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Celina Maria Diem

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I confirm to have conceived and written this paper in English, unassisted and on my own. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are equally truthfully acknowledged and identified.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Crime fiction has been one of the most prolific literary genres in the last 150 years and continues to be so, as a glance at any bookshop, bestseller book list, or the reading matter of fellow passengers on trains, tubes and buses will confirm” (Matzke and Mühleisen 1). This trend is equivalently perceptible in South Africa’s literary development, illustrating that South Africa’s history as a nation characterized by violence and oppression has undeniably influenced the country’s belletristic progression. While South African literature in general has received critical international attention – considering the rising popularity of South African authors, the academic discourse of (post-)apartheid literature, or the established body of criticism regarding trauma and memory in South African texts – the discussion of detective fiction in South African literature has only recently surfaced on the horizon of academic literary criticism and is characterized by controversy.

This thesis seeks to expose and examine the relevance of detective fiction in South African literary studies by exploring the genre’s capacity to mirror persistent socio-political issues rooted in the country’s past. The aim of this paper is therefore to analyze how South African authors engage with common generic conventions in order to either criticize or affirm ideological beliefs in three selected contemporary South African detective novels – Jann Turner’s *Southern Cross* (2002), Deon Meyer’s *Devil’s Peak* (2007), and Michiel Heyns’ *Lost Ground* (2011) – in order to estimate and understand the significance of crime writing in this particular context.

To provide a contextual foundation this thesis begins by defining crime and detective fiction followed by a summary of the cornerstones of critical perceptions from the genre’s origin until today. A brief outline of the origin and development of detective and crime fiction as a genre in general will additionally serve for a better comprehension of the genre’s capacities and limitations. Although South African detective fiction is hardly part of the early assessments of this text-type –

particularly in Western literary studies – a look at the generic studies of the genre helps to assess and comprehend South African detective stories more efficiently.

To complete the theory review I will then move on to briefly discuss the historical development of detective fiction in South Africa by considering literature's function in the struggle for freedom pre-1994 as well as its role in the nation's healing process after apartheid. An outline of the progressing body of academic criticism of South African detective and crime fiction and an assessment of most recent insights on the subject matter will be the groundwork for my analysis of the three selected texts. Since a significant part of the critical debate takes place online, my research will build on both online articles and published scientific papers as well as the few books that have been published within the field so far.

The second part focuses on the main objective of this thesis, the analysis of the three selected novels and the way in which they reveal everyday socio-political concerns within South African society. By doing so I hope to contribute to the “ongoing project of assessing South African crime fiction” critics have recently called for (Amid and de Kock 61). It will therefore be investigated how authors like Turner, Meyer and Heyns incorporate and criticize contemporary issues like the country's high crime rates, the AIDS epidemic, economic-, social- and gender-inequality, as well as environmental pollution in their narratives, while at the same time they are engaging with the boundaries of genre writing. Each novel will be examined with regards to specific themes and issues such as truth, justice or violence. My discussion of Turner's *Southern Cross* (2004, first published in 2002) will draw attention to the complexity of betrayal, truth and boundaries between perpetrators and victims in a South African context, demonstrating how socio-political issues are interwoven with generic conventions; the analysis of Meyer's *Devil's Peak* (2007) will investigate entities like justice, revenge and the commonalities of heroes and villains in South African everyday life, showing how traditional generic forms like the hard-boiled heritage re-emerge in South African detective novels; finally, Heyns' *Lost Ground* (2011) will serve as an interesting example to examine classic detective fiction by analyzing the setting as well as the journalist detective figure and his journey of ‘homecoming’ – after leaving South

Africa to escape military service – and of uprooting racial and social prejudice in post-apartheid, post-transition South Africa.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While South African detective fiction has risen in popularity in the last decades, the discussion of this genre in a South African context has emerged only recently and commentators – both professional and laymen – have just begun to appreciate crime writing as a meaningful entity. However, from a global perspective, detective stories have earned their place in the literary canon over the past decades, resulting in a fairly extensive body of criticism. Therefore, since much has been written in and about detective fiction – particularly in the last two decades – it will prove helpful to briefly analyze the genre in an international context before investigating detective fiction in southern Africa. By doing so the focus will lie on two aspects: firstly, on the genre's capacities for ideological criticism throughout history and secondly, on the diverging critical perceptions of such capacities. This discussion will help to understand how the genre has been perceived by both readers and scholars around the globe from its origin until today, including in South Africa.

Thus, after defining detective fiction, for the purpose of this thesis an outline of the genre development will be provided with regard to the ideological underpinnings in changing varieties such as clue-puzzles, private-eye stories and thrillers. Additionally, a summary of prevailing critical interpretations of the genre's capacities and limitations as tools of social critique will serve as common ground for the interpretation of these qualities in South African detective novels. Following the general outline of the genre, the focus will then shift to South African detective and crime fiction, addressing the genre's development and its critical perception locally and across borders.

Drawing on recent findings in the field of South African literary research, my investigation will build on the few available publications on the subject matter by Christopher Warnes, Beth le Roux, Sam Naidu, Jonathan Amid and Leon de Kock.

Since the majority of critical discussions on South African crime literature has so far taken place online, my analysis will draw on various articles from websites like Mike Nicol's Crime Beat blog (Nicol is a renowned South African crime author and leading force in the critical discussion of the genre in southern Africa online), the Stellenbosch Literary Project SLiP, established by the English Department of Stellenbosch University, and the independent internet journal LitNet which is based in Cape Town and published by members of the University of Cape Town.

Furthermore, it should be noted that in this paper a vast number of detective fiction from and about South Africa will be left unattended to, not because they are less valuable for this research but because a full account would simply go beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.1 Working Definition of Detective Fiction

Since crime and detective novels are well established, widely read and much favored literary categories, many commentators note that a straightforward definition of the genre would result in a dilemma of exclusion and inclusion, subsequently disregarding the broad variety of subgenres and new variations. However, for the purpose of this discussion, it is necessary to define what I will henceforth refer to as crime and detective fiction and to highlight the fluidity of such categorizations with regard to contemporary South African detective fiction.

To exemplify, the *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* defines detective fiction as a "[t]ype of popular literature dealing with the step-by-step investigation and solution of a crime, usually murder" (230). This description evokes several problems and portrays the issue concerning a strict definition of the genre. The terminology labelling detective stories as 'popular literature' has provoked critical responses ever since the genre's emergence, and while murder is indeed often the crime of choice, the range of possible misconducts goes beyond homicide by far. The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* offers a similar though slightly less rigid definition of detective stories, stating that "the principal action and focus of interest is the investigation of a crime or apparently criminal enigma by a

detective figure, either professional or amateur” (86). Thus, this definition points out the three quintessential features of traditional detective stories: first, a crime or mystery, second, an investigation and lastly, a detective figure of some sort (i.e. professional representatives of law enforcement, or amateurs) (Martin vii).

However, the problem of classification remains. When referring to texts with these qualities critics often interchangeably employ the terms detective fiction and crime fiction. Commentators like Knight (1980, 2004) and Priestman (1991) use detective fiction as an umbrella term, while others, for instance Scaggs (2005) and Horsley (2005), refer to the whole genre as crime fiction with detection as a subgenre. Although it is clear that detective fiction focuses on the investigation and the detectives, while crime fiction revolves around the culprits and their crimes, the majority of texts deliberately diverts from restrictive boundaries and may therefore be described as crime as well as detective fiction.

Hence, the confines of genre variations are blurry and indistinct, and authors adjust certain parameters to their particular needs in order to keep their readers entertained. Subgenres like thrillers, (neo-)noir, cozy mysteries, hard-boiled fiction, court-room dramas, police procedurals or serial killer novels might as well feature an investigative process or concentrate on the criminal and therefore further illustrate the difficulty of a strict classification (Panek 156; Knight 2004). “This proliferation of terms is”, according to Warnes, “testament to the wide variety of settings, characters, formal devices, and themes” of crime writing (982). The majority of critics therefore agrees with John Scaggs, who concludes that “one of the defining characteristics of crime fiction is its generic (and sub-generic) flexibility and prosperity” (2).

The three examples of contemporary detective novels central to this discussion affirm this fluidity of generic conventions: *Southern Cross* and *Devil’s Peak* combine elements of the thriller and the detective novel, and *Lost Ground* draws closely on the clue-puzzle’s conventions. Since all three novels depict an investigation and feature a detective figure while also emphasizing the investigation of the crimes and the criminals, the terms ‘detective fiction’ and ‘crime fiction’ will be used interchangeably in the course of this thesis. This flexible

definition follows “the majority of critical studies of the genre over the past twenty years [that] employ the term ‘crime fiction’ to classify an otherwise unclassifiable genre” while still emphasizing the features of detection (Scaggs 1).

Besides an analysis of the most crucial aspects of crimes, culprits, detectives, investigations and the restoration of order in the three novels, the focus lies on the investigation of the genre’s capacity for social critique. Therefore, the novels’ capabilities and limitations to depict socio-political anxieties within the scope of detective fiction will constitute the heart of this analysis.

2.2 Critical Perceptions

As a genre concerned with moral behavior, social (in)justice and the restoration of order, detective fiction has attracted a plethora of critical controversy. Although today detective writing is assessed through a diversity of critical approaches, including feminism, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, structuralism as well as ethnic and gender studies and is taught at a university level in numerous countries, the academic community has not always been so acceptable of the genre. This section will focus on the main cornerstones of the critical discussion by summarizing the developments historically. Generally, the genre experienced four waves of criticism: authors’ own assessments of their texts during the 1920s, the analysis of form and structure during the 1960s, the examination of the genre’s ideological qualities emerging particularly by the end of the twentieth century and the contemporary debate sparked by these previous discussions of structural features and ideological underpinnings (Pyrhönen 45-49).¹

Detective fiction rose to popularity in the 1920s with two distinct forms: the classic clue-puzzle and hard-boiled detection (see also section 3.2). Authors of these varieties, like Dorothy L. Sayers, S.S. van Dine (aka Willard Huntington Wright) or G. K. Chesterton, have explained their writing patterns in forms of prefaces to their books or justified their narrative techniques in the form of semi-academic

¹ For a more detailed account of historical criticism, see Pyrhönen and Knight.

essays (Pyrhönen 45; Knight 2004, 99). Some of these writers, like Sayers, were part of the British ‘Detection Club’ – which Knight calls an “unserious assertion of the significance and structure of the clue-puzzle form” (2004, 99) – while others, like Ronald Knox and Wright, composed guidelines or rules for writing detection.² Although few of these discussions offer academic insights, they do shed light on early perceptions of the genre. These discussions, according to Pyrhönen, primarily focus on “plot structure and narrative techniques” but also interrogate the genre’s game-like nature and self-reflexive qualities (45).

Structuralists started investigating the form and techniques of the genre a few years later – however, for different reasons. Due to the rather restrictive formula of early varieties like the clue-puzzle, formalists embarked on a strategy to analyze the general rules of narratives by considering the example of detective fiction (Pyrhönen 46). This approach is central to the critical discussion of the genre since detective fiction is, as Scaggs notes, “characterised by the way that it self-consciously advertises its own plot elements and narrative structures” (2). Furthermore, this approach gives meaning to the genre’s dual structure consisting of the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. Tzvetan Todorov has identified these two parts of detective texts in his categorization of different types of the genre in 1977, and it has been a point of departure for numerous critical discussions ever since (Horsley 2005, 23; Knight 2004, 108). Typically, the story of the investigation is constructed in a backward manner and leads back to the story of the crime that occurs in the beginning. “[I]n the ‘purest form’ of detective fiction” Horsley states, “[the two parts] come together only as the detective puts the pieces of the puzzle in place and reveals the guilty party” (2005, 23). However, considering the variety of authors’ innovative engagements with the genre’s formula, it should be noted that not every detective novel strictly underlies this plot division.

² Ronald Knox formulated ten commandments for writing detective fiction, insisting that authors should provide honest clues for their readers; Willard Huntington Wright authored *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories* (1929), see Knight (2004).

The third wave of the genre's critical discussion emerged in the 1970s and 1980s when scholars initially began to study detective narratives with regard to underlying ideological beliefs. The genre has since no longer merely been understood as a reflection of ideas about crime and social anxieties, but it has become a tool to approach and critically engage with such notions (Pyrhönen 47). Since it is particularly the development of this critical approach that remains so appealing – not only for the majority of contemporary academic discussions of the genre but also for this thesis – a closer look will prove valuable for the analysis of the three selected novels later on.

In this regard, detective fiction has often been analyzed as a product of popular culture with an exceptional potential for escapism. During the crucial critical developments in the 1970s, John G. Cawelti has described detective fiction as a tool for readers to engage in moral fantasies. He states that

by reducing crime to a puzzle, a game, and a highly formalized set of literary conventions, it transformed an increasingly serious moral and social problem into an entertaining pastime [...] something potentially dangerous and disturbing was transformed into something completely under control. (Cawelti 104-105)

In that way, Cawelti suggests, readers can immerse themselves in a number of emotional experiences in the secure setting of the genre's end-oriented and resolution-driven formula. While Cawelti addresses popular culture as by no means less important than 'high' culture, others, like W.H. Auden, have identified literary detection as nothing but an escapist tool. Auden claims that only few crime and detective texts – like Raymond Chandler's detective stories – should be "read and judged [...] as works of art" ([1948] 1988: 19; Knight 1980, 1; Amid and de Kock 54). While first and foremost functioning as escapist tool, Auden additionally understands the genre as alternative form of religious certitude in a secular world ([1948] 1988: 19).

A decade later, Knight and Porter provided a different approach to the ideology of detective fiction. While their approach differs in its assessment of the relation between ideology and detective fiction, it shares Cawelti's assumption about *how* ideology is incorporated in the genre, namely in both form and content of the texts.

Knight argues that while “form and content [of detective fiction] create the crucial realisation of a pleasing, comforting world view”, reality is ultimately obstructed by the very same process (1980, 5-6). Both Knight and Porter therefore have identified the genre as one of the practices that affirm and maintain “Western capitalist societies” and can thus not be understood as means of social critique (Pyrhönen 47). As Pyrhönen formulates it, “[b]y portraying the law and its enforcement as natural and self-evident, the genre helps to circulate the idea that crime and the law are outside any specific social contexts and concrete historical developments” (47-48). In other words, according to this view, detective and crime fiction covertly reproduce the predominant values of a society while overtly pretending to be challenging them.

Naturally, these notions have been contested over the course of time. Jim Collins, for one, offers a postmodern approach by indicating that any form of fiction provides views of the prevalent ideology from two sides: on the one hand the dominant beliefs might be affirmed, while on the other hand, oppositional beliefs are revealed and maintained as well (34-37). The main reason to contest the view that detective fiction is a “straightforward reflection of dominant ideology” is, in Pyrhönen’s view, that such premises build on “the untenable assumption that detective fiction is aligned with conservative ideology, while serious literature is relatively autonomous in relation to ideology” (48). Therefore, the genre can nevertheless engage with its socio-political surroundings in some way or another, much like ‘high’ literature does. This view has also been advocated by popular cultural scholars like Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall or Antonio Gramsci. According to their studies popular culture

consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which – in different particular types of popular culture – dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are ‘mixed’ in different permutations. (Bennett 96)

In this line of thinking, crime and detective fiction therefore indeed portray certain issues worth analyzing since it becomes both progressive and regressive, negotiating between opposing discourses.

More recent developments within the genre suggest that authors and critics have accepted this premise for their critical engagement with the genre's form and content. Throughout the twenty-first century, several critical approaches have emerged in response to the genre's vast number of innovative varieties. Particularly notions of class, gender and sex have been investigated more closely by critics like Pepper, Pyrhönen, Priestman and Knight, to name just a few. Drawing on Pepper, Pyrhönen states that

[c]urrent research holds that the genre meets head on bitter racial, ethnic, class, and gender conflicts without providing easy answers. At best, it is able to envision a present and a future where difference can be acknowledged and where power relations can be unsettled. (48; see also Pepper 2000, 8, 174-175)

In any case, this development demonstrates that authors and readers of detective fiction critically engage with the genre's premises, drawing attention to the capacities of popular genre fiction and providing a plethora of material for critical debates.

Today, crime and detective fiction are increasingly observed from a global perspective, further emphasizing the contemporary significance of the genre and indicating "the relaxation of the boundaries" between 'high' and popular literature (Pyrhönen 49). Andrew Pepper and David Schmid, for instance, interrogate the role of the state and globalization in contemporary crime writing (2016), and Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleisen offer a "transcultural perspective" of crime fiction in their book *Postcolonial Postmortems* (2006). Stewart King and Stephen Knight too declare that "[c]rime fiction was never so global in its reach, its vitality, and its capacity for serious engagement with the world around it" (2014, 7). For this reason, it is beneficial to consider the genre's origins and developments in order to fully understand the influences and effects on South African crime fiction as it is written and read today.

3 GENRE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Origins

“So how and when did detective fiction become an accepted genre of popular fiction? To this there is no easy or generally accepted answer.”
(P.D. James 6)

The critical perceptions of the genre’s development, as suggested by P.D. James above, are controversial. Nevertheless, it is clear that the general interest in crime narratives has fueled the production of literary works about criminals and their misconducts for centuries. A brief investigation of early developments not only underlines the genre’s popularity among readers but also reveals how authors have been employing the genre’s formula to express social criticism.

Authors chose crime as their major theme long before the hero figures of brilliant detectives appeared to solve crimes and mysteries in fiction. As Knight notes, “there existed plenty of fiction dealing with crime” (Knight 2004, 11). Collections of real crime-tales like the *Newgate Calendars* in the eighteenth century depicted criminals, their misconducts and their persecutions – usually ending in public executions – in detail (see Knight 2004, 6). Besides being a popular form of entertainment, these early texts also served educational purposes. Due to the city’s limited resources to reduce and avert criminal misconducts at the time, the content of the “overtly and heavily moralistic” crime stories conveyed certain social and moral principles for their readers (Worthington 14). The popularity of texts depicting the felonies of “[s]windlers, pickpockets, procurers [and] burglars” as well as violent offences and murder cases lasted throughout the eighteenth century and mirror the general interest in the fictional examination of morals and social justice (Knight 2004, 7).

As soon as detectives and police officers emerged in societies, detective figures slowly materialized in fiction as well. The correlation of these occurrences is often pointed out by critics, since a genre featuring detectives and investigations could, according to P.D. James, not establish itself in literature “until society had an official detective force” (6). Just like the majority of early crime stories are drawn from real crime-tales, detective stories are often based on real detectives. This

reference to actual police detectives in fiction poses a particularly interesting question in regard to South African crime fiction: why and how could a genre concerned with crime and police procedures achieve such popularity in a society plagued by their history of crime and corrupted police? “Perhaps”, Michael Williams suggests, “it’s because our lives are so chaotic, so filled with unsolved mysteries, incomplete stories, uncaught murderers that crime fiction is so popular [...]” (163; qtd. in Comaroff 800; a more thorough discussion of this aspect follows in section 4.1). Thus, the reason for the genre’s success in South Africa might be the same one Knight observes in his discussion of early eighteenth century fiction: the need for a figure that provides answers and solutions to unsolved mysteries and crimes (2004, 5).

The first fictional detective invented to supply such desired solutions for mysterious crimes is Edgar Allan Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin, drawn from famed French investigator Eugène François Vidocq.³ Although detective Dupin set out to solve crimes well before the detective story had been established as an independent genre, Poe laid the groundwork for detective fiction and its capacity to address prevailing socio-political anxieties. Knight notes that Poe’s texts “imply that the isolated intellectual and imaginative life is a sufficient and successful response to the world and its problems” (1980, 39). Poe’s Dupin stories therefore resemble the first cornerstone of the genre’s development and soon inspired other authors to pick up the traces he left behind.

Short of three decades later these initial attempts of fictional investigations took a more distinct shape in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868), featuring detective Sergeant Cuff (Scaggs 23; P.D. James 6). This narrative placed the emphasis on the role of the detective and his investigation and had an undertone “of imperialism and social division” (Scaggs 35). Accordingly, the genre’s fundamental characteristics come together in Collins’s stories (Worthington 25; Priestman 4; Knight 2004, 44).

³ C. Auguste Dupin is featured in three of Poe’s short stories: “The Murder in the Rue Morgue” (1841), “The Mystery of Marie Roget” (1842) and “The Purloined Letter” (1844) (Kopley 2008).

Arguably, detective fiction only came to full bloom during the fin de siècle. The author who most intelligently combined the various features brought to paper by his predecessors is without a doubt Arthur Conan Doyle with his famous detective Sherlock Holmes. Considerations of the genre's capacities to address prevailing social anxieties emerged with Doyle's popular detective stories and further evolved into the rich variety of detection and mystery that followed. The forty-five texts depicting Sherlock Holmes' adventures convey a straightforward ideology: "Crime will always be punished, either by the law or by divine providence" and therefore entertain the readers with a combination of critical assessment of the status quo and an opportunity to engage with moral fantasies (Scaggs 25). Doyle's success and popularity, however, were not only the reward of brilliant writing but rather a product of well-advised publishing combined with a suitable socio-political environment for the genre's prosperity. Horsley notes that

[i]n considering the question of why the 1890s were propitious to the emergence of Holmes, critics generally take account of the fact that the stories contain a core of bourgeois values, combining an attachment to fair play with an appeal to the growing belief in individualism and addressing widespread anxieties about the presence in late Victorian society of potentially disruptive forces. (2005, 21)

This indicates the perfect match of the detective fiction genre and the discussion of socio-political issues – in Doyle's case the effects of the industrial revolution – and illustrates how the genre functions as a tool for social critique as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century (Knight 2004, 62-63).

