

POST-APARTHEID POSTMORTEMS: VISIONS OF TRUTH
AND RECONCILIATION IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN DETECTIVE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This project historicizes the genre of detective fiction in its early formation in post-apartheid South Africa, from 1995-2005. The argument that detective fiction is often complicit in reaffirming hegemonic, state-sanctioned visions of justice suggests that the genre has significant limitations as a vehicle for social protest. However, this study resists such a tight circumscription of the genre's potential for social critique in post-apartheid South Africa, especially given the shifting grounds of political hegemony in the country's shift to a new democracy. The study demonstrates that the detective fiction novels published during 1995-2005 both engage in a socio-political critique of the structural crimes of colonialism and apartheid that continue to shape the material conditions of people's lives in the new democracy *and* perpetuate ideologically conservative visions of crime and justice through some of the novels' more strict adherence to generic conventions that re-encode racial, gender, and class hierarchies that foreclose or subvert critique. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work on truth and power and on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work on the limits of narration and representation, my analysis of Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* and Mike Nicol's *Ibis Tapestry* in chapters one and two demonstrate how Slovo and Nicol use and disrupt the codes of the genre to critique both the genre's and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's productions of truth and restoration. While these writers work towards aesthetically innovative and politically progressive ends, my analysis of Deon Meyers' novels *Dead before Dying* and *Dead at Daybreak* in chapter three and Richard Kunzmann's *Bloody Harvests* and Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby* in chapter four reveals that these authors' closer adherence to generic conventions reproduce contained or ideologically conservative attempts at social critique. These latter four novels dramatize deep

tensions between visions of unity and emancipation and powerful anxieties about the shattering of identities, increasing social disorder, and the elusiveness of shared, knowable truths. This study examines these tensions through the genre's fictional engagements with the confessional narrative, slavery, patriarchal violence, negotiations of raced and hybrid identities, and the idioms of belonging shaped in contrast to criminal, occult, and immigrant others.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: DETECTING TRUTHS AND JUSTICE: <i>RED DUST</i> 'S	
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TRC.....	24
CHAPTER 2: DETECTING SILENCES: <i>THE IBIS TAPESTRY</i> 'S	
INTERROGATION OF THE NARRATIVE LIMITS OF THE TRC.....	57
CHAPTER 3: "WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU?" THE CONFESSIONS OF	
AFRIKANER MALE DETECTIVES.....	100
CHAPTER 4: WHITE IMAGININGS OF THE RAINBOW NATION:	
THE HYBRID DETECTIVE TEAM.....	158
CODA.....	232
WORKS CITED.....	236

INTRODUCTION

An April 2008 *Time* magazine article “South Africa’s Crime Wave—in Bookstores” addresses the country’s publication of crime fiction since the end of apartheid. “A hot literary genre in a society plagued by a daily surfeit of true-life horror stories,” observes *Time* (Rutter). The article indicates that the genre’s growth in South Africa is notable enough to harness international attention while simultaneously suggesting that a portion of this interest rests in the link between the fictional and factual incidents of crime and its proliferation in the country. South African reviews of local crime fiction novels make a similar linkage between the burgeoning of the cultural production and the social reality of crime. “Crime Fiction Booming like the Real Thing” headlines *The Weekender* (Saunderson-Meyer). Mike Nicol, a South African author of both popular detective and more literary fiction, takes issue with this characterization of the genre’s growth. He asserts that the fiction would have flourished without the real crime and suggests rather that we view this boom in the genre as an indication that “South Africa is maturing as a nation and we’ve given ourselves permission to write escapist commercial novels” (“Crime Fiction Booms”). Nicol’s marking of a national maturation that initiates the cultural conditions for a popular genre of crime fiction is an implicit reference to the nation’s transition from a racist apartheid state to a new, non-racial democracy with the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994 and the approval of the new South African Constitution in 1996.

Nicol’s point on “permission to write” the genre in a post-apartheid era echoes the sentiments of Deon Meyer, an internationally published South African detective fiction writer. Meyer claims that it was not until the end of the apartheid era that authors felt free to write popular detective fiction centralizing a heroic, justice-seeking investigator who also restores

systemic order (“Relative Absence”), a reconstruction of stability so typical of much of the British and American renditions of the genre. He emphasizes that the police state of apartheid was not the “ideal environment” for crime or noir crime fiction: “‘Normal’ crime and noir crime fiction is not possible within an abnormal society....A crime fiction protagonist who believes in justice cannot be part of an abnormal, unjust system” (“Relative Absence”). Meyer’s alignment of the genre’s representation of justice and state-sanctioned authority is affirmed by critics such as Stephen Knight in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* and Dennis Porter in *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction*. They argue that despite the marginal or rebel status of some noir detective figures who reject the social authority of the police, many of these fictions lead to resolutions of crime that restore social justice and reaffirm the hegemonic status quo, an important foundational claim, as I will address below, for the grounding of my study of South African detective fiction. Thus, authors of fictional detectives working within these conventions in apartheid South Africa would have been complicit in reinforcing a morally corrupt state.

I open this study with these media dialogues because they explicitly and implicitly identify issues integral to my project of historicizing and contextualizing the genre of crime fiction in its early formation in post-apartheid South Africa. The argument that detective fiction is often complicit in reaffirming hegemonic, state-sanctioned visions of justice--as Knight, Porter, and Meyer affirm—suggests that the genre has significant limitations as a vehicle for social protest. While Knight’s and Porter’s crucial insights inform my analysis and the questions I raise regarding to what degree the South African genre’s representations of crime and justice perpetuate or subvert inequalities of power, my study resists such a tight circumscription of the genre’s possibilities for social critique in post-apartheid South Africa, especially given the

history of protest literature and critiques of the apartheid state and the inequalities of power by both black and white authors and given the shifting grounds of political hegemony in the country's period of transition. As I demonstrate, the detective fiction novels published in the early years of the country's political transformation, in the decade after Mandela's election, both engage in a socio-political critique of the structural crimes of colonialism and apartheid that continue to shape the material conditions of people's lives in the new democracy *and* perpetuate socially conservative ideas, containing visions of crime and justice through some of the novels' more strict adherence to generic conventions that re-encode racial, gender, and class hierarchies that foreclose or subvert socio-political critique.

What makes the genre a potentially rich vehicle for social critique and for social conservatism is its popularity and long history of established conventions, which Porter calls a "structuring force" that provokes readers' "desire to know" (86). The text's intelligibility, its familiar journey from mystery to solution provides authors a means of employing and disrupting these conventions to destabilize status-quo processes and resolutions and, perhaps, to thus destabilize readers' comfortable and passive forms of knowing. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work on truth and power and on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work on the limits of narration and representation, my analysis of Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* (2000) and Mike Nicol's *Ibis Tapestry* (1998) in chapters one and two demonstrate how Slovo and Nicol use and disrupt the codes of the genre to critique both the genre's and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's productions of truth and resolution. In other words, these writers work towards aesthetically innovative and politically progressive ends. By contrast, my analysis of Deon Meyers' novels *Dead before Dying* (1996) and *Dead at Daybreak* (1999) in chapter three and Richard Kunzmann's *Bloody Harvests* (2004) and Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby* (2005) in

chapter four reveals that these authors' closer adherence to generic conventions and visions of social restoration, their politics of reconciliation in the new South African democracy, reproduce contained or ideologically conservative attempts at social critique.

My study and its focus on the first ten years of post-apartheid South Africa has been shaped, in part, by an initial slow access to post-apartheid detective novels being published in English outside of South Africa. In fact, if it were not for a serendipitous trip of the sister of my committee chair to South Africa, this study may have been further delayed. She kindly transported books back from South Africa for me. In the last few of years, with the growth of digital publishing and the self-promotion of books by their authors, international access has become much easier.

While there has been a significant increase in the publication of South African crime fiction, especially since 2008, my focus is on detective fiction novels published by white authors in English during the decade following the democratic elections, from 1995 to 2005. In this ten year span, five authors, whose novels are the subject of this dissertation, ushered in the post-apartheid genre: Deon Meyer, who, in addition to the novels introduced above, published *Heart of the Hunter* in 2002, Mike Nicol, Gillian Slovo, Richard Kunzmann and Andrew Brown. Their novels comprise a nascent post-apartheid genre of particular interest as they straddle a significant period of social and political change in South Africa with the official end of apartheid and the transition to a new non-racial democracy and the country's preoccupation with new national imaginings. My study will explore the ways in which this early South African crime fiction and their white and mostly male authors represent the preoccupations, hopes, and anxieties of this transitional period.

One of the challenges of this study was writing about post-apartheid South Africa without living there and having a sense of daily lived experience. I was initially unsure to what degree my outsider status would help or hinder my study. In 1998, when I made a trip to South Africa to visit family, I found that white South Africans of both Dutch and British descent with whom I came into contact, never brought up the TRC, despite the fact that its hearings were just about to end in July of that year. Later, as I further researched the TRC, it dawned on me that my outsider status may have helped create the emotional distance needed to build a deeper and more intricate understanding of the of the Commission's goals and proceedings and of the revelations of apartheid crimes than the understanding of many of those in the white communities that I visited in South Africa. What these communities were preoccupied with was the crime and violence in the country, especially their fear of blacks targeting whites. Before my mother and I traveled anywhere, a relative would provide a cautionary tale about a recent violent incident. I remember particularly my aunt's concern with our taking a one-hour train ride to Cape Town and her sharing of a story about three passengers (we assumed she meant white passengers) who were thrown off the train by black passengers. Later, I read about the 1998 deaths of three African male immigrants (from Senegal and Mozambique) who were chased by a mob on the train, and who either fell to their death or who were electrocuted by overhead cables when trying to escape. The attackers had accused these men of stealing South African jobs, an early example of xenophobic attacks against African immigrants, which will be discussed in chapter 4. I wondered whether the attack my aunt referenced was just such an incident. I still don't know to what degree my aunt's anxieties were based on real threats or a culture of increasing paranoia, but what was clear was that there was deep anxiety about crime, especially crime perpetrated by blacks, in white communities in South Africa. In conclusion, while I think my status as an

outsider has provided some advantages in conducting this study (e.g., emotional distance), I believe it is important to acknowledge and bear in mind that I am an outsider.

History of the South African Detective Fiction Genre and Market

The detective fictions of the first decade of democracy preface what Mike Nicol marks as the “break out year” for South African crime fiction: 2008 (“Crime Beat Latest”), the same year the media stories referenced above appear. Nicol’s blog site *Crime Beat*, which contains a yearly cataloging and community discussion of crime novels being published in South Africa, lists fourteen novels published that year, ten in English, the rest in Afrikaans.¹ Of the ten English novels, all except *Ancient Rites* by Diale Tlholwe are written by white authors who feature either white or black or an interracial team of detectives. Only three of the ten white authors are women (“Crime Beat Latest”). This 1995-2008 crime fiction market, and, as we will see continue to some degree in the subsequent production of the South African genre, generally accords with Ed Christian’s claim in “Ethnic Postcolonial Crime and Detection (Anglophone)” that “most indigenous postcolonial detectives have been created not by indigenous authors but by ex-colonizers, generally white men who have lived in the countries they write about or who have studied them sympathetically (283). However, “ex-colonizers” in this context are mostly settlers who claim South Africa as home. Except for Deon Meyer, who was published internationally early in his career, most of the authors catalogued were difficult to access outside of South Africa in 2008, despite the media publicity. However, by 2015, the international market for South African crime fiction has grown, digital media has made even locally published fictions

¹ Mike Nicol’s blog and cataloguing of publications seems to be the definitive source for a yearly accounting of who is writing and what is being published in the South African Crime fiction genre. His blog is the resource Sam Naidu uses to reference the output of post-apartheid crime fiction publications in his essay “Crime Fiction, South Africa: A Critical Introduction.”

accessible, and Nicol lists sixty-three authors who have published more than a hundred South African crime novels in English since 1995.

While his list reveals there are still more male than female-authored texts, the most striking imbalance is racial. Nicol catalogues only two black South African authors who have published detective fiction in English, Diale Tlholwe and Angela Makholwa. His list also includes only one writer publishing in an African language, Meshack Masondo, who wrote six crime novels in Zulu from 1990 to 1995 (“Who’s Who”). There may very well be additional African language detective fiction writers since Sam Naidu in “Crime Fiction, South Africa: A Critical Introduction” notes a “growing number of crime thriller novels being written in indigenous African languages” (130), but he provides no evidence that this is the case.

In his general survey of South African crime fiction, Naidu notes that a “demographic study of the readership of the South African crime thriller novel has yet to be undertaken” but proposes a “heterogeneous” reading public based on his observation of the genre’s popularity in “airport lounges, media attention, library shelves, book club acquisitions and book stores” (130); however, given the publication statistics above that demonstrate a largely white group of authors publishing mostly in the English language and a somewhat smaller portion in Afrikaans, I am skeptical of the claim to heterogeneity in readership and would suggest a predominantly white market of readers, especially in the early post-apartheid years of my study when the lasting effects of apartheid structural inequalities in education and thus in English language literacy were even more severe than now.

There is a further caveat to the publication history Nicol provides. His definition of crime fiction is broader than that which I am using for my study. He includes “thriller,” “espionage,” and “adventure” fictions that involve some form of crime but not necessarily investigations

(“Who’s Who”). By my use of “crime fiction,” I point to that genre more recognizably established and more commonly labeled as “detective fiction” in the United States, a term which South African authors, publishers, and readers are less likely to use, choosing instead labels such as crime fiction, with Nicol’s broader implications of any popular novel focusing on crime and possibly but not necessarily including detection, kriminis, or thriller fiction. Thus, when I use the term “crime fiction” in this study, I limit my meaning to novels that include some form of crime as a central event; an investigator, either amateur or professional; a process of investigation; and often, though not always, a solution or resolution.² For the purpose of this study, I will use the terms crime or detective fiction interchangeably.

My emphasis on the “post” may seem to suggest an absence of what Meyer posits as “normal” crime fiction during the apartheid era. However, while there was not the proliferation now in evidence, writers such as James McClure and Wessel Ebersohn both wrote detective fiction, often pointedly addressed at apartheid criminality. In her survey of South African crime fiction published before 1994, Elizabeth le Roux notes that both McClure and Ebersohn were published in the United Kingdom by Gollancz, “a socialist and left-wing publisher that supported the anti-apartheid cause” (144).³ McClure’s work is an important precursor to the post-apartheid interracial teams that I examine in chapter four as his novels featured the first interracial South African detective duo, African Sergeant Mickey Zondi and Afrikaner CID Lieutenant Tromp Kramer. While Nicol has named him “without doubt the founder of crime fiction in South Africa and its most internationally respected exponent” (qtd, in le Roux 143), le Roux points out that his books “are almost unobtainable in South Africa” (143), perhaps due to the history of apartheid-

² A three week debate on the South African blog *Crime Beat* between authors, publishers, and booksellers on an appropriate label for local crime writing in post-apartheid South Africa reveals that the local genre is still in its genesis with a less established character than the more easily labeled “detective fiction” in the United States.

³ Elizabeth le Roux’s uses a rather broad definition of “crime fiction” that includes adventure novels and novels by non-South African writers who set their fictions in South Africa.

era banning and the fact that he was published in the United Kingdom. Le Roux suggests that “local booksellers” may also have added to the limited access by not stocking the novels (144). Nicol’s naming of McClure as the founder of South African crime fiction also ignores the work of *Drum* writer Arthur Maimane, who, under the name of Arthur Mogale, wrote a series of short stories in the 1940s that featured a social bandit detective figure, Chester O. Morena, whom le Roux names “the first black South African detective” (142). Other apartheid “literary” rather than popular texts, such as Andre Brink’s *Dry White Season*, often included tropes of the detective genre, centralizing the search for the “truth” of apartheid human rights abuses/crimes. Critiqued as white savior narratives, these quests typically feature a white man’s search for justice on behalf of the racially oppressed. Rob Nixon describes them as documentations of “white psychic crisis” and conscientizing (88). One assumes that Meyer’s label of “normal” to describe the current narratives of crime fiction signifies stories that are not explicitly anti-apartheid, as indeed his fictions are not, and which now, with the shift of the African majority from the margins to the center, at least politically, can no longer be seen as complicit in an ethically bankrupt order in their motivation to restore the social order of the state.

Literature Review

Since the 1960s, the critical study of detective fiction has been increasingly recognized as worthy of scholarly pursuit; yet most academic interrogations have focused on the genre and its variations as they’ve been produced, marketed, and consumed in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The sixties and seventies witnessed the emergence of academic writing on the history and typology of the genre, with Tzvetan Todorov’s “The Typology of Detective Fiction” and John Cawelti’s *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art* serving as foundational texts for later studies. In the eighties, Stephen Knight, Dennis Porter,

and Ernest Mandel subsequently examined the genre's ideological structures in the narratives' social contexts, each considering the classical British and American hardboiled variations. Although they recognize that the genre might offer room for some social critique, their analyses concur, that detective fiction presents a largely conservative vision: a comforting restitution of the dominant social order through socially integrating closures of the narratives of crime, violence and murder. While some hardboiled mysteries, those by Chandler for example, do work to critique the values of the middle class, the wealthy and American capitalism, they still inscribe sexist and racist values in a patriarchal narrative which progresses towards the restitution of the hegemonic social order. As mentioned earlier, Knight's and Porter's critiques inform the perspective of this study; yet I focus too on the spaces that the detective fiction in transitional South Africa opens to socio-political critique. Informed by but moving away from the social and generic contexts of Britain and the United States, this study enters South African cultural interrogations and shifting narratives of official truths, apartheid and colonial histories, criminality, justice, and social restoration envisioned by white authors in the genre during the 1995-2005 period in this particular post-apartheid society.

In the eighties and nineties, critical attention turned to issues of diversity as authors examined the genre's adoption by writers marginalized by gender, race and sexuality. In *Murder by the Book* and *The Woman Detective*, Sally Munt and Kathleen Klein respectively provide important studies of women's roles in and feminist moves to transform the genre. They both emphasize that the conservative implications of the genre constrict subversive reconfigurations and reinforce white, masculinist, and hegemonic values. Other critics, such as Adrienne Gosselin, Stephen Soitos, Andrew Pepper, Megan Abbott, and Maureen Reddy have critiqued intersecting representations of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality to interrogate to what

degree the white, heterosexual, hegemonic values can be or have been disrupted in detective novels featuring or authored by people of color. Some suggest, as does Soitos of black detective novels, that many writers of color do indeed subvert “common Euro-American ideological” structures (4). Indeed, the greater diversity of authors has produced more substantial challenges to the limiting nature of the genre. Authors such as Sherman Alexie, Lucha Corpi, Barbara Neely, Michael Nava, and Barbara Wilson have creatively used the structures of detective fiction to critique social injustices predicated on a network of oppressions emerging from the interconnections of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality.⁴ There is little evidence of great diversity in current South African authors of detective fiction; however, as this changes, as no doubt it will, such fictions will offer intriguing areas of future scholarship. Nevertheless, the work of the above writers, especially critics Megan Abbott’s and Maureen Reddy’s scholarship on representations of white hegemonic masculinity and racial others in American detective fiction have been integral to my analysis in chapter three of Deon Meyer’s white Afrikaner detectives and their loss of white political privilege in the new South Africa.

More recently, scholars have noted that detective or crime fiction “is a more interwoven and international body of writing than has often been recognized” (Knight, *Crime Fiction* xiv). Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleisen note that the regional boundaries of the cozy English mystery and the hardboiled American crime novel “no longer hold—and probably never did in the first place” (3). Their anthology, *Postcolonial Postmortems*, a collection edited by Ed Christian, *The Postcolonial Detective*, and an anthology by Nels Pearson and Marc Singer, *Detective Fiction in a Postcolonial and Transnational World* point to the increasing number of migrant investigators who have either transgressed their national boundaries to operate “across

⁴ See for example, Alexie’s *Indian Killer*, Corpi’s *Black Widow’s Wardrobe*, Neely’s *Blanche on the Lamb*, Nava’s *Little Death*, and Wilson’s *Gaudi Afternoon*.

countries and continents” or investigators who have emerged in specific postcolonial contexts (Matzke and Mühleisen 3). While the authors in these three anthologies point to relatively early developments of clue-puzzle mysteries in postcolonial societies, it is not until the twenty-first century that we witness sustained academic investigations of detective fiction produced in these particular societies. The postcolonial anthologies give evidence to the developing interest in confronting questions of policing/detecting, criminality, and justice in the social, political, and historical formations of specific postcolonial societies. The detective genre is uniquely suited to this critique as it has been connected to the disciplinary power of imperialism from its early formation, and its representation of the complexities of crime and justice in a postcolonial context can be a useful means of interrogating oppression and power.

Critical studies in English on the production of postcolonial African detective fiction is sparse. However, Christian claims that there is “significant work being done on African detective fiction” and that the apparent dearth is due mostly to the difficulty of finding the work in English (“Ethnic Postcolonial Crime 283). *Mysteries of Africa*, a rather thin collection edited by Eugene Schleh, offers only a couple of chapters on independence era mysteries; the authors interrogate mostly colonial mystery texts. There is one chapter on South African detective fiction author, James McClure, and indeed he and fellow apartheid era writer Wessel Ebersohn have been the focus of a few scholarly articles in journals or in the diversity and detection anthologies. As addressed above, although the detective genre has been popular with readers in South Africa, it was not as prevalent a genre with South African writers before democracy. Deon Meyer accredits this relative paucity to the fact that authors felt constricted by the politics of apartheid which made such “frivolous” fiction and representations of heroic police/detective figures impossible (Interview). Perhaps the fact that South African detective fiction had “rarely been

considered a major genre in South African literature” (Davis 182) until recently, gives reason to a corresponding paucity of academic interrogations of South African detective texts in the first decade after democracy. Michael Chapman’s *Southern African Literatures* (2003) and Christopher Heywood’s *New History of South African Literature* (2010) verifies the absence of the genre from major studies of Southern African literature (Davis 182).

There is recent evidence, however, of increasing academic interest in South African crime fiction. One of the earliest critiques is novelist Meshack Masondo’s MA dissertation that analyzes “The Detective Novel in Zulu” (Nicol, “Meet the Zulu” *Crime Beat*). Then there are a small number of scholarly articles published after 2010 on individual South African crime novels by authors such as Deon Meyer, Mike Nicol, and Margie Orford, and, most recently, the journal *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* dedicated its September 2013 issue to South African crime fiction. The journal includes le Roux’s survey of the publication market of pre-apartheid crime fictions, Naidu’s introduction to crime fiction in South Africa, an essay on newspaper witchcraft articles that read like mysteries, an article on the crime fiction novels of Sarah Lotz whose first foray into the genre was in 2010, and an article by Sabine Binder on Brown’s *Coldsleep Lullaby*, which will figure in my chapter four analysis of Brown’s representation of the detective figure’s abject and entangled coloured identity. However, as Naidu notes, there has been no “comprehensive study” of the South African crime fiction genre (124), a gap that this study seeks to contribute to filling.

Most of the essays on South African crime fiction have offered celebratory arguments of the genre’s ability to effect social critique, some even going so far, Naidu remarks, as to claim for it the “status of the new ‘political novel’ in post-apartheid South Africa” (126), a clear counter to Meyer’s celebration of an escapist crime fiction genre in a new nation that now

enables an unfettering from the political. Indeed, while there may be a move away from apartheid-era fictions' singular struggle against the apartheid-state, the genre cannot but be an articulation of the political, as illustrated by the media's linking of a reflective crime fiction genre to the everyday in South Africa as steeped in criminality and violence. However, my analysis troubles the celebratory and too broad perception of the post-apartheid genre as "the new political novel." The more closely authors adhere to established generic conventions, the more these works seem to constrain political critique.

What makes the period 1995-2005 in South Africa especially productive for the study of detective fiction? Critic Stephen Knight observes that "crime fiction is an early, often the first, voice to respond to new social and cultural encounters generated by the colonial situation" ("Crimes Domestic" 25), a claim which arguably can be extended to the apartheid situation in the specific context of 1990s South Africa. How does one write early post-apartheid detective fiction without addressing the major crime of the epoch: apartheid itself? In a 2001 interview, Mike Nicol observes that apartheid "has sat on everything" ("Interviews with South"). Thus, in 1995, South Africa's transitional government and its citizens invested in an official process of examining the history of apartheid abuses through the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which sought to build a collective memory and recognition of apartheid as a crime against humanity and to more broadly effect a means of national reconciliation and nation building. The structural and material crimes of apartheid and the legacy of its violence permeate the early narratives of South African crime fiction, which simultaneously begin to imagine the (im)possibility of reconciliation in a new nation.

Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation: The TRC and the Tropes of Detective Fiction

Established in 1995 by the South African transitional Government of National Unity, the TRC was mandated to “uncover as much as possible of the truth about past gross violations of human rights” (*Report 1*: 49), defined by the Commission as murder, attempted murder, abduction, torture and severe ill treatment (*Report 1*: 42-60). Through holding public hearings for the testimonies of both perpetrators, who could potentially earn amnesty for full disclosure of their politically motivated violations between the years 1960 and 1994, and victims, who would have the opportunity to tell the full story of their pain and loss, the Commission sought to promote “reconciliation and national unity” (*Report 1*:49). The hearings began in 1996 and during a two-year process, the commissioners received more than 20,000 statements from survivors and received approximately 7,050 amnesty applications (Krog vii). Unlike other truth commissions, the TRC hearings were made public and were broadcast by the media to both national and international audiences. In 1998, the first five volumes of the TRC’s report were published. The government decided to extend the period of investigation to 2002. In 2003, an additional two volumes were published, and in 2005 the majority of the exhumations of the disappeared were conducted. The TRC’s work, which extended from 1995-2005 became a meaningful a historical frame for my study of post-apartheid detective fiction.

While laying important ground for recovering and archiving a history of gross violations of human rights over a 34 year period, both the Commission and its report have fueled a spirited cultural and political debate on not only South Africa’s past but also the political goals, ideological structures, and processes of the Commission itself. The range of texts that engage the

TRC include autobiographies, memoirs, non-fiction studies, novels, cartoons, photographic essays, art exhibitions, documentary and fictional films, and theatrical performances.⁵

However, most pertinent to this study are the correlations between the Commission's key goals—truth, justice, reconciliation—and the structural conventions of much detective fiction. In *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction*, Dennis Porter notes that the plot structure of detective fiction is “preoccupied with the closing of the logico-temporal gap that separates the present of the discovery of crime from the past that prepared it. It is a genre committed to an act of recovery, moving forward in order to move back” (25). One sees clear parallels with the TRC as it attempted to move the country forward into a new democracy by first bringing to light the past injustices of the apartheid era. Comparatively, both the Commission and the genre of detective fiction work towards a recovery of the truth of past injustices through processes of investigation and narrative reconstruction. The TRC not only encouraged perpetrators’ to fully and publicly confess the truth of their acts of human rights violations, it also collected corroborating evidence, through its investigatory powers of “subpoena, search and seizure” (*Report 1*: 26).

Central to both the Commission and the genre of detective fiction is the desire to enact justice, to redress a communal violation. Porter reminds us that crime “always occurs in a community,” suggesting a violation of the communal code of behavior and demanding retribution in terms of that code (120). Interestingly, and as will be explored in more depth later, the justice encoded in most detective fiction is punitive while the TRC sought to enact restorative justice, the promotion of “national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past” (*Report 1*: 26). Thus while one might suggest that both the TRC and, in large part, the genre of detective fiction work towards resolution,

⁵ See Paul Gready’s “Novel Truths: Literature and Truth Commissions” for a snapshot of this work.

towards the restoration of social order after its disruption by crime or a communal violation, a significant difference exists between the two. Much detective fiction restores and sustains the communal values of the dominant social order while the Commission sought to bridge two social orders, to effect the transition from one state to another. Robert Wilson, author of *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*, characterizes the Commission as an interstructural body occupying a liminal, ambiguous space, “betwixt and between existing state institutions” (19). Rather than restoring an already established order, the values of the status quo, the Commission worked to reshape and internalize a new system of values, which included the recognition of the criminality of the codes of the previous community, the apartheid state.

The Commission’s goals of truth, justice, and reconciliation and the national dialogue the Commission sparked resonate in the detective fiction novels in this study, and provide a meaningful frame for my analysis. The focus on a *post*-apartheid era does not signify a severance from the apartheid past, but, as the novels reveal, a continuing preoccupation with apartheid crimes and structures that shape the detective figures’ perspectives and their professional and personal conflicts, inform the processes of and challenges to their investigations, and give shape to visions of criminality and justice. The novels in the first two chapters focus specifically on the crimes of apartheid and enter into dialogue with the TRC’s productions of truth and national reconciliation. Nicol’s comment on a new national maturity that permits the production of current forms of crime fiction carries with it reverberations of the celebratory emancipation of the “New” South Africa, the imagined community of the Rainbow Nation that metaphorically imprinted itself on the first decade of democracy: an invitation for South Africans to embrace unity and difference. The promise of new national imagining and belonging are central to the

novels featured in chapters three and four, in Meyer's representations of the birth of a new Afrikaner masculinity and in the imagined unity of the interracial detective teams that police the multi-racial neighborhoods of the new nation. The novels dramatize deep tensions between hopeful restorations to and disruptions of such visions of unity and emancipation: the elusiveness of shared, knowable truths, the shattering or alienation of identities, and an increasing irresolution of order. This study examines these tensions through the genre's fictional engagements with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and apartheid crimes; the confessional, introspective modes of narration; the negotiations of gendered, raced, and hybrid identities; and the idioms of belonging shaped in contrast to the criminal other and dangerous *makwerekwere* (immigrant others).

My analysis of these fictional engagements draws on an eclectic body of critical material, including detective fiction genre studies; South African cultural, historical and social texts; and postcolonial theory that provide insight into experiences and histories of colonialism, to individuals' complicity with and resistance to such structures, and to the ways in which we can read these post-apartheid detective fiction writers' understanding of and staging to different ends how race, ethnicity, gender, and class are inextricably linked to discourses of power and oppression in the new national imagining.

The Chapters

Chapter one examines Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, which uses the codes of detective fiction to thematically center the goals and processes of the TRC through an investigation into the amnesty hearing of ex-policeman, Dirk Hendriks. Hendriks is guilty of the torture of Alex Mpondo, a current member of the South African parliament and a former apartheid-resistance fighter, and is suspected of being complicit in the disappearance and assumed death of Mpondo's

comrade, Steve Sizela. In her staging of the search for the truth to Sizela's disappearance, Slovo utilizes multiple focalizers that disrupt the authoritative lens of the detective figure, Sarah Barcant, and positions "truth" as an unstable variable, both provisional and unreliable. Drawing on Foucault's work on truth and power, my analysis of the discourses of the TRC Report and hearings, and various scholars work on political violence and human rights, I argue that *Red Dust* contests both the TRC's and the detective genre's abilities to produce truth and social justice. Slovo's critique of the four-fold truths of the TRC—forensic, narrative, social, and restorative—reveals the ways in which these truths are produced through a complex weave of power relations that defy the TRC's goal of establishing a consensus on truths of apartheid abuses that could lead to reconciliation. Indeed, as I demonstrate, her weave of the detective genre with the processes of the TRC implicates the detective and, perhaps, the Commission in a discursively violent will to know as Alex Mpondo is compelled to relive his experience of Hendrik's torturous apartheid interrogations.

Chapter two focuses on Mike Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* and its critical engagement with the TRC. Drawing on Spivak's work on the limits to narration and representation, the TRC Report, and multiple texts on South African social and political history, I demonstrate how Nicol's meta-detective novel, which on the level of plot follows a detective's quest to solve the mystery of an arms-dealer's death, productively dramatizes an interrogation of the TRC's project of narrating the historical truths of apartheid human rights abuses. I argue that the novel's labyrinthine structure, its complex textual weave, not only draws attention to "truth" as a construct, but also directs readers' to focus on the limiting mechanics of the TRC's mandate, goals, and productions of the historical truths of apartheid crimes. *The Ibis Tapestry* confronts a number of "truths" that the TRC did not, and, perhaps, could not establish due to its discursive

foreclosure of women's experiences of apartheid abuses, its temporally bound understanding of the criminality of apartheid severed from the colonial violence from which the politics of apartheid grew, and its silences on the illegal arms trade that exported apartheid violence beyond South Africa's borders. I suggest that the novels' final resistance to the resolution of its central mystery—who killed Christo Mercer and why—and to a narrative of reconciliation or social restoration provokes a politics of reading the TRC's proceedings and report: not as a narrative of closure on the crimes of the apartheid past but as an ongoing construction open to critique.

Chapter three marks a shift into more traditional detective novels, which in the South African context have been primarily influenced by the American hardboiled tradition. I examine two novels by Deon Meyer, South Africa's most popular and internationally known crime fiction writer, *Dead before Dying* and *Dead at Daybreak*. These novels, as do those in chapter four, initiate new imaginings of identity and belonging in a democratic South Africa and imagine the everyday forms of reconciliation that must occur between its citizens in the new nation. I contend that Meyer's novels dramatize an anxious preoccupation with the loss of white Afrikaner male privilege through their reconfiguration and ultimate restoration of the heroic white male detective, to use Raymond Chandler's phrasing, as "the best man of his world" ("The Simple Art" 399). Integrating theories of white hegemonic masculinity—including the specific histories of pre-1994 constructions of authoritarian and militant Afrikaner masculinity—and the work of detective genre critics Megan Abbott and Maureen Reddy—who critique the genre's encoding of racial, class and gender hierarchies—I argue that Meyer uses the genre to fashion a softer-boiled, Afrikaner masculinity suitable for policing in the new nation. Yet the detective heroes' rehabilitation operates through a troubling use of confessional narratives that perform a series of profound denials by the police detective heroes who, despite the TRC revelations of apartheid

police complicity in the murder and violent disciplining of racial “others,” proclaim they are not racist, not sexist, and not the authoritarian Afrikaners of old. Meyer’s reliance on the masculinist and racializing tropes of the genre contain, if not subvert, his questionably progressive attempts and, ultimately, re-affirm racial, gender, and class hierarchies to legitimize the figure of the reborn, post-apartheid, Afrikaner male detective hero.

The final chapter focuses on two novels that employ racially hybrid detective teams in their representations of racial and geographical belonging in South Africa’s transitional narrative of celebratory racial unity. Richard Kunzmann’s *Bloody Harvest* articulates racial unity through a multi-racial detective team that explores a series of *muti* murders or murder for the purpose of trafficking human body parts. I argue that the text stabilizes idioms of South African belonging through this team’s policing of dangerous “others” —*makwerekwere*, (a pejorative term used in South Africa for immigrants—those who have transgressed South Africa’s geographical borders) and that the novel participates in a xenophobic discourse through its representations of a horrific hybrid other, a criminal Nigerian albino drug lord and practitioner of witchcraft. Andrew Brown’s *Coldsleep Lullaby* invites analysis of the entangled racial histories of Afrikaner and colored identities in a double narrative of rape and related murders in colonial and contemporary Stellenbosch—a wine-producing, university town. In the contemporary mystery, coloured detective Eberard Februarie and his rookie, female African partner, Xoliswa Nduku investigate the rape and murder of an Afrikaner professor’s daughter. The concept of creolization is used to challenge the novel’s too easy recuperation of its coloured protagonist detective and to explore the painful context of slave and colored history—coloured shame associated with anti-miscegenation ideology, the intermediate status of coloureds in apartheid’s racial hierarchy, and the complicity of coloured culture in white racist discourses.

The South African detective novels of this period demonstrate both a socio-political critique of the criminal structures of colonialism and apartheid with their enduring legacies in the post-apartheid era and the containment of such critique by the generic codes of detective fiction. While the detective novels of these white authors evidence white anxiety about the loss of white privilege and the place of whites in the Rainbow Nation, they also provide substantive critiques of the racist and sexist discourses of the past. The meta-detective novels *Red Dust* and *The Ibis Tapestry* speak back in complicated ways to the TRC's process and to the detective fiction genre, resisting the conventions of a panoptic detective who resolves the mystery and provides a definitive resolution, and, in this way, these novels argue for a difficult and continuing dialogue about the crimes of apartheid and its legacy in the new South Africa. However, as the genre has become more popular and the novels have more closely followed the generic conventions, their socio-political critiques have been either overturned or partially contained by those conventions, especially through the use of white male heroes who reaffirm their whiteness against raced and gendered others and through celebratory visions of interracial detective teams ordered through visions of monstrous or abject hybridity. As the genre continues to expand and represents more diverse voices, one hopes that it will foster a more vigorous dialogue on race, gender, and crime in the new South Africa.

A Note on Terminology

While I recognize the concept of race as socially and historically constructed, this project seeks also to acknowledge what Robert Morrel calls the “analytical weight” of the legacy of the apartheid state's arbitrarily imposed racial classifications: African , coloured, Indian, and white (ix). Problematically relevant in contemporary South Africa, these racial classifications continue to have a social and material role in structuring South African's lives and identities. While

correlating to wide and deep material inequalities, the classifications are also used by state-sponsored programs to redress such inequalities as well as by academic and media markets.

When relevant, I have used African (when referring to indigenous groups that earlier apartheid nomenclature termed “Bantu”), coloured, Indian, and white. I have chosen to maintain the South African spelling of “coloured” to mark its specific historical and geographical origins and relevance. “Black” is a more contested term in South Africa, sometimes used to refer to Africans and sometimes used in a collective sense, as I do in this study, to refer to all peoples previously oppressed by apartheid, a use popularized by the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s. Finally, although not acknowledged by apartheid ideology, it is important to recognize that these racial groups are not and never have been homogenous or fixed. There is great diversity within each classification with individual identities constituted by such intersections as gender, class, and ethnicity.

CHAPTER 1

DETECTING TRUTHS AND JUSTICE: *RED DUST*'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TRC

At the outset of Gillian Slovo's novel, *Red Dust*, protagonist Sarah observes her mentor Ben working on the early stages of a complex puzzle, Pierre Bonnard's painting of *The Open Window* and recognizes in this activity Ben's specialty as a lawyer: the "putting together of disparate fragments to build a picture." Confounded by Ben's choice to first give shape to the image of cat and vase, Sarah queries, "Don't you think it would be easier if you first put the window in place?" He responds, "But why assume I want to make it easier?" Sarah silently ponders, "Why indeed?" and reaches for a puzzle piece. Thus, sitting side-by-side, "each picking up pieces of the jigsaw and slotting them into place or rejecting them" (42), Sarah and Ben metaphorically dramatize their goal to solve the core mystery of the novel, the disappearance of anti-apartheid activist Steve Sizela shortly after his arrest by apartheid-era police in South Africa.

The jigsaw puzzle is a common metaphor for the detective text, the fragmented clues typically brought to order through the focalizing, revelatory eye of the detective figure. Author of *Crime Fiction* John Scaggs notes that in early twentieth century Britain and America, detective story writers Ronald Cox and S.S. Dine who codified rules for the genre, distilled the detective novel to "a level of abstraction comparable to that of a puzzle, or a game of chess," which invites readers to participate with the detective in finding the solution (36-37). However, that solution and the meaning it produces are not generated by the reader. The answer, the ultimate truth to the mystery of the crime, most often is produced by the detective whose vision the reader merely adopts (Scaggs 38). By contrast, Slovo offers a more complicated metaphor that not only evokes the genre of detective fiction but also marks its disruption: the presence of not one but multiple

and conflicting perspectives on how best to fit the pieces together, how best to make meaning of the parts. Ben's jump to the less central, less significant images of cat and vase, though he acknowledges the approach as potentially more difficult, indicates his faith in attending to the substance of each fragment, that such a journey will eventually lead to productive truths. Sarah's desire to first put the window in place suggests a need for a particular frame, a containing perspective that will give shape and meaning to the emerging truth of those disparate parts.

This metaphor and its evocation of both the methodical structure of and disruption to the traditional codes of the detective narrative aptly set the stage for the critical work of two of the earliest post-apartheid South African crime novels: Slovo's *Red Dust* (2000) and Mike Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* (1998). Each novel exploits the codes of detective fiction to engage with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its complex search for and construction of the truth of apartheid injustices. Slovo and Nicol refuse the genre's systematic chain of causality and epistemological certainty, highlighting instead the ways the apartheid and colonial histories and the TRC's institutionally circumscribed processes limit the recovery of an unmediated truth and the establishment of communal justice and social resolution. *The Ibis Tapestry's* generic engagement with the TRC is the subject of the next chapter. My focus here is Slovo's *Red Dust*, which thematically centers the TRC's goals and processes through its portrayal of a former apartheid-policeman's appeal for amnesty at the TRC hearings. Situating truth as a constantly shifting variable, as both provisional and unreliable, the novel challenges the TRC's consensus driven goal sloganized as "truth, the road to reconciliation." It provokes questions on who has the power to produce truth, under what conditions, and to what effect. Undermining even its detective figure's production of forensic truth, the novel denies readers their typically authoritative guide and a final reassuring closure of undeniable truths to crimes

being publicly revealed and righted. Such epistemological uncertainty and irresolution refuse readers the ease of merely affirming the singular vision of an all knowing detective who establishes ideological meaning of the crimes investigated. Instead, the uncertainty and lack of resolution invite a critical engagement with both the TRC's and the detective genre's vision of truth, justice, and reconciliation, and like the image of Ben and Sarah struggling over their individual sections of Pierre Bonnard's painting *Open Window*, leave the puzzle in play, forever an evocation of dialogue and debate.

Interrogating the Histories of a Criminal State

How does one write early post-apartheid detective fiction without addressing the major crime of the epoch: apartheid itself? To this question first raised in the introduction, Gillian Slovo's response is *Red Dust*. The significance of the novel's engagement with the TRC and the criminal history the Commission uncovers is made clear in a 2002 article entitled "Making History: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission,"

My interest in the TRC is political and also personal. My mother, Ruth First, was assassinated by a parcel bomb sent to her in Mozambique by the South African security forces. My father, Joe Slovo, helped to create the Commission which would permit her assassin to go free. (5)

Both of Gillian Slovo's parents were anti-apartheid activists. Joe Slovo had been the leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and was chief of staff of the armed wing of the African National Congress until 1994, when he became housing minister. Ruth First had been a journalist and member of both the ANC and SACP. In 1963, she was detained in solitary confinement for 117 days under South Africa's notorious 90 Day Act which gave security forces the authority to arrest without charge and interrogate anyone they suspected as acting against the state ("Ruth

Heloise First,” “Ruth First”). The final line of First’s memoir *117 Days*, which details her ordeal, are hauntingly prophetic: “When they left me in my own house at last I was convinced that it was not the end, that they would come again” (144). In 1982, First was killed by a letter bomb sent to her office at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique where she was living in exile and working as a professor (*South African History Online*).

In 1995, two of the men responsible for First’s murder applied for amnesty at the TRC: Craig Williamson, “apartheid superspy,” who headed the Security Branch’s foreign section and who devised the idea of the bomb; and Roger Raven who constructed the bomb. The Amnesty Decision Transcripts reveal that both denied full knowledge that the intended recipient was First. Raven denied knowing who the intended target was and Williamson claimed not knowing if the parcel were addressed to Joe Slovo or Ruth First (“AC/2000/0082, Amnesty Decisions”). In *Coming to Terms: South Africa’s Search for Truth*, Martin Meredith notes that resolving this dispute would have determined whether or not they had “targeted an innocent person” (146). The TRC, while acknowledging “contradictions in the evidence of Williamson and Raven” determined that “the material facts were, however, revealed and the Committee is satisfied that the applicants as far as they could remember the details made a full disclosure of the relevant facts” (“AC/2000/0082, Amnesty Decisions”). Thus, the Amnesty Committee made the controversial decision to grant both men amnesty for their role in killing Ruth First.

Gillian Slovo and her sisters, screenwriter Shawn Slovo and film producer Robyn Slovo were incensed at the miscarriage of justice, as were many in South Africa who felt profoundly disheartened by their own experiences of the TRC granting amnesty to police perpetrators. In the immediate aftermath of the 2000 decision, Journalist Victoria Brittain suggested that the outcome of the case would be seen as a symbol of the ANC’s “failure to look after its own”

(“Outrage”). However, Gillian Slovo draws attention to the fact that the ANC did not have complete control of the TRC and its processes. The Commission was a negotiated, political compromise between the ANC and the former apartheid government, The National Party, which, in fact, had wanted blanket amnesty but settled for individual applications for amnesty (“Making History”). As such, “it was a dynamic uncontrollable process” which, while admirable for its goals of truth recovery and healing, contained “many disturbing paradoxes and contradictions” (Slovo, “Making History”). Marina Warner writes in her review of *Red Dust* that Slovo revealed feeling “deeply divided” about her own experience at the TRC, but “that through the hearings she learned the truth about her mother’s death, ‘not because [the] murderers told the truth – I am convinced they lied throughout – but because the process forced me to understand their mind-set and who they were’” (“Scene Four”). Out of this personal history of the TRC and her mother’s death emerges *Red Dust*: “The seeds of it were born out of my grave-side realisation that if the country would not leave me alone, then I would have to face it” (qtd. in Patten and Woodward). An author of numerous detective fiction novels set in London, Slovo uses the codes of the genre in *Red Dust* to confront the crimes of apartheid that have also shaped her personal history.

Red Dust: Ambivalent Return

At the center of *Red Dust* is a small town TRC hearing of an apartheid-era policeman Dirk Hendriks who is appealing for amnesty for the torture of an imprisoned apartheid resistance fighter, Alex Mpondo. Sarah Barcant, a South African emigrant living and working in New York as a lawyer, is summoned to Smitsrivier, her childhood home, by her mentor Ben Hoffman to help him with his final case representing the victim Alex Mpondo at the hearing.⁶ Ben and his friend James Sizela, a school headmaster whose son Steve disappeared after having been

⁶ For more on the TRC debate over the use of the term “victim” versus “survivor” see the TRC Report, Volume One, “terminology,” p. 57.

captured and imprisoned with his comrade, Alex, have hatched a plan to use Dirk's amnesty hearing to reveal a truth they have long suspected: that Steve was killed in prison by Pieter Muller. Both a friend of Dirk's and a former apartheid policeman, Pieter has not applied for amnesty. The impending TRC hearings cast a pall over Smitsrivier as each character awaits with trepidation the drama about to unfold.

