Exploring *muti* murder and the supernatural in selected southern African novels: The case for (magical) realism.

by

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Declaration

I, **Buntu Makhedama**, declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Signature ……. Date 2024/08/12……

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to myself, usebenzile kwedini.

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Abstract

This study explores the appropriateness of Western genre categories and cosmologies to understanding *muti* murder and other supernatural elements in selected southern African fiction namely Alexandra McCall-Smith's *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998), Christine Mary Elliott's *Sibanda and the Rainbird* (2013), Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) and Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010). Postcolonial theory is adopted to navigate through the research questions of this study. Each chapter offers a distinct analysis of the novels noting that *muti* murder affects a text's classification. Mda employs *Intsomi* to express *muti* murder in *Ways of Dying*, while Beukes in *Zoo City* employs faith-based magical realism. CM Elliott's *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and McCall-Smith's *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* maintain the conventions of realism despite referencing *muti* murder which is a concept believed to have supernatural effects.

IsiXhosa version

Olu uphando lukhangela ukufaneleka kwe ndidi zase ntshona ngoku qonda izinto ezifana no muti oza ngoku bulala nezinye izinto eziyimilingo kwi ncwadi ezikhethiweyo zase ntshona Africa, ezifana ne ka Alexandra McCall-Smith's *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998), Christine Mary Elliott's *Sibanda and the Rainbird* (2013), Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) ne ka Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010). iPostcolonial theory eyona ekhethiweyo yoba ihluze imibuzo eza noluphando. Isahluko nganye siza nophando oluhlukileyo, ngoku qaphelisa uba umuti oza ngoku bulala unako ukuchaphazela indlela esizifunda ngayo ezincwadi. Apha koluphando sifumanisa uba uMda kwi *Ways of Dying* usebenzisa indlela zokubalisa Intsomi xa eveza lo mba wo muti kwaye uBeukes kwi *Zoo City* usebenzisa iMagical realism edibanisa izinto ze nkolelo. uCM Elliott kwi *Sibanda and the Rainbird* no McCall-Smith ku *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* bakwazile ugcina imithetho yeRealism nangona nje beshukuxa into enemiphumela engaphezulu kweyemvelo njengo muti.

IsiZulu version

Lolu uphando luphica ukufaneleka kwe zigaba zase ntshona ngoku qonda izinto ezifana no muti oza ngoku bulala nezinye izinto eziyimilingo kwi ncwadi ezikhethiweyo zase ntshona

Africa, ezifana ne ka Alexandra McCall-Smith's *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998), Christine Mary Elliott's *Sibanda and the Rainbird* (2013), Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) ne ka Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010). iPostcolonial theory eyona ekhethiweyo yokuthi ihlaziye imibuzo eza naloluphando. Isahluko ngasinye siletha uphando oluhlukileyo, ngoku qaphelisa ukuthi umuti oza ngoku bulala unako ukuchaphazela indlela esi yifunda ngayo lezincwadi. Kulolu uphando sifumanisa ukuthi uMda kwi *Ways of Dying* usebenzisa indlela zokulandisa ezifana nomlando we nganekwane uma eveza loludaba lo muti, kwaye uBeukes kwi *Zoo City* usebenzisa iMagical realism ehlanganisa izinto ze nkolelo. uCM Elliott kwi *Sibanda and the Rainbird* no McCall-Smith ku *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* bakwazile ugcina imithetho yeRealism nangona nje bexoxa ngento enemiphumela engaphezulu kweyemvelo njengo muti.

Key terms:

Magical realism; Realism; *Muti*; *Muti* murder; *Shavi* spirits; *Intsomi*; Faith-based magical realism; African realism; African cosmology; Western scientific thought

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale of Study

This study was inspired by my interest in novels, plays and films that featured supernatural elements in their dramatic scenes. Such supernatural elements were also a constant reminder of my immediate society where there are stories about witchcraft, the dead coming alive at night and haunting people, and about seers and *sangomas* who healed or engaged in diabolic activities abounded. These experiences shaped my interest in magical realism and how some African authors represented supernatural elements in their narratives which sometimes were drawn from their cosmological perceptions.

Alexandra McCall-Smith's *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998), C.M. Elliott's *Sibanda and the Rainbird* (2013), Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) and Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010) all make reference to the phenomenon of *muti* killings, which often occurred in stories I grew up with.

Muti murder is better understood as an element of bewitchment in Bantu cosmology (Matthee, 2014:145 and Labuschagne, 2004:145). It involves the use of supernatural forces, either for evil and harmful intent or to improve the wellbeing of an individual or a community (Petrus & Bogopa, 2007:3 and Labuschagne, 2004:193). The reference to *muti* magic in these texts derives from a cultural belief that a certain group of people has special supernatural powers that allow them to consult the ancestral spirits, asking them to 'whisper' a remedy to determine the cause of illness or to cause harm to others, against the values of the community (De Jong, 2015:13 and Bourdillon, 2000:176). This is a cosmological perspective belonging to an African group known as 'Bantu' in which the supernatural permeates the natural world, an idea that contradicts scientific Western perspectives.

'Bantu' refers to a cultural group that is distinct from the Khoi and San group in southern Africa and has an arguably stronger lineage to the Benue Congo branch of the Niger – Kordofanian supra group (Rowold et al., 2016:48). The delimitations of this study are that it focuses on 'Bantu' cosmological perspectives and not other African groups in southern Africa such as the Khoi and San; thus when the term 'African' is used in conjunction to cosmology or mythology it is meant for the Bantu group.

Western thought which is known to be governed by extracting knowledge through observation, regards supernatural elements as myths and associates these with the pre-Enlightenment era, a period in medieval West when people believed in supernatural elements such as witchcraft (Wiredu, 1976:320, Osei, 2003:42 and Petrus, 2007:121). With the rise in empirical science during the Enlightenment era, all supernatural elements that were understood during medieval times to make sense of the world were disregarded. Today, 'Western thought' is characterised by its association to empirical scientific thinking.

The cosmology common to traditional African cultures involves a belief in supernatural entities. The supernatural is defined as 'all that is not natural, that which is regarded as extraordinary, not of the ordinary world, mysterious or unexplainable in ordinary terms' (Norbeck, 1961:11. Cited in Petrus & Bogopa, 2007:02). It is worth noting that there is a significant population in African communities that embraces Western scientific perceptions that they have inherited from colonial education. However, the focus of this study is on the traditional African cosmology that contradicts Western scientific thought.

The belief in the supernatural has an impact on how African art is perceived by an audience that does not understand the spiritual plane of African cosmologies; consequently, they have had an impact on how the four novels of this study are classified, given that they contain references to *muti* magic.

Some scholars argue that novels with a narrative mode similar to those considered in this study, where the supernatural is treated as an aspect of reality; or a fictional narrative that includes magical occurrences in a realist narrative, are magical realist narratives (Bowers, 2004:02). Scholars such as Barker (2008) and Moudileno (2006) question this use of the term magical realism. Moudileno (2006:39) gives an absorbing account of Sony Labou Tansi's *La vie et dem* (1979), explaining that she believes that the term 'magical realism' is inaccurate. Barker (2008:08) proposes that the term magical realism should be more clearly defined since the mere presence of a fantastic element is not enough to classify a text as magical realism.

My interest in research begins at this point. I was interested in finding out whether *muti* murders described in the four novels, given that they are believed to carry supernatural effects into the natural world, can be classified as magical realism or realism?

Realism can be understood as a faithful mimetic form of art that aims to relate to human and physical reality, even in a complex and subtle way (Villanueva 1997, 05), while magical realism is a narrative mode in which 'magic' refers to any extraordinary occurrence but

particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science (Bowers, 2004:19). The realism that is considered in this study is Western-led realism and ideas of reality as perceived by traditional African people.

Cooper (1998:15) asserts that magical realism thrives in post-colonial societies where pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of living coexist. Aljohani (2016:74) asserts that magical realism exists as a criticism of society, particularly a society governed by Western scientific thought. If Cooper and Aljohani arguments are considered as determining arguments to determine the fate of these novels, then the term magical realism may be applicable to these texts. Firstly, because the authors of these novels come from post-colonial societies, and their texts provide in some way a critique of modernity. Furthermore, Naidoo (1998), Stobie (2012) and Bheamadu (2004) all provide justifications for *Zoo City* and *Ways of Dying* to be classified as magical realism texts.

Some African writers reject and deny the association with the term magical realism (Cooper, 1998:15 and Moudileno, 2006:31). For example, Mda initially accepts that he unwittingly employed magical realism in *Ways of Dying* (Naidoo, 1997:250). However, he later denied his affiliation to magical realism and argued,

> I am a product of a magical culture. In my culture the magical is not disconcerting. It is taken for granted. No one tries to find a natural explanation for the unreal. The unreal happens as part of reality. (Mda in Fincham, 2011: xxii. Cited in Woodward, 2014:373)

Mda's assertions allude to African belief systems, particularly when thinking about the real and the unreal as represented in some southern African fiction. It can be argued that magical realism is not applicable to African art, given that the supernatural elements that are incorporated in their artistic work are deeply embedded in their understanding of reality.

Kangira (2019) argues that *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* are realist texts, while Counihan (2011) believes that *The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency* does not adhere to the standards of realism.

This dissertation examines the extent to which these novels, in their representation of the supernatural and *muti* murders, adhere to the genres of realism or of magical realism. Furthermore, the researcher posits that the liberty to decide whether the novels adhere to realism or magical realism depends on the audience's spiritual beliefs. This is because the

authors emerged from syncretised post-colonial societies. Consequently, hybridity is inevitable; that is, there are those who may argue that either realism or magical realism is a suitable label for these novels, while others may feel that they are unclassifiable (Barker, 2008:09). Woodward (2014) describes *Zoo City* as a narrative that fits into the classification she calls 'embodying the feral'. She observes that embodying the feral is a narrative component that imagines human bodies as uncertain and contingent, as porous and inter-subjective, therefore 'challenging fixed notions of corporeal identities' (Woodward, 2014:373). I find Woodward's argument to be applicable to *Zoo City,* which she included in her research. Cooper, Aljohani, Naidoo, Stobie, and Bheamadu, with all their aforementioned perspectives such as Barker and Moudileno who question the application of magical realism by African authors and Woodward's embodying the feral will be taken into account.

Statement of Problem

- To what extent do the terms 'realism' and 'magical realism' account for the elements of *muti* murder and the supernatural in the novels?

Research Questions

- What is the appropriateness of Western genre categories and cosmologies to an understanding of *muti* murder and the supernatural in African fiction?
- To what extent can *muti* magic be considered an example of magical realism?
- What literary techniques do the writers use to depict magic and magical realism in their novels?
- What is the relationship between postcolonialism and magical realism in southern African fiction?

Research Aims and Objectives

- To explore the appropriateness of Western genre categories and cosmologies to an understanding of *muti* murder and the supernatural in African fiction.
- To assess the extent to which *muti* magic can be considered an example of magical realism.
- To examine the literary techniques employed by authors to depict magic and magical realism in their novels.

- To assess the relationship between postcolonialism and magical realism in southern African fiction.

Theoretical Approach

This dissertation uses postcolonial theory to explore the research questions. The terms 'postcolonialism' and 'post-colonialism' have been used interchangeably to refer to the study of post-independence literatures and societies (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000:168). The debate whether the term should be hyphenated or not has yet to be resolved.

In this dissertation, 'post-colonial' is used to refer to a post-independent state, while 'postcolonial', without the hyphen, refers to the ideology of cultural reproduction (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000:174 and Lazarus, 2011:11). Postcolonialism is traced back to poststructuralist and postmodernist scholars such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015:491). Lazarus (2004:240) claims that poststructuralist theory is thought to have performed the historical and cultural revisions presently connected to postcolonial theory. Poststructuralism created the potential to challenge institutionalised ways of thinking and practice by allowing for the possibility of a battle against dominant meaning. Poststructuralism aimed to give the subject who operates within the structure back their agency while also acknowledging the continued effect of institutional authority over the individual and the community. Postcolonialism adopts the principles of poststructuralism and focuses its attention to post-colonial states. In other words, postcolonialism challenges dominant colonial institutions that operate in post-colonial states. From this reasoning, postcolonial theory seemed to be a pertinent tool to combat Western dominant ideas than Poststructuralism—it provided a broader spectrum than poststructuralist theory (Lazarus, 2004:205). Moreover, Lazarus (2004:205) observes that, like poststructuralism, Marxism had a convergence and departure point in postcolonialism.

Postcolonialism converges with Marxism as its initial theoretical basis, meaning its social implications and its objective to combat dominant social structures can be traced back to the Marxist theory (Lazarus, 2004:204). Marxism is also a departure point for postcolonialism because the theory emerged as a pronouncement for the 'end' of Marxism (Lazarus, 2004:204). I place the term 'end' in inverted commas as it denotes the end of historical communism in 1989 and not necessarily Marxism as a theory. However, Marxism is

connected to communism, therefore, the collapse of communism was initially interpreted as a collapse of the Marxist theory. This historical event made postcolonial studies prominent which is why Lazarus (2011:12) argues that postcolonial studies can easily be read as post-Marxism criticism.

> The term 'postcolonial' appeared in scholarship in the 1970s, but it did not have the same connotations as it does today (Lazarus, 2011:11). Postcolonialism was later developed by Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000:168). In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha (1994:112) discusses various issues related to postcolonial studies; central to this discussion is hybridity. According to Bhabha, hybridity is,
>
> the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (Bhabha, 1994:112)

Bhabha's definition of hybridity is essential to this study as it theorises conflicting and diverse beliefs such as the conflict between Western scientific thought and African supernatural cosmologies (Loomba, 2015:36). These two conflicting elements are expressed in the novels discussed in this dissertation.

The representations of *muti* murders are discussed as a concept of African cosmology. As such, the first part of this section provides a discussion of African cosmology and the concept of 'supernatural' events that are treated as 'natural'. The conclusion highlights the shortfalls of postcolonial theory.

Petrus (2009:53) asserts that often Western-led scientific thought regards non-Western people as irrational if they adhere to supernatural cosmological ideas in order to make sense of some aspects of their existence; modern Western scientific thinking believes that the human body has no connection with the supernatural. Thus, the Western view is that the human body can only be interpreted in natural terms (Petrus, 2006:05). Contrary to Western-led scientific thought, African supernatural cosmologies hold that the supernatural and the natural exist interdependently (Petrus, 2006:02).

Cooper (1998:15) asserts that these conflicting beliefs are common in post-colonial societies where Western or modernist thought clashes with non-Western or pre-capitalist beliefs. Cooper's assessment is important because it lays out the context of a hybrid society. These

societies are generally mixed in culture, and this generates what Bhabha (1994:112) argues to be a 'strategic reversal of domination', a disruption of pure and fixed identities.

Hybridity often emphasises the creation of new transcultural zones that are born out of the results of a mix of cultures (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000:109). The authors of the four novels selected for this study arise from similar societies that comprise diverse cultures. This suggests that a new interpretation of the four novels could arise, an interpretation that is neither realism nor magical realism.

At the same time, magical realism arises from hybrid conditions such as in post-colonial societies (Cooper, 1998:15). Magical realism tends to employ multiple planes of reality which often reflect the hybrid nature of a post-colonial society (Aljohani, 2016:74 and Cooper, 1998:15). This was a critical point to consider in this study because it can be argued that in the four novels, *Ways of Dying*, *Sibanda and the Rainbird*, *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency,* and *Zoo City*, divergent world views have been employed by the authors. Consequently, this raised the question of whether the representation of *muti* murders in these novels demonstrated realism or magical realism. Moudileno (2006:30) argues about the mixture of genres and magical realism:

> Magical realism is first and foremost a 'realism,' as it performs a fundamentally mimetic representation of a given reality… The critical currency of the term now extends to many other postcolonial narratives in which magical or mythical elements of 'indigenous' cultural origin are incorporated and naturalised within a Western language and framework… (Moudileno, 2006:30)

I agree with Moudileno's argument, as it can account for the representations of *muti* murders in some of the four selected novels. Magical realism has been rejected and denied by African writers because it suggests that nothing new emanates from Africa (Cooper, 1998:37 and Moudileno, 2006:31). *Ipso facto*, magical realism may well not apply in African art.