A vast number of authors soon started to imitate as well as satirize the Holmes figure, including Robert Barr with "The Adventures of Sherlaw Kombs", Maurice Leblanc with his Arsène Lupin stories and M. P. Shiel with the *Prince Zaleski* short story collection (Knight 2004, 70-77). Other writers developed their own crime-solving heroes, like G.K. Chesterton's infamous detective priest Father Brown, and soon different varieties of the genre emerged in distinguishable new forms (Rzepka 2005, 137; Knight 2004, 71-72).⁴

⁴ For a more detailed account see Knight (2004, 70-73).

3.2 Twentieth Century Detective Fiction

After Poe and Doyle, the genre became subject to a number of changes: new branches and sub-genres emerged, elements of previous investigative forms such as the scientific analysis of clues gained greater emphasis in some varieties, while other types gave priority to individualism and realism, and a body of criticism discussing the genre's tendency to address predominant tensions in society slowly came into existence.

These changes surfaced in a number of ways in both form and content of the detective story and were influenced by, among other things, the socio-political reality of the early twentieth century. Regarding the texts' form, a change in length from short stories to novels occurred – although the short story remains popular until today. Furthermore, the crime of choice became, more often than not, murder instead of thievery, indicating a shift of social anxieties from threats to property and wealth to threats to identity and life (Knight 2004, 67-80, see also chapter 3). These various new features took distinctive shape in two widely popular varieties that emerged after the First World War: the classic detective story and the hard-boiled detective story.⁵

Classic detective fiction – often referred to as clue-puzzle, 'whodunit', mystery story or analytic detective fiction – revolves around the game-like investigation of a mystery and the detection of who has committed the crime. This form of detection remains popular until today, mirrored in the number of sales worldwide, but experienced its peak in the 1920s and 1930s – therefore, critics generally refer to the interwar clue-puzzles as Golden Age detective fiction. Pioneers of this form were Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham, often called the "Queens of Crime" (Panek 129). Classic detection is typically characterized by metafictional qualities, a notion of fair-play and the presentation of "resolved endings" (Horsley 2010, 31). In an intellectual contest with the detective, readers

⁵ It should be noted that, although the division into these two main branches is often geographically associated with Britain (i.e. the clue puzzle) and America (i.e. hard-boiled detection) and critics frequently divide their analysis accordingly, it is a simplified classification since both varieties can be found in Britain as well as America (Knight 2004, part II).

are encouraged to solve the case based on the clues provided by the author (Hillerman and Herbert 4). Many of the Golden Age authors adorned their stories and investigators with distinct feminine attributes, giving their crime writings a certain comfortable and reassuring outlook. Horsley states that “[t]he feminized detectives of the interwar years [...] can themselves, in their non-violence and their reliance on intuition and empathy, be seen as a reaction against the heroic male model of wartime endeavour” (2010, 32). Besides these typical features, the depiction and examination of a bourgeois belief system through rational detection is central to this form of detective fiction (Knight 1980, 163).

However, while popular among readers and authors, the clue-puzzle has not only earned praise. As Scaggs states, “[t]he general critical consensus regarding Golden Age fiction is that the plot is elevated above all other considerations (often including credibility), and that realistic character development takes a back seat to the construction of the puzzle” (35). In other words, the uniformity of classic detective stories, the enclosed settings removed from the real world as well as the mellow notions of violence soon attracted many critical voices – among them other authors who transformed the detective genre into a more individual approach to solve crimes and mysteries.

Although some authors like Van Dine, Ellery Queen (aka Frederick Dannay and Manfred B. Lee), Rex Stout and Carolyn Keene (aka Mildred Wirt Benson) perfected their clue-puzzles across the Atlantic, the majority of American crime writers started to shape their own variety of detection: the hard-boiled or private-eye story (Knight 2004, 87). Authors like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler rejected the clue-puzzle’s straightforward simplicity, denouncing classic detection as utterly conservative literature that paid little attention to its surroundings and was ultimately confined to an English middle-class audience (Knight 2004, 87, 97; Horsley 31-39 and Scaggs 35). The hard-boiled tradition, as opposed to the clue-puzzle, mirrors the reactions to the “tensions and anxieties of postwar society” in a much bolder and more aggressive manner (Horsley 2010, 32). Commentators describe hard-boiled detection as a “socially liberal and even, in some ways, radical ethos” marked by “physical rather than intellectual ability”

that focuses on rugged individualism in an urban setting (Cawelti 6-7; Grella 107; see also Knight 2004, chapter 5; and Horsley 2010, 32-33).

Critics generally agree that Hammett and Chandler perfected the hard-boiled stories in the 1920s. Each of these authors depicts the violence and corruption of modern life in an urban setting and offers, contrasting to the clue-puzzle, rich and realistic depictions of characters and settings (Scaggs 27; Knight 1980, 136). Notions of realism and a serious engagement with the world in the hard-boiled stories have generally led critics to partake in more deliberate discussions of the genre – like Auden, for instance, who describes Chandler’s texts as more than just escapist literature ([1948] 1988, 19). A closer look at the analyses of ideological beliefs conveyed in some of these texts, however, reveals how “illusion can operate in a popular fictional form”, as Knight has analyzed (1980, 136). Knight’s interpretation of Chandler’s texts, for instance, shows that Chandler’s “apparent realistic modernism conceals a conservative and elitist position” and therefore his texts covertly affirm what they overtly claim to be criticizing (1980, 136). Overall, both the clue-puzzle and the private-eye stories have encouraged critics to conduct a more thorough investigation of the competences and the integral social function of crime fiction and have inspired authors around the globe to reassemble and modernize the genre’s form and content.

In addition to the convenience of an established formula and the option to explore and break the genre’s boundaries, the development of new media and a more educated public has resulted in a number of new varieties of detective and crime literature. Some subgenres, like the police procedural, lay focus on the investigator as the personification of moral stability and justice, while others exploited the flaws of previous detectives to a deeper extent, resulting in a rich corpus of anti-heroes in varieties like the gangster novel, the literary noir or serial killer novels (Horsley 2010, 35-39). Commentators generally mention the rise of African American crime writing in the 1980s and 1990s and the development of female and lesbian detectives, created by authors like Sara Paretsky or Sue Grafton (Horsley 2005, 249; Scaggs 30; Knight 2004, 167). Horsley suggests that “[b]oth black and female writers have adapted the tradition [...] and implicitly [challenge]

what is taken to be [a] conservative, white male value system” in previous varieties like the private eye or to some extent the clue-puzzle and have therefore formed their own varieties of detection and crime writing (2010, 36).

4 SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE AND DETECTIVE FICTION

As has been mentioned above, South African literature developments have been strongly influenced by the nation’s history – from colonialization and apartheid through the transitional period to the new democracy. This influence is also apparent in South African detective fiction. Critics have recently posed the questions why South African crime writing has become so popular and why *now*. I would like to shed some light on these questions by briefly investigating the country’s literary developments before and during apartheid before moving on to a more detailed discussion of contemporary South African detective and crime fiction.

For the past decades, South African authors have used a variety of text forms to narrativize and negotiate their own as well as their nation’s past, present and possible future. The prevalent concern in numerous texts of various forms and genres is apartheid and the aftermath of this atrocious regime. Jassy Mackenzie, a South African crime writer, compares the burden of apartheid on local literature and authors to the impact of the Nazi regime on Germany, stating that “[it] had the same lasting repercussions on the culture and society it affected” (14). This is a useful comparison to illustrate the value of the critical engagement with South African crime writing; as Stewart King (2014, 15) points out, scholars have been approaching particular historical occurrences – such as the National Socialist rule – through the lens of crime fiction around the world, and it seems overdue to consider the observations and interpretations of socio-political issues of the past and present that South African detective fiction provides.

Addressing the question why the genre has only recently risen to such popularity in South Africa it should thus be considered that literature has played a very unique part in the struggle for freedom and democracy in the past. During and

particularly before South Africa's democratic transition, literature has not only presented itself as a tool to equip the voiceless with a powerful way of expression, but it has functioned as a political weapon for apartheid's victims. Political parties, like the African National Congress (ANC), have advocated the use of cultural practices like literature and music to realistically depict the oppression and suffering of this era (Attridge and Jolly 2). It is therefore not surprising that only little can be found in the field of crime writing at that point of South Africa's literary history, since the genre has often been considered as popular rather than serious literature on the one hand, and the major concern being the restoration of social order on the other hand (see section 3.1). As Geoffrey V. Davis states: "[T]o be writing work in such a supposedly lighter vein, work which did not in some manner engage relevantly with 'the system', was viewed by some as politically somewhat irresponsible" (2018, 182). Hence, the main genre of literary works in South Africa at that time was the political novel rather than popular literature – the main objective was to inform and realistically portray everyday South African struggles rather than to entertain readers or escape reality.

After the first democratic elections in 1994, the new South Africa was facing the difficult task of transitioning from the horrors of its past to a new future, which is once more mirrored in literature. While crime fiction has become a popular choice of form for numerous authors around the globe by the late twentieth century, only few South African authors, like Wessel Ebersohn and Deon Meyer, started to explore the detective genre. The majority of authors and readers were preoccupied with their collective trauma in every aspect; South African authors had, according to Njabulo Ndebele, to rediscover the ordinary. As early as 1980, Ndebele addressed the impact of the use of literature as a cultural weapon in the struggle by investigating its outcomes, only to conclude that "Black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of spectacle", resulting in "the suppression of deep-rooted individual as well as social fears" (143; 150). Attridge and Jolly add that Ndebele argues "against what he saw as the conservative effects of realist literature focused on the violence of the apartheid regime as a spectacular object" and for the return to the ordinary (2). Thus, the rise of popularity of genre writing such as detective fiction might be considered as

one of the desired outcomes of the reconsideration of the ordinary in South African literature.

While critics approach South African crime fiction from contradicting points of view, the success and popularity of local crime fiction is beyond dispute. Crime fiction eventually rose to be one of the most popular literary genres in South Africa, read both locally and abroad with new novels being published every year. A survey conducted by the Nielsen Book Data Group in 2012 reveals that “Crime, Thriller & Adventure” was the second most read genre in South Africa that year (Betts).⁶ Nevertheless, this trend has attracted critical attention and left many commentators puzzled as to why the genre suddenly seemed so favorable among authors and readers. Some explanations for the genre’s recent developments have been related to the country’s crime rates. Although South Africa’s crime rates are indeed among the highest in the world⁷ – offering authors numerous issues to interrogate in their writing – such suggestions seem rather premature considering that some of the bestselling detective novels are from countries with very low crime rates such as Sweden, Germany or Japan. Less speculative observations have been provided by several scholars of the field, which will be addressed in more detail below (see section 4.2).

Regardless of critical insights, it is obvious that links to apartheid and the depiction of contemporary issues rooted in this horrid past are perceivable in the nation’s contemporary detective fiction and mirrored in authors’ political engagement of their crime writing and the (inter)national success of South African crime novels. As Mackenzie notes, this also becomes obvious in the fact that “[s]ome crime fiction villains have their roots buried in the rotting carcass of apartheid, and some of today’s books are still set in that era” (14). In that way, contemporary South African crime and detective fiction not only engages with

⁶ See <https://www.sabooksellers.com/wp-content/assets/Gobal-Book-Sales-Insights-PASA-SABA-Conference-2012.pdf>

⁷ See International Homicide Data, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, available at <http://data.un.org>; UN Crime and criminal justice statistics available at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime.html>; and ‘South African rape survey shock’ available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8107039.stm>; see also Warnes.

socio-political anxieties of today but sets them in relation to the past and a possible future. Overall, the genre therefore calls for a more detailed critical investigation.

While critical approaches have been made in studies of other continents' crime fiction in the past – in countries like Cuba, Mexico or Japan – South African crime fiction has primarily attracted critical attention in the last two decades. In the following chapters, a concise summary of the genre's development in South Africa will be provided, before moving on to a more detailed outline of the controversial critical perceptions of South African detective fiction.

4.1 Genre Development

As opposed to the genre development in Western Societies, South Africa's detective novels have only recently made their way to the top ranks of bestseller lists and bookshelves of international as well as local readers. Nicol notes that 2008 might be described as the “break-out year for [South African] crime fiction” and an inquiry by Michael Titlestad and Ashlee Polatinsky in 2010 reveals that “local popular crime titles now account for 8-10% of [local publishers'] annual lists, which represents a significant increase since 1994” (260, Footnote 9).⁸ Considering that the country's literary developments are entangled with the nation's political past and present, it is not surprising that crime and detective fiction have flourished comparatively late.

As it has often been pointed out by commentators, the South African crime and detective genre needs to be considered in relation to historical developments, particularly during the early apartheid years. The question arises, how a genre primarily concerned with the restoration of social order and justice can emerge in a society where the concept of social order is based on racism and injustice. Nicol suggests that because of “the apartheid state in the late 1940s no self-respecting writer was going to set up with a cop as the main protagonist of a series. It was

⁸ Nicol provides an overview of annual publications of South African crime novels on his website, stating that almost twenty new crime novels were published in 2008 alone, see <http://crimebeat.bookslive.co.za>

akin to sleeping with the enemy”.⁹ This attitude is therefore perceivable when looking at the genre’s earliest development in South Africa. Although publications within the genre date back to the 1960s they are rare. The historical outline of crime fiction generally includes June Drummond’s *The Black Unicorn* (1959), often considered as the first South African detective story (see le Roux 1; Amid and de Kock 55), and James McClure’s *The Steam Pig* (1971), *The Gooseberry Fool* (1974) and his several other crime novels published from the 1970s to the 1990s, his most recent novel *God It Was Fun* was published in 2014. Another South African crime author – who remains one of the most renowned South African crime writers, at least outside of South Africa, until today – is Wessel Ebersohn. His works include *A Lonely Place to Die: A Novel of Suspense* (1979) and *Divide the Night* (1981) as well as several more recent crime novels like *The October Killings* (2009) and *The Top Prisoner of C-Max* (2012). Furthermore, Arthur Maimane’s short stories published in the *Drum* magazine during the 1940s are often cited in the list of early contributions to South African crime fiction. Le Roux points out that Maimane’s detective, Chester O. Morena, was “the first black South African detective” in local crime literature (7; see also Amid and de Kock 55). Thus, the list of early publications in the South African crime genre is short due to authors’ reluctance to engage with themes like crime and morality as well as the fact that apartheid regulations prevented the publication of texts that might convey anti-apartheid beliefs in any form.

However, while many commentators, such as Mike Nicol, Jonathan Amid and Leon de Kock, agree that crime and detective fiction has only recently established itself as a popular genre in South Africa, some critics have taken a more critical stance on the matter. Le Roux, for instance, sets out to give a more detailed account of the local publishing history in her 2013 article “South African Crime and Detective Fiction in English: A Bibliography and Publishing History” and thereby considers the “issue of classification” of South African detective fiction that has resulted in the exclusion of texts in the past on the premises of language,

⁹ See Nicol’s article “A short history of South African crime fiction” on *Crime Beat* and Amid and de Kock 55.

publishing places, authors' nationalities and sometimes even plot settings (2-3). Thus, Le Roux agrees with Warnes when he states that "the detective returns to South African literature with a vengeance" (le Roux 1; Warnes 986). Her account of South African crime fiction therefore dates back to the 1890s, including authors like Ernest Glanville and Bertram Mitford, and the 1920s with writers like Gordon Gardiner or William Westrup (le Roux 4-5). In any case, the numbers of recent publications within crime and detection writing speak for themselves and there is no denying the rise in popularity in the last ten years. Thus, it is clear that South Africa has not produced nearly as many crime and detective novels during apartheid and the early years of transition as has been the case in recent democratic history.

More recent publications have proven popular with an international and local readership and have been contributing to the rise in popularity of the genre. Recent works include Deon Meyer's *Heart of the Hunter* (2003) and *Blood Safari* (2007), Richard Kunzmann's *Bloody Harvest* (2004), and Andrew Brown's *Coldsleep Lullaby* (2005), as well as a variety of crime novels published in the last two years, like Alan Cowell's *Permanent Removal* (2016), Mike Nicol's *Agents of the State* (2016) and Paul Mendelson's *The History of Blood* (2016), to name just a few.¹⁰ Additionally, as Nicol notes on his website *Crime Beat*, several Afrikaans authors have added to this success, among others, Sifiso Mzobe, Francois Bloemhof, Piet Steyn and Dirk Jordann.

Many of these contemporary crime and detection novels manifest certain sub-generic features. Generally speaking, critical assessments have revealed that the classic detective story – the clue-puzzle variety – seems to be less influential than the hard-boiled variety. Amid and de Kock write

[u]pon careful inspection, it emerges that the South African crime fiction after 1994 has appropriated and adapted the subgenre of hardboiled detective fiction most willingly, with a plethora of

¹⁰ For a more detailed bibliography see Nicol's *Crime Beat* site or Titlestad and Polatinsky "Turning to Crime: Mike Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry and Payback*" (2010).

detectives and private investigators featuring in local detective stories. (57)

Considering the clue-puzzle's formula-guided features, it is not surprising that the hard-boiled elements might appear more suitable for South African authors and their local audience. While some have tended to set their novels in small towns, like Heyns' *Lost Ground* is set in the fictional small town Alfredville, the majority of detective novels are set in crime-ridden cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town or Durban and the investigations are led by tough detectives struggling with personal and socio-political issues in the fight against crime and injustice. However, a vast number of contemporary crime fiction exhibits a blend of different genres – elements of thrillers, historical crime fiction, hard-boiled and classic detection as well as court room dramas coalesce in South African crime writing. Turner's *Southern Cross* is a crossbreed of a thriller and a *Bildungsroman* (Mengel and Borzaga 161), Meyer's novels are usually perceived as crime novels with suspenseful elements of the thriller (Amid and de Kock 57; Naidu "Fears", 732), and Heyns' *Lost Ground* is generally described as modern-day 'whodunit' (Lenz 2). Before moving on to a more detailed analysis of the three selected novels, the following section will discuss the critical perceptions of the genre's development in South Africa, relating the most recent insights to former paradigms of ideological criticism.

4.2 Critical Perceptions

Considering that critics like Knight and Porter have identified detective fiction – or popular fiction in general – as an instrument to affirm rather than condemn prevalent ideological beliefs of a society, the question arises in how far South African detective fiction can function as an outlet for socio-political criticism. This issue, along with the question *why* detection and crime writing has become so popular in South Africa over the last years, has recently been addressed by various critics and fans. Although literary and cultural scholars have generally called for a closer analysis of this subject matter only little has been published so far; however, there is a wealth of writing and debate to be found online.

Examining potential reasons for the genre's local and global success, commentators have approached the subject matter from various points of view. Mike Nicol observes the recent developments of South African detective fiction as part of the nation's process of normalization. Nicol argues that "[...] it takes some time for a country to mature and give itself permission to write and read escapist books, especially as we'd been used to writing and reading as an act of protest" (2015, para. 5). Nicol thus builds on Cawelti's approach to the genre on the one hand, seeing it as a tool to engage in moral fantasies, and draws on Ndebele's call for the return to the ordinary on the other hand, suggesting that genre writing could only blossom later in South Africa due to apartheid and the distinctive role of literature during the struggle.

Other critics, like Warnes, refer to more apparent reasons for the genres popularity. In a global context the most striking feature in this regard is the commercial advantage of crime fiction. As a genre that is easily translated due to both form and content, financial gains can surely be drawn from an international readership (Warnes 981). Additionally, South Africa appeals to readers with an exotic one-of-a-kind setting often combined with the attraction of historical insights. Regarding the local success of South African detective novels, the explanations generally draw on the apparent needs of a transitioning society. Warnes, similar to Nicol, points out that the shift from a structurally violent regime to a post-apartheid democracy has affected both South African society and cultural practices like literature. He states that

the democratisation of crime – the perception that there has been an extension of the levels of crime that existed in apartheid-era townships into the post-apartheid suburb – has meant that writers and readers have found common ground in the need to find fictions to explore a persistent source of anxiety. (981)

While authors and readers seem to engage with socio-political issues through detective fiction, like Warnes argues, critics have further investigated the relevance of genre fiction in a South African context, posing the question whether crime and detective fiction have obtained new context-related responsibilities.