Neither Sarah nor Alex are eager to return to the dusty, rural Smitsrivier, their reluctance tied to their racially conflicted, agonizing pasts that both have determinedly left behind, Sarah through her immersion in metropolitan New York and Alex through his commitment as a Member of Parliament to the newly democratized South Africa. Upon hearing Ben's phone message, stating, "I want you back," Sarah's immediate response is "back?...There is no going back" (3). Her memories of Smitsrivier conjure "a world that had lost all meaning" (2). Her re-entry to Smitsrivier layers a "stunning dislocation" atop a discordant sense of familiarity, the town still dominated by the Dutch Reformed Church with "its jagged white spire thrusting up into the sky...seen from every point in town" (8-9), a prominent symbol of the early settlers and their descendants who had helped shape the racist politics of the town and country. Walking along Main Street, Sarah notes the interweave of church, state, and commerce in the structural layout of Smitsrivier, and thus, implicitly, in the colonial and apartheid history of South Africa: the police station and courthouse near the church, the line of Afrikaner banks along that same main street, "the Eerste Nasionale, the Volkskas, the Boland" (9).

For Sarah, the tension evoked in the unsettling juxtaposition of displacement and the familiar escalates when she experiences a sudden sensation of nostalgic pleasure at the sight and sound of four young black men whose laughter and greetings to each other recall "the liveliness of her mother country. It's good to be back, she thought" (9). Yet she is quickly confronted with the

realization that “this is still South Africa” (10), with its divided race relations shaped by the not-too distant apartheid legal codes that challenge her too easy slide to shared nationhood and that mark the difficulties facing the country’s transition to a reconstructed future:

When one of the men saw her looking, his eyes flicked sideways. It was an almost imperceptible movement which his companions nevertheless instantly understood. Their laughter was abruptly stanchd as was their conversation and they moved together, cutting her out, their expressions mutating from animated to morose, reminding her of such encounters endlessly repeated during her childhood. Fourteen years had gone by since she’d last been witness to any, but the feelings this one evoked came flooding back—that horrible composite of shame and fear.

(10)

In her reading of contemporary white female South African authors’ narratives of “whiteness, guilt, and culpability” (765), Georgina Horrell draws attention to Sarah’s “horrible composite of shame and fear,” noting of the “cross-racial, cross-gender encounter...a scene of metonymic allusion to the state of apartheid: A script written by the restrictive set of racial and sexual roles laid down by the Immorality Act (repealed in 1987)” (770). The young men’s exclusion of Sarah from their community not only positions her, a white woman, as an outsider, but also denies her the romantic vision of a shared “mother country.” The scene simultaneously recalls the danger during apartheid of cross-racial sexual encounters criminalized and policed by the apartheid state. The young males’ performed moroseness reminds Sarah of such encounters repeated in the past. While it is Sarah’s fear that is identified in the scene, South African history reminds readers of the inequitable relations of power amongst the players in such past encounters. Sarah’s gaze directed at the men summons the violent apartheid consequences for African males accused of

transgressing the boundaries of state legitimized sexual behavior. Her classically liberal nostalgic pleasure is troubling since it also animates a yearning for an *apartheid* past.

Slovo's earlier comment on her reluctance to face South Africa and its past that preoccupies her is given further dimension in this scene of Sarah's return to and her first encounter in Smitsrivier. While returning as an outsider, a South African in exile, her locale immediately makes transparent what may have been less visible to her in New York: her whiteness and its attendant political and economic privilege. This first encounter provides subtext to Sarah's later relationship with Alex, whom she will both represent at the TRC and interrogate in her role as lawyer attempting to discover the truth about what had happened to his comrade Steve during his detention. As will be addressed later, the dynamic of their relationship puts into play the epistemic violence of the law encoded in colonial and apartheid history and directs readers to that violence represented but also repeated in the genre of detective fiction.

Red Dust: Decentering the Panoptic Eye

One of detective fictions' narrative conventions summoned but strategically disrupted in *Red Dust* is that of the panoptic detective whose rational, observing perspective epistemologically orients the reader to what is legible, knowable, and who provides systemic order in the resolution of the mystery or crime. Michel Foucault uses the architecture of Bentham's "Panopticon," a circular prison ordered around a central watchtower to illustrate the mechanism of a "disciplinary society" controlled by institutional technologies of observation in schools, hospitals, factories, and prisons (200, 218). Foucault explains the primary effect of the Panopticon from which unseen guards survey inmates inducing in the prisoner "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). Various scholars of detective fiction have drawn parallels between Foucault's Panopticon and the

detective figure. Jon Thompson, who compellingly links the conventions of early detective fiction to the project of imperialism, argues that Edgar Allen Poe's detective stories participate in the "development of a 'disciplinary society,'" creating in the character Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin "a figure whose omniscience is comparable to that of a panopticon" (44). Thompson posits that Poe's detective fiction "articulates a desire for a complete form of knowledge, a desire that ultimately becomes a structural element of the genre" (44). Scaggs and Porter further link the panoptic detective figure to the hardboiled genre. Recalling the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, Dashiell Hammett's inspiration for his fictional detective agency, Scaggs suggests that the Pinkerton's symbol of the open eye and its motto "We Never Sleep" secure "the notion of unceasing surveillance and its relationship with social discipline" (89). Porter notes that the hardboiled genre typically establishes its detective as narrator who is "immediately given a name, shown, shown seeing, and heard narrating what he sees" (91-92). Conventionally, the detective figure enacts a form of social monitoring and control in his or her unceasing observation and processes of interrogation to reveal the truth of a crime and re-establish order.

The closest character to the panoptic detective figure in *Red Dust* is Sarah Barcant. However, her investigative eye is not privileged. As recalled by Ben and Sarah's different approaches to the solving of the jigsaw puzzle, the discussion she has with Ben about the TRC accentuates that in her search for truth she is entering a contested field. Her lawyer's faith in the processes of legal justice—interrogation and evidentiary support at trial, and, if determined guilty, the individual's full punishment under the code of law—is at immediate odds with Ben's belief in and support of the TRC's goals, summed in its familiar slogan, "Truth: the Road to Reconciliation." Addressing Ben, Sarah contends, "Your Truth Commission is a compromise," to which Ben responds, "Your country must be given the chance to heal" (38). Sarah questions

Ben on “whose truth’ will be centered at the Commission hearings, and while acknowledging that truth and law are not neutral, she argues that the law, at least, “provides some standards for inequalities to be judged.” The law attempts to deliver justice, she asserts, while amnesty is a means of “saying that the guilty can go free (38-39, 42). Ben’s response is to accuse Sarah of valuing “law above truth.” He maintains that the law works only when there is evidence and suggests that the weight she gives law is “a prosecutor’s obsession that would lead to the most terrible injustice” (39, 42). Their conflict foregrounds differing ideologies on justice, Sarah aligning with Western systems of evidentiary processes and punitive justice, while Ben aligns with what the South African Interim Constitution named a communal, African system of restorative justice: a “need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* [the African philosophy of humanism] but not for victimization” (qtd. in Krog vi). The novel stages the conflict between and shortcomings of each of these orientations towards “law” and “justice.”

The narrative structure of *Red Dust* further unsettles Sarah’s role as the novel’s panoptic locus by putting into tension her gaze with those of several other focalizers. Written in third person, the text opens with Sarah as focalizer reflecting on her impending return to South Africa to help Ben; yet a short three pages later, Sarah’s central perspective is disrupted when chapter two opens with ex-police officer Pieter Muller silently observing the familiar landscape surrounding his Smitsrivier farm, bitterly anticipating the arrival of “this damned Truth Commission that was heading into town, stirring it all up” (6). Chapter four offers Ben as focalizer, impatiently awaiting the “coming of the Truth Commission—James’s last chance to find his son’s body” (17). The subsequent chapter shifts to the perspective of Dirk Hendricks, an ex-policeman and now prisoner being transported to Smitsrivier where he will face Alex

Mpondo at the Commission and “then it would be almost over” (27). Alex Mpondo’s perspective shapes the following chapter. He reluctantly drives to Smitsrivier angry at being pressured by James Sizela into facing his torturer Dirk at the Commission hearings, wanting only to “be left in peace” (31). Sarah’s perspective is thus but one amongst many in the novel’s narrative development, and counter to playing the role of central detective, she must continually negotiate her quest to discover the truth of Steve’s disappearance amongst the contestatory beliefs and motivations of even those who share her quest.

It’s as if Sarah has left the land of the detective genre, America, in which she could play with ease the panoptic detective charged with unraveling the grand narrative of crime and has now entered a political and social context in which the possibility of such a genre, such a figure, and such a grand narrative is contested. Not only do the first several chapters introduce five different focalizers, but also they collectively represent national divisions of race, gender, history, and political perspective, such that their individual truths cannot be homogenized into a singular grand narrative. Structurally, the novel mirrors the narrative processes of the Truth Commission hearings which allowed space for multiple, contestatory narratives of the apartheid past to be publicly shared. However, while entering into dialogue with the TRC’s processes, the text’s structure also performs a challenge to the TRC’s consensus driven goal of “truth, the road to reconciliation” and to the shape of the final report that some have argued stripped individual narratives of context to shape a unified, collective history of apartheid crime and of individuals’ willingness to reconcile in the new nation.⁷

The characters’ diverging views of the TRC clearly mark it as a site of social and political struggle. Dirk, the ex-policeman seeking amnesty, perceives the Commission as dramatic

⁷ For a sampling of these debates see Robert Wilson p. 34-37 and Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd, Introduction. pp. xiv-xxi.

performance, a stage with actors, and observes silently at the start of the hearing, “showtime” (79). His view of the TRC as theater recalls a common accusation during the hearings: that many amnesty seekers merely *performed* contrition before the TRC. Pieter, his former colleague, disparagingly names the Commission a game of “musical chairs,” a circus in which white policemen like himself and Dirk were “the designated freaks,” where justice is enacted “rainbow nation style,” where “black had become white and white, black” (84, 94). Pieter’s contemptuous rhetoric mirrors that of the apartheid era President Pieter Willem Botha who dismissed the TRC as “a circus” and refused to appear before the Commission, despite being subpoenaed. In the racialized hierarchy of power that was apartheid, Pieter’s belief in a mere reversal of power elides the racist mechanisms of violence in the atrocities of the apartheid regime. Maintaining a fixed racial binary, he fervently believes he is now simply the oppressed. In conversation with Sarah, Alex names the TRC, “South Africa’s very own Band-Aid” (239), suggesting that it is an insufficient and superficial dressing for a deep and complex wound. His discursive allusion to a wounded body both conjures and contests similar rhetoric circulating in the TRC that linked the healing of individual bodies with a metaphoric healing of the national body.⁸ Sarah’s observation of the Commission--“This dance `of the past, this baroque blending of court ceremonial, street party, and revivalist meeting” (84)--renders the TRC as a socially dynamic, interactive space that ritualizes the secular and religious. The description raises the specter of what many critiqued as the TRC’s reliance on a Christian infused discourse in its efforts to produce individual and national reconciliation;⁹ yet Sarah’s description simultaneously puts that narrative into debate with the secular, truth then becomes a reverberating polyphony of voices in dialogue and contention.

⁸ See for example critiques by Richard A. Wilson p. 14 and Fiona Ross p. 12.

⁹ See Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph and Oren Stier. See also Richard A. Wilson pp. xxix.

Red Dust: Destabilizing Truths

While acknowledging the complexity of truth, *The TRC Report* claims that the Commission accessed four kinds of truth during its proceedings: “factual or forensic truth; personal or narrative truth; social or dialogue truth; and healing and restorative truth” (1: 110). Forensic truth is the familiar notion of truth as connected to the legal or scientific process. It includes the factual, corroborated evidence and “objective procedures” the TRC used in the information gathering process. Narrative truth denotes the individual testimonies, the “perceptions, stories, myths and experiences” that both victims and perpetrators shared in relaying their personal truths of the past. Social truth, the third category, refers to the truth that was established through the interaction, discussion and debate during the TRC proceedings. And the final category, perhaps the most problematic, promotes a truth that is based on the purposes it is required to serve: healing and restoration (*Report* 1: 110-114). Rather than offering a definitional truth, this fourth category is functional. It recalls the Commission’s mandate to promote reconciliation through truth-telling.

Red Dust’s engagement with the TRC’s four-fold definition of truth reminds readers that no claim to truth is value free nor disinterested, not even that which the law or, for that matter, much of crime fiction privileges: forensic truth. The characters’ attempts to uncover or narrate the truth about their actions during apartheid in the post-apartheid context of the TRC reveals the ways in which truth is produced through a complex and dynamic weave of power relations. Foucault’s work on the relationship between truth and power is useful here. He claims, “Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it” (“Truth and Power” 133). He argues that each society has its regime of truth, its “‘general politics’ of truth”: within a society, there are

the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements. The means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (“Truth and Power” 131)

Red Dust lays bare the multiple regimes of truths circulating in the micro-society of the TRC, that negotiated, interstitial, and transitioning body that does not, cannot establish a consensus on the truth. The novel compels readers to recognize the personal and political stakes in the characters’ search for or narrations of the truth.

Operating as if she were the panoptic detective, Sarah seeks to establish forensic truth. In her earlier discussion of the TRC with Ben and to his accusation that she values the “law above truth,” Sarah clarifies that she distrusts the TRC’s process that equalizes individuals’ narrative truths: “Whose truth exactly...the torturer's or the freedom fighter's? The policeman's or the terrorist's?” (38). The legal process based on evidentiary facts is the window she would like to first put in place to frame her representation of Alex and her interrogation of Dirk at the TRC to reconstruct the puzzle of Steve’s disappearance. In her eyes, the law provides “standards for inequalities to be judged” (38). She reminds Ben that the reason he sent for her is that he needed her “objective eye” (67). While Sarah acknowledges that “the law is not neutral” and that it “works unevenly” (38), she nevertheless maintains a perception of the law’s standards as impartial and is overly confident in her professional capacity to objectively apply such standards. Yet, in this transitional South African context, the disciplinary mechanisms of the law and its complicity in sustaining a repressive apartheid state reverberate.

When Sarah first meets and questions Alex whom she is supposedly representing, she employs adversarial interrogative techniques that demonstrate her faith in the ability of the judicial process to produce an authoritative truth and her privileging of forensic over narrative truth. Instead of allowing Alex to tell his contextualized version of his anti-apartheid activities and subsequent incarceration, she asks him disjointed questions that require short, immediate answers to produce facts that can be used to demonstrate consistency or contradiction: “Were you an operative in the ANC Army?...Did you bury a box of rocket propelled grenades by the river?” (59), “Did you in fact hide weapons for the ANC...Did Steve Sizela know this?” (60). Sarah’s questions rely on the processes the TRC Report noted as essential to establishing forensic truth on an “individual level”: identifying “what happened to whom, where, when and how, and who was involved?” (1:114). She asks Alex concrete questions to produce facts that can be corroborated by evidence or the testimony of others. For example, in an attempt to discover more about Alex’s last sighting of Steve in jail, she asks, “Was Pieter Muller present?” When Alex nods, “Please, Alex, say the words out loud,” then, “And Dirk Hendricks?...Was he also there?” (62). Most tellingly, Sarah asks specific questions about what Alex was able to see at critical moments of his interrogation and where he was located. She then uses the floor plan of the police station and prison cells to show that his testimony contradicts the floor plan of the cell. Sarah grows increasingly frustrated by what she perceives to be Alex’s deliberate evasion to tell the truth since whenever she leads him “anywhere near the pivotal event, his last sighting of Steve Sizela...then he would seize up on her” (57). At one point, Sarah realizes that she is almost shouting at Alex. When later reprimanded by Ben for her “cross-examination” of Alex, she responds, “I asked him simple, factual questions that he either couldn’t, or wouldn’t, answer”

(66). A crucial concern for Sarah is that without some evidence, Ben's and James' hope of implicating Pieter Muller in the death of Steve is null and void.

While readers of more traditional detective fiction might initially trust Sarah more than Alex or Ben, Slovo's novel also critiques Sarah's forensic approach, undermining the truth she produces, and leaving the reader adrift without an authoritative guide to the truth. Sarah's conclusion that Alex is deliberately skirting the truth regarding his last sighting of Steve will not only be exposed as faulty, but his supposedly incorrect description of the prison's layout on which she bases her conclusion will eventually be revealed as accurate and will be the pivotal clue that leads Alex to find and expose the interrogation and burial site of Steve Sizela. Later in the novel, when Alex has the opportunity to build his own narrative of that night, not circumscribed by Sarah's techniques of forensic fact gathering, he will remember that he and Steve had been moved by Dirk and Pieter to an alternate site of interrogation and torture, an unoccupied farm that does indeed match the layout he gives Sarah during her questioning. From Alex's testimony when he faces Dirk at the hearings, it is clear that under Dirk's and Pieter's watch, he and Steve were severely tortured, that they suffered sleep deprivation, emotional trauma, and extreme physical abuse. When Alex replies to Sarah's questions whether a second prison encounter with Steve occurred hours, days, or weeks later, his litanies of "I can't remember," sound "genuinely sorry" and "genuinely as if he could not remember" (61). "These are hard memories," he tells her (58).

At this point in the novel, while readers can't know if his omissions are intentional or whether the memories he does have are accurate, we can know that Sarah's approach is socially and culturally inappropriate. After the interrogation, Ben reminds her that Alex was tortured, that it should not be a surprise that there are gaps in his memory. He admonishes, "You're not

objective, Sarah, you're a hunter. . . . You think like a prosecutor and you act like one even among friends" (67). He also accuses her of being ethnocentric, of having "forgotten how this world works," that Alex's slower, "less direct," "more oblique" rhetoric is "his people's way" (67). Arguably, Ben's characterization is steeped in his own white South African paternalistic ethnocentrism; however, there is no denying that Sarah has violated a social contract in her disrespectful, antagonistic treatment of Alex, a member of parliament who is voluntarily helping James' and Ben's (and Sarah's) search for Steve Sizela at great personal cost. Her myopic, decontextualized search for forensic truth that denies Alex the space to make narrative shape of his fragmented memories alienates Alex and nearly undermines the entire investigation.

More critically, *Red Dust* alludes to a troubling parallel between Sarah's mechanisms of interrogation with those of Alex's torturer, Dirk Hendriks. Her processes reproduce the coercive techniques sanctioned by the apartheid state, enacting a kind of epistemic violence that forecloses aspects of Alex's narrative and agency. While swimming the day after Sarah's questioning, Alex's thoughts drift to the police station amidst the "rigid order" of the town and to Dirk Hendricks (74). Kicking against the intrusion of Dirk into his consciousness, Alex remembers

shards of a distant dream. . . . A face. A woman's face. Sarah Barcant? The face looming close, too close, asking questions he couldn't, wouldn't answer. A voice calling his name. Two faces. Two hands. Or was it one? One hand laid upon the other. Two faces that seemed like one. Not a woman any longer: two men. Dirk Hendricks. Alex Mpondo. (75)

In Alex's imagination, Sarah folds into Dirk, then, associatively, into Alex, a metaphoric allusion to the layers of discursive and material violence Alex has suffered at the hands of these parties.

Through the dominating confines of Sarah's examination, Alex is forced to relive the original scenes of Hendrick's interrogation and torture, recast not only as victim but as suspect in this act of "truth-telling." Sarah's rhetorical maneuvers cast Alex as a legal subject, interpellated through the codes of law, bound to confess a truth that is strictly circumscribed by that institution. Her discourse recalls the disciplinary power of the panoptic detective and the law, both of which align, as Porter reminds, "with the celebration of the repressive state apparatus or at least of that important element of it formed by the police" (121). Sarah imagines herself as allied with Alex, in her politics and in her opposition to Dirk Hendricks' petition for immunity, yet her gaze poses a threat to him as it did to those four African men on the streets of Smitsrivier. The traces of the power structures of the apartheid state still haunt the landscape and imprison its inhabitants in a repressive past.

For Alex Mpondo, the search for forensic truth and the TRC's invitation to hear narrative truths from both perpetrator and victim threaten his careful reconstruction of his anti-apartheid activities, his brutal experience as a political prisoner, and both his personal and political identity. One's political fate in post-apartheid South Africa depended largely on conveying a compelling narrative about one's resistance to South African apartheid. To this point, Alex has been able to control that narrative, one which portrays him as a hero in the resistance movement. However, there are large gaps in his memory, from which such a narrative could implode: What happened to Steve Sizela? Did he betray his political comrade and friend under the pressure of Dirk Hendricks' interrogation and torture? His faculties and memory impaired by torture, denied access to a full truth of his and Steve's imprisonment, Alex fears that the only one with access to the gaps in his truth is the one he can least trust: his torturer, Dirk Hendricks. Alex "knew all about Hendricks: he was a man empty of conscience and unashamed to find himself putting

forward a series of ritualized lies to a commission that had been set up to hear the truth” (132). Alex tells Sarah, “I don’t want to know anything from him” (137). Dirk has the power to reconstruct Alex’s history, not only as victim, but as betrayer of Steve, which could lead to Alex’s exclusion from the very community for whom he fought and sacrificed.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission defined narrative truth as denoting the individual testimonies, the “perceptions, stories, myths and experiences” that both victims and perpetrators shared in relaying their personal truths of the past” (*Report 1*: 112). However, as Alex and Dirk’s situation in *Red Dust* illustrates, this sharing of personal truths is not on equal footing. Dirk maintains his advantage. He has an unimpaired memory, he has official records, no doubt constructed to reinforce the truth he was trying to author through the means of torture, and he has his skills of manipulation. At the first TRC hearing, Dirk presents a contrite amnesty seeker who bears little resemblance to the torturer of Alex’s memory. He speaks in a soft, dull tone, not the “harsh, boisterous, bullying” voice Alex remembers (125). Referencing his recently disintegrating marriage and his diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, Dirk paints himself as both victim and patriot, a man “taught that the enemy was all around, that we must fight communism and its terrorists” (131). In the public venue of the TRC, Dirk elides racial and emphasizes political motivations. Representing a hegemonic ideology of the apartheid state, Dirk confesses, “What I did to Mr. Mpondo I did in good faith....I believed in what I was taught.” His torture of Alex was done for the “good of South Africa” (231). Dirk’s testimony echoes that of many officers who testified at the TRC who excused their actions with such phrases as “It was my duty....I was doing my job.” Not once in their testimony before the TRC did the officers use the word “murder” in relation to those who died while in police custody. Although they admitted, later in their testimony, that their actions occurred “outside the normal

processes of the law” (qtd. in Meredith 59), they rarely acknowledged any wrong doing. They acted as dutiful officers, legitimized to commit murder by the apartheid state. Prompted by his lawyer at the hearing, Dirk acknowledges, “Ja...In hindsight, it was wrong. I am truly sorry for the hurt I caused...” (132). In disbelief of this “imposter” who now so dutifully performs his remorse and physically sickened by the “self-pity that had sifted through his torturer’s voice, Alex lurches from the courtroom, “spewing out” his breakfast on the ground outside (132-133). Dirk’s narrative suggests that both he and Alex are victims of war, each caught up in the values of their respective side and equally implicated in the violence of the battle, ignoring the dramatic power differential between the oppressive apartheid state and the resistance fighters that led to the unchecked human rights abuses by the SAP and other representatives of the apartheid state.

What Alex fears most in facing Dirk at the hearings and listening to his story of the past is the fact that his torturer has the power to fill the gaps in Alex’s memory, to narrate a truth that layers over any memories he can himself access. Standing outside the courtroom, still gagging, Alex is tormented at the fragments of memory that he hadn’t wanted to return:

The memory was being delivered, not in an ordered, structured form that might have been easier to assimilate, but in jagged splinters. Images—Steve’s pointing, the dirt under Dirk Hendricks’s nails. Sounds—those screams building up, battering his ears, the terror gripping him so tightly that it was all he could do to stand and shout....And Steve’s lifeless body. Always that. Steve’s death: his fault?

Alex’s memories are shattered by the traumatic violence of his torture, now re-invoked by his torturer, the man whose “truth,” Alex fears, will become his own: “I can’t risk Dirk Hendrick’s narrative, his version of history, becoming mine” (228). Dirk’s version suggests he is as much a

victim as those he persecuted, and his control of the narrative threatens to interpellate Alex as the betrayer of Steve and complicit in his death.

Alex attempts to penetrate Dirk's veneer of victimization and sincere penitence, to challenge his control of the narrative. In a game of cat and mouse, Alex asks Dirk a series of questions, but Dirk repeatedly claims he doesn't remember or that he "disremembers" (189).

"Do you remember how you continued to torture me way beyond the first three days?" ...

"I don't remember." ...

"Would you disagree then, if I told you that you continued to torture me every fourth day for twenty-one days?"

Dirk Hendricks' face was blank. "I never made a note of it." (189)

Time after time, Dirk disallows Alex's access to his memories of suffering, foreclosing and invalidating the veracity of Alex's truth, his history.

In the horrific exchange between Alex and Dirk about what is forgotten and remembered, Slovo exposes the danger of narrative truths given equal footing in the TRC hearings. Not until Alex brings up Dirk's torture technique of using a wet bag to suffocate him is he able to evoke the voice of the torturer. "Sarah saw another man breaking free of the prisoner's chrysalis...replaced by some other being that Alex had conjured up, a dangerous being" (191). Alex summons Dirk, the torturer, by recalling that he had finally revealed to Dirk the hidden site of the weapon cache in a desire to "please his torturer" (192). Dirk then remembers in vivid detail memories that are seemingly benign yet distinctly intimate:

"You were hungry. Remember? I stopped and brought you Kentucky Fried Chicken. You said it was the tastiest food you ever had...Remember?" using the

repetition like a whip, flicking it across the stage, lashing Alex with it, forcing him to yield, to bow down lower after each assault. (193)

The narrative truths circulating through Dirk's application for amnesty and through Alex's desire to help uncover what had happened to Steve reconstruct the violence of the past. Dirk's call for Alex to remember detailed intimacies of his past subjection shortly after his series of denials that refuse to affirm Alex's experience of torture is a strategy of power that repeats the material violence Alex suffered, a "repetition like a whip...lashing Alex...forcing him to yield" (193). Alex is again subjected to the torturer's control, the violence resignified in the present.

Slovo lifts the general shape and some of the details of this scene from the TRC testimony of Jeffrey Benzien, a warrant officer and, as TRC documentarian Martin Meredith notes, by Benzien's "own admission,...Cape Town's most successful torturer" (122). In Benzien's confrontation with Tony Yengeni, a Member of Parliament and former *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) commander, and Ashley Forbes, also a former MK member, Benzien similarly withholds and reveals information for his apparent pleasure and repetition of injury. He remembers in great detail the particular foods Forbes enjoyed--"steak" and "Kentucky Fried Chicken"-- the first time Forbes saw snow on the "N1" highway, and his favorite reading material, "Westerns" (qtd. in Meredith 126-128). He similarly refuses Forbes' access to his memories of torture: "I can't remember it correctly, sir, but I will concede I may have said it....I cannot remember it specifically, but I am willing to concede....No Sir. As heinous as it may sound, I used an electric generator on one person. It was on Peter Jacobs, not on you..." (qtd. in Meredith 126). Antjie Krog, present at the hearings in her position as reporter for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, writes that Benzien was able to manipulate his victims into the position of their previous relationship so that Benzien has the power and they the

vulnerability (95). *Red Dust*'s use of the TRC testimonies in characterizing Dirk's and Alex's exchange illustrates the TRC's limitations in trying to effect a full disclosure of the past and to foster individual and national reconciliation.

Dirk's testimony marked by denials, lies, partial disclosures, and repetitions of violence not only recasts Alex as victim but threatens to shatter his professional and political identity as parliamentarian and as a hero in the struggle against apartheid. When Dirk tells Alex that he had revealed "where the weaponry was stored. Just like I knew you would," Alex thinks, "There. Finally. It was out in the open. His betrayal" (192). Though not spoken, questions reverberate in the public space of Dirk's amnesty hearing: Having given up the location of the weapons, had Alex also given up Steve? Had he betrayed his comrade? Was he responsible for Steve's death? Had he betrayed the community? Was he not the heroic defender of his people's struggle for democracy, a narrative that had propelled his political career? He is intensely aware that his home community is witnessing his "disgrace" at the hearing:

He can feel the way the audience absorbed the information. The collective was united: Like a wounded animal it gave up a soft burrowing hum that hovered above the hall until very gradually it died away. Nothing now—only the silence—as the crowd let sink in what Alex, their hero, had done. (192)

In *Politics of Atrocity*, Michael Humphry argues that in truth commissions, the victims participate in a process that discursively re-enacts their violent victimization and in the marking of themselves as such "excludes them from the very communities that are brought forth in their own sacrifice" (126). In the silence of the witnesses, Alex feels his exclusion from the community. Agonizingly, Dirk "had turned Alex white. Bleached white, lily white. White with fear....He was no longer black" (239). In *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, Mark

Sanders addresses the “terrifying contamination” of opposition that “takes the form of a demarcation *from* something....[It] cannot be untouched by that to which it opposes itself” (9). As he had feared he would be, Alex is forced to structure his condition of being on the grounds that Dirk and the politics of apartheid have laid, implicated in and contaminated by its violence.

Red Dust thus problematizes the third category of truth claimed by the TRC, a recovery of social truth. The latter refers to the truth that was established through the “interaction, discussion, and debate” during the TRC proceedings (*Report 1*: 113). It is also a truth established through the public’s witnessing of the hearings and the subsequent dialogue, on an individual, national, and international stage. It is a relevant truth achieved through negotiation and approximation. And as Dirk and Alex demonstrate, it is a truth problematized through contradiction, elision, suspicion, and lies. In the proceedings in which he finds himself, Alex is asked to offer up his narrative truth, knowing that it will eventually be overshadowed by a negotiated, dialogic truth in which his and Dirk’s narratives, the tortured and the torturer, might well be given equal weight. *Red Dust* evokes questions on whose past and through what relations of power are truths being recovered, remembered, and memorialized. Finally, it prompts questions on what hopes remain for truth effecting reconciliation, what hopes remain for restorative justice.

Red Dust’s final scenes dramatize challenges to the final truth the TRC claimed to access, restorative truth, a functional truth based on the effect it purported to achieve: healing and restoration. This final truth aimed to promote reconciliation between individuals and within the national body. In its section on restorative truth, the report claims that the “Commission was required to help establish a truth that would contribute to the reparation of the damage inflicted in the past” and to forge a future in which such damage could not reoccur (1:114). Integral to that

process, notes the report, is the role of acknowledgement. Not only would the truths of the past be disclosed but they would be fully and publicly acknowledged: “Acknowledgement is an affirmation that a person’s pain is real and worthy of attention. It is thus central to the restoration of the dignity of victims” (1:114). However, if one premises a person’s restoration of dignity on the perpetrators’ public acknowledgment of their human rights abuses, what opportunity is there for reconciliation in a context in which perpetrators, from security force members to apartheid leaders, refuse the act of acknowledgement, refuse to testify, refuse to remember, or deny any wrong doing? What opportunity can there be for any one individual to become whole, never mind a nation? The generals and politicians who had once run the security establishment not only denied responsibility for the past apartheid abuses, but they also claimed complete ignorance of the security force members’ criminal acts. In TRC hearings they reject their foot soldiers’ claims to duty and to apartheid truths, suggesting these are nothing but lies. General Magnus Malan, former army commander, asserts, “The killing of political opponents of the government never formed part of the brief of the SADF [South African Defense Force]....About assassinations, we never discussed things like that....I would never have approved elimination of individuals” (qtd. in Meredith 168). Adrian Vlok, police minister from 1986 to 1991, a period of extreme and excessive police violence claims, “I personally never knew about the crimes that are now coming to light. I would never have tolerated such things, and I would have acted drastically against them” (qtd. in Meredith 175). The denials climbed up the chain of command, resting finally with F.W. de Klerk, the former president who had received, along with Nelson Mandela, the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in overturning the government of apartheid.

The perpetrators refusals to fully disclose or acknowledge their roles and criminal acts in the apartheid regime directly contested the TRC’s attempt to uncover the truth and promote

reconciliation. Their refusals denigrated the victims' sense of worth and their magnanimous acts of forgiveness. In fact, in the context of perpetrators' false acts of contrition and lack of remorse, victims and analysts alike have suggested that the TRC's precedent of forgiveness as a means to reconciliation and healing may have done more harm than good.

Even when the truth was acknowledged, some victims' families voiced their need for the perpetrators to be held accountable for their crimes. They wanted justice. "Sorry is not enough. I want to see them punished for what they did to my family" (qtd. in "Survivors" 5). Slovo, herself, admitted that it infuriated her to see the men who had murdered her mother be given amnesty when they clearly had not told the complete truth (Warner 14). Steve Biko's family filed legal suit to reject the TRC's amnesty policy and when that failed, opposed amnesty for the men responsible for Biko's death. "Warrant officer Beneke, Warrant Officer Marx, Sergeant Niewoudt, Major Snyman and Captain Siebert," in line with the claims of the 1977 inquest into Biko's death, continued to insist that "Biko was injured in a 'scuffle,' provoked by his 'sitting down without permission during an interrogations session'" (Biko 194-195). In "Amnesty and Denial," Biko's son, Nkosinathi Biko registers his family's and others' desire for retributive, court-sanctioned justice:

We noted that some South Africans were content with the granting of amnesty to those who maimed or killed their family members, but we also knew there were a significant number who were adamant that they would like to have their day in court in order to confront the perpetrators of evil deeds. (194)

The Biko family claimed that the right of "progressive constitutions worldwide" granted "the right to seek recourse in a court of law if and when a citizen is wronged" (194). When their suit against the amnesty clause was denied, they opposed the police officers' requests for amnesty,

noting not only the officer's lack of transparency in their adherence to the old "scuffle" theory in which no individual "admitted to engaging in a manner that resulted in his [Biko's] death," but also the inconsistency of this theory with a "political motive," a condition the TRC set for the receipt of amnesty (195). The Biko case is relevant also to *Red Dust's* interrogation of apartheid violence and of the TRC's form of justice as the character and conditions of Steve Sizela's disappearance and death evokes the disappearance and death of Steve Biko, the father of Black Consciousness.

Red Dust explores the limits of the TRC's power to effect restorative justice through James Sizela's confrontation of Pieter Muller once the truth of the latter's role in the death of Steve is made public. At the end of the novel, in a surprising about face, Dirk reveals to Sarah and Ben that "if [Steve Sizela] did die in custody...someone would have buried him." He continues, "Try the field, nearest to the farm, directly behind the barn" (259). Not only did "someone" bury Steve—that someone being Dirk, whose dirt embedded fingernails haunt Alex's memory (133)—but he also did so with evidence that implicates Pieter in Steve's death. Discovered with Steve's body is a sheet from the police "detention book...wrapped in plastic to preserve it" that identifies Pieter as Steve's interrogating officer and, ultimately, his murderer (270). While *Red Dust* thus provides a definitive truth regarding what happened to Steve, the question of justice is problematized. Pieter evades the Sizela family's civil suit by applying to the TRC for amnesty. However, when James follows Pieter out of the courthouse, we are told, "But the hearing is for neither man" (288). Instead, Pieter suggests that James come and visit him on his farm. When he does, Pieter places a gun on the desk between them, inviting James to pick it up and feel it in his hand. He offers to tell James about his son, but James says he will wait to hear the truth at the hearing, to which Pieter replies: "But we both know, don't we, Mr. Sizela,

that the last thing spoken at the Truth Commission is the truth” (289). Pieter then reveals his plan. He will tell the Commission that Steve was a coward, a not terribly bright whiner, who blamed his father’s intransigence, “the father who preached but would not listen,” for his getting involved with the movement, for being arrested, and tortured (301). When he tells James that he will tell this to the Commission in front of James and Steve’s mother, James finally picks up the gun and shoots Pieter through the heart.

This act of vigilantism provides, perhaps, some sense of justice to the reader, but we learn that Pieter had goaded James Sizela into shooting him for selfish and even malicious reasons. Pieter’s wife Marie Muller explains to Alex who witnessed only the sound of the gun exploding: “He [Pieter] was thinking that if he was going to die as he had to, he was also going to take revenge. He wanted to take James Sizela down with him and at the same time make sure I was provided for” (312). James’ killing of Pieter would have provided for his wife, Marie, because if Pieter had killed himself, then his life insurance benefit would have been voided. However, after picking up the gun and destroying fingerprint evidence, Marie later informs the police that her husband had shot himself.

While Marie thus negates her husband’s revenge and seems to undo some of the damage he had planned for James, specifically, a murder charge, she also denies James the social acknowledgement of his narrative truth. James has lived his life by a strong moral code, has refused any militant means of resistance, and has instead dedicated himself to “producing law-abiding, productive adults,” the leaders of a future South Africa (180). In an earlier conversation with Sarah, he claims “I am no savage. Nor am I a vigilante: I have no desire to ‘get’ Pieter Muller. As far as I am concerned, what he chooses to do is between him and his conscience. All I want is to find my son’s bones so that I may finally lay Steve to rest” (181). Yet, manipulated by

Pieter, James does pick up Muller's gun and shoots the killer of his son. He does act in retribution. Prepared to confess to this act that fundamentally contradicts his values, his moral code, he is foreclosed through Marie's denial of his truth, her branding of him as a liar. Alex, who has been similarly denied by Dirk the right to claim his own history and identity recognizes the violence of both Pieter's manipulation and Marie's subsequent narration that has only pulled the loop of subjugation tighter:

First Pieter Muller, by involving James in his final act, had taken the choice out of James's hand, and then his wife had gone further. She'd stood by and watched without interrupting, as James had twisted in the agony of what Pieter had told him and then she had taken up the gun, and stopped James from being James, from telling the truth. She had kept James as her sort had always tried to keep him: securely in his place. (313)

As she informs Alex, Marie's intervention was not on behalf of James, but of her husband:

“Sizela means nothing to me. What I did, I did for Pieter. For his memory” (312). Marie claims that her husband's goading of James, his plan to have James kill him (he will not face a truth commission) and then to take James down for the crime of his death are acts outside the norms of her husband's morality: “I couldn't let that Pieter win....You never knew what a good man he was....The lie I told was in memory of that good man. The man Pieter had been” (312). Her protection of her husband's reputation as a “good man” reveals the ways in which most white South African women, many of whom were circumscribed by white patriarchy and therefore not marked as active agents of apartheid injustices, were complicit participants in the exercise of white power and in legitimizing and maintaining the structures of apartheid. Alex notes that in the final analysis, Marie's lie and its motivations expose the mechanics of “a war of races, a war

of supremacy that had led them all to this place” (313). *Red Dust* thus challenges the TRC’s rhetoric of arbitrating a forgiving, national reconciliation in the ostensibly new South Africa. Even if readers believe that this is the best ending for James Sizela who will not be prosecuted for the death of Pieter Muller, it cannot be said to constitute restorative truth and national healing.

Ironically, *Red Dust*’s treatment of the Truth Commission ends with two parallel lies: Marie’s lie to the police that denies the truth that James Sizela shot her husband and Sarah’s lie to Alex that Dirk admitted that Steve Sizela was already dead when Alex betrayed him. While differing in intent, certainly not malicious, Sarah’s lie is still dangerously in line with Marie’s lie since it too effects the control of an African male’s narrative and denies him ownership of his identity and dignity. Sarah reveals that her lie is intended to relieve Alex’s torment in believing his betrayal of Steve resulted in his death: “she thought that this reassuring of Alex was much more important than the truth could ever be” (333). However, her decision repeats what Steve Biko identified as a classically white liberal act of knowing “what was good for the blacks and [telling] them so” (20). While her intent is to protect Alex, she is nonetheless complicit in a white patronizing discourse and in Marie’s and Dirk’s apartheid politics of control. We are reminded of the early scene in *Red Dust* when Sarah’s face folds into Dirk’s in Alex’s imagination or, perhaps, the scene of Sarah’s gaze nostalgically directed at the young black men, her idealistic yearning for a moment of white/black integration premised on a ground of equality that never was.

The threat of white lies resonates in the rhetoric of Dirk’s internal ruminations on his lie to Sarah that Alex’s betrayal had indeed led to Steve’s death:

The only consolation for this whole calamity is the look that had passed over Sarah Barcant's face when Dirk had planted the seeds of his lie in her. What a fool she was. To have asked him, of all people, when exactly Sizela had died! What had she expected –that he would tell the truth? The truth that Mpondo only broke after Sizela's death. That Pieter was just clumsy. That it was an accident? How could Dirk have said any of that? Of course he couldn't. Not if he cared about Pieter. (335)

The reader then realizes that while Sarah believes she is lying to Alex, she has inadvertently told him the truth, the truth he had hoped for but was skeptical of receiving at the TRC hearings. Yet consider the way that the lie is introduced: "Dirk had planted the seed of his lie in her." Aside from the not so subtle metaphorical suggestion of rape, the lie is imagined as a living being that will grow and evolve—when she passes it on to Alex. Indeed, in the next section, we see Dirk's lie alive and growing when we are given Alex's final thoughts as he heads home. "She'd been trying to let him off the hook. He appreciated the effort and he liked her the more for her sudden naiveté: that she could think that, by a simple lie, she could so easily let him off the hook!...The fact that she'd assumed Alex would believe what she'd told him, showed just how long she'd been away" (336). Alex knows Sarah is lying because "he knew Dirk Hendricks, perhaps as well, better than he knew or would know any other human being," and he knows that "even if the sequence of events was exactly as Sarah described them, if Steve had died before Alex named him, Hendricks would never admit to it. No matter the truth of what happened, Hendricks would have lied, most certainly said anything, to keep Alex on the hook" (337). While neither Sarah nor Alex learns the truth of the chronology of Steve's death revealed to the reader, Alex is indeed correct in his assessment of Dirk. He has more insight to the motivations and behavior of the

criminal than does the detective figure, Sarah. Yet he is denied the satisfaction and the relief of hearing that truth acknowledged either privately or publicly. By ending *Red Dust* with Dirk's, Sarah's, and Marie Muller's lies, Slovo leaves the reader with a final illustration of the significant limitations the TRC faced in producing truths, whether forensic, personal or narrative, social or dialogic, but especially restorative or healing truth, and she leaves the reader questioning, what justice is there in revealing to readers but not to characters the truth of Alex's absolution?

In conclusion, *Red Dust* is a detective novel that challenges the genre's claim to unearth the truth just as it challenges the TRC's claim to produce truth. The novel not only denies the detective figure, Sarah, the final truth for which she has searched but also implicates her interrogative processes and will to know in the violence of the apartheid agents who extract "truth" through torture. One could suggest that *Red Dust* thus demonstrates that the typical generic conventions that participate in the will to know can be similarly destructive by fixing particular and narrow perceptions about crime that often serve hegemonic visions of justice and social discipline. The novel also profoundly troubles the four truths structuring the processes of the TRC, inviting readers to critique the liminal, negotiated institution's ability to produce full truths in the contested field of South Africa's transition to a democratic new order. By ending the novel with truths denied and Dirk's and Marie's lies acknowledged and as part of the public discourse, Slovo questions the degree to which the TRC was able to enact justice. In the end, *Red Dust* takes a moral stance on the point of justice. While her characters are left without the truth, she informs readers. While Dirk will receive amnesty from the Commission, Slovo will ensure readers know he is culpable and will hold him and implicitly many perpetrators at the TRC accountable for the human rights crimes they committed in the name of apartheid.

Red Dust is not a radically postmodern detective novel, which we will see exemplified in the next chapter with *The Ibis Tapestry* and the latter's interrogation of the TRC's production of truth. In the shift from this to the next chapter, I find particularly pertinent the question and comments from Janet Cherry in "Historical Truth: Something to Fight For." She asks whether or not the TRC has established the truth, "at least...a version that may be accepted by most people." She remarks that her fear is

that in the attempt to establish a consensus on 'the truth,' many of the complexities and nuances of the truth are lost. It seems that we have to acknowledge that the truth that the TRC has uncovered is, at best, only a partial truth...It may be more valuable to see historical truth as a continually unfolding process—not something that is past but something that is still part of the present, still contested and still under construction. (143)

Red Dust critiques such partial and conflicted truths and dangerous yet publicly acknowledged lies masquerading as truths at the TRC, which constrain the establishment of communal justice. *The Ibis Tapestry*, more deliberately meta-detective fiction, emphasizes the construction of epistemic and historical truths in which the past and present are mutually productive.

CHAPTER 2

DETECTING SILENCES: *THE IBIS TAPESTRY*'S INTERROGATION OF THE NARRATIVE LIMITS OF THE TRC

The narrator of *The Ibis Tapestry*, Robert Poley, a self-proclaimed author of airport thrillers attempts to reconstruct the life and death of Christo Mercer, an illegal arms dealer connected to the apartheid regime, after receiving a succession of documents from a never identified, mysterious source he calls “Deep Throat II” (97). These documents include Mercer’s laptop with the file “tamburlaine.txt; a hard disc with an essay by Mercer on “The Nature of Political Power in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great*, a file named “thevirgins.txt,” and a string of cryptic email messages; two notebooks containing more than four thousand dreams recorded by Mercer from 1975 to 1994; a newspaper clipping reporting Mercer’s stabbing death in Malitia; and a file with Mercer’s biographical information. Immersed in this labyrinth of texts, Poley seeks the guidance of Professor Richard Khafulo, a returned exile and scholar of Elizabethan literature, who offers yet another intertextual layer through his interpretive comments on the various documents and on the links between Christopher Marlowe and Christo Mercer, respective authors of *Tamburlaine the Great* and “tamburlaine.txt.”¹⁰

Although the plot of *The Ibis Tapestry* is textually layered and maze-like in structure, the novel is divided into four concrete sections: reconstruction, development, truth, and reconciliation. The sections explicitly recall both the processes of the TRC, very much part of the political debate at the time Mike Nicol was writing the novel in the late 1990s, and detective

¹⁰ While this chapter will make references to and comment on the Marlowe/Mercer links and the ways in which Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* informs the mystery Poley investigates, it will not provide a sustained focus on the particulars of this intertextual pairing, certainly a subject worth further consideration and addressed to some extent in in “The Secularization of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Mike Nicol’s *The Ibis Tapestry*” by Michael Titlestad and Mike Kissak.

fiction's formulaic sequencing: the detective's reconstruction of a past event that resulted in a disruption of social order—a death or crime, the development of the investigation through the detective's collection of data and series of interrogations, the detective's revelatory unmasking of the truth of the crime, and finally the use of that truth to resolve the disruption and restore social order.¹¹ Published in 1998, the same year as the TRC's final report and written before the TRC hearings had officially started, *The Ibis Tapestry* does not explicitly focus on the TRC itself, as does *Red Dust*. However, Nicol has stated that this novel is very much about the TRC's project of recovering obscured aspects of the history of apartheid, such as the human rights violations perpetrated: "It's about The Truth and Reconciliation Commission....The whole debate, the whole issue that preceded the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had begun to take hold and I just used that as a structure for the book" ("Interviews with South African Writers"). Nicol addresses the TRC and its processes of truth recovery implicitly through the narrative of a writer's search for the motive and true circumstances of the death of Mercer who was killed in Malitia, a fictional North African town to which he had often travelled to trade arms.