This highlights the problems of hybridity as it does not always allow for differences between distinct kinds of colonial situations to thrive, especially among the people who have had their lives restructured by colonialism (Loomba, 2015:36). Cooper (1998:17) further emphasises this problem, arguing that European culture tends to be the dominant culture amongst the syncretised communities. This was important to consider in this study because it reflects the flaw of hybridity and problematises the assumption that representations of a phenomena such

as *muti* murders have allowed critics to think of Africa as a morbid continent (Moudileno, 2006:36).

Cooper (1998:20) argues that there are perceptions that hybridity in postcolonial studies seeks to negotiate the collisions of art, race, and language. Retamar (1974:9-11) may agree with this notion, because he argues that hybridity is an anti-colonial tool that arises from the realisation that most of the population in the colonial world uses the language of the coloniser. Therefore, the colonised people claim the colonial tools as their 'conceptual tools' (Retamar 1974: 9-11. Cited in Loomba, 2015:172). This is important as it influenced my decision to select *Ways of Dying*, *Sibanda and the Rainbird*, *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and *Zoo City* since these African publications arguably incorporate 'indigenous' cultural elements within a Western language and framework such as 'realism'. Therefore, Retamar's argument could apply to the authors of the four selected novels.

Sorensen (2010:21) notes that the discipline of postcolonial studies has always involved the aesthetics of representation, resulting in its ambivalence. Consequently, these narrative texts tend to be confusing in terms of their genre (Sorensen, 2010: xi). This argument was important in this study because it reflects the problem that arises when thinking about the genre to which these novels belong. The selected novels tend not to meet the standards of magical realism or realism completely, which causes confusion.

This section has explained how hybridity allowed me to test the hypothesis of this study.

Research Design and Method

In this study a qualitative and exploratory approach was adopted as the preferred methodology. Furthermore, the study adopted a hermeneutic method which is understood as a research method that aims to uncover hidden meanings (Dowling, 2004:32). This means that I provided a new interpretation of the novels in question.

Stebbins (2011:05) argues that researchers engage in exploratory study when they have little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reasons to believe that it contains elements worth discovering. To explore a given phenomenon effectively, researchers must approach it with two special orientations: flexibility in looking for data and open-mindedness about where to find it (Stebbins, 2011:05).

A qualitative approach is concerned with understanding accounts of perceptions, meaning and experiences (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2005:74). A qualitative research method addresses a problem or a phenomenon about which there may be little information. Therefore, the research study addresses that research problem (Creswell, 2012:17). De Vos et al. (2005:269) note that a qualitative research design almost develops its own unique style, determined by the researcher's choices and actions when approaching the study. A qualitative research process will create the research strategy best suited to the study, or even allow the researcher to design the whole research project around the strategy selected (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2005:269).

A hermeneutic approach was crucial to this study as it advanced new interpretations of primary sources, the four selected novels.

The choice of these methods was informed by the nature of the study, which explored the application of the concept of magical realism to southern African fiction, with specific reference to *muti* murders. An exploratory and qualitative research methodology was ideal as it provided access to the discourse of magical realism and postcolonial studies with a focus on *muti* murders as represented in the selected novels. This method granted me access to some of the literature related to the problem of the study.

The procedure in this study involved the collection of data by reading, analysis and interpretation of the selected novels that made up the primary sources of the study. Secondary sources included relevant literature such as books, journal articles and other publications that had a bearing on the topic of study, were analysed and were interpreted to answer the research problem.

The nature of this study was desktop-based research and, therefore, ethical considerations negligible. This meant that I made use of material from the library to engage in relevant publications that guided the findings of the study. Data were gathered by means of intensive and extensive reading and engagement with the sources mentioned above. Textual evidence was gathered to investigate and explore the arguments made in the research proposal. Once the data had been collected, I analysed and interpreted it.

Literature Review

In this section of Chapter one, I provide a review of relevant secondary sources related to the selected novels. Several studies have attempted to address questions that are similar to the ones driving this study. Naidoo (1998) identifies African cosmology and magical realism as Mda's unique brand of writing. Bheamadu (2004) tests the aspect of African cosmology that informs Mda's writing. Andersson and Cloete (2006) argue for the third wave of postcolonial African literature such as *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* novel that is concerned with 'fixing the guilt'. Kangira (2019) analyses *Sibanda and the Rainbird,* highlighting the literary mode of the text. Stobie's (2012) examination of *Zoo City* pays close attention to its noir aspect.

Other studies argue for neither realism nor magical realism. Woodward (2014) writes about the influences of indigenous traditions and the nonhuman in some recent South African novels. Counihan (2011) demonstrates how *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* slips away from the conventions of realism. Barker (2008) proposes that we escape the 'tyranny of magical realism' and acknowledge other modes of writing that exist, as in *Ways of Dying.*

Naidoo (1998:19) asserts that Mda applied pre-colonial methods of storytelling in *Ways of Dying* where the magic is strongly influenced by folklore and ancient African beliefs. Aspects of traditional African cultures contradict laws of reality much like the magic in magical realism (Naidoo, 1998:19). The magic in *Ways of Dying* is inherent in ancient African cultures of expression, and folktales deal with two worlds, the supernatural and the natural (Naidoo, 1998:19). The supernatural is treated as though it is part of the empirical reality.

Bheamadu (2004:50) believes that African cosmology is at the centre of Mda's *Ways of Dying*. While magical realism may be a Western literary mode, Mda infuses it with elements of African folk-culture and mythology. Bheamadu argues that,

> Mda believes that the African people have always lived with magic. This is evident in African cosmology and the belief in the ancestral voices, witchdoctors, *inyanga*, myths and legends and the rich oral history which abounds with magic and the fantastic. Mda is emphatic that 'voodoo' and magic had its roots in Africa. In *Ways of Dying* Mda draws on his personal knowledge of African folklore and myths. (Bheamadu, 2004:20)

Essentially, Bheamadu argues that African cosmology is an important factor in understanding Mda's magical realism. Barker (2008:07) differs from Naidoo and Bheamadu, arguing that the fact that Mda employs elements of mythology in his work is not sufficient to classify

Ways of Dying as magical realism. Barker (2008:14) argues that Warnes' (2005:02) definition of magical realism as a mode of narration that represents both the supernatural and the natural realm without allowing one to overpower the other, is the most appropriate definition of the term. However, Barker (2008:14) problematises this definition, arguing that including elements of the fantastic in a narrative does not prove that magical realism has been employed—other characteristics that make up magical realism must be evident as well. This perspective is important and is explored further in the dissertation.

Barker (2008:09) is of the opinion that it is apparent that Mda has a level of hybrid style of narration, which makes his work 'unclassifiable'. Many critical commentators have pointed out how Mda's *Ways of Dying* has influences from orature, derived from traditional African storytelling (Barker, 2008:09). Mda affirms this when he claims to be a product of a magical culture (Mda in Fincham, 2011: xxii. Cited in Woodward, 2014:373).

Naidoo (1997:250) also confirmed this in an interview with Mda. During the interview, Mda argued that magic happens all the time in Africa. This claim suggests an integral influence of magic in African people's culture of expression, which has influenced Mda's writing. This is an interesting claim that is explored further in this dissertation.

Finnegan (2006:126) shows how *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* novel has been viewed as naïve and simplistic in narrative. Counihan (2011:105) accounts for the simplicity in the novel's narrative technique, arguing that the novel collapses the 'boundaries between fictional realist representations and the representation of the real'. Counihan (2011:105) further asserts that the novel moves away from realism and leans towards ethnographic realism.

Andersson and Cloete (2006:135) propose that we read beyond the surface of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, that is, that we understand that the novel presents a myth about modernity. The myth is that the cases that Mma Ramotswe solves are not easily resolvable. They are more nuanced than the writer portrays them in the story (Andersson & Cloete, 2006:135). Finnegan (2006:126) accounts for this by explaining that McCall-Smith is a 'utopian novelist'; he focuses on describing things as they might be instead of how they are.

Counihan (2011:107) asserts that the possibility of the novel being a detective genre 'takes a back seat' when the case of *muti* murder involving the kidnap and of a boy ends with the boy being found alive and the *muti* syndicate relocating to South Africa. Andersson and Cloete (2006:135) understand *muti* murder to be a matter that,

> feeds into the notions of Africa's heart of darkness-witchcraft, a notion that Mma Ramotswe and her friend, soon to become fiancé, Mr J.L.B. Matekoni, are equally horrified at and afraid of. (Andersson & Cloete, 2006:136)

The 'heart of darkness' can thus be connected to the argument that postcolonial writers reenact dominant powers of colonialism by perpetuating an African continent that is mysterious, morbid and pathologically sick. These assertions are explored further in page thirty-five of this dissertation.

Andersson and Cloete, and Counihan's studies were relevant to this study because their findings on *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* served as a departure point from which to examine the literary techniques employed by the author.

Kangira (2019:88) argues that *Sibanda and the Rainbird* follows classical conventions of crime fiction and it borrows a 'degree of realism'. *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* take on a realistic narrative mode but the element of *muti* magic evokes a different perspective of reality, a perspective that differs from empirical reality (Kangira, 2019:02). This is an important perspective that is explored further in Chapter four, page ninety-eight of this dissertation.

Stobie (2012:369) asserts that *Zoo City* offers a range of voices from cultures that are situated beyond the mainstream. The noir genre has been explored in *Zoo City* in ways that provide possibilities for traditional African belief systems, and they are explored from a sympathetic perspective (Stobie, 2012:376). Stobie (2012:377) regards *Zoo City* as a notable example of a postcolonial text because it disrupts the absolute or pure terms of the genre by bringing magical realism, crime fiction and noir elements into one novel. The notion of disrupting 'pure terms of genre' is a key concept in exploring whether *muti* magic is an example of magical realism.

Woodward (2014:373) differs from Stobie, observing that the supernatural elements of *Zoo City* are related to indigenous magic, where the human body is sometimes reconfigured beyond rational boundaries. Woodward avoids classifying these texts as magical realism. Instead, she opts for the term 'embodying the feral', which relates to indigenous knowledge. Woodward associates the term 'embodying of the feral' with a crossover between human and nonhuman entities. The crossover in this instance suggests a crossing over in time such as the deployment of pre-colonial indigenous traditions in contemporary times. The second idea of

the crossover suggests the modification of a human body, that is, the human body can take the form of a nonhuman entity.

Woodward argues that in each instance that the idea of a crossover is employed in narratives, it invokes the expansion of human knowledge in order to cope with contemporary negative aspects of society. This aspect is noticeable in *Zoo City*, as Beukes employs traditional Shona supernatural creatures to vocalise issues that relate to South African democracy and the issue of xenophobia. Furthermore, Woodward (2014:375) argues that whenever embodying of the feral has been employed, it is for the purpose of restoring the human and the nonhuman to their discrete categories. In other words, the human body is restored to its original self when it is in harmony with nature. This perspective is important to this study because it relates to *muti* magic.

Stobie (2012:377) asserts that the *muti* noir element in *Zoo City* invites the reader to engage with African cosmology. Stobie describes the noir genre as,

> dark and cynical, featuring a private investigator involved in a criminal underworld. oneiric, strange, erotic, ambivalent, and cruel. They focus on crime, particularly murder, in gritty urban settings. The characters are flawed and alienated and are frequently shown as engaged in love affairs. (Stobie, 2012:377)

The description above effectively describes *Zoo City* as it is set in an urban area and Zinzi plays the role of a private investigator. The Undertow which is a mystical force that claims the lives of people with *shavi* animals certainly creates an impression of an ambivalent, dark and cynical fictional world; thus on page forty-two of this study, I discuss how the Undertow espouses elements of a noir genre.

There are similarities between Woodward and Stobie's studies. The embodying of the feral is similar to Stobie's *muti* noir assessment of *Zoo City*. I combine the two perspectives of Woodward and Stobie based on their similarities. For example, Stobie asserts that *Zoo City* offers hope for postcolonialism and African cosmology while Woodward argues that

> these contemporary novelists' deliberate invocations of feral embodiment often respectfully invoke pre-colonial traditions and beliefs on their own terms, suggesting that the so-called magic of shared human-animal embodiment is a critical means of mapping pathways from fractious pasts to more productively shared futures. (Woodward, 2014:392)

Woodward (2014:373) goes on to argue that the indigenous knowledge that is employed in the novels of her study was disregarded by the colonial and apartheid establishments. This was an important argument in this study because in the four novels the indigenous invokes new ways of classifying African literature, ways that are neither realism nor magical realism.

Woodward and Stobie's sympathy for African traditional beliefs aligns with this study's approach. In contrast, Cooper (1998:34) argues that magical realist authors have an attachment to the precolonial worlds that they portray in their narratives, and it compromises the faithfulness of the magic. This means that these writers get caught up in the act of demonstrating a world that is free of colonialism and it compromises the realism and the magic in their narratives. Furthermore, Cooper suggests that

> the [magical realist] writer must have ironic distance from the magical worldview or else the realism will be compromised…The writer must at the same time have a deep respect for the magic, or else it evaporates into mere folk belief or total fantasy, separated from the real instead of syncretized with it. (Cooper, 1998:34)

I find that the lack of respect for magic that Cooper suggests has allowed some scholars to express how easily these narratives can become confusing because of attempts to infuse elements of African cosmological beliefs in their narratives. This is an interesting argument that is considered in chapter three and page sixty-six of this dissertation.

This section of Chapter one has provided a review of relevant secondary sources that have addressed issues similar to the research questions in this study.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One: This chapter provides a general outline of what the study entailed. The statement of the problem is discussed together with the research questions and aims of the study. The theoretical approach and the research methodology are discussed. An overview of the literature review is also provided.

Chapter Two: This chapter discusses the extent which *muti* murder and *shavi* creatures in *Zoo City* relate to magical realism. I opened the discussion by proving how the author made deliberate choices to add creative ideas to cultural concepts such as *muti* murder and *shavi* creatures in order to represent them as magical realism. Therefore, focusing on these

supernatural beings and the literary technique that is employed in representing them assisted me in judging whether *Zoo City* was magical realist or not. I further discuss how African cosmology situated *Zoo City* in terms of the two strands of magical realism that are identified by Warnes, namely 'irreverent' and 'faith-based' magical realism. This chapter discusses the characteristics of magical realism that are evident in *Zoo City*.

Chapter Three: This chapter assesses the extent to which *muti* murder in *Ways of Dying* adheres to conventions of magical realism. *Ways of Dying* consists of literary modes that are different from prominent magical realist texts. As a result, the discussion in this chapter takes a different approach as the representation of *muti* murder does not follow conventions of realism or magical realism. Instead, it follows the conventions of *Intsomi*. *Intsomi* or oral literature that is distinct to isiXhosa-speaking people is discussed. I will further discuss how *Ways of Dying* consistently reflects aspects of *Intsomi* while it lacks qualities of magical realism.

Chapter Four: This chapter examines the extent to which the representation of *muti* murder in *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and *Sibanda and the Rainbird* adheres to the features of magical or realism. The literary techniques employed by McCall-Smith and Elliott suggest that *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and *Sibanda and the Rainbird* are realistic in their representation of *muti* murder. Therefore, in this chapter I define what realism is and its characteristics. I further discuss how *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and *Sibanda and the Rainbird* preserve the standards of Western realism. McCall-Smith and Elliott avoid representing *muti* murder in the same terms that African people would use. In this way, these authors avoid displaying the supernatural effects that *muti* murder is believed to possess. Following this discussion, I discuss the characteristics of realism.

Chapter Five: This chapter comprises a restatement of the major findings of this study. These findings are discussed and a general discussion of the relationship between African cosmology and magical realism, and Southern African fiction is provided.

CHAPTER TWO: *ZOO CITY*

Introduction

Chapter One explained the nature of the problems and the scope of the study. This chapter serves as the first response to the problem statement presented in Chapter One: 'to what extent do the terms 'realism' and 'magical realism' account for the elements of *muti* murder and the supernatural in the novels?' Here I evaluated the degree to which Lauren Beukes' novel *Zoo City* (2010) qualifies as a magical realist work.

The paranormal components found in *Zoo City*, such as *shavi* magic and *muti* murder, share the realist matrix without one overexposing the other. When the supernatural shares equal credence with a realist matrix it is called magical realism. However, the supernatural components in this text, namely *shavi* magic and *muti* murder are linked and set within African cosmology—these aspects are considered real by African people. This creates a problem as the novel has the potential to be read as African realism as opposed to magical realism.

