WRITING WOMEN IN UGANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA: EMERGING WRITERS FROM POST-REPRESSIVE REGIMES

by

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any other university for a degree.

Signature: Date:

Abstract

The thesis examines how women writers from Uganda and South Africa simultaneously offer a critique of nationalist narratives and articulate a gendered nationalism. My focus will be on the new imaginings of women in and of the nation that are being produced through the narratives of emerging women writers in post-repressive nation-states. I explore the linkages in post-conflict writing by focusing on the literary representations of women and womanhood, while taking into account some of the differences in how these writers write women in these two post-repressive regimes. I read the narratives from these two countries together because, in the last fifty years, both Uganda and South Africa have been through prolonged periods of political repression and instability followed by negotiated transitions to new political dispensations. I use the phrase post-repressive to refer to the post-civil war era after 1986 in Uganda and the post-apartheid period subsequent to the 1994 first democratic elections in South Africa. From the late 1990s, there has been a steady increase in fiction written by emerging women writers in Uganda and South Africa. The term emerging women writers in the Ugandan literary context refers to the writers who have benefitted from the emergence of FEMRITE Publications, the publishing house of the Ugandan Women Writers' Association; in the South African setting, I use the term to define black women writers publishing for the first time in a liberated state. The current political climate in both countries has inaugurated a new era for women writers; cracks are widening for these new voices, creating more spaces that allow them to foreground, interrogate, engage and address wide-ranging topics which lacked more forms of expression in the past. This study explores how women writers from Uganda and South Africa attempt to capture women's experiences in literary texts and seeks to find ways of interpreting how such constructs of female identity in the aftermath of different forms of oppression articulate various signs of rupture and continuation with earlier representations of female experience in these two nation states.

There are three core chapters in this thesis. I approach the gendered experience as represented in the fictional narratives of emerging women writers through three different perspectives; namely, war and the aftermath, popular literary genres, and identity markers. In the process, I try to think through the following questions: How are writers reclaiming and re-evaluating women's participation during the oppressive regimes of civil war in Uganda and apartheid in South Africa? How are women writers rethinking and repositioning the roles of women as they continue to live in patriarchal societies that marginalize and oppress them? To what extent have things changed for women in the aftermath of these oppressive regimes as

represented in the texts? What new representations of women are emerging? For whom, and from what positions, are these women writing? Is literary representation a reiteration of political representation that ends up not being effective? What is the relation between literary and political representation? Do these narratives open up alternative avenues for writers to represent women's interests? How do new female literary representations emerge in different novels such as chick lit and crime fiction?

Opsomming

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die wyses waarop vroueskrywers uit Uganda en Suid-Afrika krities kyk na nasionalisitiese narratiewe en tegelyk ook na ‘n *gendered* nasionalisme. Daar word gefokus op die nuwe uitbeeldinge van vroue in en van die nasies wat spruit uit die narratiewe van opkomende vroueskrywers in nasiestate in die post-onderdrukking-tydperk. Deur te fokus op die uitbeeldinge van vroue en vroulikheid word die verbande tussen post-konflik-skryfwerk ondersoek, en word ook rekening gehou met etlike verskille in die wyses waarop vroue deur sodanige skrywers in spesifieke post-onderdrukking-regimes uitgebeeld word. Die narratiewe uit die twee lande word saam gelees, want in die loop van die afgelope vyftig jaar ondervind sowel Uganda as Suid-Afrika langdurige politieke onderdrukking en onbestendigheid, gevolg deur onderhandelde oorgange na nuwe politieke bedelings. Die term post-onderdrukking verwys na die tydperk na 1986 na die burgeroorlog in Uganda en na die post-apartheid-era na afloop van die eerste demokratiese verkiesing in Suid-Afrika in 1994. Sedert die laat-1990’s was daar ‘n geleidelike toename in fiksie deur opkomende vroueskrywers in Uganda en Suid-Afrika. In die Ugandese letterkundige konteks verwys die term opkomende vroueskrywers na skrywers wat gebaat het by die totstandkoming van FEMRITE Publications, die uitgewery van die Ugandese vroueskrywersvereniging; in die Suid-Afrikaanse opset word die term gebruik om swart vroueskrywers te beskryf wat vir die eerste keer in ‘n bevryde land kon publiseer. Die huidige politieke klimaat in albei lande het vir vroueskrywers ‘n nuwe era ingelei; vir sulke vars stemme gaan daar breër barste oop wat hulle toelaat om al hoe meer ruimte te skep waarin wyduiteenlopende onderwerpe, wat in die verlede minder uitdrukkingsgeleenthede geniet het, vooropgestel, ondersoek, betrek en aangespreek kan word. Die proefskrif ondersoek die maniere waarop vroueskrywers uit Uganda en Suid-Afrika die vroulike ervaring in letterkundige geskrifte uitbeeld. Daar word gepoog om te vertolk hoe sodanige konstrukte vroulike identiteit verwoord in die nadraai van verskeie soorte onderdrukking en uiting gee aan verskillende tekens van beide die onderbreking in en die voortsetting van vroeëre uitbeeldinge van die vroulike ervaring in die twee nasiestate.

Die proefskrif bevat drie kernhoofstukke. Die *gendered* ervaring word uit drie afsonderlike hoeke benader soos dit in die narratiewe verteenwoordig word, naamlik: oorlog en die nadraai daarvan; populêre letterkundige genres; en identiteitskenmerke. In die loop daarvan word getrag om die volgende vrae te deurdink: Hoe word vroue se deelname tydens die onderdrukkende regimes van die burgeroorlog in Uganda en apartheid in Suid-Afrika her-

eien en herwaardeer? Hoe herdink en herposisioneer vroueskrywers tans die rolle van vroue soos hulle steeds in patriargale samelewings voortleef waar hulle opsygeskuif en onderdruk word? In hoe ‘n mate het sake vir vroue verander in die nadraai van die onderdrukking, soos dit in die tekste uitgebeeld word? Watter vars representasies van vroue kom onder die nuwe bedeling tot stand? Vir wie, en uit watter posisies, skryf hierdie vroue tans? Is die letterkundige representasie bloot ‘n herhaling van die politieke representasie, wat dan op niks doeltreffends uitloop nie? Wat is die verhouding tussen politieke en letterkundige representasie? Baan hierdie narratiewe alternatiewe weë oop waar skrywers die belange van vroue kan verteenwoordig? Hoe kom nuwe vroulike letterkundige representasies in verskillende narratiewe vorms soos *chick lit* en misdaadfiksie voor?

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> *A study of Africa, whose starting point is the commonality of the African experience, seems imperative at this historical moment. To do so, however requires that we proceed from recognition of our shared legacy which is honest enough not to deny our differences.* (Mahmood Mamdani)[1]

> *The woman writer in Africa has a special task. She has to present the position of women in Africa in all its aspects. … As women, we must work for our own future, we must overthrow the status quo which harms us and we must no longer submit to it. Like men, we must use literature as a non-violent but effective weapon. We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother who in his anxiety, man confuses with Mother Africa. Within African literature, room must be made for women.* (Mariama Bâ)[2]

This thesis examines fictional representations of women in the post-repressive regimes of Uganda and South Africa, revealing that these authors, through various literary genres, offer complex and nuanced depictions through which to understand and explore women's experiences. The thesis argues that these writers simultaneously offer a critique of nationalist narratives and advance a gendered nationalism. This thesis is built on the foundation of my Master's report, which presented pioneering research that explored the fictional narratives of Ugandan women published by FEMRITE. That report focussed on the emergence of FEMRITE as a site for the articulation of a feminist critique and commented on the various forms of cultural and political marginalization in contemporary Uganda. (Spencer 2001).[3] It

[1] Mamdani 1996, p.31.

[2] Cited in Stratton 1994, p.54-55.

[3] Elsewhwer I argue that, 'Ugandan literature is today the site of feminist insurgency, at the core of which is a new generation of women writers' (Spencer 2012, pp.91)'. The early 1990s saw the emergence of women's writing in Uganda under the auspices of FEMRITE Publications Ltd. This publishing house, which grew out of the Ugandan Women Writers' Association, has contributed significantly to the expansion of the Ugandan women's literary corpus. It is a Ugandan-based, non-profit-making association which was born out of the need to organize literary women writers nationally and internationally, collect and disseminate information on gender related issues, advocate for increased women's literacy

revealed that, for these women, the act of writing becomes a political vehicle to address women's issues and concerns; it also argued that writing creates a space for women within the Ugandan literary scene (Spencer 2001). This doctoral thesis pushes beyond the analysis of the Master's into new territory that includes various contemporary women's narratives from Uganda, not just FEMRITE, put into conversation with contemporary black South African women's voices.

Post-conflict writing by women writers from Uganda and South Africa creates fictional constructs of women and womanhood; therefore this thesis explores the commonalities in how these writers write women in these two post-repressive regimes, without negating the differences between them. The term post-repressive delineates the post-war period after 1986 in Uganda and the post-apartheid era following the first democratic elections of 1994 in South Africa. In the last half century, both Uganda and South Africa have gone through protracted periods of political turmoil, repression and turbulence, before each country could negotiate a transition to a new political regime and dispensation. In Uganda, the period immediately after independence in 1962 was characterized by the authoritarian rule of Milton Obote and the military dictatorship of Idi Amin which included the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972. South Africa in turn went through an extended repressive period of racial segregation and oppression. Even though both countries have distinct experiences, the ordinary citizens in these countries were similarly subjected to gross human rights violations. These brutal atrocities included but were not limited to murder, mass killings, torture, detention without trial, kidnappings and political disappearances. However, the particular nature of the political repression and instability in each of the two countries influenced the levels of literary engagement of female writers in different ways.

The women's movement in Uganda, which has its origins in the colonial period, was strengthened in Milton Obote's first regime but was completely suppressed during Idi Amin's era, and gradually re-emerged in Obote's second dispensation. The architects of the women's movement in Uganda included the Uganda Council of Women (UCW), Uganda Association of Women's Organisation (UAWO), Indian Women's Association, Uganda Muslim Women's Society and the controversial National Council of Women (NCW) (Aili Mari Tripp 2000). In spite of these movements, the various tyrannical regimes in Uganda controlled all

programs by incorporating literature generated from local communities, while simultaneously encouraging a positive portrayal of women by promoting gender sensitive literature in society (Spencer 2012). For a more elaborate study on the formation of FEMRITE see Susan N. Kiguli (2007, 174-179).

aspects of civil society. Not only were these women's movements ineffectual, but the economy was in shambles and eventually disintegrated, which contributed to the collapse of the publishing industry. As a result, there was very little writing from Uganda between 1962 and 1985, and much of what was published was male-authored, with only four female writers being published during this period.[4] Consequently, the voices and concerns of women were suppressed, stifled, ignored and almost completely silenced. It is not until the late 1980s after the National Resistance Movement (NRM) assumed political power that various Ugandan women's movements and organisation began to succeed in advocating for women's concerns and issues. In the case of South Africa, female voices – and those of black women in particular – were muffled by the repressive regime of apartheid; even where there were strong women's movements like the African National Congress Women's League and the Federation of South African Women (Fedsaw), women's oppression was subordinated in favour of the nationalist agenda and struggle (Hassim, Metelerkamp &Todes 1987; Wicomb 1996) and their role in the struggle against apartheid inadequately recognised.

Part of the preliminary research towards this thesis thus involved the construction of a comparative framework in which to read these two locations that have comparable but very different (gendered) histories. The most significant comparative study that has been done on Uganda and South Africa is Mahmood Mamdani's seminal text *Citizen and subject* (1996), which offers an account of the colonial experience in Africa through a comparative analysis of these two countries.[5] Juxtaposing South Africa and Uganda, he asserts that it is imperative for research on Africa to begin by acknowledging the commonality of the African experience, while appreciating the differences between various nations and regions. By setting up a comparison between Uganda and South Africa, Mamdani argues against South Africa's

[4] Barbara Kimenye, who is one of the earliest Ugandan fiction writers, published *Kalasanda* (1965), and *Kalasanda Revisted* (1966); Elvania Zirimu published *When the Hunchback Made Rain* (1975) and *Snoring Strangers* (1975), Grace Akelo published *My Barren Song* (1979), in addition to a collection of folktales from Teso entitled *Iteso Thought Patterns in Tales* (1981) and Jane Bakaluba published *Honeymoon for Three* (1975).

[5] Mamdani contends that the post-independent state was a bifurcated power, in other words it was structured as two forms of power that were contained by a single hegemonic authority. These two types of power were characterized by the customary authority that was primarily located in the rural areas, enforced tradition and produced an ethnic subject, in contrast to the civil power situated in the urban areas that was racialized and protected the rights of citizens. Interrogating the problematic nature of oppositional movements that emerge out of the bifurcated state, he argues that because these kinds of movements are fragmented, they impede the democratization process. By using two modes of resistance as case studies, Uganda's rural resistance movement and South Africa's urban resistance movements, Mamdani theorizes a bifurcated power through a bifurcated argument.

exceptionalism and provides a constructive launching pad for the editors of *No shortcuts to power* (2003), whose comparative analysis contrasts women's political participation in the post-repressive regimes of Uganda and South Africa. Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim base their comparison on the fact that these new dispensations guarantee female representation in parliament; both countries, they note, 'stand out as trailblazers in Africa and in the world in their efforts to bring greater numbers of women into formal politics. Since the 2001 elections, Uganda's parliament is one quarter female, while women have made up nearly one third of South Africa's parliament since 1999' (Goetz & Hassim 2003, p.1). Paradoxically, this visible female representation has not consistently translated into the effective implementation of policies that have an immediate impact on the position and interests of women in the nation-state. If women are not able to shape policymaking processes, it suggests that their representation is constrained; for representation to be significant, it has to be extended to include the exercise of influence (Gouws 2005, p.6). The good society, as Gayatri Spivak (1988) has argued, is constructed through constitutional female protections, and is projected outwards as providing certain kinds of freedoms to women. However, a critical analysis of women's experiences in these new societies in both the private and public realms reveals that 'there is no aftermath for women' (Meintjes 2001, p.3), that visible representation and participation in government and parliament does not necessarily translate into 'women's political effectiveness' (Goetz 2003, p.29).[6]

During the transitional period, both South Africa and Uganda drafted new constitutions and established constitutional courts which function as 'the ultimate arbiters of the law and executive propriety' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2006a, p.22). In spite of these new women-friendly constitutions, South Africa continues to have one of the highest incidences of gender-based violence in the world (Gouws 2005; Samuelson 2007b; Davis 2013).[7] In addition, the Ugandan constitution does not protect the rights of same-sex relationships, while in South Africa, the rights of gays and lesbians are enshrined in the constitution. However, although certain lesbians are protected by material and class privileges that enable them to access these rights, violent attacks against female same sex relationships are on the increase,

[6] '"Women's political effectiveness" is understood as the ability to use "voice" to politicize issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands on decision makers, to trigger better responsiveness from the public sector to their needs, and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women's equal rights' (Goetz 2003, p.29).

[7] They are understood as women-friendly, because during the transitional period women mobilized themselves to ensure that their concerns were taken into account in the new constitutions.

especially in the townships.[8] While it is relatively easier for South African lesbians in the suburbs to live out this constitutional protection, lesbians who reside in the townships tend to live in constant fear of being attacked, raped and murdered. South African lesbians resident in the townships thus have more in common with gays and lesbians in Uganda than the differences between the two constitutions may suggest.[9] Like their Ugandan counterparts who have no constitutional rights, they find themselves in conservative communities where the citizenry is tenaciously clinging to hetero-normative values. In addition, one could also argue that South African communities might be perceived as simultaneously radical and conservative, since it is usually young men who enact gender and sexuality policing in society. While in Uganda, they may also be articulating a radical critique of one western current (international gay rights) from within the grounds of another (evangelical Christianity) rather than tenaciously clinging to an obsolete value. Therefore, sexuality becomes the battle ground for contemporary contests in the neoliberal order rather than between traditional past and modern present ways.

While *Citizen and subject* examines the bifurcated colonial power and anti-colonial resistance in post-independent Uganda and South Africa, and *No shortcuts to power* engages with female politicians representing women's concerns in parliament; Susan Kiguli's research focuses on the process and practice of contemporary oral performance in post-apartheid South Africa and Post-civil war Uganda and particularly explores the practice of oral poetry and popular song as it is understood by performers. This thesis contributes to these significant studies that read these two countries together by offering a comparative study of literary representation in narratives from Uganda and South Africa. In recent years there has been a flowering of literature by emergent female writers in Uganda and South Africa.[10] The transition to new democracies in both countries has provided women's

[8] For Henriette Gunkel 'homophobia in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa cannot be separated from discussions around gender and race' (2010, p.7).

[9] In *The Cultural politics of female sexuality in South Africa*, Gunkel problematizes the escalation of violence against black lesbians in contemporary South Africa in great detail.

[10] According to Abasi Kiyimba, because 'of Uganda's multiple legacies – colonial, cultural, social, educational etc. – the lists of Ugandan writers have mainly been dominated by men. They have traditionally had more access to the country's English-based educational system than women, and they have consequently had more opportunities to express themselves in creative writing. ... In the writings of male writers like Robert Serumaga, David Rubadiri, Peter Nazareth, Davis Sebukima

movements with new opportunities to negotiate for the incorporation of social transformation for women in the nation-state. These new political freedoms have opened up spaces for previously muffled female voices to construct forms of female representation that engage both the literary and the political. In the midst of these new freedoms, female writers are emerging and finding cracks in which to foreground the female experience in the new nation-state, inserting women's voices and concerns into the national agenda of Uganda and South Africa.

Using research on established black women writers as its analytic and theoretical bedrock, this study foregrounds the voices of these emerging black women writers who represent female subjectivity in and of the nation. The central focus is on the new imaginings of women in and of the nation that are being produced through the narratives of emerging women writers in post-repressive nation states. In the process, it attempts to show how women are negotiating identities for themselves in post-repressive nation-states. By placing emergent narratives of Uganda and South Africa alongside one another, this thesis reviews the national literatures of the two countries and women's positions and representations in these new political dispensations. The study proceeds by tracing the textual oscillations between positive images of change, on the one hand, and the portrayal of debilitating continuities for women living in the aftermath, on the other.

In her analysis of gender and nationalism in postcolonial narratives, Elleke Boehmer (2005) reveals that, because past literatures tend to constitute 'a nationalist and masculinist preserve' (p.93), for women writers, the act of writing can be read as a direct confrontation with this 'male prerogative' (p.94).[11] For many women, narrating the nation becomes the non-violent, but effective weapon that Mariama Bâ appeals for. Writing allows women to speak and reflect on their 'place in the world' (Boehmer 2005, p.94) and construct their own identities. For Boehmer, 'through claiming a text and a narrative territory – women sign into and at the same time subvert a nationalist narrative that has excluded them as negativity, as corporeal and unclean, or as impossibly idealised' (2005, p.94). Carole Boyce Davies (1990) argues that women in the African literary tradition, especially in male-authored texts, tend to

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and Godfrey Kalimugogo for example, women are assigned peripheral roles. There are even some embarrassing cases in which some novels (by male writers) do not have a single female character' (2008, p.194).

[11] 'Novels written by men evolve out of their understanding of the economic and legal underpinnings of cultural acts, which bear directly on their representation of national phenomena. Novels written by women converge around the sphere of the familial as the orchestrating unit that looms over and plays out national dramas' (Andrade 2012, p.34).

be defined in relation to men. In my Masters report I argued, they are always regarded as someone's wife, mother, daughter, mistress or concubine. As a result, most female characters tend to fall within specific categories or stereotypes. She is either seen as an idealized figure, the Great Mother, endowed with eternal and abstract beauty, embracing each and every nation to emerge as Mother Africa, or as the good-time girl or the prostitute.[12]

Many female characters are spoken for because the African woman is not regarded as 'a speaking subject' (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997a, p.5) For example, in Okot p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino,* although we hear the voice of a woman, the concerns of women tend to be on the periphery, as in most male-authored texts. The ambiguity of Lawino's legacy is that p'Bitek, the nationalist writer, is ventriloquizing through her voice to articulate his concerns about the tensions between tradition and modernity, effectively reiterating the classical nationalist patriarchal trope of women as carriers and custodians of culture. While, Susan Andrade observes that the early female writers' narratives were considered apolitical because their 'representation of politics rarely involved explicitly nationalist or syndicalist themes' (Andrade 2011 p.5). Historically, the first generations of female writers were excluded from 'hierarchies of national politics' because it was assumed that they could not at once engage national and feminist politics. Yet, as she adds, they were successful in deploying one fiction to expose another. In 'the narratives of many African women writers, the family becomes the nation writ small' (Andrade 2011, p.21). I read the emerging women writers, as daughter figures within this literary tradition, who are trying to offer alternative forms of mothering.The maternal figure is a thread that runs through this thesis: the narratives sometimes counter the contradictory and idealised mother image depicted in nationalist narratives; occasionally, they also replicate these images. They do not reject motherhood; instead, they engage with it and acknowledge that there are some aspects that are both affirming and negating by trying to separate the institution of motherhood in patriarchy from the actual experience of mothering by women (Nnaemeka 1997).[13]

[12] On stereotyping the African female character, see also Nfah-Abbenyi 1997a; Stratton 1994; Boehmer 1992; and Ogundipe-Leslie 1987.

[13] In a different but similar context, Boehmer observes that Flora Nwapa also 'uncovers the practical *lived* reality of motherhood. She digs into the muddy, grainy underside of nationalism's privileged icon without undermining the importance of the institution of motherhood in West African culture. The mothers of Africa, Nwapa shows, also have voices, anger, rival aspirations, their own lives to live. They are as much the worthy subjects of a communal history as are their nationalist sons' (2005, pp.101-102).

The emerging women's writing examined in this study can be read against and within the dominant national narratives and African women's writing. Raymond Williams uses the terms dominant, residual and emergent to provide a complex understanding of the way in which cultures attempt to maintain some stability in a changing environment. Dominant perspectives, he argues, are represented by the majority or the most predominant class. However, within dominant cultures exist residual cultures that consist of relics 'from previous social formations' (Williams 2006, p.137). Although residual forms survive at a distance, at some point they may be incorporated into the dominant culture, but if they become oppositional, they are sidelined, whereas emergent forms of culture persist as an alternative to the dominant culture and constantly create different meanings and cultural values. Williams argues that 'literature operates in the emergent cultural sector … it represents the new feelings, the new meanings, the new values' (2006, p.140). The act of writing … contributes 'to the effective dominant culture and [is] a central articulation of it. They embody [some] residual meanings and values' (2006, p.140). Njabulo Ndebele (1994) in his article 'Liberation and the crisis of culture' describes post-apartheid South Africa as a newly emerging place in which the dominant actors have

> finally yielded some space on the stage, and we are witnessing a frantic entrance of new actors all carrying their own scripts. We wait for the scripts to be opened, for some of them have been written many years back; and we wonder what possible exercises in re-writing and revising have been carried out. What is in the scripts now? (p.1)

Ndebele argues that writers in post-apartheid South Africa and by extension post-repressive Uganda find themselves responding to a 'crisis of culture' which is also a 'crisis of transition', a process that culminates 'in the emergence of something new. But seldom does the new in human history emerge so clearly as the emergence of the sun. Rather, the new is experienced as a process of becoming' (1994, p.8).

Drawing on the ideas of Williams and Ndebele, this thesis theorises the emergent as a practice where women writers attempt to negotiate gendered and national identities when positions are no longer clear-cut, while trying to find ways of pushing forward a liberationist project both for women and within the nation-state, without being pulled back into the compromises of the roles that might be marked out for women. Therefore, these writers are Janus-faced, looking back at conflicted and contested pasts and forward to imagine new

futures.[14] McClintock points out that women's narratives and the national project 'must be laboriously and sometimes catastrophically invented, with unforeseen results. Time is dispersed and agency is heterogeneous. Here, in the unsteady, sliding interstices between conflicting national narratives, women's national agency makes its uncertain appearance' (1995, p.364). The challenge for emerging writers in this transitional period is to negotiate the complex space of tension between rejection and acceptance. Because in this 'crisis of transition' women's positions are not as clearly demarcated as they were during the colonial period or the anti-apartheid era, they are indeterminate, vague and multifarious. As Jessica Murray argues elsewhere, such narratives reveal 'a constant tension between aesthetics and politics as these authors use literature to come to terms with the place of individuals in a public sphere that is in a constant state of flux' (2009, p.2).

The emerging women writers of this study understand that an attempt to 'search for new alternatives' has the potential to create 'a strong basis for a future political culture' (Ndebele 1994, p.2).[15] It is important to point out that emerging writers are involved in an immanent critique from within the dominant cultures, they do not completely abandon what has gone before, and they are not exactly clearing new ground – this is why they are emergent. Although their writing contains some residual forms, they attempt to prise open those roles to fill them with new content and inhabit them differently. However, for them the process of 'becoming' is always going to be an ambiguous and conflicting one.[16] These emerging writers find themselves contradicting themselves, coming into dead-ends, having to turn round and backtrack and find alternative ways out. There is an attempt to negotiate the labyrinth in which they find themselves, but they do this because they have an investment in women's constructions within the nation. In the aftermath of political turmoil, emerging women writers are concerned with nationalist themes and gender issues. According to Boehmer, women have 'sought to evolve other strategies of selving – less unitary, more dispersed and multifarious, more alive to the contradictions involved in the process of self-

[14] 'Unsure of reliable political languages, still sure of old dreams, it remains necessary to anticipate and to warn, to be ready inventively to define a future as well as a present and yet also to remain in constructive touch with existing oppositional and diverse discourses' (Boehmer, Chrisman & Parker 1994, p. ix).

[15] 'The role of literature in this situation is not an easy matter. It throws up a problematic of its own within the broad cultural crisis I have been attempting to understand. Writers, rather than critics, are likely to provide the ultimate direction. Hopefully, critics will pose the kind of questions that will assist writers in their work' (Ndebele 1994, p.9).

[16] 'After all, have there not been times in human history when the certainties of ongoing war and destruction were strangely preferable to the uncertainties of the peace which everyone passionately said they desired?' (Ndebele 1994, p.4).

making'(2005, p.93). By their own account, women's voices are involved in a process of self-creation as they attempt to carve an identity for themselves, one that is unmistakably unambiguous in the way it portrays the ambivalences, anxieties, contradictions, complications, complexities and nurturing that women experience in their everyday lives. Boehmer (2005) points out that women writers, including the emerging writers in question, attempt to interrogate, cut across, and refuse the dominant account of the independent nation. By focusing on women's subjectivities, sexualities, maternal duties, private stories and intimate pleasures, they are in tension with conventional roles reflected by national and other traditional narratives.

This study seeks to ask the following questions: How do these emerging writers retrieve and re-evaluate women's participation during and beyond the repressive regimes of civil war in Uganda and apartheid in South Africa? How do these writers re-evaluate the roles of women as they continue to live in patriarchal societies that constantly suppress them? How do emerging writers portray the positions of women in the aftermath? Are there any new representations of women that emerge in the aftermath? For whom, and from what positions, are these women writing? What is the nexus between literary and political representation? Is literary representation a reiteration of political representation that is ineffective? Do these narratives open up alternative possibilities for writers to represent women's interests? How do new female fictional representations emerge in popular literary forms such as chick-lit and crime fiction?

In South Africa during apartheid white women had a strong literary voice, although it was constrained by patriarchy, while the vast majority of black female writers wrote from outside South Africa. The emerging writers of this thesis can be analysed against the backdrop of the dominant narratives of their literary foremothers. Some of the predecessors who managed to publish their fictional works (largely but not exclusively from exile) during the apartheid era include Lauretta Ngcobo, Miriam Tlali, Zoë Wicomb, as well as autobiographers Ellen Kuzwayo, Emma Mashinini, Mamphela Ramphele, and Sindiwe Magona. However, a shift in publishing conditions in the 1990s meant that new voices, which may not have emerged without political change, are beginning to surface in the new dispensation. Most of these writers are part of the 'born-free' generation of young people who were born after the demise of apartheid. The past few years have seen a sudden proliferation of this new generation of female writers, who include Zukiswa Wanner, Angelina Sithebe, Zazah Khuzwayo, Kagiso Lesego Molope, Kopano Matlwa, Pamphilia

Hlapa, Angela Makholwa, Hawa Jande Golakai and Futhi Ntshingila.[17] Unlike their older and more established counterparts, this first generation of post-apartheid writers has to date received very little critical engagement. This study defines emergent writers in South Africa as young, black writers who emerge out of the apartheid regime, with distinct histories and experiences, and are interested in re-imagining black womanhood in post-repressive South Africa. [18]

On the Ugandan literary landscape, the emerging writers are following in the footsteps of earlier fictional writers such as Barbara Kimenye, Elvania Zirimu, Grace Akelo and Jane Bakaluba. In the Ugandan context, the term emerging writers refers to all women writers who have benefitted from the different empowerment policies implemented by the NRM government which encouraged women to participate in various sectors of society. FEMRITE Publications which focuses on women's writing is one organisation that profited from these policies. Since its inception there has been a marked increase in women's writing from Uganda. The emerging writers who have been published by different publishing houses include Goretti Kyomuhendo, Doreen Baingana, Mary Karooro Okurut, Rose Rwakasisi, Violet Barungi, Jane Kaberuka, Regina Amollo, Monica Arac de Nyeko, Lillian Tindyebwa, Mary Abago, Rosemary Kyarimpa, Jackee Budesta Batanda, Beatrice Lamwaka, Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu, Grace Birabwa, Juliane Okot Bitek, Hope Keshubi and Anne Ayeta Wangusa.[19] Given that female-authored writing from Uganda is relatively new, there has been very little critical engagement with it.

The shift in the political environment in both countries has transformed the conditions for publishing, introduced new conditions for freedom of speech, and provided room for women to think of themselves differently. [20] For example, creative writing programs have opened up new avenues for emerging writers such as Monica Arac de Nyeko, Goretti

[17] These lists are not exhaustive and do not include dramatists and poets.

[18] Eva Hunter and Siphokazi Jones note that the 'terms "white" and "black" are redolent of apartheid's categories, but they also acknowledge the fact that the divisions forged by apartheid linger – to the extent that segregation may still be found in the physical areas in which the writers and their protagonists have their homes and their workplaces. Further, even when physical spaces are "mixed", internalised racism may raise barriers' (2011, p.98).

[19] According to Abasi Kiyimba, along 'with these new names has come a broad spectrum of new ideas and new approaches to old issues. Apart from enabling Ugandan Literature (sic) to contribute meaningfully to the contemporary gender debate, women writers have enriched the discussion on subjects that had been tackled by men earlier' (2008, p. 194).

[20] For example, the new face of South African literature recognises the narratives of immigrants such as Hawa Jande Golakai and Yewande Omotoso.

Kyomuhendo and Doreen Baingana. In addition, other possibilities have been created by publishers who are committed to publishing fiction by women or books that focus on women's interests. These include Modjaji Books, Sapphire Press (an imprint of NB Publishers), Nollybooks (an imprint of MME Media), Melinda Ferguson (MF) Books (an imprint of Jacana), and FEMRITE Publishing.[21] Some of the works of these emerging writers have been propelled into (inter)national visibility through various literary awards such as the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature, Commonwealth Writers Prize, Caine Prize for African Writing, The European Union Literary Award, the M-Net Literary Award, and The Sunday Times Literary Award. The new writing emerging out of the different conditions of the present covers a wide array of social and economic issues and presents women's attempts at self-discovery and at forging their own freedoms.

As I have pointed out, in spite of the burgeoning number of fictional texts being published by emerging women writers from Uganda and South Africa, there has been little critical scholarly engagement with these narratives. Nonetheless, it is beyond the scope of this study to critically analyse all the narratives by each of the emerging writers. In delineating the corpus of this study, I have therefore been extremely judicious in my selection of primary texts. First, although there are a number of emerging poets, playwrights and autobiographers in Uganda and South Africa, I have decided to limit my focus to selected fictional narratives by emerging women writers. All the fictional narratives under study are novels except for *Tropical fish*, which is a collection of short stories; however, in my analysis I argue that *Tropical fish* is a series of interconnected stories that can also be read as a fragmented novel. Secondly, for the purposes of this equiry, the category "emerging writers" includes only those authors who published their first works in the new political dispensations of both countries. Authors such as Goretti Kyomuhendo, Mary Karooro Okurut, Kagiso Lesego Molope, Zukiswa Wanner and Angela Makholwa have been more prolific than their counterparts, having each published more than two novels; I still choose to regard them as emerging writers so as to distinguish them from their more established literary foremothers.

Moreover, in two chapters I have attempted to create a balance in selecting texts from Uganda and South Africa. In chapter two, I read two Ugandan authors Goretti Kyomuhendo's

[21] Unfortunately Oshun Books, which specialised in women's interests and concerns is now defunct. Some of the books they published included Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish*, Lebogang Mashile's anthology of poetry *In a ribbon of rhythm* and Zukiswa Wanner's *The Madams.*

Waiting, and *The invisible weevil* by Mary Karooro Okurut alongside *Dancing in the dust* by the South African author Kagiso Lesego Molope. In chapter four, two South African novels – *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa and Kagiso Lesego Molope's *The mending season* – are analysed together with two Ugandan novels, *Tropical fish* by Doreen Baingana and *Shock waves from across the ocean* by Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu. However, in chapter three, which focusses on popular fiction, it was impossible to strike a similar balance. Of the eight novels under discussion only two – *Whispers from Vera* and *The deadly ambition* – are Ugandan-authored. My hypothesis is that South African authors have been more enthusiastic in embracing popular genres such as romance, chick-lit and crime fiction than their Ugandan counterparts. Yet this is itself a new trend. Christopher Warnes (2014) in his analysis of contemporary South African popular romances observes that although popular fiction has always been part of the South African literary scene, it only began to flourish with the demise of apartheid. Warnes argues, that during apartheid

> there was a strong critical perception that popular fiction abrogated the social and political mission to document injustice, challenge preconceptions, and conscientize readers. The end of apartheid was interpreted as signalling the lifting of this literary-political injunction to be serious. The creative energies that have filled the void left by the departure of the "struggle aesthetic" in the years since 1994 have been noticeable in the explosion of genres such as crime fiction, romance, chick lit, science fiction, gangster noir, and comedy. (p.156)

In addition to the explosion in popular genres there has been an increase in the black middle class who happen to be the primary consumers of popular literature in South Africa.

Lastly, my choice of texts has been highly influenced by specific authors whose narratives speak to the most pertinent concerns of this thesis. I examine *Waiting*, *Dancing in the dust* and *The Invisible weevil* because these novels return to the site of war in the repressive regimes. These texts portray and interrogate the various roles that women played in past conflicts, as well as the impact of these conflicts on their everyday lives. In the next chapter, I explore a range of novels such as *Whispers from Vera*, *The madams*, *Behind every successful man*, *The 30th candle*, *Happiness is a four-letter word*, *The deadly ambition*, *Red ink* and *The Lazarus effect*. All of these popular narratives allow emerging authors to offer new imaginings of feminine subjectivities. Finally, I focus on *Coconut*, *The mending season*, *Tropical fish* and *Shock waves across the ocean* because they offer intricately complex

representations of the mother-daughter relationship which sometimes extends beyond familial bonds.

This study explores the different ways in which emerging women writers from Uganda and South Africa interrogate the positions of women in post-repressive regimes. In order to contextualise the post-repressive period, I begin by analysing the narratives that reflect on the preceding repressive regimes. It is important to understand how these writers revisit and transcend the conflicts of the past, but also how these narratives demonstrate the continuities that flow from the past into the present. Using this historical context as a foundation, the thesis then pushes beyond the repressive era to illustrate how women writers are experimenting with popular literary forms, which allow them to project a post-war world that accommodates a wide range of female subjectivities. By articualting and claiming space for women's voices, these authors are using popular genres as a form of on-going literary warfare. Finally, the study turns to the ways in which emerging writers depart from the traditional constructions of motherhood. By representing new subject positions open to women in new dispensations, the emerging writers of this study destabilize and disrupt an identity that has defined women in dominant African narratives.

Therefore, the three core chapters of this thesis each read women's literary representation from three different perspectives. Chapter two examines the emerging writer's narratives through the lens of war; it begins by returning to the familiar national scene of war and civil strife to understand the conditions that women are emerging from, while interrogating their experiences. In addition, the chapter examines how in the process of tackling the past the authors also strive to determine what achievements women have gained in the post-conflict era. The chapter concludes by theorising the aftermath. To problematize the way in which women and war interact, the chapter draws on theories of gender, war, narration and nation espoused by the work of Cynthia Enloe, Anne McClintock, Haleh Afshar, Jacklyn Cock, Susan Andrade, Elleke Boehmer and Meg Samuelson; on theories of female representation in new democracies by Sylvia Tamale, Amanda Gouws, Beth Goldblatt, Sheila Meintjes, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Shireen Hassim, Meredeth Turshen, Anne Marie Goetz, Anu Pillay and Tina Sideris. Although this thesis is cognisant of the critiques of western theories on trauma advocated by Jessica Murray and Claire Stocks, the works of Elaine Scarry and Judith Herman have been useful in thinking through issues of trauma in *Waiting* and *Dancing in the dust*. The focal writers of this chapter are Goretti Kyomuhendo,

novelist, essayist, activist and founding member of FEMRITE was born in Hoima district in western Uganda. *Waiting: A novel of Uganda at war* (2007a), her fourth novel, was published by The Feminist Press.[22] Kagiso Lesego Molope was born in Atteridgeville, Pretoria. Her first novel, *Dancing in the dust* (2002), was chosen as the South African English representative for the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Honours List.[23] Mary Karooro Okurut, author of *The invisible weevil* (1998), is a celebrated columnist and founder and former Chairperson of FEMRITE. For many years she was an academic at Makerere University; currently she is a member of parliament and Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs.[24]

Chapter three is particularly pioneering for the way in which I explore how emerging writers are embracing popular literary genres such as chick lit and crime fiction to articulate the experiences of middle-class women. It is particularly interested in how these generic forms allow the writers to produce new female communities in the aftermath. Whereas chapter two presents a textual analysis of three novels, chapter three looks at various thematic strands from a larger sample of eight novels. In chapter three, the analysis hinges on different thematic concerns such as love, friendship, female sexuality, female vulnerability, female agency and consumer consumption. This chapter uses the substantial body of work on popular culture in Africa by Karin Barber, Stephanie Newell, Jane Bryce, and Carole Boyce Davies; theories of feminism, post-feminism and transnational feminism in popular culture by Angela McRobbie, Pam Butler and Jigna Desai; theories on romance, chick lit and women's culture by Janice Radway, Jean Radford, Stephanie Harzewski, Lauren Berlant; feminist theories of crime fiction by Priscilla Walton, Manina Jones, and Ranka Primorac as well as the research of criminal profiler Micki Pistorius. The emerging writers experimenting with

[22] Kyomuhendo is one of Uganda's most prolific writers; she holds a Master's degree in creative writing from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Kyomuhendo also held the position of program coordinator of FEMRITE. Her first novel, *The first daughter* (1996), was followed by *Secrets no more* (1999), which was the recipient of the Best Novel of the Year award from the National Book Trust of Uganda. She has also written two children's books, *Different worlds* (1998) and *Hare and the King's crow* (2006).

[23] Molope is a graduate in English Literature and Literary Theory from the University of Cape Town. Previously a Human Rights Project Officer based in Canada, Molope has been involved in human rights advocacy, counselling and documentary film-making. Her most recent novel is *This Book betrays my brother* (2012).

[24] Okurut's published works include *The official wife* (2003) and *Child of a delegate* (1997), a play, *The curse of the sacred cow* (1993), and an unpublished play, *The trial of Thomas Sankara.* A number of her plays have been performed at the Uganda National Theatre and Cultural Centre. She has also published children's literature, e.g. *Milking the lioness and other stories* (1999) and co-edited *A woman's voice: an anthology of short stories by Ugandan women* (1998).

chick lit are Zukiswa Wanner who was born in Lusaka, Zambia. Her mother was an exile from Zimbabwe and her father an exiled Umkhonto we Sizwe cadre. *The madams*, her first novel, was published in 2006, followed by *Behind every successful man* in 2008.[25] Angela Makholwa grew up in Johannesburg; *The 30th Candle* was published in 2009.[26] Cynthia Jele grew up in Mpumalanga; her first novel, *Happiness is a four-letter word* (2010), won the 2011 Commonwealth Writers Prize: Best First Book (Africa region) and the Film category of the 2011 M-Net Literary Award. Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Whispers of Vera* (2002) is also in this category.[27] The writers who are drawing on crime fiction include Glaydah Namukasa who grew up in Entebbe, a town on the outskirts of Kampala. *The deadly ambition* (2006) is her first adult novel.[28] Liberian-born Hawa Jande Golakai studied at Stellenbosch University and works as a medical researcher in immunology. Her first novel, *The Lazarus effect*, was shortlisted for the 2012 Sunday Times Literary Award.[29] Angela Makholwa's debut novel *Red ink* (2007) also belongs to this group.

Chapter four explores issues of identity by examining the manifestation of diverse subject positions of women in four narratives. It interrogates the complex and complicated relationships between mothers, daughters and sisters. The emerging writers are engaging with motherhood, which has been constructed as an idealised identity that confines women generally, but particularly in Africa literature. This new generation of writers who are

[25] When Zimbabwe gained independence, Wanner's family relocated to Zimbabwe where she received most of her education. After high school, she attended Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu where she received an undergraduate degree in journalism. She also has a blog and has written literary reviews and essays for magazines such as *Afropolitan*, *O* magazine and *Elle*. Her last novel, *Men of the South*, was published in 2010.

[26] Makholwa has a BA in Journalism and Industrial Psychology from Rhodes University. She has worked as a magazine journalist and a public relations consultant for different agencies. In 2002, she set up her own public relations company, BriteSpark Communication. Fresh off the press is her third novel, *Black widow society*.

[27] Jele graduated from the then Natal Technikon with a BTech in Environmental Health; she has a BA in International Business from North Central College, Illinois. She has worked as a public health officer and management consultant and started Lombuso Consulting Group, an economic development consultancy.

[28] In 2000, she was a mid-wife and worked at Namayumba Health Clinic IV in Wakiso district. In addition to her full-time job, she is a member of FEMRITE. Her young adult manuscript *Voice of a dream* won the 2005 Macmillan writer's prize. Her short stories and poems have appeared in various anthologies. She is a fellow of the British Council Crossing Borders programme. In 2006, she was awarded the Michael and Marilee Fairbanks International Fellowship to attend the Bread Loaf Writers conference in Ripton, Vermont; she was awarded the title of Honorary Fellow by the International Writers program, University of Iowa; she has also been a writer in residence at various institutions in the United States.

[29] Because of civil war and economic unrest, Golakai's family were forced into exile. She sees herself as an African nomad since she lived in various African countries, including Togo, Ghana and Zimbabwe, before settling in Cape Town in 2003.

becoming mothers themselves take up this category and re-inflect it to offer alternative ways in which women can inhabit the nation. Although the psychic life affects the way people engage with society, my primary focus is on how these texts are responding and engaging to society rather than the inner worlds of the characters. To this end it draws on Adrienne Rich's reflections on the institution and the experience of mothering and motherhood. Furthermore, it employs African literary theories on feminisms as advocated by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, Florence Stratton, Desiree Lewis and Obioma Nnaemeka, Melanie Mauthner's ideas on sistering and theories on nationalisms by Benedict Anderson. This chapter focuses on the following authors who are attempting to construct alternative forms of mothering: Kopano Matlwa was born in Mamelodi, Pretoria. Her acclaimed debut novel *Coconut* (2007) was the recipient of the 2006 European Union Literary Award and joint winner of the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa 2010. Kagiso Lesego Molope's second novel, *The mending season,* was published in 2005. Doreen Baingana, born in Entebbe, is the author of *Tropical fish: Stories from Entebbe* (2005), which has won many awards including the Commonwealth Prize for First Book, Africa Region in 2006 and the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Award Series in Short Fiction in 2003, the Washington Independent Writers Fiction prize in 2004. She is the current Chairperson of the Uganda Women Writers Association, FEMRITE. Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu was born in Mbarara, Western Uganda.[30] *Shock waves across the ocean* (2004), her first novel, was nominated for the Dublin International IMPAC Literary Award in 2006.

The new dispensations in Uganda and South Africa have heralded a new era for women writers. Therefore, this thesis examines how women writers seize the opportunities available to them to offer a critique of nationalist narratives by portraying a gendered experience of nationalism. The study explores how emerging women writers through various literary forms are producing new feminine subjectivities in post-repressive regimes.

[30] Ekochu holds a Bachelor's degree in commerce from Makerere University, a Higher Diploma in Marketing from the Makerere University Business School, and a Master's degree in Management Studies and a post-graduate diploma in Financial Management, both from the Uganda Management Institute. Four of her short stories have been published in the following anthologies: *Tears of hope*, *Beyond the dance* and *Talking tales.* She has also written articles for various Ugandan newspapers. She is a former Chairperson of FEMRITE and currently works as an accountant for the Centre for Women in Governance.

CHAPTER TWO
WOMEN IN WAR, WAR ON WOMEN, WOMEN AT WAR: TRAVERSING TERRITORIES OF CONFLICT AND AFTERMATH

> *The women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories, and comedies …* (Salman Rushdie)[31]

This chapter focuses on literary representations of women set in the repressive period, but written during the post-repressive regimes of Uganda and South Africa. The narratives in this chapter attempt to excavate women's participation in repressive regimes, while mapping out women's agency and resistance in the aftermath of conflict. Emerging writers emphasize that women have more agency than previous writers. The emergent writers explore the various roles or contributions made by women and disrupt the dominant narratives on war; simultaneously, they illustrate that for women the home front is also the front line by showing how women continue to face oppression in nations apparently at peace. In other words, wars are not only fought on the battlefront; they inevitably spill over into the private space of the homestead and the repercussions are felt widely within and beyond the home. Moreover, in the post-war period, the home remains a war-front for many women who are subjected to domestic violence, intimate rape and femicide.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on narratives returning to sites of civil war and the armed struggle in Uganda and South Africa respectively. In these narratives, emerging writers reclaim women's contribution in past nationalist struggles and rewrite women's roles within these struggles. The second section interrogates the status of women in the aftermath. It argues that in post-repressive regimes the war does not necessarily end for women. Instead, it bleeds into the aftermath, where women are continuously and constantly beleaguered by patriarchal constraints that seek to limit and contain them, such that freedom is often still closed down for them in the ostensibly liberated states. Goretti Kyomuhendo, Kagiso Lesego Molope, Mary Karooro Okurut, Zazah Khuzwayo, Futhi Ntshingila and various FEMRITE authors create female characters who are still repressed in the wake of liberation, while simultaneously constructing characters who

[31] Cited in Herman 2001; Samuelson 2007a, p.841.

reveal the ongoing oppression on women and how women actively resist the different manifestations of subjugation.

In these texts, writing itself evolves into a form of on-going literary warfare against patriarchal politics. Through writing, these emerging authors inhabit and claim spaces for themselves in liberated zones; more importantly, women's voices are shown marching in from the peripheries of history, demanding to be heard in the narrative of the nation.

Wartime women: Revisiting repressive regimes and resistance in emerging women's writing from Uganda and South Africa

The three emerging authors of this section deliberately return to repressive regimes to retrieve the significant roles played by women during the turbulent times. The argument they advance illustrates that during times of conflict there is a re-negotiation of gendered roles that gives rise to new gender identities. Some of the questions raised in this section include: how do the narratives by emerging female authors reflect on the lived experiences of the individual, the family unit and the community? How do women writers represent the experience of violence and the disintegration of the home? Do these narratives reveal how and why women construct new forms of agency during conditions of repression? What are the various strategies that female characters adopt to defend and maintain their families in times of conflict?

Goretti Kyomuhendo, Kagiso Lesego Molope and Mary Karooro Okurut return to the recent history of repressive regimes in Uganda and South Africa. In *Waiting,* Kyomuhendo uses the voice of Alinda to examine the last months of the 1979 civil war in Uganda that culminated in the end of the dictatorship of Idi Amin. Molope's narrative, set during the volatile period of the 1980s, puts the spotlight on the experiences of Tihelo Masimo, a young black girl living in a South African township during the apartheid regime's state of emergency; *The invisible weevil* chronicles the violent history of post-independent Uganda. Okurut uses Nkwanzi as a focalizer to focus on women's participation during and after the numerous hostilities that have besieged Uganda.

Cynthia Enloe shows that nationalisms have 'typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope' (cited in McClintock 1995, p.353). Therefore, Kyomuhendo, Molope and Okurut use female characters to narrate their experiences of war and armed conflict to ensure that women are not merely 'subsumed

symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit' (McClintock 1995, p.357). Instead, their active cultural and political participation in national formation is brought into historical visibility. The writers use female narrators to reflect on the realities and prospects of women in Uganda and South Africa, and re-gender nationalism as they surface and reveal multiple forms of women's agency during times of conflict. During wartime, women and typically children experience enormous pain, suffering and trauma. At the same time, periods of armed conflict and civil war open up spaces for certain forms of freedom which enable women to step out of traditional patriarchal roles into new positions that give them autonomy and agency that result in a shift in gender roles. Whereas war is partly positive for women, most of these gains are lost in post-repressive regimes. As Nthabiseng Motsemme (2004) argues elsewhere, an examination of women's experiences during wartime illustrates how some aspects of violence that are not contained in the repressive regime eventually spill over into the post-repressive.

Many critics observe that violence has defined the 20th century. According to Emilia llieva and Lennox Odiemo-Munara the century was dominated by various conflicts which manifested as 'civil wars and strife within states, and [or] military occupations of other nations' (2011, p.183).[32] This legacy of state terror, civil strife, and brutalization deeply damaged civilian life and, increasingly, the burden on civilian populations of most armed conflicts tended to be higher than the impact on combatants.[33] Since gaining independence from Britain in 1962, Uganda has had its share of socio-political upheavals and militarised conflicts. Milton Obote, the first prime minister after independence, deposed Kabaka Mutesa in 1966 to become President. In 1971, Obote was overthrown in a military coup by Idi Amin; in 1979, a civil war broke out which ousted Amin's dictatorship; in 1980, after failed attempts by Yusuf Lule, Godfrey Binaisa and Paulo Muwanga, Milton Obote was returned to power after winning sham elections; in 1985, two military generals, Tito Okello and Bazilio Okello, ousted Obote in a 'bloodless coup' and in 1986, after having waged a guerrilla war in the bush for almost six years, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over and is still in power today. During his reign as President and Commander in Chief

[32] For example, Britain, which was the colonial presence in Uganda and South Africa, has had two major world wars, as well as the South African War and many others.

[33] Nordstrom (1992, p.271) notes a shift towards the increasing slaughter of civilians: in the First World War over 80 per cent of casualties were soldiers; in the Second World War half of all the casualties were military, half civilian; today nearly 90 per cent of all war-related deaths are civilian (quoted in Turshen 1998, p.21).

of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), Museveni has been engaged in an on-going battle with Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) located in the Rwenzori Mountains. These internal conflicts have spilled over into neighbouring eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

In Uganda, a number of writers have explored these volatile periods and the impact they had on the fabric of society. These include Robert Serumaga's *Return to the shadows* (1969), John Ruganda's *The burdens* (1972) and *The floods* (1980), Grace Ibingira's *Bitter harvest* (1980), Magala-Nyago's *The rape of the pearl* (1985), *Thirty years of bananas* (1993) by Alex Mukulu, *Kosiya Kifefe* (1997) by Arthur Gakwandi, Julius Ocwinyo's *Fate of the banished* (1997) and *Footprints of the outsider* (2002), Moses Isegawa's *Abyssinian chronicles* (2000) and *Snakepit* (2004). Whereas these male-authored narratives offer complicated representations of the various conflicts, they are typically deficient in their articulation and interrogation of the gendered experience. Women's roles are invisible: they are shown at home, or they are portrayed as silent women on whose behalf the warriors are fighting, or idealised figures to whom the combatants return, or brutalised bodies. Narratives by women are often explicitly concerned with giving a more nuanced account of war and its impact on women and children. For example, the anthology of short stories *Farming ashes: Tales of agony and resilience*, Monica Arac de Nyeko's short story 'Strange fruits', Beatrice Lamwaka's 'Butterfly dreams' and 'Bottled memories' and Christine Oryema-Lalobo's long poem 'No hearts at home' (1999) issue a strong critique of the on-going war in northern Uganda precisely by drawing attention to its devastating impact on women and children. In her memoir *Child soldier: Fighting for my life* (2002), China Keitetsi adds a new perspective within the growing literature on child soldiers by providing a harrowing account of her role as a child soldier and the abuses she had to endure as a female combatant during the guerrilla war.

South Africa's own tragic history of apartheid and the subsequent struggle against racial segregation has been narrativized by various writers. Some key examples include Lauretta Ngcobo's *And they didn't die* (1990), which is set in rural Kwazulu-Natal and focuses on the impact of the various Land Acts on a community of rural women who had to fight to control their land because the men had migrated to find work on the mines and in the cities. While Miriam Tlali's *Amandla* (1980) and Mongane Wally Serote's *To every birth its blood* (1981), examine the 1976 Soweto uprising and its aftermath. In *The beautiful*

screaming pigs (1992), Damon Galgut explores the traumatic experience of a soldier who returns to South Africa after participating in the cross border war Namibia and Angola. Revisionist accounts of women's experiences in the camps include *David's story* (2000), by Zoë Wicomb, which grapples with the figure of the female militant and her participation in the armed wing of the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe [MK], at the same time exposing how women were tortured and mistreated in the ANC training and detention camps (Samuelson 2007a). In Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the silent* (2004), Hambile Kondile the male protagonist goes in search of his activist daughter who disappeared after joining the struggle in exile. When Kondile discovers that Sindiswa was repeatedly raped by Raymond Mbete one of the leaders, he strangles him to death in a feat of rage. Niq Mhlongo's *Way back home* (2013) includes a female guerrilla who was tortured and murdered in the camps in Angola who returns to haunt the post-repressive state.[34]

McClintock argues that all 'nationalisms are gendered, invented and dangerous'.[35] Inevitably, over time the nation begins to construct a history that produces specific forms of masculinities and femininities of its citizenship. Consequently, nationalist struggles embody an unambiguous figure of a resilient, courageous and resourceful male soldier whose heroic sacrifices during the war entitle him to the citizenship of the nation at the end of hostilities. Conversely, these storylines celebrate iconic images of women in their symbolic roles as mothers, wives and custodians of the nation. In such representations, women are elided from the arena of action and denied any direct relation to national agency. 'Rather than extending a politics of self-assertion to women, postcolonial nations tend to regain control over the women who have become empowered during the struggle for independence' (Boehmer 2005, p.33). Haleh Afshar (2003a) also argues that, when investigating the role that gender plays during nationalist struggles, it is important to debunk the myth that women are innocent spectators or victims who inhabit the arena of the home, and are absent from the space of the

[34] Other examples that deal with war zones and war in the camps include *Mother to mother* (1998) by Sindiwe Magona, Elleke Boehmer's *Bloodlines* (2000) and Njabulo Ndebele's *The cry of Winnie Mandela* (2003). For further details on some of these texts see *The Columbia guide to South African literature in English since 1945* by Gareth Cornwall, Craig Mackenzie and Dirk Klopper (2009).