The palimpsest nature of *The Ibis Tapestry* draws attention to epistemic truth as a construct, a discursive entity in which the quest to know is contained within yet more webs of text. In *Crime Fiction*, John Scaggs, notes that such labyrinthine or multiply framed texts are integral to both historical crime and postmodern anti-detective fictions, which attempt to address history or knowledge as constructs (131, 139). These historical crime fiction narratives draw attention to the historian's and detective's task as interpretive, to the fact that "no 'telling' or 'repetition' of history is pure fact, free of individual perception, interpretation or selection" (Scaggs 123). Brenda Marshall, author of *Teaching the Postmodern*, observes that such fictions illustrate that "we no longer are able to think about absolute and unquestionable 'facts' or 'truths'"

¹¹ See Dennis Porter pp. 87-88 who details such sequencing in the genre.

of history, speaking now of ‘histories’ instead of History” (qtd. in Scaggs 139). Anti-detective fiction, sometimes termed metaphysical detective fiction, similarly disrupts chains of certainty, and in line with postmodern critiques of “mimetic representation,” destabilizes the grounds of reason itself (Scaggs 139). Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, editors of *Detecting Texts: The Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*, characterize metaphysical detective fiction as featuring “the defeated sleuth,” “the world, city, or text as labyrinth,” “the purloined letter, embedded text,” “*mise en abyme*,” “the missing person [and] double,” and the “self-defeating nature of any kind of closure to the investigation” (8). Having noted that *The Ibis Tapestry* is also an “examination that attempts to address history or to interrogate history...but in a more contemporary setting” (“Interview with South African Writers”), Nicol puts many of these anti-detective fiction elements into play in *The Ibis Tapestry*, marking the text as a transitional dialogue between the past and the present as embedded in discourse. His fictional weaving evokes the *TRC Report* as tapestry, directing our gaze at historiography as much as history, at what Salma, one of his characters remarks when beginning her story, the question of “[h]ow to tell” (my emphasis, 50).

The Ibis Tapestry’s engagement with the TRC’s project of narrating the historical truths of apartheid human rights abuses suggests that the mechanics of the TRC’s production, its gendered, temporal, and geographical limitations, produce a contained history measured by silences. The novel’s labyrinthine structure and lack of resolution make an implicit argument about historical truth being a mediated, open-ended social construction, representing the interests of the present as much as the experiences of the past, as one would expect of a postmodern, anti-detective novel. However, *The Ibis Tapestry* also speaks back to the TRC’s silences and containments. Through the embedded memoir of Salma, the novel directs attention to the

gendered frame of the TRC's mandate which shaped the condition of women's speaking at the hearings and which foreclosed experiences of African women's suffering under apartheid. Through the recognition that apartheid grew out of a continuum of European colonialism and an Afrikaner narrative of victimization following the Boer wars with the British, the novel challenges the temporal bounding of the history of apartheid, usually marked as beginning in 1948, and certainly the TRC's limitation of choosing the year of the Sharpeville shootings, 1960, to begin its investigation of apartheid abuses. Finally, through Poley's investigation of Mercer's arms dealing activities in northern Africa, the novel interrogates the TRC's inadequate investigation of private businesses' complicity in South Africa's illegal arms trade and the exportation of apartheid crime and violence beyond its geographical borders, a limitation evident in the TRC's goal of effecting *national* healing. Thus the novel does more than emphasize the limitations of historical discourse and of the possibility of realizing the TRC's goal of national healing built on that discourse; it interrogates and deepens the truths about apartheid crimes not fully recovered in the TRC hearings nor in its *Report*.

“Reconstruction”: The Decentering of the Panoptic Detective

As with Sarah Barcant in *Red Dust*, Nicol's narrator and sleuth, Robert Poley, performs the role of the panoptic detective, only to have that role undermined. He self-referentially adopts the guise of the formulaic rational detective of classic crime fiction, the sleuth who methodically collects, selects, catalogs, and analyzes an accumulation of data to establish the full truth around a crime. After receiving in the mail over a period of three weeks Mercer's laptop computer and the various disks and documents and acknowledging their triggering of his curiosity—"I'm constantly in search of plots and intrigue"—Poley sets out to gather evidence that will help him begin "the process of reimagining a life" (6). He visits Mercer's house held open for sale in

suburban Waterkloof, a neighborhood of “large houses set in large grounds,” “of swimming pools and tennis courts,” and “lawns, gardeners, beds of rhododendrons,” where people drive instead of walk (7). It is a neighborhood appropriate for the likes of Christo Mercer, director of International Ventures, Poley decides. He wanders among “the Sanderson floral sofas [Mercer] sat on when he entertained,” he “smells the richness of the sherry [Mercer] kept in crystal decanters,” sits in chairs Mercer sat in to watch television or to eat dinner, stands at his bed and smells his pillows for a “trace of his scent,” pockets a photograph of Mercer he finds wedged in a mirror, and examines the books in his study (7-9). Then the following Sunday he returns to Mercer’s home to gather more details he hadn’t noticed before. Poley observes of his process, “to reconstruct: that is the researcher’s task. To find the life among the scattered details and piece together some motive for why something happened” (12). Through the figures of Edgar Allen Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, readers are readily familiar with the processes of the methodical detective who, as Porter observes, produces order: organizing disparate pieces into pattern, forming “meaning where none had previously appeared” (225). Poley’s narration relentlessly draws attention to his systematic processes of selecting and investigating.

Poley’s reflexive narration underscores that he is indeed *making* meaning, creatively imagining, fictionalizing and filling in gaps as he pieces together the facts that will lead to the truth of Mercer’s character, and ultimately to why someone had murdered him. Immediately after establishing the “researcher’s task” as one of reconstructing from details, he adds, “also to imagine, to make the leap from a fact to the emotion it elicited. Which is hardly scientific, but what is these days?” (12). He then begins to imagine Mercer sitting in his study, looking over the gardens of his neighborhood, “the taste of onions . . . still in his mouth, raising a memory he

[Mercer] thought he'd long forgotten. Or rather, a memory he'd learnt not to remember" (12). These reflections are not Mercer's but Poley's fictional construction based on a small detail he has previously found in Mercer's dream books regarding the haunting taste of onions. Moving abruptly between fact and fiction, Poley claims that he starts from "facts, reality, what is known," and when he confronts a gap, he "jumps." While he insists, "I'm not making anything up. I'm reporting" (12), he simultaneously reveals that his reporting of facts, his truth-telling, is deeply imbricated in fictionalizing: "I am the writer, the reconstructor, and the developer. I choose what to include and what to leave out. What follows could have been left out, and I'm including it only in the interests of integrity and truthfulness" (80). And again the entangled processes of presenting truth and fiction appear in his frustrated response to the unyielding mystery of Mercer: "To get back to Christo Mercer. To the mind of Christo Mercer. The truth is, I don't know what was going on in his mind. I can only recount, put disparate facts together, reinvent, describe, collect evidence, reimagine, present" (23). The "Reconstruction" section of *The Ibis Tapestry* is analogous to the preliminary or initial steps of an investigation: Poley identifies the crime and the victim, reviews and further gathers evidence from Mercer's home and the dream books and files on the computer he's received in the mail, consults a scholar for insight on the texts, and imagines a few scenarios that would explain the crime. His investigative process leads readers to focus on the fragments, the details he selects, believing that he will eventually bring them to order. Yet, his simultaneous undermining of that march to order, his confessions of imagining and reinventing, the appeal of "plots and intrigues," his "leap" to narrative, all blur the boundary between fact and fiction and destabilize the readers' confidence in their panoptic guide.

The way in which *The Ibis Tapestry* foregrounds its constructedness marks it as what Roland Barthes has termed a writerly text. According to Barthes a "readerly" text is one that

comforts readers with the impression that meaning is “predetermined and already made” (Scaggs 74), of which the reader is nothing more than a passive consumer. With a writerly text, according to Barthes’ counter vision, readers become producers of the text, as they are constantly forced to “rewrite and revise” the text’s meaning (Scaggs 74). The fragmented nature of Poley’s narrative is established at the outset of the novel, which marks the narrative’s first of countless interruptions and digressions: “This—once I’d shut out predatory professors, banshees, lawyers, -besotted itinerants—is how I imagine it: when Christo Mercer dreams of the death of the four girls for the second time, he is filled with an apprehension bordering on obsession” (3). Three pages later, Nicol ends Poley’s reverie with another interruption, when Poley yells at his wife (the apparent banshee). “Go away, Justine, you bitch. I’m not opening the door. I’m trying to write a serious book, for Christ’s sake” (5). These interruptions shake readers’ faith in Poley as the investigative guide to solving this mystery. We are left with significant doubts about whether Poley could ever be the writer of a serious book, try as he might. His tone better fits the author of airport political thrillers. By emphasizing truth as a construct locked in a web of texts and subverting the credibility of the narrator/panoptic detective figure, Nicol’s anti-detective novel consistently challenges readers to reformulate meaning as the narrator suggests or retracts his scattered collections of truths and fictions.

In the shadow of Poley’s reconstruction of the past that resulted in the death of Mercer and the genre’s ritual of re-establishing social order lie the TRC’s reconstruction of the apartheid past and the Commission’s work of collecting and laying before the country the apartheid crimes in order to build a new social order. Published the same year as Nicol’s *The Ibis Tapestry*, the report records the intricacy of its own textual weave, acknowledging the difficulty of portraying

the “detail and complexity” of its collection, documentation, and interpretation of the plethora of data it recovered and generated:

The transcripts of the hearings, individual statements, a mountain of press clippings and video material are all part of an invaluable record which the Commission handed over to the National Archives for public access. This record will form a part of the national memory for generations yet to come. In this report, the Commission has tried, through a range of detailed ‘window cases’ and selections from the testimonies of many victims, to capture some part of the richness of the individual accounts heard before it. (1:113).

The TRC’s truth recovery processes have been lauded by many as a “huge achievement” that broke through the “barriers of silence” on particular and structural crimes of the apartheid past and that “democratized” for victims a means of confronting that past (Meredith xi and 11). However, others also draw attention to the TRC’s technologies of production that limited and shaped the truths it recovered to affect a nationalizing narrative of reconciliation. Richard Wilson, for example, argues that in reaching for a comprehensive narrative that would contribute to national healing, to the “overriding nation-building objectives of post-apartheid regimes,” the *TRC Report* dissected, stripped and decontextualized individuals’ narratives, resulting ultimately in an incomplete and insufficiently historicized narrative (34). *The Ibis Tapestry*’s foregrounding of the text as a space that constructs rather than merely contains truths directs our attention to the TRC as such a space, to the technologies of production that shape its narrative. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us that grand narratives which work to tell “how social justice is to be achieved” have a goal in mind. We are compelled to recognize that “when a narrative is constructed, something is left out. When an end is defined, other ends are rejected.” She cautions

that rather than having narratives established as “solutions for the future,” we need to consider what constraints are in place, what has not been included, and whether one can know what has been excluded (*The Post-Colonial* 19). Nicol’s subsequent segment of *The Ibis Tapestry* provokes just such questions as Poley continues his investigation of the cause of and motive for Mercer’s death.

“Development”: A Tapestry of Texts

In the second section, entitled “Development,” Nicol’s narrator provides readers with a single narrative, the testimony of Salma, one of four virgins about whom Mercer obsessively writes in his dream books, “dreams not only of his death but of the deaths of others...often simply visions of horror” that he began in 1975 (4), the year he was first conscripted to South Africa’s war with Angola on the border of northern Namibia (102). Mercer’s recording of his dream of the four virgins of Djano, a town in his vast Saharan arms-trading territory, parallels that of the four virgins killed on the orders of Tamburlaine in Christopher Marlowe’s play *The Great Tamburlaine*. Poley notes that Mercer gave the girls names he had found in a “file of foreign newspaper clippings about the wars in his territory” and ignoring the “real lives of Farida, Dirie, Gali, Salma[,]...he fictionalized them” (34). In a shift from Marlowe’s play in which all four virgins die, Salma survives her assault commanded by warlord Ibn el-Tamaru, one of Mercer’s arms-buying clients, and is nursed to health and adopted by el-Tamaru’s wife, Sarra. Poley describes the single file he finds on the laptop he receives in the mail, “tamburlaine.txt,” as an “autobiography...or at least a story narrated in the first person by one Salma who explains her relationship with a type of ‘wretched Zenocrate’ here named Sarra” (46). In the most emotionally compelling and coherent passage of writing in the novel, Salma recounts her survival of, recovery from, and revenge for being shot and permanently maimed.

Poley's treatment and examination of this narrative provides the reader with a microcosm of the investigative processes he might employ in trying to evaluate the multiple texts he has received and which have posed to him the mystery regarding the fate of Christo Mercer. Poley will consider the origins of the text that contains Salma's narrative or memoir, the *tamburlaine.txt*. He will have it interpreted by a textual expert, Professor Khafulo, the formerly exiled Elizabethan scholar now employed at the University of Cape Town. He will then follow traces of the text back to source and related texts, to *thevirgins.txt*, to Christo Mercer's journal of dreams, which include several entries on the four virgins of Djano, and then to Christopher Marlowe's *The Great Tamburlaine*, which is, if not the original source for the narrative, then one with remarkable resemblance.¹² Finally, in the "Development" section, Poley will examine specific terms, facts, and related minutia of these texts through a series of endnotes. The process is not unlike the critical methodology that a literary scholar might employ to interrogate the meaning, inspirations, discourse, and source material of a literary text, such as Marlowe's drama. Nicol plays here on what Porter notes are the significantly similar methods of the detective and scholar-researcher: one who "takes the fragments and finds the hidden pattern," who "establishes relationships where none had previously appeared. [The detective's] implied motto, 'Give me your clues and I will build you a theory'" (225). However, the result of this section is a developing skepticism in the reader that Poley's investigation could reliably answer the questions Poley constructed in the first sections of the novel: Who killed Christo Mercer and why?

Nicol initially denies the reader the pleasure of absorption into Salma's narrative. He begins by having Poley explain, "I have come to regard this story as the last dream of Christo

¹² In the third section, "Truth," Mercer's friend, Martin Eloff, tells Poley that Mercer "had this crazy idea that of the four virgins Tamburlaine put to death [Zenocrate had] found one alive. That, he argued, would've altered the whole outcome of the play" (Nicol 158). Does this suggest that Mercer wrote Salma's memoir or just that he had read or heard it? If he wrote it, did he tell Eloff while he was inventing the narrative, after he had learned the "true" story on which it was based, or after he had already created (imagined and written) it?

Mercer” (47), so we are left with the uncomfortable vision of this large-domed, balding, white South African arms dealer imagining and typing up the narrative as we read the memoir of Salma, a maimed, Muslim female teenager from Djano (somewhere in Saharan Africa, a town that could be in Chad or Mali).¹³ We do not know at this point if the story is true, but it so closely corresponds to the murder of the four virgins in Marlowe’s *The Great Tamburlaine* that it appears to be Christo Mercer’s adaptation of the story from Marlowe’s play. In the final section of *The Ibis Tapestry*, “Reconciliation,” Poley travels to Djano and meets Salma, so at that point readers must assume that at least such a person truly exists and that perhaps parts of her story are true, even if reconstructed or recontextualized by Mercer and/or Poley who hears some of it translated through Mercer’s lover, Oumou. Readers then cannot assume it is just a fictional adaptation of the 400-year-old drama with which Mercer is obsessed. On the other hand, readers might question whether Poley’s narrative of his travels to Djano is also fictional. In any case, what makes the shooting of the four virgins in Djano strikingly different from Tamburlaine’s killing of the four virgins, is the survival of Salma. Thus, like the victims of gross violations of human rights under apartheid that the TRC is set up to investigate, Salma is able to tell her story of victimization and serve as a reminder and as historical evidence of the guilt of the perpetrator of her victimization, Ibn el-Tamaru, and, through his complicity in the latter’s violence, of the guilt of arms trader Christopher Mercer.

Salma’s story is relevant to the TRC hearings in three significant ways: 1) it draws attention to the violence that apartheid South Africa exported across the African continent, which

¹³ The towns are in French colonized Saharan Africa, which extends from Mauritania in the west through Mali and Niger to Chad in the East. Ibn el-Tamaru’s wife is Sarra, which could be a reference to the Sara people and language of southern Chad. Malitia could be derived from Mauritania, but this raises the question of why Mercer would fly there by way of Mogadishu, Somalia on the west coast of Africa. More than likely, the name is meant to resonate with its homonym “militia.” Djano suggests the ancient town of Djenne-Djenno, which has an old mosque that looks like the fortress that Ibn el-Tamaru sieges in the story of the four virgins of Djano. On the other hand, Djenne-Djanno (translated to mean very old Djenne) is located near a modern urban center whereas Nicol’s Djano takes days to get to by a road that is often not a road.

will be addressed more fully in the “Truth” section of *The Ibis Tapestry*, 2) it summons the TRC’s aims and the kinds of stories told by many illiterate and impoverished African women at the Commission, and 3) it provokes engagement with the question that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak articulated in her watershed article: “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Bill that prepared the way for the TRC stressed the importance of a “victim-centered-approach,” a commission that would place at its center victims’ “right to tell their stories of suffering and struggle” (*Report 1: 52*). At the start of Salma’s narrative, Sarra recognizes and names Salma as victim, proclaiming as she carries her wounded body across the sand, “Salma, you are the horror. You are all the misery of this day” (47). Inscribed by the interlocking violence of Ibn el-Tamaru and his advance on Djano and its colonialist Gouverner’s move to win reprieve by sending out the four virgins, Salma survives to haunt and confront those complicit in the violent history of colonialism and its aftermath. Her presence troubles Sarra who confronts and confesses her sense of guilt to Salma, an act that recalls Sarra’s literary double, Zenocrate whom Poley suggests “would be the first person to stand up before a Truth Commission and confess to her sins of omission” (42):

While you were a body lost in darkness, I could treat you. Then you were no one....But when your eyes opened, when you returned to this world, I couldn’t endure it. Your eyes seemed to accuse me. I felt I had done as much to hurt you as Ibn el-Tamaru. (48)

Her remorse motivates her nurturance and adoption of Salma into the home of Ibn el-Tamaru and her effort to help Salma tell her story. She evokes the discourse of the TRC that presented victims’ narrations as integral to the process of healing: “The Act explicitly recognised the healing potential of telling stories. The stories told to the Commission were not presented as

arguments or claims in a court of law. Rather, they provided unique insights into the pain of South Africa's past, often touching the hearts of all that heard them" (*Report 1*: 112). By assisting in the production of personal truths, the TRC sought to enable "the process of reconciliation by ensuring that the truth about the past included the validation of the individual subjective experiences of people who had previously been silenced or voiceless (*Report 1*: 112). While acknowledging that Salma will always carry the pain of "unseen, hidden wounds" that Sarra cannot heal, she tells her, "I can help you learn to accept them. In talking about them, describing them, there is a kind of hope" (48). And she provides Salma with the means to effect such a telling; she teaches her to bead, and later, when Ibn el-Tamaru destroys Salma's tapestry, to write so that she will not be silenced.

Both signifier and signified, the beads inspire Salma to weave a tapestry in the image of an ibis, a tapestry of hope: "I saw hope as an ibis" (48). From Sarra, she learns the ingredient of each bead, the bone, wood, stone, glass, metal, and seeds that convey the character and history of the animal, plant, stone or substance from which it came. Pointing to the beads made from bone, Sarra tells Salma, "I know their size. I know their grace. And their anger when men hunt them. This tiny circle is not just a bead. It is the animal. It is every day of its life. It is, too, its death" (51). To Salma, the beads composed of metal speak of "trade and greed and exploitation," of the "burdens of slaves and the fires of mongers and smiths" while others, like those of wood, "stand for goodness and growth[,]... years of drought and the seasons of rain," and the "storms the trees had withstood" (51). In using these materials, radically pluralized and relational in meaning, to *represent* her experience of suffering and accusation against Ibn el-Tamaru, Salma entwines her story, at times distilled to the pain of her violation—"I was only my wound" (49)—with the traces of other narratives, other histories marked by violence, death, and endurance. Nicol thus

marks Salma's narrative, translated and contained within Mercer's digital adaptation and then repeated in Poley's narration, as a palimpsest text, each sign, each bead inscribed and , each retelling carrying traces of multiple histories multiply mediated.

Salma's choice of subject, the ibis, is similarly inflected with multiple meanings: both "scavenger of the slum streets" and "revered" by the people of Djano, both maliciously cruel in its "mauling of a fledgling goose to death" and a sign of blessing and hope to Salma who can "talk to the sacred birds" (49). Archetypally, the ibis alludes to the Egyptian god Thoth, who was depicted as a man with the head of an ibis. Thoth was not only the god of wisdom and knowledge, but also the *scribe* of the gods and the inventor of writing. He had a role in the underworld judgment of the dead in the Hall of the Two Truths where he documented the confessions of each soul in the company of forty-five judges before the souls progressed into the afterlife ("Thoth," "The God," and "Hall of Two"). While Salma chooses to depict the ibis because the sacred birds roost in the pepper trees of Ibn el-Tamaru's courtyard while she recovers from her injuries and not because of their symbolic aptness, we can assume Nicol deliberately chose the eponymous image for Salma's narrative for its figurative meaning. Her tapestry of violation and hope, of history and myth, of documented truths, confession, and judgement echo the politics of production thematized and performed in Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* and its critical engagement with the TRC's aims and politics of production.

The network of texts in which Salma's memoir exists forces readers to recognize how far removed we are from the voice of its original author. With each layer, we must consider the various mediators' motivations and how they shape or limit the shape of the kernel story. Sarra's sense of guilt motivates her teaching of Salma to weave her testimony into a beaded tapestry which is subsequently destroyed by Ibn el-Tamaru: "He comes for my ibis screaming not words

but rage. My shield is torn from me. I see him rend the fabric, see the beads fly loose in an arc over us” (61). Embattled with Ibn el-Tamaru, who blames her for not providing him with a son, Sarra then defiantly teaches Salma to write so she will be able to document her story of blame and outrage at the violence perpetrated by her husband. Salma’s story documents also Sarra’s resentment and her harassment by el-Tamaru. After the destruction of her pictorial narrative, Sarra teaches Salma to write her memoir in French, the language of the colonizer which, as she informs us, Salma learns by copying out the story *Ghanim Bin Ayyuh, the Distraught, The Thrall o’ Love* from the *Arabian Nights* (63). The irony is that Salma’s story documents violence done to her by el-Tamaru in his battle against the French colonizer, or more specifically, the governor the French left behind “to look after their interests during the transition to self-rule” (19). Yet, the governor of the French garrison, who sent the virgins out as a peace offering is not blameless, nor are the French, who by having colonized Djano, have motivated el-Tamaru’s violence. The weave of the memoir ensures their presence and agency in the history of that violence.

If Salma’s story is true, it has presumably been translated into English for Mercer by his Malitian lover, Oumou, perhaps from Salma’s oral retelling, perhaps from her writing. We cannot know what has changed in the translation. However, Poley’s opinion is that Mercer wrote the narrative, that it’s “the last dream of Christo Mercer,” inspired by Marlowe’s play, not an actual event (47). The fact that it corresponds to other visions of mayhem that Mercer records in his dream books, many of which connect to his days of fighting and killing in the war of Angola, suggests Mercer is haunted by the horrific violence he has performed and perpetuated, as both a soldier and gun runner supported by the apartheid state. While his sister believes his writing of the four girls demonstrates his remorse for participating in the violence in North Africa, we cannot help but recognize his simultaneous distancing from blame: Salma is shot on the orders of

Ibn el-Tamaru. Although Salma's incident occurs before Mercer met el-Tamura, and certainly before he sold him guns, we learn in the final section, "Reconciliation," that Mercer chooses to sell guns to Ibn el-Tamaru one final time, against his better judgment, and the brutal killing of African villagers is the direct result. Thus while Mercer's file with Salma's story focuses outrage and blame on the colonized warlord, not the colonizer and not the international gun runner, the weave ensures our recognition of Mercer's presence, his obsession, his anxiety, and his agency in the history of violence supported by the South African apartheid state.

Our access to Salma's narrative is through *The Ibis Tapestry's* unreliable, in-search-of-intrigues, novel-writing narrator, Poley, who has his own vested interests: a good plot to shape his "serious novel" and his desire to escape his unraveling marriage and delinquent son. He unrepentantly reveals, "Thank God I was able to fly off somewhere else. Thank God I had my investigations, my Christo Mercer" (114). Poley intersperses his telling with interpretive comments from Professor Khafulo who suggests Salma's memoir is a compromised narrative, her "own oral traditions...usurped completely," a "classic example of the invidious way in which the colonizing culture writes itself onto the invaded culture" (76). A target of a similarly invasive occupying culture, formerly exiled Elizabethan scholar, Khafulo also has a vested interest in illuminating Salma's memoir, a shoring of his own professional capital: "You will, of course give me all due credit won't you, Mr. Poley!" (30). The effect of Nicol's layering of texts and emphasis on their constructions is a resonating recognition that we cannot passively read Salma's core narrative and imagine we are getting her authentic voice and experience. Her memoir's containment in various technologies of production--patriarchal, colonial, and imperial--inspire readers to persistently question the politics that make possible Salma's representation and to

attend to Spivak's argument in "Can the Subaltern Speak," which cautions against a too easy recovery of the authentic voice of the subaltern woman.

In this article, Spivak interrogates the politics of representation of Third World oppressed peoples by both post-structural and postcolonial intellectuals whose projects work to recover the voice and agency of subalterns, whom Spivak defines as "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (78). Spivak suggests these intellectuals assume the presence of a subaltern consciousness that is pure and accessible and omit the mechanics of "ideological production" (81). She ultimately argues that through and within the violent mechanics of patriarchy and imperialism, "there is no space" from which the subaltern in general, and the "historically muted subject of the subaltern woman" in particular, can speak (80, 91), no space to speak in systems of representation; Spivak emphasizes not so much that the subaltern woman *cannot* speak but that she has no recourse to self-representation in hegemonic discourses.

She thus cautions against too easy, uncritical recoveries of female subaltern consciousness. By attempting to bring the subaltern into historical discourse, the character of those experiences and narratives are constrained, filtered, and altered by the process of mediation and translation. Yet rather than proposing a response that rejects representation, Spivak quotes Pierre Machery to center a strategy of ethical representation that does not assume unmediated access to the knowledge of Others, that requires one pays attention to the "*measuring of silences*," of interrogating "what a work cannot say...because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence" (81-82). *The Ibis Tapestry's* fictional engagement with the TRC fosters a kind of vigilance "against too great a claim for transparency" and participates in a sustained critique of the "mechanics of the constitution of the Other," both

of which Spivak advocates in her argument. (90). Nicol's novel's dialogue with the TRC redirects our gaze to the Commission's hearings and stimulates questions regarding the constitution of African women's stories at the hearings that revolved primarily around their male relatives.

Salma's memoir tells of her own bodily violation, of the violence she personally suffered, and of the continuing physical and mental pain she endures from wounds that have left her crippled and unable to bear children. Her story would fit the TRC's mandate, which included a very narrow definition of gross violations of human rights as the killing, torture, abduction, and severe ill treatment of any person (*Report* 1:42-60), which South African feminists marked as having a gender bias.⁸ During the course of the Commission's hearings, feminist critics observed that the stories of women's violations under apartheid were largely omitted precisely because they did not meet this mandate. The mandate's focus particularizes apartheid violations as acts of injury carried out on individual bodies. The focus on the individual act perpetrated on the individual body privileges the forms of violation the TRC proclaimed as public, active political resistance regulated by the forces of the apartheid state. It simultaneously draws attention away from the systemic violence of apartheid, violence connected to the economic and social conditions that most severely affected the daily lives of African women and their rights to human dignity. The mandate did not include, for example, apartheid abuses such as "forced removals, pass law arrests, alienation of land and breaking up of families" (*Report* 1:42-60). The focus on acts of violence enacted on bodies also positioned human rights violations as temporally located, ignoring the violence of psychological trauma, which haunted women's stories. Of course, the latter would also be relegated to the private domain, that space seemingly unaffected by apartheid abuse. The mandate thus invited and validated particular kinds of experiences of

violation during its hearings, eliding other types of suffering of women under apartheid: dispersals, separation from family; economic hardship, etc. Of course, women did suffer bodily violations, especially rape and sexual abuse, but they were less likely to speak of these types of bodily violations because of the shame of publicly disclosing rape and sexual violations.¹⁴

The limiting effect of the TRC's legal mandate is shown by analysis of the TRC testimonies. While more than half of African testimonials (which constituted 90 percent of the testimonies of victimization) were given by women (*Report 1:169*), their stories tended to downplay or not speak of their own violation but of the abuses suffered by their male relations.¹⁵ In "Exploring the Narrative of Truth: A Feminist Critique of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission," Rina Kashyap reports early recognition of the low incidence of women testifying about their own suffering:

According to Fiona Rosa's coverage of the first five weeks of hearings involving 204 witnesses, 6 out of 10 deponents were women, but over ¾ of their testimonies and 88% of the men's were about abuses to men...25% of all cases involved women speaking about their sons, 11% were women speaking about their husbands and 8% about their brothers. Only 4% involved men speaking about their sons. There were no cases of men speaking about their wives or sisters. (17)

The TRC's concern to make heard that which was not known, to allow individuals to voice their stories and make public the historical silence regarding the crimes of apartheid stand in tension

¹⁴ As Rina Kashyap notes, the Commission acted on the recommendations of women's organizations, creating special, closed door hearings in which women could talk of "gender-specific forms" of victimization, including rape and sexual abuse (19).

¹⁵ See the *TRC Final Report's* section on "Special Hearings: Women" in volume 4, chapter 10 for a more developed reporting of the physical violations enacted on women. The recognition that women were not testifying to their experiences came months after the beginning of the hearings, at which point the TRC established a special category for women, holding three hearings in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

with many of the women's narratives in which they seemingly do not figure as the central victims of apartheid.

Initially, the TRC explained the paucity of female-centered narratives that suggested a low incidence of violations of women's human rights as not being due to a flaw in the report or its proceedings but due to the fact that men operate in a public sphere and women in the private sphere, relegating women to the role of witnesses of the political crimes of apartheid.

One of the more important divisions in terms of gender analysis is that between the public and private spheres. Men are more commonly "active" in roles in the public sphere, while women predominate in roles in the private sphere. Politics as usually understood pertain primarily to the public sphere. The public-private distinction played itself out in the Commission hearings to the extent that women were often constructed and constructed themselves—as wives, mothers, sisters of the active (mainly male) players on the public stage. (*Report 4:289*)

This statement comes from a section of the *TRC Report* that looks specifically at women's experiences of human rights violations under apartheid, many of whom one would identify as subaltern. Elucidating the distinctions between the private and public realms and their relationships to the gender and political action of TRC participants, the statement performs a kind of double-speak, a paradoxical juxtaposition that results in an ambiguous tension between the natural and the constructed. Despite the presence of qualifiers, the statement still posits, through a lens informed perhaps by Enlightenment thinking, a kind of naturalized, almost common-sensical and distinct division between these two social spheres, the private and the public, and the gendering of those bounded spaces. The statement then shifts, alluding to the fact that the binary of private/public had a fundamental connection to the construction of women's

roles and subjectivity. However, the language of the excerpt does not clarify what that connection might be. It does not, for example, name the binary itself as a constructing frame that produced gender in the TRC hearings. Notice the ambiguity in the last sentence, the Commission's use of passive voice which neatly escapes the naming of the powers and processes through which women's subject positions were/are shaped. Indeed, only the second portion of this last sentence is coded as grammatically active, giving accountability to the women participants who "constructed themselves—as wives, mothers, sisters...." Notice also the absence of the male named as construct. The sentence ends with a return to the taken-for-granted, natural position of men as "active players on the public stage." Also implicit in the excerpt is the suggestion that the private space, women's space, is not political.

The Commission's discourse thus situates the public/private dichotomy as an interpretive lens through which accounts of male and female activities of resistance and experiences of violation during the apartheid regime become known. The TRC gave credence to and reinforced perceptions of the public space as a male domain regulated and disciplined by apartheid law and of the private space, the female domain, as having escaped such state regulation. Through this interpretive lens, African women testifying to apartheid violations are effectively constructed as secondary witnesses, only indirectly affected by the apartheid state. The TRC thus acted as an interpellating institution, discursively producing the conditions for its speaking subjects. As Judith Butler notes, "The domains of political and linguistic 'representation' set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject" (4). Seeking to bring to light past violations of human rights, the TRC also effected the foreclosure of women's stories of violation through its discursive binary which categorized, organized, and produced male and female

subjects. The TRC report constructs a narrative of national healing as analogous to the violated body healing, but that body upon which the new nation is imagined is particularly a male body. In the gendered nationalizing discourse of the TRC, African males are thus the legitimized inheritors of political power in the new state, the legitimized inheritors of the new nation.

Nonetheless, the impulse to narrate cannot be stopped, nor would doing so offer a counter solution to the often violent circumscription of narratives that are institutionally produced authentications of truth and history. For Salma, her tapestry of the multi-inflected Ibis represents hope, a suggestion, perhaps, that in the continual and multilayered processes of narration and counter narration, there is the promise of dialogue and sustained critique that resist singular grand narratives. Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* reminds us to look at the entire weave of intertexts and their continual interplay, at technologies of production and containment, to dialogically engage with the question of what truths are established and through what epistemes, and what silences we can measure. The novel provokes questions on what truths, what experiences of human rights violations, are elided from South African history under apartheid

“Truth” Part I: Social or Dialogic Truth

In the third section of *The Ibis Tapestry*, entitled “Truth,” our detective hero, Robert Poley, finally moves beyond reading, interpreting, and analyzing the network of texts through which he was brought into investigating Christo Mercer's death and begins the physical investigation we expect of a detective. He finally ventures out to the mean streets—in this case, the streets that crisscross middle and upper class communities in Johannesburg—as Poley interviews Mercer's family, friends, and business associates.

This part of the process produces what the TRC refers to as social or dialogic truth, the truth that is derived by putting individual testimonies in dialogue. However, Poley's interviewees

are not witnesses to the killing of Mercer and provide conflicting theories about his death. While they sometimes address his illegal selling of guns, they produce no solid leads on who killed Mercer. Instead, these witnesses provide opinions about Mercer's character and speculations about his murder. They are simply more texts that Poley must evaluate (for credibility, for bias, etc.) and interpret. Indeed, each of their theories on Mercer's death say more about the witness' character and prejudices than they say about Mercer and his murder.

His first interview is with Mercer's widow's lawyer, who tells him that if he so much as tries to contact his client, Wilma Mostert Mercer, he will file a court interdict or restraining order (115). He is able to meet with P. J. Mostert, Mercer's father-in-law and partner at International Ventures, a company, as Poley informs us, currently "under a judicial investigation into the arms trade" (105). Mostert begins by telling Poley that he agreed to the interview because with his age (approximately 80), he doesn't get upset anymore, but when he was younger he beat up journalists and writers trying to cause trouble, and he makes an oblique reference to them being like roaches and flies, which he no longer bothers to kill or even brush away.

There are scum on this earth, my friend, but there is none worse than your sort.

There never has been worse and there never will be worse. And you know why, because you tell bloody lies, that's why. The truth is never good enough for you.

You come here and say you are writing about Christo because you think he's a hero. As you put it, an unsung hero.... Maybe you will even write what I have said in your book. But I know you are lying." (116)

Mostert's criticism of Poley rings true. Nothing Poley has told us suggests that he considers Mercer an unsung hero. Mostert goes on to say that he believes Poley will lie because "the truth is too tough for [him]" (117). However, after subverting our faith in Poley, Mostert then

torpedoes his own credibility with his theory of what happened to Mercer: “You want to know who killed him? I’ll tell you: Mossad Agents. You want to know why? Go and ask the Israelis! (117). The accusation is plausible. The Israelis were partners and purchasers of the illegal arms produced and sold by South Africa during the embargo years leading up to the election of Mandela in 1994 (Frankel 8). However, Mostert makes it clear that his theory is based primarily on his rampant anti-Semitism, claiming that the Israelis are only friends when they want something from you, after that

“You’re as good as dead. I’ve seen it over and over again. I’ve seen it in business. I’ve seen it in politics. I’ve seen it when Christians try to marry Jewish women. It doesn’t work, my friend; it’s like whites marrying blacks: it doesn’t work.” (119)

As Mercer’s one-time partner in an arms-trade company, Mostert probably knows more about Mercer’s illegal business than he shares with Poley, but rather than providing reasonable evidence, his theory is informed primarily by his anti-Semitism.

Mostert’s wife, Magda, has a contrary theory, but, like her husband’s, it is based on personal bigotries: “It’s the Arabs” (120). But Magda doesn’t claim to have had the kind of experience with Arabs that her husband has had with Jews. She bases her view of Arabs on the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*: “Ja, that’s it. *Lawrence of Arabia*. They’re such barbarians. Such cruel people” (120). Magda’s theory, steeped in Orientalist discourse, is informed by a cultural text similarly complicit in this colonialist epistemology that Edward Said has critiqued as essential to the mission of imperialism and colonial power. Said observes that this Eurocentric discourse preceded and produced the *real* of the East, constructed as “irrational, depraved (fallen), child-like, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (40).

The couple's contrary explanations remind us that personal and cultural bigotries are deeply imbricated in perceptions and judgments of evidence. For Nicol, this is an important truth.

The novel illustrates the deep-seeded bigotries of Mercer's Afrikaner in-laws, and could lead us to imagine Mercer's Afrikaner associates as the villains of the mystery, but Nicol counters this parry with Poley's next interview: Mercer's sister, Mary Fitzgerald, who defines herself as a liberal, who wept for joy when Mandela was elected President, but who also admits that she has a prejudice against the Mosterts specifically, and Afrikaners generally.

I've got nothing against Wilma, you understand. She does some strange things. But then look where she's coming from. Those are some strange people - and I'm not only talking about her parents. I'm talking about the Dutchmen in general. They've got enormous complexes about running around with bare feet and runny noses and being called bywoners. Okay, so they weren't all sharecroppers, but they've still got that mentality. (126)

The source of Mary Fitzgerald's anti-Afrikaner prejudice is her and Christo's father who was still upset about the Boer War, a hundred years after the fact. Fitzgerald's theory on her brother's murder fits her anti-Afrikaner prejudice, but it also begins to address Nicol's stated interest of addressing aspects of history that had been omitted from the history of apartheid and which he expected would be left out of the TRC report: SADF covert operations against opponents of apartheid and its involvement in illegally trading guns:

"I - we, Ant [her husband] and I - think Christo was killed by one of these "dirty tricks" guys. You know, the third force. Maybe he knew things about those high ups, and what with the Truth Commission and the judicial inquiry into arms trading plenty of people were getting worried." (127)

According to the report “Apartheid Grand Corruption,” in 1990 “Nelson Mandela described the existence of ‘a third force’ in South Africa bent on destabilizing the process of negotiation and killing innocent civilians” (van Huuren 55). The third force—a clandestine, apartheid-state sponsored organization of security and ex-security force operatives believed complicit in the intra-race violence and series of assassinations in the final years leading to democracy—became a subject of investigation at the TRC hearings, but its operations remained largely opaque. While police colonel and apartheid assassin Eugene de Kock and some of his associates were imprisoned for their individual crimes, no generals or politicians were prosecuted for their role in third force activities (van Huuren 55). Mary Fitzgerald has no evidence that she can give to Poley to support her accusation that Mercer was a target of a politically motivated assassination. Rather her theory seems based on her general anti-Afrikaner, anti-apartheid government political beliefs. However, her narrative does implicate her brother as an agent of violence both within and beyond the South African border. For example, she mentions that her brother was involved in training the KwaZulu Police (122). In a note following the interview, Poley explains that Fitzgerald’s reference to the KwaZulu police probably related to the training and arming of SPU’s or Special Protection Units, which led to an undeclared civil war between Zulu’s *Inkatha* Party and the Xhosa and the African National Congress. From this conflict, “Death tolls of more than a hundred a week were not uncommon during late 1994 and throughout 1995” (127). Amidst the personal interviews, Nicol inserts facts that document the breadth of apartheid crimes leading up to and during the years of the Government of National Unity and the notion of the Rainbow Nation.

Poley’s final interview in Johannesburg is with Mercer’s friend Martin Eloff, with whom Mercer shared a tent in his first tour in the Border Wars (153). As such it is not surprising that

Eloff is something of an apologist for Mercer and his role in the arms trade. He rejects the notion that Mercer was the victim of a hit squad. “What Christo was involved with had nothing to do with the political struggle in South Africa. He was making money for the government, and he continued doing so when it changed from the Nationalist to this current gemors,” which Eloff explains is an Afrikaans term that has a much richer meaning than its English translation of “mess” (157). Eloff criticizes the ANC for not supporting what Mercer was doing as demonstrating that they were idealists, whose moral high ground was “up in the clouds” (157). Eloff goes on to say that “Christo . . . believed that what he was doing was allowing oppressed people gain their freedom” (Nicol 157), which is the first defense of the politics of selling weapons in the novel. However, in suggesting that the ANC should have supported Mercer’s work, Eloff apparently was not aware of Mercer’s role with training the KwaZulu police and the resulting deaths of many members of the ANC. Eloff’s theory on Mercer’s death, like those of P. J. Mostert, Magda Mostert, and Mary Fitzgerald is not based on facts. He believes that Mercer was clinically depressed and even mildly schizophrenic. To support this claim, he recounts that in his last meeting with him he went on and on about Tamburlaine and his wife Zenocrate:

Therefore, given his mental state, and his crazy fixation with the play, I believe he committed suicide. Oh, I know he was killed, but I believe he provoked the attack. This was just the sort of thing he’d do. I witnessed this sort of behavior on two occasions, up on the border, where he deliberately put himself into, quote unquote, “life threatening situations.” Christo had a death wish, Mr. Poley. The attack in Malitia was its manifestation. (158)

Aside from ending Poley’s gathering of witness testimony in Johannesburg with yet another unsupported, if not untenable, theory, the assortment of theories and counter-theories the

witnesses offer keep the reader baffled. Nicol clearly does not intend for us to settle on any single explanation. By the end of the “Truth” section, Poley’s flying to Johannesburg and gathering of testimony from those who knew Mercer does nothing but further undermine the reader’s belief that there will be a definitive resolution of the mystery of who killed Mercer and why. While Poley has done his due diligence in Johannesburg, interviewing Mercer’s family and close associates, the closer he gets to Mercer’s life the further away he seems to be from solving the mystery. *The Ibis Tapestry*’s interrogating of witnesses echoes *Red Dust*’s use of multiple focalizers to keep the reader unsure which version of truth can be relied upon, but with a satirical tone that emphasizes the absurdity of Poley’s quest and his role as the detective figure. However, by including snippets of white colonialist discourse, Nicol marks the weight of colonialist history carried in the language and ever-present in epistemological processes that re-narrate historical truths. Moreover, the prejudices implicit in colonial discourse are the kind that some white participants at the TRC might have been careful to circumscribe when speaking before interviewers or judges. It is in reference to the illegal arms trade and its role in perpetuating violence that Poley’s investigation finally achieves the gravitas one expects from the typical crime novel investigator.

“Truths” Part 2: Interrogating the Histories of the Apartheid State

As Sten Pultz Moslund notes in *Making Use of History in New South African Fiction*, “history has come to be seen as no more than a discourse, and, like any other discourse, subject to the always partisan medium of language, which, in the words of Bakhtin, is ‘overpopulated with the intentions of others’” (qtd. in Moslund 67). He notes that with *The Ibis Tapestry*, Nicol uses “critical notes and references to other sources” as a way of illustrating this and leaving the reader “no room for imagining that the narration is more than a textual construction” (67). By

reminding us that his detective novel is a construction, Nicol seems insistent that historical discourse, such as the kind that the TRC is attempting to rewrite, is another kind of narrative construction, which attends to Spivak's intervention that calls attention to *the grand recits* being constructions rather than unmediated, naturally occurring stories.

So what [the post-structuralists] are interested in is looking at the limits of narration, looking at narrativity, making up stories that tell us, "This is history," or making up stories that tell us, "This is the programme to bring about social justice.".... The narrative takes on its own impetus as it were, so that one begins to see reality as non-narrated. One begins to say that is not a narrative, it's the way things are. (Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, 19)

To resist history as "truth" and to view it as a narration encourages the recognition that any historical narrative has been shaped by a particular perspective at a particular time to meet particular ends. The politics of its production guarantee selections, interpretations, distortions and omissions.

In the TRC's "programme for justice," what stories have been left out of its grand narrative of the crimes of apartheid? What ends have been rejected? In an interview in 2001, Mike Nicol gave an explicit answer: South Africa's colonial history.

Apartheid sat on everything. It sat on the colonial history and, I think, obscured it. Then when apartheid went away, everybody thought "okay, we've got rid of that and that is fine, the problem is gone" but it left us with the colonial legacy which we haven't dealt with and that's still got to be dealt with. ("Interviews with South African Writers")

The Ibis Tapestry examines the colonial history that underlay apartheid in an additional two ways: through the intertext of *Tamburlaine the Great* and its relation to Christopher Marlowe's murder and the origins of British imperialism in the sixteenth century (something that I will not develop as it has been dealt with already by others, principally Michael Titlestad and Michael Kissack, and because it is less relevant to my foci on the TRC and the detective genre) and by examining the history of South Africa, especially in relation to its exporting of weapons during the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa, which lasted from 1977 to 1994. Nicol has stated that *The Ibis Tapestry* "attempts to address history or interrogate history. What have I written that's not been that? (laughs). But in a more contemporary setting" ("Interviews with South African Authors"). What is history in a contemporary setting?