As noted in Chapter One, African people consider the notions of mundane reality to be a constant interaction with the supernatural. Therefore, despite knowing that *shavi* magic and *muti* murder are supernatural elements that they are presented as real elements, they may still not adhere to qualities that make up a magical realist genre. At the same time, not every supernatural aspect is real for African people; only mythical concepts are imagined as coexisting with the natural world. New ideas that contain the supernatural are not regarded as real by African people. As a result, in this phase of the study I attempted to determine whether the representations of *muti* murder and *shavi* magic reflected the concept of African realism or of magical realism.

My claim is that *Zoo City* is a magical realist text and reading it in this manner helps to meet its objective. The author has deliberately presented *shavi* and *muti* murder in a manner that renders them fictional. For instance, in Shona mythology, *shavi* spirits are the roaming ghosts of deceased individuals who were not properly buried, while *muti* murder is an act of extracting bodily organs to produce a potent medicinal substance to help people overcome their challenges. These details have been artistically enhanced in the text to match the narrative. In *Zoo City*, *shavi* spirits are no longer ghosts of human beings; they are a physical

manifestation of one's transgressions and they manifest as animal creatures. Therefore, despite knowing that in African thought *muti* and *shavi* spirits are considered real, the symbolic features that Beukes adds to them is what defines them as magical realism.

My arguments are presented in the following sequence. In the opening, I provide an overview of the story. Then I discuss magical realism as a narrative form and how it has been applied in the text. A discussion that determines whether *muti* murder is an example of magical realism follows. I discuss in detail how *Zoo City* follows a strand of magical realism known as faith-based magical realism. Thereafter, I discuss two major characteristics of magical realism present in *Zoo City*, the irreducible element and the merging of realms. This is followed by a summary of my arguments.

As I develop my arguments, I acknowledge some of the readings on *Zoo City* such as that of Stobie in 'Dystopian dreams from South Africa: Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*' (2012), which concludes that *Zoo City* is a noir narrative.

Ashmore, in 'Reading Space in Lauren Beukes's *Zoo City*' (2020), assesses the space and time that is represented in *Zoo City,* and categorises the text as dystopian. King in 'Bodylands: Inscriptions of the Body and Embodiment in the Novels of Lauren Beukes' (2015), opines that the novel is multigeneric, adding that the text incorporates elements of science fiction, fantasy, slipstream, noir, dystopia, magical realism, and melodrama. Woodward in 'Embodying the feral: Indigenous traditions and the nonhuman in some recent South African novels' (2014) characterises *Zoo City* as embodying the feral because it evokes indigenous magic that has been disregarded by the apartheid government. My interpretations of the text differ significantly in some aspects from those that I have noted.

Synopsis

Zoo City is a fictional narrative that follows the protagonist Zinzi December who is a former drug addict living in a section of Johannesburg reserved for people marked by *shavi* animals. The mark of a *shavi* animal is given to people that have been found guilty of transgressions. Zinzi cohabits with Benoit, her boyfriend of five years and who is marked with a mongoose. People who are marked by a *shavi* animal are also imbued with perverse abilities. For instance, Benoit has perverse powers that allow him to dampen the intelligence of other

people while Zinzi's perverse powers include the ability to search for misplaced items; she makes a living by finding lost items when hired to do so.

In the opening chapter Zinzi is hired to find a ring by Mrs Luditsky, an old woman who lives in Parktown, a section that people marked with *shavi* animals are forbidden to enter. When she has completed her business with Mrs Luditsky, she meets Mark and Amira who are known by their *shavi* animals as the Maltese and the Marabou. Mark and Amira are employed by Odi Huron, the owner and manager of a music recording company. Odi Huron manages the pop duo iJusi that comprises the twins S'bu and Songweza. For some reason, Songweza has gone missing and Mark and Amira seek out Zinzi to help them find her.

Initially, Zinzi declines the request to find Songweza but she later reconsiders it because of her financial difficulties; but she struggles to find Songweza despite her powers. She is accustomed to finding lost items, not lost people. She seeks out Baba Dumisani Ndebele, a traditional healer with clairvoyant powers. Baba Dumisani Ndebele concocts *muti* which is a medicinal substance by drawing blood from the sloth, Zinzi's *shavi* animal, and mixing it with various substances. He makes Zinzi drink the *muti* and its effects put Zinzi in a trance state where she experiences a series of dreams that lead to her finding Songweza. On her way to finding Songweza she is delayed by a group of criminals who attempt to steal from her and take her sloth for *muti*. She fights them off and manages to escape.

When Zinzi eventually discovers Songweza, Mark and Amira have already reached her. Zinzi discovers that Songweza has been hiding from Odi Huron on purpose and that the Maltese and the Marabou were recruited to find and return her forcibly. As Zinzi is employed by Odi Huron to locate the missing Songweza, her involvement in the case ought to have ended at this juncture. Instead, she is curious about Songweza's reaction, and she ponders to herself why Songweza would intentionally hide from Odi Huron? Zinzi decides to pursue the matter further to get answers and in the process she involves her boyfriend Benoit.

At the height of the narrative, Zinzi's perseverance leads her unintentionally to a ritual involving the transfer of *shavi* animals. Zinzi and Benoit break into Odi Huron's home, where they find S'bu, drugged and forced to engage in a knife fight with Songweza. This scene has been predicted by Baba Dumisani Ndebele as the twins are a life force that cleanses people of their bad omens and transgressions. As a result, a ritual transfer of *shavi* animals must be made by murdering one pair of the twins; by encouraging S'bu to fight Songweza, Mark, Amira and Odi Huron are using them in a ritual sacrifice.

S’bu gives a fatal blow to Songweza and she becomes the sacrifice in the ritual transfer. Meanwhile Zinzi and Benoit are injured in the fight with Mark, Amira and Odi Huron. S'bu is then coerced by Amira and Odi Huron to recite a ritual prayer that declares his acceptance of the crocodile as his *shavi* animal and his release from Odi Huron.

As S’bu recites this prayer, the atmosphere changes abruptly, and a loud rattling sound is heard. The change in the atmosphere is an indication that the Undertow is approaching (Beukes, 2010:299). The Undertow is a dark mystical force of annihilation that claims the lives of people who are marked with a *shavi* animal; it takes their life when their *shavi* animal is killed and they are separated from it. The Undertow also occurs when a person has transgressed and must be marked by an animal. In this scene, it arises because Odi Huron intends to transfer his crocodile to S’bu who has killed Songweza and is deserving of an animal. When the Undertow has fully emerged the crocodile gently moves towards S’bu as an indication that he is the new host.

After the transfer ritual has been successfully completed, Amira fires a gunshot at S’bu’s head, killing him. The crocodile that has recently been transferred to S’bu gently touches him and within a few minutes, it turns on Odi Huron and it pulls him into the swimming pool (Beukes, 2010:301). Mark and Amira watch as Odi Huron extends his hand for help.

At this point it is clear that Mark and Amira have different intentions from Odi Huron; they want to make money by selling the crocodile for potent *muti* (Beukes, 2010:303). Unfortunately, they do not achieve their goal as the crocodile subsides into the swimming pool with Odi Huron. At the same time, the sounds of approaching security forces can be heard outside. Mark and Amira make their escape, avoiding being caught. Zinzi and Benoit, injured in the altercation with Mark, Amira and Odi Huron, nonetheless silently make their escape as well. Eventually, Zinzi leaves the country and starts a new life in Zimbabwe. The events that occurred at Odi Huron’s home are reported in various news media as a gruesome *muti* murder involving the pop duo.

Magical Realism in *Zoo City*

Bowers (2004:19) explains magical realism as a narrative mode in which ‘magic’ refers to any extraordinary occurrence but particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science. Bowers (2004:19) argues that when describing magical events, magical

realism relies primarily on the narrative's matter-of-fact, realistic tone. Magical realism is frequently regarded as being similar to or even a form of literary realism (Bowers, 2004:03).

Raffa (1967:280. Cited in Villanueva, 1997:05) argues that realism can be considered a particular version of the old principle of mimesis, because it represents the art of discourse that aims to relate to human and physical reality, even in a complex and subtle way. Therefore, magical realism has synthesised mimesis and the supernatural since its inception in Franz Roh's 1920 magical realism. Franz Roh introduced magical realism as a new style of painting, a synthesis of expressionism and impressionism (Warnes, 2009:25). The limitations of mimesis and reliance on the dialectics of inwardness and outwardness, subject and object, spirit and the world were concerns of Roh's magical realism (Warnes, 2009:25).

Zoo City exhibits qualities of a magical realist text because the text has realist characteristics but includes magical events that are treated as realistic. Realist qualities of the text are found in its faithful representation of the city of Johannesburg. Consider the passage below:

> Morning light the sulphur colour of the mine dumps seeps across Johannesburg's skyline and sears through my window. My own personal bat signal. Or a reminder that I really need to get curtains. Shielding my eyes – morning has broken and there's no picking up the pieces – I yank back the sheet and peel out of the bed. (Beukes, 2010:01)

This passage contains textual evidence that gives the impression of a realistic scene. It gives the reader information about a familiar place such as Johannesburg and the personal thoughts and emotions of the character. Now consider the following passage:

> As soon as I touch it, I feel the tug – the connection running away from me like a thread, stronger when I focus on it. Sloth tightens his grip on my shoulder, his claws digging into my collarbone.
>
> 'Easy, tiger,' I wince. Maybe it would have been easier to have a tiger. As if any of us gets a choice […] I have a talent not just for finding lost things, but shortcuts too. (Beukes, 2010:04)

This passage demonstrates that the main character has unnatural abilities in finding things. Earlier I established that the text has a realist quality; with this passage I demonstrate that the text has magical elements that coincide with the impression of realism. This means that the text is consistent with magical realism as its narrative mode.

The protagonist Zinzi is a former drug addict who lives in a neighbourhood in the city reserved for those with criminal records, otherwise known as *Zoo City*. She also carries a Sloth with her; this is her *shavi* animal and is an indication that she has been found guilty of a crime. Everyone who has been found guilty of a crime is marked with an animal that they carry as a reminder of their transgressions (Beukes, 2010:24). All these elements prove that the text has the characteristics of magical realism.

Is *muti* murder magical realism?

Following the problems discussed in Chapter One, in this section I discuss how *muti* murder adheres to the standards of magical realism. *Muti* is a potent medicinal product that is produced from plants, human body parts such as the tongue, eyes, heart, genitalia and other parts of the body. This is rooted in the idea that African thought regards the body and its organs as agentive, a dynamic site that can be manipulated while in Western empirical science the body serves as an instrument of the ego (Mathews, 1991:24). This means that body parts are symbolic to the perpetrator of a *muti* murder—they possess a life force that can be manipulated to draw out the life energy that lies within certain body parts (De Jong, 2015:12). People seek out *muti* from a traditional healer in order to overcome their difficulties (Matthee, 2014:142).

In *Zoo City*, *muti* murder involves *shavi* creatures which are physical manifestations of people's sins. In Shona mythology, *shavi* spirits are roaming ghosts of people who have passed away from their homes and are not brought back to receive a proper funeral (Masaka, 2013:135). In other words, they are people while in her novel, Beukes represents these *shavi* spirits as animals, altering the concept of *shavi* spirits in the fictional world. This alteration is what makes *shavi* spirits examples of magical realism in the novel, likewise with *muti* which also appears to be altered as well.

The term *muti* denotes a natural substance made from strong herbs or body parts that is believed to have supernatural effects; it suggests that within African communities there is a belief that all living entities like humans, plants, and herbs are born with a natural life force which is manipulated to create *muti* (Tempels, 1953:36 and Matthee, 2014:141). In *Zoo City, muti* has additional powers that go beyond the Shona mythology. The act of extracting blood from a *shavi* animal to concoct *muti* is an example of a new idea that goes beyond the myth of *shavi* spirits and *muti*. *Shavi* spirits are supposed to be invisible ghosts and when blood is

extracted from them it renders the concept of *shavi* spirits and *muti* in the text part of magical realism.

Muti murder which normally involves extracting bodily parts from people to produce potent medicine has also been altered as well. Instead of people being murdered for *muti*, *shavi* animals are victims in the world of the text—making the concept part of magical realism.

In Chapter eleven, the discussion between Zinzi and Mrs Prim Luthuli, the twins' guardian, demonstrates how *muti* is effective as a homoeopathic medicine. This means that the way *muti* is represented in this part is realistic. In this scene, Zinzi comes looking for clues that might indicate why Songweza has gone missing. Visiting Songweza's home helps Zinzi to use her supernatural powers to track Songweza; in order to find lost items or a person Zinzi has to have something belonging to the lost person because somehow her powers help her to connect such items with their rightful owners. Earlier in the text she explains that,

> Stepping out in public is like walking into a tangle of cat's cradles like someone dished out balls of strings at the lunatic asylum and instructed the inmates to tie everything to everything else. On some people, the lost strings are cobwebs, inconsequential wisps that might blow away at any moment. (Beukes, 2010:06)

If Zinzi is to find a person or an item she must figure out which string to tug on (Beukes, 2010:06). The conversation between Mrs Luthuli and Zinzi is a discussion about Songweza and the kind of person she is. Mrs Luthuli answers Zinzi's questions, informing her that Songweza visits a *sangoma* once a month for *muti* to help her relieve stress. At this point *muti* as a medicinal substance functions as a homeopathic stress reliever for Songweza; this can be viewed as a realistic representation of the functionalities of *muti* as there are no new ideas added to them. Up to this point, *muti* cannot be considered an example of magical realism despite it being endowed with supernatural powers that are derived from the life force of a living being.

It is in chapter eighteen that *muti* transcends its function in the real world. When Zinzi realises that her powers alone cannot locate Songweza, she seeks out Baba Dumisani Ndebele, a traditional healer who can help her in her quest. Baba Dumisani Ndebele's strategy is to put Zinzi in a trance state so that she can locate Songweza through a dream. He thus mixes *muti* made of herbs and with Sloth's blood and makes Zinzi drink it. When Zinzi swallows it, the convulsions begin and in a series of dreams she sees Songweza.

When Baba Dumisani Ndebele combines *muti* with the Sloth's blood, the notion of *muti* as it is known in the real world is transformed, embellished and given symbolic powers. The Sloth is a supernatural being and a familiar creature that is invisible to the ordinary human. Yet in the text, it becomes visible to everyone. The Sloth is also a *shavi* creature; these are usually dead people, not animals. Therefore, the mere existence of the Sloth as a *shavi* creature in the text is a magical realist aspect. The *muti* that is created by Baba Dumisani Ndebele by adding the blood of the Sloth makes *muti* magical realist as it has elements that are not realistic. This is an example of magical realism because a fantastical feature is added to a religious concept.

When it comes to *muti* murder, Chapter twenty demonstrates that body parts are collected from *shavi* animals as opposed to from humans. When Zinzi returns from seeing Baba Dumisani Ndebele, she is cornered by a group of thugs who break into her car and steal her cell phone. One of the thugs, who seems to be the ringleader and to whom Zinzi refers as Nasty, has a porcupine as a *shavi* animal. Zinzi notices that the porcupine is badly injured from the way it is limping:

> [It was] limping forward on three paws, its quills rattling. It nudges his knee with its stubby snout in wary affection. Thick ropes of drool hang from its jowls. Its eyes are dull. Its back foot is missing. The stump has healed badly, the tissue grey, the spiky hairs matted with dried blood and pus, it smells of dampness and rot, like the broken concrete of the hole it crawled from. (Beukes, 2010:182)

Nasty explains to Zinzi that he has dismembered the porcupines' limbs and sold them for *muti* for good money (Beukes, 2010:182). Usually, victims of *muti* murder die from excessive bleeding but this porcupine did not die. This may not be a direct reference to the cultural concept of *muti* murder because a *shavi* animal is the victim and secondly, the animal survives.

The notion of *muti* murder is central to this scene because Nasty amputates the porcupine's limbs and sells them to be used to create potent *muti*. This confirms that *muti* murder in *Zoo City* adheres to magical realism conventions because of the magical elements that alter the cultural concept of *muti* murder.

