

Abstract

This MA (Creative Writing) project, titled *The State*, comprises two components, a novel and a reflective essay. The novel, which is the primary creative component, is experimental in form and is organised by means of short chapters. These chapters sketch out the lives of three main characters – Azra, Haroun and Jerry M – over the same period in Johannesburg. Azra is a lonely chartered accountant who is burdened by religious obligations and having to live with her ageing mother; Haroun is a government economist who acknowledges his ennui but is unable to do anything about it; and Jerry M is a drug-addicted street thug with a calling towards a darkness that he sees as his deliverance. The three characters' lives are connected in the latter part of the novel by the death of Azra's mother. The novel is written mostly in the third person, with the exception of the first-person accounts of Jerry M and the Person/Spirit in the bush who sees Jerry M through a drug portal. The novel explores various themes, the most prominent being loneliness and isolation, ennui, violence, and sexual identity. The reflective component – titled *Pop, Paranoia and a Pornographic Nexus* – is a meditation on the production of pop music and how it relates to the author's processes, the humour inherent in paranoia, and how the author found himself learning from a pornographic spectacle exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.