The present that Nicol examines is South Africa's transitional period, the country's shift to a new democracy and the role that the TRC has in shaping that transition. His novel interrogates the Commission's goals and processes of revising and establishing a shared history that will include aspects of the country's history suppressed under apartheid. Michael Green notes that today, history's focus is the present, its goals, concerns, and prejudices and provides a supporting quote from R. G. Collingwood:

...since the past in itself is nothing, the knowledge of the past is not, and cannot be, the historian's goal. His goal...is knowledge of the present, to that everything must return, round that everything must resolve. But, as historian, he is concerned with one special aspect of the present – how it came to be what it is. In this sense, the past is an aspect or function of the present.... (qtd. in Moslund 63)

While Nicol's focus on the construction of narratives interrogates the TRC's historicizing discourses, the narratives' weave points also to the relevance of South Africa's colonial history

that prefigured apartheid and upon which the politics of apartheid were built. He also measures the silences, the apartheid history that the TRC fails to fully address and redress, the institutional violence perpetuated through private businesses complicit with the National Government's proliferation of arms development and trade that buttressed its violent rule.

The "Truth" section presents South Africa's illegal involvement in clandestine arms trading during the embargo, largely through the organization called Armscor. This part of *The Ibis Tapestry*'s narrative is presented through a series of notes at the beginning of the novel's third section, "Truth." As Nicol explained in the interview:

.... There were a lot of footnotes that were all part of the narrative, not to be read as footnotes. It was an attempt to try and come to terms with language references, what certain terms, whether in Afrikaans or English, were referring to. To try and make the statement that history is ever-present and that we are using it all the time, sometimes without knowing what the references are. Things are changing but history is what most fascinates me about this country. I think it's what we have dealt with the least. ("Interviews with South African Writers")

As detailed earlier in this chapter, the notes in the second section of the novel, "Development," coming mostly after Salma's narrative, are often tangential and trivial, documenting Poley's family crisis and the *bergies*, the homeless couple that camp outside his door, who distract him. The general effect of the notes is to subvert the seriousness of Poley's investigation and his credibility as an investigator. The tone and tenor of the notes in the "Truth" section are surprisingly different. These notes list historical facts about South Africa's weapon industry under apartheid and facts about Mercer in copious, undramatic detail, giving the notes and the entire section an air of journalistic detachment and scholarly credibility.

Through Christo Mercer's twin hauntings, by the taste of onions that he associates with the Cuban Jorge Morate, the first man he killed while serving with the SADF in Angola, and the shooting of the four virgins of Djano, which Mercer connects to his arms trading in Northern Africa, *The Ibis Tapestry* focuses its interrogation on two major South African imperialistic ventures: 1) its war in Angola against the ruling MPLA party and its allies, principally Cuba, and 2) its illegal arms sales to north African countries and rebel groups.

Mercer killed many in the South Africa Border Wars, even participating in massacres of woman and children, but “[a]fter Jorge Morate, he never again wanted to know the names of his victims” (Nicol 34). Mercer's sister tells Poley, that her brother “was seriously disturbed. Jorge Morate had seriously disturbed him....Christo once advanced the theory that Jorge Morate was actually the devil, and that by killing him he'd contracted his soul to Lucifer” (130). That Morate's death haunted him is conveyed mostly through a motif that runs through the novel of Mercer's obsession with onions, which begins early in the novel when Poley imagines Mercer with “the taste of onions...still in his mouth, raising memories he thought he'd forgotten” (12). Poley asks many of his interviewees about the mystery of the onions. We eventually learn that he loved them as a child, eating them raw (171). In high school, he came up with a recipe for cough medicine made from onion juice and brown sugar (170, 172), yet as an adult he went off onions and wouldn't allow them in the house (171). We finally learn from a phone call message from his sister that the source of his obsession with onions is that while searching Jorge Morate's body for identification papers to learn his name, “the corpse sighed...and a waft of onion breath blew out—it was enough to make Christo hurl. I can only think this is why Christo went off onions” (173). This haunting of the first person he killed indicates that, despite his callousness in the arms business and apparent denial of the consequences of his work, Mercer's involvement in

South Africa's venture in Angola's post-colonial civil war had left an indelible scar on his psychological and spiritual life, as it has left such a scar on the history of South Africa and southern Africa. Yet these are scars that are not talked about.

A second silence attended to through the endnotes of this chapter relates to the way that the colonialist discourse and terms are present in contemporary understandings of apartheid, of the Afrikaner, and of racial politics. Through the use of the fictional name of M. T. Cronje as a key figure in the South African arms industry and trade and the historical name of General de la Rey,¹⁶ one can work out an Afrikaner historical narrative forward from the British greed for the gold at Witwatersrand and its barbaric tactics in the second Boer War to the development of a sense of the Afrikaner as a victimized but heroic character,¹⁷ which was established as a national narrative in the 1930s and 1940s and institutionalized through apartheid in the 1940s and 1950s, to the development of Armscor in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally to the development of private companies working with European multinational corporations in the 1980 and 1990s to export South African weaponry to nations, including pariah nations such as Sudan, Burma, and Croatia, across the African continent, and indeed around the globe.

The great suffering endured by the Afrikaners during and after the Boer Wars set up an Afrikaner self-image as an oppressed, victimized group, which provides the motivation and the framework for an Afrikaner narrative that leads to apartheid, which we are told in *Red Dust* is supported by Afrikaner churches, businesses, and financial institutions, as well as their political institutions. In the second Boer War, to combat General de la Rey's very effective guerrilla war

¹⁶ In Note 5, Poley finds an article indicating that Mercer's father-in-law, P.J. Mostert handled the divorce of M. T. Cronje, a member of Parliament, against his wife, B. J. Cronje, the great-granddaughter of the famous hero of the Boer Wars, General de la Rey, whose commander was General Piet Cronje (106-107). It also brings to mind a founding member of the Broederbond, Geoff Cronje, whose book "'n Tuiste vir die Nageslag—A Home for Posterity was the first comprehensive draft of the apartheid ideology, and with remarkable completeness it spelt out the details of the coming system" (Sparks 177). For further history of General de la Rey's role in the Boer War, see "Role Players and Figures." *Anglo-Boer War Museum*.

¹⁷ See Sparks pp. 127-128.

against the British, the British instituted a scorched earth policy, which, in his book on the Boer War, Ian Knight describes as the burning of Afrikaner farms and fields, the destroying of their stored food and crops, and the killing of their livestock (40). Boer families were also moved into unhealthy concentration camps where they “died in catastrophic numbers, varying in estimates between 20,000 and 26,000, of whom more than three quarters were children” (Sparks 128). In Salma’s narrative, her rescuer, Sarra, kills herself by eating glass in order to escape the oppression and abuse of Ibn el-Tamaru,. In a note in chapter 22, Poley tells us that Mercer probably got this idea for this story in Salma’s narrative from a Boer War myth that the epidemic of dysentery in the British concentration camps was caused by the British commandants doctoring the food of their Afrikaner prisoners with ground glass (135). Poley notes this theory is supported by the historical fact that camp medics ordered prescriptions of Epsom salts, which is a laxative that would have exacerbated the dysentery of the Afrikaner inmates. The suggestion to the reader is that Nicol got the idea for Sarra’s suicide from the history of the camps.

Epsom salt, which looks like ground glass, is still today (or at least when *The Ibis Tapestry* was written) being marketed in South Africa as *Engelse Sout* (which in English means English salt) (Nicol 135). In this way, the victimization of Afrikaners by the English is still part of contemporary discourse and part of the continuum of history that led to apartheid, a history that in the confines of the TRCs mandate cannot be interrogated. The English treatment of Afrikaners during the second Boer War led to protest in Britain against the war, to a politics of reconciliation in England—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman famously said in late 1905, “When is a war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa” (Sparks 130)—and four years later to the British decision to give South Africa to the Afrikaners and not the black majority, . . . “an act of unprecedented betrayal of the black South Africans. For it was

the first and only time an imperial power has given sovereign independence to a racial minority” (Sparks 130). Afrikaner’s sense that they were Africans who were victimized by European colonialists played some part in their control over and oppression of black South Africans from the gaining of sovereignty until the end of apartheid in 1994.

The third and most critical silence relates to the involvement of private businesses in the crimes of apartheid, principally by their partnerships with Armscor. Francis du Bois and Antje du-Bois-Pedain assert that the TRC Report, Volume 4 “fails to paint an adequately vivid picture of business’s involvement in some forms of apartheid...., [t]he best example of this inattentive posture ...is probably the way in which the TRC dealt with Armscor, a state corporation specializing in the supply of weapons and equipment to the apartheid military” (1). According to Van Huuren, Armscor didn’t even provide the TRC with a submission in response to its request for information.

Armscor was created in 1968 to ensure an adequate supply of arms to the South African Defense Force. After the U.N. arms embargo in November 1977, Armscor focused on procuring arms to maintain apartheid structures in the face of increasing domestic resistance and to support its military’s venture in various regional conflicts, most notably the border war with Angola (Department of Defence). Armscor decided to accomplish this task by employing private companies:

The CCR claimed that, by 1982, between 2000 and 2500 companies (ultimately controlled by only Old Mutual, Anglo American and Anglo Vaal) acted as suppliers, contractors and subcontractors of Armscor. Armscor executive chairman, Ron Hayward, however, insisted in an oral submission to the TRC that

a ‘fairly limited’ group of private companies were involved in the arms industry during the apartheid years. (Du Bois and Du Bois-Pedain 1)

The TRC decided not to pursue this apparent contradiction about how deeply involved the business sector was involved in Armscor. This silence is important because the involvement of business and the collusion and cooperation that occurred between Armscor employees and business is likely responsible in part for the rapid expansion of Armscor, especially its expansion of exporting of arms around the world and its complicity in armed conflicts throughout Africa, Eastern Europe, South East Asia, the Caribbean and by Israel.

The previous Cabinet's country classification lists similarly revealed scant concern for civil war, military rule and abuse of human rights in the recipient state. In 1989 acceptable purchasers of South African weapons included Bulgaria, Haiti, Indonesia, Malawi, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Liberia, Nigeria, China and Somalia. Arms supplies to the government of Rwanda, which began in the late 1980s and ended shortly before the onset of genocide, included grenades, mortars, bombs, rocket launchers, rockets, rifles, machine guns and pistols.

Pretoria also distributed large quantities of military equipment to the rebel movements Renamo and Unita, its political allies in Southern Africa. In other instances the motivation for fuelling internal conflicts was purely commercial. For example, Cabinet was willing to arm the Burmese regime and the Karen resistance movement, as well as the Lebanese government and the opposition Christian militia. (Department of Defence)

Note 16 in the “Truth” section of *The Ibis Tapestry* partly informs readers of the degree of South African arms exportation despite UN arms embargos, along with accompanying in text citations:

by 1983 South Africa was producing weapons for export....By 1992, two shiploads of Armscor weaponry...were reported to have ended up in Croatia in contravention of another UN arms embargo.

In 1995, Denel, an arms manufacturer within the Armscor umbrella, exported weaponry to seventy countries for a return of \$330 million. This included missiles to Pakistan, G5 cannons to the Persian Gulf, Rooivalk attack helicopters to Malaysia. (111)

Poley notes that Denel's chairman had stated in an annual report that the company had not been "sufficiently adept at 'weaving the desired tapestry' to ensure success in available and lucrative markets" (111-112). Poley's next note ironically emphasizes South Africa's complicity in exporting death beyond its borders: "'Weaving the desired tapestry' is such a poetic gloss for 'placing enough weapons of death in the field' that I had to find its source" (112). That the phrase recalls the title of the novel and that it reverberates in the "Truth" section resonantly mark the complicity of South African private businesses and the apartheid state in violent conflicts, indeed in human rights abuses, beyond the country's borders. This particular truth remained insufficiently interrogated by the TRC and its historical archiving of apartheid abuses. Note 16 also conveys the economic benefit to the arms dealing companies. It seems likely that the extent of South Africa's level of arms exportation and its politically (and morally) blind policy regarding to whom it would sell arms was motivated in part by the business sector and by corrupt Armscor agents who profited through these sales.

While both the South African apartheid government and their business partners profited by selling arms abroad, conditions for these sales promoted extensive corruption and inappropriate profiteering by Armscor's private business partners. According to van Huuren,

“The arms industry is one of the murkiest in the world with kickbacks, commissions and bribes being accepted as the norm.” (53). According to the report for the National Anti-Corruption Forum prepared by van Vuuren of the Institute for Security Studies:

The lack of any effective control measures is exemplified in the fact that before 1986, CCB [Civil Corporation Bureau] members were handed huge wads of cash purely on the basis of trust. This changed when an operative took R480,000 (ZAR2005=R3,1 million) meant for a secret mission and gambled it on the famed Swazi roulette wheels.¹⁴⁷ We are unlikely to ever be able to establish how many other operatives invested CCB money in get-rich-quick schemes, or simply stole them. (62)

One get rich quick scheme was exporting commercial rand through exporting front companies and then bringing them back in as financial rand (to encourage the reclaiming of rand, a government program valued financial rand at 4 times the rate of commercial rand). This type of fraud was called round-tripping, and a close friend of Magnus Malan, who oversaw Armscor, Albert Vermaas was found guilty in 1996 “of operating illegal investment schemes and foreign exchange round tripping. The Pretoria lawyer and businessman was sentenced to 18 years in prison” in schemes that cost the public 139 million rand (Van Huuren 75).

In one note in the “Truth” section of *The Ibis Tapestry*, we are told that Christo Mercer’s company International Ventures is one of a slew of companies that were set up by spies and retired security policemen, such as those started by Craig Williamson. A second note explains that Williamson was a spy who had infiltrated the South African Communist party and as having been implicated in “hit-squad activities” (109), among these we can count the assassination of Gillian Slovo’s mother, Ruth First (“AC/2000/0082, Amnesty Decisions”). Poley states that

Mercer's company was comparable to Williamson's companies, except that the latter have received much more notoriety in the press. One acutely ironic statement can be found in Note 12.

Readers may see some similarities between Craig Williamson and my hirsute, rotund spy, Craig Wilson, who was forever spilling food on his clothes. However, I want to state unequivocally that the obese hero of my 1991 best seller, *Who Lurks in the Shadows*, is wholly fictional. (110)

The note is not only ironic because it manages to suggest to the reader the opposite of Poley's claim but because Nicol has said in an interview that Mercer is modeled on Craig Williamson, who is referenced in the novel's footnotes as a highly corrupt ex-spy.

After resigning in 1985, Williamson began infiltrating the upper echelons of industry, commerce, and government as a director of companies and also was nominated a National Party member of the President's Council. During the late eighties he was chiefly involved in negotiating takeover deals between European multinationals and companies divesting their South African interests.

The engorging spider and its web is not an inappropriate metaphor here.

(Nicol 110)

In conclusion, the omission of the involvement of private business in Armscor specifically and in supporting the apartheid security apparatus from the TRC investigation and report is a profound silence, and one of the silences that is attended to by Nicol in the "Truth" of the novel.

"Restoration": A New *Grand Recit*

The final stage of a detective novel typically provides the solution to the crime and the restoration of social order. Yet, the fourth and last section of *The Ibis Tapestry*, entitled "Restoration," neither solves the crime nor restores social order. The first form of resistance to a

narrative of restoration is demonstrated through Salma's refusal to forgive Ibn el-Tamaru. While her memoir does not make it into public discourse, she chooses to embody the ibis and live her accusation of el-Tamaru until he wastes away and ultimately commits a kind of suicide by attacking villages and provoking his death through battle. In an interview with Poley, who has journeyed to Malitia, Salma relates through translator Oumou that when Ibn el-Tamaru came to see her in her room after Sarra's death, she "kept repeating at him in [her] head: you are guilty, you are guilty, you are guilty....I was afraid I might forgive him. But I couldn't. He was guilty" (198). She tells Poley that el-Tamaru had killed the virgins Farida, Dire, and Gali and that he was responsible also for the death of her parents during his and his militants' attack on Djano.

Salma's final words stand in profound contrast to the TRC's rhetoric of forgiveness and reconciliation, captured so aptly in TRC Chair Bishop Desmond Tutu's proclamation on the first day of the hearings in the Eastern Cape: "Forgiveness will follow confession and healing will happen, and so contribute to national unity and reconciliation" (Tutu 91). Salma's narrative contests Bishop Tutu's sanctioning of forgiveness:

He stood before me. If I forgave I would not be freed. I would still have the pain. I would not be healed. I would still be ashamed that I had been allowed to live. It would be too easy to forgive him, too easy. So my choice was to accuse him. To judge him. Like the ibis I had to judge him. I had to. For those who were dead. But not only for them, also for the ones who had chosen to forget....I do not think there can be any forgiving and there should be no forgetting. Ibn el-Tamaru was a killer and he will always be that and so forever he will be unforgiven. (198)

Salma speaks back to the TRC's promotion of healing and reconciliation, suggesting that these place a greater burden on victims than on perpetrators who need to be held eternally accountable

for their crimes. As did the ibis in its incarnation as Thoth, Salma witnesses, documents, and judges the guilt of the dead, here Ibn el-Tamaru. Forgiveness will *not* release her pain and would too easily release el-Tamaru, and, by implication, South African perpetrators from the guilt of their crimes. As did *Red Dust*, *The Ibis Tapestry*'s refuses the closure of reconciliation. Salma dramatizes that such a closure threatens to lead to forgetting, not to the forging of national unity.

The novel's final form of resistance to a narrative of restoration is dramatized through its refusal to provide a definitive answer to the detective's quest: who killed Christo Mercer and why? In the final step of his investigation, Poley journeys to Djano, the stronghold of Ibn el-Tamaru, where Salma supposedly survived her execution. At that point, Poley admits that his investigation, which has moved closer and closer to the site of Mercer's death, has gotten him no closer to resolving its mystery:

I have stood on the sand where Christo Mercer stood while he imagined the gunmen, shooting his four teenagers. I have walked the streets of Malitia. I have eaten lunch in the café where he had his last meal. I have even slept with his lover. But who is Christo Mercer? And why was he stabbed? (201)

Poley finally admits, "I do not know what the truth is about Christo Mercer's death" (205). The detective's pursuit and declaration of truth and his re-ordering of meaning have invariably failed, and detective genre readers' expectations of closure remain unfulfilled. *The Ibis Tapestry*'s postmodern intervention with both the genre of detective fiction and with the TRC's historicizing truths problematizes the use of either historical or literary discourses being situated as sole legitimizers of a new *grand récit*. Put in a productive tension, as Nicol has done, historical and fictional narratives can each counterbalance, extend, and circumscribe the other. Rather than dismissing the value of the truths uncovered by the TRC, *The Ibis Tapestry* reminds the reader

how we must read the TRC's proceedings and report, not as narratives of closure on the crimes of the apartheid past but as ongoing dialogues in which we need to attend to the tensions between conflicting truths, to the limiting frames that both represent and foreclose, and to the silences, what was and could not be said at the TRC or in its final report.

The end of *The Ibis Tapestry* directly addresses the potential frustration of the reader who also never discovers who killed Christo Mercer and why. Nicol's implies that if we really want a definitive and simple answer to complex problems, then recognize that this fantasy can be best achieved by the reading of the kind of airport thriller about the arms dealer that Poley begins to write in the final pages of *The Ibis Tapestry*. Poley reconciles himself to never having solved the mystery of who killed Christo Mercer by sitting down "at Christo Mercer's laptop, boot[ing] it up, and open[ing] a file called 'dealer.txt.' At the top of the screen [he] typed the title: 'Who Markets the Sword,' and then began the next airport blockbuster by Robert Poley" (209). A conventional detective text could solve such a mystery and could lead to more stable truths than *The Ibis Tapestry* can or wants to offer. Nicol indeed does write and publish a popular detective novel, *Payback* (2008), in which I imagine him using the concept of Poley for his narrator/writer although no such narrator exists or is named in the novel; it is simply a third person narration. Because Poley never discovers who killed Mercer, and if, indeed, Mercer is even dead, he is able to imagine him still alive, perhaps even the figure of Deep Throat 2 who sends him all the documents and computer in the mail. In *Payback*, a former South African gunrunner named Mace Bishop has started a security business with his African partner, Pylon Buso. The team protects people who contract their services—tourists, celebrities getting plastic surgery, etc.—from the threatening culture of violence in South Africa and is living with his wife Oumou, the name of Mercer's lover in Malitia, and their daughter Christa, a feminine version of Christo.

Moreover, in *Payback*, Bishop's past involvement in gunrunning comes back to haunt him, leading to the shooting and maiming of his daughter, whose spine is damaged, leaving her paralyzed from the waist down, an injury similar to the one Salma suffers. This seems to be Nicol's final word: if you want a simple, clear resolution, then you should read a crime novel that more conventionally follows the codes of the genre.

CHAPTER 3

“WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU?” THE CONFESSIONS OF AFRIKANER MALE DETECTIVES

But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything: he must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be...a man of honor, by instinct, by inevitability....He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.

(Chandler, “The Simple Art” 399)

Raymond Chandler thus famously positions the American hardboiled detective hero and genre in his essay, “The Simple Art of Mu

nder.” The essay narrates the virtues of this manly-centered genre, which begins in the 1920s with the short stories of Dashiell Hammett who, along with Chandler, established many of the features that subsequent detective fiction writers were to adopt. George Grella notes that at the genre’s center is a “prototypical American hero” emerging from frontier myth: a solitary, white male, with few communal, familial or emotional ties, who lives and works outside the social order, bringing his own professional and moral order to bear on the “tarnished justice of civilization” (106-107). Chandler situates the American model as more “realistic” than the British version, as giving “murder back to the kind of people that commit it,” and as being more masculine, as evidenced by the multiple repetitions of “man” in the above quote (396). A

defining feature of the detective's masculinity is his core of personal integrity. Porter observes that Hammet's and Chandler's heroes—the Continental Op, Sam Spade, and Philip Marlowe—are tough yet common men who are as “honest as [their] name” (165). While the hero of hardboiled detective fiction occupies a space between the realms of an often corrupt legal authority and the criminal element, such that his nature can be ambiguous and ambivalent, the genre typically mandates a resolution that restores social order and the hero to Chandler's characterization: he is “the best man of his world.”

South African detective fiction writer Deon Meyer clearly draws on the legacy of the American hardboiled genre to fashion his earliest detective heroes Mat Joubert and Zatopek Van Heerden. These two socially marginalized detectives feature in his first two novels translated into English, *Dead before Dying* written in Afrikaans (as *Fenix*) in 1996 and translated into English by Madeleine von Biljon in 1999, and *Dead at Daybreak* (also called *Orion*), written in Afrikaans in 1999 and translated into English in 2000 by Meyer himself.¹⁸ While Joubert is a police detective rather than a P.I., as is Van Heerden, the emphasis placed on his loner status more closely resembles the hardboiled hero than a man who is part of the collective investigations of police procedurals. From the prologue of the first novel, entitled “Purgatory,” Meyer marks a particularly ambivalent hardboiled hero: a more desperate, tarnished man who seems to have lost his core of integrity, his personal code of honor:

His hands were shaking, hanging next to his body, his eyes were still closed.

“That's the problem, when you can't get out of your own head. You think you're so clean. Because Silva was so dirty. We think in terms of black and white.

¹⁸ *Dead before Dying* won Le Grand Prix de Littérature Policière, 2003 (France). *Dead at Daybreak* won the ATKV Prose Prize for 2000 and was short-listed for the *Sunday Times Literary Prize* and the M-Net Prize (all South Africa) and won the French Le prix Mystère de la critique, 2004. Meyer says his first novel will never be translated into English “simply because it [is] not good enough to compete on the international market” (*Deon Meyer*)

Silva was a killer, dirty and black as sin. And I was the clean, white light of justice. And they encouraged me. Get him. They made me even cleaner. Get Silva for the girl, the two women he had thrown away on a rubbish tip like so much human garbage. Get him for the cop of Murder and Robbery with the hole in the forehead. Get him for the drugs, for his invulnerability, for his dirty, black soul.”

(1)

The next page, chapter one, begins with Joubert contemplating suicide. He is clearly a man who has fallen from grace, who is no longer the morally upright center with a solid notion of justice.

The reproachful internal reflection offered in the prologue is provocative. It sets up a racial divide evocative of an apartheid narrative: the good/clean/just/white fight against the sinful/dirty/criminal/black. Joubert’s self-recriminating tone—“you think you’re so clean”—and use of past tense verbs invert the binary only slightly. Joubert is blackened with sin, dirty. Silva, though, has not escaped the binary. The series of final injunctions sediment his criminality. Joubert has crossed the divide. The passage further provokes through the string of pronouns that moves the detective further and further from a position of agency. First there is a collective owning, a “we” that perceives the world through a sharp racial divide, then a subsequent move to a “they” who influence and justify police detective Joubert’s actions, who color him whiter/cleaner. A reader familiar with the politics of South Africa in 1996, two years after the transition from an apartheid to a democratic government and well into the TRC hearings of police participation in apartheid human rights abuses cannot but believe the prologue hints at the novel’s impending dialogue with its socio-political, geographical, and temporal location. Who is the “we” complicit in the racial, and by implication, racist divide? Afrikaners? All South Africans? All readers? Who are the inducing “they?” The police force? The state? And most

significantly, why has police detective Joubert, as Liam Kennedy suggests of film noir, “appropriate[d] signs of blackness to signify his liminal isolations and difference” (227)? Will Meyer’s appropriation of a metaphoric blackness with its evocation of white anxiety initiate within his detective novels a critical dialogue on race in the new South Africa?

In *Traces, Codes, and Clues: Reading Race in Crime Fiction*, Maureen T. Reddy argues that the defining feature of the American hardboiled detective hero is his whiteness and that the function of American hardboiled detective fiction is the valorization of a white/male/heterosexual central consciousness that encodes “racial, sexual and gender hierarchies” (8). She asserts that given the “interdependence of genre fiction and social context,” hardboiled fiction is undeniably implicated in the racism so acutely rooted in American and British experience (2). Pointing to the 1920s and 30s as a period when legal and social challenges to racial limitations on citizenship and immigration circulated, Reddy observes that the ascent of the hardboiled genre “coincides neatly with widespread anxiety about race and about the difficulties of maintaining the whiteness of the United States” (Reddy 18). She finds that ultimately the genre encodes a dominant white discourse that is resistant to change (9). Reddy’s analysis reminds us that representations of hegemonic masculinities need to be interrogated in confluence with their intersecting historical, geographical, and political sites of construction.

Megan Abbot, author of *The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity*, similarly marks the rise of the hardboiled genre during a period of anti-immigrant politics but notes also an economic factor at play: the presence of “depression-era fears about a capitalism-defeated masculinity” that threatened the stability of white masculinity (2, 26). She demonstrates the degree to which the

heroes of the hardboiled genre reflect a crisis of white masculinity, a “fraught and tentative” masculinity requiring continuous restoration (8, 26):

These men repeatedly find themselves dissembling, fainting, unconscious, overpowered, and out of control while their ideals of masculinity continue to require of them self-discipline, toughness, and the quintessential hardness that gives the genre its name (7).

She characterizes the hero as a “figure constantly on the verge of nervous collapse, even hysteria, a figure that often finds himself a victim of clausturation and sequestration” (8). Her description recalls the shaking, dissembling figure of Joubert whom we first encounter in purgatory in the prologue of *Dead before Dying*.

Reddy’s and Abbott’s explorations of the genre’s representations of a hegemonic white masculinity during periods of social upheaval inspire this chapter’s focus on the internationally published and popular post-apartheid detective novels by Deon Meyer, which not only more conventionally fit the generic frame than do *Red Dust* or *The Ibis Tapestry* but also look forward to imagine the place of the white male, and particularly the white Afrikaner male detective in the new South Africa. Certainly, it is hard to ignore the coincidental rise of South African detective novels in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century that reflect white male detectives’ anxiety about their place in the nation with the fall of apartheid and the dismantling of a system of Afrikaner privilege in the South African government bureaucracy and especially in the South African Police force (SAP/SAPS). At the start of the novels, Detectives Joubert and Van Heerden are both in a condition of moral destitution. They aptly dramatize Raymonde Borde and Étienne Chaumeton’s analysis of the use of a metaphoric blackness in film noir to signify a “fall from whiteness,” characters who “have lost the privilege of whiteness” (Diawara 262-263).

However, the prologue's implicit promise that *Dead before Dying* will engage critically in that fall is not fulfilled in the novel. Indeed, neither *Dead before Dying* nor *Dead at Daybreak* significantly addresses the shifting grounds of race nor of gender relations in South Africa's period of transition. Instead, as I argue, in each novel, the male protagonist's initial feeling that he can no longer claim a clear distinction between himself and the evil or corrupt criminals he investigates is overcome by the hero's drawing of a new line between himself and the apartheid-era white Afrikaner male, which works to restore the Afrikaner detective hero as the best man of his world.

The detective's heroic rehabilitation unfolds through the novel's use of confessional narratives that enact a series of denials: the detective is not a racist, nor a sexist, nor the stereotypically anti-elitist, working class Afrikaner male who had dominated his world and the South African police force during apartheid through political violence and white economic and patriarchal privilege. The use of the confessional is particularly provocative given the prominence of SAP officers confessing to or denying human rights crimes in newspaper exposés (Dirk Coetzee in 1989), court trials (Eugene de Kock in 1995), and at the TRC (1996-1998). However, in a notable shift from the critiques of the apartheid past offered by Slovo and Nicol, Meyer's two novels completely ignore the TRC and elide the historical complicity of the police in apartheid era crime (in fact, the term "apartheid" is only used once in these novels, once by a minor character, Colonel Bart de Wit, a former member of the ANC). They instead present their fallen detectives as resolving their paralyzing guilt connected to personal moral transgressions. Meyer attempts to fashion a more progressive Afrikaner detective hero, a softer-boiled, intimately and romantically involved male who is culturally edified, a means, perhaps, of claiming a class differential in the new politics of racial equality. Yet, his restoration is achieved

through denials, elisions and the tropes of the hardboiled detective genre, which contain, if not subvert, those progressive moves and re-encode racial, gender, and class hierarchies that cumulatively valorize the figure of the reborn, post-apartheid white Afrikaner, male detective hero.

A Fall from Whiteness: Afrikaner Male Detectives in Crisis

Meyer's novels begin by presenting their detectives as in need of restoration. They are dissembling, wounded men paralyzed by guilt from a yet to be disclosed act of moral failing. At the start of *Dead before Dying*, Mat Joubert, the novel's detective hero, considers shooting himself. We learn his life has fallen apart. He drinks and smokes too much; he is overweight, a "fat fart" (273). He has become socially alienated and professionally unreliable. His colleagues have petitioned not to work with him, and his new boss, Colonel Bart de Wit, threatens to sack him unless he shapes up. De Wit even forces him to see a police-appointed therapist as a condition of his continuing employment. Joubert's colleagues are sure it is the murder of his wife, a fellow police officer, during a drug sting two years previous that is the root cause of Joubert's post-traumatic stress disorder. *Dead at Daybreak* begins with Zatopek Van Heerden hung over and in jail because of a bar fight he started with several dentists and doctors. He too has suffered a serious personal and professional fall, having quit the force, failing to earn a living in his new career as a private detective, living in the guest quarters on his mother's estate, and never socializing except for the occasional dinner with his mother or drunken fight with a medical professional. His former Murder and Robbery colleagues and mother believe it is the death of his partner, Nagel, and, as we will later learn, husband of Van Heerden's lover, five years earlier that has trapped Van Heerden in a cycle of self-destructive behavior.

The traumatic event that is the catalyst for each detective's search for personal healing appears to have occurred in 1994, the year Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa. In *Dead before Dying*, written in 1996, the traumatic event occurred two years before the beginning of the book, and in *Dead at Daybreak*, written in 1999, the traumatic event occurred five years before the book begins. Thus the protagonists' personal crises that engender their rebirth coincide with the birth of the new rainbow nation.

The State and the Construction of Afrikaner Masculinity

Before critiquing the significance of the crisis of masculinity in Meyer's South African detective novels, it is useful to review briefly some concepts emerging from critical studies of masculinity to recognize that positions or practices of masculinity are historically and socially constructed and are thus routinely in flux. In the 1980s, Australian sociologist Robert Connell forwarded an understanding of "hegemonic masculinity" as a "normative" set of practices that represented the most legitimized forms of being a man and that maintained "men's dominance over women." In line with Antonio Gramsci's use of hegemony, Connell argued that rather than being legitimized through force, hegemonic masculinity secured consent through "culture, institutions and persuasion" (832). In a later publication, Connell reviews the critical responses to his earlier analysis of hegemonic masculinity and acknowledges the need for a more complex framework for analysis. Critics suggest that his earlier analysis produced a reductive and heteronormative perception of the relations of power between genders and thus essentialized gender categories and that it ignored the differences that occur within gender relations of power (Connell and Messerschmidt 839). Current analyses of hegemonic masculinities recognize the need for considering its construction through a web of social and political relations such as race, class, region, age, etc.

In *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Robert Morrell builds on Connell's work to make clear that not only is there diversity amongst masculinities and the conference of power but that there is also change: "masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any one group of men" (7). Morell reviews some of the colonialist and apartheid history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the "specific relations in place" to trace the shifting discourses of hegemonic masculinity and the ways in which the South African state shaped gender categories. He points to race and class as two of the most important factors in "determining how men understand their masculinity, how they deploy it, and in what form the patriarchal dividend comes to them" (10). During apartheid "the South African government was made up of men—Afrikaans-speaking, white men," notes Morrell, and the state fashioned an establishment of Afrikaner masculinity that was increasingly militant, "authoritarian, unforgiving, and unapologetic" (17). Most salient to this chapter's examination of masculinity in Deon Meyers' detective fiction is this historical and social construction of a hegemonic white Afrikaner masculinity that the apartheid nation-state actively sponsored and which Meyer will attempt to revise in order to create a new Afrikaner hero for a new nation.

With the Nationalist Party's ascent to power in 1948, the apartheid state labored to protect and secure the social, political and economic power of Afrikaners, particularly that of Afrikaner males. In her study of South African nationalism, gender, and race, Anne McClintock reminds us that "all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender" and they "limit and legitimize people's access to the resources of the nation-state" (353). As McClintock observes, the rise of Afrikaner nationalist politics that eventually culminated in the establishment of the apartheid state had a "clear gender component" (369), and, as her chapter details, was informed by racist and economic interests. In the 1940s, a small circle of Afrikaner male intellectuals,

many of whom had been educated in Germany during the 1930s formed a secret society to bolster the “loyalties of dispirited Afrikaners and [foster] white male business power” (369). McClintock calls attention to the gender bias of this group that she identifies as symbolic of Afrikanerdom in general, articulated clearly in the group’s name, the *Broederbond*, (the brotherhood). “Henceforth, Afrikaner nationalism would be synonymous with white male interests, white male aspirations, and white male politics” (369), and more specifically during apartheid, white Afrikaner male interests.

The Nationalist Party’s concerted effort to secure the upward class mobility of the Afrikaner people grew, in part, from the history of Afrikaners’ economic disenfranchisement after their defeat in the Boer War. Piet Joubert, Commandant General of the South African Republic in the late 1880s, described Afrikaners who had suffered incarceration in British concentration camps and who, after the war, had returned to decimated, scorched farms, as “a poor, weak, downtrodden, suppressed and wronged people” (qtd. in Sparks 129). Journalist Allistair Sparks reports that after the Boer war, to an already autocratic and patriarchal Afrikaner will was added a “bitter, resentful, self-pitying nationalism” that even more rigidly stratified racial hierarchies (129, 131). During apartheid, racist laws increasingly disenfranchised black South Africans who worked in menial laboring positions while white Afrikaners were provided a secure lifestyle and improved economic status. In *Transformation and Trouble: Crime, Justice, and Participation in Democratic South Africa*, Diana Gordon explains, “political appointments went to Afrikaner applicants, government contracts went to Afrikaner businesses,” and civil service positions were offered to Afrikaners with the removal of English speaking employees, including within the police and military (Gordon 54). “For decades, being a white male meant being kept from poverty, with jobs in the traditional Afrikaner preserves like...the police...being

handed down from father to son” (Swart 77). She notes that between 1946 and 1960, Afrikaners joined the police force at a rate close to three times higher than that of English-speakers, and practically all of the supervisors in the police force were Afrikaners by the early nineties (Gordon 54). The apartheid state-secured, militant and patriarchal authority of the police would have been the cocoon within which both Joubert and Van Heerden would have worked before the democratic shift in 1994.

Apartheid-Era Crime, the South African Police, and Afrikaner Masculinity

South African Police (SAP) complicity in apartheid crimes makes its absence in the Meyer novels particularly striking. During the era of apartheid, the SAP increasingly became a paramilitary force fighting what Mark Shaw calls “a vicious and low-level civil war with the liberation movements” (22). As the daily enforcers of apartheid laws, the police were the most “visible and brutal instruments of state repression (Gordon 5). Girded with fervent Afrikaner nationalist ideology and given broad policing powers, the SAP envisioned itself as “defending the country against subversion and racial mixing” and by the late 1980s against a full communist “revolutionary onslaught” (Gordon 61). In fact, according to Marius de Witt Deppenaar, the official SAP historian, during apartheid only one in ten members of the SAP were involved in “crime detection and investigation” (Shaw 1). Throughout the apartheid era, the SAP largely ignored crime in the black townships and even fomented it. Except in the case of murders, where one could count the bodies, the number of black victims of crime and violence in the townships is still largely unknown because black victims did not trust the SAP enough to report crimes to them. “The senior and middle ranks of the police were almost all exclusively white (and Afrikaans)” (Shaw 23). Although the SAP was not motivated to address the high crime rate in the black townships, as it provided a justification for continuing apartheid, when crime rates in

white communities began to increase in the mid-1980s, enormous pressure was put on the apartheid apparatus.

Conditions created by the social policies of apartheid ensured that high crime levels were a feature of South African society before the transition to democracy. Such violence was however concentrated in black areas and more often than not, remained invisible and unreported. Paradoxically, apartheid generated high levels of crime, yet acted as a crime prevention measure at least for privileged white communities, by isolating them from its impact. This was, however, to change in the last decade of apartheid. (Shaw 15)

In 1986, the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlak, admitted that violence was increasing in white suburbs, and crime rates continued to increase every year up to 1994 “with the worst upturns occurring in 1989/90” (Shaw 15).

Aside from its declining ability to protect white communities from increasing crime, the challenges facing the SAP in 1994 were enormous. The SAP had no history or record of crime prevention in the black townships, and black citizens of the new South Africa had no faith in the SAP as a legitimate police force or as an apparatus of justice. Not only was the police management of the SAP almost entirely white and Afrikaner, but there was a pervasive racism throughout the force:

Simply replacing white with black faces at the management level would not necessarily solve the problem—the nature of policing in the country was embedded in a deeply racist culture. In the words of an ANC activist: “There is a racist police culture that even black policeman take on. A black policeman tells

jokes like an Afrikaner and speaks like an Afrikaner....There is a culture within which these people are trapped.” (Shearing qtd. by Shaw 23)

Writing on apartheid justice, Diana Gordon observes that interviews with township residents in the 90s revealed they found it not only useless but even dangerous to report criminal activity to local police. The apartheid regime “sent a message that the assignments of the security police came with a license to kill” (61). Police violence against blacks was a routine practice during apartheid.

Because of the SAP’s critical involvement in the political crimes and human rights violations of apartheid, the distrust it engendered in black communities, accusations of its deeply racist culture as well as rampant corruption, as well as decades of government manipulation of hiring and promotion practice to ensure an Afrikaner-dominated police force and leadership, the SAP was a focal point for change by the new government in 1994. Shaw explains it began with a change of the name to the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the changing of leadership with ANC political appointees, and finally with changes to hiring practices (including affirmative action) with the hope of evolving to a police force that reflected the diversity of the population and the ideal of a rainbow nation (22-23, 27). The election of Mandela in 1994 marked the end of Afrikaner domination of government bureaucracy and the special privilege of the white Afrikaner male, but this crisis of masculinity was nowhere more acute than in the SAPS of the 1990s. The loss of privilege of the white, Afrikaner male in general and the white Afrikaner police detective specifically resulting from the fall of apartheid was significant, but this is just one aspect of the post-apartheid crisis of masculinity. A second even greater vulnerability lay in the exposure of human rights abuses by the SAP through the TRC hearings,

which resulted in a damaging of the public reputation of the SAP and its officers and raised the real possibility of criminal prosecution.

The Post-Apartheid Crisis of White Afrikaner Masculinity

At the start of Krog's first chapter of *Country of my Skull*, "They Never Wept, the Men of My Race," she presents a snapshot of an advocate speaking on behalf of his client at the Justice Portfolio Committee, the group responsible for drafting the Truth Commission Bill of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. After disclaiming any support of the policies of apartheid, he notes he has taken the case because he believes his client, General Johan van der Merwe, former commissioner of police, has a point, that "politicians should be the essence of the Truth Commission's inquest. It is not the police who came up with apartheid, he says, but the politicians." His client, he notes, told him in a "choked-up voice, 'The politicians have prostituted the police. Once I was a proud policeman, but here I am today—humiliated and despised. My career, to which I dedicated my entire life with such pride is ending in this horrible shame and dishonor'" (qtd. in Krog, 6). While Afrikaners in general experienced a significant sense of loss accompanied by an "element of shame and guilt—of disgrace" at the exposure of the "immorality...indeed criminality" of the old regime (Steyn 150), the Afrikaner police who acted in the name of apartheid bore the brunt of that shame. They were the most publicly vilified section of a group that author and critic Zoe Wicomb notes are perceived as "most in need of rehabilitation" ("Five Afrikaner Texts 159). This is the social context of Meyers' detective figures Joubert and Van Heerden, both of whom either work or worked within the SAP during apartheid.

It wasn't until later in 1996 that a flood of amnesty applications appeared from South African police forces, notes Graeme Simpson, due to the result of the successful prosecution of

Eugene de Kock, “a notorious apartheid assassin who, during his trial, provided extensive information about other senior state operatives who were involved in gross human rights abuses” (7). However, as mentioned above, de Kock’s trial in 1995 and police captain Dirk Coetzee’s confessions published in the Afrikaner newspaper *Vrye Weekblad* in 1989 had already made police complicity in apartheid crimes a part of the public debate in the lead up to the TRC.¹⁹ Two years before the publication of *Dead at Daybreak*, various members of the security forces had applied for amnesty and testified to the fact that they had played active roles in the torture and murder of thousands of South Africans.

Their testimonies, however, are littered with denials of personal responsibility for the human rights crimes they committed:

We are not criminals. We have never committed any criminal deed outside the spheres of conflicts of the past... We believed that we acted bona fide in the interests of our country and our people. We will show that we, at all times, believed that we were acting in the course and scope of our duties within the scope of our authority. (qtd. in Meredith 57)

The police officers who made this statement at the Commission were seeking amnesty for murdering more than 60 people during the apartheid government (57). They, as did many other officers who testified, excuse their actions with such phrases as “It was my duty... I was doing my job.” Not once in their testimony do they use the word “murder.” Although they admit, later in their testimony, that their actions occurred “outside the normal processes of the law” (qtd. in Meredith 59), they never acknowledge any wrong doing. They acted as dutiful officers, legitimized to commit murder by the apartheid state.

¹⁹ See Meredith 32-54 which covers some of the revelations of Dirk Coetzee and Eugene de Kock

In their claim to an apartheid regime of truth, the officers deny the TRC's positioning of their acts as criminal. Rather, they offer a pedagogical performance in which they convert their human rights violations into political acts with cultural value:

We will endeavor to enlighten the world to the environment and background against which we acted, the beliefs we held which were impressed upon us from our birth, the indoctrination to which we were subjected, and the political motives with which we acted.

We were brought up to believe in apartheid. We were made to believe that apartheid was sanctioned by God through the Church. We were made to believe that that our participation in the security forces was justified to uphold apartheid.

We were made to believe that black people were inferior....(qtd. in Meredith 58).

Converting their murderous deeds into cultural capital, the officers offer to impart to the world their intimate knowledge of the ideology of apartheid in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of their acts in the previous political field. Their rhetorical maneuvers also position them as passive state subjects with no agency, no personal choice, and thus no personal responsibility. Beliefs were thrust on them and they were "made to" brutally beat, torture and kill. As will be demonstrated later, Meyer's use of the confessional narrative in *Dead before Dying* and *Dead at Daybreak* operates, similarly, as a defense of his SAP detective and former SAP detective heroes, respectively at this point of crisis for the SAP officer.

The dismantling of the power structure of the delegitimized apartheid era police is demonstrated in the opening of Chapter 3 in *Dead before Dying* as the officers await the arrival of the new ANC minister's appointee to take over their department. According to Mark Shaw,

after the election of Mandela in 1994, there were a series of purges in the SAP, with a number of generals removed or forced into early retirement:

Thus, in May 1994, less than a month after the nation's first democratic election, senior management in the SAP waited apprehensively in their offices at police headquarters *Wachthuis* (literally meaning Watchhouse, as the police had viewed themselves as the guardians of the old order) for the arrival of the new minister. They were, said many of them amongst themselves, to be directed literally by the enemy. (Shaw 22)

Compare this to the opening of Chapter 3 in *Dead Before Dying*:

This morning was different. Theal, the commanding officer of Murder and Robbery, had taken early retirement on December 31 and was going to grow vegetables on a smallholding in Philippi. Coming in his place was Colonel Bart de Wit. Appointed by the minister of law and order. The new black minister of law and order. As of January 1, Murder and Robbery was officially part of the New South Africa. Because Bart de Wit was a former member of the African National Congress. (15-16)

Meyer begins this story and his whole series of Cape Town Murder and Robbery novels at this critical juncture, when the SAP, now the SAPS, must become part of the new South Africa, in Mandela's parlance, the rainbow nation, when its racist culture and its civil war against the ANC and other anti-apartheid elements must end. This crisis in the SAP culture is the backdrop for the resurrection of Joubert's and Van Heerden's heroism.

The Heroes' Rise from the Ashes

With the opening line of Chapter 2, "The first step in the rebirth of Mat Joubert was physical" (7), Meyer lays out one of the main narrative thrusts of *Dead before Dying*. He will recount the physical rebirth of Joubert, which begins with a sexual reawakening when his neighbor's teenage daughter, Yvonne Stoffberg, makes a pass at him. The initial titillation gives way to a fearful, hysterical response.

Joubert felt the fear of humiliation in him.