Despite the fact that I make the claim that depictions of *muti* murder adhere to magical realism, Stobie (2012) argues that the representation of *muti* murder in *Zoo City* has features of a noir text. Stobie (2012:376) explains that a noir text is usually characterised by 'a sense of pessimism, of unwanted situations and its characters being doomed by fate and Zinzi

displays these notions in *Zoo City*'. Stobie presents a brilliant angle in looking at *muti* murder in *Zoo City* which I agree with. *Shavi* animals present 'unwanted situations' to their hosts because they are burdensome and they put the host in a precarious position where the life of the host and the animal are interconnected; thus their lives can be taken away by killing either one. Certainly, when *muti* murder is done on a *shavi* animal, the host's life will still be threatened by the Undertow that emerges when the *shavi* animal dies. When this is viewed alongside the characteristics of a noir as stated by Stobie, there are convincing reasons that *muti* murder can also be interpreted as a noir.

Stobie (2012:377) adds that the *muti* element has both positive and negative connotations and that the text explores the negative aspect of *muti* and *muti* murders. Therefore, this is a typical trait of a noir genre used to demonstrate a sinister situation (Stobie, 2012:377). While I agree with Stobie's characterisation of a noir text, as an extension to her arguments, I believe that noir fiction typically has elements of crime, cynicism, fatality, and moral ambiguity (Skoble, 2006:43), such as a private investigator who typically attempts to solve a hardboiled crime mystery that is typically set in an urban context (Conard, 2006:10). In this text, Zinzi demonstrates the traits of noir archetypes. These traits include those of the femme fatale, the unlucky con artist, the vice-ridden private eye, and the victim of circumstance (Stobie, 2012:376). She is eventually a lone wanderer trying to survive in a harsh world where even the simplest plans end in total failure (Stobie, 2012:376). It is quite evident that there are strands of noir in *Zoo City*. Another noir aspect of the novel can be seen when Odi Huron hires Zinzi as a private detective to seek out Songweza. Odi Huron employs Mark and Amira who serve as his henchmen to seek out Zinzi who eventually manages to use her powers to locate Songweza. This marks the start of a private investigation in which Zinzi seeks to discover the truth about Odi Huron's intentions. Zinzi becomes a private investigator, which is a characteristic of the noir genre.

In her struggle to find the individual who is missing, Zinzi comes precariously close to losing her life. Once she finds Songweza, the Maltese and the Marabou who have been recruited by Odi Huron take Songweza against her will. When this happens, Zinzi discovers that Songweza has in fact been hiding from Odi Huron and his thugs. Songweza resists being taken to Odi Huron, crying, 'Don't let them take me' (Beukes, 2010:219).

Zinzi wants to save Songweza even though her involvement in this case ought to have stopped at this point. She pursues the matter, hoping to see what will happen to Songweza.

This is an aspect of a noir text that Skoble (2006:44) identifies as duty and virtue; the main character does something wrong for the right reasons or seems to be morally conflicted. Zinzi decides to include Songweza's brother S'bu, instructing him to phone her before calling the police if anything strange happens to Songweza (Beukes, 2010:240).

Owing to Zinzi's perseverance, she finds herself unintentionally involved in a ritual murder. In the end, Zinzi assists Songweza and her brother by disrupting the ritual, together with her boyfriend Benoit. Although Zinzi and Benoit managed to disrupt the initial stages of the ritual, they still failed to save the twins from dying. This mission results in major injuries to them, and there are fatalities too, which is also typical of a noir text. I find that reading the text as a noir provides for a suitable angle of assessing its themes. This study provides an extension to the noir and posits that reading the representations of *muti* murder as magical realism is also effective.

With a combination of a *shavi* animal and potent *muti*, one can create even more potent *muti*. *Shavi* animals are currently viewed as a source of power that may be used for financial gain. Profiting from the sale of animal organs implies that strong magic is in demand. Animal organs are used to create potent *muti*, used to enhance one's life force with the life force of a *shavi* animal. Consequently, there is an emphasis on cultural magic to evoke the magical realism of the text. This means that as far as the text can be proved to be a magical realist text, it can be positioned in what Warnes (2009:59) identifies as faith-based magical realism, where magic is derived from a mythical concept. In contrast, if Beukes had left the concept of *muti*, *muti* murder and *shavi* spirits unaltered, African people would believe it to be a realistic portrayal of these concepts. By keeping to the conventions of simple magical realism Beukes is able to accommodate an audience that already views reality as a constant interaction between the natural and the supernatural. That is, she applies the characteristics of magical realism as identified by Faris, namely the irreducible element and merging of two realms, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Zoo City as a Faith-Based Magical Realist Text

The presence of *muti* magic and *shavi* spirits in *Zoo City* evokes 'a means of recovering psychic and ecological wholeness' with the visible *shavi* familiars that people wear as a symbol of their transgressions (Warnes, 2009:59). The magic of this nature is considered

faith-based magical realism, and in this section, I argued how *Zoo City* positioned itself as a faith-based magical realism.

Warnes (2009:48) argues that magical realism grounded in faith functions as a second language or complementary language for comprehending the cosmos. This type of magical realism presents a kind of magic that is ontological as it is connected to cosmology. Ontology is a subfield of philosophy that bases its research on information gained through cognition or intuition. It examines what might exist in the world or cosmos (Smith, 2012:155). Faith-based magical realism, as seen in *Zoo City*, undermines Western worldviews and offers an alternative to it. To put it another way, the magic in faith-based magical realism is not merely magic; it has a connection to a cultural worldview. This argument is made in the previous sections because in *Zoo City* magical realism is derived from elements such as *muti* and *shavi* spirits which belong to Shona mythology.

While the magic in faith-based magical realism is centred around myths and rituals, the irreverence of magical realism is discourse-orientated (Warnes, 2009: 09). Warnes (2009: 09) argues that irreverence tends to expose the faults of realism, that is, it exposes realism's assertions of truth as provisional and dependent on consensus. In other words, faith-based magical realism is the antithesis of irreverent magical realism with a sort of magic that poses questions about faith, whereas irreverent magical realism is epistemic since its magic raises concerns of epistemology.

In contrast to how *muti* and *shavi* magic are created in *Zoo City*, irreverent magic is not created to enhance a religious concept. Instead, like postmodernist literature, it positions itself as an alternative to realism. Consider Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) as an illustration of an irreverent magical realist work. This text contains examples of the magic that relates to epistemology. The main philosophical themes of *The Satanic Verses* are multiculturalism, transformation, and what it means to be born anew. Given that these themes are dependent on human knowledge, they lean towards queries of epistemology.

The opening chapter of *The Satanic Verses* best proves my claim as there are questions posed by the free indirect discourse narrator such as 'who am I?' and 'what else is there?' (Rushdie, 1988:03). Owing to the nature of the question, which necessitates an analytical answer, they are epistemology-related issues. Asking questions such as 'who are we in reference to the broader cosmos?' is essentially asking an analytical question rather than one that is based on

cognition or human intuition. As a result, the first chapter of *The Satanic Verses* features magic that is connected to epistemological issues.

The magical realist moment in *The Satanic Verses* is demonstrated when Gibreel and Saladin fall from the sky, the only two survivors of a plane crash. Their survival can be considered miraculous because it defies empirical logic. The language implies that the two men died while they were falling from the sky. However, as they land in the sea they are reincarnated; they are born again when they survive the plane crash. My assertion is supported by the following quotation:

> Down, down they hurtled, and the winter cold frosting their eyelashes and threatening to freeze their hearts was on the point of waking them from their delirious daydream, they were about to become aware of the miracle of the singing, the rain of limbs and babies of which they were a part, and the terror of the destiny rushing at them from below, when they hit, were drenched and instantly iced by, the degree-zero boiling of the clouds. They were in what appeared to be a long, vertical tunnel. (Rushdie, 1988:06)

The long vertical tunnel is also a symbol of how babies generally come out of a woman at birth. Landing in the 'English channel' can also be perceived as an act of crossing the borders of England. As foreigners in England, part of their culture and their old self must die to accommodate the new identity that comes with living in London. The magical realist moment which is surviving the plane crash holds in it metaphors that relate to being born again, hence this moment of *The Satanic Verses* can be connected to irreverent magic.

This is clear from the free indirect speech when it poses questions such as 'how does newness come into the world? how is it born?' (Rushdie, 1988:08). These questions are epistemological since they concern knowledge-related issues, and the text's magic revolves around these issues. However, at this point that the free indirect speech raises this question it is not tied to the magical realist moment in the text. Consequently, the irreverent magical realism is tied to epistemology, which is different to how magical realism is constructed in *Zoo City*.

The magical realist aspects in *Zoo City* are focused on aspects of nature and the supernatural—they are ontological. Chapter seventeen provides various definitions of the Undertow and how it affects the living world. This chapter provides an example of how the

magical realist aspects of the text are focused on issues that relate to ontology. Consider this quotation:

> Whilst acknowledgement must be given to religious organisations and lay therapists and their work with Aposymbiot individuals, psychologists cannot ignore the continuing religious stigmatisation of aposymbiots within society and within therapeutic community itself […]. Current scientific thought tends toward an understanding of the Undertow as a quantum manifestation of non-existence, a psychic equivalent of dark matter that indeed serves as a counterpoint to, and bedrock for, the principle of existence. (Beukes, 2010:157-158)

The passage relates to questions that are often asked in ontology because they attempt to understand entities in both spheres of being, that is the natural and the supernatural that are represented by the Undertow. In a sense, there seems to be an intention to understand how the Undertow relates to the human world. The Undertow is also a magical realist example and its existence in the text is connected to *shavi* creatures, which are religious aspects.

As the quote suggests, a religious group and scientists have tried to understand the Undertow; Smith (2012:155) argues that ontology includes studying entities in reality at all levels of aggregation, from the microphysical to the cosmological, including the middle world (the mesocosms) of human-scale entities in between. Chapter seventeen in *Zoo City* comprises an ontological study.

Chapter thirty-one as another example of faith-based magical realism provides a detailed explanation of how *muti* murder operates within the fictional world. In this chapter, Zinzi explains that children are murdered with the motive of harvesting body parts such as lips, genitals, fingers, hands, and feet to obtain potent medicine (Beukes, 2010:267). The more the victim screams the more powerful the *muti.*

If, for example, your reason for obtaining potent medicine is to draw the customer to your business then the potency of the medicine will be activated by burying the hand under your shop front door and this will make your store popular, bringing you more customers (Beukes, 2010:267). In this explanation, the author makes a direct reference to African cosmology, and she does not add novelty ideas to it. For instance, Labuschagne's (2004) study argues that:

> The murderer is carefully instructed on how to remove the body parts and told that the victim must be alive when they are removed. The murderer will then take the body

> parts directly to the traditional healer. This is the only apparent role the murderer has. The murderer must also make sure that the victim has the necessary qualities that the client needs and therefore he may know the victim to a greater or lesser degree […] Traditionally the victim must be alive when the body parts are removed as this increases the 'power' of the *muti* because the body parts retain the person's life essence. (Labuschagne, 2004:193)

Beukes has incorporated this idea into her text. As demonstrated by Labuschagne's explanation, the *muti* that is made from human body parts consists of supernatural elements, the life force. The African belief holds that the supreme being bestows a portion of life force upon each person at birth. Some people might desire to use devious methods, generally with supernatural help, to control their life force to gain an extra piece of luck (Labuschagne, 2004:193). Essentially, *muti* murder is an act in which a person tries to change the amount of their life force.

When this feature of *muti* murder is mentioned in the text, it is referring to an understanding of reality that is distinct from a modern Western materialist understanding of reality. As a result, the phrase above cannot be regarded as an example of magical realism because of the supernatural elements that result from *muti* murder. This insight stems from the knowledge that *muti's* potency is thought to have true supernatural effects and cannot be understood as fictional. However, the author adds creative aspects to *muti* murder, making it an example of magical realism. As a result of the creative aspects that Beukes adds to *muti* murder, *Zoo City* is thus a faith-based magical realist text. *Muti* murder as represented throughout the text involves the harvesting of body parts from a *shavi* spirit or a familiar, and the host who is the person to whom the animal has attached itself. At this point, it becomes fictional because it involves harvesting body parts from *shavi* animals that are invisible familiars in Shona mythology.

The conversation between Roberta Van Tonder and Zinzi illustrates how *muti* murder has been modified to fit the fictional world, even though it initially appears to be a direct reference to African cosmology. The conversation is with a witness of *muti* murder, Roberta, who speaks about her prostitute friend who was the victim of such a murder. The victim had a sparrow as a *shavi* animal and Roberta recounts seeing the sparrow acting wildly because of the Undertow (Beukes, 2010:269). The body parts that were harvested were those of the prostitute.

As part of the law of the fictional world, if a person who has a *shavi* animal dies, or if the *shavi* animal dies but not the person, they are consumed by the Undertow. In this scene, Roberta describes the Undertow as a grey demonic shadow that consumed the *shavi* creature after the prostitute had died (Beukes, 2010:269).

Beukes' approach to *Zoo City* is consistent with Warnes's (2009:12) argument that faith-based magical realism expresses non-Western cultural worldviews, calling for readers to suspend their rational-empirical judgements of reality. Therefore, these mythical concepts and their imagined influence on the material world are rejected by Western scientific thought because such thought rejects the supernatural as a means to understand reality and sees that every event can be explained based on natural causations.

Magical realism that often-used cultural motifs has sometimes been misunderstood as projecting cultural practices that are morbid. Consider Moudileno (2006:39) who offers a pessimistic viewpoint in 'Magical Realism: "Arme Miraculeuse" for the African Novel?' where he discusses Sony Labou Tansi's work and characterises aspects like ritual murder as sick, pathologically ill, and misleading. This viewpoint results in an incomprehension and intolerance of African cosmology where the West tends to rationalise the study of religion. Moudileno appears to use the same intellectual framework to comprehend components of African religion.

Petrus (2006:03) argues that anthropologists with Western training tend to disregard the supernatural component of religion. This is why I believe that Western scientific thought is one-dimensional. Unlike Moudileno, Beukes handles the subject with utmost respect and appreciation. Her representation of *muti* murder is truthful and consistent with De Jong's (2015) study 'Makhosi a via (Chiefs Commit Ritual Murder) Why ritual murders in Southern Africa should be seen as meaningful violence (and not senseless)' that is based on anthropological evidence.

There are also scholars that do not differentiate the functionalities of magical realism and see it to function in a single way. Consider Aljohani (2016:76) who argues that 'magical realism vocalises a lost history to pursue an alternative to modernism, which has considerable use for postcolonial texts and critics'. Although Aljohani's argument is correct, it is also loose, and it sees magical realism as functioning in a monolithic way. Warnes (2009:59) argues that magical realism functions in two ways, namely as faith-based and irreverent magical realism. If Aljohani's argument followed Warnes approach it would fit to faith-based magical realism.

The idea that ‘magical realism vocalises a lost history’ emphasises pre-colonial cultural beliefs that colonialism seems to eradicate, and this aligns with Warnes definition on faith-based magical realism. In other words, faith-based magical realism is nostalgic for a lifestyle that Western colonialism attempted to eradicate. For instance, traditional medicine was suppressed during apartheid, and it became illegal for anyone to practise or to be associated with anyone practising witchcraft and related practices (Petrus, 2009:01). As a result of this suppression, today it is evident that traditional medicine is stigmatised and seen as superstitious (McFarlane, 2015:62).

The definition of faith-based magical realism provided by Warnes implies that it intends to combat these assumptions and seeks to resuscitate the significance of pre-colonial methods. Consequently, *Zoo City* situates itself as a faith-based magical realist text because the magic that emanates from the text serves as an expansion of a cultural phenomenon and a worldview held by African people.

The act of transforming ghost *shavi* spirits into a physical manifestation of people's sins is in its own right an expansion of a mythological concept. Beukes infuses a myth concept with imagination to embellish the storyline. Even Africans who understand the concept of *shavi* spirits, such as the Shona people, will understand this representation of *shavi* spirits as fantasy rather than an actual representation of the myth. Spirit familiars are understood to be invisible but Beukes purposefully writes *Zoo City* in such a way that the spirit familiars are visible, a magical realist element. *Zoo City* is an example of magical realism even for an audience that may not understand the spiritual plane of African people.