[35] Later liberation movements included women in the struggle – but as mothers, defending their children and families, projecting a romanticised vision of women's reproductive role in the private sphere. In South Africa this role was personified by Winnie Mandela, who became known as the 'Mother of the Nation'. In general, anti-colonial nationalist movements were more successful at putting women on the agenda as symbolic of the need for radical change than for incorporating gender analysis and gender equity into the discourse of liberation (Walsh & Scully 2006, p.3).

battlefield. An analysis of wartime reveals that women have always been followers, carers and providers, guarding home and hearth. But they are also active leaders and combatants drawn into the war zone as they fight alongside men. Some of the women on the battlefields are not involved in direct combat, but they perform necessary but feminised tasks such as supplying foodstuffs, medical supplies and medical assistance. Sometimes the home front becomes part of the war zone when battle lines are blurred as the conflict gradually encroaches on the domestic space of the home. Women and children are forced to hide to protect themselves from marauding soldiers or they are caught up in the crossfire between warring factions and become collateral damage (McClintock 1995, Afshar 2003, Boehmer 2005). Afshar's observation on the Palestinian uprising in some respects has similarities with the conflicts of this study. She emphasises that, increasingly

> wars are being fought on the home fronts. … it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to separate combatant from non-combat, and the frontguard and rearguard are not clear-cut, either. Most women in such situations experience violence as a matter of daily life and devise strategies to cope with it. To live under military occupation is to live in a permanent state of war with no place to hide and no ceasefires. (2003, p.182)[36]

As critics argue, it is a myth to imagine the home front as a safe space that women occupy behind battle lines as they wait for the war to end and for their men to return. McClintock, Afshar and Boehmer observe that modern nations can be seen as a male affair narrated by male leaders, activists and writers who reproduce iconographies, administrative structures and policies that reflect masculine concerns. It is these images of men as heroes that advance their post-war centrality; while women who were empowered during the struggle lose ground during independence.

The three narratives analysed in this section suggest that there are no safe zones; the domestic spaces that one assumes will remain momentarily untouched are intruded on by hostilities as women get pulled into the conflict. The narratives illustrate that the home space that women supposedly maintain is infused by different kinds of war. Women either go to

[36] 'In wartime, sometimes women are visible, sometimes they are not. Sometimes women's bodies are hyper-visual – focused on to be counted, battled over, and controlled. Other times, views of the female body recede so that constructions of femininity are more prominent in obscuring the motivations of militarized masculinity, in providing on-going means of justification, or in shaming the enemy most egregiously. Whether embodied or constructed as an ideal, women are forced to endure wars in which their actions are constrained, their agency is compromised, and their well-being is constantly threatened' (Riley, Mohanty & Pratt 2008, p.7).

war, as reflected in *The invisible weevil* when Mama joins the guerrilla movement in the bush, or, when they stay at home, the war comes to them, as seen in *Waiting* when Kaaka is brutally murdered by a soldier in her house. These narratives attempt to demythologise spatial demarcation and gender roles during wartime.

In his essay 'Algeria Unveiled' Frantz Fanon writes about the Algerian liberation war and illustrates how women exploited the veil in order to act as couriers on behalf of the revolution struggle. Although McClintock credits Fanon for recognising gender as a 'formative dimension of nationalism' (1995, p.360), she also points out that, in his critique, Fanon strips the veil of its historic dynamism and relegates its historical relevance to a footnote. Furthermore, he negates women's agency when he argues that women's militancy in the national revolution was a passive offspring of male agency and a structural requisite of the war. In a similar vein, Andrade emphasises that Fanon 'either elides gender or, when engaging it, frequently echoes conservative aspects of decolonizing nationalism' (2011, p.32).[37] Jacklyn Cock (1994) and Meredeth Turshen (1998) observe that in modern forms of war, especially civil wars and wars of liberation, women are also combatants, they resist and fight back; they are used as decoys and couriers to smuggle arms and explosives and they often support war efforts in multiple ways, willingly or unwillingly. It is these often silenced roles of women that women writers attempt to capture as they re-imagine women's contribution on the war front.

Ordinary women who become political activists frustrate the government in different ways. For example, in the 1950s women actively resisted the apartheid government when they mobilized themselves and marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the pass laws.[38] According to Cock, '[t]hrough rent and consumer boycotts it was often women who gave resistance its mass character' (1994, p.153). In 1960, during the Sharpeville massacre, eight women were killed for their participation in protesting against pass laws and the introduction of Bantu Education. In Uganda, during the guerrilla war from 1981 to 1986,

[37] In addition, Meg Samuelson argues that by reveiling 'themselves in a revolutionary gesture during the anticolonial war, the Algerian women of whom Fanon writes consented to their demilitarization and redomestication after independence, when violence against unveiled women created "a climate of fear that was designed to force women's return to the household" (Hatem 1993, 31). Wicomb's complex engagement with the Fanonian trope of concealment foregrounds the dangers to women that Fanon himself was unable to see, as he extolled the Algerian liberation struggle as an arena of gender liberation' (2007a, p. 851).

[38] Every year the 9th August is commemorated as National Women's Day in acknowledgment for women's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle.

women were integrated into the National Resistance Army (NRA). Janette Mukwaya, a former magistrate, helped in formulating policy guidelines and liaised with local villagers to ensure support for the armed rebels, while Gertrude Njuba actively recruited soldiers, and helped to establish an intelligence network and transport foodstuff, ammunition and medical supplies to battlefields (Boyd 1989, Cock, 1994, and Turshen 1998).

As a combatant in the armed struggle, Thandiwe Mtintiso, a commander in Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), describes 'her experience of detention and interrogation as one of constant physical assault and abuse of her womanhood' (Goldblatt & Meintjes 1998, p.30). Thandi Modise current premier of North West, also a former commander in MK, reveals that in the ANC camps she had to fight a two-pronged war, 'one against apartheid, the second against the misogyny of many of her male comrades' (Modise & Curnow 2000, p.36).

Although women actively participated on both sides of the apartheid struggle, as soldiers, spies, informants, intelligence, police and perpetrators (Cock 1994), their contributions in the reconstruction of the nation are obliterated from the annals of war narratives, for example, in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a body established as part of a negotiated settlement to investigate and document gross human rights violations perpetrated within and outside the borders of South Africa from 1960-1994.[39] Fiona Ross notes, 'the commission explicitly described its task in terms of the restoration of voice. "Testifying" or "telling one's story" of past violence became synonymous with the restoration of dignity and thence with the constitution of the subject in the post-Apartheid era: the speaking self as the healed subject' (2006, p.112). Nonetheless, during the initial TRC hearings it became evident that although women were speaking subjects, they spoke on behalf of their sons, husbands, and fathers; there was a deafening silence on the atrocities that they themselves had been subjected to. Ilze Olckers (1996) attributes this to the fact that in the drafting of the TRC bill, women's experiences were defined out of the terms of the bill. Although the language of the bill addressed issues of gender equality, it tended to privilege men's experiences and simultaneously omit women's

[39] The rationale behind the TRC was that the perpetrators would approach the commission, confess their wrongdoings and seek forgiveness; while victims were encouraged to give testimony about the atrocities that they had experienced during this period. This cathartic process was supposed to foster healing and promote reconciliation as part of the national project to put the past behind (Humphrey 2000).

sufferings.[40] Their stories of detention, interrogation and torture were not heard. It was only when gender activists led by Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes made a submission on 'Gender and the TRC', that the commission became sympathetic to the gendered experience and encouraged women to speak about their own experiences.[41] Dorothy Driver argues convincingly that one of the principles underlying the TRC was the concept of *ubuntu*, which refuses to make a distinction between the individual on the one hand and the community on the other. She identifies two understandings of women in the TRC. They were women-in-community, when they focused on the violence perpetrated on their families and community, women-in-themselves, when they represented themselves as victims.

> Therefore, in their speaking for others (and primarily for men), as women-in-community, women were included in the process of reconciliation as conceived in the TRC. In their speaking for themselves, as women-in-themselves, women were excluded. It is as if the TRC's conception of ubuntu can encompass men-in-themselves but only women-in-community; … where women-in-community were artificially distinguished from women-in-themselves. (Driver 2005, p.224)

The narratives of emerging writers' focus on these excluded stories portraying women's sacrifices. Similarly, Nthabiseng Motsemme's reflections on the inaudibility of women's voices during the TRC reveal that silences can be re-interpreted 'as another language through which women speak volumes' (2004, p.910). Motsemme argues that the 'mute always speak' and explores how women are forced to speak through their silences. In other words, silence becomes an alternative site that constitutes new meanings and enacts agency for women.[42]

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[40] According to Fiona Ross' coverage of the first five weeks of hearings involving 204 witnesses, 6 out of every 10 deponents were women, but over ¾ of their testimonies and 88% of the men's were about abuses of men. Only 17% of the women's testimonies and 5% of the men's were about abuses to women. Twenty-five per cent of all cases involved women speaking about their sons. Eleven per cent were women speaking about their brothers. Only 4% of the cases involved men speaking about their sons. There were no cases of men speaking about their wives or sisters (quoted in Graybill 2001, p.5).

[41] The TRC accepted recommendations from Goldblatt and Meintjes that women be allowed to tell stories on behalf of other women; groups of women could come together and tell their stories as a collective; hearings could be held in camera; and commissioners receive training on gender related issues. It was suggested that women be permitted to tell their stories before a panel of female commissioners in a meeting hall where only women were allowed to attend, because it was felt that the presence of male commissioners and reporters inhibit women in their testimony. Three women-only hearings were held by the TRC.

[42] Motsemme rejects what she regards as 'dominant western oppositional hierarchies of silence and speech, and instead adopts frameworks where words, silence, dreams, gestures, tears all exist interdependently and within the same interpretative field. [She argues that] we find that the mute always speak' (2004, p.910).

By representing women in symbolic roles, grand narratives of nationalism elevate women to a status that excludes them 'from the sphere of public national life' (Boehmer 2005, p.91), and negates the sacrifices that they made to the nationalist struggle. As emerging writers reconsidering repressive regimes, Kyomuhendo, Molope and Okurut obey the script of national legitimation; however, by deliberately privileging the wartime experiences of women as civilians, activists, combatants or perpetrators, they also disrupt the dominant male discourses on conflict. For example, in *Waiting* Mother's death in childbirth during the war can be read symbolically; in *Dancing in the dust* Kgomotso and her daughters Keitumetse and Tihelo are tortured in detention in specific ways that focus on their gendered identities; and *The invisible weevil* reveals how sexual violence is enacted on the bodies of women. The revisionist accounts of repressive regimes are distinct in their articulation of women's concerns within the meta-narratives of nationalism. Kyomuhendo, Molope and Okurut offer a depiction of prominent female characters who actively participate in the fight against tyrannical regimes and the struggle for freedom. These narratives reveal that in civil conflicts, women should not only be perceived as mothers who stood and mourned for their children, and told stories about their husbands, but should also be recognised as daughters who made sacrifices for the new nation, which in turn needs to accommodate them as equal citizens (Olckers 1996; Turshen 1998; Goldblatt & Meintjes 1998; Humphrey 2000; Graybill 2001; Driver 2005 and Ross 2006). The act of appropriating sacrificial narratives typically associated with men allows these writers to insert women's contributions and exercise claims on citizenship, while troubling national discourses on sacrifice.[43] Even so, an exploration of these narratives exposes the tensions, ambivalences and contradictions the writers find themselves occasionally caught up in; plots where the citizenship they demand and question reveals a kind of patriarchal version that is being inscribed through a narrative of sacrifice. Nationalism, as Andrade warns, 'is a problematic terrain for women' (2011, p.57): emerging writers are implicated in their critique of male- dominated nationalism; they are forced to simultaneously incorporate it while they foreground the 'domestic politics' (Andrade 2011, p.45) of women's lives. In spite of the various positive roles that women occupy in the three narratives, the characters articulate their concerns from the margins of society. It is within

[43] 'If the act of writing is one of the most powerful ways by which women inscribe themselves into history, then the acts of female African writers inscribing themselves and re-inscribing their precursors into a literary history functions as a powerful response to Hegel's infamous dictum on the exclusion of Africans from history' (Andrade 2011, p.46).

social spaces such as the home and the school that the quotidian experiences of women within the war are invested with political meaning.

However, Boehmer notes elsewhere that an investment by women writers in a 'typically masculine nationalist imaginary impacts on women's politics of self-realisation and on their involvement in the modern nation-state' (2005, p.90). Women writers' depictions of the domestic spaces women inhabit during wartime become battlefields as they get caught up in the conflicts. These issues will be fully explored in subsequent sections. For these emerging women writers an investment in a nationalist imaginary does not curtail women's possibility to re-inscribe an inherently masculinistic narrative. But, as Andrade argues in a different context, a revisionist literary history allows for an alternative reading that marks the convergence of gendered and nationalist politics and offers a useful lens through which 'to read both men's anxieties about gender and women's silences about nationalism' (2011, p.46).

Women in war: *Waiting* by Goretti Kyomuhendo

> *The public and private worlds are inseparably connected … the tyrannies and servilities of one are the traumas of the other. It is now apparent that the traumas of one are the traumas of the other.* (Virginia Woolf)[44]

Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Waiting: A novel of Uganda at war* (2007) explores the atrocities that ordinary people experience during wartime by placing emphasis on the private suffering and humiliation inflicted on women in the domestic space of the home front. This sub-section argues that even if women do not actively feature on the battleground, they are still inadvertently drawn into the war, which has an adverse impact on their lives. Kyomuhendo draws on the experiences of different female characters to problematize the inherently ambiguous symbolic image of the mother and shows that the violence performed on women's bodies is a result of the interplay between two hegemonic forces, patriarchal authority and state power. By delving into the trauma experienced by the child protagonist, Kyomuhendo clearly demonstrates that during war 'the public and private worlds are inseparably connected … the traumas of one are the traumas of the other' (Virginia Woolf, cited in Herman 1997,

[44] Cited in Herman 1997, p.32.

p.32). The depiction of the Lendu woman and Nyinabarongo reveals that through the active participation of women it is possible for communities to transform into spaces that accommodate and support diverse identities.

In *Waiting: A novel of Uganda at war* (hereafter *Waiting*), Kyomuhendo uses the voice of a thirteen-year-old girl, Alinda, to give an account of the overthrow of the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin. The novel, which is divided into three parts, is set in a rural village in western Uganda, and portrays how a local community struggles to survive while the remnants of Amin's renegade soldiers use their village as a passageway to flee from the liberation forces tracking them down. Faced with marauding soldiers plundering, looting and murdering innocent people, Alinda's family and their neighbours live in perpetual fear for five months. Although, during the day, life in this small community has a sense of normality as Alinda's two siblings Tendo and Maya, grandmother Kaaka, Mother, Father, Uncle Kembo, the old man and the Lendu woman go about their daily chores, there is a constant discomforting sense of impending doom, and at night they and their neighbours seek refuge in a makeshift shelter which has been constructed deep within a banana plantation. Through Alinda, Kyomuhendo retrieves the voice of the female child from the margins and disrupts a masculine script that has always represented the male child as 'the self-defining inheritor of the post-independent era' (Boehmer 2005, p.106).[45] In a different context, Boehmer contends that the 'daughter of the new nation in male-authored texts is predominately pictured, as ever, as homebound and tradition-bound. She inhabits either private spaces or the peripheries of public, national space' (Boehmer 2005, p.106). By taking up this homebound identity and the periphery from a different angle, Kyomuhendo begins to construct a narrative that transforms the male-authored scripts 'of national self-formation' (Boehmer 2005, p.109). Kyomuhendo's incorporation of the daughterly perspective rewrites and reinforces Alinda's roles and responsibilities.[46] As Boehmer convincingly argues elsewhere the daughter figure is strategically located; because narrating becomes her vehicle of agency. In narrating herself as a child and citizen of the nation, she 'reworks by virtue of who she is the confining structures

[45] Alinda can be described as an inadequate narrator 'who lets us glimpse the inadequacies of all the adults [she] encounters' (Mullan 2006, p.52) – one only senses the torment, anguish and detachment of the adults.

[46] Similarly, in *Dwelling in the archive* (2003), Antoinette Burton examines how three Indian women have written about the histories of colonialism and Indian nationalisms by exploring their memories of house and home; in so doing they 'claim a place in history at the intersection of the private and public, the personal and the political, the national and the postcolonial' (p.6).

of the national family to encompass alterative gender identities' (2005, p.108). Kyomuhendo admits that,

> writing provides her with space in which she can contribute to the improvement of the situation of women by telling stories that define women's experience in their own voices: In my writings, I do not relegate the female characters to the peripheries of the narratives but rather make them active participants in the story being told. I also strive to highlight those 'trivialities' that afflict womenfolk so that I can bring them to the fore for the understanding and appreciation of society. (2007b, p.189)

In *Waiting,* Kyomuhendo foregrounds issues and concerns that directly affect the women characters. For example, in her depiction of Mother, she explores some of the difficulties that pregnant women have to navigate in the midst of war. When Mother dies during childbirth, Kyomuhendo illustrates how this traumatic experience affects Alinda, who witnesses her death. She also demonstrates how women rally together to take care of the new-born baby and reconstitute the community after the hostilities have died down.[47] Whereas the female characters exhibit various forms of resistance and agency, the male characters appear to be consigned to the margins of the narrative.

In addition, Kyomuhendo side-steps the actual battlefield, a typically male terrain, and concentrates on what happens on the margins of the war zone. By inverting margin and centre in the war and nation narrative, Kyomuhendo departs from the sites of the grand narrative of war and exposes the atrocities inflicted on ordinary people. Dominica Dipio points out that the 'frontline drama of conflict and war is lacking in the story, yet one feels the overwhelming possibility of danger and its depowering effect on the community' (2011, p.42). [48] Alinda's reflections on the conflict reveal the internal strength, resilience and

[47] 'Mildred Barya (2008) rightly argues that the characters in *Waiting* manage to "give each other support and keep re-inventing themselves and their community […] [and] are solid and stable with a sense of purpose and dignity […] [so that] when one character fades, another slips in naturally and becomes a part of the community"' (Cited in Ilieva & Odiemo-Munara 2011, pp.190-191).

[48] In a similar vein, Susan Z. Andrade observes in relation to *Nervous Conditions,* 'it's apparent silence on the question of the black independence struggle, …appears to efface the story of Zimbabwean nationalism entirely, emphasizing instead the personal travails of two black Rhodesian girls as they arrive into womanhood … set in 1968, the novel makes no reference to the *Chimurenga,* or guerrilla war, which would have been gathering steam at the time and in the location of the story. Rather, *Nervous Conditions* charts a less direct and much more conflicted route of narrative and characterological development. Part of the conflict stems from the novel's critical attention to gender, one that appears to authorize the notion that decolonizing nationalism subsumes feminism into its over-arching, totalizing agenda' (2002, pp.25-26).

sacrifices of the female characters. In her essay on women's silences during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Motsemme argues that studies show that when ordinary women speak about their traumatic pasts, they tend to circumvent national concerns by placing their narratives within everyday lived experience: 'Home, domesticity, relationships and quotidian lives are employed to map their experiences of human rights violations' (2004, p.909). As the war front encroaches on the home front, the narrative foregrounds ordinary heroines like Alinda, her mother Kaaka, Nyinabarongo and the socially marginalised Lendu woman (Daymond 2007, Dipio 2011). Scripting women's stories into the grand narratives of war allows Kyomuhendo to explore and challenge the numerous avenues that shut down and open up to women during and after repressive times. While Kaaka and Mother's death suggests that they pay the ultimate sacrifice, the active participation in 'domestic politics' of the female characters that survive the war offers them roles that gradually allow them to redefine themselves.

Abasi Kiyimba notes that for 'the literary character of Uganda, the Amin experience was a significant turning point, because it inspired large volumes of literature' (1998, p.124).[49] Kyomuhendo obeys this national script, but she distances her narrative from a masculine discourse by situating the story on the outskirts of the war and focusing on women's contribution. However, by casting Mother and Kaaka in the symbolic role of the mother, Kyomuhendo potentially gets pulled back into a nationalistic grand narrative that ostensibly closes down women's possibilities.[50] In engaging with 'maternal politics and nationalist tropes of maternity' (Samuelson 2007b, p.171), the mother image is positioned as metaphor and performs inside 'the central script of national self-emergence' (Boehmer 2005, p.29). *Waiting* is a tight balancing act that depicts female characters who simultaneously embody and undermine these symbolic roles. Kyomuhendo offers an alternative view by re-

[49] Kiyimba argues that 'Idi Amin is the most dominant single factor in Ugandan literature today, and any discussion of works that feature him can only be selective. He has been conceived in differing, contradicting, and even opposing images, depending on a writer's experiences and interests' (1998, p.124).

[50] Desiree Lewis (1992) argues that the representation of women in their symbolic roles as mothers tends to subvert and affirm patriarchal hierarchies. For example in Agostinho Neto's poem 'Farewell at the moment of parting', the male subject of the poem begins by demonstrating a reliance on the mother image for the recovery of his identity. However, this recovery 'also involves a distinctive and shifting perception of the mother image' (Lewis 1992, p.49) that demands to be separated from the maternal figure in order to recapture a particular kind of masculinity. In other words, the mother's subjectivity is negated in order to affirm a masculine nationalist project. Similarly, in *Cross of gold* Lauretta Ngcobo kills off her female character in the first chapter, because she has no space to deal with women's issues (Driver 1990, p. 238). Both writers tend to articulate and privilege male needs at the expense of women's concerns.

working the original form-giving symbols, and infusing them with meaningful attributes that bear the burden of women's own experience (Boehmer 2005, p.14). Through the 'grittily real' (Boehmer 2005) maternal figure, Kyomuhendo taps into the symbolic role to unsettle the subject position of mothers. Motherhood, as Meg Samuelson points out in a related context, becomes 'a subject position that grants considerable power to women and thus provides an arena in which to explore the unstable space between subjecthood and subjection' (2007b, p.159). Within these conventional roles, Kyomuhendo also incorporates exceptional and subversive female figures. This is her contribution, an investment in history that destabilises a typical national discourse.

At first glance, *Waiting* seems to reinforce prescribed gendered roles in this microcosm community. The novel's opening scene sees the young boy Tendo, 'perched high up on one of the inner branches of the big mango tree' (2007a, p.3). Since they anticipate soldiers to attack them at any time, Tendo's responsibility is to act as a sentry, to stand guard on behalf of his family. Although Tendo's elevated position gives him access to the regime, by zooming in on him the narrative ultimately claims the power of the gaze. Tendo positions himself as defender of the family, as the oldest male child; he assumes control of a panga and a spear. The spear as a weapon can also be seen as a phallic symbol that represents Tendo's masculine power. This is illustrated in his preoccupation with simulating battles taking place on the war front. 'He removed his hands from his pockets and started punching the air, fists folded as in a mock fight. "I'm ready for them," he said, … "Who?" Maya asked. "Who else? The soldiers." … "Father said they have guns, but a man has to be prepared for a fight"' (p.17). Tendo's assertion and affirmation of a masculinist role can be read symbolically: he represents all the gallant soldiers who go to battle as defenders of the nation.[51] It comes as no surprise when, at the end of the novel, Tendo runs off to join the liberators on the battlefield. As a young man, Tendo is portrayed as a patriotic son of the nation who sacrifices his life for the national struggle. His active participation in the war reinforces a masculine identity that has been defined for him. As Sarah Benton (1995) maintains, men feel qualified to belong to the nation through their involvement in military duties, which bestows citizenship and marks them as superior. According to Benton the 'nation belongs to those who make it and protect it, and who most obviously makes it but the military?' (1995, p. 40). Kyomuhendo's examination of gender roles in *Waiting* illustrates that it 'is difficult, though not impossible,

[51] Later, when there is a shortage of food, it is Tendo who goes out hunting and returns with a porcupine, big enough to feed the entire family, again gesturing to his masculine role as provider.

to conceive (of) the nation without the inscription of specific symbolic roles for male and female historical actors' (Boehmer 2005, p.5).

In contrast, Tendo's sisters Maya and Alinda inhabit the domestic space of the home front and are immersed in various household duties such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of their pregnant mother. At a tender age, Alinda takes on the maternal responsibilities of her mother, which she begins to transfer to her younger sister. At one point, when she is trying to teach her how to prepare a meal, she says, 'Maya, you have to learn how to cook properly, now that Mother is not well. We have to take over the running of this house' (Kyomuhendo 2007a, p.31). It is not only the household chores that Alinda has to take care of. When her father is paralyzed by fear, Alinda is catapulted into the role of a birth attendant, although Dipio (2011) argues that Father, who is the conventional head of the family and from whom all authority should emanate, seems to be as powerless as everyone else. It is important to point out that when Alinda assumes responsibility, Kyomuhendo foregrounds one of the sites of power that become available to female characters in precarious times. Unlike her passive father, Alinda is not portrayed as powerless; instead, in spite of her inexperience and apprehension, she takes control of the situation. With her grandmother dead, she has no choice but to assist her mother in delivering the baby. It is these courageous acts of resilience, situated behind 'war scenes' in the domestic space of the home that Kyomuhendo surfaces so as to compel us to re-examine assigned roles and revise and open them up for women.[52]

Kaaka is an old woman who has always gone against societal norms that force her to conform to traditional concepts of feminine behaviour. First, as a young woman, she defies her family by choosing her future husband. Second, even before the marriage negotiations begin, she announces that she is pregnant. Her mother is infuriated because she has transgressed and embarrassed the family. To protect the family honour, the mother approaches a medicine man that makes the pregnancy invisible for the wedding day. But when mother and daughter return to have the process reversed, they find that the medicine man has since died. From that moment Kaaka is perpetually pregnant, but she never

[52] 'As women and men are drawn into war, the relations between them inevitably shift. Women become soldiers, labourers for the war effort, national political actors, refugees, and survivors of violence, assuming roles previously reserved for men. It is in these role changes, as war draws ordinary women and men into fighting, that opportunities emerge to forge new social relationships and identities, including those of gender. The nature of change varies from one war zone to another. And the ability to sustain new social relationships and identities depends upon the way in which the transition from war to peace occurs' (Meintjes 2001, p.64).

conceives a child. This angers her husband, who constantly accuses her of failing to give birth to a child. Every time he lays blame at her doorstep, she retaliates by beating him mercilessly; eventually exhausted with his patriarchal attitudes, she walks out of her marriage and goes to live with her nephew, Alinda's father. Kaaka's indomitable spirit is further revealed when she refuses to join the rest of the family in their makeshift shelter during the night. In a way she is challenging the power and authority of the soldiers, even though she knows that if she is discovered she will be killed. Nonetheless, she does not allow them to curtail her life; her decision to spend the night in the comfort of her home is in itself an act of rebellion and defiance. When the soldiers invade the family homestead demanding 'women, food, and money' (Kyomuhendo 2007a, p.37) on the night that Mother goes into labour, Kaaka, whose main focus is on delivering the baby, is undeterred by the soldiers' aggressive behaviour. Meanwhile, Father and Uncle Kembo, armed with a panga, feel completely disempowered as they hide in the bushes and watch an unarmed old woman as she confronts twenty soldiers. She provokes them when she asks,

> Do you have no respect? … No shame? Pushing around an old woman, who is trying to deliver a baby? … Do you think you scare me? Me, who used to beat up my husband until he urinated in his trousers? … If you are real men go and fight with your enemy, instead of coming here to terrorize a poor harmless old woman like me. … The soldier pointed his gun and fired. Then he fired again, aiming at her stomach. (p.37)

Marie Kruger maintains that in 'her deliberate emasculation of the soldiers, Kaaka rejects a state inclined to illicitly accumulate power and wealth, an unaccountable regime given to devouring its citizens in order to satisfy the excessive needs of its own bloated belly' (2011, p.134). This brutal act of violence violates Kaaka's human rights; the cruelty enacted on her body, especially on her stomach, is performed to demonstrate that the soldier is in control and holds all the power; she is a subordinate who should be put in her place. By challenging these soldiers, she simultaneously defies two hegemonic powers, patriarchy and state authority. Kruger argues that, Kaaka's 'fearless resistance is shaped by an aggressive gender identity that reverses the dynamics of power in the domestic and political arena' (p.133).[53] The violence transforms the home into a war zone, so that resistance is required, by taking this up

[53] As Boehmer argues in relation to Gladys' death in 'Girls at war', Kaaka's 'death fixes her in the time-honoured attitude for women of self-sacrifice' (2005, p.3).

the novel is able to make Kaaka's sacrifice extend the understanding of war and the roles of women therein.[54]

Kaaka's courage, determination and resilience are admirable features reflected in Alinda's character. For example, amidst the imminent danger, and in spite of her distress, she has the courage to escort her mother to the latrine in the middle of the night. When Kaaka is brutally murdered during Mother's labour, the responsibility of completing the birthing process falls on Alinda, as she follows the guidance of her anguished mother,

> Cut, she commanded … "Cut what?" "The umbilical cord." I feared to look at the *jellied blood* next to the baby. I thought I might vomit and tried hard to contain myself. Then I saw something like a fleshy string, coiling out of the bloody mess and winding its way to the baby's stomach. … The baby was crying loudly. It had lots of hair, but it was covered in caked *blood.* (my emphasis, Kyomuhendo 2007a, p.39)

Immediately after giving birth to a son, Mother dies. Kyomuhendo seems to suggest that the damaging and destructive effects of war and by extension patriarchy get played out on the bodies of women. However, this maternity can also be read symbolically as a temporal binary in which a woman creates a new life, but also carries the possibility of maternal death. Dipio convincingly argues that Kyomuhendo represents motherhood 'as the ultimate act of heroism; in this case, dying as a grain of wheat with the responsibility of giving life. In the roles played by Kaaka, Mother and Alinda in the delivery of the baby, link and continuity among the three generation (sic) of women is evident' (2011, p.50). Kaaka's determination to deliver the baby illustrates that she emerges from the archetypal feminine as the Great Mother who, according to Erich Neumann, is good-bad and makes possible a union of positive and negative attributes' (Neumann 1963, p.21). As Great Mother, Kaaka can be seen as both womb and tomb, one who gives life, but also brings on death. Her passing foreshadows Mother's death, whose womb 'that has sustained new life slowly begins to haemorrhage' (Kruger 2011, p.130) after she gives birth to a son who seems to teeter on the brink of life and death. Neumann observes, 'the vessel character of the Feminine not only shelters the unborn in the

[54] 'Kyomuhendo's narrative, however, does not simply slide into the utopia of the inclusive nation-state and bourgeois success but instead remains acutely aware of its compromised aspirations. Through the disjuncture between narrative present and historical past, between the last image of hope and the reader's knowledge of a Ugandan future that has already passed, the utopian vision of an alternative community is riddled with the dystopian awareness of hopes betrayed' (Kruger 2011, p.142).

vessel of the body, and not only the born in the vessel of the world, but also takes back the dead into the vessel of death, the cave or coffin, the tomb or urn' (Neumann 1963, p.45).[55]

In *Waiting*, Mother's pregnancy and her protracted and difficult labour pains are a mirror image of a nation in crisis. The subsequent passing of Mother and the birth of her son signal a new beginning for the son, but also the end of life for the Mother. The narrative sacrifices her because she is not needed in the plot besides as metaphor in this sense there are two different rites of passage; one is celebratory and regenerative amidst the death and destruction of war. The other is symbolic of the disintegration of the nation. The notion of a frail and sickly son who teeters on the brink of survival can also be read as a symbol for a new Uganda that is undergoing a painful process of reconstruction.[56] By reverting to the allegorical roles of women, the narrative elevates women in a way that does not only negate but also validates their sacrifices during wartime. In this narrative of sacrifice, Kyomuhendo's depiction of women is complex and nuanced; women are not exclusively defined by their maternal role. But when they are they do not attain full narrative presence, it seems the pull of the metaphor of mother and childbirth is too strong. Instead, it is (somewhat conventionally) Kaaka the post-menopausal woman who is able to step out of the script and revise it.

As mentioned earlier, in the midst of this war the worst devastation is played out on the bodies of women: Kaaka and Mother bear the brunt of the physical violence, while Alinda is subjected to the psychological impact of the war. In quick succession, Alinda witnesses the brutal death of Kaaka and is exposed to shockingly gruesome blood products that fragment her psychic world. She sees Kaaka 'covered in blood', 'jellied blood next to the baby' and 'the afterbirth in a pool of blood', (Kyomuhendo 2007a, p.38, 39); multiple traumatic events that unconsciously bring about delayed trauma. Kyomuhendo uses a child to render an inadequate narrator who is unable to express herself, because she is too innocent to comprehend what is going on around her. Initially, it seems as if Alinda is coping; she

[55] Mother dies while giving birth to a son; however, her other son Tendo runs away to join the army. Afshar points out elsewhere that motherhood which ' in peacetime is often a natural progression and a happy event, becomes a burdensome duty during a crisis, and even the forerunner of death and devastation. Women who are left behind are expected to give birth to sons and to future warriors and to sacrifice those very sons to the cause. They become the guardians of cradles and coffins. … Thus, mothers universally become the symbol of sorrow and suffering, and children the cause of sacrifice' (2003b, p.183).

[56] 'Signifiers for the dystopia of the nation and its patriarchal epistemology, the bodies of women are visibly marked not only by war and displacement but also by the unrelenting violence of human reproduction. Child birth no longer affirms national and familial continuity, and instead transforms into a site of death, blood, and carnage' (Kruger 2011, pp.144-145).

continues with her domestic chores and takes on the duties of mothering the baby. But she is also incapable of articulating, in language, the pain and suffering that she experiences. Instead, she represses the shock of witnessing two extreme events, death and birth. Repressed memories, however, always have a way of re-emerging. In Alinda's case, the sight of blood triggers her distressing memories. When the old man shatters his leg after accidentally stepping on a land mine, Alinda sees 'a mass of red meat from which small pieces of white bone protruded. The toes had been severed' (p.63). As she watches the Lendu woman start to amputate the old man's damaged leg, she desperately feels the urge to 'put distance between [her] weary body and the scene of blood' (p.64). Alinda flees this horrific scene and collapses into a semi-conscious state where she drifts in and out of sleep. She wakes up the next day feeling nauseous, dizzy and only feels marginally better after she has vomited. For two weeks after this incident she is confined to her bed, unable to function properly. Bonnie Burstow's discussion on understanding trauma maintains that it

> is a not a disorder but a reaction to a kind of wound. It is a reaction to profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world … Trauma befalls *embodied* individuals, and even when there is no explicit assault on the body, people become alienated from their bodies in some respect. (emphasis in original 2003, p. 1302)

Furthermore, Elaine Scarry's analysis on the vulnerability of the human body demonstrates that physical and psychological pain has the ability to destroy a sufferer's verbal language, 'bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned' (1985, p.4). In Alinda's circumstance, the queasiness, dizzy spells, and the retching are visceral non-verbal forms of language that embody the pain and suffering she has experienced. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela has argued in a different context that when the world of a child is shattered by a traumatic experience like the brutal violence of the military, it is an experience the child is incapable of absorbing. Because she 'lacks the psychological capacity to contain the brutality before her own eyes, and certainly has no language with which to re-present the traumatic events *Blood, bodies and death* are the only meaningful words that capture the image of what she cannot articulate through language' (emphasis in original 2004, p.10). Margaret Daymond (2007, p.121) argues that Alinda collapses because, like her father and Uncle Kembo, she cannot stomach the sight of blood. It is evident from this and subsequent irrational reactions to thoughts of meat that Alinda is reliving the harrowing events that she witnessed. On one occasion, in a voice she hardly recognises as hers, she attempts to offer an explanation, it 'must have been

the meat, … . It reminds me of blood – Mother's afterbirth, and the old man's leg' (2007a, p.68). Judith Herman observes that,

> [l]ong after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts. It is as if time stops at the moment of trauma. The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event. Thus, even normally safe environments may come to feel dangerous, for the survivor can never be assured that she will not encounter some reminder of the trauma. (Herman 1997, p.37)

Alinda's personal experiences of death and destruction are symptomatic of the trauma the entire community experiences because of their proximity to the brutalities of war.[57] Through Alinda's naïve narration, Kyomuhendo gives voice to the experiences of young girls and suggests that despite the atrocities of war that encroach on the domestic front, women may be the most vulnerable victims, but they are also active agents.

In *Waiting* Kyomuhendo reveals how, as a precarious state, war compels a diverse group of people to set aside their prejudices and work together in order to survive its damaging effects. Elsewhere, Turshen argues that war 'also destroys the patriarchal strictures of society that confine and degrade women. In the very breakdown of morals, traditions, customs, and community, war also opens up and creates new beginnings' (1998, p.20). Kyomuhendo's narrative shows what avenues open up, particularly for women, during wartime. For example, because the Lendu woman is an immigrant from the former Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), this small community of people persistently marginalise and humiliate her. For instance, when she tries to offer her assistance with delivering the baby, Kaaka rudely dismisses her as a barren woman who does not know what

[57] However, as Burstow (2003) maintains, trauma does not only refer to individuals but the word can also be applied to communities, nations and the world. She argues that trauma is characterized by the absence of grounding – traumatized individuals feel unsafe and find the world a dangerous place, one that leaves them feeling terror, helplessness, despair, distrust, rage and often guilt. Traumatised individuals tend to remain frozen in the past or they experience different types of dissociation or disconnection from aspects of the past that are associated with the traumatic event. She also notes that they tend to use different survival skills to cope with their trauma. Alinda's coping strategy involves distancing herself from bloody substances that trigger her memory.

she is doing, even if Kaaka herself has never had a child. In spite of such and other hostilities that she is subjected to, the Lendu woman's resilience and determination see her gradually begin to assert herself in ways that force the community to re-examine their biased attitudes towards her. This is the second conflict that the Lendu woman has had to endure. Her first encounter with warfare was in the Democratic Republic of Congo, after the Americans had killed Patrice Lumumba. During this revolt, her aunt who is a nurse inducts her into the world of indigenous medicine, where she learns the medicinal properties of various plants. When she is caught up in the war in Uganda, she draws on this vital medical knowledge and uses it to save two lives. First, the Lendu woman manages to save baby's life when he is afflicted with *ebino* (false teeth), because she is the only one who knows which medicinal plants to prescribe for his infected teeth. And yet, even while she is treating him, she has to contend with Father's false accusations that she is a witch who has caused his son's illness. In the second incident, when the old man's shattered leg has to be severed, all the men, Father, Uncle Kembo and Tendo stand transfixed on the side-lines, unable to cope with this disturbing scene. Once again, it is the courageous Lendu woman, with the assistance of the other women, Nyinabarongo, Jungu and Maya, who galvanise themselves and carry out a difficult medical procedure that saves his life. In the absence of any medical facilities, the ability to heal people amidst death and destruction enables the Lendu woman to renegotiate her position and identity in a community that has always defined her as an outsider.

Nyinabarongo is the other female character that uses the conditions of the war to reconstruct her sense of self and her role in society. This mother of twins understands what it is like to be on the periphery of a community, since she herself was rejected by her in-laws who forced her to move back to mother's house with one of her two children. In spite or because of her unfortunate experiences, she is the only one who stands up for the Lendu woman. Secondly, in the absence of a maternal figure for Alinda and her siblings, it is Nyinabarongo who eventually takes over the weighty mothering responsibilities that have been placed on Alinda's tender shoulders. Nyinabarongo's relationship with Alinda's family is one of reciprocity; they need her emotional and physical support while she desires the companionship that they offer. As she develops an intimate relationship with Father, she eventually becomes Alinda's step-mother. She is attentive to Alinda's anxiety about her future, so she takes up all the household duties, which allows Alinda to return to school and reclaim a childhood that has been negatively affected by the atrocities of war. As part of their new identities, Nyinabarongo and the Lendu woman take on the roles of wives and mothers.

However, these cannot simply be dismissed as submissive functions. For both women, it is a conscious strategy that gives them a sense of agency. It could be argued that this strategy is a form of *nego-feminism,* which Obioma Nnaemeka (2003) defines as 'the feminism of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance' (p.377). After being marginalised, their pivotal roles during and after the war demonstrate that these women have learnt 'when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy' (Nnaemeka 2003, p.378). Dominica Dipio observes that, in *Waiting,*

> the characters associated with heroic acts are not those that society regards highly. They are people with fractured social lives, considered failures from mainstream outlook. The socially marginalised are fore-grounded as heroes of the everyday. What qualifies them as daily heroes is the conviction with which they assert positive human values … Most of these are women who have the courage to assert their dignity regardless of society's opinion of them. (2011, p.46)

When the Lendu woman and Nyinabarongo adopt the roles of mother, wife and natural healer, they achieve new ways of defining and positioning themselves in this community. The narrative suggests that whereas the men seem to be emasculated by the war, the women assume new roles that empower them, while Alinda's post-traumatic stress brought on by the war is symbolic of the trauma experienced by the entire community.

In *Waiting,* Kyomuhendo illustrates that the 'lines that separate the home front and the war front are porous just like the shifting front line of the war' (Pape 2011, p.101). In situating this narrative on the peripheries of the combat zone, the family emerges as a community that forges new ties in order to survive the devastating effects of war. By focusing on the domestic private space of the home front and the family, Kyomuhendo, as an emerging writer, may appear to be skirting around grand gestures of nationalist politics. But to reiterate as Andrade eloquently puts it, for African women writers, 'the family becomes the nation writ small' (2011, p.21). Using the everyday narratives of the domestic space, Kyomuhendo attempts to illustrate how *Waiting* can be read literally, but also allegorically in relation to nationalist issues that are actively challenged (Andrade 2011).[58] As an emerging writer, Kyomuhendo writes against the allegorical image of women and rewrites the typical

[58] 'Nation and family are units of social collectivity and fictions of symbolic totality, each provoking from its members sentiments of affiliation and nostalgic yearning. Moreover, when read in relation to each other, family and nation roughly correspond to the public and private spheres, the private and the familial pertaining to the domain of women and the public and national to that of men' (Andrade 2011, p.33).

nationalist image by dealing with the gritty experiences of women in war. Therefore, the vigorous involvement of female characters in *Waiting* inscribes the otherwise obscure roles of women into the narratives of sacrifice. The narrative also exploits the openings made available to women during war, but then Kyomuhendo is careful not to romanticise it as a liberating state. Instead, like Okurut in *The invisible weevil*, Kyomuhendo walks a tight rope as she attempts to strike a balance between these new opportunities and the possible failures that women face during wartime.

'Girls at the frontline' in Kagiso Lesego Molope's *Dancing in the dust*[59]

> *Too often girls are considered as silent victims of (sexual) assault – devoid of agency, moral conscience, economic potential or political awareness. ... We need to ask girls to tell their own stories of war ... rather than assuming the right to speak for them.* (Carolyn Nordstrom)[60]

Kagiso Lesego Molope's *Dancing in the dust* (2004) is a feminist revisionist account that explores the active participation of women during the struggle against the apartheid regime. Through the representation of a female teenage protagonist, Molope's narrative is a fictional reconstruction of girl's own stories of war, which consciously inserts and privileges the horrifying experiences that black women in the township had to endure on a daily basis at the height of apartheid. This harrowing storyline details some of the horrifying stories of abuse, fear and humiliation that women detainees had to withstand during detention, where they were subjected to interrogation and physical, mental and emotional torture. Whereas the previous sub-section explored how the war gets drawn into the domestic space of the home front, this discussion focuses on the depiction of the various ordeals girls had to tolerate as a consequence of being at the frontline of war. In this discussion, the frontline of war refers to the streets of the township which were a major terrain in the struggle against apartheid. The novel illustrates how the protagonist's growing dissatisfaction with the repressive regime sees her joining an underground student organisation, however, her participation in a political mass demonstration subsequently leads to her arrest, her sister's and her mother's. Through the fictionalised representation of incarceration and torture, Molope depicts the traumatic experiences that the protagonist had to undergo while in detention and the resilience she

[59] I have adapted this phrase from the title of Carolyn Nordstrom's article 'Girls behind the (Front) Lines'.

[60] Cited in Denov & Gervais (2007, p.885).

exhibits in the aftermath. Carolyn Nordstrom argues in a different context, that in spite of its viciousness, torture fails because people 'resist, and they do so in very creative ways. They literally create selves and worlds capable of withstanding and defeating rule by violence' (1988, p.105). This sub-section explores how the novel constructs alternative ways of understanding how female survivors of torture are able to imagine other selves that rise above the oppressive regimes that seek to destroy them.

Molope wrote *Dancing in the dust* because she realised that post-apartheid history and literature were silent about or neglecting to chronicle the stories of children and women. She notes that nothing had 'been written about the black female child during apartheid. Even when people talked about detention, it was a completely different experience for women than for men. I needed to get those women's stories out' (Wanjelani 2004, p.11). The protagonist rightly observes that 'information about women freedom fighters was hard to come by, yet I knew from my experience that there were many of us, from many different age groups' (Molope 2004, p.122).[61] By focusing on the traumatic experiences of a young, black girl Molope successfully 'fills the silences that were left by "official" versions of history during apartheid by reflecting the experiences of thousands of children whose childhoods – and indeed lives – ended too soon and whose stories were never told' (Williams 2008, pp.40-41). Molope's narrative feminist perspective is an assertion that clearly articulates young women's agency in the struggle, Nordstrom defines this contribution as a 'moral conscience, economic potential and political awareness' (cited in Denov & Gervais 2007, p.885).[62]

Set in the turbulent period of the early 1980s in a township possibly in the north of Pretoria, this coming-of-age story is narrated in the first person by the protagonist Tihelo Masimo. By the time she is fifteen, Tihelo, her mother Kgomotso and her sister Keitumetse have all personally experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime. Although it is not as distinct as the reflective perspective of Doreen Baingana's Christine in the short story "Green stones", which distinguishes between the consciousness of experiencing and narrating selves, there is a subtle sense that Tihelo's story is narrated in retrospect. A more mature fifteen-year-old transports the reader back to when she was a thirteen-year-old naïve schoolgirl and traces her personal journey from a reluctant political activist to an active freedom fighter

[61] For a detailed analysis of women's contribution in the ANC- led underground movement see Raymond Suttner in N Gasa (ed.), *Women in South African history: Basus'iimbokodo, bawelimilambo/ They remove boulders and cross rivers.*

[62] Molope claims, 'I've always wanted to write a novel about a girl from a feminist point of view' (Smith 2006, p.27).

fighting for liberation. In addition to her desire for political freedom, Tihelo also has to contend with her identity crisis. Her lighter complexion means 'she stuck out like a sore thumb' (Molope 2004, p.10), Keitumetse's unplanned pregnancy, the detention of Kgomotso as well as the disappearance and death of some of her close friends.

During the state of emergency, life in the townships was characterised by constant school boycotts, mass stay-aways, police crackdowns, riots against the police and detention without trial. Samuelson points out that during this period 'the conflict between the apartheid state and anti-apartheid activists reached civil war proportions' (2007a, p.833). In an attempt to escape the harsh reality of their lives, the novel portrays Tihelo and her friends immersing themselves in the fictitious world of television, '[f]or hours after we watched a show we would talk incessantly about it, recounting what we had seen to each other as if we were speaking to someone who had not seen any of it' (Molope 2004, p.32). Gradually, she becomes aware of the damaging impact the apartheid regime has on her life, her family and her community. She is especially exasperated by the inadequate education that she foresees preventing her from achieving her dream of becoming a journalist. Tihelo changes from being a dispassionate witness on the side-lines of the battlefield to being an active combatant at the frontline of the uprising against apartheid. Her involvement with the South African Students Organisation (SASO) leads to her arrest and subsequent detention where she is subjected to torture and interrogation for five months. Like Alinda in Kyomuhendo's *Waiting*, Tihelo suffers from traumatic consequences of terror. Alinda's emotional trauma stems from witnessing horrific events, and she does not experience physical pain; however, during detention Tihelo's body is subjected to physical assault and unbearable atrocities, so that when she is released, she goes through a traumatic experience that is simultaneously physically painful. Narrating functions as a means for both protagonists to deal with their trauma, as well as find ways of healing and restoring a sense of self. However, like Alinda, Tihelo is not portrayed as a silent, helpless victim devoid of agency. Through these teenage female protagonists, both Molope and Kyomuhendo foreground and problematize the forgotten and/ or untold stories of young girls; in the process they restore the roles of the invisible girls in visible wars.

In the midst of the fear and destruction brought about by the apartheid regime, similarly to Kyomuhendo who represents the consequences of the liberation war in the Ugandan context, Molope vividly captures the closeness and resilience of ordinary residents living in the township. In spite of the underlying terror, there is an attempt by Tihelo and her

friends Thato and Tshepo to create an ideal world for themselves. In hindsight, she realises that a child's innocence is 'their best protection' and 'their worst enemy' (Molope 2004, p.22). She admits that she 'knew and understood very little about what exactly was going on in the law and so I played and loved and laughed carelessly in those years. We all did. I remember caring so little about the year ahead of us…' (p.22). One day, when Tshepo suddenly teaches her how to make a petrol bomb, she slowly begins to recognise that the 'riots were now taking someone away from me, they were coming right into my own backyard' (p.26). In an attempt to cling to their childhood innocence, Tihelo tries to dissuade Tshepo from participating in sabotage activities. But, he ignores her, because he has developed an acute awareness of the persecutory nature of the apartheid regime. His frustrations are replaced by tenacious defiance, as 'he [speaks] over and over again about the plans to burn tyres' (p.37). In spite of her reservations, she feels compelled to join SASO; her ambivalence is reflected in her attitude:

> I did not want to be part of the organizing, making fliers or being there at all. Being at the headquarters had not become any easier, and it was increasingly difficult for me to feel like we were making any progress. Everything, every event, protest, or boycott, took such a toll on us. We would lose students and comrades to the police every time, and writing about it was really hard for me. (p.68)

Even though Tihelo is aware that the apartheid government is responsible for the turmoil in the township, she still blames the activists for their insurgent activities. Underlying her denial is a desire to hold on to an ideal world and an apprehension for the welfare of her friends. Incapable of dealing with the constant tension, Tihelo decides to resign from her duties at the SASO headquarters. Surprisingly, instead of reproach, her contribution is appreciated by Comrade Dikeledi,

> which made me stand still and stare at the wall in the front of me. My body was being weighed down by that heavy feeling again. … You know, we could do the fliers and the newsletters, we could even paint the shirts. But we feel strongly about all youths being part of this because we are all living the same crisis, you know? You have been a loyal and faithful comrade, and you are brave. (p.68)

Standing on the margins she witnesses the unabated ruthlessness of the police until two personal incidents jolt her into action: first, her friend Tshepo and his brother Mohau mysteriously disappear without a trace; then her mother is unexpectedly detained by the police. When her worst fears are actualised, she begins to question,

> What was there to be afraid of? What was left for me to see? For the first time since I was a child, I was crying. My body was shaking and my mother was so startled … Children need to cry … go on, she said. It took me forever, shedding that heavy feeling little by little, my chest heaving as I sobbed, mourning our childhood – mine, my sister's, Tsehpo's, and Mohau's. (p.105)

Tihelo's heartfelt grieving functions to release the repressed anger, anxiety, tension, and internal conflict that have restricted her so far. After sobbing, she transforms from an ambivalent activist to an active combatant at the frontline totally committed to fighting for a better future. When she re-joins SASO, she is driven by her convictions, as she and Dikeledi ardently continue to transcribe and distribute illegal ANC tapes:

> It no longer seemed like someone else was dictating it all for me. … I was feeling more in control and less timid. The fear had not disappeared, however, I was just learning to use it to serve me better. It was obvious that if we sat at home waiting for someone to decide that it was time to stop detaining our friends and neighbours, we would have to wait all our lives. (p.116)

This reveals a fundamental change in Tihelo's attitude: she finally realises that she cannot watch the revolution from the side-lines, because the struggle against apartheid can only succeed through communal and not individual effort. This portrayal resonates with Driver's observations that the efforts of women-in-community tended to be regarded as more important than those of the individual. Jenna Williams argues that when Tihelo abandons 'the egocentric self-concern of childhood, [she] recognizes the collective trauma experienced by all those around her. As she watches her friends and neighbours emerge from their humiliation and detention, Tihelo begins to feel a sense of responsibility toward them' (2008, p.42). When she joins the underground movement, the novel seems to suggest that the repressive regime was counterproductive; instead of destroying communities, it inadvertently galvanised diverse groups of society against itself.

In a demonstration somewhat reminiscent of the Soweto uprising of 1976, Molope's narrative foregrounds the importance of communal solidarity when disgruntled students organise a march to demand the release of their comrades. With the state of emergency, there is an escalation in the number of detentions, detention 'suicides', deaths, and disappearances. As Dikeledi observes, '[t]he government had declared war on us' (Molope 2004, p.126). Determined to fight for justice, Tihelo utters a statement that anticipates her detention when she says, 'I am prepared to die for my country, I am prepared to die for the truth' (p.126).

During the march, these defenceless students are confronted by heavily armed police who mercilessly attack them, resulting in the death of three students including Tihelo's mentor Comrade Dikeledi. Although Tihelo narrowly escapes on this occasion, subsequently she, Keitumetse and Kgomotso are arrested and detained.

In detention, fourteen-year-old Tihelo encounters the absurdity and ruthlessness of the police who use rampant torture and persistent interrogation to inflict fear and instil terror. From the first day the viciousness of the police is relentless. She recalls the threatening manner of a policewoman who instructs the female detainees to put their faces against a wall and take off their clothes. She yells '[b]end over, we're going to search you!' (p.161). But much to Tihelo's astonishment, '[t]here were men with gloves on, opening women's buttocks wide and sticking their fingers in them' (p.161).[63] This representation of a policewoman in the apartheid police force is significant, because it disrupts nationalist versions of the struggle by illustrating that during wartime, women are not only innocent spectators or victims. But more importantly, this depiction destabilizes the notion of feminine communities by offering an alternative way to read the various experiences that women are exposed to during times of political instability. This portrayal of gender and the nation-state demonstrates that women who collude and are complicit in the oppression of other women end up creating an unholy alliance with patriarchal nationalist structures. According to Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, '[w]omen also perpetrated violence; it was not the preserve of men alone. In their capacity as officers of the state women perpetrated institutionalized violence' (1998, p.43). However, by using the policemen to conduct this 'common routine' that violates their bodies, women's vulnerability is exposed and they are left feeling humiliated and traumatised. Institutionalized torture is an oppressive tool used by regimes to exert power and control. The way in which torture functions is to strip away subjectivity and agency, and not to extract information. Roy Baumeister argues that repressive institutions use torture to defend the way in which they extract information from detainees, 'but in practice most torture is conducted without the intention (or the result) of gaining any useful information, and the framework of interrogation is merely a pretext. Torture is used to bully, intimidate, and punish dissent, as a way of shoring up the power of the torturer's organization' (Baumeister 1997, p.106).

[63] At the TRC hearings, several 'of those who testified at the hearing spoke about the extent to which those who had perpetrated abuses against them were women. They spoke, in particular, about women warders in prisons. Mrs Thandi Shezi explained that "the female used to hand over their assault and brutalisation to their male counterparts"' (TRC report 1998, p.313).

Apart from the intrusive body search, Tihelo experiences the police's excessive power and intimidation when she is subjected to various forms of torture for six months. After the search, she is painfully separated from Keitumetse and Kgomotso, and placed in a filthy cell filled with women of different ages. Although it is appalling, it is slightly bearable; she is surrounded by women detainees who are protective over her because she is the youngest cellmate. After Tihelo thwarts a sexual attack by one of the police, she is removed from this shared cell and put in solitary confinement where she suffers intense psychological and physical torture.[64] One of the most common forms of psychological torment is to isolate the detainee. Tihelo is put in a dark, rat infested, icy-cold cell where the only human contact is a hand that places a plate of inedible maggoty food; she has to constantly endure the painful screams of other women, and she is denied water to drink or clean herself. In her analysis on torture, Elaine Scarry suggests that even the actual cell

> is converted into a weapon, deconverted, undone. Made to participate in the annihilation of the [prisoner], made to demonstrate that everything is a weapon, the objects themselves, and with them the fact of civilization, are annihilated: there is no wall, no window, no door, no bathtub, no refrigerator, no chair, no bed' (Scarry 1985, p.41).

All these actions are meant to physically and mentally destroy Tihelo, yet she tenaciously refuses to confess; her silence acts as a form of resistance.[65] Because of Tihelo's silent resistance, the torturers resort to physical torture to inflict pain, she is assaulted and forced to undergo water torture; but when electric shock is administered on her body, 'first my breasts, then my back. It burned like nothing I had ever felt before. He kept asking questions but I could not hear anything, I thought I was going to die. I was sure I was going to die' (Molope 2002, p.172). Scarry observes that during torture even one's own body can be used to inflict pain on oneself. Tihelo is overwhelmed and betrayed by her 'body in pain'. The extreme

[64] 'The TRC hearings revealed that it was often difficult to distinguish between physical and psychological abuse. Many of the stories indicated the way in which physical abuse was exacerbated by psychological (sic). Many also showed how physical abuse was used to humiliate the victims. Women, more than men, were prepared to talk about psychological aspects of their experience. Women were also more likely than men to talk about the psychosomatic and psychological problems experienced afterwards' (TRC report 1998, p.303).