The answer to such inquiries has resulted in the so-called ‘genre-snob’ debate. Like crime and detective fiction in general – from its origins throughout the nineteenth century until today – South African crime fiction has been subject to a number of critical judgements about its ideological role on the grounds of its popularity, content and form. On the one hand, the genre is perceived as nothing but popular fiction which simply affirms the predominant ideology in a society, while on the other hand it is perceived as a tool to engage with and contradict prevalent ideological beliefs in a way other literary forms might not be able to. To exemplify, commentators like Titlestad and Polatinsky position their critical voice on the far end of the discussion, arguing that South African authors have generally “left the territory of the political for a politics of generic style” (259). At the heart of their essay lies the comparison of two of Mike Nicol’s novels – *The Ibis Tapestry* (1998) and *Payback* (2008) – and what they perceive as “[his] decision to abandon high-literary interrogations of the history of apartheid violence and the agonies of transition in favor of writing popular crime fiction” (260). Drawing on their analysis of Nicol’s two novels they conclude that South African crime fiction is generally not capable of addressing socio-political issues. The genre’s generic features ultimately render it a trivial form of popular entertainment but nothing more, in their point of view. Building on Porter, who argues that detective novels “[suppress] the historical reality that they seem to represent” (219; see also Rzepka 21), numerous critics maintain the discrepancy of high- and lowbrow literature in their assessment of South African detective fiction. On the other hand, critics advocate the view that South African crime fiction must not be dismissed for its generic conventions. Naidu and le Roux in fact contend that the genre “helps to break down ideological binaries, by introducing complexity, ambiguity and social critique beyond conventional expectations” (58). They therefore move away from an evaluative analysis of crime literature by abandoning the high-low-culture binary and returning to a more neutral starting point for analysis that recognizes the genre’s socio-political relevance. Like various other critics in their discussion of crime fiction, Naidu and le Roux thus refer to scholars like Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall who suggest that ideology always remains to be “contested” rather than one-sided (55). It seems therefore, South African literary criticism has picked

up a dispute about mass versus elite culture in the discussion of their crime fiction that is ultimately unneeded and repetitive. In other words:

[...] this opposition is redundant. It is redundant because the political and the aesthetic are always entangled. Because readers make their own meaning. And because popular literary genres have a particularly important role to play in fleshing out the critical discourses that underpin a democratic society. (Naidu and le Roux 292)

The question of the genre's significance has furthermore led to a slightly different dispute in a South African context: some commentators conclude that South Africa's crime fiction has become the next 'political novel'. Critics have therefore engaged in a debate about the plausibility of socio-political capacities in relation to commercial success. Lynda Gilfillan, for instance, addresses the idea of crime fiction as South Africa's 'new political novel' in her online discussion of Orford's books and is met with controversial responses (2011, par. 10). While some commentators note that "any ambition to garland [crime fiction] as the new 'political novel' [...] will meet with some serious difficulties" due to the fact that the genre exploits but does not "exorcise, or manage" contemporary anxieties, others in fact agree with Gilfillan and ascribe unique capabilities to local crime writing (Gilfillan 2011).¹¹ Naidu and le Roux, too, argue that "it is this very ideological ambiguity which facilitates its hermeneutic capacity in the context of post-apartheid South Africa" (287). A number of other critics likewise assign a socio-political function to contemporary South African crime and detective fiction, asserting that both the genre's content and form ensure a unique approach to political as well as social issues of the past and present and furthermore facilitate a diversity of critical responses. The conception of the detective or crime novel as 'new political novel' has therefore resonated with a profound intention to engage with the genre in a more meaningful way. Ultimately, thus, the discussion moves beyond one of literary merit to address how South African crime fiction

¹¹ See <http://slipnet.co.za/view/event/new-political-novels-not-so-political/> and <http://slipnet.co.za/view/reviews/orford's-challenge-to-the-genre-snobs/>.

“entertain[s] and simultaneously perform[s] a much-needed hermeneutic function” (Naidu “Fears”, 731).

Naturally, the qualitative characteristics of crime and detective novels varies from novel to novel or author to author, inevitably rendering some works less valuable than others – at least for the purpose of socio-political analysis. However, it remains a fact that crime fiction continues to thrive in South Africa, with each year drawing a wider readership to the accessibility and the content of the genre. Considering the various analyses of crime novels, the majority of South African detective stories are immersed in the pool of socio-political issues and are therefore definitely of hermeneutic value (Naidu and le Roux 164). For this reason, while critics like Naidu and le Roux, Warnes, de Kock and Amid as well as authors like Nicol or Orford have taken first steps towards a more meaningful examination of South African detective and crime fiction, scholars have called for a wider-ranging investigation of the subject matter.

5 *SOUTHERN CROSS* BY JANN TURNER

Southern Cross depicts ‘colored’ Anna Kriel and her white boyfriend Paul Lewis who, together with their friends Rachel and Jacob Oliphant, form a political cell of the resistance movement during apartheid. Paul and Jacob are killed in 1987 and Anna sets out to find out who shot them and why ten years later after the abolishment of apartheid. While she is sure their killer was Security Police Officer Frans Nel she eventually discovers that Paul worked as a spy for the Security Police himself, getting his orders from Joe Dladla – their former underground cell commander, now Assistant Police Commissioner and Anna’s present-day friend and lover. It becomes apparent that Joe was a Security Police officer and killed Paul and Jacob because Paul planned to hand himself over to the ANC. Anna’s quest for truth and justice and her personal mission to unravel the past in order to restore her identity forms the foundation of the story, but her confrontations with former Security Police members, her experiences with the TRC and her encounters of racism all maintain an examination of South Africa’s unresolved social and political problems.

Often described as a thriller or “crossbreed between a thriller and a *Bildungsroman*”, *Southern Cross* provides all the elements of a suspenseful detective story: homicide, detectives and the step-by-step unravelling of the truth (Mengel and Borzaga 161; emphasis in the original). Turner demonstrates how South African authors engage with the genre in order to approach the socio-political status quo. The novel thus exemplifies how authors employ the genre’s formula for their specific purposes. The two-story structure allows for a division of the novel that appears particularly suitable in a South African context: the first part (the crime) is set during apartheid and the second part (the investigation) takes place in the early years of democracy. A brief overview of the novel’s structure and setting follows below.

Additionally, Turner’s novel illustrates that, as Mengel writes, “[w]hat is important for the individual [South African] thriller is also important for the country as a whole” (160). Truth and the past play a crucial part in the South African thriller besides other major themes like crime, violence, racism as well as

political procedures and parties, including undercover groups, resistant movements and police work in general. Of the variety of themes that provide grounds for analysis of detective fiction in contemporary South African literature the following sections will focus on three in particular: the quest for truth – central to detective fiction as well as southern Africa – aspects of betrayal and spying during apartheid that eventually result in a predicament where a straightforward categorization of offender and victim is no longer possible, and the socio-political anxieties in post-apartheid South Africa the novel addresses.

5.1 Structure and Setting

The past plays a particularly important part in South Africa's present, and detective stories have become a useful tool to explore these relations. The structuralist approach to detective fiction therefore provides a suitable point of departure to analyze *Southern Cross* (in the following referred to as SC). Turner uses the genre's form to her advantage and draws an analogy between the typical two-plot structure described by Todorov and South Africa's history marked by the transition from apartheid to democracy. The novel illustrates how apartheid's ramifications persist in the new South Africa and how society as well as the executive system are faced with the challenges of transition. The novel is thus divided into two main parts, one set during apartheid in 1987 and one set ten years later, post-apartheid, in 1997. The first part depicts the murder of Paul Lewis and Jacob Oliphant who are members of the resistance movement and the second part revolves around their partners Anna Kriel and Rachel Oliphant's quest to shed light on the mystery surrounding their deaths.¹²

The first part, consisting of four chapters, illustrates Anna, Paul, Jacob and Rachel's lives and their struggle for freedom. As members of the anti-apartheid movement the four form a political "underground cell" of the ANC and lead their lives in "the narrow path of resistance" apartheid has left as their only option (SC

¹² The main concern of the plot lies with Anna and her personal quest to unravel the truth rather than Rachel's loss.

1). Throughout the novel, their lives, stricken by the ramifications of apartheid and the effects of their political involvement, is described as anything but ordinary, encased by the “longing for freedom from struggle” and “shaped to some extent by [their] time and [their] country” (SC 1). They live with “the heady anxiety of preparedness to pay the price, whether it was harassment, arrest, detention, trial, imprisonment or even death” (SC 13) and they are confronted with each of these situations. Paul and Anna are arrested by the Security Police on several occasions, Paul is held in detention for weeks at a time, they are spied on by the police and ultimately Paul and Jacob are shot dead.

Furthermore, the first part of the book portrays the obstruction of information by governmental institutions and the everyday inequalities imposed on the oppressed through the apartheid regime. On the one hand, the official police investigation of Paul and Jacob’s deaths, conducted by the “Vryburg Murder and Robbery” unit, declares the killings as “internal feuding in the ‘terrorist’ ranks”, claiming that Paul and Jacob were killed by their own people, members of the resistance movement (SC 34). On the other hand, Anna and her friends and family are convinced the police killed Paul and Jakob and used their power and resources to cover it up: “The cops had hundreds of [...] weapons which they used to make their dirty work look like the work of the other side” (SC 35). The inquest into the murders closes with the common verdict “killed by person or persons unknown”, leaving the surviving dependents with no additional details regarding the circumstances of the killings or the murderer (SC 42). This portrays apartheid’s everyday proceedings: violence, corruption and racism.

The second part continues with Anna’s search for answers about her boyfriend’s and Rachel’s husband’s deaths ten years later. It is the story of the investigation, the unravelling of the truth. This part almost immediately sets off with Anna’s testimony in “the long-awaited and much-vaunted and criticised Truth and Reconciliation Commission” and draws attention to the limitations of the Truth Commission and the struggle for answers to the unresolved mysteries of apartheid (SC 64). Due to the TRC’s deficiencies, Anna embarks on her own investigation with the help of South African expat and journalist James Kay, only to reveal that

Paul has led a double life. Hence the second part highlights the entanglement of past and present, victim and culprit, good and evil and the distorted sense of justice and morality in a society shaped by inequality and injustice.

Overall, *Southern Cross* exploits the genre's structure by illustrating how complex the correlation of murder and investigation as well as past events and present struggles are, particularly in a South African context. Consequently, the novel draws attention to issues of the legal system and moral beliefs that arose in the course of transitioning from apartheid to democracy. Ultimately, the first part of the story not only revolves around Jacob and Paul's murders but portrays apartheid as *the* crime against humanity, while the second part not only consists of the investigation and the search for truth but mirrors the nation's endeavor to move forward in a world beset by crime, violence and lies of the past.

In what follows these issues will be discussed in more detail. While the novel provides a wide range of themes and questions I will focus on events and characters that portray the complexity of truth, betrayal and the offender-victim mediation and address prevailing socio-political problems after apartheid.

5.2 Truth and the TRC

Truth has been a central feature of South African literature ever since the first democratic elections in April 1994 and even more so after the Truth and Reconciliation commission had been established approximately a year later. Among other approaches to reflect on South Africa's past, authors have addressed the "uncomfortable truths' and 'unfinished business' of apartheid *and* the TRC" in abundance (Gready 2009, 156; emphasis in the original). Turner too engages with issues of South African truth in her detective novel and illustrates how silences that otherwise appear unapproachable become accessible through genre fiction.

5.2.1 The TRC

The TRC plays an important part in the unraveling of the truth in *Southern Cross*. Turner emphasizes the significance and relevance of the Truth Commission throughout the novel, describing it as a machine in action (SC 80), a tool to finally feel free (SC 82), or the reason that the “wall of silence – around the police at least – has mostly crumbled” (SC 121). While the novel occasionally mentions how painful the TRC’s process is for victims – “the splitting of scars and the gouging open of wounds” (SC 81) – the healing power of the Commission’s agenda is stressed more markedly. The TRC’s importance is additionally emphasized by the detailed descriptions of the Commission’s locations, settings and procedures, and the use of direct speech and slow narration during several hearings (SC 68-9; 80-1; 78, 82). The depicted hearings are fictional, but they are drawn directly from reality, using accurate locations like the Regina Mundi Cathedral and Pretoria City Hall, witnesses such as Sophie Thema (SC 87)¹³, procedures like the welcoming and opening ceremony in the beginning of hearings (SC 77), and members of the Commission, most recognizably Archbishop Tutu (SC 89). Thus, as Turner notes in the foreword to her novel: “The story that follows is not one of those documented by the Truth Commission, but it could have been.”

On the other hand, the novel addresses the Commission’s shortcomings and limitations. These shortcomings are visible in relation to the protagonist’s personal experiences with the TRC and might primarily serve the function of creating suspense but nevertheless shed light on apparent flaws. Anna’s search for truth begins with her own Human Rights Violations Hearing where she hopes for a full and official investigation of Paul and Jacob’s case (SC 91). Instead she realizes that the TRC proves useless for her needs: “[They] were swamped with other cases” and do not have the capacities to conduct the thorough investigation her case requires (SC 145; 64). The TRC therefore only provides a starting point

¹³ The protocol of Sophie Thema’s original hearing can be found online, see <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans%5Csoweto/thema.htm>

in her quest for truth and functions as a unit of official public acknowledgment rather than an investigative engine:

Anna was all too aware that the Truth Commission was more about acknowledgment, about jogging the collective conscience than it was about thorough investigation. However, it just might inspire someone to come forward, might jerk an amnesty application out of one of the killers, or at least someone who knew them. [...] So it was not a new investigation she expected from this, but rather the publicity and the recognition for Paul and Jacob that might awaken consciousness or memory in someone who could shed light on the mystery. (SC 64)

These TRC hearings in *Southern Cross* therefore provide certain tools to openly approach a ferocious past but do not actually reveal any new information or answers to Anna's unresolved case. Moreover, the fact that Paul was a spy renders Anna's own testimony untrue. Although she was not aware of the truth at the time she spoke in front of the Commission, this scene further draws attention to conceivable flaws of the TRC.

Turner additionally addresses the deficiencies of the TRC's methods by depicting Frans Nel's amnesty hearing as arranged and not sincere.¹⁴ Anna – and the reader – are aware of Nel's faulty amnesty application, which, as it transpires later, was initiated by Joe with the intention of keeping the truth hidden. However, the Commission remains in the dark, unknowingly conducting a manipulated hearing that is based on lies and therefore finds fault with the hearing's main objective: honesty and full disclosure.¹⁵ Nel's personal perspective also illustrates this problem: "I mean, the Truth Commission investigations people couldn't find a Castle in a brewery; they weren't going to get anywhere" (SC 303). This reinforces the critical analysis of the TRC's capacities, suggesting that the Commission can be manipulated and deceived with adequate available resources. Once more,

¹⁴ Since officer Nel allegedly detained Paul several times, Anna is sure he shot Paul and Jakob. As the story unfolds, the novel reveals Nel and Paul's collaboration and it is ultimately Nel who tells Anna the truth about Paul and Joe's double lives and their involvement with the Security Police branch during apartheid.

¹⁵ See <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/index.html>

whether this is done to keep the story suspenseful or whether it is a direct critique of the executive system of the new state remains open to interpretation.

5.2.2 Truth

While these aspects illustrate the significance of the TRC in genre fiction on the one hand, and the expectations as well as the capacities and limitations of the Truth Commission on the other, truth in Turner's novel expands far beyond the TRC. It is the personal need for answers in order to survive "the chaos and madness of what had happened" that has become so meaningful for South African society (SC 64). This is emphasized with several characters – such as Rachel and her family, other candidates of TRC hearings, Anna's family, or Willem and Rika Swanepoel – but becomes most apparent with protagonist Anna Kriel. Anna's pain and trauma render her stuck in the past, unable to move on. The only way for her to restore her identity is to find the missing answers about Paul and Jacob's murders: "The need to know was overwhelming, had been all consuming, had even alienated friends and family who wanted to leave the past behind and move on into the present. But Anna couldn't let it go [...]" (SC 64). Her determination to uncover the truth is shaped by her need to restore the order in her life.

In accordance with the genre of detection or thrillers, the truth in *Southern Cross* is revealed step-by-step. Although Anna seems to have gathered some useful experiences during her time as member of the propaganda unit, she is an amateur rather than a professional detective. With the help of journalist James Kay and prisoner Ig du Preez, Anna manages to discover bits of the truth and unveils the rest by interrogating suspects or people who were involved in Paul's case. Thus, the investigation builds on interviews and lucky coincidences as opposed to a sophisticated decoding of clues or a technical evaluation of evidence.

The complexity and difficulty of truth in a South African context is exposed when Anna finally finds the answers to her questions – that Paul was in fact a spy and that Joe was working for the Security Police and eventually killed Paul and Jacob. While she initially expects the truth to free her from the past, she is instead confronted with the impact and pain of it:

[...] the truth was more awful and more familiar than she cared to know. The truth was no acid pellet of knowledge delivered to the Commission for sanitizing and sealing and disposing in the dustbin of history. It was a dull mirror, which showed the dirt that clung to everyone instead of cleansing and absolving all. (SC 300)

In the tradition of detective fiction's tendency to restore the disrupted order, readers are consoled by the fact that Paul died because he chose to do what was right in the end and Anna is eventually able to restore her future to herself (SC 309).

While this aspect might reinforce the genre's supposed escapist elements, other features of the story are left unresolved. Joe's actions and intentions, for instance, remain mostly ambiguous (see section 5.3.3). With regard to truth, the novel seems to conclude that "[t]he truth had a complex of causes and the blame was too widespread to be meaningful" (SC 309). Hence, when approaching aspects of truth in South African fiction, and in *Southern Cross* in particular, new issues emerge. The following chapters will thus analyze how themes like betrayal and spying are approached in the novel and how this sheds light on the complexity of questions about guilt and innocence or victims and perpetrators.

5.3 Betrayal and Spying

The ability to address the 'unfinished business' of apartheid, as Gready suggests, is a distinctive feature of South African literature (2009, 156-157). Fiction offers persisting problems a platform for interrogation. Authors of fiction, Gready continues, particularly engage with the following themes: "the enduring appeal of revenge and retribution, the prevalence of informing and betrayal on both sides of the political divide, the complicity of white beneficiaries in apartheid's crimes, and the complexity of certain black identities" (2009, 157). In *Southern Cross*, each of these themes emerges to some extent throughout the novel, but 'informing and betrayal on both sides of the political divide' is the key element of the story. Turner's decision to incorporate these aspects in her thriller illustrates how fictional novels elicit diverse approaches to issues that have otherwise not been thoroughly addressed yet.

Turner also explores reasons and explanations for becoming a spy and leading a double life. By analyzing a few characters more closely, some of these motives become more apparent and offer insights into the political and personal ramifications caused by spying and disloyalty on both the spies and the people affected by their betrayal.

5.3.1 Paul

Most vital for this investigation is Paul's character. On a personal level he betrays Anna and their mutual friends by lying and cheating. He has an affair with Frans Nel's wife and lies to Jacob about his intentions which eventually leads to their murders when they depart on a secret mission in April 1987. However, his betrayal exceeds the personal line by far. Paul's double life is steered by a political agenda: a white freedom-fighter who died a hero when in fact he was working as a Security Police spy. Since Paul is killed early on in the story, the reasons for his political and personal decisions are explored through other characters like Anna and Shane Fourie, former police officer and part of the team that sampled out Paul for their spy work.

Through Shane's point of view – a Security Police officer himself – details about spy and police work during apartheid are depicted in a very technical manner. In Anna's conversation with him he explains how he and his team found Paul in prison and “pick[ed] [him] out as a potential spy” (SC 183). Paul was arrested for drug possession and the police “cleaned him up, taught him the rules and then gave him an early release” (SC 183). They paid his university tuition and employed him as a spy. Shane refers to this procedure as routine, stating that people like Paul were useful assets for the police. While it startles Shane that the police eventually killed Paul, his apprehension is based on the fact that it could just as well have been him rather than the fact that Paul is dead.

The effects of Paul's spy work are more severe for Anna and her friends. Anna is so emotionally involved in Paul's betrayal that she starts to question her judgment and to scrutinize her relationship with Paul: “Everything had to be revisited,

everything mistrusted” (SC 207). She starts to grasp the meaning of his betrayal and wonders what role she played in it, what information she provided for him, whether she even became an accessory to Jacob’s murder: “[she] was incidental at best. At worst, she’d been the unwitting interlocutor, the key to many locks”, she reflects (SC 190). Moreover, she wonders what effects it had on Paul:

She knew what intelligence work was like and what it did to a person. A person living the life of a spy backs off from being forthright, from honesty, and year by year they become more devious, more damaged until they are unable to distinguish any more between their true self and all their compartments of legends and lies. (SC 191)

This slowly changes Anna’s perspective of innocence and guilt, victim and perpetrator. While she is initially convinced that spies are “plain greedy [people] who would do anything for money, broken [...] with no principles or family or community to guide them” (SC 14), she starts to reconsider her black and white categorization. Paul’s actions are eventually almost justified by the unfortunate prospects of his life: “suckered into it at an early age. Given a way out of a sentence for a drug conviction [...]” (SC 245). Knowing that “[a]t least in the end [Paul] knew which the right side was” finally enables Anna to move on, despite the fact that he lied and betrayed her (SC 309).

Various passages also depict the impact of spying on other members of society and comrades of anti-apartheid groups. When Paul is publicly revealed as a spy in a newspaper article Anna is confronted by several friends and comrades who want to find out if Paul or Anna had anything to do with their arrests, detentions or encounters with the police.

5.3.2 Joe

As has been addressed above, Joe’s character also calls for a closer investigation to shed light on the novel’s approach to guilt and innocence. While Paul’s personal and political betrayals are partly explained as consequences of his rough childhood and a history of drug abuse and he remains a victim to some extent despite his betrayal, Joe’s motives are less explicitly resolved. Joe is only revealed as a traitor

at the end of the novel and his description as perpetrator takes another shape of complexity since he is not only leading this double life during apartheid but continues to do so after the transition. He is the commander of Anna's cell but also works for the Security Police before the transition. Later on, in the new democracy, he is Assistant Police Commissioner but cooperates with criminals and continues to corrupt and lie to people.

Although Joe's actions are neither justified nor interpreted in more detail, the novel indicates that the character is shaped by his country's socio-political circumstances. Unlike Paul, Joe becomes acquainted with the effects of apartheid and the struggle against it at an early age. The novel does not provide many specific aspects about his life, but it is indicated why Joe joins the movement – “fired into activism by the death of his mother [...] Dladla left South Africa at thirteen or so, in the stream of other young men and women who were fleeing the country to join the liberation movement” – and that he has endured the tough conditions of camps (SC 97). Eventually he comes back to South Africa and works as a “high profile activist” until he begins his work as police officer in the new democracy (SC 96). Like Paul, Joe is therefore another victim of his circumstances to some extent. However, while Paul seems to have had a change of heart, however, Joe continues to live his double life. The novel therefore repeatedly emphasizes the issue of categorizing society into ‘good’ or ‘bad’ individuals.