The Undertow and the Irreducible element

Faris (2004:07) argues that magical realism has a primal feature that is always present, and that feature is the irreducible element. This is a magical element that is assimilated into the realist environment without evoking any comment from the narrator or characters (Faris, 2004:08). The irreducible element takes the form of the Undertow in *Zoo City* which is a supernatural element that invades the realist world.

A credible representation of a realist world which is characterised by a faithful and undistorted aesthetic of reproducing the external world as it is perceived must be established before the irreducible element can take effect (Raffa, 1967:81 cited in Villanueva, 1992:05).

Zoo City has identifiable features that can be considered faithful and undistorted representations of the real world—every event in the text takes place in a quotidian and lifelike setting. Consider the passage below:

> I walk up on Empire through Parktown past the old Johannesburg College of Education, attracting a few aggressive hoots from passing cars. I give them the finger. Not my fault if they're so cloistered in suburbia that they don't get to see zoos. At least Killarney isn't a gated community. (Beukes, 2010:11)

The passage includes convincing details of a setting that is like the real world. Beukes' travels through several areas of Johannesburg, and the credibility hinges on the fact that the language employed in the text is consistent with the reality of the streets of Johannesburg. These details form the first building blocks of the irreducible element; Faris (2004:08) argues that the irreducible element requires a realistic textual environment, and the magical element makes up the last step to forming the irreducible element.

The irreducible element is characterised by the magic that refuses to be entirely assimilated into the realism that is established by the text. In other words, the irreducible element is a combination of realism and the supernatural elements that disrupt the real. Magical realism has other characteristics to measure it, but Faris seems to emphasise that the irreducible element is the fundamental aspect of constructing a magical realist text.

There is one aspect in *Zoo City* that seems to follow the characteristics of the irreducible element and that is the Undertow. The Undertow is a wave of darkness that seems to emerge from a different dimension. It arises when it effects a transfer of *shavi* animals from one person to another and when it has to claim the life of a person with a *shavi* animal, either when the animal dies or when a person is detached from the *shavi* animal.

The Undertow is an example of an irreducible element because it is a magical event that refuses to blend into the realist matrix. The Undertow is unlike the *shavi* and *muti* magic that can be accommodated in the African form of reality, despite the author adding creative ways to these mythical concepts. The Undertow does not belong in African cosmology, and it does not belong in Western scientific thought either. It is closely related to Margaret Atwood's (2011:29) argument that creators of superheroes and fantasy acquire novel ideas from mythology and childhood imagination.

Atwood (2011:29) argues that mythology contributes to the development of innovative ideas because it is rich in tales of individuals or monsters with extraordinary or unfathomable abilities. The assumption that planets exist in solar systems allows for the possibility of extraterrestrial life, whereas portals and gates to other dimensions are concepts that can be connected to ancient myths because of their chariots of fire and cave entrances (Atwood, 2011:29). Atwood goes on to say that as children have creative minds, their imaginations also contribute to the development of these novel ideas. In other words, the Undertow is a product of Beukes' creative imagination combined with the myth element that Atwood argues is attributable to envisioning the potential of another dimension. Therefore, the Undertow is a novel idea given that it is a product of Beukes' imagination. This is also one of the reasons the Undertow fits the description of an irreducible element provided by Faris because it cannot be assimilated into the realism that is established by the text.

The scenes in which *muti* murder takes place have characteristics that reflect the irreducible element, such as realistic features that are disrupted by the Undertow that is a fantastical element. The scene in Chapter thirty-four begins with Zinzi attempting to save Benoit in the swimming pool that is home to the enormous white crocodile. The Mongoose splashes and pursues Zinzi as she jumps in after Benoit. After several minutes in the pool, Zinzi manages to pull out the injured Benoit. However, she is too late to save Songweza. Odi Huron drugs S'bu and encourages him to fight with his sister Songweza. S'bu lands a vital blow that kills her, and Songweza becomes a sacrifice in a ritual murder (Beukes, 2010:299).

After her death, the atmosphere suddenly changes, indicating that the Undertow is coming (Beukes, 2010:299). The Undertow begins with a high-pitched howling noise like wind in confined areas (Beukes, 2010:298). The sound of the Undertow grows louder as it emerges. It resembles a mystical, dark grey wave that develops into something like a demon with a tail (Beukes, 2010:299). Every person with a *shavi* animal is terrified by the Undertow because according to the narrative it acts in a manner that cannot be understood and it is a force of absolute annihilation.

Based on this description, the Undertow can be understood as a supernatural element that belongs to its separate world. Consequently, this description aligns with the irreducible element. Faris (2004:09) argues that the irreducible element is the 'magical images or events, glowing alluringly from within the realistic matrix, often highlighting central issues in a text'. The Undertow can be perceived as an example of the irreducible element firstly because it is

a magical element that arises within a realistic environment and secondly because it highlights central issues that relate to the text.

One of these issues is the impression that people with *shavi* animals live under precarious conditions. These conditions may relate to the reason Beukes wrote *Zoo City*; to expose the precarious living conditions of African refugees who come to South Africa. Xenophobic attacks create even more precarious conditions for refugees living in South Africa. The unpredictable nature of the Undertow reminds the reader that xenophobic attacks are also unpredictable. The Undertow is one of the reasons that people with *shavi* animals live in precarious conditions. This is reflected by Zinzi who is in constant fear of being consumed by the Undertow. The Undertow is also connected to *muti* murder, which links to another central theme in the text. This is evident when Amira transfers the crocodile to S'bu, singing a ritual chant she asks Odi Huron to repeat after her:

> 'I offer this boy in my place. Let him not be animalled. Let him take mine. Bound by the flesh, bound by blood.' He lunges forward and slices across the crocodile's snout with the knife, as it tears at Songweza again. It yanks its head away in fury and hisses at him with open jaws. (Beukes, 2010:298)

Then Odi Huron orders the frightened S'bu to recite his part to the chant:

> 'Say it! Fucking say it!'
>
> 'Please.' S'bu starts to cry.
>
> Do you hear that sound? Do you know what that is? Odi Huron yelled. 'That's the fucking Undertow, my boy. Now say it, or it's going to swallow you up and drag you down to hell.'
>
> 'I take this…,' S'bu stutters.
>
> 'Animal!'
>
> 'Animal. I take this animal.' He looks to Odi Huron for approval. (Beukes, 2010:299)

The Undertow administers the ritual transfer in this scene and when it is finished, it slowly dissipates into a mirage. The atmosphere changes back to normal as does everything else that is affected by the presence of the Undertow.

The presence of the Undertow transforms the *muti* murder ritual, considered real among African people, and turns it into a magical realist moment. Stobie (2012:375) argues that the Undertow displays critical dystopia because it intends to punish the people who transgressed and carry a *shavi* animal as a sign of their transgressions. Following Stobie's argument I find that there is a sense of ambiguity with how the Undertow can be interpreted. Two interpretations of the Undertow exist: one sees it as a metaphor for a xenophobic mob in Benoit's context (a topic I address later in this section), and another sees it as evocative of other stereotypes on a worldwide scale. In chapter ten, Tyrone Jones testifies about the size of his *shavi* animal that is a butterfly. This scene offers an impression of prejudice based on the size of a person's *shavi* animal; he states that

> some niggas got real wild animals, man. One guy got a Cougar. You can't tell me that's right [...] Don't matter what you did, you got a bad-ass animal in here, you're a bad-ass too [...] Then there's me. I got a butterfly. Keep it in a matchbox. I oughta be pissed off, man. (Beukes, 2010:83)

The Undertow does not appear in this scene because the prisoners are allowed to be with their *shavi* animals, but there is an impression that inside this prison a person is trivialised for being imbued with a small and less vicious animal like a butterfly —the Undertow would not denote a xenophobic mob at this point. It is a common theme in the text that people with *shavi* animals are discriminated against for various reasons. If perhaps the prisoners were kept away from their *shavi* animals as punishment for their transgressions then the Undertow which would make its appearance because prisoners are not with their *shavi* animals could be viewed as collaborating with law enforcement by punishing the prisoners; thus bringing a sense of transcendence. In the same way, this transcendence cannot be considered as an aspect of 'God's nature and power' which is supposed to be independent—it would have been manipulated. In other words, the Undertow will not arise because it is an aspect of 'God' that wants to inflict its sense of justice upon those that have transgressed. It will make its presence because a requirement that a person should not be away from their *shavi* animal would not have been met. If this is considered, then the sense of justice that the Undertow inflicts is unjust and prone to manipulation. In this case, I agree with Stobie when she reads the Undertow as a dystopian element because its sense of justice is extreme.

While I agree with Stobie (2012:375) that the Undertow is a 'threat and an enforcement of justice', my impression is that the Undertow does not always serve as an agent of law

enforcement; rather, in some instances it reeks of havoc. The Undertow's brand of justice, concerning Benoit, reminds me of a mob that attacks foreigners during a xenophobic attack in South Africa. Benoit illustrates an individual who is discriminated against for being a foreigner in the text.

During xenophobic attacks, the mob will charge from shack to shack, attacking migrants, imprisoning them inside, and torching their homes (Vromans & Schweitzer, 2011:90). This often occurs after the mob has conducted a language test in which participants are asked to label specific body parts in isiZulu (Vromans & Schweitzer, 2011:90). The language test is used to determine whether foreign nationals can know any isiZulu words. For instance, most individuals refer to their fingers as *iminwe* rather than the more formal *ucikicane* name for the pinkie finger (Sanders, 2016:08). These outdated terms are still common in South Africa but are unlikely to be known to foreigners (Sanders, 2016:08). Since the mob believes that only foreigners will be unfamiliar with these terms, it will attack people who do not know them. In some instances, holding documentation proving one's status as a permanent resident of South Africa protects people from a mob attack (Vromans & Schweitzer, 2011:90), and likewise, being aware of such terminology may prevent one from becoming a victim of the mob. If not, a person is at risk of being assaulted by the mob, which is comparable to the Undertow in that it preys on those who do not have their *shavi* animals close by.

The nature of the Undertow's attack resonates with an actual xenophobic attack because if one considers how the Undertow operates it is clear that it is an agent that does not reason, just like a mob. The Undertow is also regarded as unpredictable by the people with *shavi* animals even though the text makes it clear that it claims their lives for specific reasons. The Undertow punishes 'Zoos' when they are without their *shavi* animals, as demonstrated in Chapter twenty-three when a bear *shavi* animal is shot multiple times and the Undertow seems to devour the man who is the creature's human host.

The relationship between the Undertow and *shavi* spirits seems logical when it is connected to magical realism as opposed to dystopia. The Undertow is an imagined concept, and it is abstract, while *shavi* are connected to Shona mythology. The form of magical realism that Beukes explores resonates with Warnes's faith-based magical realism, which functions by inserting fantastical elements in cultural verities (Warnes, 2009:15). On the other hand, dystopian narrative is described by Stobie (2012:359) as a type of fiction that depicts imaginary settings that are worse than modern spaces. Thomas Horan (2018:01) offers a

detailed description of dystopia, arguing that it is a literary genre that promotes ideas that oppose the status quo in philosophy or politics. Consequently, I do not perceive the relationship between the Undertow and the *shavi* creatures as espousing dystopia because the setting in *Zoo City* is not worse than the extratextual world. Instead, the representation of Johannesburg is faithful to the real world. Thus the idea of dystopia is disputed.

My impression is that Stobie treats the ideas of *muti* murder and *shavi* creatures as abstract concepts. In contrast, I view them as a kind of metaphor serving as a substitute for a more profound idea. The reason people are marked with an animal alludes to how the mob will target individuals who appear to be darker in skin complexion. In this way, their skin becomes a mark and with this mark, they will be targeted because they are presumed to be immigrants guilty of stealing South African people's jobs and other economic opportunities. In this text, Benoit has been called a '*mkwerekwere'* by Vuyo, one of Zinzi's acquaintances (Beukes, 2010:41). The term '*mkwerekwere'* is a derogatory one used to describe foreigners in South Africa.

Benoit is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo who last saw his family when they were trying to escape from the FDLR into a forest. The FDLR or the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) is an armed group in the eastern part of the DRC (Broache, 2016:20). The main objective of the FDLR, a mostly Hutu Rwandan rebel organisation, was to overthrow the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government (Broache, 2016:23). The FDLR has been linked to numerous atrocities since it was founded, such as mass murder, mutilation, sexual assault and looting (Broache, 2016:24).

While the FDLR used some of this violence to indiscriminately target Congolese Tutsis, they also used it to deter locals from aiding Congolese government forces during anti-FDLR operations and as a bargaining chip to urge the Rwandan government to agree to political talks (Broache, 2016:24). The FDLR is also responsible for the Rwandan genocide in 1994 (Broache, 2016:20). Benoit was beaten by the FDLR, and they set him alight (Beukes, 2010:56). The rest of Benoit's family is missing or presumed dead since they were not seen again after escaping into the bush (Beukes, 2010:56).

Benoit has a personal insight into what it means to run away from your country because of political instability and he also knows how South Africans treat foreign nationals. Benoit has powers that allow him to dampen the intelligence of other people and with his abilities he can

conceal critical information about himself from government officials which allow him to easily settle in any country. It is stated that Benoit lied to home affairs officers about his perverse abilities (Beukes, 2010:56), owing to this fact, it is possible that Benoit manipulates government officials into granting him access to a country. It is that he is an undocumented foreign national which is one of the reasons that gives rise to xenophobic attacks. By judging Benoit's character, *shavi* creatures and the perverse abilities that come with being a host of a *shavi* creature should be read as metaphor that relates to xenophobia, a theme that the irreducible element and the Undertow highlights.

In summation, the Undertow is an example of the irreducible element that is a characteristic of magical realism. It arises from a developed realist impression plus a magical element that refuses to blend into the realist environment. The Undertow is also a metaphor for the xenophobic attacks that claim the lives of many immigrants and some South African nationals who may not speak certain dialects. This aspect cannot be viewed as dystopian because the nature of the setting is realistic. Beukes has deliberately adhered to the conventions of magical realism when representing *muti* murder and *shavi* creatures such as featuring the Undertow whenever there is *muti* murder taking place. The Undertow serves as an additional element that goes beyond the supernatural features in African cosmology. These embellishments to African cosmology help to establish the magical realist mode.

Merging the Realm of Hell's Undertow and the Living World

Another characteristic of magical realism discussed in this section and identified by Faris (2004:21) is the merging of realms—giving the impression that there are two worlds or realms that appear to be close and almost merging. As the description suggests, this characteristic of magical realism suggests a world that penetrates or encroaches the natural world. This means that there is a strange feature that is known to belong in a different realm. This could be any supernatural element that is found to have crossed over to the natural world and rarely elicits a comment from the narrator on why or how it has come to exist in the natural world.

The Famished Road (1991) by Ben Okri is an example of a text that depicts a merging of two different realms. This novel is characterised as a magical realist text, despite the fact that Okri disputed these claims (Riach, 2020:148). The text opens by describing the nature of the world of the unborn, the spiritual world. This is a world where there are pure dreams, where all

things are enchanted, and where there is no suffering (Okri, 1991:03). The law of the spiritual world is such that as spirits grow happier, they become closer to being born into the natural world. In other words, the text establishes a cycle in which, as a child is born, one of the souls from the world of the unborn must enter the world of the living.

The spirit children who come to be born into the world of the living are known as *abiku* children. *Abiku* children are understood to exist between two worlds, the spiritual and the natural (Okri, 1991:05). They do not live long enough to mature into adults and this causes agony for the mothers that give birth to them. The *abiku* children represent the merging of two realms because they exist in both worlds concurrently. This closeness of the spiritual world can be experienced through Azaro, the main character of the story, who is an *abiku* child currently in the world of the living. Azaro becomes tired of the cycle of coming and going to the spirit world and he does not want to hurt his mother anymore. He chooses to defy the laws of the spiritual world and to stay much longer in the world of the living. The closeness of the spiritual world allows spirits to influence the world of the living. For instance, when Azaro's spirit companions realise that he does not want to return to the spirit world, they trouble him by,

> [Calling him] from across the road with the voice of my mother. As I went towards the voice a car almost ran me over. Another day they enticed me with sweet songs towards a gutter. I fell in and no one noticed, and it was only by good fortune that a bicyclist saw me thrashing about in the filthy water and saved me from drowning. (Okri, 1991:08)

The passage above demonstrates one world influencing the other and this aspect is developed throughout *The Famished Road*. It is the presence of two worlds, the natural world and the supernatural world appearing to be close to merging. *Zoo City* adopts the merging of realms in the use of the Undertow. *Muti* and *shavi* spirits hold supernatural elements as well. Therefore, it is easy to think of them as belonging to the supernatural realm. However, this could be disputed because in African cosmology the supernatural and the natural do not have separate realms—they coexist.