[65] As mentioned earlier, Motsemme convincingly argues that these alternative sites of silence constitute new meanings for women. In her view, women's narratives on the struggle 'disclose how this conscious form of silence was imperative when one wanted to protect loved ones or fellow comrades who were hidden in the house, neighbouring towns, or had crossed borders and the state, or from vigilante groups who were hunting them down' (Motsemme 2004, pp.917-918).

physical pain 'mimes death' and it appears as if Tihelo has undergone a 'mock execution' (Scarry 1985, p.31). Scarry points out that intense pain and suffering has the ability to '[destroy] a person's self and world' (1985, p.35). But it is also 'language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. World, self, and voice are lost, or nearly lost, through the intense pain of torture' (Scarry 1985, p.35). Although the torture fails to elicit any confession from Tihelo, it is a shattering and disturbing experience that results in her fragmentation. Her torturers succeed in creating shame, fear, and humiliation; by destroying her dignity and her 'childhood innocence', she is left traumatised.[66]

Dancing in the dust exposes women's contribution to the struggle by focusing on some of the sacrifices and suffering that female detainees had to endure. Molope also reveals how women deal with these traumatic experiences in the aftermath. Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, in their gendered analysis of the atrocities of the apartheid regime, argue that accounts of women's experiences in detention included 'assault and electric shocks on pregnant women, inadequate medical care leading to miscarriage, teargasing, solitary confinement, body searches and vaginal examinations, rape and forced intercourse with other prisoners, and foreign objects including rats being pushed into women's vaginas' (1998, p.37). It is these gendered experiences that tended to be muzzled or elided by official 'struggle narratives'. Torture has lasting consequences that invade and disrupt the domestic space of its survivors. The novel demonstrates these effects in its fictionalisation of traumatised women who return to the community after detention. Tsehpo's aunts, Keitumetse, Kgomotso and Tihelo are represented as women who have seen and experienced atrocities that are too painful to reveal even to themselves. Tihelo observes that when Tsehpo's aunts were released they were shells of their former selves. It is as if their lives come to an abrupt end; they resemble the 'living dead'. 'They did not return to the office and rarely left home. Every day they would come out of the house, clean the stoep and sweep the yard, and then lie on a blanket on their front lawn, right next to their father's chair. Both of them were depressed that they said almost nothing to me when I went to their house' (Molope

[66] 'In its more grotesque form, terror warfare is about destroying, not people, but what military strategists conceive of as humanity. This form of terror is not directed at the destruction of life and limb, but against all sense of a reasonable and humane world. The strategy here is not to control people through fear of force, but through the horror of it' (Nordstrom 1998, pp.106-107).

2004, p.120). The novel also reflects on how depression and trauma impacts on families by focusing on the damage created on Tihelo's family. Tihelo confesses that,

> [a]ll three of us turn our experiences into private, intimate matters that are meant only for our hearts. If we ever speak about it, it will probably be about the cursing and the beatings, not about the other things – the more humiliating ones that involved us being naked. The ones that could only have happened to us because we are women. Those stories are a source of shame. We will keep them to ourselves until we understand that we were assaulted by men who were afraid of our will (p.175).

All of them are silent and find it extremely difficult to verbalize their horrors, especially the sexual abuse.[67] Even the community is aware of the vulnerability of women's bodies and how they are violated in detention; because they are incapable of dealing with this intimate betrayal, they also bear the humiliation of these women.[68] Tihelo notes, '[I]t is strange how people can feel sorry for you when you have been beaten, but ashamed for you when they think you have been sexually assaulted' (p.183). Herman points out that

> [s]hame is a response to helplessness, the violation of bodily integrity, and the indignity to maintain one's own separate point of view while remaining in connection with others. In the aftermath of traumatic events, survivors doubt both others and themselves. Things are no longer what they seem (1997, p.53).

Michael Humphrey (2000, p.7) has argued that institutionalised terror inflicts physical pain and instils psychological fear. But, it also inscribes 'the memory of violence on the bodies' of its survivors and leaves them experiencing a nightmare 'that drives pain deeper, silencing

[67] This was also reflected at the TRC public hearings when women chose to be silent about the sexual abuse they had encountered. 'Several of the women who spoke at the special hearings began their testimony by stating their reluctance to come forward. Some said that they felt their sufferings were less severe than those of many other people. Ms Jubie Mayet, who had been banned and detained, said she was reluctant "because my experiences under the old regime were nothing compared to what so many countless other people suffered." Ms Nozizwe Madlala, detained for a year in solitary confinement, said that when people ask her if she was tortured, "I usually answer in the negative, for my own experience of torture was much milder than that of many others."… Ms Thenjiwe Mtintso spoke about the difficulties of describing one's suffering in a public arena. Ms Mtintso had previously spoken openly in a face-to face interview as part of the CALS research. She was not, however, prepared to speak about her personal experiences in the open hearings. She congratulated the women who were prepared to "open those wounds … The personal cost may be high. They may have to go back home and deal with the pain that has opened today"' (TRC report 1998, p.294).

[68] Afshar in her analysis of the Palestinian conflict writes, male 'interrogators use concepts of shame and honour when questioning women prisoners. … Women who are arrested and refuse to be broken down by their prison interrogators may be raped or assumed to have been raped' (Afshar, 2003, p.182).

them in their isolated and secret worlds, creating a metaphorical landmine designed to re-injure and torment long after the original act of violence has passed. It is a legacy individuals and social communities live with long after the event, even shaping the lives of subsequent generations'.

Herman (1997), in her brilliant analysis on trauma and recovery, argues that after a traumatic incident traumatised people need to undergo a three-stage recovery process which includes the establishment of a safe environment, 'remembrance and mourning', and lastly 'reconnection with ordinary life' (p.155). Herman maintains that a person suffering from trauma mostly feels that they have lost control and power. For Herman, it is vital for the survivor to regain that power and control. This can be done by creating a place of safety which involves 'mobilizing the survivor's natural support systems, such as her family, lovers, and friends' (p.160). In *Dancing in the dust,* the Masimo home becomes a safe haven that initiates the recovery process. In the aftermath of their traumatic events, even though Tihelo, Keitumetse and Kgomotso are incapable of articulating their trauma, they still recognise each other's grief and suffering. Kgomotso and Keitumetse's empathy is reserved for Tihelo since she has endured the worst of the torture. Like the women in *Waiting* who understand each other's trauma, amidst this 'known silence' these three women unobtrusively rally together in ways that are non-threatening and reassuring to provide the necessary emotional support that functions to restore a fractured self and disintegrated world. In writing about trauma, Molope's breaks the silences surrounding women's experiences. In this novel she successfully portrays an image of women as 'women-in-themselves' (Driver 2005, p.224).

After Tihelo's ordeal, when she is still lying recuperating in hospital, their neighbour Mma Kleintjie pays her a visit and reveals to her the secret of her birth. Although she goes against Kgomotso's wishes, it is not a malicious act; Tihelo finally understands why she is physically different. This information provides her with another aspect to focus on; it temporarily replaces the traumatic experience and brightens her mood. After months of insomnia, she says '*[f]or the first time in many months, I fall asleep and dream of things I have never dreamed of before: ships and planes*' (Molope 2004, p.178 emphasis in original). Mma Kleintjie's compassionate gesture inadvertently guides Tihelo into the second stage of recovery, 'remembrance'. Herman states that in order to restore a sense of self-agency the survivor must re-construct the traumatic event and tell their story. Unable to verbalise her trauma, she discovers that she can re-constructs her experiences of detention by writing a

letter to Diana, her biological mother.[69] At the point of articulating her pain, she is plunged into profound grief (Herman 1997).

Herman points out that the 'descent into mourning is at once necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery' (1997, p.188). Tihelo mourns her loss by immersing herself in the revolutionary music of Miriam Makeba and Letta Mbuli's whose lyrics encapsulate and acknowledge the sacrifices of the youth. By listening to the lyrics, she grieves and gradually lets go of her feelings of shame and humiliation and begins to appreciate her participation as an act of courage:

> It becomes easier to take pride in what we did when I remember the days of being at the headquarters and the spirit of revolution. I think of Dikeledi a lot. I allow myself to hear her voice and listen to her speak. I let myself see her laugh, see the lines around her mouth, the brightness of her eye, the strength in her face. I allow myself to grieve for a while, letting some things go and holding on to others. There is a lot of power in some of the memories. It is my life and cannot be denied. All my experiences and everyone I have known will be with me wherever I go. Considering that the struggle is not over, I will need to remember what they stood for and what they died for, until we achieve the freedom we are fighting for (Molope 2004, p.185).

Mourning permits Tihelo to restore the self that has completely come undone by trauma and 'discover her indestructible self' (Herman 1997, p.188). But as Herman warns, '[r]eclaiming the ability to feel the full range of emotions, including grief, must be understood as an act of resistance rather than submission to the perpetrator's intent' (p.188). By reconciling with herself, Tihelo reaches the last stage of recovery, which is reconnection. According to Herman, once the survivor has 'mourned the old self, then "she must develop a new self", "reconnect with others", and find "anew a sustaining faith" or "a survivor mission"'(p.196). But as Herman cautions, resolution 'of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete. The impact of the traumatic event continues to reverberate throughout the survivors lifecycle' (p.211). For Tihelo, her survivor mission takes the form of a more radical participation in the struggle for freedom. When she signs off her letter and her story by underscoring *'my name is Tihelo Masimo Revolutionary'* (Molope 2004, p.187 emphasis in original), she exhibits a sense of agency that is morally conscious and politically aware. This self-affirmation allows her to reclaim her world, and continue anticipating a different future. In spite or because of

[69] Jenna Williams, on the other hand, reads this letter 'as a rejection of the family that once rejected her' (2008, p.43).

Tihelo's embattled childhood, in the end her aspirations to become a journalist are fulfilled. She reappears as a successful journalist in Molope's second novel *The mending season*. Like Lucy Khambule in Angela Makholwa's *Red ink* and Vee Johnson in HJ Golakai's *The Lazarus effect*, her journalistic expertise is a form of political activism that empowers her to fight for social justice.

The fictional representation of the pain and suffering experienced by girls and women in their struggle for freedom allows for a far more complex and textured understanding of their traumatised interior worlds. As Richard Kearney argues, fictional narratives aim to 'redescribe events in terms of some ideal standard of beauty, goodness or nobility' (2002, p.9) or, as is the case in this novel, of the agony. In writing women's stories Molope helps us to imagine women's being in the nation by deliberately foregrounding the 'tragedies and histories' of women that have been relegated to the margins of struggle narratives. This literary representation of resistance against a repressive regime functions to re-write history. Told from the perspective of a young girl at the frontline of the struggle, it problematizes women's contributions and explores their experiences by focusing on their active participation through various demonstrations, physical and psychological torture in detention, silent resistance, as well as women's collaboration with the apartheid regime. These varied experiences ensure that women's stories are not submerged into the nationalist narratives.

'When hens begin to crow': Inscribing new futures for women in Mary Karooro Okurut's *The invisible weevil*[70]

> *Female mobility may increase in the war zone but it is monitored more stringently in times of peace, both within the family and outside of it.* (Meg Samuelson)[71]

In my Master's report, which explored of women's literary voices from Uganda, I analysed *The invisible weevil* and focused on Mary Okurut's representation of women as agents of change, including some patriarchal attitudes that constrain women, as well as the impact of HIV/AIDS on women. Okurut uses the central image of the weevil to represent three forms of violence and their impact on women: the violent atrocities of tyrannical regimes, the

[70] I borrow this phrase from renown Ugandan law professor, feminist and activist Sylvia Tamale's book, *When hens begin to crow: Gender and parliamentary politics in Uganda.*

[71] Samuelson 2007b, p.189.

devastating effects of pervasive patriarchal oppression, and the impact of the HIV/Aids scourge. In this discussion, I wish to take my previous analysis further by revisiting the narrative to focus on the way in which Okurut as an emerging writer inserts the voices of women within the various forms of resistance against repressive regimes in Uganda. Like *Waiting* and *Dancing in the dust*, *The invisible weevil* focuses on the stories of women in and after war. Although this discussion, like the previous two, explores the various roles played by women during and after the war, a critical examination reveals that Okurut, even more than Kyomuhendo and Molope, complicates the symbolic maternal image by portraying a militant maternal figure and, explores the sexual violations that women were forced to endure from fellow resistance fighters, the re-domestication of women after the war, and the formation of new political roles for women during the post-repressive era.[72] The narrative illustrates that during wartime constructions of femininity tend to fluctuate. During wartime avenues do open up that encourage active participation of women, but does this visible participation necessarily translate into the empowerment of women? What does this involvement signify for women's positions, especially in the political sphere? What opens, but similarly gets closed down for women in post-repressive regimes? These are some of the questions that the novel grapples with, and that form the focus of the discussion in this section.

While Kyomuhendo's *Waiting* deals with the demise of the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin, *The invisible weevil*, like Arthur Gakwandi's *Kosiya Kifefe* and Moses Isegawa's *Abyssinian chronicles*, provides a comprehensive overview of the various traumatic experiences that have plagued Uganda since independence. The narrative examines the violence and corruption of President Opolo's government; the state-institutionalised tyranny of President Duduma's regime; the brutal atrocities of President Polle's rule; and the popular guerrilla movement led by President Kazi.[73] In *The invisible weevil*, gender issues are 'contextualised within the larger objective of national reconstruction' (Simatei 2001, p.152). In the prologue, the omniscient narrator introduces the female protagonist and focalizer

[72] China Keitetsi's memoir *Child soldier: Fighting for my life* examines in detail the brutal atrocities that women were subjected to within the structures of the guerrilla movement of the National Resistance Army. Keitetsi voices the silences that are muted in *The invisible weevil.*

[73] President Opolo's regime can be read as Milton Obote's regime from 1967 to 1971, President Duduma portrays Idi Amin's dictatorship from 1971 to 1979; President Polle depicts Milton Obote's return to power commonly referred to as Obote II; President Kazi is a representation of Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986.

Nkwanzi Rwenzigye, who is returning to her rural home in western Uganda with her terminally ill husband, Genesis Rwenzigye. The narrative then shifts to Nkwanzi's past and traces her journey from early childhood to this tragic end. Nkwanzi and Genesis first met on Uganda's independence day. The narrative suggests that the beginning of their romantic relationship symbolises the birth of the nation. But the subsequent turbulent period of the nation similarly prefigures the tumultuous nature of that relationship. The other important characters are Ssenga, Nkwanzi's patriarchal paternal aunt; Mzee, Genesis's best friend; Atim, Nkwanzi's university room-mate; Rex, Genesis's devious acquaintance; and Mama, a revolutionary figure disguised as a school teacher. After secondary school, both Nkwanzi and Genesis continue to Makerere University to pursue their higher education. It is there that Nkwanzi, Genesis, Mzee and Atim become attuned to the political turmoil in the country. Their frustration with the violence and the corruption of President Opolo pushes them to join the liberation struggle in an attempt to overthrow the government. Although this underground movement is successful, the subsequent regimes are just as repressive. It is only after the 'bush war' that ushers in President Kazi that there is a semblance of peace. After the guerrilla struggle, Nkwanzi is appointed deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, while Genesis is appointed as Director of the Secret Service and Mama is in charge of the Presidential Protection Unit.[74]

While women attained increased visibility and active participation during wartime, there was a post-war backlash. Sylvia Tamale observes that during a political rally, a male observer pointed out a female candidate, *'[w]ali owulide ensera ekokolima?* Have you ever heard a hen crow?' (1999, p.1)[75] According to Tamale, underlying this statement is a strong conviction that women are not capable of holding any political office. Tamale points out that

> [t]he rowdy applause from the other men at the gathering signalled their broad sympathy and support for their colleague's observation. It is popularly believed that women are not supposed to speak up or express their opinions in public, a view that is

[74] In *Silent patience,* Jane Kaberuka also portrays a prominent female politician who participates in the guerrilla struggle. Like Nkwanzi, Dr Agnes Dumba Dronyi's contribution to the struggle is acknowledged when she is made the first female Minister of Health of Uganda.

[75] 'There is a common song among the Batoro of western Uganda that clearly portrays such gender insinuations. Part of the song includes the following words: *Tali mukazi musaija Sabina.Enku takyaseenya, amaizi takyaleeta*. This crude interpretation is that Sabina is no longer a woman but a man. She neither collects firewood nor fetches water' (Tuhaise 1999, p.152).

> deeply embedded in African patriarchal values, which relegate women to the domestic arena of home and family. Such a view assumes that men are the anointed link between the home and the public world; they are the "natural" players in the game of politics. However, women are increasingly negating the metaphor of the crowing hen. They are defying custom, culture, discrimination, and marginalisation to join formal politics in Uganda. (1999, p.1)

The invisible weevil offers a representation of female characters that negate the metaphor of the 'crowing hen'. Like Kyomuhendo, Okurut through the maternal militant figure of Mama appears to reproduce Florence Stratton's idea of the Mother Africa trope which is 'deeply entrenched in the male literary tradition', and represents the figure of Africa as that of a woman (1994, p.39). There is a risk that in her symbolic role as mother the narrative may depict an idealised image of a woman whose experiences are neglected, ignored or invisible. As mentioned earlier, during the day Mama is a primary school teacher, while in the evening she masquerades as a shebeen queen in Katanga, one of the slums of the city, who sells crude spirits to her customers, most of whom 'were soldiers who usually shot their mouths off after drowning glass after glass of the fiery liquid. [Once they were thoroughly inebriated, she] would then get information from them and this would assist in strategizing for the underground movement to topple the regime' (Okurut 1998, p.126). By disguising herself as a shebeen queen, she manages to find a fissure that allows her to openly conduct seditious acts against a repressive regime. In addition to the intoxication that makes the soldiers indiscreet, they are able to confide in Mama because as a shebeen queen she also embodies the sympathetic maternal figure. Mama is not her actual name, yet she appropriates and embraces it. Kruger makes the significant point that Mama's '*nom de guerre'* is a 'conflation of biological and political motherhood' (2012, p.92). In contrast to Alinda's Mother in *Waiting* and Kgomotso in *Dancing in the dust*, Mama does not have biological children; instead, her 'political motherhood', like the Masemola sisters in *The mending season* and Nico in *Shock waves across the ocean*, represents an alternative form of mothering.

From the first encounter with Mama one notices that she exudes confidence and authority. When Duduma's soldiers raid Makerere University after the students have demonstrated against the preferential treatment of Duduma's son, Genesis escapes with Nkwanzi, Atim and Mzee. He takes them to the slums of Katanga to meet Mama. Her first concern is whether any students have been killed. Mzee responds by saying, no, but many have been brutally beaten and need medical attention. Mama immediately mobilises and

dispatches a medical team to attend to the injured. Her next question, '[a]ny rape? [is] asked, [with] a dangerous glitter in her eyes. No Mama. It was about to take place when the commander ordered his soldiers to scram and we were saved, answered Atim' (Okurut, 1998, p.126). As Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes have argued in a different context, '[a]lthough women's role in resistance is often defined in terms of their maternal function, women have used this as a means of lifting themselves out of the private realm and entering the public arena' (1998, p.31). The narrative suggests that Mama inhabits 'two potentially contradictory subject positions' (Samuelson 2007b, p.183), those of mother and combatant.[76]

Mama is in control of recruitment, deployment and induction of all new recruits into the resistance struggle.[77] For example, she recruits Songa, who is a medical doctor during the day and a charcoal seller in the evening. No one recognises him because he is covered in black soot, as he goes about mobilising information and drugs for the guerrillas in the bush. Simba, camouflaged as a madman, goes undetected. Since not much attention is paid to him, he is able to access strategic government places. Even Nkwanzi is shocked to discover that Simba, the 'raving lunatic', is her close friend Mzee and Baba Candle, a *cura* (toilet cleaner) at the infamous state research headquarters, is Genesis her boyfriend. Mama also carries out an initiation ceremony in which she prepares conscripts such as Atim and Nkwanzi for the dangerous risks of armed resistance. First, she renames them as a preventive safety measure in case they fall into enemy hands; Atim becomes Nguvu and Nkwanzi is Udongo; second, like Tihelo, Nkwanzi is made responsible for writing and distributing subversive literature; third, she warns them to be ready to sacrifice their lives for the struggle. She warns them:

> [If] you're ever caught by government soldiers and they torture you, you'll release all the information about the organisation, that's what you say. …Moreover, they can torture you until you lose your mind and give out information involuntarily, or they will give you drugs which will make you unconscious and you disclose everything. Therefore, that is why I am giving you this lethal powder, not only to save other

[76] Meg Samuelson, in her analysis on women's divergent roles in Umkhonto we Sizwe as represented in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story,* speaks about two 'strands of feminist thought [that] diverge in conceptualizations of the woman warrior: one finds in war a potential realm of gendered equality and female liberation; another associates women with nurturing and life-giving qualities, linking them to an ethos of peace and pitting them and their interests against war' (see Cock 1991, pp.189-91; and D'Amico 1998, p.120 cited in Samuelson 2007a, p.833).

[77] According to Enloe, there 'is a common belief that intense militarization does not only privilege men, but can also "open doors" for women' (Enloe 1993, p.61).

> members of the underground movement but also to save you from very painful death. (Okurut1998, p.129)

As the war intensifies Mama, the 'disruptive female figure' (Samuelson 2007a, p.835), is at the fore-front as she continues to mobilise this group of revolutionaries and supply information and medical supplies to the liberators. In *The invisible weevil* the image of the mother is not employed as a 'nationalist strategy through which women are ennobled yet simultaneously depoliticized and dehumanized' (Lewis 1999, p.40). Instead, as McClintock argues elsewhere, motherhood as a 'social category [is] under constant contest, … African women have embraced, transmuted and transformed, [they work] strategically within traditional ideology to justify untraditional public militancy' (1995, p.381). In other words, Mama draws on the patriarchal institution of motherhood and authorises a form of political contestation. The narrative suggests that the representation of Mama is not a symbolic gesture pointing to the mother of the nation, but that this 'mother' is a political dissident fighting for the nation.

In the resistance movement, avenues open up for Nkwanzi and Mama; their roles as activist and soldier are enabling forms of authority and power that demonstrate that women are able to disrupt patriarchally assigned gender roles. Their positions in the movement demand that they be recognised as equal partners. However, the narrative reveals contradictions that arise out of a perpetual fluctuation between female empowerment and female vulnerability.[78] For example, in spite of Nkwanzi's radical political activism, she holds on to traditionally idealised concepts of feminine behaviour. Ssenga, her paternal aunt, 'instructs her in the virtues of sexual purity (Kruger 2012, p.94), making Nkwanzi believe that she has to remain a virgin until her wedding night, because she wants to "redden" the traditional white sheet and honour her parents according to custom' (Kiyimba 2008, p.197). Tragically for her, she is raped by her opportunistic friend Rex on her wedding day. This rape is not only a physical violation of her body; she also sees it as a moral invasion and disruption

[78] This idea of re-domestication can also be seen in the Zimbabwean context. Soon after independence, over a weekend in October 1983, government soldiers and police went through the main cities of Zimbabwe, arresting any unaccompanied woman, including nurses who were returning home from work. These women were taken to the police station and charged with prostitution. After the war, female freedom fighters had become symbols of freedom for women as they-re-claimed the public space; this crackdown was an excuse used to justify their harassment, control and marginalisation (Verbal conversation with Faith Mkwesha). Shereen Essof notes that Operation Clean-Up was an 'intensified regulation of women in both the private and public spheres, through the powerful invocation of counter-revolutionary cultural-nationalist discourse which portrayed women's organising as feminist, and feminism as anti-nationalist and pro-imperialist' (Essof 2005, p.13).

of her socio-cultural values. Sexual violence, as discussed in the previous section, tends to produce shame, fear and humiliation. After the rape she is faced with an internal dilemma, as to whether to speak out or remain silent. According to Tirop Simatei, '[a]dvocating for an awareness of gendered inequalities, the text also appeals to the responsibility of those who witness such discrimination and hence complicates the roles of "victim" and "perpetrator"' (Simatei 2001, p.152). On the one hand, her traditional paternal aunt Ssenga does not want her to report the rape to the police. Ssenga insists, this 'terrible matter is buried in our stomachs, the three of us. No one must ever hear of it. We must swear never, never to breathe it to anybody. This is a shame that should never, never be known by anybody else. This unspeakable act of rape is a weevil and the only way we can keep this evil buried is by keeping quiet. If we talk, the weevil will come to the surface' (Okurut 1998, p.182). In other words, Ssenga wants Nkwanzi to pretend that the rape did not happen, which would let Rex get away with a crime. Kruger contends that for Ssenga, the rape 'needs to be silenced to prevent the public shaming of a victim held accountable for her own abuse' (Kruger 2012, p.94). In effect, by striving to muzzle Nkwanzi, Ssenga negates her voice and denies her the opportunity to deal with her damaging and traumatic experience. As Louise du Toit astutely observes,

> [t]he inability of the rape victim to project herself in the world and to exist as an integrated and actively desiring and willing subject, is closely connected with the silencing of her voice during, as well as after rape. Voice is one of the most pertinent ways in which the body-subject projects itself in the world as a subject with an own will and viewpoint. Voice is thus very much the physical carrier of relation among people; my voice links me with, and gives me a place amongst personal others. (2009, p.89)

However, as Nkwanzi's comrade-in-arms, Mama strongly encourages her to speak out and break the patriarchal cycle of silence. By speaking out publicly, she will express her suffering, while her voice will also represent the muted voices of many women who have had to endure rape. As empowered women, they 'must be role models for the youth': 'we must fight the traditions which doom women to passivity. We must fight against outmoded ideas and prejudices and then the young will follow' (Okurut 1998, p.183). Eventually, Nkwanzi refuses to remain the silent victim, and reports the rape to the police. As Kruger notes, in 'her public acknowledgment of rape, Nkwanzi rejects responsibility for the crime and contradicts a normative orthodoxy that stigmatizes those female bodies marked by a less than

ideal femininity' (Kruger 2012, p.94). But Ssenga is extremely critical of the advice Mama gives Nkwanzi. She regards Mama is an abomination, 'a bad mad woman', who 'behaves like a man' (Okurut 1998, p.183), she is a transgressive figure, the 'hen that crows', whereas Ssenga wants to hold onto patriarchal values that simultaneously preserve a specific cult of femininity and suppress violent masculinities.

However, in breaking the silence on rape, Nkwanzi has to contend with other problems: she has to deal with the public humiliation and 'cope with the psychological disorientation of Genesis who, for a long time after their marriage, fails to have sex with her because he is haunted by the memory of the rape' (Kiyimba 2008, p.198).[79] Although Nkwanzi musters the confidence to defy Ssenga and expose Rex, this act of courage does not necessarily expunge her traumatic experience. She still feels the shame and humiliation, which forces her to try to efface the 'unacceptable rebellious' side of her femininity. So, when Genesis decides to go through with the wedding even after she has informed him about the rape, she feels compelled to accept her new name *Bacureera*. This name, which is given to her by Genesis's paternal aunt, another patriarchal figure, 'means a calm, quiet, humble, woman. [Who] will bring peace and tranquillity to [the] home. The home will be respected because of you, because it is a woman who carries the dignity of the home' (Okurut 1998, p.186). In spite of Mama's vehement protestations, Nkwanzi does not want to be seen as the 'rebellious bride' (187), so she eagerly accepts this traditional marker of domesticity that effectively constructs her as passive and submissive wife while erasing her independent self. In doing so, she is pulled back into performing a traditional ideal of femininity. The narrative seems to suggest that this is one of the ways in which patriarchal societies attempt to contain and re-domesticate 'unruly' women. Even though Genesis goes ahead with the wedding, he experiences an underlying sense of trauma and emasculation that is evident in his reluctance or inability to consummate the marriage. Initially, he manages to mask these feelings of emasculation, but later in the marriage this repressed rage is exacerbated and begins to manifest in damaging and destructive ways when Nkwanzi is appointed deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[79] In her analysis on women's divergent roles in Umkhonto we Sizwe as represented in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*, Meg Samuelson argues that the narrative 'is keenly aware of the powers and dangers of representation and of what is risked in writing about women in the war zone and its aftermath: a representational minefield in which women are cast as idealized warriors, silenced victims, and emblems of the domestic world toward which the male warrior ostensibly directs his efforts' (Samuelson 2007a, p.835).

After the 'bush war', the NRM's post-repressive regime introduced policies in an attempt to bring about gender transformation, especially within the political arena. Hope Keshubi comments that this 'affirmative action was embarked on, to give women a chance to take part in decision-making especially in relation to determining polices by which [the] country was to be run' (1998b, p.8). Some of these changes included the establishment of a government ministry to deal specifically with Gender and Community development, an increase in women's representation in parliament, and the number of female cabinet, state, deputy ministers, permanent secretaries, ambassadors and judges. According to Simatei, 'Okurut marshals the vision of the liberated woman in the service of rebuilding Uganda into a nation that would guarantee gender equality. The point she is making is that it takes women's participation in the process of national reconstruction to have their interests reflected in the national ethos' (2001, p.156).

As an emerging writer, Okurut reflects on these changes in her representation of Mama and Nkwanzi, by inserting a distinctively female perspective, she goes beyond the silenced or marginalised images of women in the narratives of male writers from Uganda. The text suggests that women occupy a central position in the reconstruction of the nation. For example, because of her active participation in the war, Mama takes charge of the presidential protection unit, while Nkwanzi becomes the new deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Irrespective of the visible progress in the empowerment of women, the authorial voice points out some of the shortcomings of this system. Most of the women 'were mainly given positions of deputies, an exercise that made the whole thing look like mere tokenism. This set a negative trend in that for most jobs, a man would take the chair and then the appointing officials would get a woman as his deputy' (Okurut 1998, p.196). Nevertheless, Nkwanzi's appointment is met with elation from friends and family, especially Genesis. Initially, he is extremely supportive of Nkwanzi; he even takes over the responsibility of taking care of their daughter. When Nkwanzi is guilt-ridden about neglecting her domestic duties, Genesis reassuringly says, '[y]ou shouldn't worry. You are doing your job. Suppose it was me in that job, I would trot all over the place without feeling guilty' (Okurut 1998, p.196). Sadly, this attempt at gender equality is short-lived. Within six months cracks begin to appear in their marriage. As deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nkwanzi's job entails frequent trips abroad. In Uganda, these trips are regularly televised, whereas Genesis's position as Director of Secret Service that is linked to homeland security is inconspicuous since it involves intelligence gathering and sometimes includes espionage that is always

extremely confidential. Both jobs are highly influential, but in contrast to Genesis's invisibility, the public visibility of Nkwanzi's job creates the impression that she occupies a more senior position in society. Her influence as she performs on the international stage makes him feel inhibited by his involvement in national politics and begins to awaken his suppressed experience of emasculation. The power dynamics in their relationship gradually begin to change. Afshar observes that even though periods of conflict thrust women into the public arena, this rapid transformation tends to 'create a crisis of masculinity' and produce uncertainty and anxiety in gender relations concerning which 'values should be retained, and this in turn creates a wider social crisis' (Afshar 2003b, p.151).

The novel suggests that as Genesis increasingly feels more threatened by Nkwanzi's independence, he starts to insinuate that she is having an affair with the minister. His jealousy makes him suspicious of all her travel arrangements that include the Minister. '"Where will you spend the night?" he would inquire…. "In bed, of course", she would answer irritably. … "And where will your boss stay?" he would continue the interrogation' (Okurut, 1998, p.197). When he realises that Nkwanzi will not be drawn into his insecurities, he begins to call into question her duties as a mother and wife.

> He begun (sic) to complain about Nkwanzi's perpetual absence from the house and complained that Ihoreere was not getting enough motherly care. He complained that he was tired of food prepared by a house girl. And he complained of a sexless marriage. (Okurut, 1998, p.197)

This constant criticism that draws specific attention to her femininity is his way of reminding her that despite her public position in government, she is still *Bacureera*, his wife, and she must submit to him. When Nkwanzi refuses to indulge him in his power games by being the 'calm, quiet, humble' wife, he chooses to 'hit back at her' (Okurut, 1998, p.197) by having numerous extra-marital affairs. He does this primarily to discipline and humiliate his wife. Through his infidelity, 'he resumes the role of malcontent patriarch' (Kruger 2012, p.94). Poignantly, this performance of masculinity backfires when he contracts HIV. When Nkwanzi finds out about his condition, she tries to protect herself by insisting that he use a condom when they are having sex; instead, this becomes yet another point of contestation between them. An angry Genesis asks

> "You think because you are a Minister you are everything? I'm the head of this house," he would fume and then commence to hit, scratch and bite her. She decided

> that enough was enough and prepared to leave him. But just as she was planning to do so, he went down with malaria and she could not abandon him. (Okurut, 1998, p.200)

Genesis's violent masculinity can be read as a residue of aggression from his time as a rebel during the bush war, combined with an outburst of his repressed rage that stems from the rape of Nkwanzi. Like the invisible weevil, his anger which is internalised becomes destructive, when he begins to act out his aggression on Nkwanzi's body. As Afshar maintains, during times of war or internal strife there is a particular form of masculinity that goes unchallenged. When men substitute providing for their families with fighting for the nation, it

> entitles them to more rights. … But femininity sits uncomfortably with wars and conflicts. The change of the roles of the woman from the housewife to a combatant is without clear precedence and has taken differing trajectories in different contexts. The move may provide a path towards equality but it can also cause a further decline in a woman's status. Those few women who achieve a position of leadership often feel very vulnerable. (Afshar 2003b, p.180)

Because of Genesis's desire to control and exert his power through emotional abuse and physical violence, Nkwanzi decides to leave him.[80] However, she immediately backpedals because she feels obliged to perform the role of dutiful wife. As a female politician, wife and mother she inhabits an unfamiliar place in society that is both enabling and disabling; her sense of self constantly shifts between being empowered and disempowered. She realises she does not have the conviction to abandon her sick husband. Instead, she has to disregard her feelings of hurt and betrayal, while she nurses and endures the emotional pain of watching her husband slowly become emaciated until his death. According to Turshen, when 'the war stops, when "things go back to normal, people go back to what they know, to what they are comfortable with, to what they identify with, which is the traditional society that very often is not advantageous to women"' (2001, p.81). The tempestuous relationship between Genesis and Nkwanzi suggests that as 'difficult and rebellious women' become increasingly successful, there is a backlash that undermines their achievement and attempts to contain them by pushing them back into the symbolic space of the home.

[80] Tirop Simatei observes, 'Okurut's concern is to show that women occupy political positions in post-Amin Uganda because they participated in its formation not as subordinates to men but as equals. It is also because they recognise that violence against them owes something to the general failure of national politics to guarantee basic rights for all, regardless of gender, that they focus on how to alter national politics in a manner that would guarantee rights to all' (2001, p.156).

In spite of the great advances that Nkwanzi achieves within the political arena, by compelling her to espouse a traditional form of femininity Genesis is trying to re-assert his patriarchal tendencies by re-domesticating Nkwanzi. Kiyimba notes that the metaphor in Tamale's book 'When the hen crows' is derived from the Luganda proverb, 'Enseera ne bw'eyiga okukokolima, esigala nga y'erina okubiika amagi n'okugaalula [translated it means] [e]ven when the hen learns to crow, it still has to lay the eggs and then hatch them' (Kiyimba, 2008, p.219)]. In other words, even when women thrive in the political space, society demands that they remain nurturing and caring. In a different, but related context, Samuelson argues that, in the post-repressive state, a return to normalcy demands that women soldiers withdraw to the domestic space of the home to become women, 'to render themselves sexually available to men. Ideologies of domesticity and acts of sexual violence are two means by which this return to "normalcy" may be enforced' (Samuelson 2007a, p.840-841). *The invisible weevil* suggests that even when women actively participate in the fight against repressive regimes, patriarchal attitudes on gender do not change, 'they are simply suspended' (Afshar 2003, p.185). In post-repressive regimes, these ideologies are reawakened to produce tensions between the re-imaginings of visible and meaningful political roles and the re-domestication of women.

The revisionist accounts of war and conflict by emerging writers Kyomuhendo, Molope and Okurut, encourage a different interpretation of the diverse positions that women occupy during repressive times. This reading, which destabilizes and disrupts the dominant narratives on war, reclaims women's voices from the margins of history and foregrounds their contribution during war, underscoring the various forms of agency and resistance that they take on. These narratives also demonstrate that in the aftermath there is a backlash by patriarchal structures that seek to negate and mute women's experiences and achievements. The narratives reveal that there are no clear boundaries between the battlefield and the home front, because the hostilities of war inevitably encroach on the domestic space where they are mostly performed on the bodies and lives of women, who are subjected to various forms of physical and emotional torture.[81] These revisionist narratives of war are far more nuanced than many of nationalist narratives in their portrayal of motherhood and the maternal figure.

[81] Cynthia Enloe argues just 'how a man (or adolescent boy) has experienced militarization and how willingly he sheds the habits and expectations of militarization will redound on the women he returns to. His new definition of his masculinity – or his refusal to redefine his identity – will be played out in his family life, in his interactions with women workmates, and in his exchanges with women who are perfect strangers' (1993, p.26).

This traditional ideology is drawn on to authorise a resistance that is politicised and humanised. The emerging writers revisit the war to reflect on women's complex and ambivalent realities; writing therefore becomes a form of on-going literary warfare against pre-existing patriarchal politics and cultural norms. As Marion Pape argues in relation to her analysis of gender representations during the Nigerian civil war, 'when that war is over, female writers attempt a "wo/man palava", a literary (re-) negotiation of gender relations' (2011, p.101). Even though wartime opens up new possibilities for women where they are able to problematize and re-imagine empowered gender roles, the narratives do not shy away from the inherent contradictions that are attendant on such positions. The narratives seem to suggest that once hostilities die down, there is an elevation of men's heroic performances at the expense of women's subordination. In post-repressive regimes there is an urge to 'delegitmize female militancy' and 'deauthorize' female citizenship; the empowered woman has to be re-domesticated because she cannot be contained by patriarchal structures. Okurut's novel tries to inscribe new roles for women and it grapples with the contradictions that they have to face in the aftermath.

Women in the aftermath

> *Wars don't simply end*
> *And wars don't end simply*
> *Wars have their endings inside families.*
> (Cynthia Enloe)[82]

In the Ugandan and South African context, the military coup d'état and negotiated settlement that ended repressive regimes only served to halt the hostilities on the battleground. Socially, the challenges of the war are still felt in the aftermath and influence the ways in which communities attempt to re-establish themselves. Enloe's statement encapsulates the essence of the precarious nature of the aftermath. The post-repressive regimes of Uganda and South Africa reveal that the war does not end for women; instead, it bleeds into the aftermath. The narratives of emerging writers such as Kyomuhendo, Molope and Okurut suggest that during wartime women make sacrifices for the nation and the repressive periods offer avenues in which women are able to transform gender roles. But the benefits that they gain, do not necessary translate into empowerment in the aftermath. Instead as Enloe argues, wars 'are

[82] Enloe 1993, p.299.

like love affairs. They don't just end. They fizzle and sputter; sometimes they reignite. Mornings after are times for puzzling, for sorting things out, for trying to assess whether one is starting a new day or continuing an old routine' (Enloe 1993, p.2). In other words, women are constantly beleaguered by gendered violence that emerges out of the war, escalates and attempts to curtail their freedoms in the aftermath. Feminists have emphatically declared that, for women, there is no aftermath (Goldblatt 1998; Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2001; Schroven 2006). As mentioned earlier, the post-repressive regimes in Uganda and South Africa are 'trailblazers' in their attempts to increase the number of women in formal politics.[83] During the bush war from 1981-1986, the leadership of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) was cognisant of gender discrimination, and in an attempt to address these imbalances, structures were deliberately set up to promote the active participation of women. For example, at grassroots level it was compulsory for the resistance committees to have a position for women; the Women's Desk within the NRM Secretariat was upgraded to a Directorate for Women's Affairs, subsequent to the war it was promoted to the Ministry for Women in Development. Consequently, these positive attempts drastically increased women's leadership roles in various public sectors (Turshen 1998; Boyd 1998). Nonetheless, as Boyd astutely observes, these significant initiatives 'have a long difficult road ahead. Gender-based discrimination is still deeply entrenched. Women in Uganda are fully aware that they can never be complacent; their struggle is on-going. The empowerment of women continues to face other obstacles' (1989, p.116). In a similar vein, in South Africa during the transition period the relationship between the women's movement and the African National Congress (ANC) formed the basis for women's representation which was elaborated in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality and contributed to legislation such as Employment Equity Act, The Termination of Pregnancy Act, The Domestic Violence Act, The Maintenance Act and The Black Empowerment Act. Most importantly, as Pumla Dineo Gqola sarcastically states, South Africa 'is the country of the Constitution' (2007, p.114); it has 'one of the most women-friendly constitutions to be tabled' (Samuelson 2007b, 11), which 'establishes gender equality as a core principle and value of South African democracy' (Hassim 2003, p.88).[84] And yet as Gqola maintains

[83] However, Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassam (2003) point out that most political parties are dominated by male figures who reluctantly accept gender equity concerns and only after prolonged struggles with women organisations.

[84] 'In this way, the Constitution is an aspirational document, to borrow Homi Bhabha's (2002) phraseology, just like Bishop Tutu's naming of us as "the rainbow people of God" was aspirational. This labelling of South Africans as the rainbow nation, similar to the provisions of the Constitution, would bring us closer to the society described in both. The labels were

> discourses of gender in the South African public sphere are very conservative in the main: they speak of "women's empowerment" in ways that are not transformative, and as a consequence, they exist very comfortably alongside overwhelming evidence that South African women are not empowered: the rape and other gender based violence statistics, the rampant sexual harassment at work and public spaces, the siege on Black lesbians and raging homophobia, the very public and relentless circulation of misogynist imagery, metaphors and language. (2007, pp.115-116)

Therefore, in spite of the new 'official' liberties afforded to women, one needs to question the effectiveness in the implementation of these policies.[85] Can these institutional changes be seen as a setback or advancement of women's interests? If these freedoms are meant to advance women's interests, why has there been a marked escalation in the violence against women in the post-repressive? Is there a correlation between the increased visibility of women in the public sphere and the intensified violation on their bodies in the private and public space? During the transition period, the 'rhetoric of equality and rights tends to mask the reconstruction of patriarchal power, despite recent emphasis on women's human rights' (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen 2001, p.4). According to Gqola (2013b), these tensions and contradictions are a result of the 'untidy inheritance' of successful and strategic thinking around gender and sexualities, which has led to the rise and crystallization of violent public masculinities and manifests in the policing of women's bodies in the aftermath. Okurut illustrates this in her representation of the contradictory relationship between Nkwanzi and Genesis. The novel suggests that although women emerge from the war-torn societies determined to hold on to their newfound liberties, they are confronted with a conservative

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aspirational because they gave hope (Gqola 2001b). The Constitution as a project describes how we should relate to one another, what we should be able to assume and invest in one another, what embracing and accepting that we are all entitled to freedom, really means? So, it does not hold the thoughts, ideologies, values or held morals of the majority of South Africans' (Gqola 2007, p.112).

[85] Denise Walsh and Pamela Scully in their analysis of women, politics and gender in Southern Africa observe that 'while women altered the political landscape in the 1990s by entering public life, this does not suggest that their activism produced uniformly progressive results. In general, feminist scholars have found that democratic regimes are not significantly hospitable to women's participation in formal politics or to feminist policy objectives. Across all democracies, women's presence in politics remains consistently low and the work required to achieve that inadequate presence inordinately high. Although democratic polities invite all citizens to be engaged in public life, women (and especially feminists) often find the reins of power remain firmly in the hands of others. Moreover, even when women do access power, they may not promote feminist policies. Although women's increased participation in public life tends to advance democratisation, new governments rarely return the favour with a progressive gender agenda' (2006, p.7).

backlash that refuses to acknowledge their social transformation and autonomy.[86] The shift in gender relations produces a form of patriarchal violence which includes, but is not limited to, children and women abuse, rape, femicide, forced abduction and homophobic violence and occurs ubiquitously within the home, in schools, churches, hospitals, on the streets, cyberspace and during armed conflict.[87] Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen note that 'men use violence against women and women's fear of violence to reinforce their hold on women; they compel women to comply because they need to re-establish or preserve control over wealth and resources and, above all, over women's productive and reproductive labour' (2001, pp.12-13).[88]

Patriarchal violence can be understood as a toxic repercussion of repressive regimes. As mentioned earlier, Helen Moffett has commented that patriarchal violence in South Africa is so prevalent that it can be regarded as 'unacknowledged gender civil war' (2006, p.129). This description of an 'unacknowledged gender civil war' does not only pertain to the South African context, it can also be applied to other societies emerging out of war.[89] War or turbulent times can be read as spaces that produce 'violent masculinities' that manifest in the aftermath as a backlash against women, especially since 'wounded soldiers' returning from war feel threatened by independent women who have had to take care of themselves and their children. These wounded masculinities find their manifestation in the violent conquest of women's bodies. Anu Pillay argues that violence 'against women happens in peacetime, is

[86] Critics Shireen Hassim, Jo Metelerkamp & Alison Todes attribute these tensions to three factors; 'firstly, that women's struggles are not articulated and incorporated in a way which empowers women; secondly, as organisation becomes more formalised and centralised, the two-way process between women organising on the ground and the level of political decision-making becomes distorted: thirdly, states have tended to tackle gender oppression primarily at the legal and ideological level ignoring basic material demands' (1987, pp.22-23).

[87] The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has been embroiled in armed conflict with Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Some of the atrocities committed include rampant massacres, gang rape used as a weapon of war, mutilations, child-sex slavery, forced abductions and the recruitment of child soldiers. These brutalities are captured in the personal testimonies of survivors in a collection of short stories titled *Farming the ashes: Tales of agony and resilience*, as well as short stories by Beatrice Lamwaka and Monica Arac de Nyeko.

[88] 'Women's role in maintaining cultural identity may explain why society invariably conceptualises the return to peace as a return to the previous gender status quo, irrespective of the non-traditional roles women assume during conflict' (Manchanda 2001, p.100).

[89] 'In South Africa, murder, rape and assaults are now both a cultural and a statistical norm; Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes report … that domestic violence and rape have escalated since 1994. […] And in Uganda, two decades of civil strife resulted in increased domestic violence' (Turshen 1998, p.8).

intensified during wartime, and continues unabated in the aftermath. We are faced with a societal scourge that marches on inexorably without pause and without remorse' (2001, pp.36-37). Wars are naturally hostile environments that produce some of the most horrific and atrocious acts of brutality, such as rape, torture, massacres and mutilation. Feminists have argued that during war, rape is

> committed to boost the soldiers' morale; to feed soldiers' hatred of the enemy, their sense of superiority, and to keep them fighting; …women are raped because war intensifies men's sense of entitlement, … and social licence to rape; rape is a weapon of war used to spread political terror; rape can destabilize a society and break its resistance: rape is a form of torture; gang rapes in public terrorize and humiliate women: … rape targets women because they keep civilian populations functioning and are essential to its social and physical continuity; … This list combines individual and group motives with obedience to military command; in doing so, it gives a political context to violence against women, and it is this political context that needs to be incorporated in the social response to rape. (Turshen 1998, pp.11-12)

That is to say, in war various forms of atrocities, particularly gendered violence, are used as a legitimate way to resolve conflict; it is no surprise that this insidious violence begins to filter into every facet of society. 'The violence of a regime begets a general culture of violence' (Turshen 1998, p.8).[90] For example, Pillay notes that women are harassed by the police and disrespected by the media; those who have been raped and want to get abortions are judged by religious leaders or rejected by their families. Pillay observes that it is as if society is conspiring to maintain the subordinate status of women 'in order to lessen the perceived threat that one can only assume women must pose to men economically, socially and politically' (Pillay 2001, pp.42-43). These wounded and violent masculinities feel emasculated and threatened and society does not offer 'an alternative sense of manhood or masculinity' (Sideris 2001a, p.52). Instead, in some instances ex-soldiers get involved in crime, get depressed, commit suicide, or express their anger and frustration in the privacy of the home. As a means of reasserting their manhood, they resort to re-domesticating women by controlling them through social, political and economic violence (Turshen 2001).[91]

[90] 'As an alternative to racially-inflected explanations, I argue that contemporary sexual violence in South Africa is fuelled by justificatory narratives that are rooted in apartheid practices that legitimated violence by the dominant group against the disempowered, not only in overtly political arenas, but in social, informal and domestic spaces' (Moffett 2006, p.129).

[91] 'Given that much of this patriarchal heritage remains intact, the newly democratic South African state can be suspected of trying to site women as holding equality only some of the time and in certain spaces. So a devil's bargain has been struck;

Chapter three, explores how the popular texts of Zukiswa Wanner and Angela Makholwa allow them to grapple with issues of violent masculinities and the re-domestication of women.

One can glean an understanding of the factors informing violent masculinities through Judith Butler's ideas on vulnerability. In an interview with Jill Stauffer, Butler discusses the ethics of non-violence and revenge in relation to the United States government's refusal to recognise its vulnerability after 9/11. Butler argues that in the aftermath of 9/11, because the US government felt humiliated by the events, it chose to seek revenge by projecting missiles on the 'enemy' through '"shock and awe" in order to "restore" its damaged sense of impermeability and supremacy' (Stauffer 2003, p.29). For Butler, the 'desire for revenge' was a failed attempt at solving the problem of vulnerability, because it produced 'a kind of horrid masculinism' that 'sought to eviscerate our own vulnerability and to establish our own impermeability' (p. 31). By striking back, the US disavowed its vulnerability, which it transferred 'to the other'. Instead, this produced 'a world in which its vulnerability to injury … increased the likelihood of another strike' (p.30), in turn this intensified 'the vulnerability of everyone' (p.30), and heightened 'the possibility of violence' (p.30) that happened (p.30). Butler's ideas on vulnerability are useful in understanding the patriarchal violence that permeates war-torn societies. As mentioned above, during wartime combatants commit various atrocities, but they also have to face harrowing incidents that provoke anxiety and aggression. These traumatic experiences of war create wounded and violent masculinities.[92] However, these forms of vulnerabilities are negated; instead, they project their vulnerabilities in violent ways on women's bodies to reclaim their masculinities. 'In order for men to carry out atrocities against women, they need a psychological construct that reduces women to property and objectifies women as the 'other'. It is this perception of 'otherness' that allows men to carry out the most heinous acts of violence' (Pillay 2001, p.43). In addition, socio-cultural norms socialise men to repress their vulnerabilities, while valuing 'aggressiveness and violence as manly traits' (Pillay 2001, p.43). Moreover, 'dominant discourses of gender fail to provide men with alternatives to superiority and the necessary control' (Sideris 2001b, p.143). Butler argues that it is important to publicly grieve loss, because when one

women are widely accepted as having equal political status, even within structures like parliament, as long as they remain subordinate in the private and domestic realms. It is entirely possible that rape covertly performs the function of policing this fault-line' (Moffett 2006, p.143).

[92] 'War begets war. It produces outraged and humiliated and furious people. That is almost invariably the case' (Stauffer 2003, p.38).

'anaesthetizes one's own pain and sense of loss' (Stauffer 2003, p.31), it is easier to anaesthetize oneself to the pain one inflicts on others. In the context of gendered violence, when men numb themselves to their anguish and loss, they also anaesthetize themselves to the suffering they inflict on women. And since there are few constructive ways of accommodating vulnerabilities which do not depend on reaffirming and reasserting masculinities, it becomes extremely difficult to break the cycle of violence. Butler's suggestion is to do nothing, because peace can be seen as 'a certain resistance to the terrible satisfactions of war. It's a commitment to living with a certain kind of vulnerability to others and susceptibility to being wounded that actually gives our individual lives meaning' (p.39).

In spite of the backlash on women in the post-repressive regimes of Uganda and South Africa, it would be erroneous to think that women are passive, subservient, docile and simply accepting of their circumstances.[93] On the contrary, in the aftermath, women are resilient, they still manage to organise and assert themselves by producing new strategies of resistance and forms of agency. In addition, despite the 'unacknowledged gender civil war' which women inhabit, they exercise what Butler refers to as 'a certain kind of conditioned agency' (Stauffer 2003, p.33).[94] While chapter two begins by revisiting the repressive, it concludes by arguing that there is no 'post' in post-repressive regimes; women still live under siege. Instead, the new dispensations of Uganda and South Africa are differently repressive. Chapters three and four show how women share relationships that do not depend on denying vulnerability. These mutually dependent relationships accommodate vulnerabilities and also produce notions of agency which are not the same as individual will (Stauffer 2003). The narratives of emerging writers reveal that women use some of the avenues that the new dispensations offer to re-script feminine subjectivities and construct alternative forms of identity.

[93] Tina Sideris, following on Sheila Rowbotham, argues that 'women are not passive victims of their circumstances. They resist and reflect on their experiences of oppression and violence. Consciousness shifts but not in a progressive linear direction. Resistance, reflection and shifts in consciousness are multi-dimensional and contradictory, framed by the particular conditions and circumstances in which women live' (2001b, p.146).

[94] 'I've always been concerned to understand subjective agency, that is, the agency we have as persons, as both constrained by certain kinds of cultural forces but not determined by them, and also open to improvisation and malleability and repetition and change' (Stauffer 2003, p.56).

CHAPTER THREE
RESCRIPTING FEMININE SUBJECTIVITIES IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR LITERATURE: ROMANCE, CHICK LIT AND CRIME FICTION

> *The figure of woman, as subject or writer of fiction, is, as a result, always overdetermined by this historical baggage. Women can neither write, nor be written, 'innocently'.* (Jane Bryce)[95]

Emerging women's narratives from South Africa and Uganda reflect on the rapid pace of change in the social lives of women as they explore some of the major challenges faced by women today. While the fictional narratives in chapter two revisited repressive regimes to explore the opportunities available to women during and after the war, this chapter explores how Goretti Kyomuhendo, Zukiswa Wanner and Angela Makholwa and Cynthia Jele embrace chick lit as a form of writing that allows them to reflect on the lived realities of women, and opens up spaces to engage with the contradictions, complexities, and ambiguities of contemporary feminine subjectivities. The second section of this chapter reveals how the narratives of Glaydah Namukasa, Angela Makholwa and HJ Golakai attempt to negotiate resistance and critique, subvert and/or infiltrate patriarchal structures, while offering alternatives to dominant discourses. Taking up a typically masculine literary genre, emerging women writers appropriate crime fiction as a feminist gesture. In each of the two sections, I begin by briefly drawing on different theoretical concepts of popular culture in Africa, romance fiction, chick lit, postfeminism and transnational feminism and feminist crime fiction for approaching popular feminine forms of writing in Uganda and South Africa.