Then his body spoke softly to him, a rusty moment that came and went, reminding his crotch of the rising pleasures of the past. But his fear was too great. He didn't know whether that kind of life had died in him. It was more than two years. (11)

The SAP detective's fall from the privilege of whiteness in 1994 after the election of a black majority is reimagined as the loss of his sexual virility following the death of his wife in that same year. He is afraid that the sexualized male inside him has also died. Framed in this way, Joubert's rebirth seems a simple process requiring him to engage in a sexual tryst. However, his sexual resurrection is complicated by his fear that he has so neglected his health that the machinery will no longer work, and, as will be explored later, by his need to confess his moral failing, be understood, and be forgiven by a softer, more caring woman than the sexually aggressive teenager. The policeman's loss of political power and legitimacy and his public shame is reframed then as a loss of sexual power and masculinity, the restoration for which can take place in a private rather than political sphere, requiring little of his engagement with the more public debates occurring at the time.

The next step comes when the new head of Murder and Robbery, Colonel Bart de Wit, the political appointee tells Joubert that the department's doctor must deem him physically fit to

meet the department's standard. Joubert's lack of physical prowess is yet another sign of his masculine inadequacy. The SAP doctor sends Joubert to a dietitian, who uses "flashcards and posters to explain about fatty acids—saturated and unsaturated—about fiber and bran, animal fats and vegetable fats, calories, vitamins, minerals, and balance" (102-03). Not only do we get substantive tracts in the novel on maintaining the health of a middle-aged man, but we are told how many cigarettes Joubert smokes each day, whether they were filtered or not, and given his diet menu: "60 grams of chicken (no fat), 60 milliliters fat-free meat sauce, 100 grams baked potato, 150 grams carrots, broccoli. Two units of fat" (144). Or "Joubert's dinner was chicken stew: 60 grams of chicken (skinless), 125 milliliters of gravy, 150 grams of mixed vegetables, and as much boiled (tasteless) cauliflower as he wanted. 1 gram of fat" (326). At points, this early Meyer novel sounds more like *Bridget Jones' Diary* than *The Long Goodbye*.

Zatopek Van Heerden leads a healthy lifestyle in terms of his eating and exercises; yet the effect of his personal crisis linked to the death of his police mentor in 1994 is his withdrawal from both professional and personal relations. Self-loathing and misanthropic, he has no friends other than his rich artistic mother on whose estate he lives, apparently rent free. The novel begins with an incarcerated van Heerden contemptuous of professional men trapped in conventional, upper middle-class lives, a characterization more in keeping of the traditional hardboiled detective:

He awoke abruptly out of an alcohol-sodden sleep, the pain in his ribs his first conscious sensation. Then the swollen eye and upper lip, the antiseptic, musty smell of the cell, the sour odor of his body, the salty taste of blood and old beer in his mouth

And the relief.

Jigsaw pieces of the previous evening floated into his mind. The provocation, the annoyed faces, the anger—such normal, predictable motherfuckers, such decent, conventional pillars of the community. (3, emphasis in the original)

An attorney, Kemp, comes to bail out Van Heerden because he has arranged for him to do some private investigative work for another lawyer, Hope Beneke, who needs a murdered man's will found for one of her clients, the man's romantic partner. Kemp apparently admires Van Heerden's detective skills and knowledge, but not his character or professionalism. His first statement is "You're trash, Van Heerden." And then, "Even dentists know shit when they see it. Jesus, Van Heerden what's with you? You're pissing your life away. Dentists. How drunk do you have to be to take on five dentists?" (Meyer 4). Van Heerden accepts Kemp's criticism when he contests only one point: "Two were GPs." The dissolute Van Heerden demonstrates his violent disdain for and separation from men who so easily adopt a mask of decency. Van Heerden adopts no such mask and instead revels in his outcast status, at least at the start of the novel.

Although sequestered from a public community, Van Heerden has a close relationship with his mother, which seems a progressive move for a genre that often presents its P.I. as disconnected from both communal and familial ties; however, the fact that his mother is his only intimate, that he uses her company and wealth to deflect participating in a public sphere, and that she saves him from his self-destructive behavior suggests a retreat to the womb, an infantilization of the heroic figure. When a chapter opens with his expertly cooking a dinner for a woman, we discover it is his mother, a promising characterization of a progressive male given the patriarchal divide of male and female labor in most Afrikaner families. Yet, that progressiveness is suspect when Hope fires Van Heerden for his disrespectful attitude and

unprofessional behavior towards her and her client, and his mother arrives to save his job. After explaining to Hope that he was a happy child, she says, “He didn’t know about the dark side of life. I didn’t tell him...[W]hen he discovered it, I wasn’t there to help him.” After telling Hope that Van Heerden’s mentor was “shot in front of him,” she says, “he changed because I hadn’t prepared him for things like death and human fallibility....If he could believe in himself again, if he could be given another chance...” (66-67). It is difficult to imagine a mother appearing before her adult son’s employer to explain his dysfunction and to take the blame for his boorish behavior, let alone a hardboiled P.I.’s mother doing so. Yet *Hope* Beneke gives him another chance, because she likes his mother.

As the reconstruction of Joubert’s heroic figure begins by literally rebuilding his physical form, Van Heerden’s begins by his establishing new social connections: first, with Hope, who will become both his confessor and romantic interest, then with her S/M friend, Kara-An Rousseau, then with former colleagues at Murder and Robbery, including with Joubert, and finally with Orlando, a local crime lord whom Meyer races coloured, and his men, Billy September and Tiny Mpayipheli, a Xhosa who loves rugby.

While both Joubert’s and Van Heerden’s reawakening is dependent on their emergence from sequestration and re-engagement in their professional lives, their detection and discovery of the criminal figures seem almost secondary to the greater emphasis given to the means of their rehabilitation: forming romantic relationships with women to whom they can confess their sins and humiliations, who will understand and absolve them, and who will confirm their status as the best men of their worlds. It is a particularly domestic rehabilitation, premised on gender relations and safe from the public debates on policemen’s racist apartheid criminality, Afrikaner shame, and the loss of white political power. What is presented as an emergence from

sequestration seems more like a retreat into a familiar reconstruction of masculinity within a gender binary.

The Confessional Narrative: The Privatization of White Masculine Guilt

Our capacity to imagine a future is, in large part, dependent on an ability to confess, for in confession we construct a narrative of responsible community that is capable of instilling hope. (Ghallagher 207)

In “Reconciliation and Hope: *Confessional Narratives in South Africa*,” Susan Van Zanten Gallagher, asserts that “confession is ontological,” that one “testifies to and admits guilt about life events in such a way as to construct, or reconstruct, a ‘self’” (208). For F. Hart, “It is a personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature, the truth, of the self” (qtd. by Gallagher 208). The purpose of confessing is not just self-actualization but “to commit the narrative to others” (208). Gallagher goes on to note that a “confession is directed to a specific audience” (208). Mat Joubert and Zatopek Van Heerden direct their confessions to female love interests, Hana Nortier/Margaret Wallace and Kara-An Rousseau/Hope Beneke, respectively. They address their romantic failures of the past, admit sexual humiliations, and confess moral transgressions while simultaneously denying identification with an old regime masculinity to demonstrate their worthiness to possess the women to whom they confess and to reclaim their heroic status.

Both of Meyer’s early novels present two-track narratives: murder investigations coupled with a separate narrative thrust, confessionals that reveal the mystery of the event that precipitated the detective hero’s fall. In fact, the detective’s personal mystery is as important as

the professional one. What action or event caused his current guilt, humiliation, and self-loathing? *Dead before Dying*, written in Afrikaans in 1996, when the TRC hearings were just beginning, when the national discourse was engaged with the genre of confession as a way of rebuilding an inclusive, multiethnic national narrative, develops its confessional narrative piecemeal as part of the romantic subplot. In *Dead at Daybreak*, published in Afrikaans in 1999, more than a year after the TRC hearings when police abuse had been more fully disclosed, provides a more overtly structured confessional narrative. The chapters alternate between a third and first person narrative. The first and subsequent odd-numbered chapters are in third person and develop the murder mystery in which Hope Beneke engages Van Heerden; the even-numbered chapters are all in first person, narrated by Van Heerden (with the exception of chapter 58), and on the subject of the development of Van Heerden's personal character, his moral transgressions, and his search for true love.²⁰ This narrative is not marked by font (italics, etc.) or note. One wonders while reading, is it from a diary, letters, an autobiography written retrospectively, a confession?

In *Dead before Dying*, Joubert's longing for a woman to replace his dead wife is tied to his desire to tell her of his story, to confess his guilt and fears. Nonetheless, the confession is initially compelled; he must see a therapist in order to continue working in the Cape Town Murder and Robbery Department. However, his attraction to Hanna Nortier, his therapist, is increased through the process of confession. Joubert tells himself, "*She's a pretty, frail woman with sad eyes and I think I'm in love with her because I told her something about my father that I've never told anyone*" (246, emphasis in original). His revelations of an abusive, tyrannical father lead to an admission of his own insecurities around girls because he "was large" (161),

²⁰ Chapter 58 is also a confession, but that of criminal James Vergottini about the murder plot that Van Heerden has uncovered, and which is also not in third person, but, with the exception of two words, "he asked," entirely in dialogue.

and that his deceased wife, Lara, was his first girlfriend, set up by a Murder and Robbery sergeant who told Joubert, “He’d seen just the right girl for me. One who would do all the talking. Because I was too useless and too scared of women to get anywhere, ever” (163). His confession heightens both his desire and emotional vulnerability: “He wanted to hug the frail body of Hana Nortier with great gentleness, cover the etched shoulders with his big hands,” and “the emotion was like a magnifying glass, an acoustic booster multiplying the clarity of his memory and desire” (162). The session culminates in his emotional break-down: “And then Mat Joubert wept for the first time in 17 years—a wordless, soundless emotion, only the wetness dripping out of his eyes betraying it. He turned away from Hanna Nortier and wondered when the humiliation would end” (164).

As he confesses to Hanna Nortier, he becomes attracted to her rather than the sexually assertive teenage neighbor, Yvonne Stoffberg. In Nortier’s presence, Joubert is emotionally vulnerable yet strong, a soft-boiled detective, large, gentle, and protective of the small and fragile therapist. Her fragility is the reason, perhaps, that he can be vulnerable, expose himself to the humiliation. Yet in the face of a threatening dissemblance, the discourse reasserts Joubert’s physical prowess, his ability and desire to protect the frail female. However, Joubert’s crucial confession, the linking of his wife’s murder with his being cuckolded, is saved for Margaret Wallace, the woman who will become his wife by the opening of the next novel, *Dead at Daybreak*.

Part of the mystery of the confessional narrative in *Dead at Daybreak* is its purpose and audience for the confession. When Van Heerden hits a doctor at a dinner party, Hope’s friend and a publisher, Kara-An Rousseau, offers to quash the suit and to give Van Heerden and Hope the publicity they need for their case in exchange for Van Heerden’s life story “when this

business with the will is all over” (166). Like Yvonne Stoffberg, Rousseau is a sexually aggressive woman who is not interested in accepting the hero’s failings or empathizing with his humiliations, and while Van Heerden accedes to her demands, at the end of the novel, he tells her, “The agreement was that I would write the story of my life....I never said that I would give it to you” (464). Rousseau is caught up in self-loathing and sado-masochistic desire for Van Heerden, and he alters the intended audience for his confession. On the final page of the novel, Hope Beneke arrives for dinner, having just read the manuscript. He claims that he doesn’t want to talk about it, and she concedes that we are all capable of evil when the opportunity presents itself – one of the arguments of his life story – but that he has proved his goodness in rescuing her.

In *Dead before Dying* and *Dead at Daybreak*, the crimes and transgressions of both the murderers and the investigators are exposed to the light of day. “In the crime novel,” notes Wendy Knepper, “the confessional narrative has long been a source for investigating the meaning and role of crime, punishment, and justice in society” (43). In order to complete the argument that the detective protagonists are heroes, the novels must demonstrate that we are all vulnerable to humiliation and capable of evil when the opportunities present themselves in order to create empathy for the moral failings of the heroes, and a willingness to absolve them for their sins. According to Gallagher, the confessional narrative serves to “articulate hope” (209). In these two Meyer’s novels, Joubert and Van Heerden use their confessional narratives to move past powerful feelings of guilt and humiliation and dare to hope that each can regain his former, pre-fallen status.

If these confessions are arguments for the heroic status of the novels’ protagonists, what is the form and substance of that argument? Referencing Bethany Ogden’s work on hardboiled

ideology, Reddy notes that the genre constructs the hero in juxtaposition to disparaging representation of “others” who are “not white, not men, [and] not heterosexual” (9). She quotes Ogden who claims, “These descriptions of others serve to construct a mirror against which a hypermasculine identity appears. It is a case of defining the self (the “I” of the story) in terms of what it is not: a series of negations establishing identity” (9). This process of defining the self by what it is not corresponds closely to constructions of whiteness, which depend largely on defining what is non-white. (Reddy 9). This definition through negation can be seen in apartheid classifications of race. Definitions of whiteness are terse and vague, relying on the formulation that whites do not belong to other racial categories, which are developed in exhaustive detail. In these Meyer’s novels the two detective heroes use their confessional narratives to assert their new post-apartheid masculine identities by what they are not: they are not racists, they are not sexists, they are not members of the anti-intellectual/anti-elitist working class, they are not the hyper-masculine Afrikaner males of old. They are Afrikaner detective heroes of the new South Africa

“What kind of a man are you?” I’m not a Racist

In *Dead before Dying*, Margaret Wallace, the second woman to whom Mat Joubert will confess and the one he will ultimately marry, accusingly asks, “What kind of man are you?” (399). She is the woman who can understand the answer that he (and the novel’s narrative) have been developing to the question: What kind of man are you/is Joubert? The question is as relevant for Van Heerden given that half of *Dead at Daybreak* is a first person autobiographical narrative. The detectives’ and Meyer’s answers to this central question in the two novels are built on a series of negations that challenge the national and international stereotype of the white, Afrikaner male. The first negation is *I am (he is) not a racist*.

In *Dead before Dying* and *Dead at Daybreak*, Meyer uses Afrikaner males from the old order who fit the stereotype of racist to put his detective heroes in relief and demonstrate that they are more enlightened than their predecessors and those who the nation and the world saw confess before the TRC. While neither detective hero is ever accused of being a racist, both Joubert and Van Heerden confess that they grew up in a racist culture and recount for their confessors (and the reader) their moment of enlightenment. In *Dead before Dying*, in an admission to Dr. Hanna Nortier, his therapist and first confessor, and the woman who inspires him to once again become romantically and socially engaged, Joubert contrasts himself to his father, who was a very confident, well respected, aggressive, hyper-masculine, SAP leader. Joubert admits that he detested his father and became determined as a youth to become the opposite of everything his father was.

“He had a racial slur for every hue, for every racial classification in the crazy country. Malay people were not called *coloureds*. He called them *hotnots*. To their faces. He called them his hotnots. ‘Come along, my hotnot.’ Zulus and Xhosa’s were not blacks, but...*bloody Kaffers*. In his time there were no black constables, only black criminals....He hated them.

“...I also did at first, because he did. Before I started reading and had friends with parents who had different views. And then I simply...despised my father. His narrow, simplistic point of view. His useless hate. It was part of a...process. (79)

That he learned racism from his family is a common rationalization for racism. For example, it is similar to that provided by police officers seeking immunity at the TRC cited by Meredith above: “We were brought up to believe in apartheid” (58). However, Joubert goes beyond simply

justifying his past racism; he recounts becoming enlightened about race at a young age when he first became aware of viewpoints other than his father's. For Joubert's father's generation, racism is essentialized, an inherent part of his father's nature, but for Joubert's generation, racism is presented as a learned ideology that can be unlearned, and Joubert, the best man of his world, did unlearn it.

The novel provides illustrations of Joubert demonstrating his enlightenment about racial bigotry. When a coloured officer hits a white businessman they are interrogating, Joubert takes the officer's side, even repeating his anti-white racial slur: "It's okay, Leon...I also believe that rich fuckin' asshole whitey is lying" (274). Later in the novel, when a banker uses a racial epithet against Khumalo, an African police officer, Joubert replies, "...if you ever refer to my men as kaffer constables again, I'll smash you in the face" (297). Despite being in a group of policemen, including the ANC appointee, Joubert is the only one who speaks up. His use of "my men" re-enacts a white patriarchal ownership, even if it is a discourse of professional hierarchy, and positions Joubert as protector of the absent African officer who thus cannot voice his own contestation of the racism directed at him. Meyer makes a concerted effort to demonstrate his detective's alliance with black officers and to build Joubert's character against those of racist white South Africans, to demonstrate his perspective as more enlightened, an SAPS officer who could succeed in the *New South Africa*.

Meyer's rhetorical strategy for redefining his detective hero is also suggested when the new ANC minister's political appointee arrives to take over the leadership of the department: he will ignore racial politics and the history of apartheid, focusing instead on the sometimes overwhelming professional demands that the average police officer in any Western country faces, and the personal search by his hero for his identity. Joubert is disinterested in the political

transition that has the rest of the department in a panic. For Joubert and perhaps for Meyer and his white (and especially his Afrikaner) readers, there is an irresistible urge to recast this political conflict as something more local, more individual, more personal. The change that must come in Joubert is purely personal.

Tomorrow everything at work would be different. The new man, the political appointee. The others could talk about nothing else. Joubert didn't really care... It was simply one more thing to survive, to take account of, to squeeze the spirit out of life and lure the Great Predator even closer. (5)

Joubert refers to the toll the job has taken on him. The deadening of his spirit has not been caused, as the political context of the novel's production would suggest, by a singular earthquake in the cultural and political environment, in which the members of the SAPS have been recast from guardians of the innocent to inhumane, racist pariahs. Instead, the malaise that burdens Joubert and his fellow white males of Murder and Robbery is what has always burdened detective heroes of the police detective genre: the drip, drip, drip of dealing with murderers and victims, with death, and with the personal evil that generates violent crime.

If a reader were not familiar with the South African history of apartheid policing, had not followed the TRC, he or she would have no idea from reading these novels that the SAP had been implicated in politically motivated killings, kidnappings, torture, and other human rights violations. When the new chief, the political appointee, Colonel de Wit, calls the men into a meeting and conveys his high expectations of them, the tension begins to dissipate:

The detectives started to relax. The new man spoke a new language but the message was the same. He expected no more than any of his predecessors. More work at the same inadequate pay. Results, as long as his back was covered with

the higher-ups. And his promotion was assured. They were used to it. They could live with it. Even if he had been a member of the ANC. (19)

Bart de Wit, it turns out, is white, so while he is differentiated by his politics, he doesn't change the racial formula. Nor does he ever address the politics of the past. Moreover, none of the murder victims or lead detectives, nor the murderer is marked by race, which typically in Meyer's fiction indicates that they are white. For the mostly white police officers of Murder and Robbery, it's business as usual, and, despite the raced, suggestive prologue, that business as usual is fighting white criminals in white communities. When the issue of racism is brought up, its rhetorical purpose seems to be to construct Joubert as an SAPS officer who is *not a racist*.

Yet the novel uses a couple of scenes with police officers of color that may be familiar to South African readers and which reinforce racial hierarchies that position the white male detective hero in the ascendant position. The Cape Town Murder and Robbery's "only officer of color was Leon Petersen...the group's spokesman" (270). As the token officer of colour, Petersen's presence serves to illuminate white officers' behavior and character in Murder and Robbery: they are respectful of Petersen, protect him from racism outside of the department, and, unlike Petersen, do not engage in excessive force. The only two incidents in which Peterson figures prominently show him hitting prisoners that he is interrogating. In fact, he is the only SAPS officer in the novel to engage in police abuse, an implicit denial of white officers' involvement in such violence.

The first incident seems to exist to set up his character as having a temper and being willing to cross the line of professional ethics and abuse prisoners. Gang members accused of raping a girl are brought in, and Joubert and Petersen interrogate them.

Hours of listening to lies, sparring with teenage bravado and blatant provocation. Leon Petersen's patience eventually ran out. In interrogation room number two in Mitchell Plain Station, [Petersen] lost his temper, and hit the youngest gang member on the nose and eye with his clenched fist. Blood spurted on the table.

(91)

In this case, the gang member cries and confesses, breaking open the case. There is a suggestion that this is part of Petersen's skillset at Murder and Robbery. Again, this event sets up a more important scene in which Petersen's temper undermines Joubert's investigation. In that scene, Joubert and Petersen are interrogating Oliver Nienaber, who has been tied to the Mauser murders, the series of murders by someone using a Mauser gun. They don't yet know if he is a suspect or a potential victim, but they have caught him in a couple of lies. Nienaber knows he is in a tight spot, so, we learn later, intentionally provokes Petersen into hitting him in order to escape the fix that he's in. During the interrogation, Joubert recognizes that Petersen's tone is the same one he had before he hit the gang member, and he warns Petersen to calm down. "'Fuckin' rich asshole whitey is lying, Captain,' Petersen replied, the whites of his eyes becoming huge" (271). This last detail about the whites of his eyes seems an unnecessary racial marking, suggesting this detail was intended for a white audience. The first racist remark comes not from the prisoner or the white head interrogator, but the only *coloured* police officer in Murder and Robbery. To complete the provocation of Petersen, Nienaber calls him a *hotnot*, a racial slur of someone categorized as coloured under apartheid. With this comment, Petersen leaps over Nienaber's attorney and strikes Nienaber on the jaw. Nienaber's attorney says that both Petersen and Joubert will lose their jobs in the new South Africa for this brutality, but Nienaber says he would prefer to drop the whole matter if Joubert will likewise drop the matter. As noted above,

Joubert stands by his coloured officer, agreeing with him that “rich fuckin’ asshole whitey is lying” (274), but he agrees to drop the matter, which allows the solution to the case to escape and the murderer to continue. When Nienaber is killed, the investigation has to go back to square one.

Dead before Dying also employs the image of an incompetent black police officer for comic effect, which reinforces a racial hierarchy in the SAPS. Since there are no African officers in Murder and Robbery, Khumalo is borrowed from another division, presumably for this comic purpose. In order to catch an unusually polite, serial bank robber, who wears disguises and flatters the female bank tellers he holds up, calling them “Sweetheart,” Captain Joubert requests undercover police officers from other divisions to stake out every branch of the Premier Bank in town. In one, Khumalo accidentally shoots a customer. The teller mistakenly thinks she is being held up by an elderly white Afrikaner farmer because he calls her “Sweetheart,” and she sounds the alarm. When Khumalo tells the farmer, Uncle Zato, “Don’t move or I’ll shoot,” Meyer goes out of his way to say that Khumalo was a good cop, who shouted his command with authority, such that a real bank robber would have complied. However, the elderly white Afrikaner male, stuck in the racist past, defies the order because he “saw a black man with a pistol [in civilian dress keep in mind], and instinctively wanted to hold his wallet in his hands, keeping it safe” (270). The scene stages a racist joke, that Uncle Zato would assume any black man with a gun would be a criminal, not a police officer. This humiliation is multiplied by Officer Khumalo’s overreaction, shooting the elderly farmer when he reaches for his wallet. The only experience of an African officer in the novel works to demonstrate his incompetence. This depiction suggests that in this world, because of their experience and the respect they command, whites are superior. The implication that Khumalo is less competent than Joubert and the other white officers is

reinforced when Joubert tells Colonel de Wit, “obviously we’ll relieve Constable Khumalo and do a complete investigation of the whole incident” (298). As Meyer presents it, the problem is that other Afrikaners, those unlike his hero Joubert, have not yet come to accept Africans officers as equal members of their society. They are still perceived as the racial other that apartheid marked as criminal, and, in Meyers novels, the communities being policed and protected from crime are presumably white.

Peterson and Khumalo are the only officers marked by race. By not being explicitly raced, Joubert and the remaining detectives are presumably white. In *Dead before Dying*, both of the raced officers function to highlight Joubert’s lack of racism, and, by contrast, to affirm his superior professional expertise. The prologue’s innuendo that the novel might critically address Joubert’s collapsing whiteness, that it would confront the police detective’s complicity in the racial conflict of the past or in the current post-apartheid state remains as nothing more than innuendo, but one that confirms a narrative of white anxiety. The representations of Peterson and Khumalo position them as the dark other that colour Joubert cleaner/whiter. He is the racially enlightened best man in his world.

Dead at Daybreak, written in 1999, after the nation had become engrossed in the TRC hearings, addresses the issue of past racism far more explicitly in a scene between Van Heerden and his confessor, Hope Beneke. The morning after Van Heerden has punched a doctor at Kara-An Rousseau’s dinner party, Hope confronts Van Heerden to tell him that he must grow up and change. She illustrates personal change and responsibility by confessing her racism when she was younger and by recounting her overcoming of it. The narrative of her personal growth begins with a confession about her belief in apartheid growing up:

“I voted for the National Party, Van Heerden. Before ’92. In two elections. Because I believed separate development was right. Fair. Believed like my father and mother. Like my friends. And their parents. Like my teachers and lecturers. Like the whole white population of Bloemfontein. I believed the local Afrikaans newspaper. The Afrikaans radio and TV. I questioned nothing because I saw blacks as we all saw them. As people who believed in witchcraft and the *tokoloshe* and the spirits of their forefathers, who worked in the house and garden and fetched the rubbish and smelled of Lifebuoy soap. I accompanied my father when he took Emily to the location and I looked at the dirty streets and the small gardenless houses and I knew separate development was right because they were so unlike us. Why didn’t they garden? How could people have so little pride?”

(180-181)

Her confession creates the narrative space for a powerful epiphany and reconstruction of her identity as an enlightened, post-apartheid, Afrikaner.

“And then I found a book about Mandela, an old biography, written by some Dutch woman or other, and I read it, and it was like being reborn. Do you know what it feels like to change your opinion of yourself, your views, your people, your parents, your leaders, your background, your history—all within two days? To realize that everything you believed, and believed in, was wrong, twisted, without insight, even evil? But I’m proud of one thing, Van Heerden, that I had the strength to do it. To open my mind to truth. To see, after being blind for so long. And after I had assimilated and processed the guilt and humiliation, after working through my own anger, and the anger I felt against all the whites who

had assisted in my seduction, I came to a decision...I wouldn't judge people based on their colour, beliefs, or actions before I understood why they were like that. And if you think that I'm going to drop it, that I'll believe your infantile excuses, that I'll be thrown off course by your fencing and flight, you are making a big mistake." (181-182)

While it strains credibility to believe that Hope had a complete reversal of her apartheid ideology sedimented in familial, communal, and political institutions within two days by reading a book on Mandela, the scene demonstrates that Meyer is drawing a link between the Afrikaner political crisis in post-apartheid South Africa, and the role of the confessional, personal narrative on the domestic plane. Hope's confession to Van Heerden is a classic example of "white psychic crisis," a term Rob Nixon uses to describe white writing of the late seventies that focuses on the "conscientizing" of the white mind. (88). Hope's narrative focuses on her awakening, her guilt, her anger, her tolerance, and her perseverance in dealing with Van Heerden.

What kind of change in perception, character, and behavior does she demonstrate? The exoticized, othering details that characterize her pre-epiphanic perception, presumably shared, as she suggests, by her broader Afrikaner community, undergo no explicit change post-epiphany. Blacks have disappeared from her discourse as her enlightened mind takes center. Hope's rapid shift from the significance of her conscientizing to her use of that process to demonstrate her tolerance and her contestation of Van Heerden's childishness indicates the degree to which she and Van Heerden and their impending romance is the emotional focus of her confession. Hope equates her overcoming of her racial bigotry with her refusal to judge Van Heerden for his rude behavior before understanding his motivation for his actions. The following excerpt is particularly revealing: "I came to a decision...I wouldn't judge people based on their colour,

beliefs, or actions before I understood why they were like that” (182). She seems to equate Van Heerden’s rude, defensive, misogynistic behavior with the condition of being a black person in South Africa. Only now, she has learned to see beyond what she perceives as the misbehavior of a group or person and look at the underlying causes of that misbehavior. In other words, it appears as if she is still critical of the character of South African blacks, but now she understands that there may be reasonable explanations for *why they are like that*. Hers is a particularly patronizing enlightenment.

Van Heerden rejects Hope’s request that he explain why he acts like he does. Instead he asserts a typical perspective for a hard-boiled detective protagonist: through his work with the criminal element, he has come to realize that humans are **not** inherently good. Rather, we have a great capacity for evil. He explains that he had his “*lucidum intervallum*” about race well before 1992, when he saw a black man reading poetry in an SAP jail cell and found out that the man was arrested for nothing more than walking in a white neighborhood late at night after talking to his thesis advisor, who had invited him, about his master’s thesis on the poet Breyton Breytenbach. This was Van Heerden’s “moment of truth,” regarding the immorality of racial bigotry and oppression under apartheid (182-183). For Van Heerden and for Meyer’s narrative, the black man’s education and reading of poetry, and an Afrikaner poet, if anti-apartheid one, mark him as worthy. During apartheid, police arrest of black men traversing white neighborhoods without the appropriate passbook was common practice. Yet, what sets this man apart from the common criminal other are his Afrikaner cultural and intellectual pursuits with which Van Heerden can identify. Stephen Biko disparagingly characterizes such testimonies of white South African identification with “a few ‘intelligent and articulate’ blacks” as a panacea to white guilt and a means of claiming protest without really participating in the dismantling of the

structures of racism and apartheid (22-23). Van Heerden's scene serves more fully to demonstrate his enlightenment against the failure of the other SAP officers to recognize the prisoner's value because of his color.

Yet, Van Heerden suggests that his recognition of the injustice that this one man suffers, as does Hope's epiphany with Mandela, moves him to a broader political awakening:

...suddenly I was the poor man's Afrikaner Gandhi....In a civilized manner, I made a point of starting conversations with petrol attendants, office cleaners, and road café waiters. Joking and sympathetic, I focused on them *as people*. I knew we differed culturally, but different isn't wrong. Different is merely different.

Basically, we're all human, Hope. I knew that. (Meyer 183, emphasis added)

The identification with his own culture is very strong here. He assumes that *we* (he, Hope Beneke, and all whites) differed from them (all blacks) in some culturally fundamental way that was far more powerful than other points of difference within or across groups—gender, class, sexual orientation, political perspective, etc.. He strongly claims that he “focused on them as people,” immediately suggesting the determination and effort it took him to treat them “as people,” as if there were some other habitual way he would treat them.

It is an astonishing moment when Van Heerden imagines himself as a paternalistic Gandhi figure, even a poor Afrikaner version of one, who is needed to bring the message of peaceful resistance to the non-white masses. Van Heerden's appropriation dramatizes Biko's characterization of white liberals who claim “they have black souls wrapped up in white skin.” These liberals “always knew what was good for blacks and told them so” (20). Rob Nixon notes “as if divinating many years ahead...Biko once cautioned: ‘The liberals must understand...that the blacks do not need a go-between in this struggle for their own emancipation’” (84). Van

Heerden seems to be arrogantly unaware of Biko and the politics of black consciousness. More bewilderingly, it is as if he is completely unaware of the decades of passive resistance that blacks had engaged in up to the Soweto riots and the decades of violent resistance that had followed, and the SAP's state-authorized role in provoking, extending, exasperating, and brutally responding to that resistance. Meyer's novel participates in a style of attention that Nixon notes of American media's representations of apartheid South Africa: "injustice exists as soon as the white man notices it" (88). However, Meyer is South African, has lived through parts of the history of apartheid, has been witness to the truth and reconciliation hearings, and has fashioned a detective series of police or former police detectives who worked during these phases of South African history, which makes these elisions particularly troubling.

Van Heerden has a second epiphany that usurps the first; it is the common epiphany of the hard-boiled protagonist. Seeing black people as people is not necessarily a good thing to Van Heerden:

I made the big mistake of believing we were all good *because* I was good....But even my mother won't admit we're bad. She cannot. Just like you. Because you believe that you're good. And you are. Because you never had the opportunity to let the evil escape, because life has never given you the choice. (Meyer 156)

Typically, the hard-boiled detective has had the opportunity to be evil, has transgressed the line between good and evil, between law enforcer and criminal, and so has become enlightened about the capacity for evil in every human. While this is a confession of evil, it is also a defense of his personal character, of his personal failings. If we are all capable of evil, then none deserve to be singled out for having done evil when the opportunity presented itself, whether it is betraying

one's partner and falling in love with his wife or participating in the violent oppression of groups classified non-white; anyone, Afrikaner or African, white or black, has the capacity for the same kinds of evil action, the same bigotry, the same racism. Van Heerden's narrative also contests the idea that Afrikaners were more likely to be racial bigots than other ethnic groups. Van Heerden's platitude that we are all alike becomes an incredible flattening of the history and structures of racism and oppression under apartheid.

Meyer's final strategy for marking Van Heerden as different from the racist white Afrikaner male detectives of the SAP is through his alliance with Tiny Mpayipheli, a large Xhosa enforcer in Orlando Arendse's crime gang and a former assassin for the ANC. While everyone keeps telling him that he should go back to the police force, Van Heerden occupies the romantic liminal space between the police and criminals, between the safety of middle class family and society and the dangerousness of the streets, between white and non-white, that is often the domain of the hard-boiled detective. Although *Dead at Daybreak* includes many of the same characters from *Dead before Dying*, as a *former* member of Murder and Robbery who now, like the typical hard-boiled detective figure, belongs to no particular organization, family, marriage, culture, or other social group, Van Heerden is able to move from one location to another, transgressing boundaries between distinct social groups. He is able to procure the help of Mat Joubert and other members of Murder and Robbery, but as is typical of the hard-boiled detective he is also able to form alliances with the criminal element. The murder that Van Heerden is investigating points to a conspiracy involving members of apartheid-era (1976) military intelligence, so he seeks out the assistance of a drug lord, Orlando Arendse, who in apartheid parlance would be racially classified as coloured. Meyer is careful in racing Orlando, acknowledging the complexity of his history as well as an element of racial oppression in that

history: “a man with brown skin and the features of a Xhosa, the unsympathetic genes of his legendary white wine farmer father and his servant mother” (84). Van Heerden’s alliance with Orlando will lead to an important partnership with Billy September, who Meyer identifies simply as coloured, and Tiny Mpayipheli, who Meyer identifies as “the black man” (301). Tiny will be the vigilante protagonist of *Devil’s Peak* (2004), but in *Dead at Daybreak* his main role is to square up the sides between the conspiratorial alliance of these former South African military men, Orion Solutions, who identify themselves as white Afrikaner racists, and Van Heerden, Wilna van As, his client, Van Heerden’s mother, and the mother of the murder victim, Carolina de Jager, who is identified as a farmer’s wife from the Free State.

Tiny is named after an Afrikaner athlete from the most famous rugby team in South Africa, the Springboks, and this is just one of many ways that he is constructed to be a comforting and accessible black character for Afrikaners. When Carolina de Jager, an elderly Afrikaner, is confronted with Tiny’s “terrifying size,” she exclaims, “Lord save us.” Tiny responds, “‘And protect us,’ . . . and he smiled, showing a perfect set of teeth. ‘Why don’t they make hymns like that anymore?’” (301). When Mrs. De Jager is surprised that he knows the old hymn book, he respectfully explains, “My father was a missionary, ma’am” (301). Tiny’s real name is “Thobela,” which he tells Van Heerden means “respectful, well mannered” (Meyer 326). Not only does he share de Jager’s manners and Christian upbringing, but he shares other Afrikaner values as well, namely rugby. He wants to make sure they have the sports channel, so he won’t miss the weekly rugby match. As his coloured partner, Billy September puts it, “Tiny’s a very strange Xhosa, likes rugby more than soccer” (Meyer 302).

Tiny explains that his last name, *Mpayipheli*, means “the one who never stops fighting” (327). When Van Heerden finally confronts the Orion Solutions gang, it is only Tiny who is

adequately strong and persevering to take on its murderous leader, Speckle, who challenges him to a discussion of “white domination,” by which he means hand-to-hand combat to the death. When Van Heerden takes on the rest of the gang, it is as if he and Tiny are taking on the old racist *Broederbond* together. It is Tiny who will pronounce final judgment on the character of Meyer’s detective hero, “You’re a good person, Van Heerden” (409).

In a long, digressive narrative, Tiny recounts for Van Heerden a rugby competition between himself and other members of the ANC against their Soviet military trainers that seems to foreshadow *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation*, the 2008 book upon which the 2009 movie *Invictus* is based, a historical event, book, and movie that demonstrated how important it was for Afrikaners that South African blacks embrace the beauty of their signature sport. Meyer seems to have imagined how compelling this would be for Afrikaners back in 1999. In Tiny’s narrative, the ANC members were in the Soviet Union near the border of Kazakhstan to train in military resistance to the South African SAP and military. Tiny gets into a fight with a Uzbek member of the Red Army whose “hate was the white man’s hate” (328), but this provokes a hate in Tiny that is even bigger. The Uzbek soldier has a heart attack and dies that night, after which Tiny is put into a jail cell. For some reason, the commander of the base is interested in preparing his base’s rugby team for a competition, so he wagers that they can beat the ANC members. If the ANC wins, then Tiny will be let free. The problem is only a few coloured members of the ANC know anything about rugby. The rest of the group represent various South African ethnic groups (Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, Venda, and etc.) who thought “rugby was the sport of the oppressor” (330). Yet, when faced with humiliation at the hands of a different white group

...something happened...as if those fifteen South Africans from the townships and the small-town locations and the villages of Bantustans suddenly had insight into this strange, wonderful game...Van Heerden, you should've seen them play—it was wonderful, it was indescribably beautiful. (335)

The story breaks down some stereotypes. For example, Van Heerden is an Afrikaner who was never into the sport. Tiny and his fellow black South Africans beat the Russians. However, while the ANC rugby overcomes racial stereotypes, it does so in a way that does not challenge Afrikaners or disrupt the racial binary in the novel and in the detective genre.

Meyer displaces racial conflict, putting it upon the Soviet soldiers, and thereby making it more palatable to Afrikaners. The Afrikaner and the black South Africans can share in the final victory against a common enemy. As Tiny puts it: “On the rugby field that day, South Africa won its only test against the Red Peril, thirty-six to eighteen” (336). In this image of the rainbow nation, it is the blacks that have come to a sense of enlightenment about their countrymen: they have learned the beauty of the Afrikaner cultural pastime, and they have learned that racism against blacks is widespread and not the sole province of white South Africans. While this performs an overcoming of racial difference, it does so in a way that, once again, ignores the institutionalized racism of apartheid and the heavy toll in lives damaged and lost in that project, and in a way that leaves the Afrikaner in an ascendant position, the true aficionados of rugby. At the end of *Dead at Daybreak*, it is Tiny Mpayipheli who pronounces final judgment on the white detective hero's character: “You're a good person, Van Heerden” (409).

“What kind of man are you?” I am not a Sexist

In one of the chapters devoted to his confession, Van Heerden tells the reader (whose identity we do not yet know, but we can be sure that she will be a woman), “I am not a sexist”

(161). This becomes the central argument in the reconstruction of the identity of the Afrikaner detective heroes in Meyer's two detective novels. While the novels eschew questions of racism and Afrikaner complicity in apartheid, their confessional narratives obsessively construct a new, softer masculine identity for their protagonists, countering hardboiled constructions congruent with an Afrikaner "hard right masculinity," a term I've borrowed from Sandra Swart. In "'Man, Gun and Horse' Hard Right Afrikaner Masculine identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa," Swart employs the term to "evoke a sense of political conservatism and a rigid belief system wrapped up in militarized, 'hyper-masculine identity' in the Afrikaner "civil and military bureaucracy," which includes policemen and soldiers (76). As I have argued earlier, this increasingly dishonored masculinity informs the white male anxiety present in Meyer's novels. In the new democracy, Meyer's detective heroes demonstrate their soft-boiled masculinity through their greater appreciation of tasks and roles that are conventionally feminine (cooking, nurturing, and the arts) and by an appreciation of women who demonstrate competency and power in the public realm (e.g., Dr. Hanna Nortier, Hope Beneke, and Van Heerden's mother). But the arguments are shallow, contradictory, and ultimately contained by regressive generic moves, such as the encoding of women as the contested property of men, the punishing of sexualized women, spectacles of violence against women, and resolutions that require heroes' female love interests to be rescued by the detective hero protagonists.

Meyer begins his career as a detective novelist by employing what Abbott calls the common generic trope of constructing the hero's masculinity through the *femme fatale figure* (Abbott 8). Since Janey Place's article "Women in Film Noir," written in 1978, there has been a debate over whether "the femme fatale is merely a misogynist projection of male fear of female agency or whether she represents a profound power that is of use value to feminist theory"

(Abbott 138). In support of the latter position, Elizabeth Crowley argues that the *femme fatale* figure in *film noir* “afforded women roles which are active, adventurous, and driven by sensual desire” and whose “dangerous female sexuality can be enjoyed by female as well as male viewers” (qtd. in Abbott 138). As Abbott puts it, “The visual power of the *femme fatale* and the dominance of her image...may carry more potency than all the male-centered, male-identified, and male-narrated stories that sought to contain her” (138). However, the figure of the *femme fatale* in *Dead before Dying*, Dr. Hanna Nortier, is so contained that she neither represents explicit misogynistic anxiety nor significant female agency or potency.

Meyer has positioned Hanna Nortier to pose a significant threat to Joubert. Professionally, as his therapist, she has the power to end his career through a bad report; conversely, through therapeutic rehabilitation, she could help him resurrect his former role at Murder and Robbery. Moreover, she is able to discuss with him his investigation of the Mauser Murders and use this knowledge to obfuscate her guilt as the killer. As a therapist and as a woman in a patriarchal society, she is able to penetrate the tough guy veneer of the detective and call forth his vulnerable self, which could leave him vulnerable to her malevolent intentions. As John Scaggs notes:

the *femme fatale* is the antithesis to the hardboiled detective private eye, in that she reverses the normal dialectic of rough surface and sensitive depth that characterizes the private eye hero. The emotional, sensitive façade of the *femme fatale*...disguises a tough, self-serving identity. The *femme fatale* uses her apparent vulnerability by appealing to the private eye’s chivalry and code of honor to get close to him so that when her true nature is revealed, she is in a position to threaten him personally. (77)

However, this is not the gender calculus of *Dead before Dying*. Joubert has no tough guy veneer. He is emotionally paralyzed or hysterical and Hanna Nortier, though a serial killer, is more victim than dangerous woman. As noted previously, Joubert was attracted to her smallness, her sadness, her frailty, which turns out not to be a facade. Typically, the *femme fatale* in hardboiled detective fiction would be an element of suspense and anxiety as the reader and the male protagonist discover clues that suggest she is not to be trusted. In *Dead before Dying*, there are no clues that she is the murderess until very late in the narrative, after which Joubert immediately arrests her, yet not with triumphant rejection. He asks her why and then the reader is presented with the scene of her gang rape by men she has murdered. The effect is to emphasize her victimization and her need for protection rather than her role as killer.

Stephen Knight argues in *Form & Ideology in Crime Fiction* that the threats faced by the detective hero are “private threats” from “intimate associates”: “The villain is a woman [the detective hero] finds attractive, who has made vigorous and alarming sexual overtures to him” (156). The containment of this dangerous sexuality is part of the project of the hardboiled detective. As Dennis Porter puts it, the hardboiled detective hero “does not so much lack romance” as he “rejects it” (Porter 187). In *Dead before Dying*, it is the seventeen-year-old Yvonne Stoffberg who is the more sexually adventurous and dangerous woman who is rejected by Joubert for Hanna, the frail woman that Joubert can protect and possess in a very conventional gender relationship, seemingly calculated to show his maturation from the beginning of the novel and to show his softer masculinity.

However, the most important step for his healing, his confession of guilt and anxiety related to his wife’s, Lara’s, death takes place not with Yvonne or Hanna, but Margaret Wallace, the widow of the first victim of the Mauser Murders and the woman who will eventually become

his wife in *Dead at Daybreak*. Joubert chooses her as the woman who should receive his confession perhaps because as Stephen Knight says of the hardboiled genre, “women with a reduced sexual drive are trusted and liked” (157). Margaret believes Joubert has told the newspapers something he kept from her: that her husband was coming from a sexual tryst with another woman when he was killed. He explains that he didn’t tell the newspaper and he kept knowledge about the affair from her because he himself was humiliated when he had learned not only that his wife had been shot to death two years earlier but that it had occurred after her sexual tryst with a drug dealer as part of her undercover work. Wallace’s parallel humiliation is another reason Joubert chooses her as the woman who should hear his story of his wife’s murder, which is tainted by his being cuckolded.

More so than the revelation of the Mauser murderer, the novel’s climactic revelation is Joubert’s confession of the reason for his fall from grace, and while the Manichean race divide discursively haunts the scene, Joubert’s story is not about a public shame connected to race and the politics of apartheid as the prologue seemed to foreshadow. Joubert’s loss of cleanness is his breaking of the law to plant a microphone in order to capture a drug dealer named Silva, who is metaphorically dirtied and blackened in the prologue. Joubert tells Margaret Wallace that “it’s against the law to plant microphones. We are not allowed to. But if you’re clean, you have power” (369). However, the planting of a listening device is a comparatively minor breach of ethics that is presented as justified. The purpose of the scene is to demonstrate within the confessional narrative Joubert’s humiliation at the loss of his possession of his wife to the criminal Silva. When he goes home to listen to the tape of the night before, he is surprised to hear Lara’s voice. A fellow police officer, she has been on a secret undercover assignment to entrap Silva. Joubert hears them flirting, listening to music, and then her dancing for Silva: “I

want those tits...show it all, baby. Watch me.' His Lara. He saw his Lara. He knew his Lara....Not for him, my Lara, not for him" (405). Soon Joubert is listening to his wife having sex with Silva and the sounds of the lovemaking coming to a climax:

Lara's laugh. Silence. The bed, the bed sounds, sounds. *Ah, good. Take it, yes, take it, jeez, good, now, uhm, jeez, baby, uhm, uhm, jeez, you're alive, baby, uhm.*

It was his, his, his noises, his Lara, his Lara. He wanted to tear off the earphones and run upstairs, stop it, but this was last night. (405)

After Lara and Silva finish having intercourse, Silva finds Lara's gun and immediately decides she's a plant and that he's going to kill her. "It was too easy. Never trust an easy fuck. Baby, you're going to die." She pleads for her life, but there is a gunshot. The novel casts her murder as a physical injury done to Joubert that brings him and Margaret Wallace together in intimacy.

