones from antagonistic and opportunistic old community members. Young black men are celebrated as leaders who brave encounters with bellicose and morally bankrupt criminals to rid the community of the scums. The township space is vindicated through the depiction of crime as a social malice that can be curbed through non-violent community involvement. This responsibility towards their community by the young men posits them a masculinity previously denied men in the township through their representations as aggressors.

The two young men discussed are professionals with fulfilling careers, and not the morose street thugs typically displayed in popular representations of the township in film and television. The clothes they wear and their use of simple language and not colloquial mark them as self-

respecting young men who do not desire street accreditation by violently asserting their masculinity.

The fourth chapter investigated how the new representations of the township space re-masculate the successful middleclass within the townships. These township elites are posited as having triumphed over social pressures such as poverty and crime to be respected members of the community. A successful career credits Martin with the dignity that comes from a man's industry as a provider for his family. This is evinced by the lavish lifestyle led by Portia. Their assets are testament to Martin's wealth which he accumulated without reverting to crime.

It has been argued too that the dignity afforded the township elites alienate the proletariat. The township middleclass are pitied against the powerless and desperate underclass and come off as dignified because of the lifestyle money affords them; whereas the underclass is exempted from this dignity. Old stereotypes are recycled to represent the poor as migrant labourers, new to the city space. This is done to negate the existence of poor people in the townships. At the end of the film, the criminals- Portia and Ronnie are arrested and Portia's other lover leaves for Cape Town- and the poor leave the revamped township where the middleclass are situated. This absolves the township of associations with crime and poverty. The gap between classes is further widened by the lack of promotion of upward mobility, trapping the underclass in endless poverty. When the poor have lost employment in the urban space, they disappear, thus suggesting they have gone back home to the rural areas.

Although an attempt has been made throughout the first season to show women as progressive by means of careers, this falls desperately short as the women evinced in the series are still somehow victimized and constrained by situations that can be solved by the heroic males in their lives. Women are infantilised and placed under the protective guidance of their male counterparts. They are presented as helpless damsels awaiting male rescue. Through employment the women are progressive but their dependence on men to solve their problems is what is most problematic. For men to be the heroes they are presented as the women have to willingly surrender all power and responsibility for their own lives and depend on men.

Manatu (2011) avers that women are traditionally represented in cinema as 'passive, dependent, emotional…and irrational' (2011: 52). In the series we are shown men who go out of their way to save their women. Not only are they not brutalising their women- save for the gangsters in *Chasing the Truth* and landlord in *Abducted* whom the series blatantly condemns- they protect them. In both episodes, women fall under the protection of the males as they are deemed unfit to protect themselves against violent men. In *Chasing the Truth*, Nathi and Percy are colleagues but when her uncle is murdered she eagerly lets Percy solve the crime.

Though they offer their opinions and the narratives centre around their problems, women are only afforded supporting roles and daub the margins of their own stories. Their emancipation comes from decisions made by their male counterparts. In *A Good Wife* roles have been reversed- Kate takes up role of irresponsible father as the show aims at salvaging black fatherhood.

As the men are shown to be diligent and careful with their wealth, women are represented as being unable to be affluent and down to earth; instead they become ruthless. Kate mistreats Rebecca the maid by the way she talks to her, always ordering her around and is never grateful for the assistance she gets from Rebecca. In *Secret Lovers,* Portia fired her maid's brother for allegedly stealing money and arranges to have her husband killed so she can have his money.

Lerner in Manatu (2011: 54) asserts that 'a man's job is to make something of himself in the world; a woman's job is to find herself a successful man'. This is made clear in *Abducted* as destitute foreigner Bongi is represented to be most fortunate to find herself a working, well-mannered man like Brian who wants to marry her after only a few days of meeting her. To show gratitude for her fortune, Bongi is expected to be a subservient wife whose job is to make Brian happy.

Although the films were constructed for entertainment they have reality to talk back to because media 'offer us positions or ways of understanding ourselves (Mkhize 2006). As a result, "…images of…multidimensional black characters… represent a move towards the recognition of diversity and social mobility" (Stadler 2008: 359) yet there is not much progress if certain groups are demonised to validate others as this only proves a new oppression for the marginalised.

ENDNOTES

2 Marikana - 34 people were shot dead and 78 more injured during a protest by mineworkers.

3 Andries Tatane – was shot by police during a service delivery strike in Ficksburg, South Africa.

4 Bunny chow- hollowed bread filled with curry.

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