A discussion of chick lit calls for a brief examination of romantic novels, since critics such as Rosalind Gill and Elena Herdieckerhoff have argued that contemporary chick lit rewrites Western romantic fiction. The romance fiction genre is mainly associated with women, written by women, for women and about women; therefore, 'critics regard it as a ghetto which imprisons women, while its sympathisers see it as an "imaginary community" of women sharing a "utopian dream"' (Hollows 2000, p.68). Romance novels have been

[95] Bryce, 1997a, p.118.

dismissed and branded by most literary and feminist critics as escapist and frivolous, as misrepresenting real life problems.[96] 'Romance readers on the other hand, are described as masochistic, "regressive" and passive. Some feminist critics have gone as far as to accuse feminine narratives and their readers of colluding with patriarchy' (Hollows 2000). The problem with such critiques, as Tania Modleski (1984) observes, is that feminine attributes are associated with negative attributes. 'By distancing themselves from trivial romantic fantasies, these feminists accept "a critical double standard" based on masculine contempt for the feminine' (cited in Hollows 2000, p.74).[97] This dismissive, rather patronising attitude towards romance fiction tends to conceal important aspects of romance novels. Jean Radford contends that critics of romance novels tend to mistake 'the thing on the page for the experience itself, they see popular romance as a packaged commodity relaying false consciousness to an essentially passive and foolish reader' (1986, p.4). This raises various critical questions. Firstly, if, 'as is frequently argued romance fiction is pure escapism, then why should a housewife, clerical worker or a schoolgirl escape from a world economically and psychologically dominated by men into fictional fantasies of the same thing expressed sexually?' (p.7). Secondly, why do these novels tend to transcend class, race, age, culture, religion in their appeal? Thirdly, why do sales of romantic novels continue to exceed any other category?[98]

In an attempt to answer these questions and explain why women read romance, some feminist approaches have produced a more nuanced analysis of the significance of romance fiction that reveals the complex and contradictory meanings contained in this genre (Hollows 2000). In her analysis of Mills & Boon romances, Ann Jones (1986) acknowledges that there is a conflict between feminism as an emergent ideology and romance as a residual genre

[96] For example, 'Germaine Greer describes romance novels as the "escapist literature of love and marriage voraciously consumed by housewives" (1970, p.214). The "housewife" becomes a key figure in writing on romance and soaps. A stereotypical figure, she is characterised by her passivity, dependence, childishness and addiction to romantic fantasies. In this way, the "housewife" becomes the negative opposite of the heroic feminist' (cited in Hollows 2000, p.72).

[97] One of the ways in which this double standard operated was in the opposition between romance, equated with femininity, and sexuality, equated with masculinity (Hollows 2000, p.74).

[98] Francesca Segal observes that worldwide the *Harry Potter* series have sold 400 million copies in 11 years, while Mills & Boon novels sell 200 million copies every year. On average in the United Kingdom a Mills & Boon paperback is sold every 6.6 seconds. In the United Kingdom there are 3.2 million devoted readers of Mills & Boon, and 50 million in the rest of the world (2008).

which produces 'three kinds of contradiction: narrative discontinuity, irreconcilable settings, and inconsistency in realist dialogue' (1986, p.204).

Although Modleski agrees that romantic novels are contradictory, she challenges the stereotype of the 'passive' reader, claiming that the reader 'is engaged in an intensely active psychological process' (p.58, cited in Hollows 2000, p.76). Other romance theorists such as Rachel Anderson (1974), Janice Radway (1991) and Jay Dixon (1999) have also argued that a critical analysis of romance novels reveals that they reflect on social problems, and advocate 'for a change in the way society is organised, from [being] male-oriented to female-oriented. It empowers women by showing them fighting not just to enter the workplace, but to change it to suit their needs' (Dixon 1999, p.9). Jones notes that the 16 novels she has read referred explicitly or implicitly to feminist issues such as women's work, their economic and psychic independence from men and their sexuality. These feminine forms of writing increasingly engage with or activate feminist ideals.

In her interviews with the Smithton women, Janice Radway set out to learn about the meaning of romance, but the readers kept 'talking about the meaning of romance *reading* as an activity and a social event in a familial context' (emphasis in original 1991, p.7). They constructed the act of romance reading as a 'declaration of independence' p.11) as well as 'a way of participating in a large, exclusively female community' (p.11).[99] They insisted that reading romance was a way of temporarily rejecting the demands associated with their social roles as wives and mothers, while it also provided female companionship and conversation. 'The ideal romance offers readers the opportunity to escape from a world characterised by the excesses of male power into a utopian world in which heterosexual relationships can work' (Hollows 2000, p.79). At the same time, it addresses the needs, desires and wishes that their male partners cannot fill. And by doing so, it creates a feeling of hope, provides emotional sustenance, and produces a fully visceral sense of wellbeing (Radway 1991). As Helen Taylor argues, dreaming is not necessarily a reactionary pleasure, 'dreaming is also about imagining other possibilities, change, difference' (cited in Hollows 2000, p.87). In addition, Radway discovered that romance reading gives women the confidence to become writers. For some, writing becomes a way of intensifying the fantasy experience associated with the act of romance reading; for others, it is a desire to provide pleasure for other women. For the

[99] Janice Radway set out to explore the ways in which romances are interpreted, but ended up exploring how 'romance reading as a form of behaviour operated as a complex intervention in the on-going social life of actual subjects, women who saw themselves first as wives and mothers' (Radway 1991, p.7).

romance reader turned writer, the act of writing offers a public forum from which one can speak. It also allows the writer to demand time for herself, which in turn challenges the 'balance of power in the traditional family' (Radway 1991, p.17), and gives her a substantial income to become independent. Ultimately, these readers are no longer defined by their roles as wives or mothers, but also as writers. Reading and / or writing romance is about women creating for themselves, in Virginia Woolf's words, 'a room of their own' within the intimate space of the patriarchal family home.[100]

Lauren Berlant's ideas on women's culture offer a way of appreciating the importance of women's relationships with one another. Berlant defines an intimate public as a space of mediation in which the personal is refracted through the general. In this case, one could argue that chick lit as a genre becomes a place of recognition and reflection where women 'share a world view and emotional knowledge' derived from a broadly common historical experience (Berlant 2008, p.viii). It is an achievement which 'flourishes as a porous, affective scene of identification among strangers … it promises a certain experience of belonging and provides a complex consolation, confirmation, discipline, and discussion about how to live as [a woman]' (p.viii). It allows women to be realistic, as they assess the way things are, while providing material that promotes 'enduring, resisting, overcoming, and enjoying being [a woman]'(p.viii). All forms of chick lit can be seen as an avenue for 'women's culture', which speaks specifically to issues of femininity and permits women to share their personal experiences in spaces that are both intimate and revelatory. Chick lit serves as a 'commodified genre of intimacy' (p.x) that enacts a fantasy that a woman's life is not her own, but an experience understood by other women, albeit not shared by many. The consumers of 'women's culture' are fully aware that much of what they read is imaginary and expressed in extreme genres of hyperbole and grandiosity, but to a certain degree it is also a realistic form that enables women to feel that their emotional lives are shared and taken into account. Chick lit, as a gendered marked text of women's popular culture, constructs an illusion of a vague sense of belonging which allows women to deal with their lived reality, an existence embodied by 'social antagonisms, exploitation, compromised intimacies, the attrition of life' (p.5).

[100] A critical examination by romantic theorists reveals that these novels cannot be simply dismissed as a 'formulaic pulp that exerts dangerous social control by reinforcing that a women's only ambition should be to ensnare herself a man' (Kirstie in *Consuming Passion*, 2008, [DVD], directed by Dan Zeff, written by Emma Frost, UK: BBC).

In defence of romance fiction and chick lit

d…d mob of scribbling women (Nathaniel Hawthorne)[101]

Taking these insights to the scene of African cultural production today, this chapter argues that popular feminine forms of writing such as romance fiction and chick lit should be read within the ambit of popular arts in Africa. In her ground-breaking research on popular culture in Africa, Karin Barber (1997) suggests that popular arts in the African context are not a 'discrete category of cultural products' (1997, p.6); rather, they indicate an 'area of exploration', (p.6). Popular arts, she says, 'penetrate and are penetrated by political, economic, and religious institutions in ways that may not always be predictable' (pp.1-2). Popular arts, she elaborates, are not elite; at times they borrow from elite forms, and while they are not traditional art forms, they are grounded in them. Therefore, popular art is characterised by its 'unofficial' character and its novelty; it is free

> to operate between established cultural systems without conforming to their conventions, [it is] novel because [it] combines elements from the traditional and the metropolitan cultures in unprecedented conjectures, with the effect of radical departure from both. (p.13)

An interrogation of these cultural forms of production indicates that they conceal 'criticisms of; or reservations about, the status quo,' but it also reveals 'doubts and anxieties; and possibilities which are located within loopholes, fissures and silences' (p.8). It is open-ended, inclusive, slippery, elusive, and mobile.[102] It is a reworking and extension of traditional and modern categories of culture that speaks to 'local audiences about pressing concerns, experiences and struggles' in new ways (p.2).

Popular art, and in particular popular fiction in Africa, is difficult to define because of its amorphous character. However, it would be erroneous to simply dismiss it because it is aesthetically unsophisticated. A serious analysis reveals that popular texts are multifaceted, intricate, complex, and they reflect and provide a critique of society. Drawing on the theories of Bernth Lindfors (1991), Richard Priebe (1997), Karin Barber (1987, 1997) and Stephanie Newell (2002), this study attempts to define popular literature as that which communicates an

[101] Cited in Ferris & Young 2006, p.30.

[102] 'Although popular art forms may be difficult to interpret, … they do undoubtedly talk about what the people themselves think is important- in their own vocabulary, and through the form they feel to be appropriate. They also preserve memories by formulating them, giving us clues, however partial and cryptic, to past attitudes' (Barber 1987, p.4).

African perspective to a wide audience in a way that is easily understandable; and which is accessible in terms of its distribution, cost and thematic concerns.[103] In addition, following on Barber's research, Onookome Okome and Stephanie Newell point out that popular arts manifest in the urban milieu. The city becomes an agent of change that allows for new situations in which popular arts are able to respond to and be produced. 'In other words, the city is the crucible in which to read the complexity of popular arts in Africa. It provides a new template' (Okome & Newell 2012, p.xii). It is within this complex field of popular creativity, that this study situates feminine forms of romance fiction and chick lit.

Even within the field of popular literature, popular forms of women's writing are further marginalised. Jane Bryce (2012) maintains that it is often described as too conservative, personal, and crude, preoccupied with the material and the mundane.[104] Nonetheless, as has been mentioned, women writers embrace genres such as romance and chick lit, because they afford them 'a space outside of masculinist discourses to articulate alternative desires' [which allows them] to address taboo questions of women's sexuality and the contested issue of women's role in … society' (Bryce 2012, p.75). In a different, but related context, Jane Bryce and Kari Dako argue that romance as a despised form is used self-consciously to subvert the dominant political and social discourse, and to expose contradictions within gender relations (1999, p.219).

These feminine forms of writing may focus on the everyday of women's lives, but as Njabulo Ndebele reminds us in 'Rediscovery of the ordinary', not all narratives need to make 'spectacular political statements' (2002, p.139).[105] Infused with the ordinary and everyday, these narratives compel us to examine the interiority, the 'nooks and crannies' (Ndebele

[103] Stephanie Newell observes '"popular fiction" in Africa describes those types of narrative which never fail to generate debate amongst readers on moral and behavioural issues. In terms of their appeal, such narratives are popular in the sense of being on demand by African *readers*; in terms of their *content*, these texts are popular in the sense of containing ubiquitous character types and plots, reworked with each re-usage by authors' (2002, pp 4-5).

[104] Jane Bryce observes that 'popular' writing is a category of low status, generic writing dominated by a male-oriented sex-and-violence gestalt. Women writers adopting a 'popular' format in order to explore questions of gender, sex and romance are even lower-status than males, for they are seen as 'soft' or 'failed' popular writers. This very stigma, however, Bryce suggest, gives women writers a certain space in which to operate (cited in Barber, 1997, p.5).

[105] If it is a new society we seek to bring about in South Africa [and Uganda] then that newness will be based on a direct concern with the way people actually live. That means a range of complex ethical issues involving man-man, man-woman, woman-woman, man-nature, man-society relationships. These kinds of concerns are destined to find their way into our literature, making it more complex and richer (Ndebele 2002, p.140).

2002, p.139), of women's experiences. The ordinary, according to Ndebele, is sobering rationality, which forces attention on necessary detail. Paying attention to the ordinary contributes to a growth of consciousness (Ndebele 2002). Therefore, these narratives may reveal that 'the problems of the South African social formation are complex and all embracing; that they cannot be reduced to a single, simple formulation' (Ndebele 2002, p.139). For instance, in *The cry of Winnie Mandela,* Ndebele absorbs some of the conventions of chick lit by using '*ibandla labafazi'*, a congregation of women (own translation) (Ndebele 2003 p.35) as an ordinary space in which four women talk to one another and imagine alternative possibilities for themselves.[106] Romance and chick lit capture aspects of women's lives that are not addressed in other forms of writing. As Newell (1997) rightly observes, women writers in Africa use romantic fiction to respond to what has been considered a male-dominated process. Women's fiction 'is a risk-taking art form in that it transcribes women's comments, moving the oral responses of audiences and leaders into published narratives and expressing shared, but previously unwritten interpretation of domestic affairs' (Newell 1997, p.397). Romance fiction may seem escapist, but love could also be read as 'a trope for the desire for change: not just for "an other", "but for something other"' (Bryce & Dako 1999, p.226). Some emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa have embraced and adapted romance to challenge the patriarchal society they inhabit, while they advocate personal and social change in post-repressive regimes.

The politics of romance stories and romance imprints

Drawing on the above arguments on popular arts in Africa, I will now illustrate how emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa have appropriated romance to problematize 'popular constructions of femininity' (Newell 2002, p.8) tackled through popular fiction. They use literary forms that are conventional, to challenge patriarchal conventions. Although I will not provide a close critical analysis of the romance narratives, I offer a broad enquiry into how and why the romance genre is used by emerging writers.

In the Ugandan context, FEMRITE writers have espoused romance as a form of protest writing. These emerging writers borrow, mock, mimic and use romance and love to create awareness within their society about the needs and concerns of women. The first

[106] 'There is that afternoon that stands out when Penelope's descendants met for their usual weekly conversation over tea. The meetings of this *ibandla* had become ritualised. Conversation always took place against the clink of cups and saucers, and of teaspoons rolling in small whirlpools' (Ndebele 2003, p.36).

anthology of short stories written and published by Ugandan women is *A woman's voice: An anthology of short stories* (1998). This anthology is significant because it provided a space for various emerging writers to articulate the experiences of women in a modern urbanized society. Some of the stories, like 'Joanitta's nightmare' by Hope Keshubi, 'The last to know' by Violet Barungi and 'Where is she?' by Philo Nabweru use romantic love as a starting point to expose the numerous expectations and accompanying dilemmas that challenge women in the city. In other words, romance, sex and marriage are symptoms of contradictory demands and conflicting desires that manifest as these emerging writers attempt to interrogate women's roles in society; while simultaneously offering a critique of a repressive society. Romance is given an underlying didactic purpose and the stories are all about self-improvement. Whereas the Western romance always ends 'happily ever after', with the conflict between the two principle characters being resolved, the same cannot be said of romance in FEMRITE texts. In these romances, few relationships end in a 'happily ever after'. They are what Western readers of the romance refer to as 'bad' romance (Anderson 1974, Dixon 1999, Radway 1991). Moreover, the characters that the readers encounter are not romanticized, but ordinary people. Readers of the romance in Uganda do not read these texts to escape reality; the texts force them to recognize, acknowledge, and challenge the issues that continually marginalize them. While the modes and aims of Western and African romance may seem distinct, there are notable overlaps.

Romance fiction in South Africa is different from its Ugandan counterpart: three established publishing houses publish romance fiction. It is important to point out that there is a noticeable difference in the amount of romance fiction and chick lit emerging out South Africa in comparison to Uganda. It could be that in South Africa the results of cycles of repression and conflict produce a normalising process in the post-repressive regime. This normality elevates a certain middle class that articulates and performs freedom through a consumer culture that is enabled through popular feminine forms. For example, Gqola describes the black 'new South African woman' (2013a, p.57) as an ambitious career driven woman, who is nicely groomed, speaks fluent English,

> aspires to have an address in the suburbs, … she is a skilled consumer, reads several women's magazines, goes to a designer church, believes in women's empowerment. She is not a feminist but believes in feminine power … she does not like the idea of sharing her man, but recognises that men are likely to stray … She is the consummate

> professional, punctual and committed to personal development. She has a five-year plan and a ten-year plan and does not compromise on her 'me-time'. (p.58)

Gqola argues that although most black women in South Africa do not conform to this construction, she has become 'the aspirational archetype' (p.59) that black women desire to be. Dion Chang (2102), in contrast, argues that there are different classes or urban tribes emerging within post-apartheid South Africa that have a direct impact on society because of their access to cultural and economic resources. 'Two of the twelve "new urban tribes of South Africa" are the "Diamond Chips" and "Black Pinks". Chang defines "Diamond Chips" as spoilt children of successful black parents; they are more connected to African culture than "coconuts", they have an urban identity and love celebrity culture, while "Black Pinks" are loud, proud, black women who spend a lot of time in "shopping malls with their BFFs, female celebrities" and the second type of "Black Pinks" the '"Pink Chino Corporate" high powered corporate types' (Britten 2012). Emergent authors recognize that middle-class women are becoming more visible, so they are being targeted as the consumers of these new genres. In 2010, Kwela Books, an imprint of NB Publishers, launched Sapphire Press, a romance imprint subtitled 'Where true love reigns'. Sapphire is a series of romance novels that closely resembles the fiction of Mills & Boon. However, although Sapphire Press shares certain characteristics with Mills & Boon, there are also significant differences. The stories are rooted in the South African context, and aimed superficially at black South African women. According to Nelleke de Jager, publisher of Sapphire Press, they are not that prescriptive on the guidelines of romance, apart from the fact that it has to follow the recipe: girl meets boy, falls in love happily ever after. 'In all these stories you're looking at financially independent female characters, often looking after one or two family members. They've got an entrepreneurial streak' (Chetty 2011).[107]

The series which focuses on South African issues and culture does not permit or encourage exaggerated elements of fantasy. In terms of the linguistic style, the writers are allowed to use a mixture of local colloquial expression and any of the other official languages to remain true to the readers' use of language. Initially, the books were circulated as part of a collaboration between book clubs and *True Love* magazine as a way of gauging the viability of the project. The positive feedback from the pilot project resulted in the availability of

[107] I do not with De Jager when she says that the books are not prescriptive about how women should live their lives. According to Sapphire Press there are specific Kwela romance writing guidelines that authors strictly have to adhere to.

Sapphire books in commercial bookstores like CNA and Bargain Books.[108] Sapphire Press offers South African black women novels that speak directly to them, but as Radway's research illustrated, they may also provide authors with a platform to write South African romantic stories in which the protagonists have to deal with the realities of their societies. The books are aimed specifically at a South African audience, although the authors are not necessarily South African, but come from various parts of southern Africa.[109] As mentioned in the introduction, in the post-repressive era publishing opportunities have opened up to people who did not have such prospects under the apartheid regime. Nani Khabako, author of *Her forever after* and *The nanny affair*, observes that writing romance allows her to explore the experiences of contemporary black women as they negotiate

> traditionalism and western corporate culture. In her narratives she tries to include cultural references to who they are and where they come from, …These women didn't just show up in Cape Town or Joburg. They have a past in previously disadvantaged communities; a past inherited by them as black people. But they're also part of the new South Africa with new opportunities. I think a lot of black women will be able to identify with this – this new possibility where they can pursue anything they want. (Chetty 2011)

In contrast to NB Publishers, a prominent publishing house, the second publishing house that caters largely to black South African women is MME Media. It is the brainchild of Nigerian-born, South Africa-based Moky Makura, author of *Africa's greatest entrepreneurs*, actress, television presenter and entrepreneur. Nollybooks, an imprint of MME Media, was established in 2009, launching its first novel in 2010. In an interview with Erin Conway-Smith, Makura says that she got the inspiration for Nollybooks from Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry which produces up to 50 feature films a week (2011). Makura ascribes the success of Nollywood to the movies they produce, which tell African stories: Africans want

[108] A City Press book reviewer wrote that they found the books relevant because they reflected on 'local traditions, lingo, trends, lifestyle and sociocultural issues, such as arranged marriages, polygamy, children who are raised by grandparents, inter-racial relationships, vat-en-sits (living together without being married), lobola negotiations, traditionalist men dating independent career women, and women dating future chiefs' (City Press 2011/02/26).

[109] There are currently 13 authors who have written for Sapphire Press; however, Nolo Mothoagae is the pseudonym for Mokopi Shale, while Akhona Bota is the penname of Fezile Cokile, the only male author for Sapphire Press. Of these 11 authors, 10 reside in South Africa and three in Botswana. In terms of their professions, three are fulltime writers, two are students, and three are involved in some aspect of the media: journalists, public relations managers, one fund manager. Two have won literary awards.

to hear their own stories that reflect their lifestyles and aspirations, and what they consume. She uses Nollywood as a template and hopes to do for South African publishing what Nollywood did for African cinema (Conway-Smith 2011; Boswell 2011; Van Eeden 2011; Mabuse & Wither 2011). 'Nollybooks: Real South African Stories you'll love' are romance novels aimed at young black women between the ages of 16-24. Makura's argument is that although they are literate they never read for pleasure. They are a young, hip and upwardly mobile generation that is becoming increasingly important on the continent, part of Africa's growing middle class (Conway-Smith 2011). Her goal is to tell interesting but ordinary stories and to get young women reading and buying novels. 'My books are being positioned as an alternative to movies, TV, shopping. I am trying to make reading fun' (Conway-Smith 2011).

Barber observes elsewhere that the themes of Onitsha market literature (1987) were highly influenced by imported American, Chinese and Indian films; while Adewale Maja-Pearce says that in spite of the demise of Onitsha market literature some of its features have been absorbed into the Nollywood video film (cited in Okome & Newell 2012). Therefore, one could argue that Nollybooks via its reincarnation of Nollywood is a recreation of Onitsha market literature. Nollybooks may have evolved due to modern technology, but the idea behind the books is similar: to communicate to its audience in an accessible way. Popular arts in Africa may be ephemeral, but as Nollybooks demonstrates, they are also dynamic:

> [R]ecycling and substitution is the hallmark of popular culture in general, whether commercial or not. Domestication, recycling, and substitution can be seen as metaphors for the whole practice of popular arts, placed as they are on the interface between two worlds. (Barber 1987, p.33)

In addition to this intertextuality with Onitsha market literature, Nollybooks has taken the Mills & Boon romance style, blended it with chick lit and produced a hybridised romance-chick lit genre which is fun, vibrant, entertaining, and educational. These are easy to read narratives, with storylines and characters that reflect the lives and aspirations of their audience. As with Sapphire Press, these heroines are always strong, independent, confident, ambitious women who know what they want.[110] Like other formulaic romances, Nollybooks shuns failed or bad romance; there is no disillusionment, no death of protagonists, no

[110] The format is a small hand-bag-sized book which is convenient to read while using public transport (Lewis 2011; Conway-Smith 2011).

destruction of their ideals.[111] Makura is adamant that these books all have to end happily, she 'rejects any book proposal featuring, for example, a woman who has AIDS and three children, because she doesn't want depressing books. There is too much of that already' (Conway-Smith, 2011). Nollybooks, in contrast to Sapphire Press, does not depict any sex scenes and deals with social realities. As Makura notes, these books are romance without the smut, because you 'don't need sex to have good storytelling' (Mabuse & Wither 2011). Some may argue she is being moralistic, but she claims that she took the decision to make the imprint sex free because it was a more responsible approach. 'Because of the market we are selling to and because of the issues of Africa with AIDS and sex as a whole we didn't think it was important' (Mabuse & Wither 2011).[112] In other words, there is a response to issues caused by HIV/AIDS, but not a representation of it.

Nollybooks is distinctly different from romance brands such as Mills & Boon or Sapphire Press, because it has an underlying didactic agenda. Nollybooks has successfully combined entertainment with an explicit educational component. Makura claims she is determined 'to make reading sexy … Reading … it's foreplay for the mind' (Lewis 2011). Her innovation has been to include a bookazine in each of the novels. Bookazine is a word that Makura coined and has subsequently trademarked. According to their website, Nollybooks Bookazines™ are much more than just books; they are books that think like magazines. The Bookazine™ pages which make the book interactive include talking points targeted at book clubs; a glossary of difficult words from the romantic story; word quizzes, word puzzles, and word challenges.[113] This educational element allows the publishing house to tap into the corporate social responsibility budgets of big brands such as Ponds and Perfect Choice, who then sponsor their educational initiatives in schools. The other nexus with the magazine format is an endorsement by celebrities such as Lebo Mashile, Connie Ferguson, Sonia Booth and others who speak about their favourite novels. The 'face' of Nollybooks is

[111] A failed or bad romance is one that evokes powerful feelings of anger and fear which are directed at the fictional hero or men in general. It contains vivid titillating sexual scenes, which enable the reader to witness brutal violation and degradation of women. Such scenes include abandonment, rape and physical violence. And more importantly, it is one in which the heroine has casual sex with several partners (Anderson 1974; Dixon 1999; Radway 1984).

[112] Unlike Sapphire Press, Nollybooks does not promote the authors, but the brand. Makura says, '[w]e want to build a trusted brand and want our readers to know each time they buy our books, they'll be entertained regardless of who the author is' (Van Eeden 2011).

[113] This bookazine, although different, is reminiscent of *Obaa sima, Ideal women*, a Ghanaian women's magazine owned by Kate Abbam which she used as a tool to empower women (Bryce 1997a; Newell 2000).

the editor Sis' Nolly, who recalls Sis' Dolly of *Drum* Magazine.[114] An agony aunt of sorts, she is audacious and opinionated, she selects the stories and makes sure that they are morally responsible and celebrate romance and life; she always gives her opinion on the books and the protagonists; and she comes up with all the educational material in the bookazines (Lewis 2011; De Waal 2011; Conway-Smith 2011; Mabuse & Wither 2011).

In line with the idea of promoting a reading culture in South Africa, in 2012 Moky Makura conceptualised a television series based on Nollybooks. The series called 'Mzansi Love: Kasi Style' was aired on the television station ETV for a period of six weeks. Each episode was a standalone rom-com which featured a female protagonist trying to balance romance and a career in modern society. As Makura points out, movie 'adaptations of books have always generated interest in the book itself and I am hoping the "Mzansi Love" series will do the same for Nollybooks. … The idea of our movies is to ultimately draw people back to reading and show that books can be as entertaining as anything you find on television' (Lindsay 2012).[115] Makura has used romance novels in innovative ways. As Newell argues elsewhere, romance in Africa is not a static genre; women writers put it

> to different uses in different countries and contexts, as women utilise and rewrite what has, in Western societies, long been labelled a stultifying, 'dead' form. … what one finds in popular fiction by African women is a shift in emphasis, a distinct set of discursive manoeuvres carried out from their positions *within* popular constructions of gender roles. (2002, p.8)

As mentioned earlier, romance in Uganda and South Africa has been appropriated mostly by women writers. Newell notes that these are not '"pure" genres modelled from or upon Western templates, but historically situated texts containing an array of preoccupations that relate in precise terms to contemporary religious and gender debates, as well as to family relationships and political events within their region of production' (p.151).

[114] Although one has to point out that, Sis Dolly was a collective of anxious syndicate of men who were speaking for women.

[115] The six novels whose titles were changed are *Office games* based on *Business of love* by Pamela Moeng, *Something's cooking* based on *Recipe for love* by Charleen Nadioo, *Uncovered*, based on *The spy who loved me* by Robyn Goss, *Your move*, based on *A man worth knowing* by Anthony Ehler, *PhD*, based on *Finding Arizona* by Michelle Atagana and *Game on*, based on *Looking for Mr Right* by Cheryl S Ntumy.

Chick lit as an 'uprising genre'

In chapter two, the novels I focused on represented the opportunities available to women in the post-war aftermath, yet showed how these freedoms entail certain limitations. This chapter continues to illustrate how the female protagonists portrayed in Ugandan and South African chick lit find themselves in a similarly ambiguous position. They may have benefitted from feminism, which opened new possibilities for them; however, underlying this emancipation is an explicit complicity with patriarchy. Chick lit refuses to offer a clear-cut construct of women's lives; instead, it suggests a messy terrain inherently ambiguous and contradictory, while it simultaneously empowers and oppresses women. Chick lit 'selectively appropriates aspects of feminism into a primarily consumerist model' (Harzewski 2011, p.10). It mirrors a gritty world where contemporary women critique patriarchy and attempt to break out from its stranglehold by finding new ways of self-realisation. But in the process of trying to activate and re-inhabit new roles, their preoccupation with a consumer culture, desire for romance and performance of femininity exposes their complicity with patriarchy. Nonetheless, these implications can also be seen as grounds from which they fashion new identities and relationships. As a genre, chick lit is a potent form that grapples with the struggles and tensions of modern women.

Chick lit is considered the 'most culturally visible form of postfeminism' (Harzewski 2011, p.8). It could be argued that a postfeminist culture erases feminist politics from popular culture, even if aspects of feminism seem to be incorporated into that culture (Tasker & Negra 2007). Angela McRobbie (2004) observes that postfeminism is the pastness of feminism: all the feminist gains achieved in the 1970s and 80s are undermined in contemporary popular culture. On the surface, postfeminism appears to engage with feminism in a progressive manner, in the way it depicts the strides that mainly middle-class women have achieved in the work place, in terms of their sexuality, and in their access to a disposable income. However, it correspondingly negates feminism by upholding conservative values of sexuality, and it creates anxieties in relation to feminine body image and beauty.[116]

[116] 'This variance between autonomous development and heterosexual coupling, monetary gain and romantic sentiment, is a classic female dilemma as well as a locus of postfeminist affect. Through chick lit, we can glean that postfeminism is not so much a social agenda or critique of power hierarchies but operates instead through defamiliarization. Postfeminism maintains a more ambivalent view on independence than second-wave feminism and, in its most historically recent manifestation, is propelled by twenty- and thirtysomething women negotiating the tensions between feminism and femininity. Chick lit replicates in its formal structures and generic amalgamations the quandary of multiple and contradictory meanings confronted in a taxonomy of postfeminism' (Harzewski 2011, p.150).

'The new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique, to count as a modern sophisticated girl, or indeed this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom (McRobbie 2004, p.260).[117] However, Stephanie Harzewski cites Rachael Mosley and Jacinda Read who contend that

> postfeminism is characterised not by negation or rejection but instead by a 'repeated articulation of new spaces in which previously discretely held positions – feminist and feminine, professional and personal – are held together' (p.246). As a form of postfeminism, chick lit does not operate through renunciation (giving up the pleasures of adornment and hetero-sexual romance) but struggles to reconcile 'our feminist desires with our feminine desires' (p.238, cited in 2011, p.181).

Pam Butler and Jigna Desai show the limitations of the above reading of chick lit by persuasively arguing that most critiques of the genre tend to understand it as a symptom of postfeminism. By using postfeminism as an analytical framework, these critics reflect and re-enact the limitations of a hegemonic feminist discourse that assumes chick lit is a homogenous white normative genre that is uncritical of consumer culture and individualism and can only be read in relation to feminism and femininity. This analysis excludes any other forms of social difference (Butler & Desai 2008). When chick lit is collapsed into a single category, critics of the genre refuse to recognize the differences within the genre, as well as those between different feminisms. Butler and Desai maintain that a 'wholesale rejection of chick lit demonstrates a lack of regard for how genres operate and, specifically, how subgenres may work to undermine and rewrite the form and its attendant discourses' (2008, pp.3-4). They observe that within mainstream chick lit there are various subgenres such as nanny lit, sistahs lit, Diva diaries, mommy lit, assistant lit and so on which 'tell stories about young women's individual empowerment, but the characters' engagement with femininity and gender are often articulated through questions of race, nation, ethnicity and socioeconomic class' (p.4). This argument allows for a critique that shifts from engaging with chick lit as postfeminism phenomenon, to an analytical framework guided by critical race and transnational feminisms (2008).

[117] 'Postfeminism positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which has been taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasise that it is no longer needed, it is a spent force' (McRobbie. 2004, p.255).

It is useful to read chick lit through such a critical race and transnational framework. However, instead of reading Western chick lit in a hierarchical position in relation to 'subgenres' as Butler and Desai suggest, this thesis attempts to theorise chick lit subgenres differently. I will refer to the Western form as mainstream chick lit and the 'transatlantic phenomenon' (Harzewski 2011, p.17) and the local forms as 'uprising genres'. 'Uprising genres' is a phrase that Newell has adopted from Carole Boyce Davies, who initially coined the phrase 'uprising texualities' to refer to black women's experiences and narratives about migration that occur outside dominant genres. Boyce Davies contends that these narratives

> signify 'resistance, reassertion, renewal and rethinking', … Positioned on the outskirts of the dominant (white, patriarchal, Eurofeminist) culture, uprising narratives and voices have not 'adopted' Western hegemonic ideologies, nor have they been silenced by anti-feminist agendas. (1994, p.108)

When Newell refers to 'uprisings' within romance fiction written by African women, she develops Boyce Davies's definition to include popular feminine genres that have been dismissed as anti-feminist and patriarchal by feminist commentators (Anderson, 1974; Coward, 1984; cited in Newell 2000, p.144). Similarly, I refer to chick lit by emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa as 'uprising genres'. To echo Newell, when a

> dominant genre is put into operation by writers who are situated geographically and economically *outside* the centres of mass-production, then the gender conservatism commonly associated with the genre is detached: when authors who are neither mainstream nor canonical take on the romance, it becomes an 'uprising' form, capable of conveying potentially radical challenges to popular gender ideologies. (2000, p.144)

In their examination of South Asian American chick lit, Pam Butler and Jigna Desai observe that it explores issues of gender and sexuality, but also engages with 'questions of nation-state, globalism, capitalism, race, and ethnicity' (2008, p.4). Nóra Séllei (2006) contends that, although *Bridget Jones's diary* has heavily influenced Hungarian chick lit, as a cultural import it should not be 'read fully in terms of cultural dominance and dependence'– instead, it has produced a new nationalized cultural product that has been embraced by Hungarian women (pp.173-174). Harzewski comments briefly on Indonesian *sastra wangi*, or 'fragrant literature', which emerged in 1998 as a phenomenon 'whose visual marketing of its authors mirrors representations of Anglo-American chick lit' (2011, p.17). Although she may not be defined as chick lit, Shobhaa De, one of India's leading English literary brands, has been

described as the 'rani of raunch'. Isabel Hofmeyr describes her work as a vibrant example of contemporary popular literature that synthesises different popular forms and genres arising from the experience of the new Indian middle class: 'these books are a blend of sex, shopping and melodrama that unfolds in the glitzy film and media world of Bombay'. Shobhaa De says her 'books try to find ways that women can survive and cope in a world that's cruel to them' (Hofmeyr 2009). In Uganda and South Africa, the chick lit genre is rewritten by emerging women writers. They attempt to resist, undermine, renew and rethink its mainstream counterpart; their books are saturated with local content that speaks to and about the intimate lives of middle-class women in a post-repressive regime (Newell 2000). There are a number of women authors whose narratives could be considered as South African chick lit; for example Rosamund Kendal's *Karma suture* and *Angina monologues*, Fiona Snyckers's *Trinity rising* and *Trinity on air*, Gail Schimmel's *Marriage vows*, and Sumayya Lee's *The story of Maha* and *Maha, ever after*. However, here I will limit myself to the narratives of black emerging writers who have adopted this feminine form of writing. This uprising genre of chick lit situated in South Africa and Uganda articulates how women see themselves and their relationships with their spouses but, most importantly, with their female friends. They represent the challenges that modern women face in the work environment; it interrogates the realities of women concerning marriage, motherhood, infertility, infidelity, how women negotiate the dilemmas of patriarchal societies; and also confronts issues of class and race.

The following sub-section turns its attention to the narratives of emerging writers who have embraced the major features of the chick lit genre. Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Whispers from Vera* (hereafter *Whispers*) is written in the form of a letter. Set in Kampala, the narrative is reminiscent of Mariama Bâ's *So long a letter* set in Dakar, Senegal. The narrator Vera writes to her deceased friend Jane and gives an account of her everyday life, her marriage, children, her infidelity, her relationship with her girlfriends and her work. Readers feel as if they are eavesdropping on a private conversation between close friends. Vera is married to Eric; she has a stepdaughter and two sons, and her other confidantes are her best friend Sheila and other girls in the 'sisterhood'. Like *Bridget Jones's diary* and *Sex and the city*, *Whispers* first appeared in serialized form in *The Monitor*, one of Uganda's leading newspapers.

The madams has been referred to as 'South Africa's first black chick-lit blockbuster' (McNulty 2007). This first-person narrative follows the life of Thandi, an executive director (of the Soweto office of Gauteng's Department of Tourism), her husband Mandla, a cardiologist who owns a surgery in Soweto, and their son. Although she adores her life, she is

also frustrated with juggling her different roles as a modern woman. Exhausted with performing the role of 'supermom' (Wanner 2006, p.ix) to her son, 'superslut' (p.ix) to her husband and 'superslave' (p.ix) at the office, she decides to employ a white maid. The narrative's plot revolves around this contentious idea which Wanner uses to problematize issues of race and class, thus undermining the characteristics of chick lit. However, in keeping with the characteristics of chick lit, Thandi also tells the story of her two best friends Nosizwe and Lauren. Nosizwe, who is married to ex-convict Vuyo, is an executive at a French multinational company, and unable to have children of her own. She is coerced into taking care of Vuyo's two children. Lauren, the third in the trio, is an English lecturer at Wits University, married to Mike and they have four children. Set in the north-eastern suburb of Lombardy East these three friends can be described as upper middle-class. Their world consists of weekly brunches where they gossip, drink copious bottles of chardonnay and champagne and indulge in excessive shopping sprees. On the surface, this may appear to be a frivolous, over-indulgent life-style, but each woman has to deal with issues of love and betrayal. One of the central themes of the novel is racial identity it offers alternative ways of understanding race relations in contemporary South Africa. By representing female friends from three different racial groups, Wanner appears to be problematizing constructions of race. For example, Thandi is from mixed heritage: her paternal grandfather was a Scotsman and her maternal grandfather was English, but she hates being called 'so-called coloured' (p.15). Whereas Siz is black and Lauren is white, both Lauren and Nosizwe's mothers are anglophiles, although they are not British South Africans. They are nicknamed the 'OBE's – Odious Babes of the Empire' (p.14). Wanner uses these characters to reflect on the complexities of race, class, sexuality, gender roles and HIV/AIDs in post-apartheid South Africa.

Wanner's second novel, *Behind every successful man* (hereafter *Behind*), strategically uses a third-person narrator who provides two narrative perspectives, those of the heroine Nobantu Makana and Andile Makana. Unlike the other novels in this section, Andile's is the only male point of view that the reader has access to. Although Nobantu has an MBA from Wits University, she is a stay-at-home mom who has devoted her life to her husband and children. Her husband Andile is a successful Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) entrepreneur who co-owns Mapamo, a mining company on the verge of listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Despite her access to money, wealth and luxury goods, Nobantu feels unfulfilled in her role as wife and mother. This novel deals with traditional

patriarchal attitudes, and one women's determination to define herself outside the normative social fabric of society.

Makholwa in *The 30th Candle* also uses an omniscient narrator to tell the story of four girlfriends whose friendship dates back to their time at the University of Cape Town. Linda Mthimkhulu, a television producer for the national broadcaster, is portrayed as the most outspoken of the quartet. The novel opens with Linda's fiancé walking in on her having sex with an older man. Dikeledi, a psychology lecturer at a university in Johannesburg, has been in a ten-year dead-end relationship with Tebogo, the father of her child, and desperately hopes that one day he will propose marriage. After a whirlwind romance, accounts manager Sade marries Winston Gumede. Not only is he is a well-respected member of the church, but he is also a prominent BEE nouveau riche type. Trying to escape her past, Sade reinvents herself as a born-again Christian and sees Winston as the 'perfect man' who will help her find redemption, but he is concealing a sordid life. Nolwazi, a gifted fashion designer, is engaged in a secret affair with Tebogo, Dikeledi's philandering boyfriend. When she falls pregnant and he refuses to take responsibility, she is forced to relocate to Cape Town and set up her own boutique. Set in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg and Cape Town, the novel shows the four friends each approaching a threshold in their life, their thirtieth birthday. It is a time for introspection and self-interrogation as each woman takes stock of her life, especially her relationship with her partner. Fred Khumalo in a review observes that these characters seem to have it all; they are 'professionals in their own right … living the quintessential middle-class dream in post-apartheid South Africa, occupying houses that millions of their fellow citizens can only dream of. But they are unhappy. Just what do women want?' (2009).

Happiness is a four letter word (hereafter *Happiness*), like *The madams* and *The 30th candle*, tells the stories of four thirty-something female protagonists. Nandi Hadebe, a chartered accountant is engaged to Thomas, a software developer, but still has feelings for her ex-fiancé; Tumi Modise is a schoolteacher, married to Tshepo Modise, owner of SA Telecom Inc., an IT company, who is cheating on his wife with one of his employees; Zaza Zulu, who is having an extra-marital affair with Bongani Gumede, manages eThembeni orphanage, owns a boutique, and is married to Bheki Zulu, who owns BZ Property Group, a construction company; lastly, Princess Mokoena is a women's rights lawyer, while her boyfriend Leo Moyo, a talented artist, is also a drug addict and thief. The novel, set in the affluent suburbs of Johannesburg, revolves around the four friends as they meet to prepare for Nandi's wedding day. Jele uses an omniscient narrator to narrate the drama that ensues in the lives of

these four friends; so the novel reads as four interlinked stories. All four friends have experienced life under apartheid, and now live in a post-apartheid regime that has opened up for them various freedoms and opportunities. In spite of these liberties, each woman faces conflict in her marriage or relationship and the narrative shows them striving to negotiate these tensions and anxieties with the support of the other friends.

Whispers from Vera, The madams, Behind every successful man, The 30th candle and *Happiness is a four letter word* are novels that can be defined as 'uprising genres' of chick lit. Although they share similar characteristics and themes, there are also marked differences between the two genres. Both genres deal with the challenges encountered by middle-class women as they negotiate their female friendships, work environment and the ways in which they experience sexual desire. These 'uprising genres' differ from the mainstream in the way in which they focus on the social expectations of motherhood and marriage, social injustices such as domestic abuse, sexual violence and diverse political issues. Mainstream chick lit approaches the dilemmas facing women in contemporary society in innovative ways. It uses self-deprecating humour, but underlying this tongue-in-cheek humour is an indictment of various social, economic and political issues.[118] Since it is aimed at a female audience, the voice and point of view in chick lit tends to be female.[119] 'Chick lit's use of the diary form, journals, letters, and e-mail links it to the epistolary tradition and to the novel that emerged out of private modes of writing commonly associated with women … which also explore the internal and emotional life of women' (Benstock 2006, p.255). In contrast to mainstream chick lit, *Behind, The 30th candle* and *Happiness* have an omniscient narrator; permitting the reader to have shifting points of view and an unbiased access into the inner feelings and thoughts of the different characters. However, *Whispers* and *The madams* both use the conventional first-person narrator, told from the point of view of Vera and Thandi respectively. The first-person narration opens up a gap between the 'I' who tells the story and the 'I' who is the past self. [It reveals] the drama of a person trying to make sense of him- or herself (Mullan 2006, p.45).[120] Although it is a subjective point of view, the narrator invites the reader into the private worlds of the protagonist and her female friends. Suzanne Ferris and Mallory Young (2006) observe that the authors of mainstream chick lit exploit the confessional style to create the impression that the narrator is directly addressing the reader,

[118] In this regard, Zukiswa Wanner has been more successful than the other three writers.

[119] However, as mentioned above, in *Behind*, Wanner provides a male perspective.

[120] As seen in *So long a letter, Nervous conditions* and *Purple hibiscus*, to mention but a few.

who in turn is fascinated and enticed by the characters' private thoughts and emotions and feel as though they are part of the protagonists' circle of friends. Female friendship is a specific theme that differentiates romance fiction from chick lit; nevertheless, it is the thread that runs through all chick lit.

Best friends forever

For Eva, Ayeta, Betty, Sanyu, Susan, Sandra and Jane (R.I.P)

For a friendship so deep and sincere
So unconditional and timeless

For the laughter we share
The stories we tell
The sorrows we endure
Together.

This is the prologue to *Whispers*; the poem is a dedication to Kyomuhendo's close female friends. She celebrates the intimacy of this relationship in the poem quoted above, which pays tribute to a relationship between friends that is complete, genuine and unpretentious; an attachment that provides a comfortable space for friends to confide in one another, to share their pain, celebrate their achievements and provide encouragement and support for each other. It speaks about the emotional intensity and devotion that women share with their female friends. In a similar vein, chick lit always involves a close-knit group of female friends who serve as a support system for one another. Vera, the protagonist in *Whispers*, thinks of her friends as 'girls of the sisterhood' (Kyomuhendo 2003a, p.39) who are always there to keep her company whenever she feels disheartened. In *The madams*, Thandi talks about Siz as her sister; she says 'we had been through thick and thin together. … That's what sisterhood is all about' (Wanner 2006, p.69). Tumi in *Happiness* persuades Princess to confide in her friends, 'you know you can talk to us. We're your sisters, your family. We're here for you now and always' (Jele 2010, p.170). When Nobantu in *Behind* finally finds the courage to venture out on her own, it is the encouragement of Tsholo that strengthens her: with 'a sisterhood like this, she thought, maybe she might just be able to make it after all' (Wanner 2008, p.81). Jane Gerhard (2005) asserts that chick lit seems to suggest that the most

valued relationship for contemporary women is the one they have with their girlfriends. These are always depicted as being more permanent and dependable than their relationships with boyfriends, fiancés or even husbands. Even if these women live apart, modern forms of communication mean they are always in touch with each other. This kind of intimacy, reminiscent of the lives of women in female residences at university or boarding school, or the supportive love of sisters, helps women to understand that their individual experiences are understood and appreciated by other women. It is this affirmation that makes it easier for women to deal with the existential realities of their lives.

Female relationships nurture women and offer 'an emotional alternative to the compromising world of boyfriends and potential husbands. The bonds that they forge, and upon which they rely, provide the women with the support that the endless stream of men cannot give them' (Gerhard, 2005 p.44). So, for example, in *The madams*, when Siz discovers that her husband Vuyo is cheating on her with Pertunia the domestic worker, she throws him out of her house and drives to his mother's home with her friends Lauren and Thandi to confront his mother, on whom she blames his infidelity. Although her friends do not agree with her, they go with her to provide emotional support. After tolerating an abusive marriage, Lauren finally gets the courage to leave her husband when she confides in her friends. Thandi says, with 'our encouragement, the divorce was actually processed pretty quickly. It was a dirty divorce, but in the end she managed to find the one thing that she had lost … her self-respect and dignity' (Wanner 2006, p.131). In *Happiness*, when Nandi's fiancé Thomas leaves her because she has rekindled her friendship with an ex-fiancé, it is her friends Zaza, Tumi and Princess who drive her to his home and persuade her to ask him to give their relationship a second chance. When Tumi discovers that her husband has impregnated another woman, she finds consolation from her friends. These intimate friendships serve a number of emotional and practical functions. All the friends are always available to give their unconditional support; it is Nandi's friends in *Happiness* and Sade's in *The 30th candle* who organise their wedding events. When Linda in *The 30th candle* and Siz in *The madams* lose close family members, their girlfriends rally around them and help to cope with the bereavement and the practicalities of the burial event.

Despite the emotional intimacy and devotion, these relationships are not perfect. In the next chapter, I revisit and explore in detail the conflict that ensues between female friends. Because women's lives are interwoven intimately, it is inevitable that they experience tension and jealousies that produce extreme anxiety within the friendship. For

example, Thandi's decision to hire a white maid is driven by her desire to expose Lauren's inherent racism. Thandi's provocation results in 'The Great Catfight' (Wanner 2006, p.61) and this creates a rift between Thandi, on the one hand, and Siz and Lauren, on the other. When her friends refuse to speak to her for a month, Thandi feels isolated by the emotional distance,

> I was beginning to realise how cold it was on my own … I missed gossiping over the wall to Lauren. I missed getting my daily horoscope from her. I missed hearing the latest babymama drama from Siz. I missed moaning about Mandla to sympathetic ears. (p.63)

By interrogating racial tensions, *The madams* interprets chick lit differently. Wanner is using ideas of transnational feminism to grapple with issues of race. Although this sisterhood cuts across race, these best friends still have to negotiate South Africa's history of racial politics. With no emotional outlet, Thandi's entire life is out of kilter, and can only be restored when she reconciles with her friends. In *The 30th candle,* the disintegration of the friendship occurs when Dikeledi overhears Nolwazi confiding in Sade that Tebogo, Dikeledi's boyfriend, is the father of her daughter. Dikeledi is furious with Nolwazi, but she reserves her disappointment and resentment for Linda, who she feels has betrayed her by concealing this secret. After many months, the rupture in this friendship is sutured when they all meet to celebrate Dikeledi's wedding.

In most instances, women always find a way to resolve the conflicts amongst themselves, because sharing with one another helps them to recognize that they have different choices to make in their lives. The connections between these women are stronger than their romantic entanglements. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues that, within 'this secure and empathetic world, women share sorrows, anxieties, and joys, confident that their friends have experienced similar emotions' (1975, p.14). By providing emotional and physical support, these friends construct an alternative family; a self-selected one that meets their needs and replaces familial bonds in a modern society (Gerhard 2005). These female roles may seem conservative and have perhaps been cast as passive by male writers, as A. Marby (2006, p.205) points out; they are, 'after all, produced by and within the same male-dominated culture'. However, instead of joining their literary mothers in their rejection of these assigned roles, emerging writers embrace and re-inhabit them. They try to fill them with new content and activate them differently, but in the process, they find themselves implicated. But those implications are also the grounds from which they create new identities and relationships and

construct new imaginings of women's communities. Chick lit provides 'spaces for the expression of women's experiences and desires, suggesting possibilities for women outside the role of girlfriend, wife, or mother. In doing so, these "women's texts" truly are *for* women, presenting affirmative notions of female identity, sexuality, and community' (Rochelle 2006, p.205).

Finding 'Mr Big' versus 'Me-time'

In spite of the advances of the feminist movement, the modern woman's sense of identity as portrayed in chick lit is still 'inextricably bound to the shadow on the "Cult of True Womanhood", a nineteenth-century construction that positioned white women as the moral centre of families who reigned exclusively in the domestic sphere as a near-sacred calling. Men were meant to provide salary, women were to provide sanctity' (Guerrero 2006, p.93). Mainstream chick lit usually centres around the life of a 'singleton' desperately searching for the one entity that will complete her life, in other words, a husband – as seen in Bridget's search for 'Mr Darcy' in *Bridget Jones's diary* or Carrie's relationship with 'Mr Big' in *Sex and the city*. In contrast, the 'uprising genres' under discussion portray the lives of women in committed relationships and married women trying to negotiate their idea of womanhood beyond the constraints of domesticity. On the whole, the female characters depicted are privileged middle-class, independent, professional women who do not conform to the traditional stereotypes of femininity; they are successful in their own right, and not because of their male partners. These 'uprising genres' reflect on the challenges modern women face as they juggle their private and public lives. Harzewski (2011) defines this subset of chick lit as 'mommy lit'. 'Mommy lit' focuses on the anxieties and intricacies of female protagonists as they attempt to balance children, marriage, workplace politics, and 'me time'. These anxieties are articulated by Thandi when she acknowledges that she has failed to fulfil these roles:

> I am tired of having to be a Superslave at the office, a supermom to my son and a Superslut to my man. I am tired of the fact that if I do so much as indicate that I need 'Me' time, I have fallen short of the high standards set for me as a modern woman. (Wanner 2006, pp.ix-x)

The exceptions are Nobantu in *Happiness* who epitomises the 'Angel in the House', as she selflessly devotes her life to satisfying the needs of her husband and children, and Sade in *The 30th candle* who gives up her job when she gets married to Winston.

Love, marriage and all that jazz

To reiterate, the female protagonists seem to be caught in a double bind: as modern independent women, they try to undermine specific notions of femininity, but through their intimate relationships with men, they get entangled in a gendered struggle. In other words, love is a site for women's complicity in patriarchal relations, but it can also be a location of resistance to objectification (Jackson 1995). These 'uprising genres' focus on the 'happily ever after' that the 'singletons' in mainstream chick lit desperately desire. They explore the challenges that face women after they have settled down with 'Mr Big' or 'Mark Darcy', and expose the anxieties, tensions, conflicts and fears that undercut the idyllic suburban life.

On her 35th birthday, Nobantu's husband Andile throws her an extravagant party. In attendance are South Africa's rich, super rich and BEE nouveau rich. Her presents from Andile include a matching white gold bracelet and necklace, adorned with diamonds and tanzanite, an all expense trip for two to the Atlantic Fashion week and a brand new Jaguar with personalized number plates, Nobantu GP (Wanner 2008). However, when one of the guests asks her what she does for a living, Andile speaks for her 'Eish, sisi, our Nobantu here does nothing. She is just a housewife' (Wanner 2008, p.25). This insensitive and patronising comment compels Nobantu to reflect on her life, and she realises she has sacrificed her MBA, her ambitions, her sense of self. Nobantu recognizes that she has become the 'Angel in the House' (Woolf 1966); for fifteen years her sole purpose in life has been to soothe, to flatter and comfort her husband and children. She has no voice, no identity beyond that of 'housewife' and mother. Whenever she tries to broach the subject of her business, Andile simply dismisses her:

> Nobantu, we have talked about this. I know you are a trained auditor and have those little sketches of yours you call designs, but do not deceive yourself that you can crack it in the business world … Hhayi, man, why don't you concentrate on what you do best … 'Being a housewife and a mother'. (Wanner 2008, p.31)

He asserts his authority by threatening to divorce her if she defies him. Her need to affirm herself is constantly gagged, which creates tension in their marriage. But she is also implicated in her own subordination. She has become accustomed to living an extravagant lifestyle, and is aware that if he cuts her off financially she will lose most of her comforts. She contemplates whether she could 'leave him, slum it, and become – horror – middle-class: no maids, no manicures or pedicures, no gardeners?' (p.33). In addition, she has to contend with societal pressure as reflected in her mother's disapproval. Her mother thinks that she is

an ungrateful wife and should 'stay with [her] husband without complaining … As Aunt Thembi says, better to cry in a limousine than laugh in a taxi!' (p.33). It is not only the middle-class comforts mentioned above that are presented as generally liberating, but also patriarchal attitudes she has internalized that prevent her from pursuing her dreams of becoming a designer. It is only when Nobantu eavesdrops on her daughter saying, 'I know what I don't want to be. I don't want to be like my mother. She does boring stuff like going to the salon and getting her nails done all day. She just waits for Dad to pay for everything' (p.45). Once Nobantu's daughter vocalizes what her life has become, she resolves to kill the 'angel in the house'. She gains the courage to literally walk out on her husband, children and luxurious lifestyle to start her business. With the support and encouragement of her friends Tsholo and Ntsiki, she finally launches Soweto Uprising, a designer label for children. Her decision to establish a business is an act of resistance that takes her on a journey of self-discovery and enables her to define herself on her own terms, and not as Andile's wife. Through Nobantu, Wanner reveals that middle-class women face a complicated and contradictory set of expectations that are fragmented by class.