The shot tore through him, tore through him, tore through his flesh and his blood and his soul, and tumbled him down, his life, his life was falling, tumbling, he, down, with all the broken pieces, the remains, tape clicking, the yellow light dead, the tape turning, *shirrrrrr*, back, to the beginning, his body jerked, jerked, jerked, and now he stood on the lawn and he shivered because the cold was so deep and Margaret Wallace was holding him, the tape that stopped and turned, the yellow light, a door opening, steps, *So what do you think? It's lovely. What music do you have?* Margaret Wallace who held him, more and more tightly to stop the spasms, shaking with him, the two of them drowning, weeping, among the shrubs in the garden. (Meyer 406-407)

This is the climax of the confessional narrative in *Dead before Dying*. Joubert is able to let go of the remnants of his hard, Afrikaner masculinity, and confess his humiliation to Margaret

Wallace. His dissemblance among the suburban shrubbery (so much for the mean streets) and in the arms of a “good” woman dramatize his emotional release from the ties of the traumatic past and prepare him for his professional re-masculinization, his discovery and confrontation of the Mauser murderer, Hana, his vulnerability to her no longer in play.

While Meyer may be attempting to rehabilitate a post-apartheid Afrikaner male hero who is less hard, less violent, and more emotionally vulnerable, his use of the tropes of the genre and his patriarchal resolution subverts any progressive claim. While he forms intimate bonds with women, their characterization undermines female agency, as will be demonstrated also with *Dead at Daybreak* below. Joubert chooses the conventional, non-sexualized, non-professional, wealthy family woman Margaret Wallace, who is always referred to her by her full name, as his confessor and romantic interest over the professional female characters who have either been killed or are victimized killers. The epiphany of the confessional narrative shows that it is not the murder of his wife that has traumatized Joubert but her cuckolding of him just before she is punished for her sexual transgression by Silva. Meyer focuses on Joubert’s pain, the bullet metaphorically tearing through his rather than Lara’s body. His humiliation is having to listen to Silva having sex with “his Lara,” the “his” repeatedly asserted, before Silva shoots her. Ultimately, his trauma is his loss of ownership of his wife’s body, the body of the only woman he has ever had sexually, according to his confessions to Hanna. In the regressive resolutions to the novel’s two-track narrative, women are cast as possessions of good men or victims of evil men, and in the case of Hanna, a victim turned killer. These resolutions are played out in scenes of spectacle violence against women that render them as objects in the detective hero’s quest for absolution for his past self and affirmation of his new heroic identity.

Like Joubert, Van Heerden will reject a sexually dangerous woman and choose an attractive but less overtly sexual woman as his confessor. As noted above, half of the chapters in *Dead at Daybreak* are devoted to Van Heerden's confession, which we will eventually learn is the story of his life demanded by Kara-An Rousseau in exchange for providing Hope and Van Heerden the publicity for their case that they have asked her for. When he reveals this toward the end of the novel in one of the non-confessional chapters, he asserts that this is a power play by Kara-An, and he vows to resist it. In the final chapter, Van Heerden shows Kara-An Rousseau that he has kept his word and written his life's story, but he asserts that he never agreed to let her read it. The confession is not for her but the too obviously named Hope.

Van Heerden is established as a new kind of detective hero. The son of a Bohemian artist and a white male Afrikaner miner, Van Heerden is marked by this unusual hybridity as different from those around him in terms of his perspective, his education regarding the arts and high-brow culture and in terms of his rejection of the race, class, and gender norms of the conservative, working class, and highly patriarchal Afrikaner community that he grew up in. It is Van Heerden's mother who sexually objectifies the father, seeing him at a bar wearing a torn rugby shirt after a match and deciding she wants to paint him. She takes him to the veld, has him stand on a rock, and tells him, "Undress." When he removes his shirt and shoes, she tells him, "That's not enough." The inversion of roles in the sexual seduction becomes a fundamental aspect of Van Heerden's parents' relationship: it is fueled by the mother's appreciation of and passion for his father's body. This objectification of the male body becomes part of the unusual upbringing of Van Heerden that marks him as different from the typical white Afrikaner, male detective, who is stereotypically sexist and patriarchal.

Van Heerden suggests that living in Joan Van Heerden's home was a "cultural oasis" in the midst of a mining town, which he describes as: .

Young Afrikaners with a minimum of education and a maximum of income made for a heady, combustible mixture. They lived their lives on the fast track—they earned fast and spent fast on fast cars, bikes, and women. Their alcohol intake, their tempers—everything matched the speed of potential death in the dark depths of the earth. (Meyer 43)

As a young man, Van Heerden first major sexual relationship is with his mother's friend Betta Wandrag, who is a famous poet and another example of powerful, independent woman who has rejected the conventional gender norms of her Afrikaner community,

That night...Betta Wandrag initiated me with patience and compassion into the world of hedonism....She revealed to me the secrets of a woman's body like a gospel, educated me in the minor and major pleasures of women, gently corrected my mistakes, richly rewarded my successes. (100-01)

She shows him how to perform oral sex, and then writes a famous poem entitled "For Z" or "*cunnilingua franca*" (120). Beyond sex, Betta educates him about classical music, Mozart in particular, poetry, art, and in cooking. Between the famous Bohemian artist mother, Joan van Heerden and her poet friend hedonist, Betta Wandrag, Van Heerden is trained to appreciate strong, intelligent, sexually adventurous women, which mark him as new kind of detective hero. Van Heerden's appreciation of sexual vibrant women is subverted when the neighbor, whose outdoor sexual escapades were the catalyst for Van Heerden's sexual tryst with Betta, is found murdered and sexually mutilated. Van Heerden notes that it is Marnewick's murder that motivates him to join the police and subsequently to study criminology at a university.

Van Heerden's claim that he is not a sexist comes in chapter 24 when he explains his rejection of conventional, superficial women, who are manipulative, negotiating access to their bodies in exchange for commitment to a socially successful man. This figure is ultimately represented by Wendy Brice, a senior lecturer in English literature, who "knew that she was a woman in the male world of the university and the glass ceiling of the senior lecturer would be her highest step up the academic ladder (191). She decides Van Heerden is her ticket to her professional and social ambitions. Wendy becomes the focal point of his eight-page (the entire chapter 24) rant against women of questionable "sexual morality" (189) that follows his assertion that he "is not a sexist" (188). The rant seems to contradict his claim that he is not a sexist. He complains that

Like most beautiful women, Wendy was also a manipulative operator who couldn't resist the power of her curves. She used them and her pouty little mouth...and her little-girl attitude. Never so flagrantly that it could be pinned down. But subtly, like a pick pocket. (191-192)

Van Heerden is a more culturally enlightened man than Joubert, and he is looking for a woman that is neither overly sexually aggressive, like Kara-An Rousseau, and thus, in Meyer's characterizations, self-loathing and deserving of punishment, nor conventionally shallow and manipulative like Wendy Brice, but one who, like his Bohemian artist mother, capable of a true, adventurous, sexual, and artistic romance.

Van Heerden's search for love is constrained by three precepts that his mother gives him as a teenager. The first two precepts speak to understanding women as independent, human beings and thus contest patriarchal norms: "Before you have sex with a woman, think. Think if you want to have a baby with her....Think, my child, whether you love her" (62-63) and "never

force a woman” (63). However, the third precept is the one critical to Van Heerden’s traumatic past, and it is a socially conservative, patriarchal norm that subverts the first two and makes *Dead at Daybreak* a far more conventional treatment of gender than it tries to be. His mother tells Van Heerden: “And the third thing is to leave another man’s woman alone” (63). When Van Heerden finally finds his true love, she is another man’s woman. Nonnie Nagel is the wife of his police partner and mentor, Captain Willem Nagel, the typical, blue collar, anti-intellectual/anti-elitist Afrikaner SAP officer.

While the first two precepts of Joan Van Heerden urge her son to seek out relationships with women on an equal basis, neither one possessing the other, the third precept argues that women are possessions of men, of their husbands or lovers. From this standpoint, it doesn’t matter that when Van Heerden meets Nonnie Nagel, his police partner’s wife, that he realizes that she is *the one* for him, it doesn’t matter that she is hopelessly out of love with Nagel, or that Nagel calls her his “chains” and seems as pained in the marriage as she. Van Heerden’s mother’s precepts support the patriarchal value that Van Heerden cannot pursue the wife of another because she is owned by him, and to take her would be a violation of his rights. As with Joubert’s situation with Lara in *Dead before Dying*, the traumatic event that is the catalyst for the hero’s dissolution at the beginning of *Dead at Daybreak* is a failure to possess the primary female lover.

Eventually, Nagel suspects that Van Heerden and his wife are having an affair and tells Van Heerden, “If anyone ever messes with my wife, I’ll shoot him. Like a dog” (327). He forces his younger partner to come with him to arrest the Red Ribbon Executioner so that 1) he can show Van Heerden that he, Nagel, without a fancy university education, is still the better investigator, and it appears 2) to put Van Heerden’s life in danger. It may seem reasonable to the

reader, then, when Van Heerden hesitates before shooting the assailant, just long enough for him to shoot and kill Nagel. In any case, it was a decision, an act, made in the moment. It was not premeditated, so ultimately it is Van Heerden's affair with his partner's wife that is cast as the unforgivable act, a sin against patriarchy. Their relationship ends when after Nagel's death, his wife, Nonnie, refuses to talk to Van Heerden, as if she realizes that what they have done is unforgiveable. Van Heerden seems to share this belief:

I was never given the opportunity to confess.

I didn't go to her that evening to take possession of her. I went to confess, to tell her that I had eventually been weighed as a man, as human being, and found myself despicable. After so many years of hunting evil, I had discovered an infinity of evil in myself. And I deserved it because I had seen myself as above it all.

But I cannot deny that I yearned for her forgiveness. I didn't go to her to tell her that I didn't deserve her. I sank far lower than that. I went to seek absolution. (463)

Nonnie's refusal to hear Van Heerden's confession or provide him with absolution provides the impetus for the novel's confessional narrative. In the end, unattached Hope Beneke will provide Van Heerden with what Nonnie could not: both true love and absolution.

Meyer's narrative of the progressive Afrikaner male detective hero is subverted in these novels in several ways, but one of the most critical is by the exploitation of the spectacle of explicit, almost pornographic sexual violence against women to engage his readers. Not only do we get the passage of Silva and Lara having sex before he shoots her, Meyer also presents a detailed erotic description of a sexual encounter that precipitates the gang rape of Hanna Nortier, which together go on for 8 pages.

In *Dead at Daybreak*, Van Heerden's sexual awakening occurs when he sees and hears Baby Marnewick masturbating. A week later, Baby is sexually mutilated and murdered. It's an uncomfortable linking of eroticism and sadistic violence against women. Van Heerden's study of serial killers continually brings out the spectacle of sadistic violence against women. However, the most troubling scene of sexual violence occurs in the climactic scene of the Orion mystery. Meyer puts Hope in the role of helpless victim subjugated to the desires of men, undoing an earlier scene in which his mother and Carolina de Jager demonstrate that women are strong and capable of self-protection.²¹ "He saw...Hope's shivering body, her lips around the barrel of the M16, the tears rolling down her cheeks, her eyes turning toward Van Heerden" (356). The image not only shows her powerlessness, but describing Hope's lips as around the phallic barrel of the gun is clearly meant to suggest her sexual subordination. The scene is of a violent, forcible rape. When Van Heerden is forced to put down his gun, he pleads with the man holding the M16 to pull the gun out of her mouth. Overall, the novel is full of the spectacle of sexualized violence against women, and the final effect of this spectacle and narrative resolution is to reproduce a gender hierarchy in which men are the active, capable, abusers or protectors of women and women are the objects with which evil and good men struggle for ascendancy.

In the end, Van Heerden is able to kill the man in front of Hope, which allows the man who was aiming an M16 at him to shoot him (something of an echo of the scene with his partner Nagel and the Red Ribbon Executioner. Having survived the gunshot, his valor and his masculinity have been proven. As Tiny, Van Heerden's black partner in confronting the Orion

²¹ When the crime boss, Speckle, sends four of his heavily armed men to Van Heerden's mother's place in order to teach him a lesson for getting in their way, Joan van Heerden, their middle-aged client, Wilma van As, and the elderly mother of her deceased lover, Carolina de Jager, are on the private estate under the protection of one security agent, Billy September. When the police arrive, they note that all four of the assailants have been killed or hospitalized. Captain Joubert asks Van Heerden, "One security man handled four armed attackers?" Van Heerden replies, "He got one. A farmer's wife from the Free State got two with a shotgun. And my mother hit the other one with a spade" (365). The police officers are astounded by the women's ability to stand up to this deadly gang.

gang, pronounced him a good man, and by inference, a good non-racist white man, it is left to the feminist character Hope to pronounce him a good man, and by inference a non-sexist man. After Hope reads Van Heerden's life story, his confessional narrative, she goes to Van Heerden's. There she is greeted by the aroma of seafood and the sounds of Mozart, but Van Heerden's hard edge is apparent as well, as he asserts that he doesn't want to talk about his confession.

“Perhaps you're right,” she said. “Perhaps there is some wickedness in each of us that lies dormant until the moment of truth. But in that warehouse you were willing to die to save my life. What does that tell you?”

He stirred the seafood pancake mixture.

“Would you like to eat?” he asked. (464)

With this line, *Dead at Daybreak* ends in a similar way to *Dead before Dying*, with the protagonist-investigator offering a commonplace, domestic invitation to the woman with whom he hopes to fall in love and complete the reconstruction of his identity.

In both of these early Deon Meyer novels, it is the traumatized, isolated, and infantilized white Afrikaner male detective who is able to navigate his crisis of masculinity by confessing a past sin related not only to betrayal and lust but, most critically, the failure to possess the women he desires. In the end, he confesses and is not only forgiven by the new love interest, but she recognizes that he is the best man of this world and pursues a romantic love with him. For the female love interests, their role seems to be to validate the hero by forgiving and loving him. In this way, Meyer has constructed hardboiled detective narratives that offer a detective hero whose hysterical crises of masculinity are relieved by redefining themselves as new, enlightened, white Afrikaners with a somewhat softer or at least more broad-minded masculinity. However, the genre itself has the final word. Scenes of pornographic violence against women and hyper-

masculine rescues performed by the hardboiled detective hero reclaim the narratives safely within the confines of the genre and its generic refiguring of the binaries of race, gender, and class, leaving us with the typical hardboiled white, hyper-masculine detective hero in the ascendant position, as still the best man, just one who has learned a greater appreciation for classical music, capers, and female sexuality.

Meyer's claims that his detective heroes in these first two novels are neither racist nor sexist is part of a broader claim that these heroes are a new breed of Afrikaner detective who has gained the markers of cultural capital that were often foresworn by Afrikaner males as indicators of a feminine, British masculinity: high-brow culture, education, and professional careers. In *Dead before Dying*, Meyer constructs a simplistic character arc for Mat Joubert. After he lets down his invulnerable masculine mask to his therapist and love interest, Dr. Hannah Nortier, she invites him to the opera. It is her education and cultural knowledge that attracts him to her rather than Yvonne Stoffberg.

Because if he placed Dr. Hannah Nortier and Yvonne Stoffberg next to each other on the scale of femininity, he was stunned. How could he have been so aroused. Now, compared with Hannah Nortier's, Yvonne Stoffberg's beauty had become shallow, her sensuality diminished. (152)

In the final chapter, after Hannah is arrested for the Mauser murders, he invites his new love interest, Margaret Wallace, to the opera.

In *Dead at Daybreak*, Meyer develops a more sophisticated argument for an enlightened Afrikaner masculinity. Instead of the soft, shy, humble/humiliated masculinity of Joubert, Van Heerden's masculinity has a hard edge to it. He gets in fights with dentists and lawyers. He punches out doctors at dinner parties when they are condescending but don't show an adequate

appreciation of Mozart's music. He considers a sado-masochistic relationship with Kara-an Rousseau. Even his markers of high-brow culture have a hard-edge to them. He has a passionate appreciation for art: for healthy gourmet cooking, for Mozart, for erotic poetry, and for education. He rejects the soft, flaccid life of an academic that his girlfriend, Wendy, so desperately desired: "status was important to Wendy" (139), as were commitment, bourgeois comfort, and domestic stability. For Van Heerden, the quest for knowledge is not for rank or profession but the urgent need to outsmart a serial killer. The quest for love is not for comfort, but a risky, adventure to win a rare if not singular prize. These are all a part of the hard-edged but enlightened masculinity that Meyer presents as the special providence of his new post-apartheid Afrikaner male detective hero, he who is the best man of his world. This is the kind of man that Meyer, both a novelist and a motocross enthusiast, can laud and respect.

In *Dead at Daybreak*, there is a clue to how this detective hero figure will evolve in the new South Africa, the rainbow nation. This is in the figure of Tiny Mpayipheli and his partnership with Van Heerden in confronting the Orion gang. While the crimes in Meyer's first two novels are perpetrated by white criminals and can be investigated within the confines of the white community, increasingly white detectives will have to cross into other racial communities to manage non-white criminals, and the racially hybridized detective team becomes the strategy employed by white authors of hardboiled detective novels. Benny Griessel, the alcoholic detective friend of Mat Joubert in *Dead before Dying* and Tiny from *Dead at Daybreak* will team up in an ad hoc partnership of white police detective and black vigilante in *Devil's Peak* (2007) in order to avenge the rape of Griessel's daughter by members of a South American drug cartel operating in Cape Town. Mike Nichol will go this route as well with his *Payback*, which will feature two former gun runners (one perhaps based on the Christo Mercer character of *Ibis*

Tapestry, forming a private security team, who are forced by club owner and his drug-dealing son, into a battle against a vigilante, terrorist organization that is bombing clubs involved with dealing drugs to South African youth. The next chapter will address this evolution of the hardboiled genre.

CHAPTER 4

WHITE IMAGININGS OF THE RAINBOW NATION:

THE HYBRID DETECTIVE TEAM

South Africa's Rainbow nation title refers to the incredible diversity of its people, from the original San inhabitants of the land to the people who migrated and settled here over the years. There is hardly a nation on Earth that is not in some way represented in this diverse country. ("South Africa Rainbow Nation")

*On 11 May 2008, residents of Alexandra Township near Johannesburg turned violently on their neighbors, launching a string of attacks that, two weeks later, left 60 dead, dozens raped and over a hundred thousand displaced. Most of those killed were from beyond South Africa's borders, but at least a third were citizens who, for reasons of ethnicity or political affiliation, failed to protect their space in the country's urban core. (Landau, *Exorcising the Demons Within* back cover)*

"Is This the End of the Rainbow Nation?" (South African Observer).

The celebratory yet much-contested term "Rainbow Nation" conveyed an enduring optimism toward multiculturalism or non-racialism that held sway in South Africa in the decade after the transition to a new democracy. The phrase was coined by Bishop Desmond Tutu, but its popularization is attributed to Nelson Mandela who stated in his inaugural speech, "Each of us is

as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld...a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world” (Statement of Nelson). Towards the end of the speech, he appealed, “We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.” In “Conditions of Cultural Production in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” Jyoti Mistry suggests that the shifting of a “marginal culture to the center “ through processes of political negotiation, as was the case with South Africa, results in “normative conceptions of center/margin” needing to be reshaped to “account for a new ‘pluralism’ or cultural diversification—celebrating the differences while at the same time maintaining a semblance of ‘homogeneity’” (3) President Mandela’s inauguration marked the hopeful vision and celebration of such diversity and unity through his invitation to South Africans to effect a politics of harmonious multiculturalism in constructing the Rainbow Nation.

The post-apartheid South African Constitution reflected the new democracy’s commitment to a politics of inclusion. Loren B. Landau, Director of the African Centre for Migration & Society at the University of the Witwatersrand, notes that the Constitution’s vision of a “postracial” country included “not only the nation’s aboriginal population, but also migrants from Asia, Europe, and the rest of Africa” (“Transplants and Transients” 128). To safeguard that all people in the nation would not suffer exclusion on the grounds of “race, religion, class or origins, the Constitution’s preamble proudly promises that ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it’ without explicit reference to place of birth, ancestry or immigration status” (“Transplants and Transients” 129). While the vision of non-exclusion was motivated to include “political exiles and non-‘African’ groups,” it also reflects a connection of South Africa to the broader continent that Thabo Mbeki was to promote during his presidency, first unveiled in his 1996 “I

am an African Speech,” which commemorated the country’s new constitution (Landau 128-129). While Mbeki’s pan-Africanist program contrasts with Mandela’s Rainbow Nation campaign, both articulations of nationalisms suggest an embracing of immigrant Africans choosing to live in the country. The violent xenophobic attacks of Alexandra in 2008 and the most recent attacks against African immigrants in April 2015 have led people in South Africa, on the African continent, and across the globe to question whether the “Rainbow nation project has failed” (“Big Debate”). International headlines echo the disintegrating vision of rainbow-ness, with headlines such as “Xenophobia Plagues Rainbow Nation” in *Al Jazeera*, and “Rainbow Nation Betrayed as South Africans Attack Immigrants” in *Bloomberg Business*. In an April 2015 article entitled “Rainbow Nation turns Dark as Attacks on Immigrants Rise” in *Reuters*, a statement from Nobel Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu’s foundation is quoted lamenting: “(We are) witnessing hate crimes on a par with the worst that apartheid could offer... Our rainbow nation that so filled the world with hope is being reduced to a grubby shadow of itself” (qtd. by Serino and Mapenzauswa). Although “the attackers, like the victims, [were] usually poor and black” (Jacobs), the xenophobic attacks are often supported or catalyzed by comments from government officials or community leaders, so are seen as part of a national xenophobic discourse that is in tension with the way South Africa promotes itself as open to all groups. For example, the most recent round of attacks in the spring of 2015 was largely seen as fueled by comments from Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, who called for immigrants to be sent home (Jacobs; also Serino and Mapenzauswa; Karimi, “What’s behind Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa?”; and Ryan Lenora Brown, “Fear Grips the Rainbow Nation”), and compared immigrants to lice and ants (Jacobs).

While the previous chapter on Deon Meyer's novels focuses on white, Afrikaner anxiety in the new South Africa in the late 1990s when the TRC was being planned and implemented, this chapter will focus on the resonating TRC goal of national reconciliation as dramatized through two detective fiction novels that exemplify the increasing trend of hybrid, multi-racialized detective teams in South African detective fiction in the first decade of the twenty-first century, a proliferation that suggests that white authors embraced Mandela's hopeful vision of a harmonious multiculturalism and the promise of a peaceful, multi-racial belonging in the Rainbow Nation. Richard Kunzmann's *Bloody Harvests* imagines a white and African male detective partnering, the most popular choice of South African authors of team detective fiction, and Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby* presents a coloured male and African female detective partnering.

In focusing their novels on cross-racial detective duos, Kunzmann and Brown are in line with other South African detective fiction authors, writing both before and after the transition to democracy, who have chosen detective partners to traverse the multi-raced yet often racially and economically segregated communities of the country. The prevalence of such duos may well indicate that interracial partners are an identifying element of the South African genre of crime fiction.²² As discussed in chapter three, the post-apartheid team crime fiction trend can be traced back to the conclusion of *Dead at Daybreak* (2000), when, white, Afrikaner private eye Zatopek Van Heerden and the ex-ANC assassin, rugby-loving Xhosa Thobela (Tiny) Mpayipheli team up to free Hope from the Orion gang. In his 2008 novel, *Devil's Peak*, Meyer again presents a black and white detective team, pairing the popular Tiny Mpayipheli (he was also the protagonist of Meyer's internationally acclaimed *Heart of the Hunter*, 2002) with Benny Griessel, the

²²While Naidu in "Crime Fiction, South Africa: A Critical Introduction" and Christian in "Ethnic Postcolonial Crime and Detection (Anglophone)" don't mark the team as a specific element of the South African genre, they both make note of the frequency of these interracial teams in South African detective fiction.

alcoholic, Afrikaner SAPS detective who was introduced in *Dead before Dying*. The author of *The Ibis Tapestry*, Mike Nicol, has written a trilogy of detective novels with a black and white detective team of former gun runners turned private security agents, Pylon Buso and Mace Bishop, respectively, the latter, as mentioned earlier in chapter two, apparently based on the Christo Mercer character of *The Ibis Tapestry*. Each novel of Nicol's Revenge Trilogy, *Payback* (2008), *Killer Country* (2010), and *Black Heart* (2011), is an airport thriller of the kind that narrator Robert Poley promised (and began) to write at the end of *The Ibis Tapestry*. Richard Kunzmann has also written three popular detective novels, *Bloody Harvests* (2004), *Cotton Salamander* (2006), and *Dead-End Road* (2008), with a black and white detective team, featuring Harry Mason, a white, British-born, South African SAPS detective, and his junior partner, Jacob Tshabalala, a Christian, Zulu man, who is the son and grandson of *sangomas*, the Zulu term that is often translated into English as a traditional faith healer.²³ Another white South African detective novelist, Andrew Brown, also employs a racially hybrid detective team in his first detective novel, *Cold Sleep Lullaby* (2005, winner of the 2006 *Sunday Times* Fiction Award). Brown's novel is unique in this set as his hybrid team features an Afrikaans speaking, coloured SAPS officer, Eberard Februarie, and a rookie female, African SAPS constable, Xoliswa Nduku.²⁴ For this chapter, I will focus on these latter two novelists, Richard Kunzmann and Andrew Brown, and their novels *Bloody Harvests* and *Coldsleep Lullaby*, respectively, arguably the most progressive of the racially hybridized detective team crime novels.

²³ *Sangomas* typically belong to Christian churches. "What is specific to the *sangomas*... is their ritual incorporation into a specific profession in whose practices and beliefs they are trained. They undergo a rigorous and exhausting period of apprenticeship, *ukuthwasana*, and perform a 'graduation ceremony' – known as 'drinking the *intwaso*' – often lasting several days and nights, by which they pass into the full status of a *sangoma* and member of their teacher's school" (Thornton 4).

²⁴ Brown does not mark Xoliswa Nduku's ethnicity, but both parts of her name are associated with Shona, an African language and ethnic group in southern Africa known for a powerful connection to and reverence of their ancestors, which would be an appropriate association for *Coldsleep Lullaby*.

As I have stated, these post-apartheid novels are not the first to feature a multiracial team. The first to do so was James McClure with his apartheid-era police team, Micky Zondi and Tromp Kramer. In *Companion to Crime Fiction*, American scholar, Ed Christian links the significant proliferation of black and white detective teams in post-apartheid South African detective fiction to the influence of James McClure, whom he believes created “the finest series featuring postcolonial detectives...with Bantu sergeant Mickey Zondi and Afrikaner CID lieutenant Tromp Kramer” (287). While Zondi responds cheekily and with irony to the racist structures he faces daily, he is always overtly subjugated in relation to *Baas* Kramer. In settling on the literary roots for this recent trend, Christian downplays the important historical impetus of these early 21st century novels. McClure’s Zondi and Kramer novels had a very different political context, given that they were written in during apartheid (from 1971-1991) and while McClure was in exile. Christian notes he was deported in 1965 because of his anti-apartheid activities (287). Because of their anti-apartheid stance, his novels could not be legally sold in South Africa, but they were nonetheless popular in particular to whites who were critical of apartheid. “It was daring to have a Bantu detective as a protagonist, even more so in that, throughout the series, it is primarily Zondi who solves the crimes by using his knowledge of indigenous cultures” (Christian 287). Christian’s characterization of Zondi and his participation in the apartheid police force as “daring” and the broad approval of McClure’s interracial team by other detective fiction critics such as Gina and Andrew MacDonald in their article “Ethnic Detectives in Popular Fiction: New Directions for an American Genre” strike me as particularly white liberal perspectives. Given the black community’s distrust of and defiance towards the primarily racist and race-policing apartheid force, as discussed in chapter 2, a black South African audience may have been more skeptical that such a subversive figure could exist and

may have marked his “cheeky” behavior as a colonialist’s fantasy of black subversiveness. Black police members during apartheid were community outsiders viewed as compromised and complicit in sustaining the racist state. In the post-apartheid detective fiction novels mentioned above, the focus is not on critiquing apartheid or white racism, but rather these novels provide a forum for white authors to imagine broader post-apartheid South African communities of crime and investigation, in which the victims and perpetrators are not uniformly white as in the novels of Meyer.

The racially hybridized teams in these novels seem to suggest an optimism for a de-racialized South African police force and system of justice working to support the new democratic state, an imagining of a small, difficult piece of the Rainbow Nation. Yet, the racially hybridized detective also gives the white author a passport to explore characters and communities of other races, employing the African partner as a guide to and repressive enforcer of African communities and culture. These two texts explore a more diverse set of issues facing the new, post-apartheid South Africa, such as the perpetuation of structural racism and reconfigured forms of racism, new constructions of identity and difference, and the explosion of crime and social disorder, represented through drug-dealing immigrants, witchcraft practices, human trafficking, and interracial rapes.

In *Bloody Harvests*, Detectives Harry Mason and Jacob Tshabalala investigate the ritualistic mutilation and murder of a five-year-old African girl, whose hand has been severed and whose eyes and internal organs have been cut out of her while she was alive in order to use them (or sell them) as *muti*, or objects imbued with magical power. For Harry, the crime is horrific and nonsensical, leading him to become overprotective of his daughter, but Jacob knows immediately that this is the work of an evil witch doctor or *baloyi* in his native Zulu language,

who often kidnaps unprotected African children in order to use parts of their bodies for *muti* or potions for luck, wealth, sexual performance, fertility, etc.²⁵ Jacob knows this because his father and grandfather were traditional faith healers or *sangomas* in isiZulu, and a *baloyi* attempted to kidnap him as a small child. According to Jean and John L. Comaroff, professors of African studies and anthropology at Harvard who have written extensively on witchcraft in South Africa,

A victim's hands are "symbols of possession." Eyes imply vision, genitals imply fertility. As we know from elsewhere in South Africa, avaricious people are thought to enhance their own vigor by draining the vitality diffused in the organs of others, preferably cut out while the body is still warm (Ralushai et al. 1996: 271) and, best of all, if taken from children under 12. (290)

The reader knows that a Nigerian called “the albino” and his gang have murdered the girl and many others to support the albino’s trafficking of their body parts. The albino also trafficks children as sex slaves and controls the drug trade, namely the heroin market, in Johannesburg, but everyone who knows of the gang in the local community is afraid of the albino and his powerful magic, and consequently the police are unable to find any evidence or witnesses that could lead them to the gang, headquartered in a penthouse apartment at the top of the iconic but mostly abandoned Ponte City in downtown Johannesburg, the tallest residential building erected in Africa. When rumors of witchcraft surface, Harry dismisses the whole idea as the irrational superstitions and fears of the local community. However, Jacob’s insider knowledge of African culture and of witchcraft, and a female British reporter of Zulu descent investigating a human trafficking link between South Africa and the UK are able to penetrate the criminal gang and expose it to the light of day. In other words, it is the African member of the rainbow detective

²⁵ See Jean and John Comaroff’s “Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony.”

team that allows the team to infiltrate the community and thus bring it under police control. While the novel constructs Jacob as a liminal figure—straddling a Western Christian and a traditional African culture—his partner Harry Mason is recuperated as a white immigrant (from Britain) who has been “Africanized” by experiencing and coming to appreciate traditional African culture and spiritualism.

In this chapter, I will consider how *Bloody Harvests* explores the cost of this performed healing and resolution between European and African cultures in South Africa embodied by the rainbow detective team, principally by the demonizing of African immigrants in the form of the Nigerian albino and his henchman, who are also mostly Nigerian immigrants. Kunzmann’s novel, I contend, presents a generic argument for a more assertive and active policing of local African communities and, more significantly, reproduces the xenophobic discourse that exploded into widespread, material violence in South Africa three years after the novel was published.

The second novel I examine, *Coldsleep Lullaby*, dramatizes a kind of healing between African and coloured communities and hope for a new de-racialized South Africa and SAPS, but as with *Bloody Harvests*, there are costs in constructing the narrative. In Brown’s novel, a coloured male detective in his mid-thirties, Eberard Februarie, and a young, African female rookie reservist, Xoliswa Nduku, investigate the rape and murder of an eighteen-year-old daughter of a famous Afrikaner law professor, Dawid du Preez. When they find and incarcerate a suspect, Bullet, an illegal immigrant from Burundi and a bouncer at a dance/sex club, Du Preez shoots and kills him in his jail cell. When the Attorney-General drops the charges against the professor, it is up to Xoli and the Congolese immigrant club owner to convince the coloured officer, Eberard, that it is his own prejudices about Africans (the black peril myth) and immigrants, and even shame of his own coloured identity that have emotionally and

professionally paralyzed him and his quest to find the real murderer of the professor's daughter. While Eberard buys into the black peril myth, jumping to the assumption that an African immigrant raped and murdered the Afrikaner professor's daughter, the novel develops a historical narrative that takes place in the 17th century, at the inception of the world renowned Stellenbosch vineyards to develop and provide an illustration of the legacy of white peril, or white perpetrated interracial rape in South Africa. In this narrative, the 15-year-old daughter of a slave couple is raped by the master viticulturist of the fledgling settlement. Together, the narratives demonstrate what Sabine Binder claims is the purpose of the black peril myth: to divert attention away from the real threat of interracial rape, which historically has come from white men (181). *Coldsleep Lullaby*'s historical narrative concludes with the discovery that the offspring of the white Master and the young slave girl is the male progenitor of the Du Preez line, an incredible irony given the professor's pride in his "pure Hollandse line" of descent and his vitriolic hatred of racial impurity, which is linked metaphorically to the professor's criminal engagement with incest. Xoli, the African member of the rainbow detective team, helps Eberard recognize his complicity in white racism, reject Du Preez's claims of superiority, and stake his rightful place in the new Rainbow Nation.

While Brown's novel works towards the final recuperation of Eberard's character, the detective is extremely passive and abject throughout the novel, illustrating so many coloured stereotypes that Brown's depiction of the coloured detective raises the question of whether it is appropriate for a white author to represent a member of another ethnic group in such a negative, stereotypical way. Conversely, the figure of Xoli is so idealized that she becomes flat. Although she proves to be the master detective of the team, her indigenous knowledge is not necessary for the team to solve the novel's murder mystery (the victim and the murderer are both white), but it

is necessary for the restoration of the abject detective Eberard. Brown marks her African-ness as untroubled, an at-ease and authentic belonging in a post-apartheid South Africa, which provides her with the cultural authority to accept Eberard and prod her partner's personal and professional recuperation in the new nation.

The trend of the racially hybridized detective teams in South African detective fiction in general and in these two novels in particular represent a step forward from Deon Meyer's novels in the late 1990s in that they more overtly attempt to address issues of racial conflict and offer social critique; nonetheless, these duos still finally represent a white discourse that reinforces and reproduces racial stereotypes that demonstrate the lingering racial tensions in the Rainbow Nation while performing a disavowal of white liberal complicity in that racialized discourse.

Bloody Harvests' Imaginings of a Rainbow Nation

*The Yoruba does not feel safe here, but it has to do
him for now. (1)*

Bloody Harvest begins with an image of alienation and decay: a man without a name but marked as a Nigerian immigrant hiding in an unsafe place, a grimy, shuttered room with blackened windows in a mostly abandoned and rotting building in Hillbrow, a densely populated inner city neighborhood in Johannesburg. Kunzmann provides a litany of adjectives and descriptions of parasitic insects and scavenging animals like rats and pigeons to describe the disorder and deterioration of the space: "plaster and crumbling brick have peeled... from the walls," water drips slowly from a "large brown stain" in the ceiling, and a "sour" stench permeates the room as "mosquitoes buzz endlessly, "rats scabble across the dirty floor" and "cockroaches chatter" while "flies shoot across the room like angry bullets" (1). In case readers have missed the not-too-subtle images of death and decay, the author informs us the "building is

rotten” and a few lines later, “dead,” and the Yoruba “wonders if everyone there is dead or dying” (1). Moving from the room, to the building, to the social condition of all those in the surrounding area, Kunzmann metaphorically marks Hillbrow, and more broadly still, Johannesburg, as a disintegrating, disordered, space in which the Nigerian cowers. Indeed, that connection is made clear when we learn the man “can smell Hillbrow beneath the sting of this solitary room of his; he can hear the ghetto humming just above the room’s buzz of frenzied insects. Oozing through the painted glass, the light from outside looks sickly green” (3). Two pages later, the Yoruba too is dead, killed by the men from whom he has been hiding, two violent Nigerian henchmen of the city’s criminal drug lord. While one of the men “slaps an archaic rhythm on his thigh,” rumbling an “incantation,” the other “enforcer hefts his panga over his head” and brings it down on the Yoruba. “They leave the room and the body just as they are: a bloody and well-ordered message” (6). The description of Johannesburg in the novel’s opening illustrates John Scagg’s characterization of “the modern city of hard-boiled fiction” as “a wasteland devastated by drugs, violence, pollution, garbage, and a decaying infrastructure” (70), which Scaggs specifically links to Hammett’s *Red Harvest* (70), which Kunzmann appears to allude to in his novel’s title. The mean, urban streets of South Africa run through Johannesburg.

Kunzmann’s depiction of Johannesburg as an apocalyptic, decaying wasteland becomes a concretization of white anxiety about the crime and social disorder of inner city areas in post-apartheid South Africa. With the eradication of apartheid’s passbook laws, there was a great migration of rural South Africans, along with immigrants to Johannesburg and other urban areas. According to Landau in his 2006 article “Transplants and Transients: Idioms of Belonging and Dislocation in Inner-City Johannesburg,” while “few black South Africans grew up within the city center,...Johannesburg and other South African cities are being transformed and enlarged by

a heterogeneous amalgam of domestic migrants searching for a common language of belonging” (126-127). Landau notes that, while a survey of inner-city Johannesburg residents found that nearly a quarter “were born outside of South Africa....”, “68 percent of inner city Johannesburg residents (three-quarters of whom are South African) had moved to their present household in the last five years” (130). This migration, coupled with white flight to gated suburban communities, the continuing and ever increasing economic disparity between white and black South African populations, the increasing levels of unemployment, and the inability of the post-apartheid governments to maintain services compounded the spread of poverty and the attendant social ill of crime. Kunzmann’s depictions of Johannesburg give little context to this rapid shift of local mobility to the city’s center nor to the lack of structural and economic support for the new residents whose language of belonging, as Landau argues, stakes a territorialized claim to the city predicated on a xenophobic othering of non-national immigrants, informed, Landau suggests, by a resistance to the history of apartheid’s racial and racist circumscription of space and its fragmentation of African communities (127). In Kunzmann’s novel, Johannesburg is a corrupt and decaying wasteland, overrun by drug-dealing, violent youth and controlled by a criminal Nigerian overlord who parasitically feeds on the city while luxuriously residing in his penthouse apartment in Ponte City, a characterization of an avaricious immigrant who avariciously appropriates the resources that belong to South Africans, which participates in the xenophobic discourse circulating in early 21st century South Africa.

Ponte City tower, which *Bloody Harvests* refers to as the “dark tyrant” overlooking the ghetto (23), is a landmark residential tower in Johannesburg at “the garish center point of a trio of rundown inner city neighborhoods—Yeoville, Berea, and Hillbrow” (Brown “South Africa’s Tower”). The 54-floor apartment building is a concrete cylinder with a hollow core that the

architect thought would provide extra light for the residences (“Dark Tower”). Its basic structure resembles Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, if the tower of surveillance at the center were ripped out, like a prison devoid of surveilling guards. Ironically, there was a proposal in 1998 to make the then nearly abandoned apartment building into a prison (Smith). When Ponte City was built in 1975, it was the tallest residential skyscraper in Africa and the sign at the top of the tower (advertising Vodacom in real life but Coca Cola in the novel) was the largest in the southern hemisphere (“Top 10 Tallest Buildings in Africa”). While its extraordinary views made it an exclusive and much desired residence in the late seventies, by the late eighties the area became known for gang-related crime and by the end of apartheid in 1994, Ponte City was known as a place for drug deals and prostitution (Bauer; Smith). In fact, “residents of that era claim the 11th and 12th floors were completely stripped bare and, along with the downstairs parking lot, were nothing more than spots to score. Both were informal brothels” (Bauer). “The inner core of this 173-meter high concrete cylinder became a giant rubbish heap piled up as far as the fifth floor. Among the refuse and junk were, so legend has it, were the bodies of residents who took a suicidal leap” (Smith 2). In *Bloody Harvests*, the tower is depicted as a site where outcasts, criminals, and illegal immigrants come together to engage in activities beyond the view and control of the state:

The poorest are drawn to it like insects lured in by light. The suicidal come from far and wide to climb its grim stairways to the roof before tossing their used-up lives down its central shaft....Prostitutes are packed together like cattle into tiny rooms...and illegal immigrants congregate at the windows, hanging their rags out to dry...over the black void below. Feral pigeons squat...to breed there and mutate. On every level junkies wander the dark narrow corridors, slipping cash

under battered doors in the hope of achieving that one last shot of heaven....These lost souls, who toss their blunt needles down the same central shaft as the suicides toss their bodies, are never too far behind....To many, Ponte City represents the end. It is rock bottom for everyone except those who control it. (23)

It is the ultimate fortress for the ones who control it: the unnamed Nigerian drug lord, who lives in the Penthouse apartment and is simply referred to as “the albino” because of his disability, and his henchman, who are mostly his fellow Nigerians. They are able to conduct surveillance from this panoptic place at the center and above the surrounding neighborhoods while being invisible to state authorities.

Kunzmann’s description of Ponte City in *Bloody Harvests*, then, constructs a particularly apt setting for a narrative that addresses white anxiety about the unraveling of societal institutions and structures in post-apartheid South Africa in 2004 when the novel was first published. As noted earlier, descriptions of inner-city Johannesburg are replete with references to scavenging animals and parasitic insects. The human residents of the ghetto are described in a similar fashion so that they become insect-like, criminal parasites that sweep across the city in waves of irresistible, chaotic motion. This is the site of white anxiety in the new South Africa, not a black civil war on whites nor even a governmental war on the economic privilege of whites, but *anomie*, social disorder created by rapid social changes. Such white anxiety can be seen in the blog “Death of Johannesburg,” in which the author, who goes by “The Real Realist,” “illustrat[es] the collapse and physical destruction of Johannesburg in the ‘New South Africa.’” The images of broken, dilapidated buildings and the text of the blog have been reconstructed into PowerPoint presentations, emails that have gone viral among white emigrants, and videos, which can be found on white racist websites, such as *The White Resister*, as well as on YouTube. This

anxiety is also suggested in research conducted by Cornel Verwey and Michael Quayle and reported in their article “Whiteness, Racism, and Afrikaner Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” in which they found “while rejecting apartheid, [Afrikaner] participants simultaneously recycled key discourses underlying racist apartheid ideology, particularly discourses of black incompetence and whites under threat” (552-553). The threat to whites voiced by the participants in this study was the perceived incompetence of blacks to maintain order and economic vitality. Such representations and discourses of social disorder and rising criminality, in which *Bloody Harvests* participates, are productive forces for increased policing and social discipline, desires, one could argue, for the return of the well-ordered, authoritarian and racist state of the apartheid era.

The title of Kunzmann’s novel, which alludes to Dashiell Hammet’s *Red Harvest*, reinforces the idea that Johannesburg is a site of working class, urban blight. In *Red Harvest*, industrialist Elihu Wilsson employs a number of criminal gangs as his proxies in battle with a labor union. Once the eight-month strike is broken, he pays the protagonist, the Continental Op, to rid the town of Personville (called Poisonville by the locals) of the gangs, who have decided it is most profitable for them to stay even though the strike is over. In “Going Blood-Simple like The Natives”: Contagious Urban Spaces and Modern Power in Dashiell Hammett’s *Red Harvest*, Thomas Heise argues that

Red Harvest ultimately destabilizes the discursively produced definitions of criminality, while confirming the contention made by the official literature on crime that urban criminality is an effect of poor, ethnic, and working-class spaces and social relations. (490)

Through the title's allusion to the ungovernable urban spaces in Hammett's *Red Harvest* and the description of the abandoned Ponte City Kunzmann begins *Bloody Harvests* by establishing inner-city Johannesburg as a criminalized space full of transient, immigrant, and criminal populations who are unfettered by law enforcement, legitimate social or economic activity, or shared social norms.

The novel's Ponte City is not, however, a place of anarchy. It is controlled by the Nigerian called "the albino," with lower case letters, suggesting that this is a description, not his name, which no one seems to know. The figure of the albino is a site of another anxiety in post-apartheid South Africa: xenophobic anxiety. He is described in the novel as a figure of particular indeterminacy and uncertainty, as being "neither white nor black" and as "belonging nowhere and to no one" (319). In his article, "Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization," Arjun Appadurai argues that ethnic violence can be explained by a hypothesis "with roots traceable to Durkheim's (1951) work on anomie and Simmel's (1950) ideas about the stranger...which focuses on doubt, uncertainty, and indeterminacy..." (225). Ethnic violence of the kinds perpetrated in the 2008 attacks on immigrants in South Africa can be explained, according to this hypothesis, as an attempt to create certainty through the body of the ethnic *Other*.

[T]hey are brutal forms of bodily discovery— forms of vivisection; emergent techniques for exploring, marking, classifying, and storing the bodies of those who may be the "ethnic" enemy. Naturally, these brutal actions do not create any real or sustainable sense of secure knowledge. Rather, they exacerbate the frustration of the perpetrators. Worse, they create the condition for preemptive violence among those who fear being victims. (233)

Because the ethnic violence does not resolve the anxiety, it can create an explosion of violence, such as the kind seen in 2008.

Monstrous Hybridity: The Albino

While the racially hybrid detective team provides a hopeful image of racial diversity and cooperation in the new Rainbow Nation, the racially hybrid team is necessitated by a criminal who is their negative image, the albino, whose racial indeterminacy is marked by Kunzmann as a monstrous hybridity, which, conversely may suggest an underlying anxiety about the deracializing of South Africa: “He alone was neither black nor white, in his own mind raised neither of this world nor the spirit world, neither completely revered nor utterly abhorred. The albino knew he belonged nowhere and to no one” (319). He occupies a liminal space that transgresses multiple boundaries of being, racially, geographically, culturally and even existentially undefined and unbounded: the ultimate *Other*.