Joe's character also plays an important part in regard to the genre's formula: he is never a suspect, but since he is close to Anna the reader is provided with numerous hints about his torn personality. He is never explicitly depicted as evil or dreadful but his temper and physical rage surface in several scenes. Joe is portrayed as a strong and ruthless character and his methods as police officer are effective but cruel, as various passages indicate:

“That was Joe, unorthodox but effective. Bazooka certainly deserved to have his face kicked in, but that didn't make it right.” (SC 113)

“This was police work, Joe Dladla style. Sleeves rolled up, [...] making it happen regardless of the rules.” (SC 110)

“He was a loner. In the man’s eyes there was that intensity, that blank depth he’d seen in many former operatives, from both sides.”
(SC 87)

The novel describes his double standards up until the exposure of his betrayal. Since the reader gets the general impression that Joe cares for Anna, as her friend and lover, the disclosure of his cruelties – murdering Paul and Jacob and betraying Anna, their friends and their joint cause – still lends an element of surprise.

Nevertheless, the reasons for his betrayal remain, unlike Paul’s, unclear. Although he is said to “believe[...] in the new South Africa” he “plays a different game to the rest [...]” (SC 303). The novel merely scratches on the surface of Joe’s essence, addressing his exposure to violence from an early age, his involvement with the struggle and his time in exile where he withstood the terrible circumstances in the camps in Angola and the Soviet Union (SC 97; 120). His exposure to violence as a possible reason for his behavior is further stressed when Anna observes his methods in the course of his police work, illustrated in the following passage: “It terrified her when she saw him like this, like so many others who’d been damaged by violence. An affliction of my generation she thought, or of those of us who struggled” (SC 114). Again, apartheid is depicted as the root of more violence and injustice. This is further accentuated by the example of Joe’s worldview when he tries to convince Anna to stop investigating Paul and Jacob’s murders:

‘Listen, we all know who killed them. It was the system. It was the Nats, the Security Police, and the whites who sat behind their high walls in their huge houses and voted for a government that employed assassins to protect their privilege. It was all of them – they’re all fucking guilty as Nazis. [...]’ (SC 150)

Ironically, he is part of the Security Police himself and states this with the objective to prevent Anna from finding out the truth about him, thus his intentions remain questionable. A more general idea is addressed in a conversation with James Kay, when he suggests to Anna that “[g]ood guys have always been infiltrated and corrupted by the bad” (SC 316), hence generalizing the fact that there has always been good and evil in the world and some mysteries cannot be solved. Ultimately, Joe’s actions are indeed inexplicable:

Joe would always remain a puzzle and that was the hardest thing for Anna to grasp. Right and wrong, action and consequence, logic and science, and psychology and explanation – none of them had any power in the face of what he'd done. She simply had to let it go. (SC 317)

While it is necessary for Anna to untangle the past in order to embrace her future, her entanglement lies with Paul and, although it is hard for her to accept Joe's actions are not completely resolved, she is able to rebuild her identity.

Another issue that emerges with Joe's betrayals is the question of justice. Anna confronts Joe but refrains from shooting him and walks away, accepting that she will never understand his motives and reasons. A day later Joe is found dead – probably killed by the gangsters he was working with – and the novel describes the poetic justice of his death: “[k]illed by a single bullet to the back of the head. He'd been executed. If this new democracy had failed to clear out all the corruption at least there was a kind of justice in the criminal world Joe came from” (SC 314).

5.3.3 Spies

The novel generally engages with aspects of spying and betrayal from the very beginning. When Paul is released from detention Rachel and some other friends consider the possibility of a spy in their midst who could have been responsible for his arrest. Linked to Anna's thoughts, readers are initially offered a description of political procedures during apartheid:

Smear campaigns were a much-used weapon of counter-intelligence. The cops loved to sow suspicions by spreading information that might lead you to suspect there was an informer in your midst, thereby destabilising a unit. It was an old and effective tactic used by both sides. (SC 14)

While it is clear that spying is nothing unusual in apartheid's everyday life, Anna is convinced of the trust that exists between her and her comrades. As the plot unravels and Anna learns the truth about Paul – and later also about Joe – several conversations between different characters further investigate the subject matter. James, for instance, wonders what leads people to spying on their friends and comrades or how spies could justify their betrayal. For Anna the reasons are

obvious and while she explains them to James the reader gains insights into different motives as well as into the general situation during apartheid:

‘So many reasons. Some, like Paul, were suckered into it at an early age. Given a way out of a sentence for a drug conviction or whatever. The police seemed like an easy option.’ [...] ‘Others were turned by force and threat. [...]’. (SC 245)

She elaborates on this by further depicting the camps’ “hellish conditions” for soldiers and the fact that the police could offer some of them “a support system” that the commanders and comrades apparently could not provide for them (SC 244-7).

The novel also addresses aspects of spying from another point of view, using Security Police and apartheid members to explain aspects of apartheid’s double agents and spies. Du Preez, for example, tells Anna that “there were *so* many people from [Anna’s] side working for [them]. The network was more extensive than anyone realizes” (SC 234; emphasis in the original). Turner therefore approaches the issue from various angles, particularly from both sides of the struggle.

Spying and betrayal is also discussed with regard to the role of police and the executive system during and after apartheid. Turner addresses the delicacy of spying in the South African police forces with the example of Joe. He is the only black spy in the novel who also works as a police officer and the impact of his betrayal on South Africa’s new society is addressed on several occasions. When Anna finds out about Joe she decides not to pursue any legal matters against him because she worries about the impact it would have on the public image of South Africa’s police force.

She knew that if the news ever got out that Joe had been an apartheid spy the scandal would be disastrous. Not just for him either. It would ripple all around the department and cause big waves in political circles. It would cast doubt on the people around him and reinforce tension between the old and the new guard in the police. Worst of all it would cast doubt on the efficacy of the government’s fight against crime, organized crime in particular. (SC 296)

The fact that Joe is a police officer and a spy therefore simultaneously allows Turner to engage with issues of a transformed executive and judiciary system.

Before the first democratic elections police officers are described as apartheid's "boot boys", and until the first few years of democracy many see "the entire force as corrupt, incompetent and politically dubious", as Anna explains (SC 66). While the novel also points towards the hard work and the fact that much of the police forces' good work was undermined by the public and the press (SC 66), Anna reflects that "South African prisons and police stations are among the most porous in the world" (SC 149).

The novel therefore not only engages with aspects of spying and betrayal during apartheid but relates these issues to post-apartheid society by shedding light on the complexity and the impact of a corrupt and unjust system on everyday life. The fact that Turner discusses these aspects indicates the previously inadequate examination of these spheres in South Africa (Gready 2009, 165). Despite the protagonists' personal entanglements with betrayal and immorality, the novel attends to this topic in a general manner and thereby provides feasible explanations to the question why people spied on and betrayed their comrades, friends and families during the apartheid era and furthermore, what impact this deceitfulness has had on contemporary South African society.

5.4 Perpetrators

While the novel draws attention to the entanglement of innocence and guilt with several characters, as the discussion of Paul, Joe and Nel has shown above, Turner further engages with the complexity of South African post-apartheid society by addressing the problems of a strict classification of victim and perpetrator. She criticizes the oversimplification of categories like good and evil, right and wrong and even victim and culprit by uncovering the root of these issues: apartheid.

Turner tackles this problem with the example of another character: Colonel Ig du Preez. The Colonel is described as "South Africa's most notorious prisoner, apartheid's most ruthless and effective assassin" (SC 144). While Paul and Joe function as examples to question perceptions of 'good' people, Du Preez offers the opposite: he is the epitome of apartheid's perpetrators who suddenly appears

sympathetic and regretful. His character serves several functions in the novel. Primarily he exemplifies the inequality of punishment and persecution of apartheid's many murderers after apartheid – while he is imprisoned, numerous others have remained free, and moreover some remained in their powerful political positions. Furthermore, with the example of Du Preez' character Turner implies the faultiness and inadequacy of dividing South African society into the categories of 'good' and 'bad' people. Additionally, it represents the dilemma victims face on their quest to find information and facts about the past since perpetrators and killers are often the only source of knowledge or full disclosure.

The novel does not challenge the fact that Du Preez is guilty of torture and murder, but it examines his personality and motives from different angles. Thus, although Anna is convinced that Du Preez belongs in prison and that “[j]ustice had prevailed” (SC 156) in his case, she starts to question the fairness of it: “The Colonel had lacked the political shrewdness to change sides with the changing tide as many other operatives did” (SC 144). This issue is approached several times in the novel as other passages illustrate:

“When negotiations started he was cut loose. Suddenly the politicians had nothing to do with the torture and assassination of their former opponents and the Colonel and his unit were shut down.” (SC 144)

“The irony of it struck Anna [...]. That Du Preez should be inside, while the men who'd constructed the policy – the politicians and generals who'd created and resourced and funded his work – were free.” (SC 233)

He was arrested for his crimes while politicians, who kept their hands clean but nevertheless gave the orders, got away with murder (SC 233). The fact that numerous politicians and policemen had remained in their powerful positions throughout the transition and afterwards is also addressed in relation to other characters, such as Frans Nel and his colleagues, and described as “an important gesture towards reconciliation” (SC 91).

While Anna's categorization of Du Preez is initially very straightforward – a ruthless murderer – she is confronted with the flaws of her own world view after meeting him. Initially she perceives him as a psychopath and killer who only had

a change of heart after he was imprisoned – “[a]mazing what the prospect of life in a dungeon can do for a man’s morals” (SC 145) – but gradually she starts to even like him. Anna is disturbed by his ordinariness and kindness and dismantled by his friendliness towards her. Her changing perception is conveyed through their conversations: “[...] when I first saw you, at your trial, I hated you. I wished you dead.’ [...] ‘And here I am and here we are and we talk about being friends and you’re my only ally in this investigation now.’” (SC 275). Eventually, upon reflection Anna reaches the conclusion that Du Preez was more than who she thought he would be – a killer but also, in a way, a victim of apartheid:

You couldn’t call such a man a psychopath. He killed within a context, for political masters who applauded him. For as long as it suited them. [...] No, the Colonel was apartheid’s creation, the National Party’s bloody mascot. Discarded when the team plan changed. (SC 233-234).

Anna recognizes the onset of self-recognition in Du Preez, which for her resembles “[t]he greatness in people” (SC 235) and while she does not forgive him for his cruelties, she is beginning to understand that there is good and bad in people, and moreover, that apartheid is the root of much more than she initially was able to grasp. This attitude is summarized by Du Preez’ statement in the novel: “It’s a mistake to see it all in black and white. It never was and never will be. It’s a thousand shades of grey.” (SC 195; 274)

The novel further draws on Du Preez to illustrate the polarization of knowledge. Perpetrators like Du Preez are a source of information that might not be found otherwise. For Anna, Du Preez provides names and details (such as Badenhorst’s location and Jane Fourie’s involvement) that are crucial in her search for the truth about Paul’s killers. Furthermore, he still has connections to other former apartheid members who Anna could not have found herself.

While Du Preez is a fictional persona, he is modelled on Eugene de Kock, a former member of the South African Police (SAP) who has been sentenced to 212 years in prison for torturing and killing numerous members of the anti-apartheid movement. During Turner’s work with the Truth Commission she “met and spent a great deal of time with [de Kock]”, and Du Preez is admittedly the character in

Southern Cross that is “most closely drawn from life”, as she states in an interview with *Literaturportal AfrikaRoman* (2006, par. 4).¹⁶ Like Du Preez becomes a central character for Anna’s investigation in the novel, de Kock offered Turner to help her find her father’s killer. Turner’s father, Richard “Rick” Turner, was an influential opponent of apartheid who was shot by apartheid assassins at the age of thirty-six in 1978. In an article published on the South African newspaper Mail & Guardian’s homepage, Turners experiences with de Kock are described in great detail and resemble Anna’s encounters with Du Preez in the novel. Some of their conversations are transferred to the novel one to one. In the article Turner states that “[she has] spent years looking for [her] father’s killer, for the killer, instead [she] found a killer – and for [her] this is about understanding” (“Eugene: From Apocalypse Now to Scotland the Brave”, par. 33).

While Turner has stated that she identifies most closely with James’ character in *Southern Cross*, Anna’s quest for truth, the aim to find answers and restore her future, and the intention to understand the past all closely draw on Turner’s own journey. Furthermore, South Africa’s quest for reconciliation and the role of literature in this difficult task is illustrated – more particularly the capacities of genre fiction to engage with these socio-political issues are emphasized and explored.

5.5 Socio-Political Anxieties

Welcome to South Africa.

Welcome to carnage on the roads and crime gone crazy
(emphasis in original, SC 144).

Besides the novel’s critique of the oversimplification of categories like good and evil, right and wrong or victim and culprit, Turner constantly points the reader towards the root of the majority of socio-political anxieties: apartheid. She does so by creating both culprits and victims who suffer from their country’s history. South

¹⁶ The complete interview can be found here: <http://www.afrikaroman.de/buch/index11.06.en.php>

African society – police officers, politicians, civilians, blacks and whites – are all affected by their country’s political system before as well as after the transition. It seems that no one is leading a life free from violence, corruption, crime or injustice. These issues are addressed throughout the novel and approached from various perspectives.

For Anna, violence and crime is South African reality. Murder, racism, robbery, rape and HIV are part of her everyday life. She is confronted with racism throughout apartheid and experiences the aftermath of this atrocious regime in the new democracy. Throughout her life she is surrounded by “whites only” signs, laws preventing her from living a normal life. One of her childhood memories is of the inexplicable “whites only” sign in front of an amusement park; during the inquest of Paul’s death, restaurants and cafés operate with the same racism, prohibiting her and Rachel from such an ordinary tasks like ordering a coffee. The Immorality Act prohibits relationships between whites and blacks, and other apartheid laws like the Group Areas Act or the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act are mentioned in the novel as well. Passages like the following illustrate the extent of these laws but also the slow decline of apartheid’s enforcements during the last years:

At the time Kensington was zoned for whites only. Technically black people, or ‘non-whites’ as the state preferred to call them, could only overnight in such an area if they had permission to be working there as domestic servants. In reality, by then the Group Areas enforcement was lax. An important factor for Anna who was classified as ‘Coloured’ [...] (SC 4)

While apartheid’s laws are slowly being demolished, racism is still a dominant issue within South African society. This is depicted with scenes of conversations Anna overhears in restaurants or cafés: an elderly white woman talks about a murder that had recently occurred, explaining that she is sure it was not “a kaffir who did it” since “[t]here would have been a smell if it had been a black” (SC 166). While this and similar comments are depicted as ordinary throughout the novel, the root of racism and violence is apartheid and Anna’s generation is described as a victim of the struggle, affected by and reacting to apartheid with more violence and anger.

Another way the novel addresses South Africa's anxieties is through James Kay's character. James' return to South Africa as expatriate touches on the experience many South Africans, including Turner, have been confronted with: the ordeal of coming back not knowing where home is. James' return is initially depicted as follows:

Twenty minutes from Johannesburg he kept grasping for a sense of the weight of the moment, wanting to feel the meaning of it. He was coming back after twenty-eight years, coming back a stranger, with a strange accent and strange ways. He felt bleary with tiredness and yet he was pumping with excitement. And there it was. Plain, ugly Johannesburg swathed in its brown blanket of air pollution, its two hypodermic-needle towers spiking the sky. He felt nothing. (SC 290)

Although he eventually feels like he did come home, he is often startled by his experiences of everyday South African life. "Welcome to South Africa" James thinks, "[w]elcome to the hell of being black and poor and living in a township" (SC 134). What seems so ordinary for Anna is shocking for James who, after all, grew up as a white South African man in England.

Additionally, the novel addresses several other issues like sexism, pollution, HIV and the debris of apartheid laws. Streets and whole towns are covered with trash, "[t]he plastic bag has become [the] national flower" (SC 168); HIV tests are only recorded if they are negative, "[t]hey no longer bothered to record if a patient was HIV Positive. Positive was the norm, not the exception" (SC 134); and women are often perceived solely for their bodies rather than anything else (SC 231; 236; 278; 280). The country is still divided into black townships and white villages, and apartheid has left its marks and scars on South African society. None of these issues are far from reality and although Turner only briefly engages with some of them, the novel paints a powerful and vivid picture of post-apartheid, post-transition South Africa.

5.6 Closing Remarks

In conclusion, Turner skillfully displays how typical generic conventions of detective fiction are adjusted to a South African context and how socio-political issues rooted in apartheid are thereby negotiated in genre fiction.

The novel makes use of the two-story structure by placing the murder in apartheid and the investigation in post-apartheid South Africa. Turner thereby sheds light on the entanglement of past and present and the persisting ramifications that have been shaping South African society until today.

This becomes particularly evident when looking at various themes of the novel: the quest for truth, the search for restoration and reconciliation, the mediation between victims and perpetrators and the effects of structural violence on society. Turner illustrates how a variety of personalities – including police officers, civilians, victims and culprits of apartheid, as well as spies – are affected by their country's political system during as well as after this brutal regime. Furthermore, she vividly depicts how racism, injustice and violence are encountered in South Africa.

Thus, as Gready suggests it to be the case for South African fiction, *Southern Cross* “reflect[s] upon ambiguity and complexity [and] interrogat[es] gray areas of experience” (2009, 164). The detective novel addresses issues such as crime and restoration, depicts the interrelation of past and present and typifies the exceptional entanglement of South Africa's complex history of structural violence, crime and racism and the difficulty of transitioning the country's justice system.

6 *DEVIL'S PEAK* BY DEON MEYER

Numerous commentators have crowned Deon Meyer South Africa's leading crime fiction author since the publication of his first novels in the 1990s – *Dead before Dying* (1999; originally published as *Fenkis* in 1996) and *Dead at Daybreak* (2000; originally published as *Orion* in 1998).¹⁷ His work has proven popular among the local as well as the international audience; his novels, originally written in Afrikaans, have been translated into more than ten languages and Meyer has received several prizes and literary awards for his outstanding work.¹⁸ Besides his international success critics value Meyer's contributions to Afrikaans fiction, stating that he is the only South African crime author who writes in Afrikaans, "apart perhaps from Andrè Brink and Antje Krog", as Davis notes (2013). Meyer himself claims that "[t]here has never been a culture in Afrikaans of thriller writing" until he started producing his novels (qtd. in Le Roux and Buitendach 1).

What distinguishes Meyer's writing from other crime fiction novels is an alignment of various factors, such as artistic merit, entertaining as well as socio-politically critical content and successful marketing strategies. Le Roux and Buitendach, for instance, have analyzed Meyer's international success from a commercial perspective, concluding that his success is a product of a loyal readership, the "regular appearance of new titles" and the fact that some of his work has been adapted for television (10). However, what might be drawing readers' and critics' attention to Meyer's novels most is the fact that he successfully combines the crime genre's entertaining features and its apparent hermeneutic capacity. Thus, on the protagonists' journey to resolve crime and presumably re-establish social order, Meyer not only engages with generic devices to entertain his readers but also introduces his audience to a number of contemporary socio-political issues in a transitional South Africa. In most of his

¹⁷ Meyer describes his actual first novel, *Wie Met Vuur Speel* (1994) as "a brother in jail", stating that "[he] can't deny him but [he doesn't] want to talk about him". (le Roux and Buitendach 2)

¹⁸ Meyer has received the *Boeke Prize Fanatics' Choice Award* in 2011, the *Barry Award* at Bouchercon, South Africa's *ATKV* prose prize, and the *Martin Beck Award* from the Swedish Academy of Crime Writers as well as the *Readers' Award* on CritiquesLibres.com (see Fletcher 124).

novels Meyer paints vivid pictures of a post-apartheid society by addressing issues related to the country's segregated past as well as the transition to democracy. Consequently, Meyer "[displays] an awareness of the legacy of the old society and an understanding of the problems and benefits of the new social order" (Davis 2013).

In *Devil's Peak* (in the following referred to as DP) Meyer tells the story of three individuals, Thobela Mpayipheli, Benny Griessel and Christine van Rooyen, who find themselves entangled with violence, murder and injustice. While the whole novel is written in the third-person perspective the story consists of three major narrative threads – titled Thobela, Christine and Benny – that emphasize the respective character's experiences and slowly merge in the course of the novel. Thobela, or Artemis, as he is later named by the media, revenges his step-son's murder by killing publicly identified child-offenders and rapists with an assegai – a recently made replica of an antique spear that the Zulu people used for hunting. Detective Benny Griessel is assigned to the Artemis police case and determined to find and arrest the killer only to face a moral dilemma of turning vigilante himself when his daughter, Carla, is kidnapped and raped by members of a notorious Colombian drug cartel. Additionally, the sex-worker and mother of a three-year-old daughter, Christine, tries to protect her child from her violent customer Carlos Sangrenegra – a member of the Colombian drug cartel – by staging her daughter's abduction and by luring the Artemis killer to Carlos' house. Each protagonist is confronted with personal as well as socio-political obstacles on their paths to realign their moral standards. Thobela, "a former Umkhonto We Sizwe soldier" (DP 15) – the ANC's military wing during the struggle – "who received specialist training in Russia and the former East Germany" (DP 15), loses his stepson during an armed gas-station robbery and is disappointed by the justice system when the killers escape police custody unpunished. Thus, he embarks on a killing spree to avenge his stepson's death and to restore the justice he sees undone by his country. However, he murders two innocent people by mistake – Carlos who did not in fact kidnap Christine's daughter and Bernadette Laurens, who confessed to murdering her daughter to protect the actual killer, her girlfriend Elise Bothma. Benny is an alcoholic police detective in his forties who was thrown out of the house by his wife

until he resolves his drinking problem; he is struggling with the corrupt and incompetent executive system he works for and tries to rescue his daughter Carla from her kidnappers, members of the Sangrenegra drug cartel. While he advocates the belief that vigilantism is an equivalent of chaos in a world that needs to adhere to a judicial system that provides a form of order and structure, he eventually revenges his daughter's suffering by singlehandedly executing her rapists. The third protagonist, Christine, grew up with a promiscuous mother and a soldier as a father who failed to take care of their daughter; Christine thus becomes a high-class sex-worker in Cape Town, afflicted with remorse and self-harm. She confesses her plan to stage her daughter's abduction to a priest. However, considering that the novel implies how Christine neatly arranged the story for the reverend in advance, she is a highly unreliable narrator. It is further revealed that her own descriptions of her past are ambiguous when Benny contacts one of Christine's former teachers who remembers that, contrary to Christine's own description, her family was negligent and careless about their daughters upbringing. The reason Christine confesses her staging of the abduction to the priest is to clear her conscience because she believes Carla was abducted due to her web of lies. Although Benny tries to tie up loose ends and to find out more about Christine's past it remains unclear what happens to her and her daughter; it is implied, however, that she buys a house and escapes punishment for staging an abduction and stealing money from Carlos. The novel's climax is a violent showdown in Infanta – a settlement in the Western Cape and the novel's original title – between the Sangrenegra drug cartel and Benny, who has Thobela by his side to help him. Benny revenges his daughter, Christine gets away unpunished and, while it is not explicitly stated, it is implied that Thobela, too, secretly gets away with murder on the grounds of Benny's personal assessment of justice.