In *The madams*, Wanner critiques a different dimension of the power struggles that occur in marital relationships. In contrast to Nobantu, Siz feels that she needs to define herself beyond her career. She wants to be a wife and mother. However, being a wife is not what she envisages and it comes with its own set of complications. She resents that she has to raise Vuyo's sons, while she cannot have children because of her infertility. To compound her problems, she walks in on Vuyo having sex with the maid in her bed. Tumi in *Happiness* is in a similar position. Tshepo betrays her when he impregnates a fellow employee. Like Nobantu, Tumi has been the perfect wife. Enraged by his actions she confronts Tshepo:

> All these years all I've done is support and support you. I've taken so much *shit* from you without complaining. I've stood by you when nobody wanted to … I've lied to my family and friends to protect you, and what do I get in return? A pregnant twenty-one-year-old. … The sight of you makes me sick. This isn't the kind of marriage I entered into. I'm done with you, with this. (Jele 2010, p.214)

Both women refuse to see themselves as victims, recognizing that they are not responsible for their husbands' infidelity. Their acts of defiance manifest in different ways. First, they confront their husbands: Siz goes as far as to pull out her Magnum .44 and shoot Vuyo not too far from his crotch. Secondly, they evict their husbands from their homes, which they claim as their domain and not the patriarchal home. In a patriarchal society, where 'a man is a

man ... is the head of the family and deserves to be treated with respect, no matter how angry you are at him' (p.247), these acts challenge accepted societal norms while affirming their independence as modern women. However, both women resolve to reconcile with their husbands, despite their friends' protestations. Tumi endeavours to articulate her predicament; marital 'issues are complicated and each couple's situation is different. We all make decisions that we feel are good for us' (p.284). Her explanation illustrates that it is not a decision taken lightly. Although both women feel betrayed by their husbands, they still love them. Elsewhere, Saba Mahmood (2001) suggests that we should not think of agency as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that is enabled and created by specific relations of subordination. Their friends see their reunions as being complicit, but both women set the terms of their reconciliations as a way of redefining their positions in their marriages. As Siz says, 'this time, their relationship would be run by her rules. Vuyo had destroyed the trust that was the fabric of their relationship and for this he had to pay. He would have to prove that it was only her he wanted if they were to be together again' (Wanner 2006, p.117). Vuyo has to sign a post-marital agreement, and Pertunia is forced to give Siz full custody of her unborn child with Vuyo. Tumi takes Tshepo back on condition that they go into therapy, he supports his unborn child emotionally and financially, but all communication with Nomkhosi is controlled by Tumi. Siz and Tumi use their husbands' infidelities to establish their own bargaining power and power over the home. The narratives present women with alternative strategies. This attempt at reconstructing the boundaries of their marital relationships also problematizes the power relations in marriage:

> love relationships are often seen as egalitarian, the compulsiveness and insecurity of romantic passion implies a struggle for power. To be in love is to be powerless, at the mercy of the other, but it also holds out the promise of power, if enslaving the other in the bonds of love. This may be part of the specific appeal of love for women – that it is the only way they can gain power over a man. (Jackson 1995, p.54)

These novels problematize and rewrite various aspects of marriage, love and the inherent gendered struggles. Nobantu fights to be recognized as a business woman, Siz and Tumi have to confront their husbands' infidelity, while Sade in *The 30th candle* and Lauren in *The madams* have to deal with physically abusive partners.

'Having it all'

Chick lit also explores how middle-class women attempt to juggle the responsibilities in the work environment and their personal lives. All the other female characters occupy a wide range of positions in diverse sectors of the work environment. These 'uprising genres' differ from mainstream chick lit where most of the protagonists are restricted to specific jobs in publishing, public relations, advertising and journalism. For example Vera, the protagonist in *Whispers,* works as an administrator, with possibilities of career advancement, so when she is promoted to work in the regional office in West Africa and offered a package that includes a salary increment, free international medical care and free education for her children, she sees this as a lifetime opportunity to consolidate her career. Her husband Eric, however, thinks that she should focus her energies on strengthening their marriage rather than advancing her career. Vera insists on taking the job, but after two years declines to renew her contract because she desperately misses her husband and children back in Kampala.

In *The madams*, Thandi grew up in exile, and studied in the United Kingdom and Hawaii before she returns to South Africa to work as Executive Director in the provincial Department of Tourism. Her friend Nosizwe's parents may be self-made millionaires with struggle credentials, but when she returns from the United States of America, she is employed as an Executive for a French Multinational company where she discovers that in spite of her impeccable qualifications she is there to fulfil employment equity quotas. She quips: my 'blackness was imperative and my intelligence apparently just an added advantage, so I forever have to prove myself to those white boys in suits' (Wanner 2006, pp.3-4). 'If Nosizwe was born with a beaded silver spoon in her mouth, Lauren was born with a wooden one' (p.9). Although her father inherited a vineyard, he squandered his inheritance, raising Lauren as an *Angloplaasmeisie* without the *plaas*. Regardless of her poor background, she won a scholarship to study at Wits University where she now works as a lecturer in the Department of English. The four characters in *Happiness* also occupy different positions: Nandi is a junior partner at an accounting firm, Zaza is a self-employed philanthropist who owns an orphanage and an exclusive boutique; Princess is a formidable lawyer who specializes in promoting and protecting the rights of women and children, while Tumi has chosen to use her Master's degree to focus on primary school education. In *The 30th candle*, Linda is a TV producer, Dikeledi a Psychology lecturer, Nolwazi a talented fashion designer and Sade an accounts manager. The representation of successful women indicates that chick lit 'advocates neither a retreat from the workforce nor a uniform condemnation of this retreat;

instead, humour, [and] the protagonist's finding potential or actual solutions work to fortify the reader with confidence that her chosen path and goals are achievable and not selfish' (Harzewski 2011, p.172). Chick lit allows emerging writers to reveal that for the modern women, 'having it all' comes with conflicting pressures of negotiating family and professional careers.

Top Billing: the best of the good life

In spite of these conflicting pressures, these are professional women with a disposable income that gives them access to all the trappings of a middle-class lifestyle. They reside in affluent suburbs, drive expensive cars, wear designer brands and can afford to take an overseas holiday. Their income also allows them to spend a great deal of time on middleclass female rituals such as shopping at exclusive boutiques, eating at upmarket restaurants, and pampering sessions at lavish resort spas. These modern spaces are reminiscent of traditional female spaces, but they can only be accessed by credit and debit cards with the attendant consequence of debt. While having manicures and pedicures, sipping cocktails or sharing a meal, these friends also engage in intimate conversations which function as 'the pauses where [they] make sense of their lives, where they try to sort out what matters and what does not. They measure themselves against each other, listening in sympathy or outrage to how one of their friends might handle the same situation' (Gerhard 2005, p.43). These bonding rituals permit them to be vulnerable, strengthen their relationships with one another and leaves them feeling revitalized. At one of their weekly brunches, Thandi expresses the significance of these rituals when she remarks that for 'one crazy afternoon we could pretend it was a woman's world and the men just live in it' (Wanner 2006, p.54). Conspicuous consumption and consumerism are characteristics that the 'uprising genres' share with mainstream chick lit. Detractors of chick lit may disapprove of this excessive consumption; nevertheless, these are independent women with disposable income, their 'extravagant' spending represents a source of pleasure and conscious self-fashioning that can potentially resist male control (Arthurs 2003; Van Slooten 2006, cited in Butler & Desai 2008). Such readings understand the novels' representation of consumption not as a series of purchases or goods, but as an integrated aspect of subject-production that defines identities, agency, and material location. Butler and Desai assert that

> conspicuous consumption of particular kinds of feminine items – high-heeled shoes, designers clothing, mixed drinks, vibrators – attests to the neoliberal agency of the

> woman as an individual located in global capitalism, signifying through the ability both to earn and to spend capital on non-essential goods that are specifically metonymic for feminine sexual and gender agency. (Butler & Desai 2008, p.10)

In a different context, Sarah Nuttall (2004) uses the phrase 'stylizing the self', to capture these forms of self-making. 'Stylizing the self refers to how people seek to transform themselves into singular beings, to make their lives into an oeuvre that carries with it stylistic criteria, as well as the emergence of explicit forms of selfhood within the public domain' (Nuttall, 2004, p.431). Nuttall explains that these forms of self-making are an explicitly middle-class culture that reveals 'significant and interesting practices of inscription, transcription, and transfiguration' (p.450) in modern-day South Africa. In *The madams*, Siz represents the consummate consumer whose sense of self is intrinsically linked to extravagant shopping sprees and the designer label she purchases from London, Milan and Paris, the fashion capitals of the world. Fashion provides her with a way to express her identity. As Jessica Lyn Van Slooten notes, fashion and 'modernity go hand in hand to produce modern personalities who seek their identities in constantly new and trendy clothes, looks, attitudes and behaviour, and who are fearful of being out of date or unfashionable' (2006, p.220). Critics, on the other hand, would have us believe that fashion is a frivolous preoccupation that inculcates women with a debilitating femininity and makes them unwitting dupes of capitalism (Ferris &Young 2006). But Zaza in *Happiness* can be seen as a strategic consumer who disrupts this idea by using her penchant for fashion to open an exclusive shoe boutique. She also uses her business acumen to tap into her husband's business circle. By catering for an exclusive wealthy clientele she is able to use her profits as sustainable income to finance her orphanage.

Nonetheless, one needs to acknowledge the contradictions in consumerism; for Siz and Zaza shopping is a pleasurable activity that temporarily fulfils their emotional needs, but it also camouflages the insecurities and anxieties in their personal and professional lives (Van Slooten 2006, p.219). In the case of Siz, she spends an exorbitant amount of time and money buying her clothes from international designers; yet she wears the clothes once before donating them to a halfway house. Could she be using shopping as an emotional crutch to help her cope with her failure to have a child? Psychologists Annette Liberman and Vicki Linder (cited in Van Slooten 2006, p.221) explain that Siz experiences a disorder called 'moneyfolly' – she is a consumer who does not make rational decisions on how she wants to use her money; instead, she spends in order to resolve emotional problems. According to

Colin Campbell, for Siz the idea and act of shopping are pleasurable activities, but the actual products are not as important as the fantasy revolving around the products. The culture of conspicuous consumption becomes a vicious cycle which shows Siz desiring a product, acquiring it, and becoming disillusioned, because the reality of the product does not match up to the fantasy in her imagination. Instead, what remains is the constant longing to find a new product that will 'serve as replacement objects of desire' (cited in Van Slooten 2006, pp.222-223). These women have the financial means to experience the very best life has to offer. But underlying their independence are anxieties about age, beauty and romantic relationships.

Sex in the city: female desire, female eroticism

Chick lit is a genre that explicitly foregrounds issues of women's sexual desires and pleasures. For emerging writers, writing about female desire is an audacious move because in most African societies women only affirm their sexual pleasures in private (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997a). For example, Tamale (2005) in her analysis of eroticism and sensuality among Baganda women argues that in contemporary Buganda, although women's sexuality is recognised, there is a fear of it. Tamale reckons this is why society bars women from expressing their sexuality in the public domain. It is only acceptable when it is confined to the hidden realm of women's secrets. However, the narratives of emerging writers reveal that female sexual desire that is independent of procreation is intrinsic to female identity.

Vera, the protagonist in *Whispers*, begins by confiding in Jane:

> I wish to announce that I have fallen in love with the man of my dreams. I have been dying to tell you! Where have you been? I called your mobile number, your office, your home … even sent you messages and letters … I have never experienced anything like this. I mean, at 30, I thought I would never feel like this again. (Kyomuhendo 2002a, p.3)

Although Vera's desire is apparently for a man, her eagerness to communicate this to Jane is even more important, because of the bond that the two share. The desire for the man strengthens and activates the desire for her friend. As mentioned earlier, the connection between female friends in the novels is much deeper than their romantic affairs. These long-lasting bonds offer women a comfortable space in which to have candid conversations about their sexual experiences and pleasures. They find it difficult to convey these frank discussions to their intimate partners. After declaring her new love interest, Vera's excitement is not so much about finding the 'the right man', it is about the way he makes her feel sexually

desirable. She derives pleasure from her sexual intercourse with Eric, which makes her feel like a desirable sexual subject and not an object of desire.

She divulges this when she tells Jane:

> I think we had the best sex ever since I got Kenny…. He was so gentle and we did a lot of foreplay … I must have come three times and, somehow, he managed to sustain the erection up to 30 minutes (I thinnnnk!) for each round. And before each round, he asked me if I was ready to come, so that we would explode together. (p.19)

In African women's writing, authors such as Like Werewere Liking, Véronique Tadjo, Ken Bugul and Calixthe Beyala, Kyomuhendo, Wanner and Makholwa, tend to be explicit about issues of female sexuality. In her extensive research on sexuality in middle-class Nairobi, Rachel Spronk observes that most literature approaches female sexuality in relation to marriage, circumcision, reproductive health, motherhood and as '"something devouring and lethal", as in the case of prostitutes' (2012, p.169). However, the emerging writers are pushing against these limited representations as they attempt to tell the truth about the experiences of the female body (Woolf, 1966). In a patriarchal society where it is taboo to openly speak about sexuality, especially female desire, by 'speaking the unspeakable', Kyomuhendo has infuriated male critics who are uncomfortable with her bluntness and dismiss her by labelling her a 'vaginalist' (Kiguli 2007, p.181). Susan Kiguli, who takes exception to this label, argues that

> we should not let anyone refer to us by choosing a mere part of our body. I propose that even though we still have to make ourselves as women writers understood by our audience, we should not let the institution of patriarchy drag us back to square one. In essence, we should refuse to be part of the victims that patriarchy glories in creating just because we are writing differently from the so-called accepted norm. (2007, p.181)

In her own defence, Kyomuhendo (2007b) maintains that she explores the issues of female eroticism because she wants to tell women's stories from their perspective and has to portray their experiences in their totality, including their fears, anxieties and desires around sex and sexuality. It is through sexual pleasure, a desire for intimacy, expressions of love and erotic expression that women begin to define themselves in new ways (Spronk 2012). Nonetheless, as Spronk points out, for women sexual pleasure is ambiguous; on the one hand, modern

women can use it to define their selves, but underlying this desire is a need to conform to conventional notions of femininity.

As wives and mothers, Zaza in *Happiness*, Thandi in *The madams*, and Vera in *Whispers* more or less adhere to traditional forms of femininity. However, the novels depict them frustrated with marriages that push them into extra-marital affairs. Zaza is married to Bheki Zulu, who owns a thriving construction company. They own a three million rand house, she has a successful business, two sons she adores and a devoted husband. She does not lack any material things, but she feels suffocated in a passionless marriage. Maybe it is because Zaza did not have the same educational opportunities as her friends. Like Fiks in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*, her fantasy was to become a supermodel gracing the covers of fashion magazines around the world. That dream was shattered when she fell pregnant. She herself admits, 'sometimes you have everything and yet you have nothing' (Jele, 2010, p.191). In her therapy sessions, she complains of 'a nagging void and immense feeling of dissatisfaction' (p.123). This unhappiness with her life may stem from the way in which she perceives herself: on the outside she exudes confidence, inwardly she regards herself as 'an uneducated township girl who had struck it lucky with a wealthy man' (p.193). Zaza's act of resistance and self-definition is in the form of sexual pleasure that temporarily masks the emptiness in her life. She has an affair with Bongani, himself a married man. The relationship, which is sexually satisfying and intellectually stimulating, becomes complicated when Bongani decides to leave his wife for Zaza. She confides in Nandi, 'I like the guy and the sex is amazing. I haven't been this excited in a long time' (p.78), but when he begins to contemplate divorce, she puts an end to their relationship. She confesses, 'I'll never choose him over my family … Never. [The sex] isn't enough for me to throw away everything I have' (p.78). Although Zaza's is emotionally distant from her husband, she cannot leave the marriage because it gives her access to money, luxury and a family. The affair is a necessary distraction that provides her with a space in which she can momentary escape:

> we're two unhappily married individuals who get together to talk and enjoy each other's company, and we have obligations to our families. But now I'm supposed to see his point of view, leave my husband and small children and move into a shabby apartment in Sunnyside. How crazy does that sound? (p.76)

She colludes in her own unhappiness when she opts to remain in her marriage. On the one hand, she wants to break out and find ways of defining herself outside of this patriarchal structure, on the other, she is astutely aware of the price that she will have to pay. This

complex paradox is also evident in Vera's sexual life. She has casual sex with Ben, her husband's best friend, a sexual encounter that transpires as she is consoling him over the dissolution of his marriage. She says,

> I came so hard that I screamed, … [Ben] said I was simply prolific and that kind of thing had not happened to him in a long time. (A full erection and explosive orgasm). I suppose it was because I was in 'my "bad" days. Just before I ovulate, I normally get hot-hot and excrete plenty of juices even when I am not having sex.' (Kyomuhendo 2002, p.62)

Her 'bad' day is a great day for Ben, who persuades her to continue the affair. But immediately after the sex, she experiences anxiety when her periods are late. Thinking that she may be pregnant with Ben's child, she considers an abortion, and seduces Eric so as to conceal her secret. Like Zaza, she does not regret the sexual act, but she is afraid of the consequences of being found out. Subsequently, Vera resorts to masturbation to satisfy her sexual needs as a married woman. By exploring Vera's body as an erotic zone, a zone of pleasure but also as a zone of suffering and a privileged site of self-knowledge, Kyomuhendo denounces the female body as object and breaks the silence to create a new space in which she can explore socio-political issues (Cazenave 2000). Thandi, in *The madams* on the other hand, discovers that Mandla has been cheating on her and exacts revenge by going to Victoria Falls where she enjoys a weekend of primal, passionate, beautiful, guiltless sex. She admits:

> What happened … should not, in ordinary circumstances, have happened, but these weren't ordinary circumstances and I felt good knowing that I was giving the middle finger to my husband. The alcohol, and the presence of an attractive … intelligent male was a gift from the goddess of revenge. (Wanner 2006, p.194)

Her rebellion is liberating. After this passionate weekend, she is in a position to let go of her anger, forgive her husband and move on with her life and marriage.

Zaza, Vera and Thandi are aware that they are acting outside traditional notions of femininity. Their affairs are based on sexual lust and not romantic love. As Odile Cazenave astutely argues, 'desire is recognized for its purely sexual pleasure, in its desire of the body, of the other, but also in its longing for oneself' (2000, p.143). Spronk argues elsewhere that 'female pleasure is represented as non-existent before marriage, and as passive thereafter' (2012, p.169). For these married women female desire cannot be ignored or disregarded; it is a reality, but one that is inherently ambiguous. Most African societies lock women into a

structure that controls women's sexual desire, because in most patriarchal societies property is passed on to a male child. In order to guarantee the legitimacy of children, monogamy is mandatory for women, but sexuality for men is normalised (Tamale 2005). This inhibiting environment defines them in ways that are delimiting. Zaza, Vera and Thandi's sexual liaisons are an attempt to deconstruct the concept of marriage. Unfortunately this self-definition is mostly ephemeral, and this constrained agency cannot be sustained because of economic and societal restrictions. Spronk maintains that 'women express a critical attitude towards conventional notions of femininity, they also internalize certain constructions of femininity that are at odds with change. However, they are not simply victims of patriarchal structures but are also partly accountable for reproducing these structures' (2012, p.172)

> [t]heir experiences and their wishes relate to conventional discourses that discourage particular expressions of their sexuality, as well as with those more liberal discourses that encourage them to explore sexuality. As a result, women often express an ambiguous attitude, so as to conform to conventional notions of femininity, while actually undermining these conventions by being or representing the 'modern woman'. (p.141)

It is important to point out that contemporary ideals of romantic love tend to be framed within the context of heterosexual and patriarchal social and cultural order, which negates the experiences of those who resist the constraints of compulsory heterosexual love (Jackson 1995). In spite of its self-assured interrogation of female sexuality, most of the 'uprising genres' of chick lit side-step the issue of lesbian love, with the exception of Makholwa, who hints at it. [121] It is only Wanner who attempts to explore same-sex relationships in her narratives.[122] Wanner's portrayal of a lesbian relationship between Marita and Maria undermines chick lit's preoccupation with heteronormative sexuality. This relationship, which cuts across race and class lines, is the only intimate relationship that does not have any anxiety or tension. Marita and Maria share an emotional intensity and devotion that is trustworthy and long lasting. Wanner offers lesbian love as an ideal intimacy outside the

[121] Jessica Murray (2011) notes that there has been a silencing of the representations of lesbianism in contemporary South African and Ugandan literature. However, there are a few narratives that explore lesbian relationships: 'Jambula Tree' by Monica de Arac Nyeko (2006) 'No Rosa, No District 6' (2006) by Rozena Maart, *Reclaiming in the L Word: Sappho's daughters out in Africa* (2011) edited by Alleyn Diesel, *Miriam dancing: Outing the stories of women who love women* (2009) edited by Elise Van Wyk, Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*, Yvette Christiansë's *Unconfessed* (2006), *The Lazarus effect* (2010) by HJ Golakai and *This book betrays my brother* (2012) by Kagiso Lesego Molope.

[122] *Behind every successful man* and *Men of the South* both deal with same-sex relationships.

conventional notions of femininity, but she does not romanticize it. Instead, she uses Maria's story to foreground the dangers that lesbians living in the township have to contend with. Maria is sent to jail because she has assaulted a man who raped her for being a lesbian.

In most patriarchal societies, 'women have limited powers of sexual negotiation, in conformity with the social values of submission, patience and endurance that characterise ideal femininity' (Diallo 2005, p.183). But for Kyomuhendo, Wanner, Jele and Makholwa chick lit provides the space to reflect on and articulate women's desires. Through the chronicling of women's sexual pleasures and experiences, women are perceived not as mere objects, but as subjects of sex (Gerhard 2005). Their sexual desire and sexual pleasure become symbolic of their identity as contemporary women (Spronk 2012). By speaking about the modern woman's body and sexual desires, these emerging writers disrupt, undermine and break the silence around traditional constructions of gender. Although their literary foremothers began the conversation on sexual desire, in the narratives of emerging writers it is less marginal and more dominant. Sexual politics for women holds 'an empowering subtext, reflected through resistance, negotiation, identity, self-desire and silence' (Tamale 2005, p.29).

Macho, macho men: violent masculinities

Chapter two explored how the fictional representations of post-repressive regimes portray violent masculinities that some men use to maintain power and control over women. In *The 30th candle* and *The madams,* Sade and Lauren respectively find themselves in destructive and damaging marriages. When Sade marries Winston, he persuades her to quit her successful career. He earns a six-figure salary, 'they live in a fancy estate, with all the trappings of a modern BEE couple' (Makholwa 2009, p.185); he convinces Sade to embrace Nobantu's lifestyle, and concentrate on being a wife and a mother. Sade acquiesces because of her troubled past and numerous insecurities. As a carefree university student, Sade expressed her sexuality freely. Her defiance of societal norms on how young women are supposed to portray themselves, earns her the nickname of university mattress. When she gets pregnant by Malusi, she decides to abort the child, an act that enrages him. He threatens and accuses her of being a murderer. Unable to deal with his psychotic behaviour she moves from Durban to Johannesburg, where she manages to repress her past and reinvent herself as a born-again Christian. This form of Christianity affords her the opportunity to atone for her past. And the validation of this new identity comes through Winston, who is attracted to her. 'Sade looked at her reflection in the mirror … before leaving for her date with Winston.

Hmmm Winston … he was too good to be true! … What a blessing he'd turned out to be. The perfect man, principled, exciting, loving and sensitive' (p.13). Although the signs that he is a controlling, domineering man are there from the beginning, she refuses to recognise them. Six months into the marriage when Winston finds out about her past sexual encounters, he becomes extremely violent:

> he took off his belt and lashed it against her violently. Ignoring her crying pleas, he pinned her to the ground and pulled open her gown, exposing her naked body. He pulled down his zipper with such urgent violence … Then he opened her legs forcefully and spread them wide a like an animal forced to give birth. … he thrust himself into her shocked, dry opening until she was bleeding. (p.153)

This violent form of intimate betrayal is also experienced by Lauren in *The madams*. From the beginning of her married life, Mike has emotionally and physically abused her. These struggles reflect and reinforce patriarchal ideology concerning gender power and sexuality – it is played out on women's bodies. It takes places in the intimacy of the home, where Winston and Mike expect their wives to be submissive, to entertain, gratify and satisfy only their needs. Violence is about enforcing notions of passive femininity through male power and dominance. In a society in which marital rape is relatively new on the statute books and often not recognized, these novels present it as a valid category and educate women about their marital rights. Sade and Lauren conceal the turmoil they endure because of the social stigma attached to spousal abuse. 'Wife-beating … is seen as an interactive process in which … the women started out feeling loved and interpreted male possessiveness as a gesture of commitment; only later did this sense of possession escalate into paranoid violence at the least threat to the husband's control or "patriarchal rights"' (Dobash and Dobash 1979 cited in Levi & Maguire 2002, p.819). This constant abuse erodes Sade's and Lauren's self-respect and dignity: because they have internalized societal expectations of marriage, they cannot share their frustrations and anguish with their closest friends. They bottle up the emotional anguish and hide the physical evidence on their bodies. The novels seem to suggest that confiding in your girlfriends is a constructive way of dealing with an abusive marital relationship. Because, it is only when Sade and Lauren open up to their friends that are they able to get the assistance and reassurance they need to break free from this cycle of abuse. Lauren gains the courage to endure a gruesome legal battle that ends the abuse and her marriage and restores her sense of self. Sade divorces Winston after she learns about his role in the death of a prostitute. Violence on women's bodies takes different variations; it occurs

in the intimacy of the domestic space, as in the case of Lauren, Sade and Nkwanzi, or it is used as a tool of torture as in the case of Tihelo; or it occurs outside the home, as will be discussed in relation to serial killers in the next section.

Through chick-lit, emerging writers draw attention to female friendships, consumer culture and female sexual desire. These spaces accommodate particular resistant kinds of new subjectivities. The acts of resistance play out in their intimate relationships in the form of tactical compliance, constrained agency and conscious strategy. These new subjectivities of the modern woman disrupt traditional notions of femininity. The attainment of political, economic, social and cultural freedoms encourages women to construct new identities: the new woman is successful, independent and assertive. However, the novels reveal that patriarchal structures continue to produce normative forms of femininity and masculinity, so new female identities generate intense anxiety that makes some of the male characters feel emasculated. For example, Andile, Nobantu's husband who has internalized these forms of masculinity, describes himself as a culturalist whose role as a man is to provide for his wife and children. When Andile's mother-in-law finds out that Nobantu has left to start her business, she questions his manhood, while reinforcing these attitudes

> [h]ow you can allow it is beyond me. What type of husband are you, wena? Don't you care what people say?' 'But, Mama, … it was her choice. I can't force her to see things the way I want her to.' 'Hhayi bo, and this is the boy who went to the bush and came out saying 'ndiyindoda?' 'Okay, if you don't know how to sort this out, or you are too proud, I will come ndizoilungisa myself. (Wanner 2008, p.124)

His mother-in-law articulates how traditional structures perceive Nobantu's new-found independence. As his wife steps out of the domestic space, an obsolete Andile is left threatened, undermined and powerless by this act of defiance. In desperation he asks his friend Anant:

> where do I fit in? What can I give her that she cannot give herself? You see, … my role has always been that of provider. I was the guy in the driver's seat. Now, suddenly, she doesn't need me. This business thing has destroyed the fabric of who I thought I was in this relationship (139).

In an attempt to restrict Nobantu's independence and regain control, Andile denies her access to their finances to coerce her into returning into the realm of the domestic, a futile move that fuels her determination to succeed in spite of him. Although these novels are primarily about

feminine subjectivities, they also explore issues of masculinity, in particular issues of emasculation. In a bid to re-domesticate their wives, the male characters address their feelings of emasculation in different ways; for Andile, it is via financial control, but for Mandla and Vuyo in *The madams* it is through acts of infidelity. When their illicit sexual acts are exposed, they have the audacity to blame their wives. Although Thandi and Siz are devoted wives, their husbands feel threatened by their independence as modern women. This is evident in the women they choose for their affairs. Mandla has an affair with Norma, a nursing sister, and Vuyo sleeps with Pertunia, the domestic worker who takes care of the house and is more maternal towards his children than Siz. In other words, these women are the antithesis of their wives; they are not 'tough, independent self-reliant [children] of the struggle (Wanner 2006, p.171), but subservient women ready to sacrifice themselves to please the men. They embody passive forms of femininity and provide the kind of affirmation that Mandla and Vuyo yearn for from their wives.

Winston's and Mike's perception of powerlessness pushes them to use excessive forms of violence to control, dominate and manipulate their wives. Winston becomes obsessed with his wife's sexual history after he hears about her previous lovers. His is a perverted form of obsession; first he is extremely violent, landing her in hospital; second, he continually cross-examines her about her past sexual encounters: 'one night ... he kept her up for hours, demanding that she tell him exactly how many men she had slept with and what she had done with them. He had wanted graphic details of sexual positions, how many times and where' (Makholwa 2009, p.204). He begins an affair with one of the church members, but when Sade threatens him with divorce, he is quick to claim that he is the victim – Sade has pushed him to violence and adultery. Her 'indiscretions' with other men have 'contaminated' him. Mike experiences similar fits of rage. When a man starts a conversation with Lauren in a bar, 'Mike came and dragged [her] off by the roots of [her] hair' (Wanner 2006, p.122). Both men seek control by instilling fear and violating the bodies of their wives, whom they regard as objects to be possessed. Both men demand that their wives exemplify "'the cult of femininity'. This patriarchal attitude is displayed by Winston:

> When I asked you to become my wife, you were an angel in my eyes … I've always seen you as my ideal woman. Beautiful, principled, intelligent, God-fearing … you were all these things and more … much more. But the discovery, Sade … the discovery about your past … it almost broke me. (Makholwa 2009, p.207)

Winston has internalized traditional views that encourage women's virginity as a 'source of respectability because it proves self-mastery, maturity and decency' (Diallo 2005, p.174). Winston expects Sade to be virginal, submissive, docile; instead, her past sexual liaisons leave him feeling emasculated. In his eyes Sade has morphed into a 'fallen woman' who must be disciplined for her actions. His sense of powerlessness makes him predisposed to enact excessive and aggressive posturing as he over-compensates for his perceived weaknesses (Musila 2007). Violent masculinities assert power, exert control and demand submissiveness. Modern women's attempt to refashion themselves rejects particular forms of femininity. But instead, they are perceived as 'unruly women'. This produces tensions and conflict in their intimate relationships. In order to re-claim their masculinity, the male characters resort to varying forms of control to rein in their wives. Therefore, violence becomes an instrument to bolster male dominance and instil fear and terror, and intimidate and humiliate women.

In conclusion, these narratives may be dismissed as frivolous and superficial, but emerging writers use the genre to reflect on the challenges faced and advances made by middle-class women in post-repressive regimes. *The madams* aptly captures the position of the modern woman:

> *Makhulu* keeps telling me how happy we sistahs should be that we are living in the age of the liberated women where we can do what we want. But are we really liberated? At least in her day the gender roles were clearly defined. Man went to work and brought back money for rent, fees and clothing and woman tended house and her thirty-meter square vegetable patch. Sure, unlike me, that woman did not have a choice about whether to be a professional woman or a housewife, but that choice enslaves my generation because we are still expected to play traditional roles to perfection. (Wanner 2006, p.x)

Unlike earlier generations when gender roles were clearly defined, women's liberation and post-repressive regimes have created the impression that women have several choices, but embedded in those choices is an expectation for women to continue to adhere to past traditional roles. For Thandi, in spite of the strides made at 'the revolutionary Beijing conference' (Wanner p.172), women are still frustrated by insidious, pervading traditional structures. A close examination of chick lit from Uganda and South Africa reveals that it resonates with middle-class women in contemporary society because it explores their realities. Chick lit also exposes the inherent contradictions, complexities, tensions and

ambiguities of modern women as they continuously push against patriarchal boundaries, trying to transform their roles and attempting to construct new forms of feminine subjectivities.

Murder she wrote: creating female sleuths and solving crime

> *Women who write crime fiction may yet be the ultimate subversives. The shock troops of feminists come and go, the backlash swells, but, ignoring the tumult, nice women sit down to typewriters and word processors and create deceptions. (Claire McNab)*[123]

The second section of this chapter focuses the spotlight on three emerging writers who draw on various elements of crime fiction and use the genre as a vehicle for social commentary and political critique of post-repressive regimes. *The deadly ambition* by Glaydah Namukasa, *Red ink* by Angela Makholwa, and *The Lazarus effect* by HJ Golakai rescript a masculinist genre by offering a female perspective that subverts, disrupts, destabilizes, and problematizes the dominant discourse of crime fiction. It could be argued that the emerging writers are not true to any particular subgenre of crime fiction. Instead, they distort the boundaries by borrowing and amalgamating different subgenres to create a hybridised gendered genre that foregrounds local concerns. For that reason, this section uses the broad term crime fiction to refer to the narratives of emerging writers that have crime and criminal acts as their primary concern.[124] Although the popularity of contemporary crime fiction surpasses all other literary genres, crime fiction, like romantic fiction and chick lit, has also been marginalised within literary studies (Worthington 2011).[125] Yet, female authors of crime fiction have successfully adopted

[123] quoted in Walton & Jones 1999, p.10.

[124] Crime fiction comprises various subgenres. These include but are not limited to the clue-puzzle, the 'hardboiled' or private eye story, while the police procedural, the psychological thriller continues to thrive. However, as Matzke & Mühleisen note, the boundaries of the genre in contemporary crime narratives have become blurred and indistinct. These narratives stretch 'over a wide range of registers, themes and styles, from pulp fiction to highly literary novels with the elements of crime, from cosy mysteries with a sense of closure to fragmented narratives focusing on racial tensions, gender conflicts or the morals of violence' (2006, p.2).

[125] 'More crime fiction is bought for and borrowed from libraries than any other genre of fiction. Best-seller lists in newspapers and magazines invariably include crime fiction titles; bookshops have dedicated crime fiction sections;

and politicised this strongly gendered genre for feminist purposes throughout the twenty-first century.[126]

Detractors of feminist crime fiction tend to regard it as a complacent acceptance of a patriarchal social structure that is out of synch with the tenets of feminism. Stephen Knight notes the following complaints:

> Palmer speaks of 'a discrepancy of values' (1997:89) and Maassen sees feminist crime fiction as at best 'the carrier of a compromised feminist message' (1998:154), … Babener sees 'female sleuths' as 'deputy henchman for patriarchy' (1995:146) and Geason calls the feminist private eye 'Marlowe in drag'. (1993, p.116 cited in Knight 2004, p.163)

Admittedly, crime fiction is a strongly masculine genre that tends to contribute to the peripheral place of women in patriarchal social structures. For example, women characters in crime narratives tend to occupy marginal positions; when they do take more central roles as investigators, according to Heather Worthington 'they are shown to be deviant from social expectations and norms' (2011, p.109). More typically the archetypal victims' refusal to conform to and comply with masculine notions of femininity always seems to contribute in some way to their downfall. Women are represented as passive and dependent on men for assistance or protection, or as the dangerous and deceitful femme fatale whose sexuality and economic independence produces gender anxieties that disrupt the patriarchal system.

Proponents, on the other hand, advocate for the destabilizing potential of feminist revisions of crime fiction formulae, whether these take the form of a refusal of narrative convention or subversion of social norms (Wilson 2001; Worthington 2011). However, as Walton and Jones convincingly argue, genre fiction is never simply subversive or essentially conservative; instead, it serves as a 'relational, conventional, contradictory location that tends to complicate in practice any simple either/or categorization' (1999, p.89).

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television and film offer many and varied interpretations of the genre' (Worthington 2011, p.ix). In addition, these tensions where evident in a crime fiction debate that took place on The Stellenbosch literary project website Slipnet in 2011.

[126] It is important to note that in the early nineteenth century women writers such as Louise May Alcott, Harriet Prescott Spofford and Anna Katherine Green were writing sensational crime-inflicted stories. In addition, writers such as Agatha Christie with her feminised Poirot, elderly spinster-detective Miss Marple, and Gladys Mitchell's fiercely independent Mrs Lestrange Bradley have been quietly promoting proto-feminist values but all these female crime writers still operated within the expectations of masculine order (Knight 2004; Worthington 2011).

Feminist crime fiction is a distinct subgenre that uses an established popular formula to investigate criminal violations, but also the 'more general offenses in which the patriarchal power structure of contemporary society itself is potentially incriminated' (Walton & Jones 1999, p.4). In other words, the plot is explicitly feminist and addresses feminist concerns. For women writers, crime fiction is a political vehicle that articulates female autonomy, women's aspirations towards equal opportunity and recognition of difference (Wilson 2001; Knight 2004; and Worthington 2011). Female authors use crime fiction to reveal that women can thrive in a male-gendered field as writers or fictional female investigators. Feminist crime fiction typically features a female protagonist who has an intimate connection with family and friends, experiences romantic predicaments, has the ability to empathise with victims of crime and is physically vulnerable to violence (Worthington 2011). According to Worthington, feminist crime fiction locates the job of the investigator as one of the previously male-dominated occupations to which women demand equal access and in which they can demonstrate 'equal efficiency and achieve equal success' (2011, p.113). The function of the female sleuth is to abide by and systematically disturb the expected continuity between gender and genre (Higginson 2008).

Implicit in the narratives of crime fiction produced by emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa is an overt feminist social agenda: their representation of women in crime fiction undermines a dominant masculinist genre.[127] Emerging writers embrace crime fiction, because as women they are more vulnerable and experience anxiety in a world that is predominantly patriarchal. The act of writing crime therefore allows for women's individual and collective agency. Walton and Jones argue that in rescripting crime fiction, emerging writers attempt to intervene within prescribed structures of society and reveal 'women's engagement with narrative as a critical strategy' (1999, p.90). They use the genre to expose the position of 'women as silent other on whose body the narrative is constructed in dominant discourse and posit alternative positionings for women as subjects producing themselves in/by language'.

[127] In Africa, except for Unity Dow*'s The screaming of the innocent* (2002) from Botswana and Malian Aida Diallo's *Kouty, mémoire de sang* (2002), there has not been an abundance of crime fiction written by black women writers. There are significantly more white women writing within the genre. These include Muff Andersson, Karin Barnard, June Drummond, Barbara Erasmus, Joanne Hichens, Sara Lotz, Jassy Mackenzie, Margie Orford, Chanette Paul, Sue Rabie, Gillian Slovo, Jane Taylor, Rosamund Kendal and Lauren Beukes.

The act of writing crime fiction for these emergent authors and the two fictional investigating journalists opens up spaces for women writers so that they can 'exercise language as power' (Kinsman 2010, p.153). The authors use language or writing to re-imagine the historical confining roles available to female characters in crime fiction. Violence in crime fiction is a dominant feature that expresses, explores and exploits issues that are recently visible within a social and cultural context; so the act of writing enables the women writers to interrogate some of these dilemmas (Knight 2004). In the 1980s, there was a sudden proliferation of crime fiction in the United States of America, because as female crime writer Marcia Muller observes there was a collective effort by women to write crime fiction, because we 'wanted to write about people like us, like the women around us. The time was right' (cited Walton & Jones 1999, p.21). By the early 2000s, crime fiction by women was firmly established and highly marketable. As 'sisters in crime', both authors and sleuths are able to imagine communities of women, thus underscoring the importance of female solidarities. The authors and the investigative reporters who write about crime inhabit a patriarchal world which constantly tries to pull them back into gendered positions; but writing crime allows them to reveal that women can succeed in a 'strongly male-gendered literary domain' (Worthington 2011, p.128). Although crime writing succeeds 'in creating a fantasy of feminist agency, [it is also] riven with contradictions' (Plain 2001, p.142). The act of writing offers potential sites for resistance and re-imagining ways in which feminine subjectivities are produced. As Eileen Julien argues, writing allows women to 'explore more personal experiences, to allow for desire that goes unarticulated indeed, unvoiced in the other forms. The very act of writing for a woman, then, can be seen as [a] transgressive [subversive and empowering act]' (1992, p.47). Furthermore, in *Red ink* Makholwa argues that the role of the artist 'is to reveal, to expose some facet of the human soul. Whether it's good or bad, express it the best way you know how, and don't give a damn about other people. Art doesn't kill anyone' (2007, p.130). Therefore, the following questions could be asked of this violent masculinised genre when taken up by women: How does women's crime fiction rescript the story of women's lives? How does the female sleuth reveal women's agency? How are female characters represented as empowered female subjects with voice and agency? What are some of the conflicting pressures for women operating within this genre?

The emerging writers also use crime fiction to envision new career opportunities for women, for example the female investigator. By using a female investigator, they illustrate that female sleuths become agents for social and political change in a traditionally male field.

The writers reflect on the changes in women's roles, their perceptions of themselves and their relationships with other women that nurture strong sisterhoods. Female sleuths like *Red ink's* Lucy Khambule and *The Lazarus effect's* Voinjama Johnson prove that they can simultaneously be tough, witty, strongly independent, smart and vulnerable. By creating black female investigators, Makholwa and Golakai disrupt and challenge the male dominant construction of the image of the investigator. As Margaret Kinsman argues, unlike the male detective who is detached from society, the female investigator isolates and distances herself not from society, but from what 'society dictates is a woman's place' (2010, p.152). Her presence challenges the patriarchal idea that there are places where women dare not venture. From a woman's perspective, the female investigator at the centre of the narrative of investigation provides a unique avenue that explores the differences of women's encounters, and foregrounds the experiences of children and women who are usually the most underprivileged, marginalised and vulnerable members of society (Walton & Jones 1999).

Like romance and chick lit, crime fiction is formulaic; however, it is important to grapple with what the genre opens up and what it closes down, instead of wholeheartedly dismissing it as a simple debased form of literature.[128] As Radway's research revealed, readers should be seen as active critics and not uncritical consumers. Scottish crime writer Ian Rankin makes some useful observations in his reflections on the ethics of crime writing, suggesting that crime fiction 'ought to invoke a self-conscious interrogation of the dark underside of society, inviting the reader to probe beneath everyday appearances in order to better understand the complexities of modern identity and belonging' (cited in Bell 2008, p.52). The growing trend of crime fiction in Africa in general and South Africa in particular reflects a global proliferation of crime thrillers (Titlestad & Polatinsky 2010).[129] In the South African context, one could locate the origins of recent crime fiction within *Drum* magazine of

[128] Pim Higginson astutely observes that Mongo Beti, an influential 'figure in virtually every significant shift in Francophone African literary history, [in] the last literary model he turned to before his death conclusively demonstrates how and why African crime fiction needs to be taken seriously as a significant – albeit complex or even deliberately problematic – trend in the evolving African literary canon' (2005, p.163).

[129] These are some of the crime fiction authors in Africa, although this is not an exhaustive list: Grieve Sithole, Abasse Ndione, Simon Njami, Achille Ngoye, Driss Chraïbi, Deon Meyer, Andrew Brown, Wessel Ebersohn, Meshack Masondo, Richard Kunzmann, Rob Marsh, Meshack Masondo, Sifiso Mzobe, Mike Nicol, Roger Smith, Michael Stanley and Diale Tlholwe (Higginson 2008; Primorac 2011a; Tchumkam 2012).

the 1950s, which saw the emergence of the black male short story and crime fiction.[130] Pim Higginson (2005) maintains that the African crime novel is an innovation in genre fiction that offers particularly suitable means by which to represent an urban Africa situated within a global network of new and previously unimagined solidarities. Ranka Primorac points out that 'African writers have embraced and adapted detective narratives which perform a variety of aesthetic, social and cultural functions' (2011b, p.1) and offer insights into how authors and readers may understand the present, and imagine the future. Crime fiction in Africa is instrumental in representing and transmitting social change, and has become 'a question about social and political responsibility and ethics' (Primorac 2011b, p.2).

I contend that the transitional and emergent period, as Ndebele argues, is characterised by a 'crisis of transition' that enables emerging writers to see things anew. For these writers, crime fiction is a radically diverse and complex genre that offers new insights into the cultures that produce it.[131] As a genre, it is able to respond instantly to changes within society. It incorporates cultural and social shifts, exposes anxieties and moralities and articulates the values produced by contemporary society. As Primorac argues elsewhere, crime fiction in Southern Africa functions in various ways. It provides entertainment, aesthetic pleasure, intellectual and emotional stimulation but also encourages debate. These narratives can be read as scripts that participate in a 'public dialogue concerning the future of democracy, citizenship and nationhood' (Primorac 2011b, p.3). In turn, this dialogue, especially in the hands of emerging writers, begins to imagine new kinds of subjectivities, aesthetics, social and political awareness. The emerging writers of this study are not naively trapped in generic conventions; instead, they engage with the genre in order to counteract it, an approach that opens up spaces that construct alternative forms of female agency (Walton & Jones 1999; Worthington 2011).

[130] For example, Arthur Maimane used the pen-name Arthur Mogale to write crime stories which featured a Chester O. Morena, an Americanized black private detective (Chapman1989). For critical analysis on Maimane's detective serial see Colette Guldimann's docotoral thesis.

[131] 'That is, rather than accepting crime fiction as a stable and unproblematic (albeit more or less marginal) literary category, nondominant authors underscore the precariousness of the genre in ways that undermine the broader category of the literary and its relationship to hegemonic operations of social production and control. The result of this work is to break through the ceiling separating low- and high-brow literatures, and to demonstrate (and question) the ways such distinctions assure literature's function as fundamentally undemocratic social legislature' (Higginson 2008, p.139).

Introducing contemporary whodunits by emerging writers

The emergence of crime fiction by black women writers in Uganda and South Africa reveals that emerging writers are appropriating features of the dominant genre to create a localized literary form that responds to and foregrounds local issues. For these writers, the exploration of a transitional moment in the histories of both countries, 'provoke[s] a deep and intimate engagement with place' (Bell 2008, p.55). For example, Glaydah Namukasa's *The deadly ambition* is partly set in Bunono village and the neighbouring Kamengo town, rural areas located on the outskirts of the capital city, Kampala. The novel opens with Evan reflecting on his spare parts shop that has recently been gutted by fire. Through an omniscient narrator, the reader learns that three of Evan's employees died in the inferno. However, Evan is preoccupied more with the loss of his business than that of human life, as reflected in his insensitive remarks: 'so what if three workers died? The issue here is that all my investment was turned to ashes!' (Namukasa 2006, p.12). This cold-hearted and unsympathetic attitude illustrates Evan's personality. He is an ambitious, unscrupulous businessman obsessed with power, wealth and money. For example, his burnt-down shop was set up with the spoils from a bank robbery. After its demise, Evan is determined to acquire more wealth as soon as possible and decides to 'act quickly, because if he didn't, he would soon become a poor man—…. "I have to get money,"… "I have to show the whole world that being born poor doesn't mean dying poor"' (pp.12-13). Evan regards poverty as a sign of weakness, vulnerability and emasculation.

The title of the novel points to Evan's ambition to get rich which is literally and figuratively deadly. His modus operandi is through theft and violence. As one of the villagers remarks, some 'people exist only to steal from others' (p.14). With deliberate precision and manipulation, Evan carefully lays out a detailed plot to get rid of two rich coffee traders, John Bosco (JB) Mukasa and Vincent Kalule. His motive is to inherit their property and take control of their businesses. One rainy night he sets his plan in motion: he begins by murdering JB and his entire family, except for the youngest daughter, Anna, who manages to escape the gruesome massacre. He proceeds to Vincent Kalule's home, but his two attempts to kill fail. His third attempt is, however, successful, when he turns off Vincent's life-support system in hospital. He then fakes a will that he sends to the police, and which gives him access to JB's property. Two years later, he marries Maria, Vincent's widow and sets about gaining control of Vincent's wealth. For eight years it seems that he has literally got away with murder and theft because of the incompetence of the law enforcement officials. But

when the villagers find out about his murderous acts, they attack and kill him in a brutal incident of mob justice.

Unlike *Red ink* and *The Lazarus effect* which are set in Johannesburg and Cape Town respectively, *The deadly ambition* is set in a rural environment, which gives it the texture of a country mystery murder. Namukasa appropriates some of the conventions of the countryside murder mystery to create a crime narrative that probes the psyche of a criminal. As Annie Gagiano (2012) observes,

> Namukasa's novel is not an example of the kind of thriller that serves the main purpose of exposing the society's ugly underbelly. If it does slot into any traditions of 'thrillerdom', it would be those that draw the psychological profile of the evildoer; that pit good people against the wreaker of havoc in an essentially healthy social context.

Namukasa tries to examine the various societal factors that drive an individual to commit violent crimes. Evan's ruthless Machiavellian plot reveals particular sociopathic tendencies which will be discussed shortly. *The deadly ambition* forces the reader to see society through the eyes of a sociopath and ask some pertinent questions: Are Evan's transgressions a mirror of his damaged self? Does Evan's damaged self serve as a metaphor for society?

Whereas *The deadly ambition* does not fulfil the expectations of a thriller, renowned crime writer Mike Nicol has described Angela Makholwa's *Red ink* as a crime thriller.[132] Told in the third person, it is the story of Lucy Sibongile Khambule, a young black female ex-journalist who works as one of the main Public Relations executives in a Public Relations company in Johannesburg owned by her friend Patricia Moabelo. When Lucy unexpectedly receives a phone call from the notorious Napoleon Dingiswayo, a convicted serial rapist and murderer who is serving out his life sentence at Pretoria's Maximum security prison C-Max, her life changes drastically. 'The Joburg Butcher', as he has been labelled, approaches Lucy ostensibly with a request to write his biography. He claims that the media portrayed him negatively during and after his trial, but he trusts Lucy enough to reveal his side of the story. Initially, Lucy is cautious, but her life-long ambition has been to be a writer. Lucy is enticed by the prospect of writing the life-story of a notorious serial rapist and killer and agrees to write Napoleon's story. But Lucy's ambition turns out to be *a deadly ambition*. She is

[132] 'Makholwa has written a crime thriller that is going to keep lights in Sandton's suburbs burning way into the night. And elsewhere in the country too, for that matter' (Nicol 2007, p.18).

oblivious to the fact that lurking in the background are Napoleon's younger brother Sifiso and KK Mabote, also known as 'the Sponsor' and 'professor', a high-powered politician and businessman who uses his money and power to manipulate the Dingiswayo brothers to do all his 'dirty work'.

The plot focuses on the ambivalent relationship that develops between Lucy and Napoleon and the far-reaching impact this relationship has on her close friends. Lucy is seduced into a web of manipulation, obsession and deceit, and unwittingly endangers her friends' lives (Murray 2007). As corpses mysteriously begin to appear around Lucy, the reader is drawn into the disturbing dark world of sociopathic serial killers, and it becomes Lucy's job to investigate these murders. Like Vee Johnson in HJ Golakai's *The Lazarus effect*, Lucy is not a professional sleuth; instead, both protagonists exploit their training and skills as journalists to investigate and or solve particular cases. In fact, Jassy Mackenzie calls Lucy Khambule an amateur sleuth, someone not involved in law enforcement but who walks into 'situations where crimes take place and dead bodies are found' (Mackenzie 2010, p.14).[133]

In *Red ink*, Makholwa has written a fictionalised account of the vicious serial rapist and killer Moses Sithole.[134] Between 1994 and 1995, he targeted black women around Atteridgeville, in Pretoria and Boksburg and Cleveland on the East Rand. By the time he was apprehended, Sithole had raped and murdered approximately 38 women and raped 40. In 1997, he was sentenced to over 2000 years in Pretoria's C-Max prison.[135] Permeated with suspense, violence and murder, *Red ink* uses the Sithole story to expose the perilous nature of the urban environment, and foreground the plight of women in the city. In spite of the various political, social and economic liberties that post-repressive regimes have opened up for women, *Red ink* problematizes the notion of freedom by demonstrating that freedom comes with and leads to certain dangers. As women assert their independence and go out into the 'free' world, they are constantly exposed to threats of physical violence. Women discover they inhabit a hostile environment that continually retaliates against their perceived

[133] One of the best examples of this archetype is Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, who met with approximately two corpses per year without leaving her village (Mackenzie 2010, p.14).

[134] Makholwa says she wrote *Red ink* as a way of making sense of an experience she had. By turning it into fiction, she felt liberated. 'I could explore it voyeuristically, bringing in fear, suspense and humour' (Von Klemperer 2009).

[135] Renowned criminal profiler Micki Pistorius (2002) notes that Moses Sithole was one of the world's most notorious serial killers and his sentence of 2410 years was a world record.

liberties.[136] As Worthington observes elsewhere, 'women demanding equal rights with men have, historically, been met with masculine, often violent, resistance' (2011, p.xxii).[137]

In contrast to the graphic depiction of violence in *The deadly ambition* and *Red ink*, HJ Golakai's *The Lazarus effect* deals with more muted forms of violence as she explores the plight of missing children in Cape Town. Like Makholwa, Golakai destabilizes and disrupts the hard-boiled genre by creating a female sleuth Voinjama (Vee) Johnson, who has a lesbian side-kick, Chlöe Bishop.[138] Vee, who is a Liberian investigative journalist, works for *Urban*, a Cape Town-based magazine. Her already disintegrated life is plunged into further turmoil when she begins experiencing hallucinations of a teenage girl in a woollen red hat. By coincidence, she discovers that the girl in her visions is Jacqui Paulsen, who left her home one Saturday morning to go play tennis with her girlfriends and has been missing for two years. Vee, who has been bored writing frivolous articles for the magazine, seizes an opportunity to write a more serious story that will have an impact on society. She convinces her editor, Portia Kruger, to let her investigate the story of missing children, and in particular Jacqui's disappearance. As Vee and Chlöe try to solve this cold case, they are drawn into the entangled lives of two families, Jacqui's mother Adele Paulsen and her father Ian Fourie and his other family.

The title *The Lazarus effect* originates from a scientific principle that refers to the rejuvenation of organisms previously thought to be extinct or dead. [139] Golakai uses the

[136] In her book *Strangers on the street: Serial homicide in South Africa* (2002), Micki Pistorius gives an account of some of South Africa's serial killers. According to her, between 1934-1993 there were 10 serial killers; from 1994-1999 she documents 17 killers. Of these, two were indiscriminate in who they targeted, 15 targeted women and children.

[137] In the early 1900s, the suffragettes suffered physically at the hands of men, and in the 1970s the feminist movement aroused a violent male response, particularly in the United States (Worthington 2011, p.xxii).

[138] In South Africa, statistics show that every six hours a child goes missing. Adele Paulsen tells Vee, 'This city's dangerous for children, but no one ever thinks it can happen to their own. I've learnt so much about missing children these past two years … Do you know how many children go missing from homes in South Africa? Over one thousand six hundred per year. And three hundred of them are never heard from again' (Golakai 2011, p.57).

[139] According to Adhiyaman, Adhiyaman, & Sundaram, the delayed return of intrinsic circulation after cessation of cardiopulmonary resuscitation was first reported in medical literature in 1982. The term 'Lazarus phenomenon' (LP) was first used in 1995, when J Bray used it to describe the phenomenon. The term was coined from the story of Lazarus, the biblical character who was resurrected by Christ four days after his death. 'The name of Lazarus has been invoked to describe many other entities in which unexpected and scientifically inexplicable phenomena have happened. The "Lazarus complex" describes the psychological sequence in the survivors of cardiac arrest and unexpected remission in Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Spontaneous movement in brain dead patients and in patients with spinal cord injury has

concept to unearth unresolved trauma and expose the skeletons in the cupboard of the Fourie family and in Vee's personal life. As a narrative technique, it allows Vee to expose the betrayal, lies and deceit surrounding the mystery of Jacqui's disappearance; secondly, in the process of uncovering the truth about Jacqui's disappearance, Vee is also compelled to confront her own repressed trauma and memories caused by the atrocities she experienced during the Liberian civil war.[140]

As a genre, feminist crime fiction is committed to the act of recovery. Emerging writers embrace it to try to intervene against certain forms of violence against women. Vee and Lucy subvert the female stereotype of submissive victims. Karlien van der Schyff notes that *The Lazarus effect* is

> remarkable for the way in which Golakai portrays the young female victim. In a genre where women seem to be helpless victims by default, and where murders of women are often portrayed with sensationalist, exaggerated and often pornographic violence, *The Lazarus effect* is exceptional for challenging the violence so often inflicted on the female body by crime fiction as a genre. (2012)

Although these emerging writers disrupt the genre of crime fiction, they retain some of the basic aspects of crime fiction. In all three novels an element of suspense sustains the story. In *The deadly ambition*, the reader is kept in suspense wondering if Evan, the murderer of the Mukasa and Kalule families, will be revealed to the villagers of Kamengo and Bunono. In *Red ink*, with Napoleon incarcerated, the reader wants to find out who is murdering Lucy's friends. In *The Lazarus effect*, the reader wants to know what happened to Jacqui. In terms of the investigators, *Red ink* and *The Lazarus effect* empower their female sleuths with skills and perspicacity to uncover the truth. All three narratives take the reader into the psychological make-up of the perpetrators to probe what drives them to commit violent acts. The emerging writers thus use the elements of crime fiction as a vehicle for social critique. Underlying these narratives is social commentary that notes the vulnerability of women and children, foregrounds the changes in women's positions, and examines women's opinions of themselves and their intimate relationships.

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been described as "Lazarus sign". The term LP was also used to describe the unexpected survival of renal graft. Survival of species after mass extinction has been called the "Lazarus effect"' (2013, p.9).