The albino’s territory around Ponte City is an urban ghetto located beyond the control of the government. Not coincidentally, the albino’s rule of the Johannesburg drug trade dates back seven years prior to the beginning of the novel, when Mandela was elected president (Kunzmann 7). Mandela’s election was also the generating point of the protagonist’s personal crisis in each of the Deon Meyer novels analyzed in chapter 3. In fact, in this neighborhood, the government is so absent, so powerless against the albino and his gang, that the locals speak of him not only as “invincible” but also “as invisible.” Indeed, it is only on page 272 of this 455 page novel that the detective Harry mentions the albino’s existence, and the police learn that from Nina Reading, the British journalist, who had learned of his existence in Britain from the niece of Ngubane Maduna, the albino’s South African right -hand man, who had raped and impregnated his niece before selling her into slavery and presumably using the baby’s organs for *muti*. Ironically, the

locals speak of the albino (without naming him) as a panoptic figure, who is able to see when others defy his control and to punish them for this. For example, when a would be drug-dealing competitor tries to set up shop at a popular site to sell drugs abandoned by the albino's gang, his friend and partner, Godfrey, argues against it.

How come he [the albino] knows when people are trying to push in on his turf?

Why else do people shut up about him, like they do? Eh? No one's ever had a shot at him; he's like a ghost. It's like he's invulnerable or something... Themba saw him once, riding a baboon as white as any Boer's arse, here in the city, riding away from that guy Victor's place... they found the guy his head cut off, man.

He's bad, man, bad. (11)

The novel begins at a moment of crisis for the albino: The Yoruba has dared to defy his "high oath,"²⁶ betraying Maduna to the police, who seized him and 10 million rands worth of the albino's heroin. Maduna sits in his jail cell, filled with doubt: "Could it be that the man [the albino] who once seemed to be able to yield miracles, has himself now faltered?" (7). This is a moment of vulnerability, which suggests a dramatic crisis for the organization.

On the other hand, this initial crisis allows the novel to show the albino's immense power by staging the restoration of his control. The Yoruba is ritually beheaded by the albino's men for defying his oath. As Godfrey put it, the albino truly is a bad man. While Godfrey is still trying to talk his friend out of defying an earlier warning by the albino about dealing drugs in his territory, the albino's men surround them, kill the friend and Godfrey's younger brother and wound Godfrey. Both the execution of Oba, the Yoruba, and the wounding of Godfrey—not only is he shot but the albino slices off his ear, telling him, "Just so we understand each other, just so we

²⁶ Captain Mitchell, the head of Occult Investigations at the Cape Town SAPS, explains to Harry that "only the very highest ranking practitioners [witch doctors] can bind someone with a high oath. It means that you essentially give your soul to the witch doctor as insurance for not breaking that oath" (347).

heard each other properly, I'm keeping this" (16)—are meant to be “well-ordered messages” to the local community not to defy the albino and his Nigerian henchmen.

The Albino as Creature, Albinism as the Horrific

To mark him as someone to be feared, the albino is repeatedly described as not human and is compared to animals like snakes and chameleons, a monstrous creature with the power of transmutation, the potential to change his skin or shape. For example, when he is dragged to the window of the albino's Mercedes.

Godfrey looks up and notices a shadow in the cool, dark interior.

His face! His face!

It has the look of some creature that has not eaten in a while. As it smiles, its large mouth splits open like an old wound, its huge white teeth gleaming brilliant and white, predatory. In a voice that buzzes with a deep cracked bass, like an angry nest of hornets, the passenger asks, “What were you thinking?” (Kunzmann 15)

We are first presented with Godfrey's horror rather than a description of what he sees: “His face! His face!” Then, the albino is compared to a “creature” and called “it.” Even his constituent parts are described as not being human, connected to “wounds,” predators, and “an angry nest of hornets.”

The albino's monstrousness is explicitly connected in the novel to his albinism. For example, when the albino bails Maduna out of jail in a description focalized by Maduna, the albino is compared to a snake, as a being that is in flux since a snake can shed its skin and produce a new skin, a new identity, which makes the albino, like the immigrant community, difficult to fix in a particular position and thus beyond community control:

The other man's [the albino's] dry, flaky skin is a splotched pink and brown all over, giving the impression that he is about to shed it, like a snake...It is not his face nor his skin that frightens people most, but those abominable eyes. They seem swollen, and the whites are always bloodshot. The irises seem to glow a demonic red. (Kunzmann 19)

In the novel, features commonly connected to albinism are used to mark the albino as both not human and evil. According to the National Organization of Albinism and Hypopigmentation, "a common myth is that people with albinism must have red eyes. People with albinism usually have blue or gray eyes which sometimes appear reddish in certain types of light" ("Information Bulletin-Social Aspects"). His albinism is also implicitly referenced by Godfrey when he describes the albino as "like a ghost" (11). According to a report submitted to the UN, "Children with Albinism in Africa: Murder, Mutilation, and Violence," "PWA [people with albinism] in Africa are generally not seen as full humans but incomplete beings or animals. In Tanzania for example, PWAs are referred to as 'Zeru-Zeru' or ghosts" (15). Kunzmann's descriptions of the albino repeatedly exploit stereotypes of people with albinism to characterize the albino as a figure of horror, human-like but not fully human.

Most ironic and troubling in regards to his albinism is the marking of the albino as a predator who murders and mutilates children in order to gain special powers associated with their body parts or to profit from the sale of those parts. In fact, across Africa, including South Africa, Nigeria, and especially Tanzania, people with albinism have been the targets of predators, hunted by witch doctors and profit-seeking third parties because of the popular belief that the body parts of PWAs have magical qualities. According to *Children with Albinism*, "Between the years 2007 and 2010, roughly 3 persons with albinism were attacked per month. Most of them were hacked

to death” (2). Cumulatively, from 2006-2012, across the continent of Africa, there were 105 documented cases of people with albinism, mostly children, being murdered so their body parts could be used in witchcraft. An additional 33 PWAs were victims of attempted murder, rape, or mutilation (usually the hacking off of limbs). (*Children with Albinism* 25). Thus Kunzmann’s exploitation of PWA stereotypes is not only offensive but participates in a very dangerous anti-PWA discourse that vilifies the victims of these attacks as the perpetrators.

Xenophobia: The Albino as Immigrant Other

The description of the albino’s skin being like that of a snake sloughing its skin, discussed above, also marks the albino as dangerous because his identity is unfixed, always in flux. This is an implicit reference to his foreignness, to his status as a Nigerian immigrant. This characterization is buttressed when the albino is later compared to yet another creature that can change its skin and become another, a chameleon, which is explicitly linked to his being an immigrant: “From country to country, he moved, along the routes of the Nigerian underworld, absorbing like a chameleon the local traditions of each country, while disguising his true origins” (Kunzmann 319). The portrayal of albino as dangerous because of a mobility that disguises or denies his origins would appear to be xenophobic; he is dangerous due to his invisibility from the repressive state apparatus and his transience that challenges nationals’ desire to fix his position within the community. The albino, as a white African, also suggests an apartheid legacy of white anxiety about racial illegibility, individuals who cannot be easily categorized racially.

It is also the albino’s status as an illegal immigrant that Kunzmann uses to explain how he rose from an outcast in Nigeria to the head of the most powerful and impenetrable drug gang in the most populous city in South Africa,

The only people he felt an affinity for were other outcasts – first, refugees, then eventually criminals....Together they lived in the shadow of the Africa’s moon and sun, they became the Mother’s landless sons and daughters, who would never again possess a country of their own, nor somewhere they could bury their dead and pay respect to their ancestors in peace. They were eternal drifters crossing the Dark Continent. (319)

Kunzmann’s Conradian depiction of Africa as a “Dark Continent” repeats the racist othering discourse of colonialism, the perception of Africa as an impenetrable and savage space across which rootless and transient immigrant “others” pass, bearing no ties or connection to the community in which they temporarily reside. The novel suggests that it is the immigrant sub-community—outsiders who do not and, perhaps, care not to belong—that is especially threatening to the South African community. Sliding easily from immigrant to criminal, Kunzmann thus represents this group as “home” for the albino, a community in which he can establish a den of criminal and destructive activities.

Wherever he went, he met the displaced, the desperate, other fugitives. He soon learnt that it was these needy and desperate people who were most likely to call on his occult abilities, and they were also the one he could most easily bind to his service with his oaths taken in blood before the spirits. Soon his cartel was based on the loyalty of worshippers.

Although the albino’s gang includes South Africans, like Maduna and Godfrey and several others, the novel suggest that the albino’s success in Johannesburg is predicated upon his role as a leader in a community of immigrants, who we are told are the ones who are vulnerable because of their need for employment and belief in the occult. The perfect location for the albino’s

venture is Johannesburg, “where the former police control was fast crumbling, where there were countless destitute black believers and many rich white narcotic abusers, that he could finally make his home and start bleeding a gullible community dry” (320). Marking the Nigerian albino as a community parasite, “bleeding it dry,” further compounds South African xenophobic discourse in which immigrants who don’t belong are perceived by nationals as taking far more from the South African communities in which they reside than they contribute.

Kunzmann’s xenophobic depictions of immigrants in general and Nigerians in particular participate in fostering the anti-immigrant sentiment in South Africa that runs both deep and wide. Landau, in the introduction to a volume he edited on South Africa xenophobia entitled *Exorcising the Demons Within*, notes that according to a 2003 survey conducted by the South African Migration Project [SAMP], “84% of South Africans believed that the country was admitting too many foreigners” (“Introducing the Demons” 6). Sixty-five percent of residents in “cosmopolitan Johannesburg thought it would be good if most immigrants left” (Landau, “Introducing the Demons” 6). In 2007, the year before the explosion of xenophobic violence in South Africa that led to 60 murders, the government had deported 300,000 immigrants, one of the highest rates of deportation per capita in the world (Landau, “Introducing the Demons” 3). The majority of South Africans believe immigrants are responsible for the increase of a host of ills in the country since apartheid. For example, “of the 70 per cent of South African respondents who thought crime had increased, three quarters identified immigrants as a primary reason” (Landau “Introducing the Demons” 6). Nigerians are particularly stereotyped as criminals, especially in relation to drug dealing. These stereotypes represented in *Bloody Harvests* are present also in other forms of popular culture, such as in the movie *District 9*, in which the Nigerian head of an arms, drug, and smuggling gang engages in cannibalism in order to gain the

power of the aliens to operate their weaponry. Nigerians were so offended by the movie that officials in Nigeria banned it and insisted on an apology from distributor Sony Pictures (Karimi “District 9”). News media also routinely associates Nigerian immigrants with criminal behavior. For example, a local newspaper in Johannesburg which headlined “Nigerians arrested in drug raid on city hotel,” proceeded to reveal in the article published in the late nineties that “[w]hile no drug related arrests were made ... two Nigerian nationals were arrested for being in the country illegally” (qtd. in Vilja 9). The albino figure in *Bloody Harvests* engages the stereotype of Nigerians as ruthless criminals involved in the illegal drug trade who are able to escape prosecution because they are hidden in parasitic immigrant communities.

However, the reality of immigrant life in South Africa is quite at variance from their depiction in *Bloody Harvests* as well as with anti-immigrants stereotypes in South Africa. According to “Creating the Nation: The Rise of Violent Xenophobia in the New South Africa,” written by Nahla Vilja in her research for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, rather than criminals, immigrants, and particularly Nigerians, are far more likely than South African nationals to be victims of crime.

If one looked specifically at the Nigerian nationals (for whom the stereotypes of wealth and drugs are particularly entrenched in mainstream consciousness), the discrepancy between those who were victims of robbery, assault, or murder was between two and three times that of nationals. (Leggett 2003, cited by Vilja 9)

In “Xenophobia: A New Pathology for a New South Africa?” Bronwyn Harris explains that since immigrants come to the country with limited financial resources, they commonly reside in “dangerous places (e.g. inner-city Johannesburg) and engage in dangerous professions (e.g. security guards and street vendors).” They are thus routinely susceptible to crime (10). Harris

also notes that illegal immigrants are not allowed to open bank accounts, so they must keep their money on their person or in their homes, making them more vulnerable to crime (10).

Immigrants, even legal immigrants, are subject to extortion by police, so are reluctant to seek the protection of the police. According to Landau, “police often refuse to recognize work permits or refugee identity cards” unless they receive a bribe, a practice so common that some police refer to immigrants as ‘mobile ATMs’” (“Introducing the Demons 9). Once again, Kunzmann vilifies a group who are often victims of crime as the perpetrators of crime.

In accord with popular stereotypes about immigrants, in *Bloody Harvests* every African immigrant is part of the albino’s criminal gang and most are Nigerians, reinforcing the stereotype that immigrants are transients and parasites who are illegally in the country. According to a 1998 South Africa Migration Program study:

Overall...this survey provides a very different profile of African migrants than the stereotypical image of the impoverished, illiterate and parasitical "alien" of officialdom and the popular press: 93% of the sample population are in the country legally; 49% have partners; more than a third are heads of households; more than 90% own their own home; 78% are working; and 73% have at least some secondary school education. (Valji 16)

Nonetheless, the popular stereotype of immigrants in South Africa is that they are impoverished, transient, and parasitic, unable to contribute back to South African communities even a portion of what they take. Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of the depiction of Nigerians in *Bloody Harvests* is that the gang members engage in ritual killing to produce magic that helps them avoid detection. This depiction engages in a South African anti-witchcraft discourse and practice of violence that is entangled with and supportive of xenophobic discourse and violence.

Xenophobia and Witchcraft in South Africa

While anti-witch doctor discourse and violence in South Africa is primarily focused on intimates, neighbors, even family, who are mostly South African citizens, xenophobic and anti-witch doctor discourses in South Africa are entangled and complicit in one another's projects. Furthermore, episodes of xenophobic violence in black South African communities are entangled with historic and contemporary episodes of violence against witch doctors. In his article "Xenophobia In South Africa: Order, Chaos, and the Moral Economy of Witchcraft," Jason Hickel argues that analysis of xenophobic violence in South Africa should focus on local communities and local issues, in particular, witchcraft. He notes that Appadurai and others who study xenophobia have focused on translocal issues such as social change occurring from globalization,

which focuses on identity politics, [and] holds that the cultural "flows" that characterize globalization induce a state of hybridity, flux, and moral anomie that triggers the impulse to violently recreate social boundaries. Violence against foreigners is less about fixing flows and ordering anomie than about reestablishing the conditions for social reproduction and demarcating the precincts of moral personhood. (104)

Hickel concedes that there are critical economic issues, as Marxist critics have emphasized, such as a struggle for limited resources in the isiZulu-speaking Durban communities he studies, especially among young men, who are typically the perpetrators of violence against both witch doctors and foreigners (as well as foreigners accused of performing witchcraft or in contracting witch doctors to do so). These young men complain "that foreigners are taking away their jobs, houses, and women," which is the kind of scapegoating that occurs in other parts of the globe

(107). However, Hickel asserts that there are ways that this competition is understood in the Cato Manor section of Durban that are unique to it and to South Africa:

This crisis is understood in Cato Manor according to ideas about what constitutes a proper moral economy and what marks its opposite, which is often conjured by drawing on the logic of witchcraft. In Cato Manor, people often draw evocative connections between their ideas about foreigners and their ideas about witchcraft, or, in IsiZulu, *ubuthakathi*. (107-08)

For example, Hickel interviewed a middle-aged woman in Cato Manor he calls “Thandle,” whose response illustrates how the logic of witchcraft becomes imbricated in the logic of xenophobic discourse and justifies violence against foreigners based on accusations of witchcraft.

You see how they come here, they are so poor, they come from a poor country and they come across the border with nothing but a passport. There’s no way that they can become rich after only three years or so here! There must be something behind it...they are using *ubuthakathi* [isiZulu for witchcraft]. There’s no other way to explain it. (108)

Witchcraft becomes both an explanation of the success of immigrants in poor and working class communities and a justification for attacking them, decrying their unfair use of witchcraft to out-compete South Africans in the same communities. Steffen Jensen and Lars Buur, in their article “Everyday Policing and the Occult” note that the occult is also used to explain “why criminals are successful in avoiding detection or conviction” (193), which again provides the moral justification for xenophobic and witch doctor-related violence.

Bloody Harvests complicity in anti-witchcraft and xenophobic discourses is particularly troubling because it situates the most horrific form of witchcraft, the ritual mutilation and killing of children for their organs and body parts with a perpetrator who is an overtly and thoroughly evil, middle aged, illegal immigrant, drug dealer and human trafficker from Nigeria, which provides sympathy for those who conduct witch hunts and put witch doctors to death through necklacing, but is also a disavowal of the “cleavages between different age-groups or generations, mediated by gender” noted in the killing of witch doctors in South Africa (Kohnert 218). Research by Comaroff and Comaroff and Dirk Kohnert have demonstrated that witch doctor killings are perpetrated primarily by young Africans on the elderly and especially on women, primarily on South African citizens. As Comaroff and Comaroff note: “The youthful comrades [who hunt witch doctors] forged their assertive identity against the foil of a sinister, secretive, gendered gerontocracy; significantly, those attacked were referred to as “old ladies,” even when they were men” (288). Comaroff and Comaroff recount the killing of an elderly woman by a mob of young men, who deployed the scapegoating rhetoric common in xenophobic discourse. As they were preparing to necklace her, the elderly woman asked:

“Why are you killing me, my grandchildren?” she wailed. Her assailants responded, “Die, die you witch. We can't get work because of you!” (Ralushai et al. 1996:206, 212). Garlanding her with a rubber tire, they applied more petrol and ignited her one final time. (287)

Witchcraft provides the explanation of why older community members have accumulated relative wealth and while young men can't find work, which is also primarily the justification for attacks on illegal immigrants, also conducted most often by groups of young, black, unemployed or underemployed South African men.

In her article “Witch-Hunting, Globalization, and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today.” Silvia Federici, professor emerita of political philosophy and international studies at Hofstra University, considers the witch hunts and killing in the African continents as misogynistic and calls on feminist organizations to take action against them.

Women are the main victims in the Congo, South Africa, Zambia, and Tanzania. Most are farmers, often living alone. But in urban areas, it is traders who are more commonly attacked, as men respond to the loss of economic security and masculine identity, by discrediting women they see or believe to be competing with them. (27)

The subtitle of an *Independent* article puts it more bluntly: “Across Africa, a war is being waged on women – but we are refusing to hear the screams” (“Africa’s Undeclared War on Women”). Both of these articles advocate more direct action by groups outside of Africa, but this raises some of issues of representation when white feminists tried to intervene on behalf of Indian women in relation to the practice of *sati* in India, which Spivak has addressed in “Can the subaltern speak?”

In conclusion, the depiction of the albino as *Other* produces the novel’s argument for a racially hybridized detective team of Harry and Jacob to stage and resolve a white/African conflict over African belief in witchcraft and magic. The novel reproduces dangerous stereotypes of people with albinism and is complicit in a xenophobic, scapegoating discourse, as well as an entangled anti-witchcraft discourse, which have fostered widespread violence against immigrants, the elderly, and women, respectively. These are very high costs that resoundingly contradict the novel’s attempt to provide a hybrid detective team that dramatizes the vision of the Rainbow Nation that is, as Mandela said, “at peace with itself” (“Statement of Nelson”). Indeed,

what is more clearly produced is the need for policing and controlling disordered African, or more specifically, immigrant African communities in the new South Africa.

The Rainbow Detective Team & the Dilemma of Witchcraft in a Modern Nation

Against the problematic othering of the albino, *Bloody Harvests* introduces a racially hybridized detective team that the novel represents as engaging in the kind of cultural healing and resolution needed to move from a system of racial hierarchy toward the ideal of a Rainbow Nation, where at least South African citizens of European and African descent can live in harmony and productivity. To suggest such a restorative narrative, the novel attends to lingering divisions: the economic and religious/cultural divides that coalesce around the issues of witchcraft. In chapter three, Zapotek Van Heerden's confessor, Hope Beneke recounts her path toward enlightenment, from an unquestioning belief in "separate development" and the racial hierarchy that underlay it to realizing you couldn't judge people by their skin but should try to understand "why they were like that" (Meyer 154). This perspective seems representative of the white liberal characters of *Bloody Harvests*; they see racism as evil, yet maintain bigotries against South Africans of African descent based on the impoverished Johannesburg neighborhoods they live in and their belief in witchcraft and participation in witch hunts, which Harry calls "superstitious" (88) and "savagery" (328), respectively. Conversely, while Harry makes it clear he has little tolerance for the closet racism of whites, he is unaware of his white privilege nor that his belief system is Eurocentric. Harry's critical opinion on witch hunts causes conflict with Jacob whose grandfather was put to death by the apartheid government for leading the investigation and killing of the *baloyi* or witch doctor that abducted Jacob, even though he was a diviner and he and the community followed the traditional practices of justice. It is the execution of his grandfather that led Jacob to abandon his father and his destiny to be trained as a

sangoma to come to the city, become a Christian, and to become involved in the police and Westernized culture.

The title *Bloody Harvests* refers to the murders and assault conducted by the albino and his gang on young children in order to harvest their organs to make powerful *muti* or medicines for a variety of magical effects. While witch hunts in South Africa are complicit in vigilantism that unfairly target women, the elderly, and immigrants, there are many indications that *muti* murder are both commonplace and increasing in southern Africa. While there are numerous reports and anecdotes of *muti* assaults and killings, it is difficult to ascertain the actual incidence of *muti* attacks against those based on rumor and hysteria. In a study on *Trafficking of Body Parts in Mozambique and South Africa* conducted by the Human Rights League of Mozambique, over 22% of interviewees (31 of 139) had at least one firsthand experience of the effects of a *muti* attack. “Firsthand means the informant has either seen a mutilated body with body parts missing, seen a body part, been exposed to an attack where body parts have either been removed or attempted to be removed or has used [a] body part” (Fellows 28). Many of these accounts were of incidents that took place along the Mozambique/South Africa border with Mozambique being the supplier of body parts and the more affluent South Africa being the consumer of them. The report confirms some of the grizzlier aspects of *Bloody Harvests*’ description of *muti* murders, such as the preference for children prior to sexualization and the higher value of *muti* parts taken while the victim was still alive, based on the belief that the “screams of the victims are believed to make the medicine more powerful by waking the spirits and empowering them, thus resulting in victims being mutilated alive” (Fellows 39). As noted earlier, Jensen and Buur confirm that *muti* can help criminals avoid detection and conviction (obviously important to a criminal gang) (193) and many sources indicate that *muti* are used to create death curses to bring

about the death of an enemy (again, an important power for a criminal gang to have or for others to believe it has). The *Trafficking of Body Parts* confirms that in the African communities in which these assaults are taking place, there is “a code of silence” (40), with interviewees believing that they could become targets if they speak about these incidents: “we never talk about such in this community, if you talk about it, you might put your life in danger” (40). This code of silence or fear of being targeted by witch doctors makes it very difficult for state authorities to prosecute *muti*-related assaults.

This is the challenge that Harry and the SAPS have in trying to discover the murderers of the little girl they find. When Harry asks the detective superintendent Kobus Niehaus if they were ever able to crack a drug syndicate that was discovered several years ago, he responds: “No the same thing happened every time. They’d follow the trail towards a core group, then, bam, they hit this impenetrable wall – or else their targets just disappeared.’ ‘Like magic?’” Harry asks. (348). In the scene where they discover the little girl’s body, they also discover a *muti*, which Captain Francis Mitchell, the head of Johannesburg’s Occult unit, calls a death *juju*, a West African term for *muti*, “a fetish enhanced with blood to invoke a death curse” (350), which they have deduced was a death curse against Oba, “the Yoruba,” who dumped the body of the girl, and who is beheaded in the “Prologue.” When Harry objects, “But we know it wasn’t a spirit that killed this Oba character,” Mitchell responds, “We know that, but this witch doctor’s followers, the ones not part of his inner circle, don’t necessarily know it” (350). Jacob is better positioned than Harry and the other white police officers to infiltrate this wall of silence around the albino’s gang because of his race and ethnicity and because he is the son of a sangoma.

The albino’s use of witchcraft and his reputation in the community thus justifies the engagement of the racially and culturally hybridized detective team of Harry and Jacob; they are

uniquely positioned to investigate the albino, whether he is a powerful practitioner of the occult as Jacob fears, or, as Harry believes, a con man who exploits the fears and superstitions of the African community in Johannesburg in order to enrich himself. In particular, the fear of the albino and the occult in a largely African community gives cultural capital to Jacob within the Johannesburg SAPS. His knowledge and experience, his straddling of the Westernized culture of the SAPS and of a traditional African culture, informed by rural values and practices now located in an urban local, are essential to penetrate the code of silence that surrounds and protects the gang.

While he participates in Western style policing, Jacob is also the son and grandson of *sangomas*. In fact, as a child, he himself was the victim of an attempted kidnapping by a *baloyi* or evil witch doctor. Through *Bloody Harvests*' representations of the horrific nature of the albino's crimes, the novel builds a somewhat sympathetic stance toward witch hunts and killings in African communities, which is developed through the figure of Jacob's father and grandfather, *sangomas* who initiated and oversaw such a witch hunt and killing, and the unjust execution of the grandfather by the apartheid era justice system. Nonetheless, the question of the albino's true nature and power is a central dilemma developed in the novel for the reader. Since Jacob is already familiar with Western forensics and Christianity, the novel's cultural argument will largely follow Harry's character as he comes to better understand, appreciate, and even respect *sangomas* and African beliefs rooted in the supernatural.

Childhood Trauma and Social Norms in *Bloody Harvests*

As children, both Harry and Jacob have witnessed violent crimes perpetrated by evil adults on young children. Kunzmann situates Harry and Jacob's cultural conflict over how to investigate the ritual killing of the young African girl and how to respond to the fetish or death

juju by providing chapters on these traumatic experiences, which illustrate typical Western and southern African understandings of violence against children and the nature of the evil adults who perpetrate that violence. Kunzmann's white readers might find Harry's experience more familiar and understandable. While living in England, Harry's best friend, Roger, is murdered by a violent, drunken neighbor of lower class origins, what his family calls a Morwaugh, a label based on the neighborhood in which they live. Conversely, Jacob is the victim of an attempted kidnapping by an evil witch doctor or *baloyi*. It is significant that each culture has its own explanation for this evil doing. In Britain, it is the violent, drunken criminality of the working class, while in rural South Africa, it is the evil witch doctor. On the other side of a forest behind Harry's childhood home live the Morwaughs. Harry and his best friend are told not to cross the path that separates the Morwaugh side of the forest from their neighborhood's side. Harry and Roger's defiance of this rule had in the past allowed them to confirm the amoral nature of the Morwaughs, as they observed them hitting their children, drinking beer in the middle of the day, walking around in loose, yellow-stained underwear, and throwing garbage into and even defecating in the woods between the two neighborhoods. Yet, one day, while playing hide and seek, Harry hides near the fence of the forbidden neighborhood, and when Roger comes to find him, he is attacked by a *Morwaugh*, who kills Roger. Harry is called a hero and becomes a media sensation, the boy who tried to save his best friend. The media attention is so relentless that Harry's family decides to move to South Africa to get away from the notoriety of the case. For Harry, the face of evil is that of an individual evil person, in particular a working class man, drunk, angry, and without the moral upbringing of Harry's family, neighborhood, and class.

Jacob's experience of adult violence against children is associated with evil witchcraft. It begins as a dream: "A woman is walking towards him in the evening's darkness, and Jacob can

see insects and shadows pouring out of her hair, her wrap, her fingers” (81). When Jacob wakes up, he feels someone lift him from his bed, but he is paralyzed to act or scream out in alarm. He realizes he will disappear as another boy did the year before, but at that moment, his grandfather, a *sangoma*, yells “strings of words that seem to affect the person carrying the frightened boy,” (i.e., a magical incantation of a *sangoma*) causing Jacob to be released. The grandfather tells Jacob’s father, also a *sangoma*, that the evil witch doctor left in the form of a hyena. The transmutation into another form, typically an animal, is characteristic of a witch doctor and his or her evil powers.

These parallel flashbacks set up the novel’s core dilemma on the nature of evil and the ways it can be known, investigated, and punished. The novel presents these two scenes of evil against children evenhandedly, making each perspective, British and Zulu, equally plausible. While Jacob believes that the *muti* murder of the little girl is perpetrated by a powerful witch doctor protected by the community’s code of silence, Harry believes that the witch doctor is a profiteer and charlatan, who uses the superstitions of the African community to escape prosecution for his heinous crimes.

Positing a New Duality in the Rainbow Nation

Belief in witchcraft and spiritualism is an obvious site of disconnection between the values and norms of white and black South Africans, which may expose unconscious prejudices. In the discussion of *Dead at Daybreak* in chapter three, it was noted that the character Hope Beneke justifies her past belief in “separate development” or apartheid on the superstitious nature of black South Africans: “I questioned nothing because I saw blacks as we all saw them. As people who believed in witchcraft and the *tokoloshe* and the spirits of their forefathers” (153). The black and white detective team in *Bloody Harvests* stages a reconciliation between wary

white and black communities regarding the issue of African traditional beliefs in *sangomas* and witchcraft, a step towards a common process of police investigation and justice that embraces both epistemologies, both methods of knowing, Western forensics and African spiritualism.

After introducing the albino and his henchman, Kunzmann introduces his detective team after having discovered the corpse of the five-year-old African girl, whose hand has been severed and whose eyes and internal organs have been cut out of her, apparently while she was alive. In this scene, we see that Jacob is far better equipped to investigate the murder than is Harry. Jacob interviews the old black man who discovered the corpse, leaving Harry to confront the body of the little girl and the *muti* left there to protect the body, an object made from an albino rat's head, blood from the little girl, and feathers. Harry clearly is out of his element and sends word for Jacob to join him, but Jacob ignores the two-way radio call, realizing that the more important opportunity here is to interview the elderly, African man who found the body. Police officers come up to tell Jacob in person that Harry needs him, but he responds, "I'm busy here with this witness" (64). This introduces the power relations between the partners. Harry may be the senior member, but Jacob is no Zondi (from McClure's black and white detective team). Jacob demands to be treated as an equal partner. In his interrogation of the reluctant old man, we see Jacob is adept at employing both his insider knowledge of traditional African beliefs as well as his role as a representative of government authority. He tells the old man, "If I need to arrest you now because you won't talk to me, what will they start saying?...What will the newspapers say when we release you after questioning?" (62). He asks the old man to consider the fears of the local community around the ritual killing (61). "You are old and you have one blind eye, which many people believe helps you see into the spirit world. Will you be the witch they hunt next, after you leave the police station and another child disappears?" (62). Jacob's insider perspective, while

successful in appealing to the man's fear of anti-witchcraft vigilantism and provoking his agreeing to tell Jacob everything he knows, also makes Jacob complicit in a state-sanctioned disciplining of his own community. It is this kind of deployment of both his power as a police officer and his insider knowledge of African witchcraft culture that will allow Jacob to penetrate the wall of invisibility and invincibility that surrounds and protects the albino and his gang.

Meanwhile, Harry is fumbling around the scene of the body. The death *juju* or fetish is discovered by the police dogs, who are described as going nearly insane over the object. None of the other men, black or white, want to go near the object, but Harry grabs it, inspects it, and then brings it to his and Jacob's police car. When Jacob sees Harry waving the object around, he tells Harry it's very bad luck and refuses to drive with the *muti* in the car. Jacob gives the *muti* to Andre, a racist white officer, who doesn't want to take the object either, complaining that he saw the way the dogs reacted to it and that he is "a religious man" (67), significantly imbuing belief in the magic of the *muti* with religious significance rather than labeling it an object of superstition. Coincidentally, perhaps, Andre is ambushed and killed by the albino's men (212), which makes Jacob remember forcing Andre to take the fetish: "The detective shivers at the thought that he may have condemned the dog handler to death by passing the curse on to him" (215). Overall, the reader is aligned with Jacob's position on the magical power of the *muti* as this position is corroborated by the violent reactions of the dogs (the birds in the trees are also squawking violently), as well as by the black officers who won't go near it, and even Andre, the white, racist officer. To this, there is another significant piece of evidence: Harry, the skeptic, admits that he is feeling disoriented by a migraine headache that hit him the moment he arrived at the crime scene. This leaves the reader with the impression that the *muti* is having a material effect on the site where the body of the girl was found. The next day, when Harry admits to still

having the migraine, Jacob suggests taking Harry to a *sangoma*, which leads to a debate about the rationality of believing in *sangomas*. Harry queries,

“Since when did you become so superstitious?”

“It’s not superstition. I just know what I know.”

“I’ve seen that crucifix you wear around your neck; you can’t tell me you’re Christian but still believe in magic.”

Jacob is taken aback... (87)

Harry offers a Eurocentric view in which Christianity is a valid religious faith while the belief in the power of *sangomas* is an irrational, fantasy of a backward people. For him, Christianity and the belief in traditional African spiritualism are mutually exclusive. Jacob, the child of *sangomas* and a Christian is presented as the more broad-minded individual, accepting the validity of the spiritual beliefs of both the colonizing and colonized cultures.

Harry’s argument is exposed as racist when it is put in the mouth of Captain Mitchell, the born again Christian and racist head of the “Occult” division of the Johannesburg SAPS, who calls the belief in *sangomas* “devil worship” (183), and Harry finds himself defending Jacob and the African belief in magic. Mitchell asks,

“You know what I think, Harry? I think these kaffirs are never, never going to change. We bring them civilization, we bring them Jesus Christ, but they still go practicing this kind of barbarism....Can’t you see we’re dealing with wild *animals* here?” (184)

Harry responds, “What’s *wrong* here is that you somehow assume we are paddling in the same boat. You’re wrong” (184). Harry not only rejects Mitchell’s “bullshit opinions” about Africans

and their belief in magic (184), but he claims not to be in the same boat, not to share the cultural values and beliefs of the racist, Eurocentric Mitchell.

The novel goes through pains to describe a traditional African belief in magic and witchcraft that is not only potentially rational but also potentially moral. For example, Jacob visits an elderly *sangoma* woman, Hettie Solilo, to see if she has heard of any crimes related to evil magic and if she could help them find the source. She recounts a number of omens, such as the occurrence of three still-born babies in the immediate area, chickens that have been killed but not eaten, and hyena tracks (remember that the *baloyi* who attempted to kidnap Jacob transmuted into a hyena). Jacob finds himself in Harry's shoes, as the impatient skeptic who needs a way of knowing and investigating these crimes that can meet Western jurisprudence.

“I need something more concrete. Can you give me something I can *use*.”

“You think omens are not important? Don't be a fool, boy. I'm telling you the story the way I know it. You must not be impatient. You must see it as part of a whole.” (134)

The novel makes an argument for Jacob's duality as the most rational and productive position for a detective operating in the Rainbow Nation. On the other hand, the novel offers a more ambivalent response to the issue of witch hunts or vigilante killings of witches. When Harry asks what happened to the *baloyi* who had attempted to kidnap Jacob as a child, he reveals that his grandfather recognized the *baloyi* and led a witch hunt, which resulted in the capture and killing of the *baloyi* by necklacing.

“They started to beat him right there and then. My father told me that the men struck him first with their knobkerries, also kicking and punching him, then the few women following them joined in. After that, they necklaced him with a tyre,

doused it with petrol and watched him burn to death in the cornfield. My grandfather himself performed the appropriate rituals to ensure that his spirit did not escape to possess any animal or person nearby. (327)

When Harry calls the killing of the *baloyi* “just savagery,” Jacob concedes that it is “barbaric.” “That is why...why I am sitting with you now and why I go to church regularly. The consequences of such practices have taught me a cruel lesson” (327). However, Jacob defends the witch hunt, noting that afterwards, they went to the *baloyi*’s hut and found “the half cooked remains of several children” (328), which made Jacob’s grandfather feel justified in leading the hunt, and which showed that “the others had acted appropriately according to ancient tribal laws, because they were led by a genuine wise man and not a charlatan” (328). When Harry points out that the evidence justifying the killing was discovered after the murder, Jacob asks Harry to empathize with the mob as a parent: “Didn’t I hear you say, ‘Have you got any idea what I would do to the bastard who killed my daughter?’” (328). In a passage focalized by Harry, his dialogue with Jacob allows him to stage a reconciliation with the African mobs he sees on the news necklacing accused witches with his own feelings as a parent.

Harry accepts that his partner has a point, in a round-about way. It’s so easy to condemning people for necklacing someone, so easy to judge them after you see the news footage, or when you break up a lynch mob. Western jurisprudence has seemingly established ethical boundaries on such practices. But what *is* fair when your own child is butchered. When your child’s *soul* is used as a commodity for evil ends. How do you react in the face of a Western judiciary that sees and understands only the physical harm done, not the *spiritual*. (329)

In fact, when Harry learns that the government executed Jacob's grandfather, he objects, "but there were mitigating circumstances. Surely those would have been taken into account?" (330). Jacob reminds him that this was during apartheid and calls Harry naïve, recontextualizing the vigilante justice in terms of the way it was unfairly prosecuted by the racist the apartheid state.

While Jacob defends his grandfather's knowledge and wisdom in following the traditional tribal laws, he concedes that it is the execution of his grandfather that made him turn away from his father and his apprenticeship as a *sangoma*. "I deserted my father, who intended to train me like all first-born sons were trained before me. Instead I came to Soweto and...and tried to change my ways" (330). It is at this point that Harry recognizes Jacob's duality:

Harry becomes aware of how uncomfortable it must be for Jacob to exist by two sets of principles, one adopted by choice and one thrust open him by birth – torn between two communities, two ideologies, belonging to both, yet to neither completely. He wonders how Jacob manages to walk so tall, burdened by this duality. (332)

The novel suggests that such a Western/African duality is a constructive perspective that could allow a new racially hybridized South Africa to move forward. Ironically, this notion of duality is suggestive of what W. E. B. Dubois has referred to in his work on African Americans as a *double consciousness*, except that for Dubois, it is the consciousness of the dominant white culture that is thrust upon the Black man. In his study black detective fiction, Stephen F. Soitos notes the

nature of American racism...forces black Americans to see the world filtered through two levels of consciousness. First and foremost, they are forced to see themselves as second-class citizens by reason of their African ancestry, both

biological and cultural. Then and only then are they allowed the privilege of seeing themselves as American citizens. (23)

However, in *Bloody Harvests*, Harry imagines that it is Jacob's African-ness that is forced upon him by birth while he has freely chosen to participate in white, Western cultural perspective. Harry's naiveté regarding the impact of white racism on Jacob is reflected in the novel's overly optimistic and too easily achieved resolution of the cultural conflict between Harry and Jacob.

In the novel's final chapter, when Jacob takes Harry and Jeanie to meet his father, Harry completes his character arc by adopting a white/African duality. The father and his fellow *sangomas* ask Harry if they can examine Jeanie, informing Harry that *baloyi* try to tie a child victim to themselves by infecting the child in some way, by having the child ingest something or by attaching something to the child, etc. Harry quickly agrees to the examination and is relieved when they pronounce her as free of the albino's influence. She asks if she can go play, and the novel ends with him watching her play with a number of Zulu children "chattering with her" as if she can understand them. He considers Jacob's father's suggestion that the spirit of his dead wife is nearby, and "as a cold breeze blows across the back of his neck like a ghostly kiss," he thinks, "Perhaps there is hope after all" (455). Harry has found hope not only in the possibility of friendship between Africans and whites, even if they can't speak the same language, but in Jacob's and his father's belief that the spirits of our dead remain with us if only we stay in the place where we have buried them (rather than escaping to another country as his parents did after Harry's best friend died). By accepting this duality, Harry not only begins his own healing, but symbolically he embraces the hope of a Rainbow Nation, in which both Western and African concepts of life and death can coexist and bring us comfort, each in its own way.

Problematizing the Resolution in *Bloody Harvests*

Having the white and black detective team recognize the value of *sangoma* investigation and healing at the end of *Bloody Harvests* imbues the closing of the novel with a sense of hope. Harry even comes to sympathize with the parents who were involved with the mob necklacing of the *baloyi* who attempted to kidnap Jacob. Harry's reference to newsreels echoes the image with which Deon Meyer begins his first novel, *Dead before Dying*, the necklacing killing by an African mob, which clearly provokes anxiety in white South Africans. However, there are two significant concerns with this coming together of the hybrid team into representatives of a Rainbow Nation jurisprudence. First, its staging of a common investigatory and prosecutorial process in relation to *muti* murders and vigilante killings of suspected witches is far more complicated and difficult than is represented in the novel. Second, the reconciliation performed by the racially hybrid detective team of Harry and Jacob, as noted earlier, relies on the vilifying and othering of the albino, which makes the novel complicit in a number of bigoted and violent discourses in South Africa.

Regarding the prosecution of witchcraft, Priscilla Boshoff in her analysis of witchcraft narratives in the *Daily Sun* notes that there were apartheid era laws against witchcraft, in particular the Suppression of Witchcraft Act, no. 3 of 1957, but these laws didn't punish witchcraft but the accusation of witchcraft and vigilantism.

This law's real purpose was to eradicate the discourse of witchcraft, and hence in time the suppression of the practice itself. This legal attempt at eradication drove discussions of witchcraft underground as the law was interpreted as protecting witches, and witchcraft-related attacks increased as traditional spaces for dealing with witchcraft accusations were eroded (Niehaus 2001). (Cited by Boshoff 168)

The apartheid government's antipathy toward the belief in witchcraft might explain why with the dissolution of its powerful police apparatus in 1994, there was an explosion of witch doctor vigilante killings. Comaroff and Comaroff note that "between 1985 and 1995 there occurred over 300 cases of witch-related killings in the [Northern] province (Ralushai et al. 1996:31); in the first half of 1996 there were 676, a 45-fold increase" (285). One of the first actions of the new ANC-elected government was to create a commission of inquiry to address this vigilante violence (Comaroff and Comaroff, "Occult Economies" 282). However, while the number of killings in the Northern Province were brought down, the overall incidence of vigilante killings of alleged witch doctors across South Africa is still quite significant. The website *Remember Their Names – Victims of witch-hunts in South Africa 2000 to 2015*, list individual cases according to news reports, amounting to hundreds of vigilante killings of alleged witch doctors per year. As Jensen and Buur note in "Everyday Policing of the Occult":

Witchcraft's ambiguous position in today's South Africa has made it very difficult to handle through the legal system. The "official" South Africa denounces it, and so, with few other avenues for dealing with it, witchcraft often becomes the task of local justice enforcement formations. (208)

Unfortunately, the prosecution and punishment of witch doctors no longer follows traditional process of community jurisprudence with the use of *sangomas* diviners, as dramatized in *Bloody Harvests* through the figure of Jacob's grandfather. According to Kohnert, "prior to the 1980s, witches convicted by the village courts were mostly exiled. Now things had changed. Youth activists spontaneously killed them, without the aid of traditional authorities or diviners" (223). Jacob's recounting of the witch hunt led by his grandfather disavows the nature of these witch hunts and killings in terms of the process, which often have no elements of jurisprudence, and in

terms of the targets, which, as demonstrated earlier, are primarily women and the elderly mostly of South African descent. Researchers seem to agree that it will be very difficult for the government to effectively police *muti*--related assaults on the one hand and vigilante witch hunts and killings on the other hand, belying the novel's facile treatment of the subject.

Regarding the novel's vilifying of the albino figure, it makes the novel not only complicit in xenophobic discourse and unfairly suggests that people with albinism are the perpetrators rather than the victims of *muti* killings, it also suggests an ambivalence towards the project of the Rainbow Nation, providing a negative, monstrous hybridity, an evil criminal who is neither black nor white, which counters and perhaps subverts the hopeful image of the hybrid, black and white detective team.

Coldsleep Lullaby: An Entangled Discourse on Miscegenation and Coloured Shame

*She drifted in the water's slow current, her toes caressed
by the grasses and blanket weed lining the muddy
bank....Three centuries earlier, the newly appointed
Governor at the Cape had set out in such heat....The river
had witnessed the passing of history....[It] had decided the
fate of the town's inhabitants - the Dutch and the English
masters and their slaves, thrown together from across the
world. The river had felt their dreams, their desperate
hopes, cast like twigs into its course, flowing away from the
town and into the sea. (1)*

In Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby*, the Eerste (or First) River is a metonym for the creolized, post-slavery culture that evolved in Stellenbosch and the Cape, its unceasing flow

weaving the dreams, destinies, and blood of slave masters, free burghers, and slaves; of Koi, Malay, Indian, and African; of Afrikaans-speaking Dutch settlers and their coloured offspring, touting their racial purity and decrying their mixed heritage, respectively. In *Coldsleep Lullaby*, the course of the Eerste River marks the imprint of the history of slavery on post-apartheid South Africa.

Shaped as a double narrative, set in both colonial and contemporary Stellenbosch, a wine producing, university town in the Cape, the novel begins with Melanie du Preez, the daughter of a Stellenbosch University law professor and advocate for the Afrikaner culture, floating down the Eerste. We do not yet know that she is already in the cold sleep of death, having been raped and murdered just hours before. The novel will recount another rape and another killing, 300 years earlier at the colonial genesis of the world-renowned Stellenbosch vineyards, when the governor's chief viticulturist assaults the 15-year-old daughter of a couple whose emancipation from slavery is pending, but in this earlier case of the late 1600s, it is the rapist's corpse that will float down the Eerste River toward the sea. The two sexual assaults and the two deaths are linked, historically and ancestrally, each configuring and reconfiguring white and coloured masculinity in the new South Africa.