If *muti* and *shavi* spirits are studied from the vantage of Western scientific thought, these elements can be viewed as belonging entirely to the supernatural world. But by virtue of their belonging to the supernatural realm, these concepts are rejected by Western scientific thought. As a result, it is advisable to read the text from the perspective of African cosmology

to make sense of *muti* and *shavi* spirits and to regard them as both supernatural and belonging to the natural world. This means that *muti* and *shavi* spirits are not aspects that belong to a different realm. On the other hand, the Undertow does not belong to African cosmology, which means it belongs to its own unique realm. The two realms that are merged in *Zoo City* are the living world and the realm of the Undertow. A common and consistent understanding of the Undertow is that it is a subject of hell, and it is known as the 'Hell's Undertow'. This suggests that the Undertow has a relationship with Hell and this is where it comes from and what it represents.

Atwood (2011:30) argues that one way of understanding other worlds that are represented in fiction is to look for their traces. They may descend from 'the Mesopotamian underworld to the Egyptian Afterlife to the Domain of Pluto to the Christian Hell and Heaven …'. The Undertow is a concept that is inspired to a certain degree by Christianity's hell and heaven relationship. The role of the Undertow in the text is to claim the lives of people with *shavi* spirits, either when they are victims of *muti* murder or when they live without their *shavi* animals. Chapter ten demonstrates the lived experience of prisoners who are isolated from their *shavi* animals. This separation causes them to develop agonising pains and sicknesses. This continues for a long time, until the Undertow comes for the prisoners and takes their lives at night for being separated from their *shavi* animals (Beukes, 2010:82). This chapter also explains how the Undertow operates; that is, the Undertow requires that people are always attached to their *shavi* animals.

The Undertow emerges from a different realm and claims the lives of people in the natural world. It appears that the world of the Undertow and the world of the living are merged. Given that these two worlds have merged, there is the impression that the Undertow can arise at any time in the world of the living. Consequently, people must not be separated from their animals. Equally, it is a burden on some people to carry their *shavi* animal everywhere as it has an effect on their physical body. In one of the scenes in Chapter seven, Zinzi reflects on a time when she was in Sun City, and during a sermon held by an Adventist group she saw a man with burn scars from carrying a gigantic mongoose. She observes:

> But the men in the lift didn't carry their animals like burdens, certainly, not the giant in front with burn scars creeping down his neck underneath his t-shirt, and a Mongoose slung across his chest in a customised baby sling. (Beukes, 2010:52)

All Zoo's live in precarious conditions because they cannot be free from their *shavi* animals. The only time they can become free is through a ritual murder. Odi Huron is an example of someone who attempts to perform the ritual by sacrificing the twins, S'bu and Songweza.

Baba Dumisani Ndebele informs Zinzi that 'twins are very powerful. In Zulu culture, we used to kill one of the pair to kill the bad luck' (Beukes, 2010:170). This claim connects with Mbiti's (1969:152) argument that the delivery of twins is a sign of high fertility in several African societies. Twin births are seen as having special powers (Mbiti, 1969:152). However, Mbiti problematises this argument and he mentions that the treatment of twins remains ambivalent. While some people rejoice at the birth of twins because it symbolises a flow of human life (Mbiti, 1969:152), others see the birth of twins as sorrowful because they are sacrificed to prevent bad omens (Mbiti, 1969:152). Considering the claims made in the text and Mbiti's argument, it could be argued that twins carry a certain life force granted to them by the supreme deity. Odi Huron intends to manipulate this life force to cleanse his sin, which is indicated by his *shavi* creature.

Even when the ritual has been carried out, people with *shavi* animals still have to face the, sometimes unpredictable, Undertow. When the Undertow comes to the world of the living there is a sense that it penetrates or encroaches on this world. This aspect can be seen when the Undertow appears in Chapter thirty-four after Songweza has been sacrificed in the ritual:

> A thin howling sound starts up like wind through narrow spaces […] Shadows are peeling off the walls, congealing in the water. The howling reaches a new pitch, underscored by a dull click-clack, as if of teeth […] The howling gets louder […] The Undertow rises like a wave, tendrils reaching towards him as if tasting his skin. (Beukes, 2010:298-299)

The description of the Undertow as it appears with the howling sound and the shadows peeling off the wall can be interpreted as the Undertow penetrating and forcing its way into the world of the living. This suggests that the world it comes from is very close to the living world. As the Undertow influences the world of the living, there are attempts by religious and scientific studies to decipher the Undertow. These reach various conclusions and use differing terminology that potentially affects the perception of the Undertow. These conclusions contribute to the perception that the Undertow belongs to a realm of its own.

An article in Chapter seventeen that is titled ‘Mask of Existence: The Demystification of the shadow-self Absorption’ is an example of how the people in the world of the living attempt to understand the Undertow (Beukes, 2010:157). The article suggests that:

> Therapists who themselves, either tacitly or (in rare cases) overtly, subscribe to the idea of Aposymbiots as ‘animalled’ or ‘zoos’ and shadow-self-absorption as ‘Hell’s Undertow’ or ‘The Black Judgement’ perpetuate this stigmatisation and very often fail to see the very real trauma that Aposymbiots experience as a result of lifelong anticipation of shadow-self-absorption. (Beukes, 2010:157)

This passage relates to an ontological study of the Undertow suggesting that even with the presence of the Undertow, the text is consistent with faith-based magical realism. The terms ‘Hell’s Undertow’ and ‘the black judgement’ relate to ontology because they are concepts that require thought and sense to understand them. This attempt to understand the Undertow suggests that it is a foreign concept that has invaded the natural world. The connotations of the words ‘judgement’ and ‘hell’ are that the Undertow belongs to the world of deities. It is from this understanding I surmise that the author might have been inspired by Christianity’s relationship with Heaven and Hell to construct the Undertow. As such, heaven and hell belong to a different realm that is beyond the world of the living. Consequently, the author has brought the realm of hell closer, almost merging it with the living world.

The Undertow is an element that passes judgement on the people with *shavi* animals. However, its judgement is not necessarily based on the transgressions they have committed. Instead, the Undertow makes these judgments when individuals are not attached to their *shavi* animal or when a *shavi* animal is killed. The Undertow appears to pass judgement by claiming the life of the individual. Its judgement is not made to bring about transcendence. Chapter Twenty-three provides proof that the Undertow does not bring about transcendence. Firstly, Zinzi calls the Undertow a black hole that is cold and impersonal (Beuke, 2010:209). There is an irony in Zinzi’s claim that the Undertow is impersonal because in this scene she watches a man being taken by the Undertow. He is a victim of a gang war, and his animal is shot multiple times. If the Undertow aimed to bring about transcendence, then it would have spared the man’s life. Instead, it further victimises the man by taking away his life.

Zinzi further conveys the uncertainty of the world of the Undertow in her words ‘we become stars beyond the other side’ (Beukes, 2010:209). Zinzi’s unsettling doubts about the Undertow reveal the closeness of the two worlds that seem at first to be separate. In the same

scene before the Undertow appears, a bear is shot repeatedly outside Zinzi's apartment, and the host makes numerous attempts to save his *shavi* animal but fails. The bear eventually dies on the spot, and the Undertow makes its grand entrance:

> The air pressure dips, like before a storm. A keening sound wells up soft and low as if it's always been there, just outside the range of human hearing. It swells to howling. And then the shadows start to drop from trees, like raindrops after a storm. The darkness pools and gathers and then seethes. (Beukes, 2010:208)

Once more, the change in air pressure signals how the Undertow cuts through the world of the living. This again underlines that the two realms are close to merging. Moments after its arrival, the Undertow pursues the man whose *shavi* animal has been killed, and claims his life. *Shavi* animals exist in between two worlds that are merging, just as Azaro does in *The Famished Road*. In Okri's text the world of the unborn affects the world of the living, while in *Zoo City*, the Undertow affects the world of the living. The idea that when individuals are separated from their *shavi* animals their lives are taken by the Undertow suggests that *shavi* spirits exist in between the two realms.

Faris (2004:21) argues that magical realism exists at the nexus of two realities, at a hypothetical place within a mirror with two faces that reflect in opposite directions. Faris's argument can be applied to *shavi* animals because they exist in between the living world and the world of the Undertow.

In this discussion I have shown how the merging of realms, which is a characteristic of magical realism, fits into the narrative of *Zoo City*. Therefore, *Zoo City* can be described as a magical realist text.

Conclusion

The questions posed in Chapter One such as the extent to which the terms 'realism' and 'magical realism' account for the elements of *muti* murder and the supernatural in the novels were addressed in this chapter. I argued that *muti* murder and *shavi* magic can be explained as elements of magical realism. Despite these aspects being supernatural in general but treated as realistic by African people, Beukes has added creative and symbolic powers that render them part of magical realism. I find that *Zoo City* follows a particular strand of magical

realism known as faith-based magical realism. Faith-based magical realism derives its magic from cultural phenomena, and it purposefully provides an alternative perspective from which to view the non-Western world. The Undertow plays a significant role in highlighting other characteristics of magical realism such as the irreducible element and the merging of two realms.

Drawing on how various scholars have interpreted the novel, I argue that overall, *Zoo City* has the features of a multigeneric text. *Muti* murder and *shavi* magic are magical and realistic while there are moments where the text leans towards a noir genre. Fowler (1982:182) describes a mixture of genres as a mixture in which 'two or more complete repertoires are present in such proportions that no one of them dominates'. It is evident from various studies that *Zoo City* accommodates multiple genres in such a way that they are equally represented. In addition, Fowler (1982:182) argues that in order to combine genres, these must at least be of the same scale, that is, they must be similar or contrasting genres that have some external forms in common. In the case of *Zoo City*, there are moments when the noir element blends well with the *muti* murder aspects of the text which are magical realist.

CHAPTER THREE: *WAYS OF DYING*

Introduction

This Chapter provides the second response to the research question discussed in Chapter One. Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying (1995)* has been cited as an example of a magical realist text despite him denying these claims. In this chapter, I argue that *Ways of Dying* is an example of *Intsomi*, that is orature that is distinct to isiXhosa-speaking people. Reading the text as *Intsomi* helps understand its objectives, as opposed to reading it as a magical realist. Likewise, the reference to *muti* murder in the text can be read as an example of *Intsomi* rather than magical realism. This is based on my observation that the text regularly employs the communal voice that is one of the characteristics of *Intsomi*.

This chapter is divided into two sections. I provide a synopsis of the story in section one, as well as discussing the term magical realism and how it concerns *Ways of Dying*. In section two, I demonstrate how references to *muti* murder and other supernatural events should be viewed as examples of *Intsomi*. My findings are summed up in the conclusion.

Section One

Synopsis

Ways of Dying (1995) is a fictional narrative that is set in an unnamed South African harbour city. The narrative covers the one-week period between Christmas and New Year, just before the 1994 post-apartheid elections (Samin, 2000:189). The story follows Toloki, a professional mourner, and his childhood acquaintance who soon becomes his girlfriend Noria.

Toloki attends a funeral and offers his services as a professional mourner. In the crowd of mourners, he notices a woman, and it is Noria from the village. Toloki accepts Noria's invitation to see her at her home and prepares to do so the following day. Toloki is homeless and he sleeps on the streets. As he prepares to sleep, he concludes that he will spend the following day at the beach and later visit Noria. At the beach, Toloki reflects on the days they

spent together in the village. As Toloki reflects about the past, the narrative focus shifts from the present to the time when Toloki and Noria were young.

He recalls that Noria has a bewitching voice when she laughs and when she sings. Jwara, Toloki's father, who is a blacksmith, uses Noria's voice when creating his figurines. Noria's voice was able to 'change mediocre artisans into artists of genius and to make the birds and bees pause in their business of living and pay audience to her' (Mda, 1995:31). As a result, Jwara kept Noria in his workshop so that she would sing for him while he created his figurines.

Noria's abilities do not come as a surprise given that she is a daughter of That Mountain Woman. That Mountain Woman has a rondavel that she uses for consultations and dispensing medicine for ailments caused by wizards and witches. When That Mountain Woman was eight months pregnant with Noria, she slept with the doctor who was treating her. When Noria was born, the Mountain People were convinced that Noria had the doctor's features despite the fact that That Mountain Woman was already eight months pregnant when she slept with the doctor.

Noria receives attention from older men such as taxi drivers and conductors as a result of her bewitching voice. Eventually, Napu, a taxi driver impregnates Noria and decides to cohabit with her. It takes Noria fifteen months to give birth to their first child who they decide to call Vutha. After Vutha's birth, Napu is unfaithful to Noria and brings different women to their home. Noria breaks up with him and returns home with Vutha. Meanwhile, That Mountain Woman falls ill and Noria finds a job entertaining men in hotels. When Noria confronts her father Xesibe about trying to rape a woman who watches over Vutha while Noria is at work, he chases her out of the house. Noria gathers up everything she owns and returns to Napu's shack. Noria insists that Napu quit having affairs with other women. Despite the fact that their relationship is unhealthy, Napu and Noria are reconciled. That Mountain Woman passes away quietly, and she is buried at Xesibe's home. After the funeral, Noria makes the decision to move to the city.

Jwara is enraged because Noria stops visiting because of Napu. Jwara's rage leads him to abuse Toloki and his mother. Toloki makes the decision to leave his home and seek employment in the city. Toloki has faced extreme hardship in his life but his adversities teach him how to channel his grief by assuming the role of a professional mourner (Mda, 1995:60). As a professional mourner, Toloki works in small black communities and shantytowns and

wanders the South African countryside looking for work at what seems like an endless number of funerals.

The narrative shifts back to the present day in the city. Noria and Toloki have reunited, and they become fond of each other as they have not seen each other for a long time, and they establish a romantic relationship. Toloki learns of the horrible actions that led to the death of young Vutha. Noria grieves the loss of her son, Vutha the second, and she confesses that this is the same child's second burial, meaning she gave birth to the same child twice (Mda, 1995:136). After Vutha passes away, Noria believes that she is no longer able to raise children because they always die before reaching adulthood (Mda, 1955:197). Toloki declares that he will fill Noria's life with more happiness than grief.

Noria's shack burns to the ground before Vutha's funeral and Toloki commits to rebuilding the house. He begins by gathering rusty steel for the frame. All the caring neighbours gather to help rebuild a mud floor and offer furniture and other bits and pieces that will help Noria to get her life back together (Mda, 1955:197). Inspired by this assistance from Noria's neighbours, Toloki covers the walls of Noria's house with collages of photographs from magazines and paint, turning it into a bright technicolour world for them to share. Inside the house, Toloki find images of beautiful kitchens, bathrooms, living rooms, and more, from houses in America and Europe and plasters the indoor walls with these images for Noria. When he is done, Toloki and Noria take a tour around their 'dream home' (Mda, 1955:198). In a play of imagination and magic, Noria and Toloki rest on a king-sized feather bed and admire their professional kitchen. They watch American sitcoms in their home theatre. Their house is fit for royalty.

Nefolovhodwe, Jwara's friend, arrives at Noria's home. He has moved to the city and made a fortune in the funeral business. Nefolovhodwe has come to give Toloki Jwara's figurines, arguing that Jwara is haunting him. Toloki dislikes Nefolovhodwe and is sad that he has changed after becoming wealthy through the success of his funeral service. Nevertheless, Toloki makes the decision to keep the figurines and considers selling them to support Noria financially. Noria and Toloki build a life together.

Magical Realism and *Ways of Dying*

As described in the preceding chapter, magical realism is a narrative style in which magical occurrences are depicted in a realistic manner. A magical realism story initially seems to adopt a type of literary realism before supernatural aspects interrupt it (Bowers, 2004:03). A clearly defined reality is crucial to magical realism. In this section, I explain how *Ways of Dying* lacks crucial magical realist components such as mundane details that give the impressions of reality.