[140] A mystery is concerned with something that happened in the past, 'a murder initiates the mystery novel, but the novel is at pains to reconstruct the events leading to that murder. … the mystery is a genre committed to the act of recovery, moving forward in order to move back' (Malmgren 1997, p.122).

Nonetheless, these narratives differ from classic detective stories in that there is no restoration of order: in *Red ink*, Napoleon's escape from prison produces extreme anxiety; Vee solves the case of Jacqui's disappearance in *The Lazarus effect*, but at the end the death of 'the watcher' further problematizes the issue of missing children; and *The deadly ambition* exposes an incompetent and corrupt police force. These ambiguous and open-ended endings suggest that there are no clear-cut solutions; thus producing an apprehensive view of justice in society. Ian Rankin advocates this kind of crime narrative:

> What crime fiction needs is a sense of incomplete, of life's messy complexity. The reader should go to crime fiction to learn about the real world, not to retreat from it with comfortable reassurances and assumptions … Good does not always triumph in today's crime fiction; evil cannot always be rationalised. (cited in Orford 2010, p.195)

Likewise, the crime narratives of emerging writers constantly reveal that women's lives in post-repressive societies consist of messy complexities.

The following discussion is divided into two parts – 'Sisters in crime' frames the sub-section on female sleuths and their vulnerabilities and agencies, while 'Natural born killers' looks at theories on sociopaths to demonstrate the connection between society and the violent criminal acts 'that lie at the heart of blood families and the family that is the nation' (Orford 2010, p.192).

Sisters in crime

I use the phrase 'sisters in crime' to refer to the different kinds of sisterhoods or communities of women represented in the novels. The first sorority, which has already been discussed is that of the emerging writers themselves: Namukasa, Makholwa and Golakai. For these 'sisters in crime', the act of writing crime narratives is a form of agency that allows women writers to explore some of the roots of violent crime, as well as reflect on the failures of law enforcement officers who have been unsuccessful in their investigation of crime. Secondly, by portraying dynamic female characters, these 'sisters in crime' undermine the archetypal roles of women encountered in the extremely masculinised hardboiled genre of crime fiction. Lastly, in a patriarchal society that is antagonistic towards women and children, they foreground criminal acts of violence that the most vulnerable are recurrently exposed to. This is useful in rendering visible what is silenced or not taken seriously enough. The expression 'sisters in crime' also describes the relationship between Rosie and Serena, two biological

sisters in *The Lazarus effect* who conspire to conceal the disappearance of their half-sister Jacqui. I explore this aspect in detail later in this section.

In *Red ink* and *The Lazarus effect*, Makholwa and Golakai rescript feminine subjectivities by creating female sleuths. This is the third way in which I use the phrase 'sisters in crime'. As investigative journalists, Lucy, Vee and Chlöe are concerned with the investigation of crimes. They see themselves representing victims and making their voice audible. Because the concept of women working together tends to threaten patriarchal strictures, these female sleuths find ingenious ways of working together within these imagined parameters. Similarly to the emerging writers who subvert a masculine genre, these female sleuths destabilise what is considered a male profession; in itself an accomplishment, because they represent a position that threatens social norms.[141] For these 'sisters in crime', solving cases is an achievement that demands recognition and opens up opportunities that strengthen female agency and female empowerment.

Charlie's angels: 'Your job is dangerous, no? It's not a good job for a woman'[142]

Feminist crime genres offer complex and contradictory perspectives on the problems and forms of experience perceived as 'female' and raise a number of questions: How do women navigate public spaces that are hostile to them? What difficulties do they encounter as they try to work in a male-dominated institution? (Watts 1993) In spite of the forms of agency and possibilities that criminal investigation affords female sleuths, it is important to point out that the figure of the female investigator is frequently subject to danger and physical violence in ways that her male counterpart is not.

In *Red ink* and *The Lazarus effect*, Lucy, Vee and Chlöe are investigators who occupy active positions. As mentioned earlier, Vee's self-assigned task is to investigate the mysterious disappearance of Jacqui. Her investigation involves a close working relationship with Chlöe: together they collect information, share tips, follow up on clues, and question Jacqui's friends and families. Because Vee is prone to seizures, she decides to take up jogging to try and discipline her body. She also takes up self-defence classes. This regimen

[141] Carl Malmgren points out that 'the investigator takes the haphazard and confusing clues of the story of the investigation and invests them with sequence and causality, bringing the story of the murder to light. The investigator secures mystery's dominant sign – Truth – by showing how all the case's seemingly wayward signs bespeak it. By revealing the Truth, [she] both *solves* it and *resolves* the conflicts caused by it' (emphasis in original 1997, p.122).

[142] Etienne Matongo's ominous statement to Vee constantly looms for these female investigators (Golakai 2011, p.214).

prepares her to counter any threat of violence that she may encounter. In the course of her investigation, she is assaulted more than three times and on two of these occasions she is left badly bruised. The first time she is attacked by her first suspect, Ashwin Venter. Vee learns from Adele that Ashwin is Jacqui's ex-boyfriend and that the two had had a tempestuous relationship. Adele suspects Ashwin was the last person to see her daughter alive. Vee tries to follow up on this lead by speaking to Ashwin's sister Marike, which infuriates Ashwin. Filled with rage because Vee has been prying into his life, he pounces on her in a public street in front of her office block. Oblivious to the imminent attack, Vee finds herself ambushed when

> [a]n unfamiliar man jumped out of a parked car and lunged at [her] with such ferocity she didn't have time to react. … She made a rough landing on her knees … The guy wasn't finished. He dragged her upright by a fistful of hair. Vee landed a solid punch in his stomach. A puff of air and a groan of surprise escaped him, and as he struggled for breath she had time to gather her wits ... The man made for her again. She kicked out a leg with as much force as she could manage and got him in the crotch. After he dropped to his knees, she collared him and slammed his head into the concrete. (Golakai 2011, p.190)

Ashwin uses the element of surprise to momentarily catch Vee off guard. Once she recognizes that she is being assaulted, she quickly composes herself and begins to fight back. Her physical expertise gives her a degree of confidence that enables her to overpower Ashwin and take control of the situation. Walton and Jones observe that the female sleuth's 'confidence on the "mean streets" is part of a fantasy that negotiates the territory between the fear of vulnerability and an ideal of physical integrity and self-protection' (1999, p.177). Female bodies are more vulnerable, but Vee's physical training turns her body into a defence weapon. When she finds herself under siege she is able to outmanoeuvre and control her assailant. By targeting Ashwin's phallus, she deliberately focuses on the most vulnerable part of his body, which also functions as the nerve centre of his masculinity. Her counterattack empowers her, and leaves Ashwin feeling disempowered and emasculated. This symbolic gesture illustrates how emerging writers appropriate crime fiction in order to subvert the representation of women in a masculine genre. Walton and Jones argue elsewhere that the 'obsession with self-defence and physical fitness is also … a symbolic possession of the object of violence, making it an active subject – taking control of the gendered body itself, vulnerable as it has traditionally been to being (literally and figuratively) overpowered by

patriarchal figures' (1999, p.179). This attack is meant to intimidate Vee. Although she emerges physically bruised, she is unwavering in determination to crack the case.

Nevertheless, physical violence is not the only threat that Vee is exposed to while she is conducting her investigation. Rosie senses that Vee's tenacious investigation is going to reveal that she is responsible for Jacqui's disappearance. Tormented by fear, she attacks Vee on two occasions. First she attempts to kill her by running her down with a Mercedes-Benz, leaving Vee with a fractured arm, ribs and extensive bruising. When this attempt fails to deter Vee, Rosie abducts her and Chlöe and holds them captive in a small enclosed space. This claustrophobic room transports Vee back to her incarceration during the Liberian civil war. As her anxiety levels begin to increase, her repressed trauma begins to surface; she is forced to remember that she killed a child soldier who was attempting to rape her. This kind of trauma is insidious and debilitating, too complicated for her to grasp. The wounds of the war may have healed, but the scars leave her feeling emotionally vulnerable.

Fatal attraction: 'A killer is a killer'[143]

Crime fiction, like chick lit, explores women's close relationships with friends and family. However, the distinct difference is that the precarious nature of the female sleuth's job suggests that these intimate relationships are vulnerable and constantly in danger. In *Red ink*, the real threat for Lucy is that she can still be absorbed into Napoleon's Machiavellian world even if he is incarcerated in a maximum-security prison. Lucy is aware that she has to portray an unattractive version of herself in order not to draw unwarranted attention from Napoleon. So, in preparation for her first visit, she tries to disguise her femininity by accentuating boyish features, wearing old jeans, a raggedy jersey and a beanie, with no make-up. Ironically, it is this masculine unappealing appearance that Napoleon finds sexually attractive. Lucy, on the other hand, is taken in by Napoleon. She notes that 'he had the kind of face that seemed to make it safe to share your deepest secret without fear of judgement' (Makholwa 2007, p.25). It is this harmless appearance that made it easy for Napoleon to lure innocent women. Instead of feeling repugnance, Lucy, like his other victims, is deluded by Napoleon's gentle demeanour. Infatuated with Lucy from the onset, Napoleon turns on the charm. This encounter leaves her utterly confused. She recognizes that Napoleon is 'a man who was supposed to represent the sum total of all her fears but now, after meeting him, all

[143] After Lucy's first encounter with Napoleon, she is taken in by his charm. To reassure herself that the man she is dealing with is dangerous, she keeps reminding herself 'a killer is a killer' (Makholwa 2007, p.27).

she could think of was that he was a fairly normal, really nice guy' (p.27). Napoleon's confinement creates a false sense of security, his charisma absorbs Lucy, and as he gradually begins to manipulate her, she unconsciously opens up to him. During one of her visits, Lucy confides in Napoleon about her frustrations with her business partner Patricia's reluctance to draw up a contract. Throughout her tirade she is unaware that Napoleon is gathering pertinent information on Patricia, which she willingly provides. A few days later, Patricia is found murdered in her apartment, stabbed eighteen times. Even though the modus operandi is similar to the one Napoleon used before he was caught, Lucy refuses to consider the possibility that he could be involved in the murder. Isaac Ndlovu argues that Lucy's naïve 'view of the prison as a space of complete isolation and utter powerlessness prevents her from linking Patricia's murder with her interaction with the incarcerated Napoleon' (2010, p.225). So, when Detective Justice Morapedi, who is investigating Patricia's murder, warns Lucy to be guarded around Napoleon, she still ignores his advice. Lucy is convinced that Napoleon is harmless; after all, as she tells her girlfriend Fundi, '[r]emember, he's behind bars, we're not so don't give him too much power' (Makholwa 2007, p.105). Despite the intimate behaviour that Napoleon exhibits when she is around him – touching her hand and giving her unexpected hugs and sudden kisses on her cheek – Lucy refuses to recognize that she has become the object of Napoleon's dangerous gaze. Unaware of Napoleon's sexual fantasies of her, and that he is gradually luring her into his web of deceit, Lucy reckons that she is in control. He has convinced himself that she is his saviour, the 'woman who would redeem him, forgive his previous misdemeanours, and usher him into a new life' (p.169).

From the beginning, Napoleon himself is not in control. He is being manipulated by KK Mabote and his brother Sifiso, who have devised a well-executed plan that involves feeding Lucy information that will not incriminate them. However, their plan does not anticipate that Napoleon's infatuation with Lucy is genuine. When Napoleon's obsession begins to threaten this unholy alliance between serial killers, Sifiso decides to eliminate the problem. First, he tries to kill Lucy and her boyfriend Karabo by running into them with his vehicle. When this attempt fails, he breaks into Karabo's house, murders the housekeeper Rosie and then attacks Karabo, decapitates him and couriers his heart to Lucy. After the murders of three people she is acquainted with, it finally dawns on Lucy that Napoleon's attraction has become fatal. With the assistance of Detective Morapedi she realises that she is entangled in an intricate maze of deception that involves three serial killers, Napoleon, Sifiso and KK Mabote. As Lucy continues to investigate these brutal attacks, the reader is filled

with anxiety, anticipating that she is going to be the next victim. Walton and Jones argue that 'the female investigator investigating a serial killer can be read as a disturbing negotiation of female fears and male fantasies' (1999, p.179). Sifiso and KK decide that Lucy is disposable. She has become a liability and needs to be killed. For Sifiso, getting rid of Lucy gives him a chance to act out his violent fantasies. He waylays Lucy in her bedroom, throws her on the bed, and momentarily has the advantage:

> He lay on top of her, the knife in his hand. … 'Look at you now … poor bitch is scared' … he said, tearing off her shirt and the bra underneath with the sharp blade of the butcher knife, leaving her naked and exposed … I have been waiting a long time for this. (Makholwa, 2007, p.226)

Driven by power and total control, Sifiso uses brute force to dominate Lucy. The wielding of the butcher knife, stripping her naked, holding her down: all these violent acts are meant to objectify Lucy, so that Sifiso can assert and affirm his masculinity. Stark naked on the bed, with a knife held to her throat, Lucy appears to be a vulnerable, defenceless object, but like Vee she refuses to succumb to Sifiso's intimidation. In a sudden turn of events, Lucy's bedroom becomes a site of resistance as she puts up a fight and foils Sifiso's attempt to murder her. During the ensuing struggle, she is able to overpower him, plunge a kitchen knife into his back and kill him instantly. Lucy's act of defiance illustrates courage and determination; by asserting her own agency, she is able to affirm and sustain her subjectivity.

Lucy and Vee are not powerless victims; instead, they are able to withstand and mete out physical violence. At the end of the investigation process, as Walton and Jones argue in a different context, even if the female sleuth does not necessarily restore order, she dramatizes, addresses, and renegotiates fantasies, fears, and conflicts in the lives of the readers. 'Through reverse discourse, with its performative gender possibilities, these texts can both inscribe an empowered female subject and rework the conventions of subjectivity that make that position problematic' (Walton & Jones 1999, p.113). For Vee, Lucy and Chlöe, as female investigative reporters attempting to solve crimes in an extremely hostile and precarious environment, their ability to crack the case, as it were, provides professional satisfaction.

Natural born killers

The essential features of most feminist crime narratives deal with the connection between victims, perpetrators and investigators of crime. Whereas the previous section focused on

Golakai's and Makholwa's depiction of female sleuths who inhabit complex positions that disrupt and threaten societal patriarchal attitudes, this section explores the various intricate circumstances that drive the four offenders – Evan, Sifiso, Napoleon and Rosie – to commit vicious acts of murder. In his pursuit of wealth, Evan brutally murders more than fifteen people, including nine children. Serial killers Napoleon and Sifiso have mercilessly raped and murdered over forty women, while in a fit of rage Rosie kills her half- sister but conceals this secret for two years. To a certain degree, the narratives seem to suggest that these offenders exhibit sociopathic tendencies. Therefore, as Primorac (2011b) points out, crime fiction in Africa provides insight into ethics and social and political responsibility, raising the question: are these four perpetrators born to kill or are they raised to kill?

This section reads the representation of Evan, Sifiso, Napoleon and Rosie through the theoretical work of Adam Morton and Erwin Staub. In his research on what makes a person evil, Morton (2004) describes a sociopath as a person who suffers from an antisocial personality disorder. He defines this disorder as 'a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated' (2004, p.48). A person with an antisocial personality disorder is detached from the wishes, rights, or feelings of others. Although devoid of certain emotions such as 'sympathetic pleasure at another's happiness, dismay at another's sorrow, remorse at having brought trouble to another' (Morton 2004, p.48), sociopaths are not lacking in all sentiments; they experience satisfaction, joy, disappointment and regret. Morton observes that sociopathic patterns, which originate in early childhood, distinguish a sociopath from other people. They are manipulative, deceitful and show little remorse for the consequences of their actions, but they are also rational, logical, competent, charming and persuasive (Pistorius 2002; Morton 2004).

In this sub-section, I argue that Evan, Sifiso, Napoleon and Rosie are portrayed as possessing these sociopathic traits which stem from the adverse conditions in which they were nurtured. According to Staub (2003a), society inculcates acceptable values, norms, concepts and modes of behaviour in its children. These rules and values tend to represent the accumulated wisdom that has evolved in a particular culture. He argues that since a child spends most of its time with the primary care givers, who in most cases happen to be its parents, it becomes their responsibility to pass on these values. Children who are raised in an environment with parental warmth, affection and nurturance develop a positive self-esteem and values of mutual caring and affection; in turn, they transfer these positive feelings to

other people. In addition, Staub insists that because children have their own desires and intentions, it is essential for parents to provide guidance and set boundaries in a non-forceful and non-violent manner. 'Firm enforcement of rules that express important values can coexist with allowing the child substantial autonomy, choice, and self-guidance, to an increasing degree as the child's capacity for responsible choice, and self-guidance, and competence develops' (Staub 2003a, p.164). Staub points out that children who do not receive affection and positive guidance from a parent figure feel indifferent, betrayed, abandoned and rejected, which leads to hostility and aggression. Likewise, parents who use power-assertive control such as depriving children of privileges or using corporal punishment, encourage aggressive behaviour in the child and in extreme instances this could lead to antisocial behaviour, 'a negative evaluation of people and the desire to harm them'(Staub 2003a, p.165). Once children suffer injustice within the family, they carry a negative legacy throughout their lives unless they come into contact with other adults who can provide positive nurturing.[144]

Murder most foul: 'If it means to kill, kill!'[145]

In *The deadly ambition*, Namukasa takes the reader back to Evan Busagwa's childhood in Lunyo village. He is the elder of a twin set, so at birth he is named Evan Wasswa. As children, Evan and Kato, his younger twin, are treated differently. Kato is the favourite, he is adored, mollycoddled, loved and he can do nothing wrong in his parent's eyes, while Evan is treated like Kato's alter ego: they hate and disapprove of him. His mother constantly reminds him, 'I regret the day I conceived you in my womb' (Namukasa 2006, p.39). When his twin accidentally drowns in a pond, his parents are infuriated and accuse him of murdering his brother. In the midst of their grief and anger they change his name from Wasswa to Busagwa, which means murderer. By naming him Busagwa, they deliberately mark him for life. As his parents' animosity and hostility continue to intensify, he becomes an outcast in his home:

> My child died and I remained with you, a brute. How I wish it was you who had died instead!'… 'Don't call me "father"! My child died.' A severe beating follows. … Besides going without food, he faces the daily insults: 'you good for nothing dog',

[144] Staub's observations indicate that children 'whose early experience was potentially highly damaging, as a result of abandonment or bad treatment at the hands of adults, were sometimes "saved" by people who had reached out to them and become significant positive figures in their lives' (2003a, p.168).

[145] When JJ is mentoring Evan, he tells him to kill at whatever cost; that is the only way he will be prosperous. This becomes the code by which he lives (Namukasa 2006, p.37).

> 'you goat', 'you snake', 'you demon', 'you murderer,' and the daily beatings from his father. (p.39)

This incessant and spiteful physical, verbal and emotional abuse becomes too much to endure. Evan decides to run away. When he returns two days later, he hopes his parents will show love and compassion. Instead, they are more resolute in their vindictiveness. For his misdemeanour, he is deprived of food for two days. The villagers treat him like an outsider rather than offer kindness or support, he is relentlessly tormented and ridiculed, 'he is the stupid child of a poor— very poor— man. He is an object of derision. *Kakutiya* [sack] is the name fellow village children call him. He has no love in his life' (p.40). The family system generates explicit and implicit rules that children use as a roadmap to navigate their place in society. If the family environment is coercive and family members rely on aggression to exert control over each other and to defend themselves, children learn that human beings are aggressive and the only way to protect themselves or exert influence is through aggression (Farrington 2002; Staub 2003a). Evan is exposed to this environment as a child. His parents are aggressive towards him, they call him names that dehumanise him, and by wishing him dead they negate his very existence. It is this negativity, hostility, neglect and abuse he suffers as a child that has a direct impact on his future behaviour. Any child who lacks positive intervention in the form of affirmation and nurturance and whose physical needs are not satisfied is bound to experience neglect and will feel emotionally unfulfilled. If, in addition to withholding support, parents withdraw certain privileges and are extremely punitive in the form of negative criticism, verbal abuse, and physical punishment, that child will most likely exhibit aggressive behaviour in adulthood (Farrington 2002; Staub 2003a).

At 12, Evan is orphaned, but for the first time he experiences a sense of freedom. He does not even wait for his parents' burial; instead, he escapes this repressive environment. He flees to Kamengo determined to succeed in life. While hustling to make money, he meets an older man JJ who offers to help him find employment. For the first time, Evan experiences genuine love and affection. JJ becomes his mentor by offering guidance, albeit of a criminal nature. JJ inducts Evan into a life of violent crime and wealth, a 'life where money is not a problem … where they just have to break into a shop or a house, and in the morning they will be rich' (Namukasa 2006, p.41). Evan begins to realise that with money comes wealth and power. From that point on he decides he 'will never be poor again. He is going to grow up into a rich man; buy cars, build houses, and have much money' (p.41).

Evan's criminal life begins with minor misdemeanours like pickpocketing; by the time he is 24, he has progressed from robbery to murder. By 34, he is a successful businessman, he owns a house, two cars, a spare parts shop; he feels satisfied that he has finally made up for all the anguish he had to endure during his childhood. Although he has succeeded against all odds, it is at the expense of his relationship with other people. When JJ, the only person he adores and respects, dies during one of their heists, Evan totally disconnects from society. Annie Gagiano (2012) notes that 'Busagwa sees the entire world as an enemy out to destroy and thwart him; everyone around him is either material to be manipulated or an obstacle to his will to power and rapid financial (and social) advancement'. The first time he commits murder, it is because he is determined to keep all the plunder for himself, so he kills off his fellow thugs. This is 'murder most foul'. For Evan, there is no honour among thieves, everyone is expendable.[146] By killing his accomplices, he violates all societal boundaries; he has become a law unto himself. Evan suffers from an antisocial personality disorder; he is deceitful, manipulative and shows no remorse for the crimes he commits. He can be described as a sociopath. Evan's formative years in a dysfunctional environment expose him to prolonged periods of emotional and material deprivation, making him susceptible to aggressive criminal behaviour. His tumultuous relationship with his parents has irreversible negative effects that affect the way he functions in society. He begins to identify with his name – Busagwa, murderer; it defines who he is in relation to society. Violence becomes his norm. It is acceptable behaviour that helps him construct a sense of self. He recognizes that violence gives him access to appropriate wealth, while with material goods he commands respect, gets acceptance and the recognition that he desperately desires. When his property is destroyed by a fire, he devises a diabolical plan. Within two years he has 'built a name and position for himself … established firmer than the heavens. He was a mighty man, one who could make orders which would be obeyed without question!' (Namukasa 2006, p.134) Evan is an antihero who disregards societal norms for his personal gratification. He refuses to remain poor, because he regards poverty as a weakness; it reminds him of a younger defenceless self who was always provoked but was unable to retaliate. In adulthood, he ruthlessly adopts brutality as a tool to protect himself, to acquire wealth and

[146] Morton (2004) calls this the process of violentization. It begins in childhood and is complete when an adult personality is formed. If an individual is subjected to or threatened by violence in early childhood, in the form of physical abuse within the family, later on, before adolescence, this individual begins to realise that they are easily provoked into physical violence themselves. This forms their adult behaviour/ personality. They begin to manage social situations through the routine use of violence.

retain power. The power he accumulates allows him to manipulate and subvert the criminal justice system. For eight years, he becomes formidable and untouchable; everyone 'feared him; from Bunono village to Kamengo town, including the police. Money sounded louder than thunder …. He paid big sums to the investigators before they could venture into his personal life, and so the cases rotted' (p.180).

In the end, his ambition for power and notoriety turns deadly. The society that he has manipulated and violated punishes him for his transgressions. Since the police are incompetent, the villagers assume their responsibility. By inflicting the same brutal violence on Evan, they collectively participate in his death. Namukasa's narrative is a biting critique that interrogates society's complicity in producing a deviant criminal; it questions the issue of materialism and exposes political corruption.

The silence of the lambs: 'the souls of many dead women cried out to me'[147]

In *The deadly ambition*, Namukasa portrays Evan as a sociopath motivated by greed to commit multiple murders for financial gain. In *Red ink*, Makholwa also examines the sociopathic tendencies, by creating Napoleon and Sifiso Dingiswayo and concentrates on the representation of their criminal intentions. These brothers exhibit an antisocial personality disorder that is disconcerting and extremely dangerous. They are controlled by violent fantasies that urge them to commit serial homicide which is enacted on the bodies of women. This vicious form of gendered violence combines sexual vulnerability and overt and brutal violence. The urban environment becomes the perfect space in which Napoleon and Sifiso are able to carry out their ruthless assaults. It provides the anonymity that serial killers and rapists require to go undetected for protracted periods. It is equally a precarious space that points to the vulnerability of black South African women in a post-repressive regime.

The legacies of colonial and apartheid labour history destabilised the family unit since most men left to become migrant labourers. For Makholwa, inhabiting the aftermath, crime fiction offers the opportunity of foreground the long-lasting effects of the repressive regime. In *Red ink*, serial rapist and killer Napoleon is constantly shadowed by his identical looking younger brother Sifiso, who is also a serial killer, but not a rapist.[148] The Dingiswayo brothers

[147] Mr Nkosi, the landlord of the Dingiswayo brothers, tells Lucy that, when he entered the room the brothers were renting from him, as an *inyanga* he could feel the sounds of perished souls (Makholwa 2007, p.202).

[148] Micki Pistorius defines a serial killer as *'a person (or persons) who murders several victims, usually strangers, at different times and not necessarily at the same location, with a cooling-off period in between. The motive is intrinsic; an*

share a father, but their three siblings have different fathers, all of whom are absent. Napoleon and Sifiso's father abandoned them when Napoleon was four. Their alcoholic mother Martha frequently abuses her children verbally and physically, forcing the older brother and sister to run away from home. This compels nine-year old Napoleon and seven-year old Sifiso to assume all parental responsibilities, which include cooking, cleaning and taking care of their baby sister Florence. Their harrowing childhood results in a problematic relationship with the maternal figure. Napoleon tries to articulate his feelings towards his mother when he confides in Lucy:

> My mother neglected us, so we formed alliances as we tried to manage more or less on our own since she was hardly ever there. My mother was always drinking; when she wasn't drinking she was swearing at us or beating me or Sifiso. She hated our father more than any of her other husbands or boyfriends. I don't know why, but she took out all her hatred of him on us.
>
> Those were tough times. When you are a child and all you know is violence, every single day of your life just becomes about survival. I'm not going to lie. I hated Martha, and I hated her more than any other person in the world. I know she was my mother, but she was a real bitch. (Makholwa 2007, pp.46-7)

Like other sociopaths, serial killers experience a traumatic childhood marked by cruel and violent patterns, rejection from parental figures, rejection from members of the opposite sex during adulthood, and confrontation with the law in youth or adulthood (Pistorius, 2002). Secondly, Pistorius (2002) observes that most serial killers come from dysfunctional homes in which family members have inconsistent contact with each other; in other words, they tend to be nomadic; they do not settle in one place for too long. Typically, by the age of eighteen they have separated from the nuclear family and isolated themselves from their community. Serial killers also tend to have an ambivalent relationship with their mothers, whom they simultaneously love and hate (Pistorius, 2002). It is within this dysfunctional family and specifically the failure of the mother's supervision that the personality of the serial killer is formed; it is an identity, a sense of self rooted in social violence (Watts 1993).

The novel allows Makholwa to engage with issues of dysfunctional families and the creation of a sociopath, by reflecting on Napoleon's childhood. In his conversations with

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irresistible compulsion, fuelled by fantasy which may lead to torture and/or sexual abuse, mutilation and necrophilia' (emphasis in the original, 2002, p.6).

Lucy, Napoleon recalls two violent and cruel incidents that defined his childhood. First, he remembers his mother burning him on the face with a hot iron, but the second episode is even more disastrous and catastrophic. At the age of ten, he returns home to find their house razed to the ground. It turns out that his mother went to drink at the local shebeen and forgot to turn off a paraffin stove; the house caught fire and engulfed everything including his baby sister, Florence. Because of the volatility of township life under apartheid and the various disorders it produced, Napoleon and Sifiso are subsequently placed in foster homes. 'The day those social workers came, we already knew that our mother was not like other mothers. And our relatives had their own problems. They did not want to get involved, so we never had a chance at a normal life' (Makholwa 2007, p.48). Napoleon and Sifiso are abandoned by their father, older siblings and relatives. They are neglected, and verbally and emotionally abused by their mother, and foster parents. As the omniscient narrator laments, throughout 'their childhood, the Dingiswayo brothers seldom encountered warmth and kindness from the adults in whose care they were placed, a factor that only served to strengthen the intense bond between the two siblings' (p.142).[149]

In addition to these traumatic events, Napoleon is sexually molested by a neighbour at the tender age of eleven. Auntie Pinkie successfully lures Napoleon into her room on the pretext of offering him food. A desperately ravenous Napoleon is touched by her act of generosity; this is the first time an adult has shown him some compassion. But Auntie Pinkie has laced the food with drugs; after consuming this scrumptious dish, he passes out and she rapes him. This incident of rape triggers his violent fantasies, and defines how both brothers will relate to people, especially women, in their adulthood. Their traumatic experiences, leaving them feeling humiliated and demeaned, begin to motivate their violent acts of crime. Napoleon and Sifiso fantasize about aggression, dominance over others and a repetition of what happened to them in their childhood, but in their illusions they are not victims, they are aggressors (Pistorius 2002). These violent impulses escalate, become uncontrollable, and are then acted out on the vulnerable bodies of women. As in Evan's case, from an early age the Dingiswayo brothers develop a deep hatred for the society that rejects them. They interact with society by scheming, manipulation, violence and aggression. These become their norm, because it gives them a grandiose sense of power.

[149] Pistorius (2005) claims that all the serial killers she and her colleagues interviewed complained that they felt like outsiders in society, they did not really 'fit in'. Because they did not identify with a father figure, they lacked empathy with other people and failed to develop a conscience.

In a pattern reminiscent of the deception that Auntie Pinkie used to trap Napoleon, Sifiso and Napoleon's modus operandi is to target innocent women, isolate them and then murder and/or rape them. These susceptible women are misled by the brothers' friendliness and charm. For example, the opening of the novel illustrates how Sifiso uses his charming looks and good manners to lure Busisiwe. She first encounters him at a busy taxi rank in Johannesburg, after she accidentally drops her groceries on the road. She stares motionlessly at the groceries, unable to react until Sifiso comes to her rescue by offering assistance. Although her instincts tell her she is putting herself at risk, she allows him to help her. Because she is completely flustered, he offers to give her a lift and to replace some of the items she has lost. Playing the role of the 'good Samaritan' is Sifiso's ploy to disarm Busisiwe. When he drops her at home and asks her out on a date, she readily accepts. To reiterate, sociopaths are charming and persuasive, but they are also rational, logical, competent and manipulative. In an interesting but frightening juxtaposition, Makholwa shows both Busisiwe and Sifiso getting ready for their date. On the one side of town, Busisiwe makes sure that she looks her best. She applies make-up and settles on an outfit that she thinks is feminine but not too revealing. On the other side of town, Sifiso is also getting ready: he takes out his new hunting knife, packs his gloves, collects a small axe, a nine millimetre pistol, masking tape and a collection of smaller knives. He is preparing to murder her. While her preparation points to her vulnerability and naivety, his is marked by power and control. Busisiwe imagines that Sifiso will find her femininity attractive and inadvertently plays into his misogynistic fantasy. All he sees when he looks at her is a debauched and promiscuous woman who uses her femininity to lead innocent men astray – she is the mirror image of his mother. In other words, he does not see her as a victim, but as a seductress who needs to be punished:

> They used men by exposing their flesh. … She probably carried diseases too. Then he saw her – or rather her partly exposed breasts. Did she really think that he would be interested in a woman like her? He felt nothing for women. Only one thing interested him. It still surprised him how many he had killed without anyone paying any attention. He was untouchable. … He noticed her lips were smeared with red lipstick to go with her red and white dress. She was a slut, just like his mother had been. He wondered if, like his mother, she had a love for the bottle. … Like he always told his brother, women are natural-born whores, no matter what you do to try and save them.

> … He hated everything about women – their high-pitched voices, their fake mannerisms, their smell. (Makholwa 2007, pp.4-6)

The former produces the latter, he conflates his hatred for his mother with his abhorrence towards women. The women he murders represent the mother who abused and neglected him. His contempt and revulsion towards women drives him to murder Busisiwe. This unprovoked violence, extreme in its viciousness, reveals Sifiso's deep-seated aversion. First he pins her to the ground, to humiliate her and show his contempt he urinates on her. Then he systematically begins to mutilate parts of her body while she is still alive. After she has bled to death, he decapitates her. While mutilating Busisiwe, he is emotionally detached from his actions. Morton points out,

> [a] serial killer thinks of his victims as sluts, garbage, snobs – some label that allows him not to think of them as human beings like himself. *They* think of *him* as an implacable monster embracing horror for its own sake. And however he thinks of himself, it will be in some way that is fuelled by knowing how his victims label him. In the simplest form it is their fear fuelling his feeling of power. (emphasis in original 2004, p.101)

Sifiso objectifies Busisiwe because it makes it effortless for him to treat her as if she is not human. The violence he inflicts on Busisiwe is a reflection of the anger and aggression he harbours towards his mother. Therefore, the brutal act of murder offers him a perverse sense of control, power and grandiosity. Because of his modus operandi, which involves dismembering his victim's body, Sifiso's nickname 'The Butcher' only serves to reinforce his arrogance and superiority complex.

Both Sifiso and Napoleon derive an intense sense of excitement and satisfaction from controlling and hurting their victims. However, there is one major aspect that differentiates the homicidal activities of the Dingiswayo brothers. Sifiso is gay; he does not find women sexually appealing, hence his sadistic compulsions towards them only involve torture, mutilation and murder. However, Napoleon's relationship with women is more conflicting and ambivalent. Even though he despises women, he is also sexually attracted to them. So, in addition to torture, mutilation and murder, his violent desires extend to rape. In order to force women to submit to his will, Napoleon uses threats, intimidation and sexual violence to exert power and control over his victims. One of Napoleon's victims is a karate expert who uses her self-defence expertise to resist his attempt to rape her. But in his perverted fantasy, he finds her tenacity challenging and exciting. Whilst she fights for her life, he interprets her

struggles as an affront to his masculine dominance. As her resistance intensifies, so does his determination to subdue her. Even while incarcerated, he derives pleasure from this experience; it reminds him of his power and control over women. He contemplates confessing to Lucy:

> Perhaps he would share the memory of the day when he sliced up that crazy karate bitch. … He had enjoyed raping her … so much fire, just like Sibongile. The last image he had of her was so perfect, poetic almost. It was like a sacrifice to the gods. Her beautiful brown head, with those big chocolate eyes staring at him, the defiance finally wiped out of them. Once that head hung from her neck by only a few threads of skin, he knew it was all over for her. He would never forget her. She had looked lovely … finally submitting to his will, his command, after so much resistance. He had triumphed, unparalleled and uncontested. (Makholwa 2007, p.92)

In her profiling of serial rapists, Pistorius (2002) categorises a perpetrator like Napoleon as a power assertive rapist, who assumes it is a man's prerogative to force a reluctant woman to have sex with him. For Napoleon, sexual assault involves a desire to humiliate the victim, to reduce her to the status of an object that he can control and overpower. He inflicts pain and suffering on his victim, but his aggression also confirms and asserts his virility, identity, mastery, strength and dominance. Rape allows Napoleon to challenge his inferiority complex, feelings of rejection, helplessness and vulnerability (Pistorius 2005; Morton 2004). In her philosophical investigation of rape, Louise du Toit (2009) suggests that a rapist does not seek normal reciprocal sexual pleasure. Instead, sexual violation is an affirmation of his sense of self. Du Toit argues that the rapist's affirmation of self depends on the disintegration of the victim's sense of self. Whilst Napoleon subdues the karate woman, her 'visible and audible pain, fear and humiliation' (Du Toit 2009, p.87) force her to acknowledge that her femininity is inferior and Napoleon's masculinity is superior, absolute and powerful. As he looks into her lifeless eyes, he recognizes submission to his will, and feels victorious and dominant. The moment Napoleon restrains her defiance, her sense of self is shattered. It is in deconstructing her sense of self that he is able to construct his sense of self and his place in the world is affirmed, extended and expanded.[150] According to Du Toit (2009), a rapist experiences a

[150] Stoltenberg describes the rapist logic as follows:

> You really are a real man. That slavish and submissive creature there spreading her legs is really not. You and that creature have nothing in common. That creature is an alien inanimate thing, but your penis is completely real and alive. Now you can come. Thank god almighty – you have a sex at last. (1989, p.4 cited in du Toit 2009, p.88)

sense of exhilaration and life affirmation long after the event. This explains why Napoleon does not forget the karate women. Du Toit insists that rape is

> always about territory – symbolic, political, physical territory – and its logic dictates that the struggle plays itself out in terms of the dehumanization of the female sex and the feminine symbolic. Rape is first and foremost a violent (re-)assertion of the legitimacy of the masculine universal, and therefore always in the first place a pushing back of woman (especially her independent, therefore threatening and contestatory aspects) onto the margins of the political, whether the territorial struggle is primarily one between the sexes or not. (2009, p.88)

In rape, Napoleon's masculine sexual identity as difference from and power over his victim's feminine and female sexuality must be affirmed. Therefore, the victim's fear and humiliation is the only aspect of her subjectivity that he allows to be expressed, because this apprehension and degradation sustains his sexual ego (Du Toit, 2009, p.88).

In *Red ink,* Makholwa's graphic representation of vicious acts aimed at women generates anxiety. She walks a fine line between the representation of voyeuristic pleasures of violence directed against women, and an attempt to problematize the precarious environment that women inhabit in post-apartheid South Africa. However, her portrayal of Lucy, a female sleuth who investigates these violent crimes, successfully incorporates a strong feminist message. The female sleuth can be seen as literally and symbolically overcoming dominant patriarchal figures**.** Although she inhabits a male- dominated and hostile world, her ability to navigate this world in spite of the dangers and threats that she experiences and her refusal to be intimidated by it, gives her control and allows her to assert an affirming female subjectivity.

Am I my sisters' keeper? 'Broken dolls all of them'[151]

In *The deadly ambition* and *Red ink,* depict hard-boiled criminals who commit vicious acts of homicide. Evan, Sifiso and Napoleon display sociopathic behaviour that can be traced back to their traumatic childhood. The pain and suffering that they experienced as children leaves them feeling degraded and helpless. The novels suggest that as they gradually mature into adults they begin to recognise that aggressive behaviour offers them power and control which enables them to assert a dominant male subjectivity.

[151] This refers to the emotional turmoil experienced by the Fourie family after the death of Sean (Golakai 2011, p.65).

In *The Lazarus effect*, however, Vee is completely taken aback when her investigation into Jacqui's disappearance reveals that the missing teenager was murdered not by a random male stranger, but by her half-sister Rosie. Vee acknowledges that she 'made the biggest mistake by assuming this had to be a man's crime' (Golakai 2011, p.279). Rosie's crime goes undetected for two years, because she is not the typical suspect; she is a child, female and closely related to the victim. Morton observes that we 'prefer to think of evil in terms of archetypal horrors, fictional villains, and deep viciousness, rather than to strain our capacities for intuitive understanding towards a grasp of the difficult truth that people much like us perform acts that we find unimaginably awful' (2004, p.102). Furthermore, Adelene Africa argues that female violence such as sororicide creates extreme anxiety because it 'challenges the normative social fabric and causes us to confront our beliefs about polarised gender norms' (2010, p.79). Although sororicide is not motivated by control and power, it is a complex, insidious and devious crime driven by anger and frustration. It is about long-standing sibling rivalries and a conflicted bond between the victim and offender. It tends to begin with a trivial domestic argument that gradually escalates into murder. This kind of violence is self-defeating because it brings little satisfaction, but it produces serious emotional problems for the offender who carries the guilt associated with killing a family member (Baumeister 1997). At 13, Rosie commits her first murder and manages to embroil her sister Serena and Etienne Matongo in her deceitful plan to cover up Jacqui's death. In *The Lazarus effect*, Golakai attempts to deal with the precipitating circumstances that would drive a teenage girl to commit such a heinous act of violence.

When Sean Fourie loses his battle with acute lymphocytic leukaemia, the novel shows that his entire family never fully recovers from his death. Sean's death defines the Fourie home, which is saturated with pain and grief. Lucas, Serena and Rosie 'all knew, had been *raised* to know and remember every landmark of their brother's short life' (emphasis in the original, Golakai 2011, p.36). After his death, the Fouries become a dysfunctional family: Ian, the patriarch, throws himself into creating a medical legacy; Carina, who feels betrayed by her husband, perpetually mourns her favourite child and wraps herself in sorrow:

> Bitterness. Bitterness killed love, and she'd embraced it. With shame and a surreal sense of triumph, Carina realised, I'm bitterness and rage and regret, and I've killed the love in more ways than one. She couldn't bring herself to look at the reflection in the mirror as the thought warped through her mind once more. I killed the love and

> happiness in my home. Well then, there was nothing like vengeance to light a flame under a rotting carcass. (Golakai 2011, p.146)

This emotional detachment between Ian and Carina is shown to have a long-term effect on the children, especially Rosie, who was only eight when her brother died. Rosie is deprived of a nurturing and loving environment. Although her parents are physically present, they are emotionally absent from her life. Rosie's formative years are characterised by a lack of parental supervision, parental conflict and low parental involvement (Farrington 2002).[152] It is important to note that these circumstances are similar to those observed in relation to offenders with an antisocial personality disorder.

Since her parents are self-absorbed in their anguished lives, Rosie begins to form an emotional bond with her older half-sister Jacqui. She tells Vee: 'I think she was cool and fun and she paid attention to me, which no one else ever did' (Golakai 2011, p.123). The chick lit novels discussed earlier and *Shock waves* in the next chapter foreground female relationships that are problematic, but positive and affirming, whereas in *The Lazarus effect*, the sisterhood depicted contains tensions that are damaging and destructive. It is a community that entails aspects of inclusion and exclusion. As Jacqui teaches Rosie how to shoplift, they become 'sisters in crime' who bond over juvenile offences. However, their delinquent activities exclude Serena, a born-again Christian not interested in violating the law. According to Rosie, her relationship with Jacqui causes animosity between herself and Serena. The novel suggests both sisters seem to be competing for attention and recognition from Jacqui.

> '*I think* the real reason Serena got all churchy and wanted to bring Jacqui along was because she got jealous we were spending so much time together and leaving her out of everything.' Rosie sucked in an angry breath. 'Like if *they* were hanging out together, she'd have less time for me.' (Golakai 2011, p.123)

Eventually, as Serena and Jacqui grow closer Serena's ethics begin to influence Jacqui. She cleans up her act and shifts her allegiance to Serena. However, their bond excludes Rosie, who is left feeling isolated and betrayed and abandoned by her family. One fateful night, after Rosie and Jacqui get into an argument, Rosie is unable to control her resentment and pent-up anger. As her emotional pain erupts, in a moment of complete rage, she kills her sister.

[152] Parental supervision refers to the degree of monitoring by parents of the child's activities, and their degree of watchfulness or vigilance. Of all these child-rearing methods, poor parental supervision is usually the strongest and most replicable predictor of offending (Farrington 2002, p.673).

Ironically, she turns to Serena, the only person she trusts, to help her dispose of Jacqui's body and conceal her murderous act. This shared secret re-establishes and strengthens the bond between these sisters who ultimately become 'sisters in crime'.

In *The Lazarus effect,* Golakai's represents an aspect of female violence that is multi-layered. It disrupts prevailing discourses that typically frame violence within a masculinist discourse. Critics have argued that the portrayal of female violence does not necessarily negate the feminist project; instead, it 'adds to feminist endeavours focused on challenging and dislocating dominant discourses which stereotype women and men's behaviour and which emphasise the differences between them' (Day, Gough & McFadden 2003; Gilbert 2002 cited in Africa 2010, p.84).

Namukasa, Makholwa and Golakai use crime fiction to foreground and critique various social and political issues. Apart from the concerns analysed in this section, these narratives also address issues of incompetence and corruption in the criminal justice system, the plight of street children, the aftermath of war, society's preoccupation with consumerism and materialism, changes in post-repressive cities and the aspirations of an emergent black middle class. Pim Higginson (2005) points out that crime fiction is attractive to women writers because it explores the policing of social boundaries. The genre's preoccupations and narrative strategies make it particularly well suited to articulate a critique of dominant ideologies. In a similar vein, the emerging women writers of this study take up crime fiction, a predominately male genre, to confront and challenge aspects of masculinity and femininity. Their narratives, which place different emphases on feminist issues, female sleuths and female perpetrators, both challenge and problematize societal conceptions of traditional femininities. The representation of female offenders and investigators questions prevailing notions and constructs women as passive and nonaggressive or as victims with no agency (Walton & Jones 1999). As investigators Vee and Lucy are able to solve crimes and restore a sense of order that temporarily offers 'a comforting illusion of the containment of contemporary social anxieties' (Worthington 2011, p.120). Sandile Ngidi (2009) comments on *Red ink*, but it applies equally to *The deadly ambition* and *The Lazarus effect*, that these crime narratives do not 'seek to be a local judge of the society in and of itself, but merely [offer] a glimpse into a people in transition, while reflecting on some of the consequences that come with this new-found … freedom (Makholwa Ngidi 2009). As Orford points out, 'crime fiction offers a way of telling an emotional and moral truth, a forensic exploration of the physical, emotional and moral aftermath of violence' (2010, p.191).

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that emerging women writers from Uganda and South Africa have appropriated the literary genres of chick lit and crime fiction to reflect and foreground some of the challenges that women face in the post-repressive regimes.[153] Although the dominant genres of chick lit and crime fiction tend to be dismissed by literary critics, in the hands of emerging writers these genres are undermined and reworked to allow the authors to speak to the local concerns of women from Uganda and South Africa. The contemporary forms of popular literature become productive sites where emerging writers can negotiate the messy contradictions, complexities and ambiguities of contemporary women, while producing new feminine subjectivities.

[153] Makholwa's *Black widow society* (2013) merges elements of chick lit and crime fiction in very interesting ways. The novel focuses on a secret society of women who are determined to free women who find themselves caught up in emotionally and physically abusive marriages. The society has contract killer on retainer who is sent to murder the errant husband; when the insurance pays out; the widow gives a percentage to the society.

CHAPTER FOUR
CONTESTED TERRAINS: MOTHERING IDENTITIES

> *Black woman, African woman, Oh I think of you …Oh my mother, you who carried me on her back, you who nursed me, you who guided my first steps, you who first opened my eyes to the wonders of the earth, I think of you …* (Camara Laye)[154]

Chapter three examined how emerging writers have appropriated popular literary genres. This chapter explores the various ways in which four emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa - Kopano Matlwa, Kagiso Lesego Molope, Doreen Baingana and Jocelyn Bananuka Ekochu - grapple with the experience and construction of motherhood. I examine the complexities that emerge from the various ways in which women as mothers are represented in four contemporary narratives from Uganda and South Africa. In contrast to the African nationalist images of women as mothers, which tend to be one-dimensional, these contemporary representations are multifarious depictions of the mother figure. This emerging generation of authors is far more nuanced than some of their literary foremothers and Western feminists in the ways in which they represent women. They offer intricate and complex perspectives on the mother-daughter relationship, interrogating both the institution of motherhood and the experience of mothering. Widening the scope of the representational range of mothers depicted, this new generation of writers reveals more freedom than many of their literary foremothers as they develop a literary tradition that explores the difficulties and rewards of the mothering experience. The narratives of emerging writing portray the mother figure as intrinsically complicated and attempt to write back to various limiting representations. They also tackle the issue of motherhood, with a history of the representation of the mother figure in Africa, while engaging with Anglo-American theories and histories of maternity.

The mother-daughter relationship is a common thread running through the narratives of Molope, Matlwa, Baingana and Ekochu and allows for the exploration of their failures, frustrations, restrictions, achievements, satisfactions, and fulfilments, and contributes to the identity formation of women as mothers and/or women as daughters. The narratives of

[154] Prologue, Laye 1955.

emerging writers portray the mothering experience as fraught and complex, grappling with the residual while writing towards new futures that do not necessarily depend on biological bonds. Critics such as Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva and Didier Anzieu have argued: that as a result of various economic, social and technological changes, the mothering environment in the contemporary societies that they represent is progressively moving away from its association with traditional ideological and legal ties, and undergoing drastic transformation (Silva 1996b; Anzieu 1989).[155] The use of the word 'mothering' instead of 'maternal' here is also deliberately chosen to avoid limiting this environment to the role played by a child's biological mother. Evelyn Glenn (1994) argues that mothering, which has always been a contested terrain, is a historically and culturally viable relationship in which one individual nurtures and cares for another. She continues:

> Motherhood ideology certainly encompasses multiple contradictions. Mothers are romanticized as life-giving, self-sacrificing, and forgiving, and demonized as smothering, overly involved, and destructive. They are seen as all powerful holding the fate of their children and ultimately the future of society in their hands and as powerless subordinated to the dictates of nature, instinct, and social forces beyond their ken. (Glenn 1994, p.11)

By putting emphasis in different places, *Coconut*, *The mending season*, *Tropical fish: Stories out of Entebbe* and *Shock waves across the ocean* these 'daughter writers' set out different configurations of the mother-daughter relationship in contemporary Uganda and South Africa. This discussion focuses on the shifts that occur in the way in which these emerging authors constitute the mother-daughter relationship. However, as mentioned in chapter two concerning the maternal figure, even as the authors attempt to negotiate motherhood differently from dominant narratives, one notices the residual as there are occasional overlaps that appear to reproduce romanticised images of the mother. At other times, there are echoes of some of the challenges that their literary foremothers had to deal with. But they also chart new ground as they reclaim this contested terrain. As Desiree Lewis observes elsewhere, they attempt, 'to [demystify] the romantic abstraction that maternity confers the natural dignity of women citizens, that women's socially-valued reproductive powers can be separated from individual women's actual experiences or memories of pregnancy, labour, postnatal trauma or the difficulties of raising children' (cited in Samuelson 2007b, p.229 n.14). In *Coconut*,

[155] The 'mothering environment' refers to any caregiver, not only the biological mother who responds to the baby's needs (Anzieu 1989, p.55).

which is set after the first general democratic elections of 1994 in South Africa, Matlwa explores intergenerational relationships between grandmothers, mothers and daughters. The grandmothers of the two protagonists have experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime, the mothers are of the transitional generation, and the daughters belong to the 'born-free' generation. *The mending season*, set in South Africa in the early 1990s on the eve of apartheid's demise, explores the lives of the Masemola sisters, who reject hegemonic ideals of marriage and motherhood and construct alternative forms of mothering. In *Tropical fish: Stories out of Entebbe*, which is set in the aftermath of the repressive regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, Baingana explores conflicting, complex, ambiguous questions of home and exile, a sense of belonging and alienation, and repressive maternal bonds. In *Shock waves across the ocean,* Ekochu constructs a world of women and women's experiences and explores how, with the disintegration of traditional social arrangements, women are facing and negotiating new bonds, dilemmas and anxieties, which have led to the creation of new forms of female and family bonds in all their ambiguities.[156]

All the authors revisit motherhood from the daughterly perspective, a perspective from which, as discussed in chapter two, the patriarchal mother stands in for repressive regimes, but can also offer a nourishing umbilical link to culture. Through creating space for diverse maternal identities, and by privileging the narrative voice of the daughter, the writers also seem to repress the very maternal voices they are evoking. This discussion explores the ways in which the construction of different mother figures internalize and replicate the conditions of the repressive state and/or traditional patriarchal conditions in an attempt to protect their daughters, and attempts to show the various ways in which mothers are implicated or depicted as resisting repressive regimes. The mothers face a double bind: they find themselves restricted and controlled by the nation-state and society, and inadvertently transfer this repression onto their daughters. Part of what is being performed in the mother-daughter relationships is the reproduction of gender norms that are sometimes experienced as stifling, overwhelming and repressive for the daughter. In addition, the narratives not only

[156] In *The bonds of love*, Jessica Benjamin suggests that there is an essential need for 'mutual recognition', 'the necessity of recognizing as well as being recognised by the other' (1988, p.23). She argues that the autonomous self is essentially a relational self, whose existence depends on being identified and affirmed by the other. Therefore, for Benjamin the recognition that the child receives from the maternal figure allows for imagining a meaningful distinct self that understands its agency in a tangible way. 'In order to exist for oneself, one has to exist for an other' (1988, p.53). These ties maintain distinct boundaries and separateness; however, if these bonds are disrupted, there is a possibility of domination.

configure mother-daughter relationships or the maternal role, they create spaces for emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa to begin to imagine alternative forms of mothering and motherhood that might come into being in the wake of repressive states. Therefore, these emerging writers focus on a double meaning in the concept of *state*: firstly, it brings us back to women's states of being, secondly, it refers to the nation-state out of which the authors are writing, and the way in which actual mothers come to symbolize the larger system of oppression.

In *The mending season*, Malebone Masemola embraces motherhood unreservedly, while her sisters Malesedi and Mabatho, like Christine Mugisha in *Tropical fish*, choose not to have children. Malesedi and Mabatho may not want to bear their own biological children, but they wholeheartedly adopt their niece, Tshidiso. Similarly, Nico Muheki in *Shock waves across the ocean* takes responsibility for the orphaned son of her best friend Cola Kalema Smith. Malebone Masemola and Ofilwe Tlou in Matlwa's *Coconut* disapprove of marriage, but not of the mothering experience. Some of the mothers portrayed are married, like Gemina Tlou in *Coconut* and Nico Muheki in *Shock waves across the ocean*, while Gogo and Koko, who represent the older generation of women, are both single mothers. Gemina Tlou represents full-time mothers trapped in the domestic space who sacrifice their careers for their children and husband, whereas Mrs Mugisha, Gogo, Malebone, Malesedi, Mabatho and Nico all represent mothers who have to negotiate full-time employment and mothering.

The origins of the contested terrain of maternal identities in Uganda and South Africa can be traced back to the colonial period. Historically, an ideology of motherhood with its roots in the nineteenth-century British Imperial project was exported to colonial Africa. Anna Davin's influential essay 'Imperialism and motherhood' looks at how a decline in population growth during the nineteenth century played an important role in the formulation of the imperial project. During this period, critics were divided over the impact of a decrease in population growth. The political economists and eugenists thought that if left unchecked, over-population would lead to the depletion of resources, which would in turn lead to war, epidemic and disease; while other critics, such as Charles Kingsley, were convinced that over-population was impossible because Britain as a colonial empire needed a healthy generation of citizens who would be responsible for the expansion and maintenance of the

imperial project.[157] The high infant mortality rate during this period was attributed to good or bad mothering[158] since mothers were obligated to raise good healthy citizens to ensure the survival of the nation. Officials and social reformers,

> concerned about the perceived drop in the quality of the populations, strove to 'educate' working class women to better health and safety standards, often without offering them the means to achieve those standards. Education officials sought to keep working-class children in school longer, but mothers resisted, insisting they needed their children's wages. At stake was a working-class mother's right to define what was in the family's best interest. (Glenn 1994, p.21)

'Motherhood was to be given a new divinity: it was the duty and destiny of women to be the "mothers of the race", but also their great reward' (Davin 1978, p.13). Pressure was exerted on working class mothers to conform to normative ideals of motherhood; if they did not comply with this hegemonic version of motherhood, they were considered 'bad mothers'. In other words, this hegemonic version defined who and what made a good mother and did not allow for any alternative forms of mothering. In most cases the 'bad mothers' tended to be single, working class women, while the 'good mothers' were married middle-class housewives. This hegemonic version of motherhood, based on the dominant European and American conceptions of womanhood, emphasized that the sole responsibility of caring and nurturing for a child be placed on the biological mother, the primary caretaker. It is only through the biological mother that children develop a sense of self and a healthy ability to relate to others (Glenn 1994). This ideology of motherhood imposed on working class women in Britain was replicated in the British colonies in Africa. Carol Summers argues that in Uganda, for example, the British colonial administration was also convinced that there was a rapid decline in the population growth, which would eventually lead to a labour shortage and

[157] The maintenance of empire would be based upon the power of a white population, proportionate in numbers, vigour and cohesion to the vast territories which the British democracies in the Mother Country and the Colonies controlled. (Davin 1978)

[158] This emphasis was reinforced by the influential ideas of eugenists: good motherhood was an essential component in their ideology of racial health and purity. 'Thus the solution to a national problem of public health and of politics was looked for in terms of individuals, of a particular role – the mother, and a social institution – the family. … The family remained the basic institution of society, and woman's domestic role remained supreme, but gradually it was her function as mother that was being most stressed, rather than her function as wife … [In] 1914 a book on young women and marriage gave as the three main objects for marriage the reproduction of the race, the maintenance of social purity, and the mutual comfort and assistance of each married couple' (Davin 1978, pp.12-13).

a resultant negative impact on the various projects of the British colonial administration.[159] In order to reverse this population decline, 'institutions and ideologies were developed to cope with an epidemic of STDs, to promote the family as a unit of reproduction, and to reform motherhood' (Summers 1991, p.788). In other words, the programs developed to promote population growth in Uganda were directly or indirectly modelled on the various initiatives that Davin has described as Imperial motherhood.