Like Turner in *Southern Cross*, Meyer in *Devil's Peak* approaches a variety of contemporary issues of the 'new' South Africa. While Turner directly addresses socio-political problems caused most strikingly by apartheid, Meyer depicts the challenges of post-apartheid South Africa in a less overt way. The results are nevertheless fruitful: the novel engages with questions of morality, justice and rightfulness and offers insights into the everyday life of a democratic South Africa

that is still haunted by its past. Since the novel offers a plethora of themes worth addressing, the following discussion will be divided into two parts: genre and transitional issues. The first part, genre, will focus on generic features such as prototypical characters and formulaic settings. Elements of the thriller formula as well as the hard-boiled detective story and the police procedural will be discussed. The second part will address Meyer's approach to transitional issues by investigating the novel's most prominent themes: the representation of justice, the impacts of transitioning to democracy on South Africa's police forces and the portrayal of child abuse.

6.1 Genre

A brief discussion of *Devil's Peak's* generic allocations will shed further light on the previously posed questions about crime fiction's limitations and capacities for social analysis and the crime novel's potential of becoming South Africa's 'new political novel' (see section 4.2). Since *Devil's Peak* is a hybrid crime novel that merges features of hard-boiled detective fiction, the thriller and the police procedural, the novel serves as an interesting example to understand contemporary South African crime fiction's potential of social critique and to furthermore reveal how authors combine entertainment and social hermeneutics (Naidu, "Fears" 729). In line with my previous discussion, this section will focus on the hard-boiled elements of *Devil's Peak*, despite the fact that the novel has been described as thriller by critics like Naidu ("Fears" 732) or Davis (2018, 15). This approach builds on Knight's suggestion that thrilling elements in crime fiction are often simply "used for [...] the excitements of the private-eye pattern" while the thriller itself is usually a "detective-free" category that is "too simply emotive for useful employment" (2004, xii). This method further aligns itself with de Kock's suggestion that the hard-boiled elements render the South African crime novel "a form of social hermeneutics in which detection within an ethically muddled topography identifies, describes and explores the phenomenon of 'bad' difference" (48).

However, considering the genre's "flexibility and prosperity", *Devil's Peak* can also be categorized as police procedural (Scaggs 2, see also section 2.1). The novel closely depicts everyday procedures of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and thereby draws attention to issues like corruption, racism, inadequate police work and understaffed police departments. According to Messent, "[t]he police novel is a form that, at its best, has mutated into an ongoing (serial) enquiry into the state of the nation, its power structures and its social concerns" (178) and Meyer certainly engages with these themes in *Devil's Peak*. The discussion will therefore return to some of these aspects in section 6.2.2.

First, however, this analysis will focus on some of the novel's hard-boiled elements. While Meyer employs a variety of hard-boiled features – such as "the centrality of the character of the [detective], [...] an urban setting, routine police corruption, the femme fatale, an apparently 'neutral' narrative method, and the extensive use of vernacular dialogue" (Scaggs 58)" – the following chapters will concentrate on two features in more detail: the detective, Benny Griessel, and the depiction of the South African setting.

6.1.1 The Hard-Boiled Detective

Detectives in hard-boiled fiction can be distinguished by a variety of features. The ideal detective, described by Raymond Chandler in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder" ([1950] 1974) is a hero who "must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be [...] a man of honor – by instinct, by inevitability [...] He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world" (Chandler 399). As a result, the original P.I.s in early hard-boiled fiction are often cynical but sincere figures, characterized by physical strength and self-confidence as well as cognitive ability. However, despite the P.I.'s talent to solve cases, the hard-boiled investigator is also a figure that is somewhat marginalized in society, troubled with personal issues such as addiction or violent behavior and often on the verge of making morally questionable decisions. Authors like Ellroy or Burke, for instance, have adapted the loyal and ultimately good-hearted P.I. introduced by Hammett and Chandler to create more innovative anti-

hero detectives who are often “little better than thugs”, as Sim observes (9). Meyer’s detective Benny Griessel, not a private investigator but an employed South African police officer, can be placed in between these two categories: a detective who tries to “be the best man in his world”, who at the same time struggles to overcome his personal demons with the intention to realign his moral and social responsibilities in a transformed South African nation (Chandler 399). This section will therefore investigate Meyer’s detective Benny Griessel with regard to typical features of hard-boiled fiction and the particular socio-political context the character is operating in (i.e. the post-apartheid state).

Detective Benny Griessel is a damaged police officer who finds himself in the midst of alcoholism and sobriety, self-pity and confidence as well as indifference and affection for the people in his life, struggling to re-construct his identity in a transformed society. His talent is evident: as a police detective, Benny was “never ‘lucky’ – he had instinct” (DP 205), he was the “best fucking police officer in the country” (DP 278) and “[h]e maintained a higher case solution rate than any [other officer] had in their days as detectives” (DP 177). He is, however, also a recovering alcoholic who suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome, bearing psychological scars caused by his work experiences (DP 125) and he drinks to quiet the voices of the dying in his head: “We scream when we die,”, Benny explains in an AA meeting, “[a]nd I drink to make the voices stop” (DP 63); “[d]eath is down there and life is up here and the scream comes up [...] It is full of horrible terror” (DP 124). Although Benny is terrified to face his realities sober, he tries to put down the bottle once and for all. Once he stops drinking, he reflects upon his changed view of good and evil in the world:

What he was now and the way he thought, wasn’t how it had been in the beginning. In the beginning he had operated in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, two opposites, two separate groups on either side of the law, sure in his belief that there was a definite difference, a dividing line. [...] [S]ome people were criminals and some were not and it was his job to purify society of the former group. (DP 203)

However, he realizes that his sobered-up self “no longer believed in that” (DP 203). “Alcohol was like a golden haze over everything, his buffer against thought” (DP 203) and he thinks crime was simply a part of human nature, something that “lay

quiescent in everyone”, even within himself (DP 203-204, 308). In the constant quest to find himself within his own as well as his nation’s world view he strives to be a better version of himself and to overcome the issues of his past in order to be the detective Chandler might have had in mind when he composed his essay.

By creating a detective figure that works for the South African Police Service, Meyer is able to address topics like racism and otherness from different perspectives. For the most part, this is illustrated with Griessel’s personal encounters of prejudice throughout the novel. On the one hand, the detective himself is hastily evaluated as a racist white apartheid henchman, he is “taunted” for his strong Afrikaans accent (DP 116), and his colleagues often suspect him to act on racist premises. An example of this is offered when Benny makes inquiries about a previous murder case carried out by another officer, Tim Ngubane; once Benny suggests to Tim that he might have arrested the wrong suspect, Ngubane feels personally attacked: “‘You fucking whiteys,’ said Ngubane. ‘You think you’re the only people who can do detective work.’ – ‘Tim, it’s nothing to do with that.’ – ‘Fuck you, Benny. It has everything to do with it.’” (DP 234). Although officer Ngubane later apologizes for his hasty judgement, the novel depicts such conflicts as nothing out of the ordinary, suggesting that racism within the new police force is encountered on a daily basis (see also section 6.2.2). On the other hand, Benny’s own prejudice against others surfaces throughout the novel as well. When Benny’s alcohol problem is made public in a newspaper article (DP 285), interfering with his work as leading officer in the Artemis case, Benny is surprised that the provincial head of Investigation Commissioner John Afrika, a “coloured man”, would support him despite their collective differences in the past:

[...] [Benny] appreciated it that the man was standing by him. A coloured man. He was thrown on the mercy of a coloured man who had to swallow so much crap from the whites in the old days. How much mercy had John Afrika received, then? (DP 302)

In addition to incidents in the police department, Benny’s personal prejudice causes him to misinterpret the Artemis case: he assumes the killer must be white based on the fact that he found his targets – child rapists and abusers – in the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* (DP 295). Despite the fact that an eye-witness

describes the perpetrator as a black man, Griessel and his colleagues resume their investigation on the premise that “[b]lacks don’t read that paper” (DP 283) and ultimately fail to identify Thobela when he appears at Carlos’ house disguised as a “swimming-pool man” (DP 330): “Looking down at the street he saw a panel van parked at Carlos’s [sic] door. [...] *First Aid for Pools. Intensive Care Unit*. A black man got out. Big. Blue overalls [...]” (DP 330, emphasis in original). Benny hesitates to react – resulting in Carlos’ death – “because he had continued to believe the assegai man was white” and therefore fails to prevent Thobela from murdering Carlos, let alone to catch the assegai killer (DP 334).

In light of the novel’s post-apartheid context, *Devil’s Peak* ultimately addresses the intricacy of South Africa’s transforming state authorities and police forces after apartheid using the example of its detective protagonist. After the socio-political changes initiated by the abolition of apartheid, detective Griessel is confronted with the decline of his class’ privilege and is forced to re-imagine his own identity, one that is no longer stigmatized as the evil force of the state but instead becomes an acceptable, well-operating state-sanctioned force in the new Rainbow Nation, one that coincides with the new democracy’s policies. Therefore, with the depiction of the male white middle-class Afrikaner detective Benny Griessel Meyer employs a distinct approach: the author evokes concerns about the decline of white authority in a transitional nation and tackles the repercussions of a racist and discriminating past in the post-apartheid present. Thus, although Meyer’s detective closely resembles typical generic personalities of classical hard-boiled detective stories, Benny Griessel is a slightly altered version thereof, one more suitable for the context of a transitional South Africa. Eventually, as Warnes suggests, Benny’s personal journey as a white male Afrikaner, but more importantly as a white male Afrikaner police officer, stands in direct relation to South Africa’s transformation:

[T]he transitional contexts in which [Griessel] operate[s], combined with the historical awareness of police complicity in upholding apartheid, suggest that [his] suffering and [his] rehabilitation can be read as symptomatic of the challenges and opportunities for white masculinity in the post-apartheid period. (987)

Meyer thus covertly tackles issues of otherness, discrimination and racism by creating characters that try to overcome their country's past and by re-imagining a future in a 'new' democratic South Africa that is marked by positivity and hopefulness. He succeeds in adapting the genre's formula and appropriating it to a South African post-apartheid context, which might seem ironic considering that the hard-boiled tradition is characterized by a white male heterosexual and foremost American perspective, and that the genre's popularity during its origins in the 1920s "coincides [...] with widespread anxiety about race and about the difficulties of maintaining the whiteness of the United States" (Reddy 18). Therefore, Meyer ultimately utilizes the genre's elements to reflect on the white Afrikaner detectives' identity dilemma and aspires to reconstruct and re-imagine the detective hero operating in the contemporary democratic South Africa.

6.1.2 Setting

Another element of crime fiction that is often employed to distinguish one variety from the other is the setting. While classical clue-puzzles, locked-room or country-house mysteries are typically located in enclosed or isolated settings like trains, locked rooms, a (country) house or a small town, hard-boiled fiction generally takes place in wide urban spaces, most frequently in big cities that are beset by crime and danger, like Chandler's Philip Marlowe stories in Los Angeles or Hammett's Sam Spade adventures in San Francisco. Similarly, large South African cities like Cape Town, Johannesburg or Durban have become popular settings for local crime writers and, according to fellow crime authors abroad, they seem to provide an overabundance of material to base a crime novel on.¹⁹ Accordingly, as connoisseurs of the South African landscape might already understand from the novel's title,

¹⁹ Michael Robotham states that "all these South African crime writers have so much material, they've got all this stuff to work with!" (see www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id.152576, see also Warnes 13). After visiting South Africa, Ian Rankin notes that "he's leaving [...] with a suitcase full of South African crimes" (Magwood 2013).

Devil's Peak is located in one of South Africa's biggest cities which also happens to have a dreadful crime rate: Cape Town.

Like many South African crime authors, Meyer offers a contrasting picture of South Africa in general and Cape Town in particular. Through the voices of his protagonists the author thus employs a variety of features that realistically depict a contemporary South Africa marked by contradictions. The novel draws attention to the country's high crime rates, the vast gap between wealth and poverty and the value of tourism for the local economy while it also engages with multiculturalism and "panoramic descriptions of the countryside" (Naidu, "Introduction" 128). Consequently, a split image emerges: on the one hand, the "bleak, sleazy and ugly" tone of hard-boiled fiction is apparent while on the other hand, an image of literary tourism materializes for the reader (Naidu, "Introduction" 128).

From an international perspective, South Africa poses as a particularly interesting example for a crime novel setting because it excites with a combination of exotic and familiar features (Drawe 187). Considering the fact that the widespread image of South Africa is characterized by contradictions – high crime rates, alarmingly high Aids statistics and economic as well as social inequality, on the one hand and images of beautiful beaches, wild Safaris and stunning views, on the other – Meyer does not need to exaggerate in his descriptions of the country's divisiveness. Ultimately, Meyer draws readers to the eclectic and multifaceted South African environment by engaging with both safety and threat, urbanity and countryside, wealth and poverty, beauty and distortion, as well as exoticism and familiarity.

For Thobela, South Africa is a natural sanctuary as well as a dreadful and dangerous place. On the one hand, his house on the remote side of the Eastern Cape, "overlooking the Cata River and the green fields of the farm" (DP 7), is a nature preserve, "a wonderful place" for him and his family (DP 8). His personal bond to South Africa is depicted as nature-bound and carries a soft tone, as the following passages illustrate:

“He saw the mountains and the forests and wondered, as always, how it had looked a thousand years ago, when there were only Khoi and San and the elephants trumpeted in the dense bush.” (DP 39)

“Thobela drove to the Waterfront, deliberately choosing the road that ran along the mountain so that he had a view of the sea and the harbor. He needed that – space and beauty.” (DP 53)

He came around the bulging thigh of the mountain and a vista opened up below: ships and cranes, wide blue water, city buildings and freeways, and the coastline curving gracefully away to Blouberg. [...] ‘Look at that, that is the most beautiful city in the world,’ [...] (DP 53)

Throughout the novel, Thobela thus consciously observes his surroundings, noticing the strength and beauty of his country: mountains, the sea, forests and wilderness all remind him of the place South Africa was when his ancestors lived there. On the other hand, Thobela perceives a different side of South Africa: poor neighborhoods and townships, where “no one had anything and there was no hope”, with “[t]oo many people, too little work”, where people simply had “[n]othing” (DP 29). In the townships, Thobela thinks to himself, “[t]he poverty [...] was dreadful. Shacks of planks and corrugated iron, a pervasive stink of decay and uncollected rubbish” (DP 29). This contrast is further stressed when Thobela compares the home of his son’s killer, Ramphele, to the suburban area of Cape Town:

Beyond George the houses of the wealthy sat like fat ticks against the dunes, silently competing for a better sea view. [...] He thought of Mrs Ramphele’s corrugated iron shack on the sunburnt flats outside Umtata, five people in two rooms, and he knew the contrasts in this country were too great. (DP 39)

While Thobela recognizes the inequality in his country, his connection with the South African landscape runs deeper, illustrating his personal bond to his ancestors, and his perception is characterized by his identification as a black male South African freedom fighter.

Although Benny Griessel’s perception of South Africa is marked by a white middle-class perspective, he too describes South Africa as both beautiful and merciless at the same time. Benny appreciates the charm and wideness of his surroundings; he “hear[s] the birds and the unbelievable silence over the city” on his early morning

walk and describes “[c]olours and textures and light of crystal”, the mighty Table Mountain and the deep blue sea (DP 183). The view over Cape Town makes him wonder how he could have missed to see this every day (DP 183). Even then, however, he recognizes the hypocrisy of it. While he senses his country’s beauty, he is painfully aware that he lives in a world traversed by crime, violence and corruption. As opposed to the wide rural places, Benny’s perception of the urban spaces in South Africa zooms in on the contradicting images between the rich and poor as well as foreigners and locals. He seems to constantly compare the real living conditions in Cape Town with the image conveyed to foreign residents and tourists. This is illustrated with the example of Camps Bay, when Benny drives along Coast Road on his way to the Sangrenegra mansion: Benny reflects that this town, consisting of newly built mansions with glass fronts and beach views, “was a false front – further inland was erosion and decay, dark corners and dirty alleys” and, like Thobela, he concludes that “[t]hat’s what money did. Reserved the most beautiful for the rich” (DP 297). Benny thus describes the places which remain invisible to tourists and vacationing foreigners and which furthermore stand in flagrant contrast to other areas of South Africa that seem less fortunate and are often nothing but the debris of dehumanizing apartheid laws.

In addition to revealing persistent repercussions of the apartheid regime, like the dichotomy between rich and poor, the novel also sheds light on the country’s negative impacts concerning the tourism industry. A passage when Benny first arrives at the crime scene in Sangrenegra’s house illustrates this:

All the houses were three storeys high to see the now invisible view of the Atlantic Ocean. They were all in the same style of concrete and glass – modern palaces that stood empty most of the year while their owners were in London or Zurich or Munich busy raking in the euros. (DP 262)

Considering that each year South Africa welcomes millions of tourists – two million travelers in 2017 alone²⁰ – the country’s tourism branch constitutes a major source of revenue. The municipality has therefore invested both time and

²⁰ See Statistics South Africa: http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1856&PPN=P0351&SCH=7081.

money to construct an image of a seemingly “safe place for holidays” while organized crime and murder found a space to flourish in the surrounding townships (Drawe 189). Building on Samara, Drawe states that this issue of segregation stands in direct relation to the country’s attempt to tackle crime within the city (189). The local municipality in Cape Town has not been able to prevent and fight (organized) crime in the surrounding townships but rather focuses their efforts and attention on the preservation of the pleasant and enticing picture of the South African Cape for tourists (Drawe 184; 188-189). “The townships, it would seem”, Drawe states, “are not regarded as part of the urban space, which thus leads to a stigmatization of the townships” (189). *Devil’s Peak* affirms these allegations in the contrasting depiction of urban spaces such as Cape Town: Camps Bay on one side and townships like Guguletu on the other. Therefore, the depiction of South African spaces in the novel illustrates, to a vast extent, a transitional South Africa still characterized by social division and inequality. More than twenty years after the official abolishment of apartheid, the spatial and social division generated by apartheid laws remains visible, and contemporary crime fiction seems to comment on “complex issues in the ‘new’ South Africa, such as multiculturalism, xenophobia [...] as well as corruption and self-enrichment” (Drawe 188).

Nevertheless, in terms of the typical generic depiction of settings in a hard-boiled tradition, it is notable that, unlike his American counterparts, Meyer not only engages with the negative sides of South Africa’s urban spaces but also depicts the country’s beauty, particularly by drawing attention to rural spaces. As Naidu states, Meyer’s novels “[differ] most markedly from earlier hard-boiled fiction [...] in [their] attempts to represent the beauty of the South African landscape” (“Fears” 733). His depiction of South African space is therefore one marked by positive expectations for a better future and an undertone of acknowledgment for recent improvements. The novel ultimately combines aspects of the unique South African panorama – distinguishing itself with an exceptional fauna and flora – and the corrupt, dangerous big city – with dodgy street corners and inhumane living conditions in townships. Thus, Meyer portrays a city that, in line with the

generic conventions of hard-boiled detection, “has a critical role to play in establishing an atmosphere of moral ambiguity” (Sim 4).

6.2 Transitional Issues in the ‘New’ Democracy

6.2.1 Notions of Justice

As has been shown above, in the analysis of Turner’s *Southern Cross* (chapter 5), a variety of themes common in detective fiction directly relate to South Africa’s historical developments. The quest to not only unravel the truth but to restore justice and social order has played a crucial part in South Africa’s past and present, particularly post-1994. Considering that until the early 1990s thousands of people suffered under a structurally violent and unjust system, categories like institutional justice and vigilantism gained a more ambiguous meaning than ever before, and subsequently had to be re-evaluated. While Gready argues that the South African engagement with the justice system during and after the transition to democracy is “a story of opportunities lost” (2011, 93), post-apartheid literature certainly proved its potential to “[contribute] to [the] transitional justice and human rights debates” (Gready 2009, 164). As Naidu points out, it is particularly the crime fiction genre that has been celebrated for “its propensity for socio-political analysis, its offers of catharsis and vicarious justice in an unremitting social landscape” (“Introduction” 126). Among other contemporary crime literature, *Devil’s Peak* too engages with different notions of post-apartheid or transitional justice. In order to reveal how Meyer employs generic features to engage with socio-political issues that emerged in South Africa during apartheid and persist until today, the following discussion will distinguish between institutional justice and vigilante or absolute justice which is most often motivated by revenge. I will therefore not only investigate how the cynical, hard-boiled detective operates in the name of the law (as well as his own assumptions of justice) but furthermore how transgressors appear to be restoring justice on their own terms and thereby deconstruct categories like good and evil or hero and villain.