In Fincham's (2011:xxii) opinion, 'Mda's magic realism has to be viewed as an extension of, rather than a contradiction of, his social realism'. I disagree that the structure of *Ways of Dying* exhibits any sort of realism, either magical or socialist. Ultimately, social realism and magical realism are both still realism; that is, they have a realism-at-its-core component that aims to portray reality as it is. Realism is motivated by the notion of representing the world by a system of signs that denotes elements of the world (Belsey,1980:40). Frye (1957:136) argues that realism is the art of verisimilitude, which means that the narrative communicates and conveys a hypothetical version of the material world. The idea of realism, according to Belsey and Frye, is that it should make the reader feel that the story is actually happening, while verisimilitude denotes that the narrative events make sense and seem like 'ordinary' moments.

The previous chapter demonstrated that *Zoo City* is largely realist in its construction and components or moments of the supernatural trickle into an already comprehensible realist context, and, therefore, I argue that it is a magical realist text. *Ways of Dying* falls short on these details. The magical occurrences in *Ways of Dying* do not resonate with magical realism. The setting of *Ways of Dying* is not mentioned, and it is a detailed description of a familiar setting that adds a realistic texture to any fictional writing.

Zamora and Faris (1995:06) argue that while resisting the fundamental tenets of literary realism and post-enlightenment rationalism, magical realism can be seen as an extension of realism owing to its interest in the nature of reality and its depiction. By using mimesis, realism develops a detailed setting, which is another aspect of realism that Villanueva points out. Villanueva (1997:05) believes that realism should be regarded as a faithful and unaltered aesthetic representation of the outside world as perceived. The information about the setting is absent from *Ways of Dying*; the setting is unspecified and the surrounding area is only briefly described.

Certainly, *Ways of Dying* is mimetic as far as the dialogue is concerned. The communal voice immerses inside the characters' thoughts and informs the reader about their emotions and state of mind. Understanding the emotions of a character enhances the verisimilitude of a narrative; this allows the emotions of a character to resonate with the emotions of the reader. In an interview with Naidoo, Mda explained:

> I had not heard of magic realism when I started writing those plays. It is something that I have always done in my writing. I make things happen the way I want things to happen, however much that might contradict what you might call objective reality […] When I wrote the novels I was at the stage where I was familiar with the movement called magic realism. When I wrote the novels, I read people like Marquez. I had read *A Hundred and One Years of Solitude*. I read that and I fell in love with that mode of writing, precisely because I felt that the Latin American writers were doing what I had always been doing myself. When I started with my first novel *Ways of Dying*, I was conscious of a movement called magic realism and that I was writing a magic realist novel. But basically, I was doing what I had done much earlier. (Mda in Naidoo, 1997:250)

I believe that there is a disconnect when scholars describe *Ways of Dying* as magical realism. According to Mda, when he wrote *Ways of Dying* he was only following a model that was already in place when he wrote his plays, and which existed before he was aware of the term 'magical realism'. Mda continues that after reading Latin American works such as *A Hundred and One Years of Solitude* (1967), he realised that the genre he was adopting was in fact known as magical realism. Therefore, when he wrote his early plays, before penning his debut novel *Ways of Dying*, he had no label for his literary style. What Mda knows is that he is writing about a universe that 'contradicts what might be called objective reality' (Naidoo, 1997:250). When Mda composed *Ways of Dying*, he was aware of the term magical realism, and he was aware that he was adhering to a pattern of writing that he had been employing all along. Mda was also aware that his style is comparative to magical realism. It is at this point that I argue that magical realism is not a suitable term to describe this novel. Mda appears mistaken when describing his work as magical realism when his inspiration for writing was not from magical realist writers.

In his dissertation, Naidoo argues that Mda infuses traditional African folk culture with magical realism. While Bheamadu in *Magic Realism and Images of the Transition in Zakes Mda's Ways of Dying (1995)* argues that Mda uses traditional African aesthetics to inject a unique sense of magical realism that is informed by African folk culture and mythology. The arguments of Naidoo and Bheamadu are consistent with what Raich (2020:155) refers to as 'African magical realism', which is a magical realism infused with oral narrative. These assessments stand out because they acknowledge how important African beliefs are to Mda's plays and novels. However, magical realism is not the only style of narration that adequately explains the African concept of magic present in Mda's works. It is safer to say that Mda is influenced by his cultural form of storytelling, which is *Intsomi*, given that he developed this style of writing before discovering magical realism. Consequently, I argue that *Ways of Dying* should be read as an orature or *Intsomi*, instead of as magical realism. In the following sections I explain why this approach is suitable when discussing *Ways of Dying.*

Intsomi/ Orature

The traditional aesthetics in *Ways of Dying* that many academics discuss are connected to the African narrative style known as orature. Orature is a long-standing form of verbal art that is transmitted from speaker to listener in both its classical and current incarnations. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981:133) views orature as a Pan-Africanist storytelling genre. Although *Ways of Dying* contains features that suggest Mda is an Africanist writer, I challenge the general categorisation of Mda's work as 'Africanist' on the grounds that the term is essentialising. Instead, the orature style that Mda exhibits is specific to the Xhosa culture.

Ways of Dying displays Xhosa-specific orature that is *Intsomi* rather than magical realism. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that orature is a Pan-Africanist style of writing, Mda also expresses Pan-Africanist views (Naidoo, 1997:250). An Africanist writer, according to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, is an artist who is shaped by the political, economic, and social standing of his/her time (Wa Thiongo, 1981:68). Consequently, Mda admits being influenced by his community:

> … as Africans, we always live with magic… Here in Africa, there is magic happening all the time. There are many belief systems and in fact a lot of the things that the Western world refers to as superstition. (Mda in Naidoo, 1997:250)

Mda refers to the traditional aesthetic that is evident in his work. Orature alludes to a pre-colonial culture that aligns with the aims of Pan-Africanism. The *muti* murder scene in the novel is an example that identifies Mda as an Africanist author because it not only references a precolonial heritage but also addresses a social problem in his society. As a result, much as Ngugi wa Thiong'o expects from an Africanist writer, Mda is affected by his community. I think, to comprehend Mda's work one must move beyond the Africanist terminology because the African continent is large and diverse in culture, religion, history, politics, and languages, therefore, it is expected that fictional narratives that are produced in this continent will be different due to these differences. The 'Africanist' term does not recognise these differences, it makes it challenging to provide a cogent definition of what comprises African fiction. Chennells writes that:

> … we fail to read the continent's texts in a complexly intelligent way, precisely because we look at them for some expression of a pan-continental experience. This has of necessity to be so generalised as to provide a thin reality for literature to explore and because it is so generalised it does not need any complex formal expression. (Chennells, 1993:115)

In traditional Xhosa culture, orature is known as *Intsomi*. I choose to refer to *Ways of Dying* as *Intsomi* to respect Mda's community and history. In this way, I avoid the general term 'Africanist' as it is not specific in this context and that African folk culture is not uniform. This choice has made it clear to me that each African ethnic group has its own distinct folk culture and cosmology, which are some of the factors influencing literature.

Opland (1975:54) describes *Intsomi* as a performing art form with a core-cliche (a song, chant, or saying) as its dynamic mainspring. During a performance, this core-cliche develops, expands, and it evokes audience participation. In Xhosa society everyone has the potential to perform (Opland, 1975:54). *Intsomi* narratives frequently explore supernatural themes at random without offering a clear sense of the real world. The public in such cases will not have been exposed to novels that use this style of writing given that *Intsomi* is shared orally and there are few authors that adapt this technique to a narrative. It is simple to overlook these narratives in conversations that relate to literary genres because they are also written in native Southern African languages, such as isiXhosa or another native language of the region.

What stands out, though, is that if these narratives were translated into English, one would find that most Southern African literature that at first glance appears to be magical realist

would fail to maintain this narrative mode. This factor is prominent in literature produced by authors who have a propensity to accept African cosmology, a conception that diverges from Western empiricism. Their writing style is influenced by this worldview, and *Ways of Dying* is a literature that reflects it. Of course, *Ways of Dying* is an anomaly because it is written in English and because Mda is a well-known figure, giving it prominence above the rest despite using the *Intsomi* narrative. His father, AP Mda, was a key figure in the creation of the Pan-African Congress and the African National Congress Youth League, and his father's fame precedes him. An example of a novel that follows the structure of *Intsomi* is *Ubulumko bezinja* (1962) by Rustum Siyongwana. This novel was written in isiXhosa, and there are similarities in structure to *Ways of Dying*.

Ubulumko bezinja opens with a communal voice '*Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi umfo othile ekwakusithiwa nguKholisile wafuya inja…*', directly translated as, 'They say it once happened, a certain man named Kholisile farmed dogs…' (Moropa, 1997:31). The opening of the novel removes you from the spheres of reality because it alerts you of an *Intsomi* narrative that is to follow. Mda follows the same approach in the first chapter of *Ways of Dying*.

> When in our orature the storyteller begins the story, 'They say it once happened…', we are the 'they'. No individual owns any story. The community is the owner of the story, and it can tell it the way it deems fit. (Mda, 1995:12)

The clue that Mda gives at this juncture is intended to communicate the idea that the story about to unfold is outside the realms of reality and does not adhere to any kind of realism. Furthermore, it defies the logic of contemporary Western reality. For the sole reason that the narrative is not organised entirely according to realist criteria, any supernatural element that arises after this declaration cannot be considered as magical realism.

A noteworthy convention shared by *Ubulumko bezinja* and *Ways of Dying* is the presence of the communal voice, which is a convention of *Intsomi.* Orature, Bell and Jacobs (2009:08) argue, emphasises two things: magic, and the communal voice. Furthermore, Mkonto (2009:93) observes yet another principle of *Intsomi*, that is the absence of individual names. In other words, magic, the communal voice, and the lack of individual names are the three tenets that make up *Intsomi* and which I apply to *Ways of Dying*.

In this section I have described the characteristics of *Intsomi* and discussed the idea of an Africanist writer. Moolla (2012:437) argues that an African-written novel is often seen as 'a metaphor of the reconciliation of divergent and competing worldviews'. This is perhaps why

Ways of Dying is confused with magical realism. In the following section I compare the tenets of *Intsomi* and magical realism.

Section Two

Intsomi or magical realism?

Some academics argue that Mda's use of African folk aesthetics in *Ways of Dying* is an innovative way to employ magical realism (Bheamadu 2004:35, Barker, 2008:08, Naidoo, 1998:146 and Warnes, 2009:79). In this section, I propose an extension from their arguments that African folk aesthetics, which are frequently referred to when discussing the supernatural features of *Ways of Dying*, relate to *Intsomi* rather than to magical realism. In so doing, I contrast the structure of *Ways of Dying* with prominent magical realist novels.

The Communal Voice

'Some magic realist texts use an omniscient third-person narrator to simply present the magic elements as undeniable fact' (Hegerfeldt, 2005:76). Orature novels rely on the communal voice that is 'inherited from previous generations, extending back into the mists of time' (Moolla, 2012:438). Hegerfeldt argues that the omniscient voice is commonly used in magical realism while Moolla argues that the communal voice is commonly used in oral literature. Following these arguments, in this section I look at how the omniscient voice and the communal voice relate to *Ways of Dying*.

The omniscient voice is a popular literary technique used by magical realist writers, so much so that the omniscient voice is regarded as one of the characteristics of magical realism. It is present in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and more. In this chapter, I focus on *The Satanic Verses* as an example of a magical realist text with an omniscient voice. In this novel, the author switches back and forth between the omniscient voice and a free indirect discourse, which I explain below.

Commonly, people confuse the communal voice with the omniscient voice. The omniscient voice narrator is commonly referring to 'the voice' of the author; this style of narration calls

to mind a specific author persona (Dawson, 2013: 12). The omniscient voice takes on the persona of a deity while simultaneously revealing and withholding details about the made-up world.

Dawson (2013: 11) argues that omniscient narrators are frequently found in realist novels from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the rise of postmodernist literature, the omniscient narrator gained even more prominence, and two devices frequently used in postmodern fiction are parody and anachronism (Dawson, 2013: 11). Postmodernism is an artistic movement that derives its existence from modernism; it is a reaction to modernism. McHale (1987:27) argues that postmodern fiction concerns itself with questions of being, a theoretical description of the universe.

Dawson (2013:18) writes that omniscience is a literary privilege of the narrator, who becomes the narrative authority who manifests information about the fictional world. Given that the postmodernist movement challenges all forms of authority, the narrator's authority in postmodernism typically functions as an irony. Therefore, omniscience operates within the parameters that are stated by Dawson which reads that omniscience is a narrative voice that possesses information about the fictional world.

In *The Satanic Verses,* the omniscient voice employs the authority of postmodernism that appears to be factual, yet it is ironic. For instance, the omniscient voice presents the nature of the fictional world as an undeniable fact that cannot be opposed, yet the narrative voice is metafictional. A case in point is the statement from the omniscient voice that 'two real full-grown, living men fell from a great height, twenty-nine thousand and two feet, towards the English Channel, without the benefit of parachutes or wings, out of a clear sky' (Rushdie, 1988:03). The omniscient voice conveys a fact that cannot be disputed, yet it is ironic and in accordance with postmodernist values. The omniscient voice also states a fact about the distance which the two men fell from and how they survived after falling from that distance. This implies that the omniscient voice is observing as the two men fall from the sky. Furthermore, it implies that the all-knowing speaker is looking down on the two men with a divine gaze. The omniscient voice's use of third-person pronouns is justified by the fact that he is not a participant in the activity.

The omniscient voice introduces the supernatural moments in the story, affirming Hegerfeldt's claim that the omniscient voice is frequently used in magical realist narratives. As Gibreel falls into the sea he has visions in which he sees an angelic figure, Reekha

Merchant, who is also Gibreel's dead partner. Moments later Saladin has a similar experience:

> When Mr Saladin Chamcha fell out of the clouds over the English Channel he felt his heart being gripped by a force so implacable that he understood it was impossible for him to die. Afterwards, when his feet were once more firmly planted on the ground, he would begin to doubt this, to ascribe the implausibility's of his transit to the scrambling of his perceptions by the blast, and to attribute his survival, his and Gibreel's, to blind, dumb luck. (Rushdie, 1988:09)

The passage describes the omniscient voice predicting Saladin's fate and demonstrates the power of this narrator. This narrator operates in an extra narrative way, which Dawson calls free indirect discourse. This is a third-person narrative technique that is recognised as a phenomenon of speech and thought representation that combines the perspectives of the narrator and the character (Dawson, 2013:169). It can be argued that free indirect discourse is not the same as the omniscient narrator, but Dawson recognises it as one of the many ways in which the omniscient voice is performed by extra narrative elements such as evaluative commentary (Dawson, 2013:20). In this passage, the narrator presents itself as if it shares Saladin's feelings. In other words, the passage does not express the emotions of the narrator, but it expresses the emotions of Saladin. Therefore, Dawson emphasises that the role of the omniscient voice is not singular, but that it can mediate its presence in the form of narratorial commentary.

The communal voice functions very differently from the omniscient voice. A communal narrative occurs when the narrative voice makes frequent use of the first-person plural pronoun for self-designation and self-reference to refer 'to a group of persons who narrate and who are also a character' (Bekhta, 2017:165). In some instances, the communal voice has similar qualities to the Greek tragic chorus. However, this chorus belongs to dramatic plays while the communal voice belongs to narrative fiction. The Greek tragic chorus is also known as the 'collective character' and it serves as a barrier between the performers and the audience (Weiner, 1980:206).