Although the missionaries encouraged particular kinds of women's work outside the domestic space of the home, they were also responsible for ideas on marriage and motherhood, sexuality and morality, which were based on patriarchal Victorian ideals.[160] This kind of domesticity advocated that good women remained in the home taking care of their children and husbands.[161] Grace Kyomuhendo and Marjorie McIntosh (2006) term this model that prescribed how a woman should act as the Domestic Virtue Model.[162] It propagated that

[159] 'Anxiety about female morality and weakening male control over women was related to fears about biological reproduction. A decreasing birth rate troubled both African and British leaders. Medical missionaries and colonial administrators attributed what they saw as an alarming population decline not only to sleeping sickness but also to venereal disease, stemming from sexual laxity. White concern with the reproductive capacities of Baganda women, tied to worry about their sexual conduct, has been described as an example of colonial misperceptions of African women and as part of a broader colonial attempt to control female reproduction. British reactions were triggered also by a shortage of agricultural labour, especially for the new export crops. But Baganda leaders shared many of these concerns. In 1920, for example, the *Lukiiko* passed measures that attempted to curb the spread of venereal disease, combat the declining numbers of marriage and births, fight emigration from Buganda, and prevent the escape of wives from their husbands' (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh 2006, pp.77-78).

[160] 'The early Christian schools and groups like the Catholic Women's Guild and the Protestant Mother's Union taught that domestic work, including growing crops, was a virtue. Encouraging women to be diligent mistresses of efficient households, they instructed girls and adult members on how to keep their homes and children clean, how to feed their families in nutritious ways, and how to sew or do handicrafts' (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh 2006, p.54).

[161] 'In some parts of Africa, Christian conceptions of domesticity led to a marked constriction of the economic and social independence that women had previously enjoyed. Among Yoruba women in southern Nigeria, for example, the expectation that Christian wives should remain at home, without engaging in commerce, was very different from earlier patterns. … domesticity is an example of how foreign values were imposed by colonialism upon local people, inculcated mainly through educational institutions. In Uganda, however, the Christian and colonial emphasis on women's domestic roles served to intensify values and patterns already in place in much of the country. In the eyes of the British, marriage and motherhood, and the domestic sphere were linked to notions of respectability and gentility, but these class-based definitions would not have been accepted so readily in Uganda had they not accorded with the existing social hierarchy and attitudes towards women's roles' (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh 2006, p.56).

[162] The Domestic Virtue paradigm defined how a good woman, one respected by her male and female peers, should behave. Its basic components, closely intertwined in practice, were the following:

- All women should marry. As wives they provide services for their husbands, including sex.

women should be married and provide for their husbands; as mothers, they are responsible for raising their children; they are restricted to the domestic space of the homestead and have to submit to male authority.

Although some of the ideals of womanhood and motherhood were based on social patterns and attitudes of African societies, they were reinforced by British colonial institutions, and appropriated by male nationalist writers who restricted women's activities to the domestic space of the home and insisted that women remain passive and submissive to male figures.[163] The mother figure represented in their narratives tends to be essentialized, romanticized and idealized; she is invested with symbolic power, but stripped of concrete power. It is this 'patchwork quilt of patriarchies' (Bozzoli 1983, p.155) stitched together out of various colonial and national traditions that emerging writers attempt to negotiate.

The African male literary tradition, as I have argued elsewhere,

> has been critiqued for portraying dichotomised images of the African woman. As Florence Stratton (1994) argues, she is either idealized as the Great Mother, endowed with eternal and abstract beauty, embracing each and every nation to emerge as the iconic figure of Mother Africa, or she is portrayed as the good-time girl, the loose woman, the prostitute, the antithesis of the mother and the wife. The prostitute metaphor symbolizes the debased nation-state, while the mother represents the

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- Women are mothers. They provide for and care for their children as well as socializing them into their culture's traditions.
- Women have practical duties within the household. They grow food for their family and do necessary work such as gathering fuel and water, cooking, and cleaning.
- Women's work occurs within the homestead and its fields, except when going to get wood or water.
- Women are subject to male authority. A woman should be submissive and deferential to her husband, his male relatives, and other men in the community. This requirement is part of a broader tradition of respect for authority and hierarchy.
- Women are not decision-makers. In the family, a woman may discuss issues with her husband but does not decide on her own, with the exception of minor domestic issues. In the clan, women maintain certain traditions but do not participate in such issues as allocating clan land. In the community they are not involved in such decisions as where to put a well.
- Women may use resources such as land and domestic property, but they do not control them (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006, pp.79-80).

[163] 'Although it was based upon many features already present in Buganda and some other local cultures, the Domestic Virtue model gained its lasting force through the similarity of those values to the ones brought by British colonial administrators and, to a lesser extent the missionaries' (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh 2006, p.65).

> continent restored. These images create binary oppositions of women: they are idealized/objectified, central figures/ marginal, powerful/powerless, active /passive, victim/agent (Nnaemeka 1997; Stratton 1994; Boehmer 1992; Boyce Davies 1990; Ogundipe-Leslie 1987) (Spencer 2012, p.93).

The vaguely defined but emotionally powerful term 'mother of the nation' could potentially be used to justify either women's active participation in nationalist movements or their place within the home, producing and caring for the men who would lead the nation (Kyomuhendo & McIntosh 2006). Therefore, one could argue that this particular representation of women and motherhood is a colonial imposition that finds itself in tension with an embodiment of African heritage and cultural values.

In addition, since in most African societies marriage was and is still regarded as a privileged status that adds value to a woman, a woman's identity is partially formed by her marital status, as well as her role as a mother. Motherhood defines womanhood. Motherhood is projected as mythical and symbolic; an idealized image of what it means to be a mother, but to male nationalist writers this representation does not adequately reflect the tensions that women experience when mothering (Nnaemeka 1997; Stratton 1994; Boehmer 1992; Boyce Davies 1990). This romanticization of motherhood ignores the anxieties and silences of the actual experiences of mothers. As Glenn points out, 'the high regard for mothers in African society has both positive and negative effects for women, circumscribing them even as it honours them' (1994, p.96).

The first generation of African women writers such as Flora Nwapa and Mariama Bâ challenge the pervasive views of motherhood; instead of an idealized version of motherhood, they grappled with the textured experience and realities of mothers by interrogating and challenging the mythologization of motherhood. The second generation of writers including Buchi Emecheta, Yvonne Vera and Calithxe Beyala do not stop at critiquing the harsh realities of motherhood as a patriarchal institution; they also reflect on the tensions that women come up against as they negotiate the various aspects of mothering. The emergent generation of writers from Uganda and South Africa try to offer alternative forms of motherhood that are not restricted to the reproduction process. By constructing different versions of mothering, these literary daughters sometimes elaborate, reiterate or push aside the images of motherhood represented by their literary mothers.

In addition, writers such as Molope and Ekochu do not only offer a critique of mothering, but since mothering embodies both pains and rewards, they also acknowledge the affirming aspects of mothering. Renée Larrier argues in her discussion on reconstructing motherhood in the autobiographies of African francophone women writers that, because mothering is not one-dimensional, narratives by women are able to 'present various aspects of mothering: its trials and pains as well as its privileges and rewards' (1997, p.197). They celebrate mothering by representing mothers who embrace it in spite of its agonies, complexities, ambivalences and contradictions as a rewarding, enriching experience. As Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (1997b) points out with regard to earlier generations of African women writers, some attempt to delink victimhood, motherhood and marriage. They invest their mother figures with agency and it is up to the women to decide whether to reject or accept being a mother and/or wife. By portraying diverse identities of mothers, they do not present homogeneous characters, but complex individuals wrestling with the patriarchal institution of motherhood, or rejecting it entirely. For example, Emecheta's Nnu Ego sacrifices her life for her children and husband, but ends up dying all alone by the roadside in a deeply ironic portrayal of 'the joys of motherhood', while Adaku, fed up with being the third wife, renounces her marriage for prostitution and a chance at improving the lives of her daughters. In *So long a letter* Aïssatou, on finding herself in a polygamous marriage, leaves her husband to make a life for herself and her sons in the United States of America. In Vera's *Butterfly burning*, Zandile abandons her infant daughter Phephelaphi, who is then adopted by her best friend Gertrude, while Phephelaphi herself rejects motherhood twice, first when she aborts her foetus and then when she immolates herself while pregnant.

Matlwa, Molope, Baingana and Ekochu have been inspired by and are following in the footsteps of more established writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ, Ama Ata Aidoo, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Calithxe Beyala who have reflected on issues of female identity; but they also explore new feminine subjectivities. Nfah Abbenyi, following on Teresa de Lauretis, emphasises that subjectivity is a continuous constant rejuvenation process that is based on collaborations between shifting subject positions, and determined by experience. She notes that 'what is emerging in feminist writing is … the concept of a multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not divided in, but rather at odds with, language, an identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race, and class' (cited in Nfah-Abbenyi 1997a, p.67).

Similarly to their literary foremothers, emerging writers are engaging with ideas of motherhood and mothering. In *Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and institution*, Rich painstakingly distinguishes between two aspects of motherhood: the experience and the institution. The institution of motherhood has been superimposed on the experience of motherhood:

> the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control. This institution has been a keystone of the diverse social and political systems. It has withheld over one-half the human species from the decisions affecting their lives; it exonerates men from fatherhood in any authentic sense; it creates the dangerous schism between 'private' and 'public' life; it calcifies human choices and potentialities. (Rich, 1995, p.13)

Contrary to conventional perceptions, motherhood and mothering do not come naturally. These are concepts that have been historically, culturally and socially constructed. 'Motherhood has always been, and continues to be, a colonized concept–an event physically practiced and experienced by women but occupied, defined, and given content and value by the core concepts of patriarchal ideology' (Fineman 1995, p.217). Various patriarchal societies have used the reproductive potential of women to construct a particular definition of motherhood as an institution that ensures women continue to be under the influence and control of men. Rich contends that, although it is women who bear children, it does not necessarily follow that women will instinctively know how to mother these children. She argues that patriarchy constructs and regulates the institution of motherhood, which ghettoizes and degrades female potentialities, while women experience mothering which is not a natural process, but a diverse experience that includes birthing, adoption, surrogacy, fostering and so on. It is complex and encompasses contradictory feelings, ambivalence, tensions, conflicts, anxieties, as well as joys, desires and rewards; it is an experience that is simultaneously enabling and constraining. The ideological imperatives of the patriarchal institution of motherhood iron out these tensions, complexities, ambiguities in order to produce a one-dimensional mother figure that is then put on a pedestal and idealized.

In the narratives of the current generation of writers from Uganda and South Africa women grapple with motherhood and mothering in the patriarchal institution with the aftermath and post-repressive societies. The emergent is a useful category of analysis because is marked by a confusing mix of the residual and the emergent in which something new is

beginning to emerge out of the dominant, but the emergent still contains the residue of what came before. They contribute to the vast body of motherhood theories by delinking biological aspects of mothering from the experience of mothering, capturing and elaborating on the diversity of the motherhood experience, breaking up dominant forms of motherhood and producing alternative structures, some of which have to be accessed by thinking back through the figure of the grandmother and mother. As Samuelson suggests elsewhere, some women's narratives 'encourage us to revise this understanding of maternal politics by showing it revolves not around the relationship of mother to child, or wife to husband, but also around the relationship of woman to woman, or 'mother to mother'. A maternal politics that establishes alliances between women … can be understood as a viable variant of feminism' (Samuelson, 2007b, p.177).

Intrusive, present, absent, silent and dead mothers: Intergenerational relationships in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*

> *Many daughters live in rage at their mothers for having accepted, too readily and passively, 'whatever comes'. A mother's victimization does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates the daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman.* (Adrienne Rich)[164]

Kopano Matlwa's debut novel, *Coconut*, heralds a new voice in South African literature, one that captures the black urban experience in post-apartheid South Africa. By exploring the relationships between two young female protagonists from distinct backgrounds, their mothers and their grandmothers, *Coconut* unpacks the popular slur 'coconut' and the challenges faced by three different generations of women. Matlwa focuses on the ways in which these generations of women grapple with issues of culture, language and heritage and their attempts to negotiate an identity for themselves in the new dispensation. *Coconut* presents a complex articulation of 'coconuttiness' (Ngcobo 2008 p.30). The novel takes up the concept of 'coconuttiness' as the subject of biting critique in order to offer personal and sympathetic views of two families. The grandmothers of the two protagonists have experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime; their mothers are the transitional

[164] Rich 1995, p.243.

generation, and the daughters belong to the 'born-free' generation. Matlwa privileges the adolescent's perspective, this viewpoint becomes an allegory for the new nation; their growing pains speak to the problems and difficulties facing the adolescent nation.

In the South African context, the derogatory term 'coconut' is commonly used to refer to a person who is black but who speaks like 'a white person'; that is, it refers to one who speaks English most of the time, choosing it over an African language, or who is unable to speak an African language, and who is considered to 'act white'. In short, 'coconut' refers to someone who is 'black on the outside but white on the inside' (McKinney 2007, p.17).[165] The coconut metaphor presents an inversion of Frantz Fanon's *Black skin, white masks*: it is not about the politics of epidermisation, but about 'culture' and one's 'essential' being. In the coconut metaphor, blackness is only skin deep, while the inner self is reconfigured by education, social and cultural hegemony. In other words, 'coconuttiness' occurs when one betrays one's ethnicity by gravitating towards the social expectations of a hegemonic westernised culture. Or, as Louise Vincent elaborates, 'coconuts are people who have become contaminated by "whiteness" through too much contact with its ways' (2008, p.1435). Engaging with the novel raises the following questions: What does it mean when we re-read Fanon by re-gendering the problematic? What is it for daughters who are trying to negotiate culture, estrangement and recovery through the maternal figure?

Narrated in the first person by two female protagonists who lead parallel lives, the novel is split into two sections. In the first, Ofilwe (Fifi) Tlou serves as the narrator, while Fikile Twala provides the narrative voice in the second part. By exploring the lives of two teenage girls who speak from two distinct subject positions, Matlwa is able to provide perspectives of two characters located on each side of the socio-economic fence struggling to negotiate an identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Chronicling a single day in the life of the two protagonists whose lives intersect at an up-market coffee shop in the suburbs of Johannesburg, the narrative is not chronological; instead, it is a stream of consciousness that oscillates between the present and the past.

Fifi speaks from a position of privilege. John Tlou, her father, has benefited from the post-apartheid government's Black Economic Empowerment policies, and is part of a black

[165] Ndumiso Ngcobo, who is critical of the term, argues that given the important national priorities such as poverty alleviation, eradicating racism and the fight against HIV/AIDS '[c]alling people coconuts is a retarded, subjective practice…' (2008, p.30).

middle class who now surpasses the white middle class in numbers, but who is constantly confronted with cultural practices that privilege global values of 'whiteness' as cultural capital remains invested in the hands of a white minority. Black Economic Empowerment policies and the lifting of the Group Areas Act created new forms of economic mobility which made it possible for some black people to move from the rural areas or the township to the inner city or the suburbs, and which also made possible a shift from race to class politics. The Tlous live in a plush gated estate in an exclusive Johannesburg suburb and have access to a private school education, modern shopping malls and lavish golf courses. In spite of all the opportunities that suburbia has to offer, Ofilwe discovers that it is a surprisingly vapid world that seems stripped of the promises it is meant to hold, a world that is empty and psychologically destructive.

Fikile (Fiks) whose name, ironically, means 'you have arrived', is an ambitious orphan who lives in the township,[166] a space of exclusion and deprivation constructed to house a population whose labour was needed to service the white city. Moreover, in post-apartheid South Africa Fiks continues to inhabit this often neglected space. Her marginality is exacerbated in that she lives in a one bed-roomed hovel in the backyard of another family's house that she is forced to share with her paedophile uncle. Their 'home' is not equipped with the basic amenities such as ablution facilities or a toilet: every morning, she has to fetch water in a bucket from an outside tap, and clean herself in the kitchen. As there is only one bed, which Fiks has forfeited to her uncle, she is forced to sleep on a makeshift mattress on the hard cement floor. She has had a traumatic childhood: even before her birth she was rejected by her father, her mother later committed suicide, she was abandoned by her grandmother, and sexually molested by her uncle. Fiks, a high school dropout, works as a waitress at an up-market coffee shop in the suburbs and aspires to all the privileges of 'whiteness' promised by the city. Fiks's story suggests that for the majority of black people, especially those living in appalling conditions in the townships and rural areas, the demise of apartheid has not translated beyond political freedom: for them, it may be regarded as a failed revolution, but Fiks determinedly aspires to reap some of the benefits. Fifi's story, on the other hand, represents the ambivalences of the promise of economic empowerment. Fifi and

[166] Mbembe observes that '[t]he biopolitics of the mine compound and township life was in direct continuity with the earlier politics of land dispossession codified in the 1913 and the 1936 land acts. These and other laws were aimed at driving noncitizens (i.e., blacks) out of sight, relegating them to forgotten subterrans of the outer city the townships' (2004, p.391).

Fiks come from opposite sides of the socioeconomic fence, but they share a sense of estrangement from the worlds they inhabit.

In *Coconut*, the relationships between the different generations of women are reminiscent of those between women in Mariama Bâ's *So long a letter*. The first generation of women, Koko and Gogo, are the mothers of Gemina and Charmin, and the grandmothers of Fifi and Fiks. They have respectively experienced the forbidding controlling forces of the apartheid era. Because apartheid curtailed and distorted the grandmothers' potential, at times it seems to their daughters that they are passing on those restrictions. But this is an unfair criticism on the part of the daughters who, like the nationalist writers, sometimes impose difficult demands on their mothers. Their mothers create limitations in order to keep them safe within the boundaries, so that they do not fall into the situation of Tihelo in *Dancing in the dust*, who is punished for stepping out of boundaries produced by the repressive apartheid system. But for Tihelo, this eventually is constructed as a liberatory.

Although the experiences of both the grandmothers do not offer a romanticised image of motherhood, they are portrayed as repositories, custodians and distributors of traditional values and ideals that support a sense of family and community.[167] Their daughters Gemina and Charmin, the transitional generation, link the apartheid and post-apartheid era; they inhabit a space that symbolizes a break from traditional cultural values and a shift towards modernity and a new democracy, but they also reflect the uncertainty of the future of the new nation. The narrator-daughters, born after the demise of apartheid, struggle with issues of identity in a rapidly transforming society, a reflection of a young democracy involved in a complex nation-building process. In this regard, *Coconut* also resonates with Ama Ata Aidoo's short story 'The girl who can', which also interrogates the relationships between three generations of women representing different eras in history.[168] By looking at three generations of women Matlwa, like her literary foremothers Aidoo and Bâ, is rethinking issues of identity and new female selves.

[167] In the South African context, tradition cannot be idealized because it is partly a construction of the colonial authority that also marginalizes women.

[168] Nana, the matriarch and grandmother, is very strong and vocal; her daughter Maami, who links colonial and post-colonial Africa, is portrayed as a voiceless character representing those that have been absorbed into the colonial economy and a disempowering maternal ideal. As a post-colonial figure, Adjoa, Maami's daughter, inherits ideals from both generations that enable her to construct alternative ways of being a woman.

Koko and Gogo are single, uneducated, working-class women who have lived through the repressive regime of apartheid, under which they raised their children. Apartheid had an impact on the ideals and realities of mothering which, in turn, reconfigured and reshaped the black family. During the turbulent time of apartheid 'black women bore the brunt of families' efforts to survive and suffered most intimately the cruelties of poverty, starvation and disease, the unemployment, malnutrition and infant deaths of the countryside. Men might appear briefly once a year at the most, stay for a couple of weeks, and then vanish, perhaps for years, perhaps forever' (McClintock 1995, p.318). Women were also drawn by pull factors, particularly since the various revised Land Acts, sought to turn land owners and farmers into tenants and labourers. This forced women to migrate to the city to seek income-generating opportunities. Along with a migrant labour system that denied them access to jobs, they encountered a hostile environment and had to cope with various tyrannical laws and regulations such as the Group Areas Act and urban influx control that constrained female migration to the cities. They were constantly confronted with the trauma of arrests, forced removal, evictions and banishments. [169]

In spite of these circumstances, Koko is able to provide her daughter Gemina with opportunities that were inaccessible to her. Although in the early 1970s opportunities for educated women were increasing, women had limited career options open to them; their roles were determined by both colonial and nationalist patriarchal discourses. As a result, the education that Gemina receives channels her into the position of a nurse. Because women were steered into these roles, nurturing became professionalized, which meant that as mothers they became unavailable to their children. Gemina gives up her career as a qualified nurse to become a suburban wife and mother to be available to her children; however, she masks her realities: she is extremely depressed and dissatisfied with her life, her marriage is both emotionally and physically unfulfilling, and she has a tense relationship with her children. Charmin, Gogo's daughter, is frustrated with her impoverished life as a woman and mother, which leads to alcoholism and depression. Out of despair, and unable to contain her pain and anguish, she ends up committing suicide by slashing her wrists. Charmin's rejection of life is a reflection of Gemina's inner turmoil, since both mothers are estranged and alienated from

[169] 'When the Nationalist party swept triumphantly into power in 1948 they began to systematize the Bantustan system. By the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 a scant 13 percent of the most arid and broken land was allocated to black South Africans, though they comprise 75 percent of the people. The Bantustans consist of eighty-one scattered scraps of land, parceled along invented "national" lines into ten so-called "independent homelands"' (McClintock 1995, p.324).

their children. Charmin may be deceased, but her presence is tangible as part of Fiks's repressed memories, while Gemina, who represses her resentment, is alive but damaged and dead on the inside, making her emotionally and psychologically unavailable to her children.

A closer examination of the mother-daughter relationship between the first and second generation reveals that Koko embodies the voice of ancient spirituality; she becomes a figure that helps to draw those beliefs that might have been consigned to the past through to the present. In terms of spiritual convictions, Koko and Gemina represent diametrically opposite positions. For example, when Koko proposes that the family perform a traditional ceremony to express gratitude to the ancestors for John Tlou's successful business ventures, Gemina is opposed to the idea; she would rather celebrate his achievements with a trip to Disneyland, Florida. However, at Koko's insistence, a truncated version of the thanksgiving ceremony takes place. Instead of traditional rituals where traditional beer '*together with the blood of an animal and motsoko'* (emphasis in original Matlwa 2007, p.71) are offered as a tokens of appreciation to the ancestors, the ritual is desecrated when a live chicken and blood from a cow bought from the butchery are used as substitutes. When the entire ceremony turns farcical, Koko becomes Gemina's scapegoat.

> *You happy now, ma? Now that you was embarrassing me in front of the eyes of my in-laws and my neighbors. Now that you cover my carpet with blood, fill my kitchen with dirty flies and chased my husband away from her home. You had to make your presence be felt, nê ma? Everybody must know Koko is here. You could not just let a good thing be. No ma, you must insist that this witchcraft be performed. You must be reminding all of us of our backward ways. Did Arthur's drunked prayer of thanks please the gods, ma? Is the gods now happy? Or now must we perform another ceremony to find that out?* (emphasis in original Matlwa 2007, p.74)

On the surface it seems as though the conflict is between mother and daughter, but it is not: Gemina's discomfiture is two-fold. On the one hand it is between her in-laws and husband, but a patriarchal institution prevents her from confronting her in-laws. On the other hand, Gemina, who represents the transitional generation mediating between the past of the township and the present of the suburbs, is caught in between these two spaces. She feels humiliated because she is reminded that these cultural rituals 'do not belong' in a suburban

community.[170] Gemina wants to be part of this Tuscan village, which itself is a veneer of Europeanness over the South African landscape; she wants to blend in, to be included, to create the impression that she fits into the cosmopolitan lifestyle it represents. Mbembe remarks that these new spaces in post-apartheid South Africa set 'up new boundaries and distances … based on class rather than on race' (2004, p.402). The Tlous' experience reveals that race and class continues to play a critical role in the social imaginary.

Initially Gemina feels as though Koko is intruding in her life, but she begins to recognize the significance of maintaining certain customs and attempts to encourage this appreciation by involving Fifi in cultural activities in the township. Signe Hammer notes that a 'mother is the first mediator of the environment for a daughter; through very subtle cues from her mother, a daughter first learns what is expected of her culture. She will combine these cues with her own responses and begin to form an image of herself and her relationship to the world' (1976, p.xiv). Gemina tries to distance herself from certain traditions, but her ambivalence apropos the tensions between culture and tradition begin to resurface in relation to Fifi, who also wants to distance herself from 'backward rituals'. Fifi is too absorbed in her suburban rituals to fully grasp the importance of forging these ties. So when her mother insists that the family attend the funeral of a former township headmaster an argument ensues between her and Fifi because the date of the funeral coincides with a suburban party to which she has been invited. The party is far more important to Fifi, who remarks discontentedly

> *My mother tells me, 'it is respect, Ofilwe … We must be there at the funeral. … These things are of immense importance … We support each other … Also us, we will need these people' … 'Not actually, Mama, I do not want a bunch of strangers at my funeral pretending to care when all they are there for is the food!' … Doesn't she understand that this party is my big chance?* (emphasis in original Matlwa 2007, p.8)

Gemina attempts to teach Fifi that one's worth is inextricably linked to involvement in the community, that active participation in the community is born out of reciprocity, which in turn reinforces linkages between people and plays a crucial role in the construction of an identity that is meaningful to the self. However, she feels that her mother is interfering in her

[170] According to the estate's regulations the ceremony violates two rules: Residents 'may not keep any wild animals, livestock, poultry, reptiles or aviaries or any animals of the sort on the Estate grounds ... must avoid installing visible laundry lines, Wendy houses, tools sheds, pet accommodation and the like in areas that are visible from public view and must ensure that the above are screened from neighboring properties' (Matlwa 2007, pp.73-74).

life. It is only later that she begins to realize that the traditional rituals she snubbed as a child were important lessons in cultural etiquette. She says, at 'nuptials and burial ceremonies, at thanksgiving days *ge re phasa Bodimo*, I stand in reverence, out of everybody's way, silently taking it all in, feeling most inadequate amongst a group of people who seem to know exactly what roles they play in the age-old Pedi rituals. … I do not know how I am supposed to know, and whether I will ever know' (pp. 8-9).

Matlwa seems to suggest that Fifi has internalized the views of a different culture that serve to construct a sense of abjection of the self. So when Fifi uses these white values as an excuse to exclude herself from participating in certain traditions not only is she denying a part of herself, she is in effect disavowing the maternal figure who is significant in a daughter's own sense of herself. The text presents language as one of the keys to reclaiming a cultural identity. It is through the mother tongue that tradition and customs are transferred from one generation to the other. Matlwa seems to suggest that the different generations of mothers see themselves through culture and language, which they attempt to pass on to their daughters. As Boyce Davies notes, the 'link to the maternal and speech is made deliberately in the myth of birth, speech, language and mother-daughter transferral of the power of speech' (1994, p.159). Fifi may participate in the suburban rituals, and may even be able to perform 'whiteness' proficiently, but it is a performance that stops short at her black skin. She is faced with the reality that she may never be fully accepted in the suburbs, that she will constantly have to negotiate her way in and around this world. It is Tshepo her brother who cautions her that,

> *the people you strive so hard to be like will one day reject you because as much as you pretend, you are not one of their own. Then you will turn back, but there too you will find no acceptance, for those you once rejected will no longer recognize the thing you have become. So far, too far to return. So much, too much you have changed. Stuck between two worlds, shunned by both* (Matlwa 2007, p.93; emphasis in original).

Fifi's predicament is about understanding Pedi customary codes embedded in the language. It begins to dawn on Fifi that she is located in an in-between place, where she is either 'too black to be white' or 'too white to be black'. In her interpretation of Homi Bhabha's theories on hybridity, Denise Handlarski (2008, p.3) notes that the kinds of cultural

tensions experienced by Fifi differ from the more liberating configuration of Bhabha's notion of the 'in-between' which is both a dislocation and a site of possibility that he calls a 'join'. The join forges two seemingly separate locations, or identities. Thus the 'in-between' is about connection and linkages, rather than a reinforcement of difference. Bhabha sees the 'in-between' as positive, liberating, and dynamic. In *Coconut*, the reverse is true: the characters feel trapped by their in-betweenness and dislocation. Matlwa attempts to demonstrate that the 'in-between' space inhabited by the 'coconut' is not a subversive space of possibility, but a painful and potentially damaging one. Like the coconut that symbolizes her predicament, which is revealingly hollow in the centre, Fifi finds she has no core to ground her. Standing on the outside of township rituals, looking in and observing, makes her realize that for her a Pedi cultural identity plays a crucial role in defining who one is. As a young adult Fifi begins to recognize the relevance of this and makes a concerted effort to learn Pedi.

Coconut attempts to demonstrate a shift from a rural ontology of sacrifice in the township to the suburbs. Both Koko and Gemina see the customs and cultures that have accrued around their spaces as valuable and both Gemina and Fifi resist as they try to move away from these customs. But in the gated community, Fifi ultimately begins to realize that her family exists in 'a world of pretend' – it is empty, too much has been left behind, and she has to go back through the mother and the grandmother to recover what she has lost. Koko offers traditional values that can feed and sustain Gemina, who has been alienated and locked in an isolated westernized middle-class domestic arrangement to which tradition offers an alternative. This means that Gemina, who emerges at the end of different legacies, also has traditional ideals to impart to Fifi.

As a writer, Matlwa draws on dominant narratives to offer an emergent narrative of the mother-daughter relationship. She does not romanticize the mother-daughter bond; instead, she engages with the complexities of this relationship and the ways in which it creates forms of repression. The mother-daughter relationship is intricate; it is nurturing and caring, but also full of tensions, conflict, complications, ambivalences, anxieties, and ambiguities. This is illustrated in the way in which Koko and Gemina interact. In spite of the physical distance between them, Koko and Gemina's relationship is an intimate one; they communicate with each other on a daily basis since Koko seems to be the only person in whom Gemina confides. On one occasion, Fifi eavesdrops on an intense conversation between her grandmother and mother. She hears a vulnerable and distraught Gemina desperately seeking moral support and advice from Koko as she contemplates whether to

leave John, who is engaged in an extra-marital affair. However, as Koko comes from an era where it was unheard of for a woman to divorce her husband, she compounds Gemina's problems by reminding her that her identity as a woman is restricted to the roles of wife and mother. Therefore, leaving her marriage is not an option; instead, she has to sacrifice her needs and happiness for the sake of her children or she will lose the privileges she enjoys as a married woman. Lauretta Ngcobo confirms that in most African societies divorced women are frowned upon. Women are forced to endure stressful marriages, because in divorce women come out as the loser:

> Even when her husband is the offending party, society sees her as having failed to hold him in place – therefore his failure is her failure as well. The welfare of the children constitutes another consideration. Children will always belong to the husbands lineage and in a divorce the wife loses the children and leaves them behind. (Ngcobo 1988, pp.149-150)

Koko, who is of the generation that Ngcobo describes, denies Gemina the opportunity to break free from her oppressive marriage; Gemina is coerced into remaining in an oppressive marriage in which she continually has to repress her anger, pain, frustrations and disappointments. Koko's advice demonstrates how, within patriarchy, women internalize the unequal gender and power relations and become accomplices in their maintenance because they continually perpetuate the control of power and sexuality that men have claimed for themselves (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997b). The mother-daughter relation is deeply intimate, yet still mediated by patriarchy. Rich suggests that

> [f]ew women growing up in patriarchal society can feel mothered enough; the power of our mothers, whatever their love for us and their struggles on our behalf is too restricted. And it is the mother through whom patriarchy early teaches the small female her proper expectations. The anxious pressure of one female on another to conform to a degrading and dispiriting role can hardly be termed 'mothering,' even if she does this believing it will help her daughter to survive. (1997, p.243)

Although both Koko and Gemina at times appear to be intrusive mothers, at least they are present in their daughters' lives. However, the same cannot be said of Fiks. With the death of her mother Charmin the responsibility of nurturing and caring for Fiks falls on her grandmother, who is a domestic worker and the sole income earner of her family. As a maternal figure, Gogo's role is multiple and shifting: at work, her duty is to relieve her employers of the heavier burdens of motherhood; she cooks, cleans and caters to the needs

and demands of her white 'children'. But by the time she gets home, she is exhausted and her reserves have been depleted. Frustrated because she has little to offer, emotionally and physically, Gogo persuades Fiks to forge links with her age-mates. By spending time with other girls, Gogo anticipates that Fiks will bond with them to form a sense of community. As a grandmother and mother, Gogo encourages Fiks by offering alternative forms of female relationships.

> *'But everybody needs friends, Fikile, even you, my sweetie. Go play outside with other girls.'*
>
> *' I am fine here with you, Gogo.'*
>
> *'"They are all the same", "they are boring", "they can't speak English", "they are stupid", "they steal my stuff"'. You always have an excuse, Fikile. I am fed up with you sitting in here all day reading those fashion magazines. ... I thought that they would be a fine way for you to practice your reading but they have taught you nothing but to be a snob. Go outside and play.* (emphasis in original Matlwa 2007, pp.30-31)

In a way, Fiks uses these magazines to replace the direction that she would have otherwise received from her mother. The images of femininity that Fiks is constantly bombarded with are constructed, unrealistic representations meant to appeal to privileged white middle-class women. In the absence of the maternal figure, Fiks is captivated by these images of beauty, which she uses to construct a new self, with pretty emerald green eyes, blow-in-the-wind caramel-blond hair pinned in perfectly to make it look real, eyeliner, mascara, eyelash-straightener, eye shadow and blush. This kind of self-invention gives her the space to present herself as a classy, modern, cosmopolitan woman in a way that explicitly references whiteness.[171] Fiks admits that it '*may have been all those magazines that I started reading* ... Body Catalogue, Girl, Gloss, Fly Girl, Allure, Panache, Spoilt!, Chic, Live life. … *The more magazines I read, the more I wanted to read ... I lived in those magazines, and the more I read the more assured I was that the life in those pages was the one I was born to live. ... I knew it all'* (p.166).

After immersing herself in these images, Fiks begins to reject her impoverished life in the township and repress memories of her dead mother and absent grandmother. She creates a fantasy-world at Silver Spoon, an up-market coffee shop that caters to politicians, celebrities,

[171] This is reminiscent of Pecola Breedlove in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, who is obsessed with having blue eyes, because she thinks only then will she be as beautiful as the blond blue-eyed children.

business tycoons and surgeons. Silver Spoon encodes a particular economic power; it epitomizes all that Fiks aspires to in life; it is a physical representation of 'Project Infinity' (p.108). At the same time, in a painful irony, it also points to the distance between this fantasy and her dismal living conditions and the absence of a maternal figure, emphasizing the distance between the two and the fact that she was not born with a silver spoon in her mouth. To compensate for the reality of her life in the township and replace her dead mother, she becomes completely obsessed with the lives of her customers, seeing herself as far more than a waitress; rather, in her mind she is a vital cog in the existence of the coffee shop: she is a therapist, friend and confidant as these strangers become, she imagines, her surrogate family. Their world of break-ups, smashed up cars and retail therapy is a reflection of her fantasy; thus she lives vicariously through their stories while waiting for 'Project Infinity' to come to fruition.

The identity Fiks constructs is a façade that protects her from the realities of her tragic life. By existing in a perpetual state of denial she avoids dealing with her repressed memories because confronting her traumatic past involves a painful process. As Amy Denver in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* says, 'anything coming back to life hurts' (2005, p.42). So instead, the wealthy white clientele at Silver Spoon café, where she works as a waitress, become her surrogate family. Rich suggests that the

> 'motherless' woman may also react by denying she has felt any loss or absence of mothering. She may spend her life proving her strength in the 'mothering' of others … or mothering in the role of teacher, … psychotherapist. In a sense she is giving to others what she herself has lacked; but this will always mean that she needs the neediness of others in order to go on feeling her own strength. (1995, p.243)

This is clearly evident in the way in which Fiks relates to her white customers. She compensates for being unmothered by doting on them like a mother hen catering for all their needs:

> 'Melissa, here is your decaf Moccachino. Now tell me, how was London?'
>
> 'George, this espresso is on me. You look like death. I'm guessing we had a big night last night?'
>
> 'Another waffle, Sheila? I know, I hate men too! I'm sorry, Sheilz, but you'll see, everything will be OK. It's his loss. Not yours.'

> 'Come, give Aunty Fiks a hug before you leave! Look what I found for you, my angels; lollipops! Now be good, don't give your Daddy too much trouble. Bye, guys, see you next Sunday!' (p.166)

Fiks's frustrations with her circumstances stem from being unmothered; she undergoes the process of self-negation that, according to bell hooks, a

> culture of domination demands of its citizens. The more marginalized, the more intense the demand. Since black people, especially the underclass, are bombarded by messages claiming that [they] have no value, are worthless, it is no wonder that we fall prey to nihilistic despair … it provides a momentary escape, illusions of grandeur, temporary freedom from the pain of facing reality. (1992, p.19)

Fiks's obsession with 'whiteness' and abhorrence of 'blackness' can be examined in relation to her subject position, namely the poverty, poor service delivery and sub-standard education of the township. Fiks begins to associate 'whiteness' with material success and 'blackness' with inferiority. 'Project Infinity' is her motivation.[172] Fiks may have succeeded in constructing an external appearance as sassy and ambitious, but she is also detached from her surroundings. She has no reservoirs to draw on beyond the surface representations of the glossy magazines, which leaves a void she seeks to fill with aspirations for whiteness and her fake surrogate 'family'. If Fiks were to experience the reality of Fifi's world, she would find that race, still plays a pivotal role in the new South Africa.

In post-repressive South Africa, the polarizations produced and maintained under apartheid continue to exist for both Fiks and Fifi. In the absence of support from their mothers, they are incapable of critiquing the status quo because they have internalised values of middle-class whiteness. Neither Fifi nor Fiks fit into the lifestyle of the township – a world that Fifi has left behind and from which Fiks is desperately trying to escape. At the same time, neither Fifi nor Fiks has been accepted into the imaginary middle class they desire. The promises of this world have not been fulfilled. Instead, from the 'in-between' space into which they have each been cast, they have to negotiate continually between compromised values, contradicting selves and conflicting desires; they live in perpetual ambivalence,

[172] Her zeal and determination bring to mind Chinua Achebe's Okonkwo, who hated everything that his father loved, because it represented weakness. The fear of being like his father is the force that drives him to succeed, but it also leads to his demise, while Fiks is driven by the fear of abject poverty.

suspended between two worlds, belonging nowhere. Fifi and Fiks are still affected by their mothers, whether they are intrusive, present or absent. As Ellen Bayuk Rosenman argues,

> mother continues to create her daughter long after she actually gives birth. Not only gender identity, but a more general sense of self in relation to other people and the outside world originate in this attachment. It is a source of both coherence and conflict, of stability and threat as, paradoxically, the daughter must define herself both with and against the mother to achieve selfhood. (Cited in Larrier 1997, p.201)

Whereas the maternal figure is important in the construction of the daughter's identity, the daughters are also 'informed by changing societies that witnessed women challenging ways of life that their mothers had accepted. Often that involved a conscious effort to be unlike their mothers' (Larrier 1997, p.197). Matlwa portrays the maternal figure as nurturer and custodian of tradition; however, she goes beyond this simplistic representation by revealing the challenging and complex experiences that mothers have to endure. *Coconut* powerfully captures maternal, class and cultural tensions that different generations of women have to negotiate in their attempt to construct their identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

The house of mothers: Constructing alternative forms of mothering in Kagiso Lesego Molope's *The mending season*

> *In the safe harbour of each other's company they could afford to abandon the ways of other people and concentrate on their own perception of things.* (Toni Morrison)[173]

In *The mending season*, Molope revisits motherhood from the daughterly perspective; from this perspective, motherhood offers a nourishing and limiting umbilical link to culture. Molope offers an intricate and complex perspective on the mother-daughter relationship, interrogating the iconic nationalist figure of the mother through a focus on the experience of mothering and being mothered. This section argues that Molope uses the space of the house to destabilise normative ideas about the family and sets up what can be described as a house of mothers. The space of the house provides a conceptual frame for thinking differently about motherhood. By broadening the scope of the representational range of mothers depicted in

[173] Morrison 1982, p.55.

fiction, Molope reveals more freedom than her literary foremothers as she develops a narrative space that allows for an exploration of the difficulties and rewards of the mothering experience. Molope is not only configuring the mother-daughter relationships or the maternal role, she is also creating possibilities for emerging writers to begin to imagine alternative forms of mothering and motherhood that might come into being in contemporary society.

As mentioned in chapter two, both Molope's novels *Dancing in the dust* and *The mending season* use teenage female protagonists as their narrators. Molope, speaking as an African feminist writer, states: 'I write the stories I would have liked to have read when I was younger – coming-of-age stories about being young, African and female. Not a lot of books are written about being young and female' (Smith 2006).[174] In *The mending season,* set in the early 1990s, Tshidiso (Tshidi) Masemola is the protagonist and narrator, although her story revolves around the other women in her life – her mother and two aunts. *The mending season* has two narrative strands: the experience of Tshidi, as she navigates her place and sense of self in a multi-racial society, alongside the story of Malesedi, Malebone and Mabatho, three sisters who challenge normative ideals of motherhood and the patriarchal views on women in society. The first-generation of post-apartheid writers such as Molope offer alternative forms of motherhood that are not restricted to the reproduction process. By constructing different versions of mothering, these literary daughters sometimes elaborate, reiterate or push aside and also get pulled back into the images of motherhood represented by their literary mothers.

In *The mending season*, Kagiso Molope constructs alternative forms of mothering by portraying three sisters who reject the patriarchal institutions of marriage and motherhood, but choose to embrace the mothering experience. The story of the 'mothers' that initially seems to be on the periphery of the novel is particularly intriguing. The Masemola home on No.4 Mabele Street in Bofelong Township is, as I have suggested, a house of mothers. In this house, Tshidiso (Tshidi) Masemola, who is being raised by the Masemola sisters – Malesedi, Malebone and Mabatho – makes no distinction between her biological mother, Malebone, and her two aunts who participate equally in caring for her. She considers all three as her mothers, and even refers to them as Mmamane (Spencer 2010, p.147), 'the term for a

[174] Although there have been various South African narratives that explore coming-of-age- stories, Molope's comment suggests that her experiences as a young black girl growing up in a repressive regime have not been fully captured by these texts.

younger aunt on the mother's side' (Molope 2006, p.9).[175] Her aunts and/or mothers who influence her in the process of becoming a woman are the most important forces in her life.

The mending season also explores the different ways in which Tshidiso grapples with asserting herself in relation to her mothers, the community and a new school. The move to Ascension Convent school signals a new beginning for Tshidi; she carries with her the hopes, dreams and aspirations of her 'mothers' who have sacrificed their hard-earned savings to provide her with the kind of education they were denied during the apartheid era. Children tend to carry the hopes of their parents.[176] However, the symbolic value of the children born during this transitional period of the 1990s is heightened, and the expectation is that they are going to inherit a new nation. By staging the mother-daughter relationship, Molope helps to convey a message of hope that the born-free generation will inherit in a new South Africa. As Sindiwe Magona comments on the blurb on the back cover, 'Molope weaves the dreams and aspirations of a young girl with the hopes of a nation about to give birth to itself'. *The mending season* focuses on the changes taking place in the private space of the Masemola household, and the public space of the township, in particular, and the country, in general. It maintains this focus by tracing the various ways in which the Masemola family come to terms or engage with these personal and political tensions.

After the death of their parents and sister Tumane, the Masemola sisters refuse to direct their desires into the patriarchal institution of marriage, motherhood and domesticity; instead, 'the intimate space that they construct within the enclosed space of their home gives them the freedom to defy societal trappings and apartheid restrictions. In this space, they live according to their own rules: they curse, spit and sit with their legs open, and reject all acceptable societal norms of femininity. Their independence is frowned upon by the community who disparagingly refer to their house as '*ko baloing*, "the home of the witches"; however, the label "witches" allows the sisters to be subversive in a repressive regime, the

[175] In *Dancing in the dust* Tihelo, the female protagonist, comments, 'I had no complaints about being raised in a home run by women. … There is always the belief that a house with no men is missing something essential' (Molope 2004, p.14). Molope has been criticised for imagining a world without men. In an interview she expresses her frustrations: 'I end up having to defend being a feminist, having to defend writing for and about women … I hate having to defend why I write about women who don't live with men' (Smith 2006).

[176] During the apartheid era Model C schools were reserved for white students only. In post-apartheid South Africa these schools have opened to all races, but are now mainly attended by the middle class.

sisters are free to play banned music loudly, because the apartheid police are too afraid to confront them' (Spencer 2010, p.148).

As the sisters begin to mature into young women, their sexual desires need to be fulfilled; however, they realize that giving men access to their home is unsettling and disruptive, so they allow them into the house for a maximum period of two months. The sisters refuse to confine themselves to a permanent heterosexual relationship, except for Malebone, whose deep yearning for a child gives Bra Pat, Tshidi's father, temporary access. After Tumane's death, although Malebone adheres to the stringent rules set by her sisters, her worldly temperament can be seen in her desperate need to be part of the community around her. '*Of all four women, Malebone was always the one who wanted a little more contact with the rest of the world. When she was younger she would stand at the gate and watch the street, longing to be part of the groups of children skipping, running and fighting out there*' (emphasis in original, Molope 2006 p.27). It is not surprising that Malebone's desire for a child sees her defying her sisters. In spite of her defiance, Malesedi and Mabatho are supportive of Malebone's decision and wholeheartedly embrace Tshidi as their daughter. Malesedi, who keeps the sisters together as a family, is positioned as the minimother; she takes on the role of the mother in relation to Malebone and Mabatho. The three sisters have distinct identities and take on different roles in relation to one another within the family unit and it is fascinating to see how aptly their names describe their personalities. In Tswana, *lesedi* means light, *lebone* lamp and *batho* people, the prefix Ma is used in reference to women. Therefore, in translation Malesedi is one who is intense, caring, discerning and enlightened. Malebone means one who is physical, naive, ostentatious, and worldly, while Mabatho refers to one who is always there for people; it is Mabatho who cares about the welfare of the sisters.

As Malesedi's name suggests, she is intense, thoughtful and progressive in her mothering role, and she feels responsible for all the major decisions affecting the sister's lives. For example, it is Malesedi who recognizes that their future lies in providing Tshidi with an educational opportunity that they had been denied. Mabatho's sense of self, her identity, is tied to her relationship with her sisters; she '*could not imagine herself living a life so different and removed from her family. Her own life was always simplest and most comfortable near her sisters*' (emphasis in original Molope 2006, p.77).

Melanie Mauthner in *Sistering: Power and change in female relationships* argues that the power relations within female bonds are often neglected in literary criticism. She identifies four sistering discourses that describe and interrogate the complex dynamics within sister relationships. These are *best friendship, companionship, positioned* and *shifting positions* – all 'four permeate and can coexist within one relationship at a single moment or over a period of time' (Mauthner 2005, p.9). Mauthner argues that the *positioned discourse* replicates specific elements of the mother-daughter relationship. In the *positioned discourse,* which she terms 'minimothering', different sisters adopt specific roles that are based on power relations which tend to be dominant. 'Women can position themselves and be positioned as "minimother" (Elderman 1994) by their sister or other family members into the carer or cared for' (cited in Mauthner 2005, p.59). Although the minimother role is one of conflict and anxiety, some women embrace it and use it to construct their subjectivity. The *positioned* and *shifting positions* discourses are pertinent in examining the intricate dynamics among the Masemola siblings.

Mauthner also suggests that the subject positions within a relationship are fluid and can change; she terms this fluctuation as the *shifting position* discourse. 'Women alternately adopt dominant, dominated, or more equal positions of power. They can negotiate different caring responsibilities with their sisters and transcend social differences between them' (p.62). In this discourse women experience different conflicting subject positions which also constitute their identity. The relationship between Malebone and Mabatho is more relaxed; they confide in each other, laugh and giggle together; whereas the bond between Malesedi and Mabatho is more conflicted since it is only Mabatho who has the courage to stand up to her older sister. Malesedi, who has inherited her mother's repressed anger against the inequalities of the apartheid government that discriminated against black people, and especially women, refuses to accept any form of racial oppression. Because of her judicious nature, her sisters (who are more tolerant) have to assume responsibility when Malesedi has been fired from yet another job, temporarily shifting their positions to that of the minimother. Malebone's identity is intrinsically linked to being a mother; her position within the sistering role sometimes shifts so that it is she who provides the nurturing and caring aspects of mothering which Malesedi lacks. She '*was always the one to calm her sisters down. She would braid their hair or cook for them when they were feeling uneasy about something*' (emphasis in original Molope 2006, p.27). Molope tries to imagine motherhood differently; on the one hand, the house of mothers attempts to debunk the biological imperative: moving

away from one-dimensional mothers, she shows the sisters sharing the biological function and having a non-patriarchal experience of motherhood. On the other hand, the house of mothers can be read as a symbolic representation that is an attempt to explore the multiple facets of the single mother figure by embodying a different aspect in each sister.

Molope explores the intimacy of sisterly bonds and alternative forms of mothering through her presentation of the Masemola sisters, who refuse to confine the experience of mothering to biological reproduction, thus endeavouring to create new forms of the nuclear family. The different forms of mothering portrayed in the house of mothers are reminiscent of a traditional polygynous arrangement within a patriarchal compound where women were responsible for their own homestead. However, in the house of mothers a proliferation of mothers and an absence of men offer a connection to a kind of heritage and reconfigured social structure by importing into the present affirming values of the past, while losing some of the restrictive patriarchal aspects. In a different context, Dorothy Driver and Meg Samuelson have argued that in *The stone virgins*, Yvonne Vera evokes the image of a beehive as a kind of shelter that refuses 'the common conception of the family home as patriarchal, and implicitly redirects the standard family-nation analogy that has been used to naturalize hierarchical structures and patriarchal power' (2004, p.196). By recreating the extended family and new social formations, the house of mothers challenges the concept of patriarchal authority and power relations.

By defining mothering or motherhood on their own terms, the three mothers offer Tshidi unconventional forms of mothering. By refusing to conform to traditional norms of a nuclear family, the sisters are the subject of exclusion by the community who also ostracize Tshidi because her mothers are seen as transgressive women. This marginalisation leaves Tshidi feeling estranged and alienated from the community. Consequently, her mother's decision to send her to Ascension Convent, a multi-racial school in the city, is a chance for her to find acceptance outside Bofelong township. Ascension Convent signals a new beginning for Tshidi in her construction of a new self.

Tshidi's transition to a Model-C school is fraught with problems: from the beginning, she experiences a sense of alienation as she realizes that she lacks sophistication, has the wrong accent, and comes from a poor, unconventional family. As she struggles to integrate into her new environment, she is forced to deal with class and race tensions. For example, Tshidi obsesses over her classmates' material possessions; but Mmamane Mabatho

immediately reprimands her, 'when did you start talking about what other people have? Where are you getting these manners? Don't bother with what other people have. What culture is that from?' (Molope 2006, p.41). Mmamane Mabatho reminds Tshidi that they have not raised her to be materialistic. Her mothers, who refuse to conform to societal norms, are at pains to encourage similar values in Tshidi. Whenever she seems to be drifting away from the cultural values that they are trying to instil in her, they tenderly remind her to embrace who she is and where she comes from; they want her to be confident and assertive. Sometimes, it may seem that she is being smothered by her mothers. The text negotiates its own ambivalences around motherhood by splitting the mother into three different figures. As mentioned earlier, the complex identity of motherhood has been flattened out in previous literatures and while *The mending season* is trying to restore this complexity, it is unable to always maintain a stable position.

By rejecting all patriarchal institutions that tend to domesticate women, the Masemola sisters attempt to construct a utopian world. Granted, they are not successful in creating this utopia, but this alternative provides them with specific freedoms that are not available to Gemina Tlou in Matlwa's *Coconut.* She is completely absorbed into the Western ideal of the housewife, and only exists for her husband and children, which ironically makes her unavailable to her children because she has been evacuated inside; she has nothing emotional to give them. While Ofilwe Tlou is emotionally distant from her mother, Tshidi's relationship with her mothers is an intimate one; they are emotionally available for her and actively involved in her life and expose her to alternative ways of being female. Because she is outnumbered by her various mothers, it would be extremely difficult for Tshidi to become matrophobic, since she would not be able to choose from three diverse identities. The scaffolding her mother's offer provides a sense of self that gestures towards a time in her adult life when she will become a sister to her mothers.

In the 'The house of the mothers', the Masemola sisters attempt to create the perfect mothering environment for Tshidi, which is partially successful; however, this space throws up a host of attendant problems that result from the loss of the male figure. In the absence of the father figure, Tshidi is occasionally besieged by her aunts, who pull her in different directions. Since Bra Pat, Tshidi's father, is allowed limited access to his daughter – one phone call a month and one visit a year – this separation reconfigures their relationship. Like her aunts, Tshidi refers to her father as Bra Pat, not *papa* or even uncle; he is more of a brother than a father figure. Their relationship is more relaxed, less challenging, and devoid

of conflict. She thinks of him fondly, 'I liked him a lot and wished I could spend more time with him' (Molope 2006, p.46). Bra Pat's absence creates a deep yearning in Tshidi. She is fascinated by his infrequent visits and longs to hear more about 'his world [which] was always a nice change from my everyday routine. I was fascinated by his stories of men and women who worked far away from home' (p.121). Since Tshidi has not experienced his world, she idealizes it. The reality is that her father is a migrant labourer, and life in the hostels or mine compounds is nothing she imagines it to be. Nonetheless, one feels ambivalent about the prolonged absence of a father figure in Tshidi's future life. *The mending season* writes men out of the house of mothers, but it also embraces men: one feels their loss because they are conspicuous by their absence.

By challenging patriarchy and resisting societal norms and values, the Masemola sisters construct a female space that is independent of the community. This space permits them to instil values of assertiveness and independence in Tshidi. This becomes evident in the way she handles the racial incident at her school. Initially she agonizes about which direction to take, but her aunts' guidance and support give her the self-assurance and confidence to tell the truth. As Jenna Williams observes, Tshidiso fully rejects

> the homogenizing culture of her school environment, [and tells her version of the] story in her own language rather than English – something that is strictly forbidden within the walls of the Convent. In doing so, Tshidiso symbolically casts off the role that the school is attempting to foist upon her and simultaneously embraces the values of her own family and community, in spite of the potential cost to her happiness. (2008, p.47)

Her speaking out signals a shift in the way in which she sees herself; it gives her the confidence to accept where she comes from and define who she is. Four years later, she comments, 'I would just as soon forget the Tshidi who so desperately wanted to be liked by someone like her – I look for friends in different places these days. I've learnt to identify people I can depend on when things fall apart' (Molope 2006, p.126).