6.2.2 Institutional Justice: Police Work and the Executive Branch

Institutional justice plays an important part in the effort to restore social order in *Devil's Peak*. Meyer engages with notions of institutional justice by creating a police officer detective and numerous side characters who are working for or with the SAPS. While the novel offers insights into everyday procedures of police work – morning rituals, the questioning of victims, collaborations with the media – the negative aspects about the South African police are stressed noticeably throughout the novel. Meyer has emphasized his intention to realistically depict contemporary police work in his novel by thanking a number of SAPS members in the novel's acknowledgements, stating that “[m]ore than any of [his] previous books, *Devil's Peak* is to a great extent the product of the astounding goodwill, unselfishness [and] readiness to share knowledge [...]” (DP 407). In this respect, the novel displays features that are typical for police novels and, as Messent suggests, thereby engages with contemporary concerns about the nation, society and its power structures (178).

The novel addresses in detail the deficiency and the shortcomings of police work after South Africa's transition to democracy. Meyer offers a constant comparison between the old and the new system and thereby sheds light on corruption, racism and incompetence. These aspects are realistically depicted in connection to the protagonist's experiences with the police, particularly Benny's daily routine as a police officer. Benny is aware of the impacts the transition to democracy has had on their police department and compares the SAPS to the former South African Police Force:

The image of the Service. Even though [Griessel] and the other dinosaurs like Matt Joubert talked about the Force, it was the Service now. The politically correct, criminal-procedures-regulated, emasculated and disempowered Service [...] Don't even talk about the fucking constitutional protection of criminals' rights. (DP 291)

In view of the police's role during apartheid, South Africa's executive branch had to undergo major changes in their approach to law enforcement. Steinberg, for instance, points out that “there is little doubt that the rot of the old regime has, to some extent, smudged the reputation of the new” (12, see also Davis 2018, 13).

One of the new policies introduced to the new police service described in the novel is “Performance Enhancement Procedure”, or “PEP” for short (DP 302). For Griessel, these new parameters used to measure police officers’ performances result in the fact that “[n]ow they were stabbing each other in the back” (DP 302).

The novel further emphasizes aspects of betrayal, corruption and disloyalty within the police through the depiction of Griessel’s colleagues. Although, as Davis suggests, “[c]orruption is of course a staple of all crime fiction”, it assumes a distinct form in the South African context (2018, 13). While detective Griessel himself, along with his friend and superintendent Matt Joubert, are two of the few police officers “[w]ho had survived without becoming entangled in politics or monkey business” (DP 239), other members of the new SAPS certainly became corrupt – reminding readers, perhaps, of the grim past when the South African police was apartheid’s armed guard and enforced institutionalized racism and violence. One example of this corruption in the new system is officer Beukes: “Senior Superintendent Wilhelm ‘Boef’ Beukes, a former member of the old Murder and Robbery and Narcotics branches and now a specialist in organised crime” (DP 263). Officer Beukes withholds important information about Carlos’ case to conceal that he stole money and is, together with another officer, Bezuidenhout, partly responsible for the kidnapping of Benny’s daughter by communicating personal details about Benny’s family to the Sangrenegra family. Additionally, he is depicted as a racist bully, calling his colleagues “[f]ucking black rubbish”, and thereby illustrates a sharp contrast to Benny. While Meyer is concerned with rehabilitating the image of white Afrikaner men, Beukes seems to function as a reminder of South Africa’s violent and unjust past.

Another issue addressed in the novel is the economic impact of the country’s transformation to democracy on the state’s police force. The three protagonists constantly point out the shortcomings concerning resources and employees. Perpetrators, like the killers of Thobela’s step-son, escape because the police “are short of manpower” (DP 21), officers do not “[turn] up on shifts” (DP 21) and they do not have “people to spare” for external case work (DP 116); this list goes on throughout the novel. Furthermore, police departments are described as

overwhelmed with the wave of new young policemen and policewomen who lack the experience and expertise that this line of work requires. Benny, for instance, is instructed to mentor one of the new police officers, Keyter: “Keyter is new. He has to learn. You will have to mentor him.’ [...] ‘Make an investigator of him.’” (DP 188). This further sheds light on the daily challenges the police departments are facing in their fight against crime.

Additionally, the police service is preoccupied with the restoration of their public image. Benny reflects that the public’s perception of the South African police suffered under the old regime and its historical issues: “And if you said you were a policeman, the room would fall silent and everyone looked at you as if you were lower than lobster crap, and that, they always said, was as low as you could go.” (DP 270) The novel therefore not only portrays a transitioning society in the process of normalization after the abolishment of apartheid but also depicts the challenges and shortcomings the new justice system is facing every day (Amid and de Kock 57). Amid and de Kock suggest that “[t]hose tasked with law enforcement are often at the forefront” of the transitional struggles in South Africa since “cultural and racial ‘others’ from different backgrounds must work together to find common ground” (57). Nevertheless, Meyer seems to emphasize the fact that South Africa’s police force underwent an “incredible transformation from being a weapon of an appalling fascist state to being the watchdog of one of the world’s most progressive Constitutions” (Brown qtd. in Powers 31).²¹ Thus, while it might seem impossible to write a crime novel without examining issues of “race and the racial politics”, Meyer sets out to distribute a more positive and hopeful image of South Africa’s new police force (Brown qtd. in Powers 31). Ultimately, the novel successfully portrays the complexity of law enforcement processes in a post-apartheid society.

²¹ Powers notes that she received this information during her interview with Brown in 2014.

6.2.3 Absolute Justice and Vigilantism

Although the general ideological foundations of classical detective stories has often been one that assures readers of the restoration of order and justice – or in other words, that “good generally triumphs over evil” (Sim 3) – it is not unusual for hard-boiled crime fiction to diversify such straightforward moral codes for the merits of entertainment and surprise. Consequently, hard-boiled novels, often referred to as ‘anti-detective’ narratives, repeatedly change classic generic rules in a way that renders the detectives rather ambiguous characters, often committing criminal acts themselves (Sim 3). Stuart Sim concludes that “[c]losure remains a seemingly unachievable ideal in fiction like this”, and characters often possess a different set of moral standards (3). The result is the depiction of a form of justice that is achieved through morally dubious actions and violence, and generally does not mirror the principles of institutional justice: vigilantism or absolute justice. In the South African context, categories like “violence and vigilantism have been shaped by apartheid and the transition” (Gready 2011, 122). While some characters in *Devil’s Peak* seem to hold on to their faith and trust in the new South African justice system and the SAPS, other passages mirror the status-quo of a moral crisis “where institutional authority is no longer felt to be trustworthy” and individuals feel the necessity to enforce justice on their own terms (Sim 5). The novel portrays this type of justice using the example of various characters who are acting out of their own moral judgement by seeking revenge – some are frustrated with the failing of institutional justice, some are criminals who act outside of the law and still others want to avenge their loved ones.

Most essential for this examination is Thobela’s character. He is disappointed with the restrictions and incapability of the state’s executive and judicial systems – the “atmosphere of faint despair” (DP 26) and an “oppressive scent of failure” in the detective’s office, the fact that the killers escaped police custody (DP 28) as well as the outlook that they might not even be found guilty for murdering his son even if they had not escaped (DP 12-13). Thus, he decides to take matters into his own hands. Initially, Thobela sets out to avenge his son’s murder by hunting down the killers, Khoza and Ramphele, but he is unable to locate them. Aware of the

fact that he might not be able to catch his son's killers he feels that "the universe was pointing the way with a thousand index fingers" when he incidentally comes across a news report – "COPS CALLED 'INCOMPETENT' – BABY RAPIST CASE DISMISSED" – and crosses paths with the mentioned criminal, Enver Davids (DP 57, emphasis in original). Thobela decides to redirect his frustration with the system to a new cause, namely to kill acquitted child-abusers: "He had always been a man of action, he could never stand by and watch. That is what he was and what he would be – a soldier, who faced the child rapist and felt all the juices of war flood his body. It was right [...]" (DP 81). Thobela's decision to turn vigilante is portrayed as a result of his dissatisfaction with the justice system, as several passages assert:

At the end [...] you must only take up a weapon against injustice; you must only point it at people as a very last resort. When all other forms of defence and persuasion were exhausted. (DP 54)

The end justifies the means. He could not allow the injustice of his murder to go unpunished; he could not meekly accept it. In a country where the System had failed them, it was now the last resort, even if this world was just as hard to explain, just as complicated to understand. Somebody had to take a stand. Somebody had to say, 'This far, and no further.' (DP 54)

Thus, Thobela is convinced of the righteousness of his actions and believes that even his victims "welcomed the blade as an escape. Or justice" (DP 355). The genre-typical depiction of the villain disrupting the social order is thereby deconstructed, since Thobela's actions are to some extent relatable for other characters as well as for the reader. This outcome can be regarded as result of increasing cynicism and the declining faith in judicial authorities and the thereby evolving affinity with the culprits. Meyer's depiction of a goodhearted villain further illustrates that Thobela's morality "is rooted in South Africa's history of social injustice" since he is ultimately "presented as a sympathetic victim who is understandably burdened, and thus motivated, by the social injustice of apartheid" (Naidu and van der Wielen 118).

The novel additionally engages with the concept of absolute justice with the example of its somewhat imported characters: the Columbian drug cartel, run by the Sangrenegra brothers. The Sangrenegras' philosophy is described as follows:

When someone takes from you – money, possession, or whatever – it is said that he walks with *culebras* on his back. It means “snakes”. He walks with a snake on his back, a poisonous thing that can strike at any time [...] The [Sangrenegras] unconditionally believe in *justicia*. Justice. Revenge. (DP 343, emphasis in original)

The Sangrenegras are violent, ruthless and determined, and once Carlos is dead, his brothers seek to revenge him by killing the people who are responsible for his death: Benny, Thobela and Christine are therefore “[...] all walking with *culebras* on [their] backs” (DP 343, emphasis in original). However, while Meyer draws on socio-political as well as historical aspects with regard to Thobela’s moral ambiguity, the Sangrenegra family adds to the novel’s suspense and thrill. It is obvious that, although Carlos died for a crime he did not commit, the Sangrenegra brothers are clear-cut villains. Perhaps the fact that they are not entangled with South Africa’s socio-political past in any way further affirms the impression that their actions are simply evil and to no extent morally ambiguous.

Meyer further engages with the concept of absolute justice by turning the detective-hero into a vigilante himself. Initially, detective Griessel strongly criticizes the fact that the Artemis killer is hailed as a hero by many; he questions the boundaries of Thobela’s actions and wonders “where do you draw the line? Do you kill everyone that can’t be rehabilitated?” (DP 201) A variety of passages like the following example emphasize his standpoint: “[...] [A] collective line must be drawn. There had to be a system. Order, not chaos. You couldn’t trust an individual to determine justice and apply it. No one was pure, no one was objective, no one was immune.” (DP 204) The fact that Thobela wrongly kills two people affirms Griessel’s beliefs and even Thobela realizes that, if his victims were indeed innocent of the crimes he killed them for, it would make him “a murderer rather than an executioner” (DP 355). As the novel reaches its climax, detective Benny is confronted with the abduction of his daughter and therefore creates “his own concept of morality and justice” (Knight 1980, 287) by “bypassing the judicial system and taking the law into [his] own hands” (Sim 18). He shoots his daughter’s rapists and abusers and, although it is not clearly stated, it is implied that he lets Thobela walk away free of any charges. While the novel conveys a feeling of social

order restored, the ambiguity of justice remains. Both Benny and Thobela get away with murder on the premises that their killings are justifiable acts of revenge. Meyer thereby affirms Benny's belief that violence lies within everyone; moreover, the complexity of justice and revenge in the South African context is emphasized. Ultimately, Griessel's turning to vigilantism certainly illustrates that the crime genre's typical categories of heroes and villains might simply not be applicable in the South African crime novel. Naidu and van der Wielen even claim that "the poles on each side of the hero-villain binary are idealized categories that cannot be realized in any form of fiction that strives toward realism" (128). It certainly seems that they cannot be adapted to the South African context.

6.2.4 Child Abuse

Besides depicting the impacts of the country's transition to democracy on the executive and justice system, Meyer also engages with South Africa's high crime rates, more specifically the severity of violence against children. Although there is, according to Warnes, "no necessary connection between the production of crime fiction and an unsettled socio-political realm" (984) – as a look at international bestseller lists of crime fiction might confirm – the consideration of South Africa's crime statistics proves valuable for the discussion of *Devil's Peak* or South African crime fiction in general because "they confront crime writers with very real ethical problems" (Davis 2018, 11). Considering that almost every second child in South Africa experiences some form of violence during childhood, it is not surprising that "[a] recurring theme in [South African] crime fictions is the abuse suffered by women and children" (Davis 2018, 13).²² This issue also informs the main storyline of *Devil's Peak*, and Meyer engages with aspects of child abuse through several different perspectives.

²² The study estimates that a total of 42% of children experience some form of violence: "35.4% of South Africa's children experience some form of sexual abuse, 34.8% of children experience physical violence, 26.1% experience emotional abuse, and 15.1% experience neglect." (Mathews and Gould 61)

First of all, Meyer critically engages with the high rate of child abuse by creating a morally ambivalent villain, Thobela. The fact that Thobela sets out to kill acquitted child molesters evokes contradicting opinions in the novel: the media describe him as “vigilant killer [who] targets ‘child molesters’” (DP 140) and poetically call him Artemis, referring to Greek mythology:

Greek mythology had its female protector of children, a ruthless huntress of the gods called Artemis, who could punish injustice with ferocious and deadly accuracy – and silver arrows. (DP 141, emphasis in original)

While the media depict Thobela as some sort of heroic avenger, Griessel’s colleagues at the police department are determined to find and arrest the killer. However, numerous police officers express a favorable opinion about the Artemis case as well. Officer Bezuidenhout, for instance, clearly states that he does not have a problem with the assegai murderer, stating that “[t]his guy is doing what [the police] should have done a long time ago. And that is to take these evil fuckers who do things to children and hang them by the neck” (DP 232). In addition, the publicity around the murder spree eventually also inspires victims of abuse to take action against their oppressors. The most striking example of this is the nineteen-year-old Miss Ravens, who buys an assegai at a flea market and kills her abusive father, claiming she is the assegai murderer from the newspaper (DP 254-256).

Meyer additionally stresses the extent of child abuse in South Africa by depicting Thobela’s search for perpetrators online. That way Thobela has access to former newspaper articles and is faced with the reality that there is “[o]ne report after another, a never-ending stream of crimes against children. Murder, rape, maltreatment, harassment, assault, abuse” (DP 97). Thobela’s research additionally yields another horrific reality, namely the fact that children are often raped based on the myth that sexual intercourse with a virgin heals Aids: “*At least 40 per cent of all cases of child rape can be ascribed to the myth that it cures Aids.*” (DP 96, emphasis in original) and “*Not only are they being caught in the crossfire of gangland shootings, or become the innocent prey of paedophiles, now they are being killed in this senseless belief that they can cure Aids*” (DP 80, emphasis in original). On the other end of the Artemis case the police also struggle to narrow

down their lists of suspects, because there are simply too many case listings that are related to child abuse.

Another way the novel engages with this theme is by depicting the main characters' personal experiences. The three protagonists – Benny, Thobela and Christine – experience threats to their children's safety as well. Benny's daughter Carla is kidnapped and raped by Columbian gang members, Thobela's son is shot dead at a gas station robbery by mistake and Christine not only fears for the safety of her daughter but might have experienced child neglect and abuse as a young girl herself.²³

Thus, although the critical discussion about whether a genre concerned with crime and violence should be employed in a society that is plagued by these issues in reality has been controversial, the majority of crime writers and critics seem to agree that crime fiction can indeed reflect on contemporary issues. Orford, for instance, states that “the crime novel [...] is a way of interpreting the society upon which it focuses its lens” (225, see also Davis 2018, 12). Similarly, Julian Symons suggests that the genre “has particular merits”, posing the question how contemporary socio-political issues could be better expressed “than in a crime story which takes violence seriously [...]” (289, see also Davis 2018, 12). Overall, Meyer's novel does certainly address a variety of contemporary issues – particularly the shocking reality of child abuse throughout the country – in a serious and meaningful way.

6.3 Closing Remarks

Due to the fact that Deon Meyer has become the most successful South African crime writer both locally and abroad *Devil's Peak* serves as an interesting example to illustrate how contemporary crime authors combine two fundamental features of the detective genre: entertainment and a hermeneutic function. Meyer

²³ Since Christine is an unreliable narrator in the novel this information is briefly revealed by one of her former school teachers to Griessel who tries to tie up loose ends of the Artemis case (DP 403).

successfully pairs thriller-typical elements like the manhunt, violent showdowns and physical fight scenes with technical sophistication, psychological subtlety and social accuracy. He furthermore bends the genre by combining elements of the thriller, the hard-boiled story and the police procedural in order to shed light on the prevailing questions concerning the South African status quo: how does the new South African police operate, how are they affected by the socio-political changes in their nation and how are these aspects represented in crime fiction? Meyer engages with contemporary as well as past socio-political issues within the confines of the crime genre's formula and thereby contemplates South Africa's legacy of racialized attitudes.

The analysis of themes like justice, police work and child abuse in *Devil's Peak* has revealed several insights. Meyer's detective Benny Griessel illustrates the author's concern to reconstruct and re-imagine white Afrikaner men who – despite their upbringing under apartheid – are not racist. As Primorac states: “[Meyer] seeks to rehabilitate the Afrikaans language and culture from their legacy of complicity with apartheid” (4). Additionally the discussion revealed that the novel engages with contemporary realities like high crime rates and social and economic inequalities and therefore illustrates that South African crime fiction has more to offer by far than escapist entertainment. In de Kock's words: “The turn to crime fiction in South Africa [...] is [...] far less the escapist, formulaic blind spot that it is often made out to be” (48). Perhaps, however, it proves valuable to conclude in Meyer's own words: “Crime fiction can never be a panoramic window on society [but it can be] a small window with a restricted view.” (Flood 2012)

7 *LOST GROUND* BY MICHEL HEYNS

The last novel considered for my analysis of contemporary South African detective fiction is Michiel Heyns' *Lost Ground* (in the following referred to as LG). Set in January 2010, the novel outlines eleven days of protagonist Peter Jacob's journey to a fictional South African town called Alfredville. In order to avert his military conscription in South Africa, Peter was sent to London by his parents in 1988 and he returns to Alfredville twenty-two years later – just after ending the relationship with his London-based boyfriend James – to investigate his cousin Desirée's death, who was allegedly killed by her 'coloured' husband Hector Williams. Since Desirée and Hector's decision to get married was met with an overall negative response in the village, nobody seems surprised when Hector is suspected of murdering his wife – despite the fact that he is, as it is revealed later on, innocent. Peter returns to native soil with the intention to write an article about Desirée's murder for *The New Yorker* that will exceed the sensationalist headlines concerned mainly with who and why and instead will shed light on the underlying socio-political attitudes that represent the new South Africa. During his interrogation of murder suspects, witnesses and family members, Peter thus eventually unveils communal issues of racism, prejudice and transitional obstacles in the new democracy.

However, upon his arrival in Alfredville, Peter is not only confronted with the socio-political reality of post-apartheid society in his hometown; he is also confronted with his own loss of identity, not knowing where he belongs or which country to call home. He encounters old friends and new acquaintances, who help to elicit Peter's realization of his lost identity, his displaced feelings and ultimately, his entanglement with the past. Most essential for the embroilment of Peter's past and present is his former school friend, and his first love, Bennie Nienaber. Bennie, disappointed by Peter's betrayal on several levels – first for leaving him behind twenty-two years ago and then for suspecting him of murdering his cousin Desirée – commits suicide when Peter accuses him of murder. As it is revealed, the killer is in fact Bennie's wife Chrisna, who murdered Desirée out of fear that Bennie would leave her and their two children behind to run away with Desirée. Besides his former school friends and family members

Peter also becomes acquainted with two other residents of Alfredville: the gay veterinarian Henk Pretorius and the black psychologist Nonyameko Mhlabeni, both of which guide and support Peter throughout his investigation and stand by him as the story climaxes with Bennie shooting himself in front of Peter. While Peter begins his quest with a sense of distance to South Africa – trying not to deny the “present in the name of an idealized past” (LG 176) – he soon rediscovers a sense of familiarity in Alfredville and begins to question his feelings of belonging and identity over the past two decades.

Unlike the previously discussed novels, *Lost Ground* employs features of classic detective fiction, such as the division of murder mystery and investigation, an enclosed setting, a limited number of suspects, inadequate police work and elements of realism paired with a skillful utilization of rhetorical devices. Nevertheless, like Turner and Meyer, Heyns eventually employs these generic features to offer a critical assessment of South Africa’s current socio-political conditions. While both the murder and the investigation are set after apartheid, the detective novel’s conventional two-story plotline is retained, dividing the story into two parts, the crime and the investigation. Thereby, emphasis is placed on the significance of unraveling the truth and the quest to find the perpetrator and re-establish social order. How Heyns draws on as well as deconstructs these aspects of classic detective fiction in *Lost Ground* will be addressed in more detail below (see section 7.1). Another characteristic element of classic detection and crime fiction in general is the utilization of intertextuality. As Lenz points out, “Heyns not only draws on the genre of the detective novel but also resorts to the self-reflexive strategy of intertextual referencing” in several instances throughout the story (4). A brief discussion of the novel’s textual references will therefore follow the analysis of the novel’s classic detective fiction features (see section 7.2).