While the novel ends with a memorial to Melanie's death conducted by a hope-inspiring partnership between a young African female constable and a white female survivor of statutory rape, Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby* (2005) presents a more skeptical white imagining of the Rainbow Nation as a site of ancestral shame where coloured identity was first entangled with sexual violence and exploitation by European settlers. It also presents a more complex configuration of the hybrid detective team: the lead investigator is Eberard Februarie, a coloured divorced father in his mid-thirties, who has regular therapy sessions to address issues of

depression and cocaine addiction; his partner is Constable Xoliswa Nduku, a rookie, who has just completed her reservist training and who is fifteen years his junior, yet “a tall powerfully built woman with striking facial features,” who “carries herself with a grace and confidence that was almost intimidating” (13). While Eberard will eventually fall in love with Xoli, and she will literally save him from a fire at the end, the detective team does not provide a narrative of cultural hybridization between coloured and Africans in the New South Africa. Rather, the idealized Xoli will help motivate and empower Eberard to face the source of his shame, his complicity with white racism and patriarchy, and construct a masculinity that is neither configured by the racist ideology of apartheid, nor complicit in patriarchal violence against women. In Brown’s novel, the theme of reconciliation occurs within the figure of the coloured detective, dramatized in his journey of disentanglement from identification with white masculinity, a site of power and privilege during apartheid, yet also a generative site of coloured shame

Although the popular consensus is that *Coldsleep Lullaby* is a crime novel, the slave narrative, disconnected from the central mystery in the novel, is just one way the novel breaks the genre’s conventions. Brown is not a typical crime or detective novelist. He considers himself an advocate first, as well as a police reservist; he writes novels as an avocation, choosing topics that he believes are socially or politically relevant. His novels have addressed the Rwanda massacre (*Ilyenzi*, 2000), South African prejudice against refugees and immigrants (*Refuge*, 2009), religious fundamentalism and intolerance (*Solace*, 2012), and most recently the Sudanese civil war (2014). In an interview with Mike Nicol, Brown admits,

“To be perfectly honest, I was a bit surprised when *Coldsleep Lullaby* was categorised as a crime thriller, as I hadn’t thought of it in that way at all. I

suppose, on reflection, the categorisation is probably correct, in that there is a crime committed which requires investigation and an ultimate resolution. (“The Dreaded Genre Label”)

The solving of that crime provides more questions than answers about the plight of South Africa’s Rainbow Nation, coloured identity, and the impact of sexual violence in the country. As reviewer John Amid puts it, Brown “is adept at [writing novels] that offer a ‘cold’ form of comfort” (“Andrew Brown Solace”).

While the crime novels in the final two chapters of this study are filled with sexual violence toward women, these are depicted as crimes perpetrated by pathological or evil men, whose guilt is typically established by the hero detectives, the best men of their worlds, who work to protect women or, when they cannot, to punish the evil men. *Coldsleep Lullaby*’s rape narratives interrogate rape as systemic patriarchal violence against women. By pairing a post-apartheid rape and murder perpetrated by a racist Afrikaner professor against his own daughter with the rape of the daughter of a slave couple in the late 1600s by the master viticulturist who helped found the world renown Stellenbosch’s vineyards, *Coldsleep Lullaby* suggests that the high incidence of post-apartheid patriarchal violence against women is, in part, a legacy of slavery. The novel suggests that contemporary colored shame, incest, and the black peril myth are rooted in the culture of slavery in South Africa and its anti-miscegenation ideology.

During the investigation of Melanie’s rape and murder, Inspector Eberard witnesses what he perceives to be a rape at club Pécheurs but fails to intervene. Unaware that the rape he witnessed was simulated and paid for and believing that the club, which is owned and run by a Congolese immigrant, establishes a space in which transgressive behavior is not only allowed but encouraged, Eberard himself attempts to assault a girl dancing when he next visits the club. By

implicating the novel's detective hero in these two sexual assaults, the novel suggests that sexual violence is endemic to South Africa, and that these patriarchal crimes are fostered by the constructions of white and coloured masculinities and the racist discourse that initially configured them.

Coloured Shame and Masculinity

The *coloured* racial classification in South Africa is complex and contested. In "History of Slavery and Early Colonisation in South Africa," a common coloured cultural identity is described as being derived from a pre-20th century intermixing on the Cape of the ancestors of European settlers, principally Dutch and British with the slaves they brought to South Africa, primarily from the east coast of India, Malaysia, Batavia (Jakarta), and Indonesia as well as Madagascar and East Africa ("History of Slavery") and with indigenous peoples, principally the Khoisan (Adhikari 2). Mohamed Adhikari's *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough* explains:

Since they are...partly descended from European settlers, Coloureds are popularly regarded as being of "mixed race" and have held an intermediated status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population. (2)

Marika de Klerk, the wife of Former President F.W. de Klerk called coloureds "the leftovers"; a coloured person was, in her words, a "not person," one who was not black, white, nor Indian (Adhikari 13, "Race in South Africa"). As Zoe Wicomb notes, one of the key descriptors of coloured identity in South Africa is *shame*. The shame of coloured identity is in part a product of the anti-miscegenation ideology of the slave culture of the original Dutch colonies and of apartheid, which associated colouredness with "concupiscence" linked to the perceived immorality of miscegenation, and the lack of racial or cultural purity resulting from that racial

intermixing (“Shame and Identity” 92). Wicomb also notes an additional mark of shame in the apartheid era assimilationist attitudes of many coloureds who were encouraged to perceive themselves as superior to Africans. Indeed, in the post-apartheid context, that shame played out in the coloured vote for the National Party, the party of Apartheid, in the 1994 election, which meant that the Western Cape, with its Coloured majority, was the only region in South Africa in which the ANC did not win majority representation. Wicomb calls this vote “the failure, in coloured terms, of the grand narrative of liberation” (“Shame and Identity” 94). In this context, notes Wicomb, the condition of hybridity, Homi Bhabha’s celebratory state of “inbetweenness” aids conservative rather than subversive ends (102-103).

In *Coldsleep Lullaby*, there are indications that Inspector Eberard Februarie’s passivity and emotional paralysis are linked to a sense of shame for his lack of racial purity, with his envying of and passive silence in conversation with Afrikaner and African men. For example, in his investigative interactions with Melanie du Preez’s father, law professor and protector of Afrikaner culture, Dawid du Preez, Eberard admits both a respect and an empathy for the man, connecting his own suffering with the professor’s.

He wanted to look away, feeling embarrassed by the spectacle of a great man battling with the horror that life had offered up to him. He thought of his own life. Figuratively, he too had lost a wife and daughter...Looking at the broken professor reminded him of his own loss. (39)

In fact, the professor’s losses, the death of his wife in a car accident and the murder and rape of his daughter, seem to ennoble him through suffering that he endured but did not cause, while Eberard’s loss is the result of a divorce and loss of custody after he became addicted to cocaine.

While Eberard admires the Professor, Du Preez is quite patronizing in his treatment of Eberard. For example, when he makes note of Eberard's last name, Februarie, he remarks:

“That’s a slave name. Your great-grandfather or perhaps his father must have been a slave in the Cape Colony.” It was customary, he explained, for slaves to take a new surname when they were released – often the month they were released. “I can also trace my heritage back to those days.” (40)

In case, Eberard does not realize that Du Preez is noting their common roots to emphasize their differences rather than their commonalities, he adds, “I come from a *pure* Hollandse line....So you see, Inspector, my ancestors may have been responsible for the release of yours” (40, emphasis added). Shame for his colouredness or racial impurity is suggested when he does not object to Du Preez's characterization and more broadly by the respectful silence with which he responds to Du Preez's reflections.

After their interview with the Professor, Eberard asks Xoliswa if she would prefer not to work the case, given the professor's role on the Komitee (to promote Afrikaner culture and values), but he doesn't seem to see any conflict in it for himself. Eberard's empathy with and desire to be accepted by Professor du Preez is illustrative of a widespread desire in the coloured community to be accepted by the dominant culture during apartheid, which, according to Adhikari, was one of the consistent markers of coloured identity through the 20th century (“From Narratives of Miscegenation” 93). Adhikari explains that coloured identity in the 20th century has been remarkably stable, consistently exhibiting four basic characteristics: 1) “assimilationist aspirations” (i.e., the desire to be accepted into the dominant culture), 2) “their intermediate status in the racial hierarchy,” and a desire to maintain their relative privilege, 3) “negative racial

stereotyping” and 4) their marginalization (93).²⁷ Adhikari cites Zimitri Erasmus’s in listing negative associations with coloured identity, primarily related to the group’s racial hybridity: “immorality, sexual promiscuity, illegitimacy, impurity, and untrustworthiness,” to which Adhikari adds “supposed propensities for criminality, gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse, and vulgar behavior” (14). According to this formulation, coloured resistance to dominant white culture and the apartheid system that oppressed coloureds was tempered by a sense of shame or inferiority to whites and the desire to maintain and assert its racial privilege over Africans, making coloureds complicit in the racism and oppression of Africans by the white dominant culture.

In *Coldsleep Lullaby* Eberard illustrates a number of negative racial stereotypes associated with colouredness. He is a recovering drug addict who accepts powerful, exotic drinks from Kitsire at Club Pécheurs. As the lead investigator in the Melanie du Preez murder, he is unreliable, failing to follow up on clues and follow proper procedures. He also demonstrates sexual promiscuity with his sexualized responses to his therapist, Dr. Susan Primesh, and his female partner, Xoli, as well as through his behavior at Club Pécheurs. Eberard also is characterized by a strong sense of self-loathing. For example, during a therapy session with Dr. Primesh, Eberard thinks:

He wanted to tell her how his own body had become foul to him. He knew he could never articulate it to her, but his body’s own smell, the very feel of it, had become unbearable....He needed her to understand. How he loathed his every reaction. (59-60)

²⁷ Mohamed Adhikari’s original hypothesis in analyzing coloured identity in the 20th century is that it would have undergone striking shifts. “I was instead struck by how stable that identity had been throughout the era of white domination and how superficial the influences of earlier radical politics, Black Consciousness, and the rejectionist movements were” (*Not White Enough, Not Black Enough* (xiii).

This self-loathing linked with his respect and empathy for Professor du Preez is strongly suggestive of a deep-seeded sense of inferiority.

Although Eberard complains that the Stellenbosch police station is more racially segregated than the large, urban stations he has previously worked in, as will be shown in the next section, he is personally implicated in the Stellenbosch force's racism by the way he treats a black immigrant suspect, which is in stark contrast to his deferential treatment of Professor du Preez.

The Black Peril Myth and Coloured Complicity in White Racism

Brown's novel engages white anxiety about black peril, or fear of African men raping white women, through the figure of Bullet, Eberard's first and only suspect in Melanie's rape and murder. Eberard's treatment of Bullet as a suspect in the case shows his complicity in racially discriminatory police practices. Eberard is not the best man of his world and certainly not the best detective of his world or even of his partnership. His only action to investigate Melanie du Preez's murder is to interview her father and to call for the autopsy report. It is the rookie reservist, Xoliswa, who interviews the victim's sister and friends, who discovers that Melanie had been going to Club Pécheurs, a dance club run by a Congolese immigrant named Laurent Kitsire and that while there the night before her murder Melanie had had an argument with Bullet, a club bouncer from Burundi, yelling at him that "My father will kill you" (76). Since he did virtually nothing to find the suspect, Eberard can't be accused of racial profiling in identifying Bullet as a suspect, but the witness of the argument is a young white girl who has just started to work at the club and who refers to Bullet as "a darkie," suggesting her own racism (74). Eberard seems to immediately assume that Bullet is guilty and does nothing to test his guilt or to find other suspects, nor to protect his suspect's civil rights. Moreover, the police officers of

Stellenbosch under Eberard's direction use excessive force in apprehending Bullet. When Bullet is unlocking his door at Eberard's command, the arresting officers bust the door open knocking Bullet back into the room (78). They then throw him on the bed and, when he answers Eberard in French rather than English, Eberard orders him handcuffed (79). When Bullet complains that his papers are in order, one officer punches him with all his might, and another hits him with his service revolver and complains, "Fucking Nigerians!" (79), even though Bullet's from Burundi. Ironically, during the arrest, Eberard never asks him about Melanie or the argument, but Bullet is an illegal immigrant, and he limits his remarks to complaints about South African racism and xenophobia – mostly in French. Eberard's complicity in the racist treatment of Bullet is underlined by his feeling an "uncharacteristic surge of hope" following the arrest (81), although there is almost no evidence at this point indicating that Bullet raped or murdered Melanie.

When DNA tests show that Bullet's semen is present in Melanie, Eberard jumps to the assumption that this proves he raped her (and thus also murdered her), ignoring the possibility that he is her boyfriend, which turns out to be the case. Eberard's assumption suggests his acceptance of the black peril myth, in which black men are seen as having an uncontrollable desire to rape white women. It seems that Eberard cannot contemplate a sexual relationship between the Afrikaner professor's daughter and the Burundian bouncer other than through violent, forcible rape. According to Lucy Graham:

Although 'black peril' refers to the period of social hysteria prevalent in South Africa from 1890 to 1914, deployment of analogous fears has been a recurring strategy in South African politics and in the media. It is not surprising to find these anxieties replayed in the transition period of the 1990s. (19)

For Binder, *Coldsleep Lullaby* invokes the black peril myth in order to critique it. Quoting Helen Moffet's article "Gender," Binder claims, the novel exemplifies a critique of "black peril" myths, which "harden racial barriers, demean black men, silence black women, and let white men off the hook" (181). That is, Brown's novel shows that the paranoia about the black suspect's possible rape of the white victim obscures the white perpetrator of that rape.

It is the eloquent owner of Club Pécheurs, Laurent Kitsire, a former teacher of literature, who points out Eberard's complicity in a racist system of justice: "Your case was given to you, prepared on a plate of fear, and you've taken it with both hands. *Merde!*" (115). Before the DNA evidence can be tested, Professor du Preez, using his advocacy card to gain access to Bullet's cell, shoots and kills the suspect, claiming to Eberard that Bullet was taunting him, telling Du Preez, "Your daughter, she tasted so nice" (Brown 103). He shot him, he claims, to silence him before the next rude thing about his daughter could escape his lips. Eberard does not question the Professor's story, and he tells him that he will not oppose his request for bail. On the other hand, he arrests Bullet solely based on his having been seen having an argument with Melanie. Moreover, when Du Preez changes his story, arguing self-defense and the attorney general wants to dismiss the case against Du Preez for the murder of Bullet as justifiable homicide, Eberard can't use Du Preez's original statement to contest his claim because he decided not to push Du Preez to sign his statement right away because he was afraid that it would upset him.

The treatment of the alleged perpetrators in Eberard's two murder cases also demonstrate a racially discriminatory judicial process. Professor du Preez gets a one-on-one interview with the Deputy Attorney General, during which he changes his story and claims Bullet attacked him and that he shot the Burundian in self-defense. The Attorney-General decides to drop the murder charge even though Du Preez's bringing of the gun to the jail cell and tricking the guard using

his card as a professional advocate shows that there was planning and premeditation to his confrontation with Bullet. The reason is never stated, but it is implied that members of the Attorney-General's Office felt that Du Preez's desire to kill the man who had allegedly raped and murdered his daughter was understandable. Laurent points out to Eberard the discriminatory handling of the case: "A Burundian didn't rape her; a man raped her. And that man was driven by his being a man, not by his nationhood. She wasn't raped by a man with a passport! She was raped by a man with a penis" (115). Yet, Eberard remains passive, inert, parroting the Attorney-General's explanation that it dropped the charges against Du Preez so he would have more time to "assess the situation" (174).

White Peril, Incest, and Miscegenation

As Binder noted earlier, one reason to deploy the black peril myth was to obfuscate white peril or the threat of interracial rape perpetrated by white males, a much more prevalent form of interracial rape in South African history. Interracial rape perpetrated by white men was considered an issue of morality rather than criminality. As demonstrated in the quote below, it was often labeled in economic terms as a form of exchange, ignoring the differences in power that configured that exchange and downplaying the sexual violence done to slaves or to African or colored women. In his history of slavery in South Africa, in a section headed "Genealogical Traceable Descendants," Andre van Rensburg describes interracial sexual relations during slavery euphemistically:

There were obviously liaisons between the slave women and the men at the Cape. The Slave Lodge served as a de facto brothel. The Slave Lodge thus served as the breeding house for many families since that was the dwelling place of many a *stammoeder* [the matriarch or first of a genealogical line]. (Rensburg)

We are not told whether the female slaves were raped or compelled to provide sexual services, only that they were “frequented,” but when a woman is not being compensated monetarily, then it would be inaccurate to describe female slaves as prostitutes in “a de facto brothel.” Sexual unions between male Europeans and female slaves and the resulting miscegenation were considered an issue of morality rather than criminality. This is likely because the legal lines of descent were matrilineal, so that the offspring of these unions would be slaves.²⁸ Nonetheless, the moral taint of these couplings whether the product of rape, prostitution, or other type of relations, rested upon the offspring, who was marred both by racial impurity and the lasciviousness of the parents. If interracial sexual relations occurred between a male slave and a European woman, then this would have a significant impact on white society as it would impact lines of inheritance of the property of white males, as the child would be legitimate. Interracial sex involving a European woman was considered a capital crime, with the male slave being put to death (Rensburg). In each case, the will of the woman, slave or European, was irrelevant to the economic impact of the offspring and irrelevant to the criminality and immorality of the act. What was determinative was the economic impact on the inheritance of white males.

The economic impact of interracial sexual relations involving European men was contained by the trope of racial impurity that devalued the offspring of such unions and associated the offspring—rather than the white male progenitors (the *stamvaders*, in Afrikaans)—with the societal condemnation of the act (i.e., with the shame produced by miscegenation (Rensburg). With this shame being overestimated, racial purity, such as that claimed by Du Preez, who claims he comes from a pure Hollandse line, becomes overvalued.

²⁸ “The History of Slavery and Early Colonisation in South Africa” notes that the economics of slavery in South Africa was quite different than in America: slaves were replaced with new slaves from slave expeditions not by the raising of the offspring of slaves.

In *Coldsleep Lullaby*, Brown's use of the incest narrative, with Du Preez's rape of both of his daughters, may be intended as a critique of Du Preez's excessive insistence on cultural and ethnic purity as a kind of perversity, with incest being the logical outcome of an ideology that stresses genetic purity above all else. As Shaun Irlam notes in "Unravelling the Rainbow: The Remission of Nation in Post-Apartheid Literature," literary critiques of racist tropes of purity have been dramatized through incest narratives in South African literature by Andre Brink in his novel *Devil's Valley* (2001), Marlene van Niekerk in her book *Triomf* (1999), and by Etienne van Heerden in *Ancestral Voices* (1992) (705). In *Coldsleep Lullaby*, Professor du Preez turns out to be the rapist and the murderer of his daughter, Melanie. The novel's hybrid detective team learns from Melanie's ex-boyfriend that Melanie was a frequent visitor of Club Pécheurs, and from Laurent that she was his star sex act, Clementine. Bullet, far from a rapist, was her devoted and dominated boyfriend. When they take Melanie's collection of lullabies to Eberard's therapist, Dr. Susan Primesh, for her analysis, she provides them with a darker version of the "Clementine" lullaby that suggests that both Melanie and her younger sister, Elsabe, were the victims of incest.

How I missed her, how I missed her

How I missed my Clementine

Till I kissed her little sister

And forgot my Clementine. (235)

From these lines, (along with some corroborating medical evidence and suggestive allusions in other lullabies), Eberard and Nduku realize that Professor du Preez had an incestuous relationship with Melanie and has begun an incestuous relationship with Melanie's younger sister, Elsabe. The revelation has a profound impact. It suggests that Du Preez himself murdered

his daughter, Melanie, and that he shot Bullet, not out of self-defense, as he told the Attorney-General, nor because Bullet mocked Melanie and her suffering, as Du Preez told Eberard, but either out of jealousy and a hatred steeped in racism or to hide his own crime. Either way, Du Preez is shown to be both a premeditated murderer and the perpetrator of two particularly heinous crimes: incest and filicide. Eberard's failure to even suspect Du Preez's guilt while jumping to the false conclusion that Bullet was a murderer and rapist demonstrates the extent of Eberard's racism and his complicity with a racially skewed system of justice.

In the climax of the murder investigation, Eberard confronts Du Preez and his own complicity in Du Preez' racism. This is shown metaphorically when Eberard demands that the Professor relinquish his daughter, a request that the Professor rejects, pushing Eberard to shoot the Professor, who burns to death in the fire that he sets in his home and that also permanently mars Eberard, a metaphorical branding of him by a shame shared with Du Preez. When Eberard breaks into the home, he finds the Professor emotionally unstable. His youngest daughter is unconscious, "her neck bent unnaturally toward her left shoulder" (252). The Professor has doused the library that so impressed Eberard in their first interview with gas and is holding a candle "as if it were a crucifix warding off advancing demons" (252). Du Preez explains that no one is innocent, not himself, not Eberard, and "not her," pointing to his unconscious daughter. "My fate and my daughters...it's in my hands now" (252). However, for Eberard, this is his moment of destiny. For the entire novel, he has been passive, accepting Du Preez's false testimony, Laurent's corrupting invitations, and Xoliswa's reproaches, but at this moment he decides to act:

Eberard took a single, deliberate step into the room, placing his front foot firmly on the damp carpet....Eberard spoke evenly: “What you can’t understand is that I welcome it” (252).

Eberard stopped thinking. Just for a second, he felt serene and in control. Then he squeezed the trigger. (253)

For Eberard, this confrontation and sacrifice is portrayed as a breaking with the Afrikaner his complicity in a white, racist injustice. While he apparently is scarred terribly in the fire, this scene leaving its imprint on him for life, the detective imagines it as a liberation, but from what?

He felt cold but comforted. The fire was cleansing. It would take his enemy away from him. It would punish the man and exonerate his pursuer in pure, bursting heat. It was an ending. He gave himself up without any resistance. (254)

It is tempting to read this resolution of the central murder investigation in *Coldsleep Lullaby* as Eberard’s overcoming of the shame of his coloured identity, especially when put in the context of the resolution of the other narrative, the 17th century rape of Sanna, the daughter of two slaves waiting for confirmation of their freedom from the governor by the chief viticulturist of the Stellenbosch vineyards, Martin van der Keesel.

The narrative resolution reveals that the *stamvader* or patriarch of Du Preez’s pure Hollandse line is actually the offspring produced by Sanna’s rape by Van der Keesel, which makes Sanna the *stammoeder* or matriarch. That is, Professor du Preez actually comes from a line of slaves and is the product of mixed blood, for which he has savagely criticized Eberard; however, because of the Stellenbosch governor’s wife’s disdain for viticulturist Van der Keesel and her desire to punish him for the rape of the young, slave girl, she gets the governor, Van der Stel, to agree to have the boy, who by law is a slave, raised with the money of Van der Keesel’s

estate by a recently widowed settler, Mrs. Du Preez. That is, he is raised as a wealthy white boy with all the privileges that entails.

Rape Fantasies and the Recuperation of the Coloured Male Detective

While the novel consistently constructs Eberard as a deeply flawed character, suffering from depression and substance abuse, it is his inaction when witnessing and confronting a rape at Club Pécheurs that is his most troubling. When the scene begins, Eberard acts like a hard-boiled detective, investigating the possibility of a crime with the intention, we assume, of stopping it. After he witnesses a bouncer taking a middle-aged businessman upstairs through a secret door, followed by club owner Kitsire escorting one of his dancers, Eberard follows them through the door, which “closed slowly behind, settling into place, only to be disturbed before it could lock by the policeman’s boot, shoved forcefully against the frame” (172). When Eberard hears the dancer scream, he ascends the poorly lit staircase and bursts into the room where the young dancer is being held by the bouncer, who “slaps her hard on the cheek” (172). It is one of only a couple of scenes that one could imagine in a film noir movie. However, when the girl pleads with Eberard to help her, he doesn’t. He lets Kitsire grab his arm and listens to the club owner passively: “Hah! So you want to see what you’re really made of? We’ll see if you are ready for this this, my friend. We will see. You have come earlier than I expected...but we will see” (173). When he then orders the bouncer to lead the dancer into the room with the middle-aged businessman, Eberard does nothing, provoking her to yell at him, “Fuck you for not helping me. You’re a pig just like the rest of them” (173). What is most troubling is Eberard’s ambivalent emotional state: “Conflicting emotions washed over him, guilt and titillation, disgust and curiosity all vying for dominance” (173). The ambivalence is demonstrated when Kitsire shifts the conversation to his anger that the charges against Du Preez for murdering Bullet have been dropped. When the

bouncer comes out of what Kitsire calls the *la salle des Jeux* or play room, Eberard sees through the door the businessman apparently violently raping the woman (she is at least in a position of subjugation, her top up and around her neck as if she had been choked). “Eberard was both horrified and aroused by the scene: like a pornographic film or car accident, it left him feeling ashamed of his fascination” (177). As usual, this shame leaves Eberard paralyzed with ambivalence and uncertainty, while Kitsire explains to him:

“the ultimate male fantasy, at its truest and darkest, must involve all the elements of masculine sexuality. And those are...dominance and power, youth...power over innocence, and of course, performance....one that contains all the necessary sins to make it forbidden and irresistible, dominance over the subject, the destruction of youth, physical coercion, the corruption of desire. And that is precisely why it so powerful.” (178)

The speech seems to be Brown’s explanation of the Du Preez’s incestuous relationships, which apparently involved elements of force, given his violent attacks on both daughter, as well as colonialist Van der Keesel’s rape of the Sanna, daughter of his slave mistress, Jakoba. In the following chapter, Martin van der Keesel will act out his masculine fantasy, but Brown’s description will be thrown in sharp relief to the one performed at Club Pécheurs.

The rape of Sanna is described almost entirely from her perspective, focusing on her pain – “the stony ground left long weals on her back and thigh and an open wound on her buttock, which Jacoba would need to dress daily for a week”—and on Van der Keesel’s repulsiveness, “his sour breath and rough beard scraping her cheeks,” – and on her passivity, she “lay still, as if in a faint or dead” (184). Even the description of Van der Keesel when he begins his assault is de-eroticized conveying the rape as a drudgery: “He seemed distracted, his eyes unfocused and

his teeth blackened from too much of the narcotic *sirih*. It almost seemed to be an obligation, a duty to assert his will and his authority” (184). When the rape is completed, Sanna demands to know why he “did that?” When he tells her threateningly that to ask such a question is impudent and may be punished, she responds with a speech of liberation:

“I am not afraid of you, Master van der Keesel. You are like a man who has fired the shot from his musket, but the ball missed its mark. Perhaps I am wounded; perhaps you have hurt me somewhere deep inside, but I am still here. You have nothing left to fight me with. The only weapon you had has been used. What can you do now, Master van der Keesel? Strike me? Have me whipped? Have me hanged? Do you think that those will me fear you now?” (185)

Van der Keesel’s response is only to walk away. Later, Sanna will lure him into the Eerste River by the entrance to a large African Cobra’s den, with a half dead mouse that she hung from a tree, and the snake will bite Van der Keesel, although before he can die from the poison, he splits his head open on a rock in the river trying to take revenge on Sanna. It is not the scene of revenge for the slave rape, which seems something of a fantasy, but the powerful speech at the conclusion of her rape that is so remarkable and so poignant following and thoroughly countering Kitsire’s male fantasy speech.

When Eberard returns to Club Pécheurs to pursue his own fantasy rape, we will see him drunk and pathetic from Kitsire’s perspective, held on the floor by two bouncers after he harasses and then assaults a teenage dancer, grabbing her breast. Kitsire brings Eberard up to his office next to *La Salle des Jeux* and laughs at the detective’s stupidity, which, argues Kitsire, is based on a racist understanding of Africans with which Eberard colludes:

“What’s the colour of evil? The colour of all that’s forbidden? It’s the colour of night, and darkness. Isn’t that right, Inspector Detective?...Your life and reactions to people are ruled by your noble belief that white is rational and predictable while black is unknowable and untameable....What an asshole you are....*Imbecile*. You think that you’ve entered some voodoo world, a world of black magic where the normal principles for white people are suspended. You think that businessmen can come down here into our dark world and behave like animals, like us, and then leave and return to their civilized worlds....Is that how you imagine my society works? Of course you do, otherwise you wouldn’t act like such an idiot.” (200)

Eberard had so believed the apartheid era stereotypes of African men as animals who can’t restrain their own sexuality—except out of fear or punishment—that in their own un-policed worlds, where white morality does not constrain their behavior, rape is a normative practice. Although the break with the Congolese club owner will come at his will, as he asks the detective to never return to his club, Eberard’s envy of African men is disrupted by Laurent Kitsire’s speech, by his recognition of his anti-African prejudice. This may also be seen as the point at which he begins his break with Du Preez and the white racist discourse that has oppressed him and coloureds as well as Africans.

Final Disentanglements

In “Disentangling the Detective in Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby*,” Binder argues that Brown’s novel and its hybrid detective team provide a hopeful perspective on the new South Africa and for the place of coloured South Africans in a “broader black experience” in the Rainbow Nation (183). In fact, she asserts that *Coldsleep Lullaby* provides support for John

Cawelti's claim that, "[i]ncreasingly the detective story is a genre in which writers explore new social values and definitions and push against traditional boundaries of gender and race to play imaginatively with new kinds of social character and human relations" (184). However, while I agree that Brown's novel does attempt to look for creative cultural entanglements between the coloured and African communities, I believe this attempt is subverted by a minimalist depiction of colouredness in the novel that reifies coloured identity in the figure of Eberard Februarie, who as an icon of colouredness is extremely passive, lacking not only agency but also a concrete past or present.

Like many protagonists in the detective genre, he is alienated from his culture. He has an ex-wife and a daughter he doesn't see, but we learn almost nothing about them. Eberard has no parents or family, no friends, no schooling, nor other aspects of his life—sports, arts, hobbies, cultural influences, consumption—nor any past or present experiences that illustrate or provide specificity to his membership in a coloured community. While Eberard's character is replete with a number of negative associations with colouredness in South Africa—such as his drug addiction, lack of reliability or trustworthiness, and concupiscence—his colouredness, as represented in the novel, echoes the apartheid definition of this racial classification: he is not white like Du Preez nor is he black like Kitsire or Xoli. At the end of the novel, his future seems limited to choosing between associating himself with these representatives of authentic or pure culture or remaining adrift in his existential crisis of colouredness: "He watched himself disappearing, a tiny turning figure sinking down the length of a dark, deep well. Falling and spinning, smaller and smaller. Until he was nothing at all" (151). As represented by Brown, what is Eberard if he doesn't choose to associate himself with Xoli at the end?

One question raised by *Coldsleep Lullaby* is whether it is problematic for a white author to represent a coloured protagonist, especially one as deeply flawed and abject as Eberard. While this study cannot answer that question conclusively, one problem with Brown's representation of the coloured detective is that it lacks the specificity of lived experience. Eberard has no concrete experiences of racializing discourses other than Du Preez's naming his potential slave ancestry. In contrast, consider how Zimitri Erasmus, in her introduction to *Coloured History, Shaped by Place*, discusses how her coloured identity required her to continually choose on a continuum of identification between blackness or whiteness: "the shape of my nose and texture of my hair placed me in the middle on the continuum of beauty as defined by both men and women in my community. I had neither 'sleek' hair nor *boesman korrels* (2),...and between being *kris* (Christian) or *slams* (a derogatory term for Muslim)" (3). Unlike Erasmus, Eberard's struggle with his coloured identity is not layered through complex illustrations of everyday experiences.

In contrast with Brown's flattened and abject characterization of Eberard's crisis of identity, Daniel Hammett's study of coloured identities discussed in "Ongoing Contestations: The Use of Racial Signifiers in Post-Apartheid South Africa" demonstrates that they are "complex and incoherent" so "that coloured identities need to be considered as mutable, dynamic and incomplete" (247, 248). Hammett interviewed high school teachers and students at a predominantly coloured school (using Afrikaans as its instructional language) and a mostly coloured and Indian school (using English as its instructional language) and asked them a series of questions on how they self-identify racially. The respondents in Hammett's study claimed multiple and contradictory identities related to race. For example, Ebrahim, a 43-year-old community activist, whose resistance to apartheid led him to decide that he was *black* as a youth, for which he received a *klap* or smack from his parents, now sometimes claims he's coloured:

In a broader sense with white people I always say I am black; in a context of African people I call myself black; in a coloured context - but always acknowledging racism in the coloured community - depending on the context I will say I am coloured, and even among Africans I will say I am coloured; if there is a non-racial audience, I will affirm my identity as a coloured but problematise it and make people aware of what it is to be coloured today. (qtd in Hammett 253)

Oliver, a retired university professor, rejected the category of colouredness as an apartheid construct, but conceded that colouredness has material realities that are important to him.

I rejected the notion of the coloured people as a separate group, but there was an ambivalence because you were part of a community, and history and social reality meant your community was a group of people who were easily identifiable in the South African context as being coloured. Whether you accepted the label or not, these were the people that you actually wanted to associate with. (qtd. in Hammett 253)

For Ebrahim and Oliver and many of the teachers, their notions of racial identity straddled apartheid and post-apartheid, so their claims of identity related both to resistance to the former and anxiety about their place in the latter. The students at these schools have only ever known post-apartheid society, so their anxieties about their marginalization relate only to post-apartheid South Africa. For example, one student asserted, “I am proud to be one [a coloured] although at times we don’t get some of the privileges that the Africans nowadays get” (qtd. in Hammett 256); another student defined coloured identity as: ““A coloured is someone that is never seen or listened to, it is someone that is caught in between the blacks and the whites” (256). Their strategies for resistance do not relate to how they self-identify racially, but is kind of global,

urban resistance that is as much about generational as well as racial cleavages and is, as Hammett observes, about cultural consumption:

Amongst these students, being coloured is associated with the consumption of specific musical genres (Western hip-hop and rap music primarily) and fashion/brand label clothing and accessories. As one student explained, “Our coloured people like to wear like Levi’s and Billabong - we like good stuff.” (qtd Hammett 256)

Hammett’s study shows that the respondents configured their colouredness based on a particular audience: coloured, white, black, part of their generation or not, and employed ways of self-identification that disrupted processes they saw as marginalizing themselves, whether that was to seek out coloured history, global cultural connections, or political alliance.

The strategies that Hammett’s subjects employ illustrate the evolution of coloured identity as a creolized identity. As Erasmus explains, *creolization* “stresses the ambiguity and ceaseless fluidity of coloured identity formations while remaining conscious of the conditions [of marginalization] under which they are produced” (4). Considering colouredness as a creolized identity attends to it both as a product of systemic oppression by and complicity with the dominant white culture of apartheid as well as a product of personal, individual agency. In fact Binder argues for considering coloured identity as a creole identity because it links that identity with agency. She notes, “Perceiving coloured identity as creole also highlights the fact that it is an active, productive, rather than a passive, identity” (180). Erasmus also notes that “[p]rocesses of creolization involve agency” (23). Both Erasmus and Binder suggest that using *creolization* allows us to look at coloured identity as a cultural mixing rather than an essentialized mixing of two pure races. One might use the term *hybridization*, but as Sarah Nuttall explains in “City

Forms and Writing the ‘Now’ in South Africa,” *creolization* emphasizes that this cultural mixing is a painful process that has taken place under the conditions of slavery and a history of marginalization by the colonial and apartheid social systems (733).

As Binder notes, the Sanna rape narrative in *Coldsleep Lullaby* returns us to the point of entanglement which Martinican literary and cultural critic Édouard Glissant explains is a critical step in attending to a creolized identity:

We must return to the point from which we started . . . not a return to the longing for origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of creolization, or perish. (qtd. in Binder 176)

I agree that the Sanna narrative does return us to the point of entanglement and could provide a productive way for considering the complexity of coloured identity. However, Brown’s narrative resolution in *Coldsleep Lullaby* racially essentializes Eberard, limiting the construction of his identity to a choice along a continuum of whiteness and blackness.

Eberard is ultimately recuperated in *Coldsleep Lullaby* by his breaking from the Afrikaner white supremacist, Du Preez and, to a lesser extent, from Laurent Kitsire, who tempts him to envy and mimic African males’ sexuality (as it is imagined by Eberard through his adoption of a white, racist perspective), and by his falling in love with Xoliswa, the strong, idealized African female. Binder specifically emphasizes Februarie’s falling in love with Xoliswa as a sign of his recuperation (183). Through his submission to and love for Xoliswa, he promises her that they will complete the murder investigation of Melanie, which he does and which leads to the final confrontation with Du Preez, in which Brown metaphorically stages Eberard’s cleansing by fire from the shame of his coloured identity. For Binder, Eberard’s

character arc is to break from Du Preez and his complicity with his white racist beliefs and to embrace his blackness through the figure of Xoliswa. She notes that “as a black woman, she [Xoliswa] points the way to new, more fertile entanglements that now open up. It seems, indeed, to conclude with Erasmus’s words, that Februarie has been able to perceive himself “as part of the shifting texture of a broader black experience” (qtd. in Binder 183). Clearly, Brown intends for Eberard’s “ending” to be a positive transformation, even though it comes at the cost of his being terribly burnt. However, Brown and Binder seem to imagine only two options for Eberard: to maintain the status quo and be complicit in Du Preez’s racialized conception of South Africa or to be part of a “broader black experience” represented by Xoliswa. In Brown’s resolution, the development of Eberard’s (and metaphorically, Coloured) identity is reduced to a choice between identifying with whites or Africans. In her introduction to the history of coloured identity, Erasmus warns against reducing coloured identity to the choice to assimilate with African culture instead of white culture:

In the context of the identity politics of the New South Africa this challenge requires a move away from the tendency to assign moral authenticity or political credibility to 'blackness' or 'Africanness' as such, particularly where these are defined in simplistic or reductionist ways. It requires a new kind of politics founded on values which challenge exclusion based on fixed categories and emphasise reflexive political practice. (8-9)

Brown’s novel does return us to the point of entanglement, through Sanna’s narrative, but it does so only to reproduce fixed categories of race rather than to perceive a complex, creolized coloured identity that is ambiguous, mutable and fluid.

Return of the Repressed

Both *Bloody Harvests* and *Coldsleep Lullaby* are detective novels that attempt to provide not only socio-political critique of post-apartheid South Africa and the continuing legacy of apartheid and white racism in the nation but also visions of a new South Africa that are forged by a hybridity of white and African cultures in the former novel, and coloured and African cultures in the latter. They each imagine a new hybridity, illustrated by a racially diverse detective team, white and black (Harry and Jacob) in the case of *Bloody Harvests* and coloured and African (Eberard and Xoli) in the case of *Coldsleep Lullaby*. They each also conclude with the image of a hopeful resolution of the racial tensions within the narrative. In Kunzmann's novel, it is both Harry's adopting of Jacob's duality around Western and African perceptions of witchcraft and his daughter having her braided by eight African children speaking to her in isiZulu as if she can understand them. In Brown's novel, it is both Eberard's cleansing by fire and Xoli's rescuing of him and the final image of Xoli and Elsabe, Professor du Preez's younger daughter (who has survived her father's attempt on her life) going barefoot into the Eerste River and spreading ashes of a loved one. Even the deaths mourned in these concluding images, of Harry's wife in *Bloody Harvests* (which Harry feels as a cold kiss on the back of his neck as he watches his daughter play with the African children) and of Melanie, apparently, strongly assert the belongingness of these characters in the new South Africa.

However, these hopeful images of racial hybridity are mirrored by corresponding negative images of racial hybridity that reassert racist discourses and convey a concomitant white anxiety about race and belonging in the Rainbow Nation. In *Bloody Harvests* that negative image is the figure of the Nigerian drug lord and trafficker of human body parts, the albino, who is neither white nor black, but described as an evil, foreign, unknowable creature, a monstrosity.

In *Coldsleep Lullaby*, that anxiety is expressed through the fire that burns down Professor Du Preez's estate. In their first meeting Du Preez tells Eberard about a famous fire in 17th century Stellenbosch, caused by a slave carrying an ember for his master's pipe, which burned down the Stellenbosch courthouse, the first building constructed in the settlement, which Du Preez tells to convey the settler's commitment to justice, but which resonates also with the image of the slaves resistance to the injustice. His story and that fire foreshadow the burning down of Du Preez's home. Both fires offer a kind of ritual cleansing, a starting over, a new potential for justice. Ironically, that new potential involves Eberard being not just burned but disfigured by the fire that consumes the racist Du Preez. The novel's final chapter ends with Xoli staring at his face as he apparently slips into unconsciousness or death. He is simply absent in the novel's "Epilogue." In fact, we are left wondering whose ashes Xoli and Elsabe are putting in the river, with the most likely candidate being Eberard. Even Elsabe's final statement, "Melanie would have wanted to come here, in the end" is not definitive about the identity of the person whose ashes they spread (255). Has Eberard survived? Does the abject detective with his burned face have a place in South Africa's future? Brown waits to answer this question for two more novels, until he decides to give Eberard new life as his detective protagonist in his 2012 novel, *Solace*, in which, according to critic John Amid, he "incidentally is in far worse shape than when we last saw him in *Coldsleep Lullaby*." This supports my challenge to Binder's argument that Eberard is recuperated at the end of Brown's novel.

While the use of the racially hybrid detective team of these two novels represent a more direct attending to racial conflict and the continuing legacy of apartheid in the new South Africa than can be found in Meyer's novels, the hopeful yet pat resolutions between African and white characters in *Bloody Harvests* and African and coloured characters in *Coldsleep Lullaby* are

achieved through discourses that reproduce and reinforce racial stereotypes and construct members of many marginalized groups as other (e.g., African immigrants, witch doctors, and people with albinism) while disavowing the sexist, ageist, racist, xenophobic and anti-disability character of these discourses.

CODA

The primary question shaping my study of the first ten years of post-apartheid South African detective fiction is whether or not the works in the genre are effective vehicles for providing socio-political critique. While the post-apartheid subgenre produced from 1995 to 2005 is more overtly political than detective fiction in general, much of which is critiqued as ideologically conservative, the majority of the novels in this study do not perform sustained socio-political critiques of either the apartheid or the ostensibly new democratic social order. Indeed, they mostly dramatize complex socio-ideological contradictions. Each of the novels I examine attempts some critique of social and political issues; yet, that critique is often undermined, especially in the more conventional detective fictions, perhaps in their white authors' eagerness to move away from the conflicts of the apartheid past and to embrace the writing of "escapist" rather than protest fiction. Indeed, the more conventional detective novels that are the focus of chapters two and three either deny or ignore their ongoing imbrication in the repressive and racist discourses of apartheid while tacitly supporting discourses that animate the desire for a repressive social order, a desire, one could argue, for the reversion to an order that is evocative of the social control of the apartheid state. Even for whites who were very critical of apartheid and supported or fought for the overthrow of the system, the apartheid era provided them with insular communities in which they were privileged in industry and the workforce, in which goods and labor were cheap and easily available, in which political and social conventions and institutions were stable, and in which crime and violence were held in check. As a mostly white and male-authored and, arguably, white-read genre in South Africa, the social, political, and racial anxieties of this community are centered, and, at times, are neatly contained by the

conventions of the detective fiction genre, and, when not, underline a fear of substantial change or of growing disorder in the new nation.

Red Dust and *The Ibis Tapestry* offer the most sustained critiques of apartheid crimes and their interrogation by the TRC; however only Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, which focuses on the material apartheid abuses inflicted on African communities, could be considered a protest novel. Not only is Slovo the sole female author of the group, but she is also the only expatriate and the only one with a personal involvement in the TRC, as the daughter of one of the victims of an apartheid government assassin seeking amnesty. All of these personal factors may have contributed to her more political and more critical stance. However, a key factor in the efficacy of her critique is her choice to disrupt the generic conventions, to provide the reader with multiple focalizers or perspectives on the mystery and the crimes of the past rather than the individual perspective of an authoritative detective who establishes a particular truth and social restoration, all of which challenges readers' comfort in a familiar detective narrative and their beliefs and assumptions about the TRC, about the full recovery of the truths of apartheid crimes, and finally about the nature of justice and politics. *The Ibis Tapestry* similarly exploits and disrupts the conventions of the detective genre to challenge readers' expectations of a singular narrative that resolves the core mystery of the text and that restores a comforting social order. While *The Ibis Tapestry* also engages readers in a critical interrogation of the completeness of the truths uncovered by the TRC and ensures a continuing dialogue with the histories of apartheid shaped by the TRC, it does not as pointedly center, as does *Red Dust*, a moral critique of the kinds of injustices that could and did occur at the TRC, where the lies of perpetrators remained and resonated as part of the public discourse, their apartheid violence re-enacted in the democratic present.

Conversely, the more ideologically conservative novels in the study are those that more closely adhere to the conventions of popular detective fiction, that which is more likely to be published and more broadly marketed and read. These are readerly texts that an audience can more passively consume and which, one could argue, provoke less discomfort for many readers. The most ideologically conservative novels are those written by Deon Meyer, *Dead before Dying* and *Dead at Daybreak*. While Meyer does critique the former hard-edged, Afrikaner masculinity and attempts to construct a softer Afrikaner masculinity for the new nation, his is a soft target. He centers police or former police detective heroes but fails to interrogate the violently repressive state-sponsored institution of the apartheid police. He chooses confessional narratives, a potentially progressive mode given the history of perpetrators' confessions at the TRC; yet his heroes merely repeat the denials of the police members confessions at the Commission hearings; they elide complicity in apartheid human rights crimes and deny both their racism and sexism. The genre's heroic masculinizing codes provide a comfortable fit for Meyer's fictions and their national and international consumption. While the novels in the final chapter, Richard Kunzmann's *Bloody Harvests* and Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby*, continue Meyer's aims of fashioning a new belonging for their male detective heroes in the new nation, they imagine that belonging through the representations of interracial detective teams, an imagined racial unity in the metaphoric Rainbow Nation. Both Kunzmann and Brown attempt to critique Afrikaner or white racism and more explicitly than does Meyer, consider racial and, with Brown, the weave of gender and racial conflicts and oppressions. Yet both of their novels are implicated in the discourses of racist stereotyping and racial othering, and, in the case of Kunzmann, in producing a xenophobic and anti-witchcraft discourse which has fostered widespread violence against immigrants, the elderly, and women, respectively. *Bloody Harvests* thus also produces the

perceived need for increased policing, for the disciplinarian control of disordered African communities in South Africa.

The study suggests, then, that the post-apartheid detective fiction novels that are more aesthetically innovative, that both use and disrupt the genre's conventions to critique both structural crimes and, often, the genre itself, are more effective in challenging their readers' political and social beliefs and their desire to avoid destabilizing topics. As Michael Titlestad and Ashlee Polatinsky note of Mike Nicol's shift from his provocative *The Ibis Tapestry* to his more conventional detective fiction text, *Payback*, Nicol has "left the territory of the political for a politics of generic style" (259), a politics of ideological containment rather than subversion. However, there is potential for the post-apartheid detective fiction novel to become more critically interrogative, to contribute to a rich dialogue on crime and justice in the new South Africa in the subgenre's continued political focus, the examples of Slovo's *Red Dust*, and Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* that challenge generic containment or that draw on a history of carefully nuanced protest literature, and the increasing ethnic diversity of authorial voices that Naidu references in his 2013 review of the burgeoning genre in South Africa. However, the future fictions will also need to appeal to a more diverse readership and not just white readers who are anxious about their place in a world that is changing with increased ethnic and cultural diversity. Otherwise, the genre will have little political relevance other than as an alarm for the increasing disorder of South African society and a call for greater policing of criminal others.

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