In conclusion, although the alternative social vision suggested by the house of mothers has not yet been realized, it is a step towards imagining utopia. By dealing with the realities of the mothering experience, Molope is able to illustrate that even though the aunts are successful in creating a house of mothers, one that is not constrained by the limitations of patriarchy amidst the repressive restrictions of apartheid, there are no perfect relationships;

instead, Tshidi experiences her life outside the house as somewhat suffocating. Being a daughter is about gender identity and it cannot be escaped, no matter how it is configured. *The mending season* focuses on the changes taking place in the private space of the Masemola household, but the characters still have to negotiate the public space of the township and the ambivalent space of a country in transition. This illustrates some of the limits of the emergent. Although Matlwa successfully imagines a new world, she still gets pulled back by the limits of what can be conceived within the available social structures.

Abagyenda bareeba. Those who travel, see: Rewriting home and exile in Doreen Baingana's *Tropical fish*

> *When I moved out of my mother's house, shaky and determined, I began to fashion some different relationship to this country of our sojourn. I began to seek more fruitful return than simple bitterness from this place of my mother's exile, whose streets I came to learn better than my mother ever learned them.* (Audre Lorde)[177]

In *Tropical fish*, Doreen Baingana interrogates complex, contradictory, ambiguous and often conflicted questions of home and exile with their concomitant issues of belonging and alienation/ estrangement and how they are intimately tied to the maternal bond. The analyses of home and exile by writers like Edward Said tend to be ungendered; however, Baingana elaborates on these concerns by reflecting on the gendered experience. *Tropical fish* theorizes the gendering of travel by trying to think through the mother-daughter relationship in terms of the daughter who abandons the home and how her diverse experiences in exile contribute to the formation of an individual sense of self. In other words, it enables us to ask, what difference does it make when *daughters* travel; what happens when the *daughter* returns to the *mother*; when the mother speaks to the returning daughter?

Tropical fish explores the coming-of-age of the Mugisha sisters – Rosa, Patti and Christine, who grow up in Entebbe, a town located on the outskirts of the capital, Kampala. The collection comprises a series of interconnected short stories that sometimes read as a fragmented novel. A sense of discontinuity is established in *Tropical fish* because each sister

[177] Cited in Boyce Davies 1994, p.127.

narrates a different story. Five of the stories are narrated by Christine, the youngest sibling, two by Rosa and one by Patti. Oshun, the publishers of the South African edition, provided the same book with three different covers, each illustrated by a portrait intended to represent one of the sisters. This establishes a sense of three different books, depending through which sister's eyes the reader is approaching the narrative. Patti, the eldest sister, chooses the traditional route when she finds solace in religion, whereas the second sister, Rosa, is an intelligent but rebellious teenager whose sexual explorations result in her contracting HIV/AIDS. She becomes a born-again Christian. Barbara Boswell observes that, as part of the emerging generation of women writers, Baingana is consciously writing against the stereotype of the African woman by alternating between the three narrative voices. She emphasises multiple and shifting perspectives of young women growing up in Uganda. This multiplicity of viewpoints is reinforced by the varying forms Baingana chooses to employ throughout the collection: some stories are first-person accounts, others have an omniscient narrator; 'Hunger' is a diary entry, and 'A thank-you note' a letter.[178] As the sisters' lives follow different trajectories, they are able to explore different female subjectivities, allowing them to become independent individuals.[179] Sue Marais has argued in a different context that 'the short fiction cycle evinces a dualism which renders it particularly well suited to the representation of that tension between centripetal and centrifugal or entropic impulses which obtain in any society' (1995, p.29). The tensions between the centrifugal and centripetal forces that simultaneously disperse and hold together the stories by locating them around Entebbe and Kampala provide continuity. The original title of Baingana's collection, *Tropical fish: Stories out of Entebbe*, suggests that the characters grow up in and are rooted in Entebbe, therefore their experiences come out of Entebbe.[180] As sisters growing up they start off the same; as young adults, they move out in the sense of leaving home, which suggests a symbolic separation from the maternal figure, and take noticeably divergent paths with different experiences as they attempt to negotiate an identity for themselves outside the

[178] 'This form of narrative technique is a departure from traditional, postcolonial women's coming-of-age novels, such as Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* or Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous conditions*, in that it provides the perspectives of three different young women at different developmental stages …. In this way, *Tropical fish* works to undercut monolithic notions of African female experience or womanhood' (Boswell 2006, p.138).

[179] In an interview with Jane Musoke-Nteyafas, Baingana says she portrayed three different sisters because she was trying to trace the paths available for African middle-class women today (2006).

[180] There are variations to the title of this text: the South African edition published by the defunct Oshun is called *Tropical fish*; the third and fourth editions, published by Harlem Moon and Storymojo, are titled *Tropical fish: Tales from Entebbe*.

familiar space of the familial home. As each sister attempts to break free from the connection to the mother, their different life paths produce different forms of female subjectivity.

The fragmented structure of *Tropical fish* reflects and reinforces the tensions experienced by Christine when she inhabits the space between home and exile. While home is a place of connection, it is simultaneously a space of alienation; moving away from home, travelling and seeing, as the Kinyankore proverb quoted above suggests, separation from the mother entails anticipating new ways of being. Christine's journey outwards could be read as representing a facet of the authorial self: it opens up new spaces for her to discover other selves and re-negotiate her identity. Elsewhere, Boyce Davies (1994) argues that the separation from the mother and the mother's house means a denial of cultural ties, but this is necessary for the daughter because it gives her a space in which to survive. However, as bell hooks (1984) observes, the very act of travelling and the exploration of various subjectivities means that home has also changed; it is now a disjunctive location. Boyce Davies points out that 'the relationship to home is not innocent and idyllic; it is fraught with conflict, tension, bitterness and struggle' (1994, p.126). At the core of these conflicts is the mother-daughter relationship: Christine has to leave home as part of a complicated process that will separate her from the restrictive, repressive maternal bond inhibiting her from constructing an individual identity. For Christine, while the mother is a sign of home, exile is a space and place in which she is able to forge boundaries and establish a sense of self; her time in exile prepares her to redefine herself against her mother. Returning home from exile is about reconnecting with the mother and the country and negotiating a new self.

As a young child, Christine had always admired her mother and her desire was to become her mother. But the older Christine who travels begins to experience matrophobia. In 'Green stones' Christine, who has moved out of the home, travelled and seen the world, reflects on her childhood and an innocent naïve self and provides glimpses into the intimate space of her home, specifically her parents' bedroom. By juxtaposing the narrating with the experiencing self, Baingana suggests the young self giving birth to the older self in complicated ways. The younger Christine is completely mesmerized by her mother's jewellery, gifts that her father bought on his business trips abroad. Whilst going through her precious stones, the young Christine begins to visualize an older self. She imagines herself as a 'queen', a 'young shy princess', 'Cinderella', a 'rich-loved wife', and a 'Paris model posing for flashing cameras' (Baingana 2005a, p.7). More importantly, she imagines herself becoming her mother:

> When I grew up, I would use lots of cool white cream like she did: Ponds, Venus de Milo, cocoa butter, perfumes called Lady, Chanel, Essence. I'd paint my fingernails and toenails with designs in glaring red, and fling my hands around dramatically like a conjurer, wear lots of lacy panties, petticoats, bras and stockings, all in frilly white and pink with flowers and sequins, and *become Maama.* (Baingana 2005a, p.8; my emphasis)

Young Christine envisions a particular kind of femininity; she fashions herself within the feminine mystique. Her mother may embody some of these qualities, but she is also aware that her mother is caught in a suffocating relationship 'wrapped in insults and complaints, drunken nights, slobbery sorries, and silent mornings' (Baingana 2005a, p.12). Christine experiences a conflict between her desire to be like her mother, and her recognition of the feminine mystique that constrains her mother. While she realizes that her mother is trapped in an unhappy marriage, she desires a mother who is caring and attentive to the needs of her daughters, one who is able to stand up and speak out against the father. Instead, her mother is distant and detached from them. 'We children knew we were an afterthought, […] They remained locked in the room of marriage. … I was repelled, fascinated, trapped' (Baingana 2005b, pp.13-14). Incapable of picking up signs from her mother on what it means to be a woman, Christine is left feeling humiliated and damaged (Rich 1997). Rich observes

> that the daughter's rage at her mother is more likely to arise from her mother having relegated her to the second-class status, while looking to the … (father) for the fulfilment of her own thwarted needs … A daughter can feel rage at the mother's powerlessness or lack of struggle because of her intense identification and because in order to fight for herself she needs to have been both loved and fought for (Rich 1997, p.243).

Christine's narrating self is able to see the reality of her mother's life, like the stones her younger self admired; her experiencing self recognises that they turn out to be 'dull, empty shells of dead insects, gray cockroaches, coarse and scratched and old. Faded, the color of dried grass' (Baingana 2005a, p.16).

The young Christine, desperate to cut loose the maternal bonds that confine her, has to venture out of the home in search of other ways of being female. Her journey takes her through various locations, first to the city Kampala to attend boarding school and university and later to the United States. These travels constitute forms of exile that represent a split from the maternal bond. The transition to the city can be seen as transiting through a rite of

passage, leaving behind her innocent childhood and entering into adulthood. The title story, 'Tropical fish' chronicles Christine's experiences as a student at Makerere University. The city far removed from home and the maternal gaze is a place devoid of any constraints. It is an in-between, transitional space that Christine momentarily inhabits, en route to the global cosmopolitan. It is a space in which Christine endeavours to carve out an identity for herself. The city, as Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe observe in a different context, is 'a great generator of cruelty and pain and of novelty' (2007, p.283). As part of the separation from the mother, the city offers a liberatory space in which Christine feels uninhibited to explore her sexuality, but this exploration leaves her feeling conflicted about her female and Ugandan identity. As a University student, Christine meets Peter, a British expatriate who becomes her lover. The affair allows Christine to discover her sexuality, while simultaneously performing a kind of sexuality that marks her as local, representing the tropical fish: she may be moving into a cosmopolitan world, but her British lover increasingly typifies her as a Ugandan woman. Although she is exercising some form of agency, a subjection is taking place. She is trying to open up spaces for herself, but finds herself trapped within certain constructions of femininity. She is not innocent; she takes advantage of this relationship, yet she is forced to become malleable, 'Our Lady of Smiles' and an 'Open Body' desperately trying to please Peter. He becomes a comfortable habit for her; the relationship is a complex situation in which she is grappling with parental and societal expectations. As Chielozona Eze points out,

> Christine courageously bears the consequences of her decisions because she has acknowledged her agency in all of the happenings around her. […] The awareness that she is not merely an innocent bystander in the corruption of her society is, […] the beginning of a deep moral awareness. She rejects the cloak of victimhood with the knowledge that there is no other way to usher in a new era of responsibility. (2011, p.182)

When she imagines life after University, her options are limited; she could either get a mediocre government job, 'get into debt and have kids'; or she could get married 'to someone from the right family, the right tribe, right pocketbook and potbelly, and have him pay the bills' (Baingana 2005a, p.89). Whichever way, she sees herself condemned to living in dire straits or restricted to the domestic space following in her mother's footsteps. So when she falls pregnant, one of the reasons that inform her decision to have an abortion is the fear of becoming her mother. As a daughter she rejects the institution of motherhood. As Adrienne Rich notes,

> [m]atrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victims in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers'; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery. (1995, p. 236)

In the final story, 'Questions of home', Christine's life comes full circle when she returns from exile, but home is not a familiar place; instead, it leaves her feeling strange and dislocated, it is a space filled with conflicted, contested, contradictory complications. After eight years living in the United States, Christine heeds the president's appeal to Ugandans living abroad to return and participate in rebuilding the nation. As a qualified professional, she is returning to contribute to the reconstruction of a war-ravaged country. Her homecoming, mediated through the representation of the mother that she returns to, is a prospect that fills her with both excitement and apprehension; excitement since she is returning to the familiar, apprehension because her time in exile has left her feeling ambivalent about her position at home, where she has to confront the repressive relationship that she has with her mother. Like Frieda, in Zoë Wicomb's *You can't get lost in Cape Town,* Christine returns to a dead father. Wicomb comments that she had to kill off Mr. Shenton, the father, in order for the mother, Mrs. Shenton, to speak. In the fathers' presence, the mothers have no influence because they are suppressed and silenced by the fathers (2000). The narrating Christine who returns is more mature after travelling and exploring various female subjectivities; as a daughter, she is also rewriting the home that she returns to. Boyce Davies remarks that mother-daughter 'tensions are right at the centre of the rewriting of home. In any writing of home by women writers in patriarchal and matriarchal cultures, the challenge to the meaning of the mother attains symbolic importance in terms of definition and redefinition' (1994, pp.127-28).

Returning to home – to the mother – is potentially disempowering. As Chikwenye Ogunyemi argues in a different context, Christine's 'painful lot is exacerbated by simultaneously (un) belonging, the perpetual longing to be in another place, and the feeling of being out of place or of belonging to several places at once. Thus, she is constantly searching for security' (1996, p.321). In exile, she felt she was losing much cultural and material sustenance, but when she comes back home, it is to a mother who hovers over her incessantly and treats her like a child. Her mother comments that her skirt is too short; she complains

that she is taking too much medicine, drinking too much coffee, cautions her that she is running late, asks her if she has taxi fare and lunch (Baingana 2005a, p.133). For Christine, who has spent the last eight years taking care of herself, it is an unnerving experience being in the maternal presence. She feels completely inadequate and smothered by her mother who makes her feel like a 'silly petulant child' (p.143). Exile allows Christine to recognize and deal with her matrophobia, 'the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of *becoming one's mother*' (Rich 1995, p.235) and to create a sense of self out of her complicated relationship with her mother:

> Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of female existence were perforce transmitted. Easier by far to hate and reject a mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon her. But where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull toward her, a dread that if one relaxes one's guard one will identify with her completely. (Rich 1995, p.235)

In 'Questions of home' Baingana problematizes what it means for the daughter to return to the mother. In exile, Christine has gradually freed herself from being defined by her mother, at home; she has to re-negotiate her new self in relation to her mother. The distinction between the older and younger selves shows how these different voices are oriented towards the mother. Christine feels that her mother is an intrusive presence in her life and she wants to break that repressive bond. Patti observes that her mother and sister are similar. 'Christine, you know you can do what you want. … Anyway, what you want and what Maama wants aren't so different. In fact, if anything, you've become more like her. I live with her, I know' (Baingana 2005a, p.146). Patti suggests that instead of standing on the sidelines, 'careful not to soil her shoes' (p.146), Christine needs to get involved in the 'messy, intimate politics of home' (Baingana 2005b, cover page); dealing with maternal tensions and conflicts is a painful, but necessary process. In his analysis, Chielozona Eze suggests that the metaphor of Christine

> digging deep down into this mud with her bare hands until she couldn't remove it from her fingernails" entails some positives. […] It is while tilling and cultivating the soil that Christine can mould it the way she wants. And tilling it at first suggests becoming one with it by merging with it "like day had smoothly become its opposite,

> night". For Christine, tilling the soil replaces being sprung from it (autochthony); it places emphasis on doing rather than on being. (Eze 2010)

The idea of digging is reminiscent of the time that Tambudzai in *Nervous Conditions* spends in her grandmother's garden, where in addition to getting her hands dirty and shaping the land, she is getting history lessons from her grandmother which help shape her sense of self. Like Fifi in *Coconut* who realizes that it is through the mother figure that she can find material and cultural sustenance, Christine begins to understand that identity is not essentially about who you are, but consists of various influences that help you to negotiate different ways of inhabiting the world. In other words, belonging and identity is not only about the politics of birth.

In conclusion, in *Tropical fish* emerging writer Baingana rewrites home and exile in relation to the mother-daughter relationship. In the process, she goes beyond literary representations of motherhood and portrays a complex and gendered experience of belonging and estrangement. Baingana, like Ekochu, reveals that women tend to choose exile because they are attempting to sever bonds with oppressive nationalist or patriarchal institutions. However, exile is simultaneously rewarding and constraining: it offers new ways for Christine to express her self, but there is also a desire to return to the conflicted home to learn how to inhabit it differently and renegotiate the mother-daughter bond.

Motherly sisterly: Female friendship and the renegotiation of family bonds in Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu's *Shock waves across the ocean*

> *From adolescence onwards, young women have tried to understand, with one another, the world around them. Female friendships have taken on enormous significance and prominence .... For many women, intimate relationships with women friends, sisters, aunts and co-workers are a bedrock of stability in their lives*. (Orbach and Eichenbaum)[181]

In *Shock waves across the ocean,* Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu explores how post-repressive regimes create space for emerging writers to reconfigure intimate connections that are not filial but affilial. These relationships are not based on blood ties, but the voluntary association

[181] Orbach and Eichenbaum 1987, pp.17-18, cited in Mauthner 2005, p.13.

of women who care about each other. Ekochu's emphasis on horizontal relationships in post-repressive regimes illustrates that female friendships can be imagined as an alternative bond that mirrors or activates aspects of the mother-daughter relationship and offers an emotional substitute to the compromising world of romantic love. This section follows on the previous chapter by showing a clear pattern emerging in narratives of contemporary society that illustrate how female friendships offer alternative possibilities of imagining the family. It is a complex relationship that might occasionally, but does not necessarily, replicate the dynamics of the nuclear family. Unlike biological ties which are not chosen but constructed on duty or obligation, these alternative family forms are deliberately formulated bonds based on individual choice and mutual reciprocity. This intricate relationship that is elaborated relies heavily on intimacy, emotional encouragement and intellectual support, but it is also a conditional and provisional bond filled with anxiety, tension, and conflict.

Ekochu prefaces her narrative with a poem by Susan Kiguli which was originally dedicated to Helen C S Bewes. Kiguli's poem provides an appropriate segue into Ekochu's examination of how emerging writers re-cast female and family bonds in post-repressive regimes. The poem is worth reproducing in full:

Friendship

Like the first flowers spotted in spring
Like posies woven in a ring
Like a symphony in full swing
Joy to my heart you bring.

Like chalk in a teacher's hand
Like a trained singer in a band
Like a beauty at a dinner grand
Satisfaction to my heart you bring.

Like rain on ground parched dry
Like twinkle in a friend's eye
Like a new born's first cry
Comfort to my heart you bring.

(cited in Ekochu 2004, p.vii)

This poem appreciates and celebrates the power and intensity of an enduring female friendship that provides comfort, joy, emotional fulfilment and unwavering support. The imagery in the poem evokes a sense of or speaks to the role of the individual in the community. In lines 1 and 2 the individual flowers are woven together to form a posy: although dissimilar, when the individual blossoms are linked together in a ring they make a beautiful bouquet. The 'symphony in full swing' highlights the different individual instruments and the solo singer contributing to a harmonious sound that is larger than the sum of its parts. The sing-song nature of the poem brings to mind children's nursery rhymes, whereas the subject evokes memories of a childhood friendship. In terms of form, the tightness and the nature of the poem create an effortless cohesion. Whereas the poem does not go into the details of the friendship, the novel opens up and prods the intricacies and complexities of that between two female protagonists, Nico Muheki and Cola Kalema. In other words, one could look at the poem by Kiguli and the novel by Ekochu as a conversation between emerging writers that offers alternative reflections on female friendships. The poem celebrates the affirming aspects of friendship, whereas the novel pushes beyond to delve into the complications and the rewards involved in female relationships; It also demonstrates how a gradual transformation in various social networks affects the structure of the traditional family.

Shock waves across the ocean (hereafter *Shock waves)* is a story about two childhood friends, Nico and Cola. The first-person narrator is Nico, who is married and has a daughter. Although Nico's best friend, Cola, is single, she is the main caretaker of her two nephews and three cousins. The novel is predominately set in Kampala. It opens with a heated confrontation between the two friends after Cola finds out that Nico has been trying to set her up with a potential marriage partner. The incident that Cola refers to involves a fleeting conversation that Nico has with her friend Hazel Murigita. In this exchange, Nico expresses her concerns over Cola's dedication to an extended family that does not appreciate her sacrifices to provide for their needs. Although Nico forgets her chat with Hazel, it sets in motion a series of events that have far-reaching effects in the lives of these women. After this conversation, Cola unexpectedly receives a letter from a Jeremy King, an African-American living in London, England, in which he offers Cola his friendship. In spite of Cola's misgivings, she begins to communicate with Jeremy and gradually develops romantic feelings for him. She then moves to London to pursue Jeremy, the man of her dreams, but once she meets him, she realizes that he has misrepresented himself. Jeremy is not interested

in her romantically; instead, he wants to recruit her as a potential drug seller and sexual worker for his business. Cola manages to extricate herself from this exploitive relationship after falling in love with one of her clients, Paul Smith, whom she subsequently marries. But Cola's marriage to Paul is a tumultuous one that drives her to have sexual affairs with other men. When she discovers that she is pregnant with another man's child and has terminal cancer, she demands and receives a generous divorce settlement from Paul. In the end, like Christine in *Tropical fish*, she decides to return to her place of birth and her estranged relationship with her friend Nico.

In giving an account of their shared experiences, Nico reveals the intimacies, struggles and interdependence between the two friends as they each attempt to negotiate an independent sense of self. From an early age the two girls share an intimate connection which simultaneously produces conflict and anxiety, but the intensity of the friendship is able to withstand this paradox. The bond between these two protagonists is evident in their names. Nico and Cola's original names are Nicola and Teopista respectively. But since Teopista admires Nico's name, Nico suggests they share it, so Teopista changes her name to Cola. The shared name Nicola indicates 'a constant interplay between sameness and difference' (Gardiner 1981, p.437). Cola's new name implies they share two core letters that can be seen as overlapping halves. When put together the separate halves make up a whole; that is, they are two parts of a self.[182] But the two different letters in each name signify their differences and foreground their individuality. Cola needs the approval of Nico, not the consent of her mother, to rename herself; that she identifies herself in relation to Nico essentially positions Nicola as a mother figure and explains Nico's incessant need to protect her. Nicola's name reinforces the connection between the two women, but it can also be read as a rejection of Cola's mother, who gradually and reluctantly comes to terms with her daughter's new identity. Cola's symbolic separation from the mother and subsequent identification with Nico simultaneously offers both women a form of mutual recognition and an exploration of the self. As adults, these childhood friends remain the most important persons in one another's lives. But it is imperative to reiterate that this intimate relationship is fraught with tensions

[182] This intense relationship evokes the relationship between Sula and Nel in Toni Morrison's *Sula,* who once shared 'two throats and one eye', (Morrison 1982, p.147) in other words they saw themselves as two parts of a self. Nel is portrayed as the more conventional one, who gets married and settles down, while Sula the free spirit leaves her home on a journey of self-discovery. When she returns to The Bottom she has an affair with Nel's husband that causes a further rift in her relationship with Sula. The two friends attempt to reconcile on Sula's death bed. Eventually, Sula's fate befalls Cola.

brought on by the conflict between complete identification and autonomy. Judith Gardiner (1981) in a different context describes this kind of close friendship between two women as one that is not equal; instead, these friends can be seen as 'a pair of similar, but differentiated women' (Gardiner 1981, p.437). She argues further that such relationships are unstable because one friend tends to be 'stable and socially conventional', whereas the other is a free spirit who dies young because 'she enjoys the risky excitements of the nonconformist, and she is punished for her deviance from acceptable female social roles'.

Through the relationship between Nico and Cola Ekochu explores the ambiguities of a female bond that is at once nurturing and caring but stifling and repressive. It is an emotional bond that contains both elements of freedom and constraint and, as previously mentioned; it also replicates the mother-daughter relationship. The tension between identifying with each other, yet wanting to remain autonomous, is illustrated in a heated argument that occurs between Nico and Cola about their conflicting opinions on Cola's personal life. The clash transpires at Nico's workplace after Cola finds out that Nico has secretly been trying to find her a potential husband. Cola is infuriated. She feels that Nico is meddling in her life and imposing upon her different views on the importance of romantic relationships that she does not regard as a priority at that moment in her life because of her familial obligations. Nico, on the other hand, feels justified in her actions; she is genuinely concerned that Cola is a 'promising candidate for spinsterhood' (Ekochu 2004, p.14) and needs to be rescued from her responsibilities towards her extended family, who exploit her generosity. Although it is true that Cola is being manipulated, the novel highlights the problematic nature of Nico's approach, which evinces how women collude with dominant patriarchal structures to reinforce and perpetuate certain notions of femininity. The novel shows that although this may be a mutual friendship, Nico's constant interference into Cola's life reproduces the tension and apprehension a mother might experience on behalf of her daughter.

Cola is affronted because she interprets Nico's concerns as the intrusive behaviour of a domineering mother and not a friend, as a 'friend would have consulted me before marketing me like goods which have overstayed in a shop. A friend would have considered my feelings first' (p.4). In particular, she feels that Nico does not fully understand her specific circumstances. Contrary to Nico's opinions, Cola believes that her 'spinsterhood' gives her certain freedoms that are not open to married women. Her life as an independent woman is less complicated and allows her to provide for her dependants. As she angrily reminds Nico:

> [y]ou know my stand on men and relationships. I don't have the time to indulge in such time-consuming games. In case you have forgotten, I have a lot of problems. A lot of people depend on me. What will happen to them if I follow your advice and run around with men? Will you feed them, Nico? (p.3)

These emotional interactions between the two friends reveal the anxieties embedded in close female bonds. Cola experiences Nico's desire to protect her from her extended family as overpowering and inhibiting. Yet, in spite of these constant tensions, the intimate bond is left intact. In her analysis of the dynamics of female friendship, Elizabeth Abel takes up Cicero's description of friendship as a mingling of souls 'as almost to create one person out of two,' suggesting that this description captures the 'dynamics of female friendship more accurately' (Cited in Abel 1981, p.415) than it does the friendship between men.[183] Implicit in this description is the idea that for two individuals to become one, it is inevitable for some form of friction to exist between the two distinct parties. This complex notion of interdependence is reflected in Nico and Cola's bond, which is admittedly challenging. But Nico also feels that to end the relationship would be tantamount to disconnecting part of herself. After one of their many confrontations, Nico says 'I realized that unless Cola put her act together, I would never be free of her. I might get annoyed with her, but I couldn't erase so many years of friendship. She was still my friend, and whatever hurt her would also hurt me' (Ekochu 2004, p.43). A part of Nico's perception of herself is in relation to her intimate bond with Cola. Abel rightly observes that through 'intimacy which is knowledge, friendship becomes a vehicle of self-definition for women, clarifying identity through relation to an other who embodies and reflects an essential aspect of the self' (1981, p.416).

While Ekochu portrays female friendship as a problematic but interdependent bond between individuals, her representation of the extended family reveals a far more exacting relationship brought about by familial duties. By twenty-nine years of age Cola has inherited an instant family; she is responsible for the material and emotional needs of her nephews Robert and Charles, and her cousins Rita, Nancy and Diana. Like Malesedi in *The mending season*, Cola adopts a 'minimothering role' towards her relatives in which she is positioned as their primary care giver. The novel demonstrates that this motherly-sisterly role compels

[183] 'Louise Bernikow characterizes the difference between male and female friendship as follows: "Their eyes are forward, like the eyes of men marching to war, fixed not on each other but on what is out there. They are shoulder to shoulder. Female friends are more often eye to eye. It is the creation of 'us' that is important, we two – and in this very different arrangement lie the great depths and the great raptures of our friendship"' (p.119 cited in Abel 1981, p.415).

Cola to embrace 'minimothering with all its tensions and contradictions' (Mauthner 2005, p.59). Cola's relationship with her extended family is devoid of any reciprocity. Her role is portrayed as a form of mothering that does not offer any pleasures or rewards. Cola's dependants issue constant demands, especially financial ones that force her to sacrifice her own emotional, social and material needs. For example, when Nico and Cola plan a girl's day out, Cola is forced to pull out at the last minute citing a headache. Nico subsequently learns that the headache was an excuse; the real reason being that Cola could not afford the additional expense on herself, having spent her money on her nephew's party.

The bone of contention between Nico and Cola stems from their opposing understandings of Cola's responsibilities towards her family. In Nico's opinion Cola is a neglected 'self-made martyr', a 'Father Christmas' (Ekochu 2004, p.6) who continuously gives while expecting nothing in return. On one occasion, she angrily admonishes her, 'Cola, believe me, you are the only person I know who is proud to have problems. … Who solves your problems for you? Surely, not those people who only exploit you and then grumble about how you don't give them enough' (p.4). Nico tries to point out the flip-side of Cola's philanthropy, that it is unappreciated and creates a sense of entitlement. Cola's relatives have unreasonable expectations, they are emotionally manipulative, and do not see her for who she is, but for whatever finances they can extract from her and yet in return she does not receive any emotional or physical support from them. In fact, Cola confesses that her two nephews are employed, but instead of easing her financial burden, they add to it because they are saving their salaries for themselves. Nico's frustration with Cola is reflected in the opening disagreement. She believes that Cola's acceptance of such conduct enables and perpetuates this negative behaviour from her dependants. In Nico's opinion, if these children's parents where alive they would not have been as accommodating or even afforded the current lifestyle that Cola gives them. Their parents would have set more restrictive boundaries. Ekochu shows that Cola's experience of mothering is mostly oppressive. Since women are expected to do all the work and take care of everybody, there is no space to define themselves. The novel is ambivalent in its depiction of the maternal bond: it is portrayed as demanding and predatory to Cola. For Cola, taking on a maternal role negates her needs and desires. There is little room for her to negotiate a sense of self; instead, she gradually experiences a loss of identity.

Despite Cola's initial exasperation over Nico's interference in her romantic life, but partly because of Nico's urging, she starts corresponding with Jeremy King. At the onset of

the relationship, Nico happens to visit Cola after she has just had her first telephonic conversation with Jeremy. Nico immediately notices that Cola is a completely different person she finds difficult to recognize:

> As I sat looking at her, curled up on a chair in her sitting room, I noticed that she was, for once, looking her age, if not younger. Her rare beaming smile made her even prettier. … This time, however, she was radiant and I thought I was seeing her for the first time. The lines of worry that had marked her light-skinned face for a long time had disappeared, and she was so sure of herself … I could not believe that this was the same girl who always seemed to carry the problems of the whole world on her small shoulders. The same girl who only thought about her relatives. The girl I was seeing was a different person altogether. (pp.11-12)

This transformed Cola is glowing; she appears to be more content, happier than Nico has ever seen her. Nico realises that Cola's infatuation with Jeremy offers her a different form of self-articulation. Even if Cola is exceedingly euphoric, it is ironic that Nico is not in favour of this relationship. Cola is mystified by her friend's lack of enthusiasm, 'Nico I thought you would be pleased. That's what you have always wanted, isn't it? You have been trying to get me interested in men. Now I think I might be interested in this one and you don't approve' (p.11). The narrative portrays Nico as a concerned friend who persistently feels the need to micro-manage her friend's life. Nico wants Cola to settle down into accepted forms of feminine decorum, and yet, when Cola attempts to assert herself, Nico becomes circumspect regarding her choices. In Nico's opinion, there is nothing appropriate about this relationship; she believes Cola is in too much of a hurry. Secondly, Nico 'had always thought of getting her a good-looking and good-natured young Ugandan man' (p.12). Here Nico seems to suggest that if Cola had given her a chance; she would have chosen a Ugandan man, because it would be easier to find out who he is and where he comes from. This process of inquiry creates a connection, not only to the individual, but also to his family. Nico implies that it is problematic for Cola to get romantically involved with a man no one knows, let alone a foreigner, because she will be opening herself up to abuse. Nico is compelled to warn Cola against rushing into a relationship with a stranger who could be 'a thief, a drug addict or married' (p.14). The incessant arguments and the strong bond begin to threaten Nico's marriage, so she gradually withdraws from intervening in Cola's life. It becomes clear to Nico that her relationship with Cola is productively ambivalent. Even if the two friends identify with each other in certain ways, they are also autonomous selves. Eventually Nico's

retreat and Cola's departure create an emotional and physical distance that fractures their intimate bond.

> I realised that I really never knew her that well. She didn't want to be advised on something that she had already made a decision on. She was ready to lose a friend for a man she knew nothing about. If that was what she wanted, then I had no intention of fighting with her anymore. (p.26)

In her quest for independence, Cola begins to develop intense feelings for and form an attachment to Jeremy; in turn, this creates a sense of urgency. As Nico had anticipated, Cola predictably starts to act out of character. In her desperation to please Jeremy, she makes some questionable choices. For example, oblivious to Jeremy's manipulating tendencies, she sends him 1000 pounds after he tells her a sob story about being robbed of most of his property and cash. However, in order to raise this amount of cash, she has to make a few sacrifices. She withdraws the money she has saved for her dependant's school fees and she cuts down on her living expenses. But even this is not enough, so she embezzles money from her office, absconds and leaves her colleagues to deal with the consequences of her fraudulent activities. Despite these early warning signs and in spite of Nico's contestations, Cola, enthralled and seduced by what Jeremy has to offer, leaves Uganda for England. As she moves away from Nico, she unknowingly relinquishes the active portion of herself that had a role to play in an egalitarian friendship (Abel 1981, p.428) and enters into a tyrannical relationship in which she is granted only a passive role. Cola's relationship with Nico is somewhat ambivalent, while her ties with her dependants may not be reciprocal, especially since she is complicit in their attitudes; however, they still provide a sense of security. But the bond between Jeremy and Cola is extremely oppressive, painfully debilitating and duplicitous. As a long distance relationship it seems nurturing and loving, but it fails to live up to these expectations and is revealed to be based on dishonesty and deception. In London, Cola soon realizes that Jeremy has misled her. She discovers that he is not remotely interested in her romantically, not because he is gay, but mainly because he is a pimp and a drug trafficker who wants to use her as a drug mule, and keep her in sexual bondage as a prostitute. She begins to recognise that the freedom she desires is tethered to a modern form of slavery. As disillusionment starts to take root, she finds herself trapped in a physically and emotionally abusive relationship. She has no freedom or control over herself or her earnings. She is a sexual object, her 'body and soul' (p.24) belong to Jeremy. Cola forsakes her family, her friends and her country of birth only to enter into a romantic relationship that fails. Cola is abandoned, betrayed and alienated

in a foreign country with no form of protection from the exploitative hands of Jeremy. She literally and figuratively pays a heavy price for her search for an independent sense of self. She is fascinated by modernity, but eventually it is an allure that leads to her extreme unhappiness and death. The novel argues that although romantic relationships promise fulfilment, the reality is that very often this bond constrains women. Intimate bonds between women and men tend to reveal a gendered struggle that produces various forms of coercion.

Ekochu uses an African-American figure, one whose ancestors would have gone through the Atlantic slave passage, to represent an oppressive bond. Cola's shocking trip across the ocean is reminiscent of the transatlantic slave trade. The title *Shock waves* pertinently captures the essence of Cola's perilous position. On the one hand, the birthplace stands in for Cola's connection to the familiar, the familial and the nation. On the other, the unfamiliar space of the foreign land symbolises displacement and estrangement. The journey across the ocean is an extreme form of separation that leaves her with no autonomy; instead, she experiences an excruciating loss of identity and apprehension of the self. Ekochu uses Cola's story as an allegory that points to the repercussions attendant on those who elect to move out of the problematic bond of the national community. This allegory is also reminiscent of oral traditional tales that warn of the consequences that loom for a young girl who rejects the warnings or advice of her mother only to marry an ogre who destroys her. This stranger from afar promises Cola freedom, but then betrays her and entraps her even more. His role as a pimp, trafficking in humans and drugs, foregrounds his illicit transnational activities that traverse boundaries. By forcing her to become a drug mule and prostitute in a foreign country, Jeremy restricts and disregards her sense of self. He uses his power to control her and literally places her under constant surveillance. Her movements are strictly curtailed, and she is not allowed to go anywhere without his permission. And even when she does go out to sell drugs for him, Jeremy ensures that one of his thugs is lurking in the background so that she does not attempt to escape. When she is not selling drugs, she is locked up in a filthy room, given one measly plate of food a day, forced to do all the household chores and permanently denied any form of communication with anyone outside of Jeremy's sordid world. Cola perceives herself as his slave. Her condition of enslavement, which creates total dependence, mirrors the loss of freedom and some of the circumstances that slaves had to undergo. According to Orlando Patterson (1982) the general condition of slavery which began with natal alienation denied the individual social ties to communal bonds and yet it is these cultural traditions that provided support and collective meaning.

Once slaves had been denied all social rights, they began to experience social death and then they became an ideal object to manipulate. When Cola severs ties from her family, home and country, she is displaced and inhabits the world as an outsider. Symbolically, she ruptures her connection to her 'mother', and gradually loses her identity and cultural heritage, which culminates in an aching emptiness, alienation, and isolation. Separated from all meaningful connections that offer a sense of belonging and an independent sense of self, she undergoes a form of social death. The coma she suffers after being violently beaten by Jeremy becomes a physical representation of the social death she faces when she tries to free herself entirely from her communal bonds. The narrative suggests that as women loosen the bonds that keep them within a relatively secure structure, they become vulnerable to other kinds of dangers that lie ahead for them. Cola dreams of a 'happily ever after' with Jeremy and subsequently Paul. Both romantic bonds turn into nightmares filled with disappointment and failure. It is important to note that Ekochu draws together two distinct threads, the nation and the transnational, on the one hand, and sisterly versus other forms of bonds, on the other. In the process, the narrative argues that the most repressive bond is the transnational heterosexual bond.

Cola's shift from the extended family to the nuclear domesticity of romantic love can be read as an allegory for the move from tradition to modernity. Simon Gikandi's examination of modernity in African literature reveals that it encompasses positive and negative characteristics that make it both complex and contradictory. On the one hand, as Gikandi (2003) contends one of the primary aspects of European modernity encourages an individual to gain autonomy by emancipating themselves from traditional values and taking responsibility for their own actions.[184] This individuality permits the subject to assert independent thinking. On the other hand, Gikandi points out that, in pursuing these ideals of modernity in contemporary society, there is an adverse impact that culminates in the disillusionment of the individual who is 'left unmoored in a world defined by psychological alienation and social displacement' (2003, p.337). In other words, modernity's 'emphasis on the identity and rights of the self-conscious individual' produces a fractured subject who is 'torn between the desire to define themselves in terms of self-engendered values and the

[184] According to Gikandi, whereas 'European modernity has always privileged the self-conscious individual as its ideal subject, African literature has as a rule struggled to reconcile the need for subjectivity as a condition for the novel: for example, with the larger project of cultural nationalism that sought to recover and celebrate the communal values which, many writers argued, were threatened by the process of modernity itself' (Gikandi 2003, p.339).

claims of rapidly changing societies'. In *Shock waves*, these positive and negative aspects of modernity can be seen in relation to Cola's conflicting desires as she attempts to negotiate between affirming her individuality and the consequences of her emancipation. Cola thinks she can only assert and define who she is if she breaks with traditional communal values, including: renouncing motherhood, extricating herself from the social network of her friends and moving into the nuclear domesticity of romantic love. Cola experiences the ironic position that Gikandi refers to in his analysis of an individual's enchantment with modernity. However, by opting for this aspect of modernity, Cola literally goes too far. She discovers that a shift into the nuclear domesticity of a romantic relationship isolates and exposes her to different forms of entrapment. Gikandi astutely argues that a loosening of traditional bonds produces an ironic situation that arises from a subject's enchantment with modernity and the subsequent disenchantment. An individual who is either attracted by an illusion, political strategy or an inevitable process of social formation soon discovers that it is a façade which often 'leads to death, madness, or unhappiness' (p.338). In *Shock waves*, Ekochu demonstrates that when a woman completely cuts ties with family connections and by extension the nation, she becomes vulnerable and 'is left unmoored' in an alienating environment. In Cola's case, even the restrictive extended family provides some form of support and protection, but when she breaks ties there is nothing to scaffold her.

After her setbacks in England, Cola returns to Uganda. However, her long-awaited homecoming is received with ambivalence, as she has terminal cancer but is also pregnant. In essence, her body anticipates both death and life. In spite of her precarious condition, she is determined 'to come back to my own people, who would understand my problems' (Ekochu 2004, p.141). Cola's time in England turns out to be a painful journey of self-discovery. Cognisant that she has made regrettable choices that threatened and affected her intimacy with Nico, Cola wants to revive this bond on her deathbed. However, she does not come back as a prodigal daughter because, as Boehmer (2005) suggests, daughterhood signals rebelliousness as well as subordinate and dependent positions, and returning as a daughter would imply resuming a relationship with a 'mother figure' laden with ambivalence. Instead, Cola's reunion necessitates an uncompromising shift in her relationship with Nico, in which she is not considered as a daughter, but as a sister. This is evident when they first reunite. An angry and frustrated Nico pesters Cola for answers; instead, she prompts an unflinching reaction from Cola: you 'don't have to get mad. I will tell you. Only I don't want your holier-than-thou attitude. We live in an imperfect world, and therefore none of us should be

expected to be perfect' (Ekochu 2004, p.131).This candid response forces Nico to recognise the change in the dynamics of their friendship. She begins to accept that if she wants to maintain this bond, it will not be as an interfering judgemental motherly figure but as an understanding empathic sister.

For Cola, the act of coming home to communal bonds, to the national community, is necessary for the restoration of the sisterly connection. On her deathbed she pleads with Nico, 'I don't have the time to give Jimmy a mother's love. But I want you to do it for me, Nico. I want you to adopt and raise him as your own' (p.136). Nico acquiesces to Cola's request and compassionately nurses her as she dies. These acts of friendship, support and loyalty re-establish a stronger bond, which cannot be severed, even in death. This relationship, as Mauthner argues, indicates that the expression 'blood is thicker than water' is a myth that can be demystified to 'reveal that sistering solidarity can be just as present in kin as in non-kin bonds' (2005, p.56).[185] The early section focused on the constraining aspects of female friendships, whereas the return of the 'prodigal sister' proposes that women's relationships with each are other are the most secure reciprocal, affirming and voluntary bonds. As Cola confesses to Nico, 'I know you worry about me, and that is the reason I'm going to come clean with you. No one has ever cared for me the way you do, and that includes my mother. Whatever happens, I want you to know I do appreciate it' (Ekochu 2004, p.134). The last two lines of the epigraph, 'like a new born's first cry/ comfort to my heart you bring' suggest death has no hold over Cola. She does not die isolated and disillusioned; instead, her meticulous preparation for death and the anticipation of the birth of her son give the impression that she has finally come to terms with herself and has a sense of belonging. Elizabeth Abel argues in relation to the bond between Sula and Nel, but which is applicable in this context, that friendship

> is both the vehicle and product of self-knowledge, the uniquely valuable and rigorous relationship. ... combining the adolescent need for identification with the adult need for independence, presents an ideal of female friendship dependent not on love, obligation, or compassion, but on an almost impossible conjunction of sameness and autonomy, attainable only with another version of oneself. (1981, p.429)

[185] In *Beauty's gift*, Sindiwe Magona also reflects on the relationship and conversations that take place between four female friends as they gather around the deathbed of one of their friends.

In *Shock waves*, Ekochu shows the destructive consequences when an individual severs ties from a close community. The narrative encourages a new way of creating communities in post-repressive regimes. In this reconfigured community of women, the individual should not be left adrift because when they are they become vulnerable and are subject to abuse, as seen in the case of Cola. Ekochu interrogates different aspects of oppression within female friendships and the familial bond, but the greatest form of repression in this novel occurs when one breaks these communal bonds. She attempts to renegotiate communal bonds in ways that are functional in urban modernity, while not being smothering or bound to patriarchal institutions. When an individual is isolated, there is a need to create new spaces that buttress while still allowing for different degrees of autonomy. For Ekochu, female friendships become the terrain on which these kinds of bonds are re-negotiated.

Benedict Anderson's reflections on nationalism construct the nation as an imagined community that is 'always conceived as a deeply horizontal comradeship' (1991, p.7) in relation to the allegorical roles of women. However, *Shock waves* attempts to move beyond this gendered form of nationalism that is deeply rooted in ambivalence and mostly understood through its index to kin relations (Andrade 2011; Kruger 2011). The novel suggests that this horizontal fraternity is constantly shifting and needs to be appreciated as a sorority which includes, but is not limited to, relations between one's kin. Similarly, Andrade argues elsewhere that 'the family need not be limited to blood relations and might be configured in any several ways; nor is the family idealised or represented as always nurturing'(2011, p.137) since these bonds are fraught with contradictions. That is to say, Ekochu's portrayal of female friendships and re-negotiated family bonds offers an alternative female version that constructs the national community as a horizontal sorority and not a horizontal fraternity. Ekochu seems to be speaking to the feminist critique on the difficult relationship that women have with the nation, which offers both protection and oppression. The national boundary is used to cast them as carriers of tradition and bearers of the national future while simultaneously neglecting their needs. 'The imagined community' of the nation marks a danger; it seems that women are safe within the nation, although they are somewhat ambivalently oppressed by it, whereas there is a far worse danger that lurks outside the nation. There is a valorisation of the transnational which ignores the great threats that women are subject to when the boundaries become permeable. The composition of the nation in the hands of Ekochu begins to take on a different form that disrupts the accepted version of 'the

story of the nation [and] permits the forging and testing of particular kinds of affiliation to a national community' (emphasis in original, Boehmer 2005, p.11).

In narrating the lives of women as mothers, aunts, sisters and friends, 'who operate through exchange, network, juxtaposition and interrelationship' (Boehmer 2005, p.209), these emerging authors affirm the power of supportive communities of women. By representing female relationships as comprising a form of duality that simultaneously empowers and inhibits, they strengthen women's agency and give them the ability to act for other women. Boehmer insists that women writers remain invested in

> those narratives that cannot be integrated into the grand teleological march of official history, they, too, deploy the genre to claim and configure national and other identities. By conveying women's complex give-and-take between public and private spaces, women writers use the novel as a powerful instrument with which to reshape national cultures in a way more hospitable to women's presence. (2005, p. 12)

Whereas Matlwa and Molope are more inward looking, concentrating on national interests, Baingana and Ekochu begin from the national and move beyond it, crossing borders to show that one should remain in the nation. Ekochu and Baingana show that in spite of the rise of transnationalism, women do not disavow the nation, because it offers them channels for social and political transformation that produce different facets of female subjectivities. As Chandra Mohanty observes in *Feminism without borders*, the presence of borders can be both 'exclusionary and enabling', but they offer her the opportunity 'to envision a critically transnational (internationalist) feminist praxis moving through these borders' (Mohanty 2003, p.3). Furthermore, Caren Kaplan, drawing on Elspeth Probyn, argues that the local should not be abandoned because the 'local' signifies a more particularized aspect of location – deeply connected to the articulation of a specific time – and a potentially transformative practice' (Kaplan 1994, p.149); and for Gloria Anzaldúa, '"borderlands" generate the complicated knowledges of nuanced identities, the micro-subjectivities that cannot be essentialized or overgeneralized'(cited in Kaplan 1994, p.150).

These emerging writers are interested in national and transnational relationships and how they shape different ways of imagining female relationships. Cola and Christine's homecoming, intergenerational female relationships and the creation of alternative forms of mothering are attempts to reconfigure the intimate bonds between mothers, daughters and sisters in post-repressive regimes. These narratives demonstrate that

> feminized spaces are simultaneously sites of exclusion and inclusion, oppression and solidarity, speech and silence, abuse and respect, neglect and friendship. … Women appropriate and refashion oppressive bonds through friendship, sisterhood, and solidarity and in the process reinvent themselves. (Nnaemeka 1997, p.19)

One of the major features of the emergent is to construct narratives that are messy: these writers are testing, experimenting and trying out different relationships to find different ways of being a woman, a daughter, a mother, or a sister. They imagine new identities but expose different ideologies that come into play. An attempt by the emerging writers to negotiate through real complexities and contradictions reveals there are no clear ideological selves. The narratives do not cut clear trajectories. They represent the ways in which women struggle to find their paths. 'Like a new born's cry', there is an anticipation in the narratives, an expectation of fresh beginnings, new ways of being, but also an anxiety. In re-constructing the nation and women's place in it, these writers imagine a horizontal sorority that is problematic, but one that also provides 'a bedrock of stability in their lives' (Orbach and Eichenbaum, cited in Mauthner 2005, p.13).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

> *To write is to claim a text of one's own; textuality is an instrument of territorial possession… narrative is crucial to our discovery of self-hood.* (Simon Gikandi)[186]

This thesis has provided an account of the narratives of emerging writers from Uganda and South Africa and has demonstrated that in these new dispensations spaces have opened for female writers to envisage and narrate new possible stories and selves for women. I argue that by writing about women's experiences, emerging writers have successfully claimed their own texts. Writing becomes a vehicle for women writers to explore and construct alternative images of female subjectivities in and of the nation. By setting up a dialogue between the literary constructions of gender by writers from two post-repressive regimes, this thesis foregrounds women's issues and struggles and imagines new ways of understanding women's experiences in two African countries.

I have argued that by approaching the gendered experience from three different angles – namely, revisionist accounts of war narratives, popular literary genres, and reformations of the mother-daughter relationship – women writers are able to interrogate various gender hierarchies and cultural norms. In the process, they disrupt deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes and social constraints that marginalise, manipulate and impinge on women's worlds. In the narratives under study, I have tried to show that by extending the range of female characters and concerns that have been portrayed in the fiction of their established counterparts, emerging writers offer alternative ways of looking at self and society in the post-repressive states of Uganda and South Africa.

In chapter two, I show how Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Waiting*, Kagiso Lesego Molope's *Dancing in the dust* and Mary Karooro Okurut's *The invisible weevil* re-examine and engage with past nationalist narratives. Through their narratives, women writers recognize and re-evaluate the participation of women during repressive regimes, and revisit the roles of women during the turbulent times of civil war and the struggle against apartheid. They reveal that in new political dispensations numerous political freedoms open up for women, but there are also various socio-cultural constraints that impede these liberties. These writers interrogate

[186] cited in Boehmer 2005, p.95.

various conflicting, contradicting and ambiguous identities, and reveal the complexities of female subjectivity and women's experience in both public and private spaces.

Chapter three explores how Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Whispers from Vera*, Zukiswa Wanner's *The madams* and *Behind every successful man*, Angela Makholwa's *The 30th candle* and *Red ink*, Cynthia Jele's *Happiness is a four-letter word*, Glaydah Namukasa's *The deadly ambition* and HJ Golakai's *The Lazarus effect* all experiment with popular literary forms. The popular genres of chick-lit and crime fiction are powerful literary tools that allow emerging writers to construct different ways of being female. In the process, they create new images of women, as well as those of women in and of the nation-state, reshaping 'national cultures in a way that is more hospitable to women's presence' (Boehmer 2005, p.12).

In chapter four, I examine how *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa, Kagiso Lesego Molope's *The mending season*, Doreen Baingana's *Tropical fish* and *Shock waves from across the ocean* by Jocelyn Bananuka Ekochu interrogate and re-negotiate the institution of motherhood and the experience of mothering. The re-examination of mothering identities is essential to these emerging writers who endeavour to disrupt women's prescribed subject positions, while offering alternative family forms that are based on female friendships.

This thesis suggests that the representation of women that materializes from the narratives of emerging women writers does not only imagine simple, passive, female characters. Instead, they also reflect on how women who have internalised patriarchal customs and practices are implicated in their own and others' oppression. I contend that the narratives reveal that although women face multiple forms of oppression, along with issues of subservience and subjugation, there are subtexts of defiance, manipulation and control by women. As Nfah-Abbenyi has pointed out, women writers as '"knowers" speak from the position of women's lives ... identities of fictional characters are infused with various and varying positional perspectives. … most of the characters have to strive for agency within each social location or gender relation in their bid to construct subjectivity' (1997a, p.151). In other words, female characters are also portrayed as speaking subjects and active agents who find sites and different forms of agency from which they are able to resist oppressive forms of power.

I have observed that emerging writers have taken up Mariama Bâ's challenge to use 'literature as a non-violent but effective weapon' (cited in Stratton 1994 pp.54-55) that seeks

to overthrow patriarchal structures detrimental to women. Nonetheless, I also point out that in the process of 'writing back' to male nationalist texts or the narratives of their literary foremothers or dominant genres, these authors try to offer counter-narratives that push beyond dominant discourses, but sometimes the emergent gets implicated in its own critique. The emerging writers find themselves running into cul-de-sacs that force them to back-pedal and find alternative ways out of the maze they have created. In this thesis, I suggest that in reflecting on the messy terrains of women's lives, the narratives of emerging writers re-inscribe women as inherently ambiguous individuals with multiple, shifting, complex and contradictory identities. The alternative roles and identities speak to the images of women that have previously been neglected, silenced, or rendered inaccessible or simplistic by dominant discourses. The voices and concerns of women that had been subsumed by the dominant literary tradition move from the periphery and are placed at centre stage. Since women writers are concerned with interpreting their experience from a female perspective, they widen the scope of female characters and mark the heterogeneity of women in a departure from the representation of the homogenous woman figure in the African literary tradition. By defining women's stories in their own voices, women writers offer a female articulation of women's experiences.

I have tried to show that women writers have benefited enormously from favourable conditions and opportunities that materialize out of new dispensations. However, the narratives speak to the inconsistencies, conflicts, intricacies, and interstices that women have to endure in their daily lives in these post-repressive regimes. In Moses Isegawa's *Abyssinian chronicles*, the protagonist succinctly captures the precarious nature of the post-repressive when he says,

> I was becoming more convinced that the afterbirth of war was in ways worse than the actual fighting itself, and that winning the peace was harder than winning the war. Now the guns were silent and the howling of ghosts had taken over, interspersed with the sighs of survivors, most of whom could not wait to reclaim their land; but the gaps in the silence were punctuated with a sense of anti-climax, a certain lack of direction. (Isegawa 2000, p.403)

This thesis finds that in spite of new liberties for women, they continue to live in the aftermath of war and war is still around them. For instance, the protracted civil war in northern Uganda has caused turmoil in the lives of women; while South Africa may not be

experiencing this form of civil war, the rape of women and children has reached the proportions of 'an unacknowledged gender civil war' (Moffett 2006, p.129). With its high crime levels that see women living in perpetual fear of being violated particularly within the home or the neighbourhood, South Africa is far from being a nation at peace. Sometimes it seems like a nation at war with itself. It is such paradoxes that the emergent writers of my study expose and explode. In spite and because of the political freedoms brought about by new regimes, the post-repressive is merely a provisional or partial ceasefire. As women become more empowered, there is a backlash against their autonomy and re-assertion of patriarchal structures that intrude on and violate their spaces, bodies and psyches (Gqola 2007). There is no post in the post-repressive; instead, new dispensations are differently repressive for women. True freedom can only occur when and if women are able to inhabit a society that does not perpetually make them feel like they are living under siege (830).

Although the research that has gone into my thesis has been extensive, it is by no means exhaustive. As mentioned, earlier I did not examine the works of poets, playwrights and autobiographers. However, my research has opened up additional areas of interest that I or others could consider in future research. For example, although this thesis has mainly focused on the urban lives of women, there are narratives such as *Tears of hope: A collection of short stories by Ugandan rural women*, and *I dare to say:* An anthology of Ugandan women living positively with HIV/AIDS that interrogate the patriarchal experiences of women living in rural areas. In South Africa there has been a sudden proliferation of auto/biographical stories of black female 'celebrities'. These include Sunday Times Alan Paton 2013 winner *Beginnings and endings* by Redi Tlhabi, *Eyebags and dimples* by Bonnie Henna, *When hope whispers: A true story* by Zoleka Mandela, *and Bitch, please! I'm Khanyi Mbau*, *The Kelly Khumalo story*, *Making herstory: Lira* and *A renegade called Simphiwe*, the biographies of Khanyi Mbau, Kelly Khumalo, Lerato Molapo-Lira and Simphiwe Dana respectively. These are some of the different kinds of stories of black women that await critical scholarly engagement. Finally, in *A renegade called Simphiwe* Pumla Gqola explains that she wrote the book, 'because writing is how we think about and through a whole range of realities. Writing is one of the ways we say things matter' (2013, 150). Her ideas on writing can be read in relation to the narratives of the emerging writers of my thesis, who write in order to understand women's experiences. In similar vein, Gqola's ideas can be read in my own context: writing this thesis has offered me a way to reflect on the messy complexities of

women's realities; but I also hope that writing a 'text' of my own has allowed me to say things that matter.

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