Set in a fictional post-apartheid village, the novel furthermore engages with a range of issues in a contemporary and post-transitional South Africa, such as racism, prejudice, loss and the entanglement of past and present and thus depicts difficulties that arose in the nation’s gruesome apartheid past and persist until the present day. Additionally, by creating a protagonist who left South Africa

during a period of political upheaval in 1988, Heyns closely engages with aspects of exile, homecoming, identity loss and displacement. Therefore, the following discussion will also analyze the novel's representation of aspects like identity loss, racism and Otherness.

7.1 Classic detection

As critics like Naidu (2013) and Lenz (2017) have suggested, *Lost Ground* draws closely on the narrative frame of the classic detective story by constructing a murder case that takes place before the main story (i.e. the investigation thereof), led by a detective figure (the investigative journalist Peter Jacobs) in an enclosed setting (the small town Alfredville) and with a limited number of suspects to be interrogated in order to resolve the mystery. Therefore, the novel provides all the necessary elements to be classified as a classic detective story. However, Naidu further points out that although the novel does pose as a detective story, given its postcolonial and post-apartheid context, *Lost Ground* more closely resembles an anti-detective novel rather than a classic clue-puzzle ("Introduction", 131). Heyns' work is therefore "actually more a story about a dismal failure of a detective whose errors result in tragedy" – namely the suicide of the accused but innocent Bennie Nienaber – as well as the fact that the actual murderer, Bennie's wife Chrisna, goes unpunished (Naidu "Introduction", 131). Consequently, Heyns' approach to the story's resolution and the re-establishment of social order, although probably disappointing to advocates of classic detective stories, illustrates the author's sophisticated and cynical deconstruction of the classic formula in a postmodern and postcolonial manner. A more detailed analysis of features like the novel's setting, the detective figure and the restoration of social order and justice as well as the representation of police work will further illustrate how Heyns engages with the generic formula formerly perfected by authors like Christie and Sayers. Furthermore, the following chapters will showcase how the novel appropriates these classic features for a contemporary South African context and thereby approaches socio-political issues.

7.1.1 Setting

Unlike the majority of contemporary South African crime novels, *Lost Ground* is not set in a big city but in a fictional small town called “Alfredville”, which is situated next to actual South African towns like Barrydale and Riversdal in the Little Karoo (LG 5). With the description of the small “*dorp, which is Afrikaans for a village*” (LG 19, emphasis in original), which is not particularly noteworthy aside perhaps from its wine production, Heyns creates a setting that has come to constitute an essential role in classic detective stories since the genre’s upsurge in the 1920s: enclosed, rural, communal and intimate. Consequently, this allows for the reduction of the world “to self-contained, enclosed, manageable proportions and dimensions” while at the same time it functions as a microcosm that in many ways mirrors the macrocosm of contemporary South African socio-politics (Scaggs 52).

Like in country-house or locked-room mysteries, the setting in *Lost Ground* causes a variety of effects that are central to the investigation of the murder itself. First, it limits the possible number of murder suspects to the inhabitants of Alfredville. Unlike Cape Town, or any other big city, the anonymity is virtually non-existent in a small town: “Alfredville is suspicious of outsiders” (LG 145) and news travel fast in “these small-town types, with [people having] nothing to do but scratch their own arses all day” (LG 228), which might be “because there’s bugger-all else to do” (LG 66). Peter therefore gradually narrows down the list of apparent murder suspects by interviewing the inhabitants of Alfredville – including Hector Williams, Desirée’s husband and head of police in Alfredville; Cassie Collins, small-town macho and one of Desirée’s admirers; and Bennie Nienaber, who was Peter’s best friend during high school and is now married to Desirée’s friend Chrisna. In this respect, the setting governs the proceedings of the investigation to a certain extent, since Peter’s actions and intentions are immediately known to and discussed by the whole town, preventing any form of discretion. Furthermore, the murder suspects as well as the witnesses conceal valuable information due to their concern for their own reputation in town. Hank Pretorius, for instance, knows that the accused Hector Williams could not have killed Desirée, since he

saw him at the time of the murder, but does not disclose this information to the authorities in order to protect his own secret: his illegal relations with a much younger man. Similarly, Cassie Collins does not want anyone in town to know Desirée rejected him and therefore actively spreads misleading rumors about her and additionally conceals the fact that the investigating officers fabricated evidence in order to charge Hector with the murder of his wife (LG 196). Another witness, Vincent, the Congolese car guard of the Queen's Hotel in which Peter is staying, who formerly worked as an advocate in the DRC, saw Bennie and Chrisna's dog in front of Desirée's house at the time of the murder but shies away from going to the police because he is afraid they would not believe a foreigner in accusing the new police chief, Bennie, of murder (LG 229). The enclosed setting of Alfredville therefore functions as a restrictive and regulating frame for the murder investigation.

Secondly, the small-town setting helps to provide detailed insights into the community affected by the murder as well as their collective apartheid past. Just like country-house murder mysteries reveal observations about the socio-political status of the people involved, the description of Alfredville offers readers an insight into a South African community that has experienced their country's transformation from structural violence and racism to majority rule and civil rights. As a result, the novel depicts a community that is still preoccupied with their shared experiences of the past. For the majority of Alfredville's community members racism and prejudice, it seems, remain common practices and skin colors are still considered a descriptive feature to assess both human beings and moral standards. As the story unravels, the seemingly peaceful, even boring village is therefore soon revealed to be a place of "racial friction and frustration" (Lenz 3). Most central to this aspect is the public perception of Desirée's marriage to Hector Williams: "[P]eople weren't used to that kind of thing, a white woman marrying a black man, or a Coloured man [...]" (LG 66) and "[...] for Desirée to prefer a *black policeman* didn't make sense for lots of people, and an ex-ANC terrorist just to rub it in" (LG 68, emphasis in original). The general reaction to the marriage in Alfredville is thus one of both wonder and repulsion and it is everyone's conviction that Hector must have killed her, be it simply because he was "Coloured".

According to Desirée's father, for instance, "[y]ou don't expect rational thought from someone like that" in any case (LG 87). Thus, Heyns creates a setting where the majority of the population belongs to a white middle-class, and although apartheid is no longer in place, the communal mindset is only slowly adjusting to the new conditions. Therefore, the author illustrates how the repercussions of apartheid surface within a small-town community, and Alfredville is eventually depicted as a "veritable hotbed of racial, political and sexual tensions", as Naidu notes ("Horrific" 125-126).

However, in addition to the depiction of a small town as a microcosm of South African society, the novel also addresses aspects of security and communal support in the countryside setting in contrast to the crime-ridden big cities that are often featured in hard-boiled fiction. After all, as Peter notes, "Alfredville was aghast, not only at the death of Desirée, but at the idea that their hitherto safe town had proved to harbor its share of the violent crime so prevalent elsewhere" (LG 106). The aspect of safety and security in a small village like Alfredville is particularly depicted through Nonyameko's view: she draws a comparison between Alfredville and neighboring townships. While Peter is unaware of the proximity of the townships – "There's nothing there, apart from the main road" (LG 203) – Nonyameko explains to him that what he apparently perceives as "nothing" in fact consists of "about twenty thousand people" living in the township next to Alfredville (LG 203). For her, Alfredville stands in contrast to the "scene of desolation, of neglect and decay, of heat and flies and stench" which Peter observes in the township (LG 205). Nonyameko further draws attention to aspects of safety in Alfredville when Peter wonders about Vincent's decision to stay in the small town instead of pursuing a more suitable career in a bigger city: "[H]e has a place to stay here, which is not so easy to find in the city. And then, you may have read about the attacks on foreigners in the cities [...] So Vincent may not feel safe there." (LG 204) Additionally, other characters, too, seem glad to return to the familiarity and comfort Alfredville has to offer. Hector, Bennie, Desirée and even Peter eventually return to their hometown, reflecting that the town has "a certain appeal in the very emptiness, something melancholy in its meagerness and yet comforting in its permanence. It's a landscape without clutter, without noise,

without much ambition, neutral, perhaps even negative” (LG 62). Thus, apart from the racial tensions within the community, the small town seems to provide its inhabitants with a feeling of safety and familiarity.

Furthermore, Heyns draws attention to the village’s colonial past, offering readers a vivid picture of South Africa’s heritage influenced not only by apartheid but by British and Dutch colonization. The atmosphere and the ambience of small towns are composed of the buildings and streets that were built during the 1890s and resemble typical British constructions: Victorian verandas, hotels in honor of the Queen (LG 20), and houses built by “English visitors from Cape Town” (LG 47). While other towns increased in population and therefore had to rebuild their infrastructure, “Alfredville was spared the boom that devastated the surrounding villages in the 1960s” and maintained its colonial design in the middle of the South African Karoo (LG 47).

Ultimately, the closed setting in *Lost Ground* facilitates a critical approach to a crime that is perceived as racially motivated in an environment that is characterized by communal relations and familiarity. According to Lenz “Heyns admits that he has selected Alfredville, a fictitious rural town in the Klein Karoo, because murder with racial connotations makes a greater impact in a little village than in the city” (3). Thus, by closely drawing on classic detective fiction and constructing an enclosed location, a limited number of suspects and a population shaped by the ideological misconceptions of apartheid, Heyns scrutinizes the conditions and attitudes of a microcosmic post-apartheid society and thereby not only draws on the formula of the genre but deconstructs it to a certain degree.

7.1.2 The Detective and the Restoration of Social Order and Justice

As has been addressed above (see section 3.2), in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes and later on of the detective heroes of classic detective fiction, ratiocination generally defeats socio-political anxieties exemplified by crime and murder (Naidu, “Horrific” 116). However, while the typical clue-puzzle depicts a detective hero who restores social order and provides a satisfying feeling of closure for the

reader, Heyns' novel – perhaps more closely aligning itself with the evolving tradition of postcolonial detection – overturns such straightforward notions of order and justice. Moreover, though it does provide a solution to the mystery, it does not offer readers or protagonists closure or a return to normality and order.

Although the detective figure in *Lost Ground* initially seems to resemble his sophisticated predecessors like Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, he is eventually revealed as an anti-hero rather than a traditional detective figure. Detectives in classic crime stories are personas of morality and responsibility that invite readers to identify with the story's hero and solve the case alongside the detective. However, Heyns' protagonist Peter Jacobs, however, fails to solve the puzzle that is readily apparent to readers of the novel. Even Peter's investigation differs markedly from typical detection. Instead of decoding the clues through ratiocination, all information he receives is provided by his respondents, and he fails to reach the right conclusion. Each person questioned by Peter unloads their guilty conscience about the murder case on him, expecting him to do the right thing – which is to make the truth known (LG 231) – because he is “a good man” (LG 231, see also section 7.1.1). The story, as Peter becomes painfully aware of, is “being inflicted upon [him]” (LG 209). Finally, he fails to entangle the pieces of evidence and to connect the clues and arrives at the wrongful conclusion that Bennie must have murdered Desirée. The reader, on the other hand, is provided with all the necessary information and red herrings to draw the right conclusion. Although Peter reflects that “there is the less amusing question of betrayal, of deliberately choosing to denounce a friend – indeed, *the* friend of [his] youth” (LG 252, emphasis in original), he ignores the signs and confronts Bennie. Heyns thereby ironically creates a hero who is unable to understand the mystery he strives to solve, resulting in the untypical “horrific breakdown of reason” (LG 294) where the detective is perhaps investigated more thoroughly than the crime itself, where to everyone's surprise “the hot-shot detective [asks] the murderer, what to do” (LG 289). “*Home-town boy solves murder on second try*”, as the actual murderer, Chrisna Nienaber, cynically jokes when Peter is at a loss of how to proceed (LG 289, emphasis in original). Although it might be to the readers' disappointment, the author opposes the genre's typical formula and thus reveals

the exceeding complexity of categories like right and wrong, social order and justice in a South African context.

The novel's detective figure thus also fails to establish justice. While the culprit in classic detective stories is usually arrested, killed or punished, *Lost Ground* provides a different ending: the wrongfully accused Bennie kills himself and the actual culprit, Chrisna, emerges unscathed. Once Peter is informed that it was in fact Chrisna who killed his cousin he decides against taking any further action. Instead he concludes that "not even [he] would want to pursue justice that far beyond the bounds of mercy" and that "it will not help much for [Bennie's children] to discover now that their mother is in fact the murderer" (LG 295). Nonyameko surprisingly agrees, stating that "[i]t would be [nothing but] a futile exercise in abstract justice" (LG 295). The novel's detective figure represents death and disorder rather than justice, morality and social order. Ultimately, through Peter's reflection that "every story has its own truth and its own moral, and they all contradict one another" (LG 294) and that "truth is merely a construct" (LG 110), the novel puts forward a sense of justice that is – although untypical for classic detective narratives – relevant in a South African post-apartheid context, one where the murderer walks free and where truth obtains a critical power. As Naidu suggests, like other postcolonial novels, *Lost Ground*

draw[s] on and subvert[s] the heritage of the classic tale of ratiocination in order to expose how 'Western' discourses of rationality, whilst limited in any context, are particularly inadequate when it comes to solving crimes in the postcolonial context. ("Horrific" 117)

In this sense, *Lost Ground* illustrates how contemporary South African detective fiction negates the values of traditional crime fiction by successfully avoiding the element of escapism through the omission of closure (Naidu, "Horrific" 127). Naidu further notes that "the story certainly sheds light on the complexities of the socio-political status quo in South African society" ("Intro" 133). Heyns thus exemplifies the South African engagement with contemporary anxieties within the crime fiction genre by dismantling formulaic elements and exposing the struggles of post-apartheid society.

7.1.3 Police Work

Although not as extensive as the two novels previously discussed in this thesis, *Lost Ground* addresses aspects of apartheid's repercussions on the police service in a post-transitional South Africa. By doing so, Heyns employs an ambiguous concept: considering that the novel adheres to a genre that puts forward an image of "social structures [that] are rarely questioned" (Dantyé 18), it becomes particularly interesting to reveal how a police force characterized by violence and injustice is incorporated into such a narrative. While golden age detective fiction "assume[s] that the government, police and other forms of authority, though they may include people who are weak or criminal, are not corrupt or indifferent to crime", the South African police force is in contrast depicted as exactly that: corrupt and violent (Dantyé 18).

The novel engages with the effects of South Africa's transition on the country's police service by highlighting the fact that the new police is defined by a racist past. This is, according to Graham, "a symptom of the collective, transgenerational trauma that continues to haunt South Africa's present" (180, see also Lenz 7). With the abolishment of apartheid, the executive system has experienced changes that include a repositioning of police officers – from the perspective of Alfredville's inhabitants, the "white man in the force" (LG 73) has to fear for his place in the police hierarchy, while former ANC fighters assume leading positions within the new South African Police Service. Bennie, for instance, is "as high up as he's likely to get as a white man" and Hector is captain of police, which is to the chagrin of Alfredville's predominantly white population (LG 73). That the police officers who investigated Desirée's murder fabricated evidence is described as yet another outcome of the shifting power structures in the country's executive system: "[...] you take two white cops, they're investigating a murder, and here's a black cop, outranking them and putting on airs. Doesn't take much to say, You bugger, we'll get you. And so they got him" (LG 196). Therefore, Hector is made responsible for a murder he did not commit to some extent on the premise that he deserves it because he is black and thus should not be head of police. This is further emphasized by the perspective of Desirée's father: "[...] he's pissed off with the

whole police force” and “angry not so much about losing his daughter as about ... well, the whole system that he thinks made it possible for Desirée to be murdered” – the system that allows for black police captains and white officers (LG 129). However, the novel reveals that while the “expectations and predictions” about the new police force in Alfredville were rather adverse, “crime actually decreased under Captain Williams” (LG 103).

Nevertheless, corruption within the force remains an issue in the transitional South Africa. When Hector’s lover, Sarah, suggests that “the police are doing well in this country”, Hector allegedly states that “the honest ones” are in fact anything but doing well and “the only ones who do well are the ones who take bribes” (LG 242). This image is also endorsed when Collins discloses to Peter that “the evidence against Williams was fabricated” and furthermore that “in a general sort of way the police have become expert at fabricating evidence, to make up for not being able to get it in any other way” (LG 196). Although jokingly, the hotel owner Joachim and his henchmen and boyfriend Boris, too, are convinced that the South African police are certainly corrupt: “from the lowest-ranking officer to the Commissioner of Police” officers steal, lie and fail to solve cases (Lenz 7, LG 251).

Overall, *Lost Ground* puts forward a critical assessment of South Africa’s contemporary police force that is shaped by its apartheid past, by depicting the new executive system as corrupt, incompetent and overall not trustworthy. While Heyns engages with such notions in a less straightforward manner than Meyer, for instance, the story’s investigation can be interpreted as the result of a failing justice system –in fact, Peter only has a mystery to solve because no one seems to confide in the police and because the official murder investigation arrested the wrong suspect.

7.2 Intertextuality

Heyns not only engages with the formula of classic detective fiction but also “resorts to the self-reflexive strategy of intertextual referencing” (Lenz 4). Metafictional or self-referential qualities have been recognized elements of detective fiction for a long time and are particularly common in classic detection or traditional whodunnits. Intertextuality, “[a] term coined by Julia Kristeva to designate the various relationships that a given text may have with other texts”, is a central feature in *Lost Ground* which Heyns employs in a variety of ways, not least because the protagonist himself is a writer (Baldick 2018).

First and foremost, the novel deliberately draws similarities to Shakespeare’s *Othello* ([1603] 2001). According to Lenz, “Heyns readily admits that he intended *Lost Ground* to be a reworking of *Othello*” (4, see also Corrigan 16). This is illustrated in several ways in the novel. For example, a direct comparison to *Othello* is drawn with the character of Peter’s ex-boyfriend, James, who auditions for the role of Iago in a contemporary remake of Shakespeare’s play in London. James aims for the part of Othello, but the theater company suggests he audition for Iago instead. As James explains to Peter in an email: “*Turns out the whole cast’s going to be black except for Othello, who’s white. Set in Harlem, black gangsters [...] Changes the symbolic logic of the play [...]*.” (LG 113, emphasis in original) The novel thereby portrays the idea of modifying the emblematic rationale of the play by refuting racial stereotypes (Lenz 4).

Furthermore, it is made explicit that Peter intends to build his article about Desirée’s death on *Othello*’s outline (LG 108). He justifies his intention to exploit the death of his relative for a good story by stating that “nobody holds it against Shakespeare that he used the tragic death of two young lovers as a story opportunity. It’s of the nature of stories to deal with sad situations, and of the nature of storytellers to seek out sad situations” (LG 102). Peter’s quest to write an article that suits *Othello*’s plotline initially seems to confine him to a limited assessment concerning the actual events of Desirée’s murder. Since the murder of a white woman by her black husband in a post-apartheid South Africa would suit *Othello*’s story better than a robbery or a jealousy drama between two best friends,

Peter seems to be blind to the truth for the benefit of his story. “What I’m interested in”, he explains to Nonyameko, “is the kind of insecurity that, even after he’s achieved total success, would still undermine [Hector’s] self-image to the extent that he’s driven to kill. As with Othello” (LG 108). Ironically, on his quest to find a possible “Iago” to his story called “The Othello Murder” (LG 186), Peter eventually proves Hector’s innocence. The outcome, though revealing that the murder case had nothing to do with racial motivations, disappoints Peter because his story is thereby “fucked up” (LG 186) since he can no longer base it “on the premise of this black man murdering his white wife” (LG 186).

On the other hand, the novel more overtly relates certain events to Shakespeare’s drama without explicitly stating so. Hector Williams, for instance, resembles Shakespeare’s protagonist who “victoriously returns home as a hero” (Lenz 4). While Othello returns from his adventures and wars, Hector returns to Alfredville after joining the ANC and tells Desirée all about his endeavors in other countries, too. Further similarities can be drawn concerning the view of the fathers on the interracial marriage. Like Brabantio accusing Othello of enchanting his daughter Desdemona with “spells and medicines bought of mountebanks” ([1603] 2001, 101), Desirée’s father Blik, too, is convinced that Hector “put a spell on her” and therefore somehow convinced Desirée to marry him (LG 87). Even Peter’s relationship with James could be interpreted as a reflection of Shakespeare’s drama, Peter being together with a strong and wealthy black man like Othello himself.

Apart from the intertextual references to Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Heyns adds a variety of “dimensions of literariness to his narrative” by referring to other detective narratives (Naidu, “Introduction” 131). A variety of passages refer to Sherlock Holmes. Peter even claims that “[he is] not here to write a whodunit” (LG 110) and compares his investigation with Holmes’ in “The Adventure of Silver Blaze” (1893) by considering the dog’s part in Desirée’s murder case (LG 109). The description of the crime, too, functions as an ironic tool to remind readers of the metatext:

‘On the night of 25 October last year, while her husband was on duty at the police station, she was battered to death in the sitting room of their house in Victoria Street, not five hundred metres from the police station. Nobody had heard any sound of a struggle, and her pet Maltese poodle, Cedric, apparently slept through the attack. Indeed, when found by her husband, Desirée was sitting with the television remote control in her hand; she had evidently been bludgeoned from behind with a statuette, a copy of Michelangelo’s David, which she had brought back from her overseas honeymoon with Hector.’ (LG 106)

However, these references ironically aim to undermine and supersede the classic detective story as opposed to the traditional employment of metatextual devices in detective narratives to display certain degrees of ingenuity or finesse. In a more traditional sense, Heyns affirms the genre’s approach to literary references by incorporating passages like the following that allude to texts of high literary merit:

I sense that there’s a thin line between absolute control and a complete surrender to a horrific breakdown of reason. The thin line, I tell myself, is irony. Cling to it like Theseus clinging to Ariadne’s clue in the labyrinth or the Minotaur, conscious of the terrible fate that awaits you if you let go. So I recount the events of the morning as I imagine Joseph Conrad would have told it, or Henry James, the horror kept in abeyance by the effort of lucid narration. (LG 294)

In a similar tone, Heyns positions his narrative within the particular range of South African literature by referencing various genres, books, writers and even plot lines. He aligns his novel with other South African narratives by referring to Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and *Diary of a Bad Year*, Krog’s *Country of My Skull* and Malan’s *My Traitor’s Heart* (LG 25, 65). On a more comical note, Nonyameko mentions the South African approach to cultural practices as political weapon when she is told that Desirée was killed with a sculpture of Michelangelo’s David statue: “I suppose you could call that a cultural weapon”, she jokes (LG 106). Nonyameko furthermore provides a list of the typical South African novel plotlines in a rather cynical manner when she tries to guess Peter’s profession:

You are a novelist who is having trouble finding a subject in England, and now you have come out here to write a novel about an ex-South African coming back, let me guess, to be by the bed-side of a dying parent – yes, the dying parent is obligatory, like a necklacing in the novels of the eighties – a man who is forced to revisit the past, or *confront* the past, more particularly his own tortured past, the

torture usually figurative, sometimes literal, involving the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At the end of the novel he will go back to England vaguely defeated and strongly relieved. (LG 28, emphasis in original)

“[T]he plot”, she rounds off, “is standard ex-pat. We have had about twenty of those, treating us to their momentous return to the mother country and the examination of their own entrails and consciences” (LG 28). Heyns therefore, painfully aware of the role South African literature has come to play in the nation’s violent past, proves how a genre like detective fiction can be employed to move past the country’s utilization of cultural progress for political objectives to a more appreciative but nevertheless meaningful engagement with literary work.

According to Lenz, Heyns’ metatextual references demonstrate “the counter-discursive modalities within a postmodern and post-colonial paradigm of intertextual referencing and metafiction to simultaneously engage with and react to both a fictional and South Africa’s historical past” (5). The novel’s suggestions of alternatives to Shakespeare’s drama, for instance, not only provide a critical assessment of the original but also emphasize aspects of the re-imagination of a past and present, which, in a South African context, plays a particularly meaningful part. Whereas Heyns’ positioning of his own text among the South African literary canon signifies the author’s integral objective to produce a detective narrative that is, despite its disputed status among critics, of high literary merit.

7.3 Themes

Like *Southern Cross* and *Devil’s Peak*, Heyns addresses a plethora of contemporary socio-political issues in post-apartheid South Africa in *Lost Ground*. Unlike Meyer and Turner, however, Heyns engages with different issues of South Africa’s present by creating an expatriate protagonist. With a detective figure who left decades ago and then returns to South African soil, the novel aims to investigate and analyze aspects of exile and homecoming and thus addresses questions of identity (loss) and belonging in the post-apartheid nation.

Furthermore, the novel sheds light on contemporary issues of xenophobia and prejudice in a society that was ideologically shaped by the apartheid system (see section 7.3.2).

7.3.1 Identity Loss

Heyns' novel approaches aspects of loss and identity in several ways. On the one hand, as Heyns has pointed out himself (see van Eeden 2011), the novel depicts the protagonist's journey to recover his lost youth, and on the other hand, it addresses aspects of identity loss and identity construction of diaspora subjects by considering the detective figure's voluntary exile and his return to native soil.

Considering South Africa's period of political upheaval between the 1960s and 1980s – starting with the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and continuing with several other events like the Soweto uprising in 1976 – the country experienced a wave of thousands of South Africans leaving their homes and even their continent. While the majority of these people were black South Africans who “went into exile abroad to join the South African liberation movements in Eastern Europe, the former USSR and various African countries”, there was in fact also a wave of white South Africans leaving their homes behind (Jacobs 237). Some left out of fear, others to make a political statement against the apartheid regime and still others to avoid military conscription – *Lost Ground's* protagonist belongs to the latter group of white South Africans who left the country during the 1980s to escape compulsory military service (Jacobs 237).

Therefore, it is not surprising that aspects of identity loss, feelings of belonging and the meaning of exile and homecoming have become major themes in South African literature produced partly during but particularly after apartheid. While crime fiction is primarily concerned with the re-establishment of social order, *Lost Ground* illustrates how South African detective fiction can be employed to approach this subject matter within the confines of formulaic structures by addressing questions of identity and belonging. By creating a protagonist who left South Africa on the premises of “principled emigration” (LG 23), Heyns inevitably sheds light on the nation's historical development and apartheid's effects on

individuals and furthermore draws attention to the entanglement of past and present within the nation.

As has been mentioned above, *Lost Ground* tells, to a certain extent, the story of two young lovers and their relationship as “a chronicle of loss” (van Eeden 2011). Peter is sent to England by his concerned parents in 1988 to escape his military conscription and to live and study in Sussex; however, he has to leave his best friend and first love, Bennie, behind. Twenty-two years later they meet again upon Peter’s return to South Africa. They indulge in reminiscences and rediscover their losses only to lose each other again, this time forever: Peter betrays Bennie’s love a second time, blaming him for the murder of his cousin Desirée, and Bennie kills himself. Unlike when Peter left South Africa, he is now deeply affected by his loss and starts to unravel the traumatic impacts of his departure twenty-two years ago.

Besides the tragic love story, the novel also highlights other aspects of a lost past and a forgotten identity regarding nationality. Peter, who seems to have left behind South Africa and his youth unaffected by the consequences of his departure – on both himself and the people he left behind in South Africa – returns to his South African hometown only to realize that he is struggling with his own identity. While he travelled to England with a feeling of excitement, thinking that it might be interesting (LG 260), he is soon forced to reconsider his personal history, his present self and the impacts of an uprooting that was perhaps more severe than he could understand before his return. He reflects that it was in fact his father’s decision to send him to England because “he doesn’t want his son to be killed for a lost cause” (LG260), that if Peter could have had it his way, “he’d stay[ed]” (LG 260). Thus, eventually he begins to question his personal history in relation to a part of himself that he left behind in his hometown. Old friends and memories of “an easier time of simple sensations and conversations” (LG 174) cause him to wonder what would have happened had he stayed in South Africa: “[...] would I have had a more eventful existence?” (LG 35) and “I muse over the remains of my milk tart, might I have married [someone else]? [...] Is it possible that the same person could conceivably have been equally happy or unhappy [...]? Except, I

wouldn't have been the same person, would I? Or would I?" (LG 182). Still, his endeavor to redefine himself seems almost hopeless, as in Peter's eyes "Proust himself would have had a hard time with Alfredville" (LG 13). Thus, building on Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Heyns depicts his protagonist Peter on his journey to rediscover and redefine himself, in search of his lost youth and the pieces of his national identity.

The people Peter encounters on his journey play central parts for the re-imagination of his own identity. First and foremost, it is Bennie who represents all the feelings and emotions Peter left behind when he moved to England: "*I lost something years ago*", Peter realizes, "*[something] that I haven't been able to replace, and if that something isn't altogether Bennie, it is what he represented to me then*" (LG 274, emphasis in original). His new acquaintance, Nonyameko, also challenges Peter to re-assess his identity construct by questioning "where, in the midst of all [the different] identities, is the one [Peter calls] himself" (LG 97). While Peter is sure that he is the sum of "a social identity, a sexual identity, a professional identity, a racial identity [and his name]", he fails to define himself by any of these categories (LG 96-97). His English friends would not consider him British, but his South African acquaintances do not see him as South African either (LG 96, 27). He defines his own sexuality as neither homosexual nor heterosexual, instead he states that "[he] found that [he] could give and receive pleasure to and from both, and decided that the fuss about sexual orientation was a hangover from a puritanical age when human diversity was regarded as subversive" (LG 199). His professional identity, too, is marked by contradiction – he does not want to label himself as a writer, nor as a journalist (LG 97). The fact that he is referred to by a variety of names (Jakes, Master Peter, Pieter, journalist, Mr. Wiseguy) even seems to imply that the summation of all the single parts of an identity do not summarize who he feels he is. Ultimately, this breakdown might affirm what Obododimma Oha suggests about the burden of any expatriate, namely that "[a]lthough the exiled person may design coping strategies to deal with in-betweenness, including trying to assimilate the culture of the context of exile, the nowhere-ness [sic] persists with the performance of memory and longing for home" (87).

Another reference to Proust – “*The true paradises are the paradises we have lost*” (LG, epigraph) – furthermore draws attention to aspects of loss in terms of spatial dimensions. Upon Peter’s return he not only engages with people and feelings of his South African youth, but additionally, he reconsiders his feeling of belonging in a geographical sense. He puts London in comparison with the small South African town that he branded as a place of little cultural or social value, an “aesthetically challenged little dorp” (LG 220). Although Alfredville initially only evokes “undifferentiated” memories (LG 48) – “the truth may be that I don’t feel anything in particular other than the heat and dust”, Peter ponders (LG 62) – Peter soon finds the old familiarity of his hometown appealing. According to critics like Edward Said, the emigration from one’s home country to a new, unknown place causes an “unhealable rift” (137) and renders the person “diasporic” (150). In *Lost Ground*, Peter’s personality is indeed plagued by division, and it becomes clear that, like for any returned exile, “the home country” for Peter “is no more simply the place of filiation with a natal culture than the host country of exile was simply the place of later affiliation with another culture or cause. Rather, they are places where the exile is doubly relocated, doubly dislocated” (Jacobs 237-238). This is reflected when Peter asks Bennie: “Who was it who said somebody who emigrates becomes a foreigner in two countries?” (LG 237). Ironically, Peter had to return to the place he did not consider his home to realize that London, the place he called home, was in fact never what South Africa was: part of his national identity. Despite the fact that Peter does not merely define himself through his nationality, he slowly realizes that his exile has had more severe effects on him than he previously understood. The psychological and emotional impacts of Peter’s displacement eventually surface and force him to face his identity crisis:

I feel the relentless pull of loss, of the losses I have caused and the losses I have suffered, the drift towards annihilation that nobody and nothing can stay. But I hold onto Nonyameko’s hand, for all the world as if I could thus anchor myself to some saving vestige of identity, as if her grasp could keep me from being swept away into oblivion. (LG 297)

Only then does he comprehend that, although he had left South Africa “originally not to get embroiled in the bloodshed and share in the guilt” (LG 295), he did

become involved in ways he could not have imagined, in a country that he did not consider part of himself anymore. His defense mechanism of cynicism and irony therefore ultimately collapses with the ironic turn of events and the “flood of inarticulate horror” (LG 297) overcomes him. Finally, “he is engulfed by a sense of the cost of his exile”, namely loss on various levels (Jacobs 257).

7.3.2 Racism and Prejudice

In addition to the discussion of concepts of identity and place, Heyns approaches topics like racism and prejudice and particularly aspects of Otherness in his novel. *Lost Ground* skillfully draws attention to issues in present-day South African society that can be traced back to the dehumanizing laws and regulations of the apartheid system several generations grew up in. It seems particularly inevitable to consider aspects of racism in a discussion of South African literature, and as has been shown in the course of this thesis, contemporary detective novels do not fail to critically engage with the nation’s socio-political past and present. In *Lost Ground* Heyns, too, invites readers to inspect ideological beliefs of the small town society that seems to be haunted by its past. Instances of racism thus appear throughout the novel.

Most evidently, the novel depicts a marriage between the white Desirée and the ‘coloured’ Hector, a bond that has evoked critical whispers in the small community of Alfredville: “As was to be expected. The white community shook their heads knowingly – *We knew it could come to no good* – and the black community suspected a racist plot. [...] apparently, race relations are as bad as they ever were” (LG 107, emphasis in original). Even though eventually the murder case turns out to be a complex story of love and jealousy rather than simply a black husband murdering his white wife, their marriage is assessed on racist premises over and over again. Desirée’s parents could never bring themselves to like Hector since, in their opinion, he simply “didn’t really understand [their] ways” or “the things that make us *us*” as Dolly expresses (LG 89, emphasis in original). For them, Hector is simply the epitome of the constructed Other, someone who “[doesn’t] understand ordinary friendliness”, “[probably] ate raw meat in the jungle with all the other

terrorists”, “didn’t go to church” and “didn’t flush the toilet after he’d been” (LG 88-89). It is striking that Hector is exclusively described through the assessments and perspectives of other characters. The novel thereby manifests a picture of an alleged killer without introducing the character per se, which nevertheless successfully provokes the reader to question the constructed image of Otherness.

The politically constructed Other is further assessed through the view of Alfredville’s other residents. Upon Peter’s return to South Africa he faces a variety of situations that unveil the racist attitudes of not only Desirée’s parents but of Alfredville’s community in general. Joachim, the gay hotel owner, who himself is in a relationship with a black man, Boris, repeatedly makes racist remarks:

“I remember Koot Vosloo packed up his whole family to Perth. Said Western Australia was the last white homeland [...] just bitching about the Abos.” (LG 23)

“[...] this new guy moved in, Coloured and all but really jacked-up, got [the winery] going again [...]” (LG 24)

“Ivan Abrahams, he’s doing all the cabinet ministers now, a Coloured, but he knows what he’s doing [...]” (LG 23).

On the other hand, Joachim seems agitated by the public remarks about the fact that Boris lives in the hotel “in a proper bedroom rather than in servants’ quarters behind the hotel” (LG 67). Other characters, like Cassie, Peltzer or Joy Duvenhage, employ terms like “hotnot” (LG 164) and “terrorist” (LG 195), wash their hands after shaking hands with anyone who has a darker skin tone than they do themselves (LG 105) and compare people of different complexions to cow dung and ice cream: “As they say, if you mix cow dung with ice cream it doesn’t do much for the cow dung but it sure spoils the ice cream.” (LG 160) The construction of the Other is affirmed by the fact that the characters’ racist comments are almost exclusively directed at Hector, implying that all black people are the same.

Additionally, Peter’s own racism shimmers through occasionally. While he is surprised that racist jokes are still being told openly in bars, expecting that these forms of racism “would at least have gone underground under the new dispensation” (LG 21), he recognizes “to [his] dismay” that he, too, is “still racist enough to be surprised at seeing a black woman reading Coetzee” in South Africa

(LG 25). Furthermore, his racist perception is maintained through his encounters with Vincent: Peter almost immediately evaluates Vincent on the premise of his skin color and his accent – “[t]he man’s very dark colour marks him as foreign as decidedly as his accent: presumably a refugee from Francophone Africa” (LG 8- 9) – and when he discovers that Vincent was in fact a court advocate back in the DRC, Peter is almost unable to hide his surprise (LG 74). Even when Vincent wishes to tell Peter what he knows about the murder case, Peter still suspects him of having a hidden agenda like a conman or a beggar, and he dreads “a story of complicated distress, of bureaucratic tangles, sick children, lost identity documents” (LG 226). In contrast, the novel provides Nonyameko’s view of Vincent to further emphasize Peter’s racist assessments. Nonyameko sees Vincent for the advocate he used to be, a person who found refuge in Alfredville and now struggles to find employment and safety within his racist surroundings. Eventually, Vincent becomes indeed a victim of xenophobia, killed by a man who, like Vincent himself, had applied for the position of town clerk and was afraid Vincent would be chosen for the job (LG 264).

By depicting various characters who discriminate between a collective *us* and more importantly, a collective *Other* based on the former apartheid-era discrimination between categories like ‘White’, ‘Black’ or ‘Coloured’, Heyns reminds readers of the brutal ideology that was imposed on South African society and of the fact that while apartheid may have finally ended in 1994, peoples’ attitudes and worldviews remain impaired by their socio-political past.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

Heyns novel serves as a suitable example to illustrate what Matzke and Mühleisen have argued in their volume *Postcolonial Postmortem* (2006), namely that “postcolonial crime fiction, whilst demonstrating social detection as well as criminal detection, has extended and re-shaped the genre to address notions of community, beliefs, race, gender, and socio-political and historical formations” (Naidu “Introduction” 125; see also Matzke and Mühleisen 1-5). In other words, Heyns provides readers with a taste of the “postcolonial genre-bending” which Matzke and Mühleisen detect in similar crime fiction narratives of other post-colonial societies (5).

Lost Ground further sheds light on the capacities of contemporary South African detective fiction by creating a narrative where neither a straightforward solution of the criminal case nor an escapist satisfaction in the form of the restoration of social order is provided. Since the depiction of social order and justice in *Lost Ground* deviates from the classic clue-puzzle form, the novel sets out to assess and critically question the socio-political status quo on the microcosmic level of the small fictional town of Alfredville as well as its actual South African counterpart, the post-apartheid nation. Ultimately, Heyns’ narrative testifies to the postcolonial and particularly the post-apartheid tradition of crime fiction by scrutinizing the genre’s formula in the context of a society that is preoccupied with past and present injustice and the process of democratization. “This anti-detective novel” is, according to Naidu, “a meditation on the country’s past of colonial crimes and social injustice, which impinge on the present, resulting in new crimes and necessitating innovative forms of detection” (“Horrrific” 116).

8 CONCLUSION

In order to establish a useful point of departure for a discussion of contemporary South African detective fiction, this thesis began by defining crime and detective fiction as an independent genre that emerged in the early nineteenth century and has been a favorable literary genre among readers worldwide ever since. Furthermore, the historical development of critical perceptions of the crime genre were investigated to assess the perceived capacities and limitations of detective and crime narratives as a hermeneutic tool and as a device for social critique. The theoretical concepts concerning the genre's apparent function as socio-political commentary were ultimately showcased by conducting an in-depth analysis of three contemporary South African detective novels: *Southern Cross* by Jann Turner (2002), *Devil's Peak* by Deon Meyer (2007) and *Lost Ground* by Michiel Heyns (2011). By analyzing each novel with regard to their particular themes, it was revealed that South Africa's contemporary detective novel is much more than simply an escapist tool for readers to engage with moral fantasies.

As Davis points out, the transitional and post-apartheid issues "inform [the] writing [...] of contemporary crime writers in South Africa" (13). All three novels demonstrate the authors' critical examination of South Africa's contemporary society as well as the nation's socio-political past and thereby draw attention to the complex entanglement of the country's past and present. The discussion of Turner's *Southern Cross* illustrated how a genre that is known for its entertaining values rather than its hermeneutic function is in fact a useful platform for authors and readers to navigate South Africa's history and present. The above analysis reveals that Turner's novel proves to be a helpful device to engage with themes like betrayal, truth and categorizations of victims and perpetrators. An in-depth investigation of Meyer's *Devil's Peak* demonstrated how contemporary South African detective narratives approach notions of justice, vigilantism, the judicial as well as the executive system and the meaning of revenge in a South African context. Finally, the discussion of Heyns' *Lost Ground* showed how a classic detective story formula can be re-shaped and therefore rendered more suitable for a postcolonial and post-apartheid context and furthermore how the author

engages with themes like personal loss, exile and homecoming as well as racism and the re-imagination of a diasporic identity. Ultimately, each novel demonstrates that almost any form of villainy or crime is rooted in the country's apartheid past.

As Knight (2004, 62) has suggested, crime fiction is a collective body of literature, assembling texts that negotiate and contemplate social disorder, threats to the body and the manifold responses to these issues. While the classic detective figures stand for control, restoration and morality, the postcolonial and post-apartheid detectives have to overcome a specific variety of threats and anxieties that plague their society. As a result, the South African detective novel not only affirms the formula established in the Western world but deconstructs and bends generic devices for their particular use and thereby creates a form of narrative that reveals the country's current socio-political situation.

In conclusion, it becomes clear that South African detective fiction is not only a form of writing that is popular among local and international readers but also a form that offers insights into the problems and complexities of the society it is composed in. Considering the fact that contemporary detective narratives tackle themes like corruption, violence against women and children, environmental issues, high crime rates, the AIDS epidemic as well as economic inequalities, it would be inaccurate to conclude that crime fiction is nothing but escapist fiction. Like Warnes argues, many examples of contemporary detective novels "attempt to keep faith with some of the core features of 'serious' South African literature: its capacity to document social reality, to expose injustice, and to conscientise [sic] readers into different modes of thought and action" (983). Thus, while pure social realism cannot be expected from the genre, it provides access to and analysis of contemporary issues.

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10 APPENDIX

10.1 German Abstract

Die Diplomarbeit „Detective Fiction in Contemporary South African Literature“ beschäftigt sich mit den Fragen, inwieweit zeitgenössische Südafrikanische Kriminalliteratur die Funktion des Eskapismus überschreitet und als Tool für eine sozial-politische Kritik der Postapartheid Gesellschaft fungiert; und inwiefern Autoren genre-spezifische Formeln berücksichtigen oder vernachlässigen, um eine solche Kritik hervorzubringen. Um diese Fragen bestmöglich zu beantworten, werden drei gegenwärtige Südafrikanische Detektivromane analysiert: Jann Turners *Southern Cross* (2002), Deon Meyers *Devil's Peak* (2007) und Michiel Heyns *Lost Ground* (2011). Dabei wird auf jeweilige Themen und Problematiken, die in den einzelnen Werken adressiert werden, eingegangen.

Mit der Analyse der drei ausgewählten zeitgenössischen Kriminalromane stellte sich heraus, dass das Genre in einem Südafrikanischen Kontext definitiv eine weitgehendere und detailliertere kritische Auseinandersetzung verdient. Es wurde klar, dass der Kriminalroman durchaus mehr als ein Werkzeug für Eskapismus darstellt. Die drei Romane setzen sich unter anderem kritisch mit sozialpolitischen, ökonomischen und genderspezifischen Ungerechtigkeiten auseinander, deren Ursprung in der Apartheid Zeit verwurzelt sind.