The omniscient voice relies on third-person speech while the communal voice relies on the first-person plural. Therefore, there is a difference between these narrative voices. The communal voice serves as a social mind—it has interests in societal issues. It functions as a

collective mind that performs a collective action and expresses shared emotions and perspectives. Natalya Bekhta argues that communal voices,

> collectively muse over their lives and gossip about each other's affairs or who is the next in line to be fired. That the gossiping and physical actions, for example, are consistently collective becomes significant over the course of the narrative… (Bekhta, 2017: 167-168)

Lanser defines the communal voice as,

> a practice in which narrative authority is invested in a definable community and textually inscribed either through multiple, mutually authorising voices or through the voice of a single individual who is manifestly authorised by a community. (Lanser, 1992:21)

There is no godlike gaze in a communal voice because everyone is equal, and no one owns the story. In *Ways of Dying*, the narrative voice coexists with the affairs of the community and, occasionally, those of Toloki and Noria. When in the first chapter the nurse yells, this apparatus is introduced as follows:

> There are many ways of dying… this our brother's way is a way that has left us without words in our mouths. This little brother was our child, and his death is more painful because it is of our own creation. It is not the first time we bury little children… (Mda 1995:07)

The communal voice appears throughout the book, and there is a repeating plurality in the conversation in the example above. The plurality alerts the reader to the fact that the narrator is a representative of group consciousness. The collectiveness that this voice produces gives the impression that he is a trustworthy witness because he is always present to observe the incidents involving Noria and Toloki. The reader can trust the communal voice even when it shifts the attention of the narrative back in time to a moment when Toloki and Noria are still young.

The communal voice creates a mimetic effect that makes it seem like a selfless 'individual who functions as a group and loses his individual properties' (Bekhta, 2017:177). Therefore, the communal voice has no authority over the story, unlike the omniscient voice that is operating like a God.

Since Toloki is the focus of the story, it occasionally seems that his inner voice is the one that is heard when in fact it is the communal voice that is conveying a deeper understanding of Toloki's emotions. When the communal voice says that:

> It is not different, really, here in the city. Just like back in the village, we live our lives together as one. We know everything about everybody. We even know things that happen when we are not there; things that happen behind people's closed doors deep in the middle of the night. We are the all-seeing eyes of the village gossip. (Mda, 1995:12)

It can be inferred that to be communal is to account for everyone's emotions. The passages above apply to Noria and Toloki because they move from the village to the city. They also apply to the audience because they are witnesses of the story as it unfolds. This is a central convention of *Intsomi*.

Naidoo (1998:151) writes that 'the omniscient narrator, who is a collective "we" is characteristic of magic realist texts where the narrator is omniscient, yet a participant in the story'. To claim that an omniscient voice has a collective consciousness feels almost paradoxical. According to my description, the omniscient voice is distinguishable by its propensity to speak in the third person. In addition, it has a feature that I have not included in this chapter but which undoubtedly excludes communal consciousness. Bheamadu argues along the same lines as Naidoo that:

> …[T]he omniscient narrator, in a communal voice, relates the experiences of Toloki and Noria, spanning a thirty-year period. Through the categories of oral discourse, he narrates their adventures to his imagined audience but adopts an external point of view. In this way, the instrument of Magic Realism is used to present the communal voice as a re-definition of rural culture within urban modernity. (Bheamadu, 2004: 36)

While Bheamadu and Naidoo describe the omniscient voice as a feature of magical realism, they frequently include the 'communal voice' as a component of the omniscient voice. The two narrative voices differ slightly from one another; one is connected to magical realism, while the other is connected to *Intsomi*. This suggests that the voice in *Ways of Dying* is not omniscient as Naidoo and Bheamadu argue in their respective studies. If it was omniscient, it would function as the narrative voice in *The Satanic Verses*.

The narrative voice that Rushdie employs is distant from the action. Dawson (2013:18) writes that the omniscient voice is ‘a product of their status as narrating agents ontologically distinct from the story world’. Dawson supports my claim that the communal voice is different from the omniscient voice. Dawson argues that the omniscient voice rose to popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Bekhta and Lanser argue that the communal voice has not been sufficiently explored by the dominant culture, making it possible to mistake it for the omniscient voice.

The fact that one narrative voice is dominant while the other has received little attention further establishes the difference between the narrative voices. Judging from the narrative voice that is used in *Ways of Dying* I argue that one of the tenets of *Intsomi*, that is the communal voice is evident in the text. From this point on in the chapter *Ways of Dying* is characterised by *Intsomi* rather than by magical realism.

The Supernatural elements

In ‘Garca Márquez's Cien Anos de Soledad’ (1983), Stephen Hart (1982:40) argues that ‘in the magical realist novel, the mystery palpates with the real rather than descending sporadically upon it’. It seems that the supernatural components in orature stories and magical realism tend to share certain similarities as both attempt to follow a similar procedure with supernatural components. Hegerfeldt (2005:50) argues that magical realism is literature that ‘approximates literary realism in that it portrays a fictional universe that is identifiable as a reflection of the extratextual world’, while Moudileno (2006:30) argues that magical realism ‘is first and foremost a realism as it performs a fundamentally mimetic representation of a given reality’. In the case of realism, Frye (1957:136) argues that a realist text should accurately reflect what is known since realism is the art of verisimilitude.

In the previous chapter, I established that magical realism is a narrative style used to ‘naturalise’ the supernatural, which means that real-world occurrences and fantastical, natural, and supernatural elements are all coherently depicted in a condition of equivalence. Hart (1982:41) argues that the ‘magic’ component of magical realism develops from a realist matrix, which means that supernatural components develop from a well-established empirical world. *Ways of Dying* is not located in a well-known location like Johannesburg, in contrast

to *Zoo City*. As a result, *Ways of Dying* does not fit comfortably with Hart and Hegerfeldt conceptions of magical realism.

I presume that since authors like Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, Lauren Beukes and others write with meticulous attention to realistic details, realism is a crucial convention for magical realism. In a sense, these magical realist authors provide the reader with a realistic world before they incorporate supernatural features in it. This is not necessary in *Intsomi*, where realism is the bedrock of the narrative. Instead, magic, the communal voice, and the absence of individual names are the three key components of *Intsomi* narratives.

Opland (1975:54) states that *Intsomi* uses fantastical animals and 'magic' to create disorder in reading patterns. The appearance of magic in *Intsomi* does not require a realist narrative like magical realism; for instance, Noria is a character who has supernatural abilities that cause disorder and appear in the absence of a realist narrative. Noria has a bewitching voice that ignites Jwara and Toloki's creativity. She is gifted with luck that enables her to avoid death, and she gives birth to the same child twice. These characteristics of Noria will be discussed below.

Noria's potent voice

Noria sings for Jwara, Toloki's father, who is a blacksmith. It is Noria's potent voice that gives him the creativity to create the figurines that he sees in his dreams. It is said that 'Noria was ten years old, but considered herself very special, for she sang for spirits that gave Jwara the power to create the figurines. She had been doing it for quite a few years' (Mda, 1995:29).

Noria's abilities can be read as magical realist if such a reading is supported by a realist representation of the material world; however, the text does not provide a realist impression to support Noria's supernatural abilities and this disqualifies it as an example of magical realism. In addition, Jwara is not creative until he hears Noria's singing voice and he is,

> overwhelmed by a great creative urge. He took an idle piece of iron and put it in the fire. When it was red hot, he began to shape it into a strange figure. He amazed himself because in all his life he had never known that he had such great talent. But before he could finish the figurine, Noria stopped, and all of a sudden, he could not continue to shape the figure. (Mda, 1995:30-31)

It is clear from the passage that Noria has supernatural abilities that are expressed by her voice. There is an impression that the passage attempts to be true to life in the way the communal voice narrates. However, the passage does not have all the features of a realist text. Stoehr (1969:1286) argues that realism alone both 'tells' and 'shows' the truth about life, through special aptitudes and devices that somehow mimic reality so well as to exert an almost hallucinatory effect on the reader. From the passage, there is an impression that the reader is distanced from the life that is spoken about. There is no evidence of the author telling or showing minute details of how Jwara crafted his figurines or how Noria's voice affects him when she stops singing. Furthermore, if *Ways of Dying* provided textual evidence of the song lyrics and accurately captured every nuanced detail of Noria's performance—from her expressions, tone, and rhythm to her gestures—the reader would have received a realistic sense of the power and effect of her voice.

To some degree, one gets the impression that Mda makes a reference to Greek mythology with the relationship of Jwara and Noria. The bond between Aphrodite and Hephaestus in Greek mythology and that of Noria and Jwara appears to be analogous. This reference has the potential to be read as magical realist because of Aphrodite's supernatural abilities that I discuss below. In the preceding section, I observed that *Ways of Dying* does not possess the traits of a realist narrative, and this reference does not make this narrative magical realism.

Aphrodite is a Greek goddess, the epitome of feminine beauty, sex appeal and love (Marcovich, 1996:43). She is married to Hephaestus, the crippled son of Zeus and a divine blacksmith who creates moving statues that serve as his labour force, guardians, and domestic help (Clark, 2015:86). Noria is revered by men for her lovely voice while Aphrodite is revered by men and gods for her outward beauty. Unlike Hephaestus and Aphrodite, Jwara and Noria are not married. Therefore, if Mda is alluding to Hephaestus and Aphrodite, it is not their love relationship that serves as his inspiration. Instead, the reference is to their special skills, such as those of blacksmiths like Jwara and Hephaestus, and to Noria and Aphrodite, who inspire creativity. Hephaestus creates supernatural figurines and Jwara's figurines are supernatural as well.

Thieves break into Jwara's workshop and take everything, but not the figurines. Jwara's claim is that the spirits that make him create the figurine are too strong for the thieves and thus protected the figurines from being stolen (Mda, 1995:207). Nefolovhodwe who is Jwara's

friend believes that the figurines have procreated and multiplied when he goes to collect them in Jwara's demolished workshop; he 'wondered how Jwara had managed to create all these works, and where he had the iron and sometimes brass to make so many figurines' (Mda, 1995:208). Nefolovhodwe's assumptions about the figurines suggest that they are supernatural as he believes that Jwara did not have the material to create so many figurines. He concludes that the figurines must have procreated because Jwara could not have made all the figurines he discovers in the demolished workshop. This serves as additional evidence that Jwara makes magical figurines, just as did Hephaestus. Noria's potent voice emerges at birth as it is said that 'when Noria was a baby, she already had beautiful laughter […] They said that nursemaids and babysitters used to tickle Noria for the pleasure of hearing her laughter' (Mda, 1995:32). Without a realist impression, Noria's abilities cannot be perceived as magical realism; instead, Noria's supernatural abilities relate to *Intsomi*.

Noria's supernatural prowess creates disorder, which is how magic functions in *Intsomi* (Opland, 1975:54). In this case the disorder is the fact that Noria as a child gives sexual pleasures to older men, and society is not alarmed by this. The notion of pleasure holds a double meaning throughout the text. At one point pleasure means that Noria will sing to please men and on the other hand it implies that Noria is sexual with men. This notion of giving pleasure starts innocently as Noria makes people happy with her potent laughter and singing. It develops to involve her promiscuous ways such as when she applies makeup and gives pleasure to taxi drivers and conductors (Mda, 1995:73). Even when Noria applies makeup, her beauty is not eroticised, but it is her voice that is important to the people she gives pleasure to. Therefore, there is a difference between Noria and Aphrodite; it is Noria's voice that draws people's attention to her, enabling her to be promiscuous. Noria is famous for giving men pleasure as she would be

> pale with powder, and her lips red with lipstick. Her gym dress and khaki shirt would be neatly folded in her school bag. She would then catch the bus to town, where she would give pleasure to bus drivers and conductors. (Mda, 1995:72)

It is made clear that, young as she is, Noria had wicked ways because after dispensing pleasures, 'she would go back to the public toilet, change into her school uniform, remove her make-up, and go home' (Mda, 1995:73). Noria is exposed to sexual activities at a very young age. When Napu, her boyfriend and father to Vutha, Noria's son, is introduced, Napu has been sneaking into the bushes with Noria:

> They would then breathe heavily, and those who had already reached puberty would wet the pieces of cloth that cover their groins. They enjoyed these escapades, and whenever they saw the young man, they would become excited, for they knew that he embodied pleasures that were beyond imagination. (Mda, 1995:74)

The word 'pleasures' comes up again from the passage above, and this time it is suggestive of sexual intercourse. Therefore, it is not innocent that Jwara's wife calls a child a 'stuck up bitch'. However, there is no proof that Jwara uses Noria for sexual pleasure. It is only mentioned that Noria ignites Jwara's creative prowess. This creates disorder because one does not expect a mere child to engage willingly in sexual pleasures with older men. It certainly makes one feel uncomfortable each time Noria's supernatural abilities concerning men are mentioned.

Consider the scene in Chapter Ten, when Noria and Toloki sit outside their shack and watch children play. Toloki remembers that he has bought crayons and paper from the city, and he wants to draw flowers for Noria since he is not able to bring her real flowers (Mda, 1995:199). Noria asks Toloki to include the children who are playing outside in his drawing (Mda, 1995:199). Toloki learns that he can no longer draw people as well as he could when he was younger (Mda, 1995:199). Noria offers to sing for him just like she did for his father Jwara when he crafted his figurines (Mda, 1995:199). When Noria sings her meaningless song, Toloki finds himself instantly able to draw the children playing (Mda, 1995:199). Once more Noria uses her bewitching voice in this scene and it affects Toloki in the same way it affected Jwara. However, the scene lacks specific detail about their surroundings and, significantly, about their deeper emotions. Consider this scene from *Beloved:*

> He (Stamp Paid) looked at her (Sethe) again and nodded toward a rock that stuck out of the ground above him like a bottom lip. Sethe walked to it and sat down. The stone had eaten the sun's rays but was nowhere near as hot as she was. Too tired to move, she stayed there, the sun in her eyes making her dizzy. Sweat poured over her and bathed the baby completely. She must have slept sitting up, because when next she opened her eyes, the man was standing in front of her with a smoking-hot piece of fried eel in his hands. It was an effort to reach for, more to smell, impossible to eat. She begged him for water, and he gave her some of the Ohio in a jar. Sethe drank it all and begged for more. (Morrison, 1987:106)

The passage above displays the minute details that I argue are lacking in *Ways of Dying*. Morrison describes the smallest elements required to create the impression that you are reading a realistic text. She describes the position of the rock that Sethe is sitting on before going on to say that the rock has absorbed the heat of the sun and that Sethe herself is feeling hot and perspiring in the scorching sun.

While Noria's voice indeed has supernatural powers, *Ways of Dying* cannot be considered a magical realist novel based on that feature alone without the support of a realistic impression. Noria's supernatural abilities do not fit the conventions of magical realism as they do not arise from a realistic world. The story feels and sounds like a fable. It is short and straight to the point. The mention of Aphrodite and Hephaestus contains supernatural overtones and can be viewed as a magical realist element in a well-developed realistic narrative. A realist narrative is characterised by a realistic atmosphere that is the key to understanding magical realism (Bowers, 2004:21).

Belsey (1980:47) observes that 'realism is plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar'. It can conclude that a magical realist text must present itself firstly as true in the way it depicts reality. In *Ways of Dying*, these qualities are inadequate and this makes the text fall short in qualities that make it a magical realist text.

Child of the gods

In chapter four, Noria's friend passes away unexpectedly on a school choir trip in a way that makes it seem as if she has deliberately caused her own death. The mystery is that she knows that she will die on that particular day as she tells Noria, 'You know, Noria, I fear something terrible is going to happen' (Mda, 1995: 43). Noria responds to what her friend is trying to tell her with 'something terrible has already happened. We have come to bury our schoolmate' (Mda, 1995: 44). The friend says again, 'I feel we are going to be attacked. Some people don't like our choir because it is doing well' (Mda, 1995: 44). How she knows about this attack on this specific day is not clear. Hypothetically if *Ways of Dying* had qualities of magical realism and there were mysterious events that are not well explained, there would be credibility in Cooper's argument that

> the [magical realist] writer must have ironic distance from the magical worldview or else the realism will be compromised…The writer must at the same time have a deep respect for the magic, or else it evaporates into mere folk belief or total fantasy, separated from the real instead of syncretized with it. (Cooper, 1998:34)

Cooper's argument would be credible in this instance if *Ways of Dying* was a magical realist text because there is an impression that the ability of Noria's friend to predict the future is not treated with respect and explained enough. A gunman shoots at the choir after the friend has given this warning and Noria's companion is struck in the chest, she passes away laughing. It is uncommon for people to die laughing, and I believe that this opens up clues to explain the mystery surrounding Noria's friend's death—she was a supernatural being or Noria's supernatural abilities affected her without knowing.

It must not be accepted without question the fact that Noria's friend is hit and Noria is not because the information that comes after the scene from Jwara is that 'Noria is not stupid and ugly like Toloki. She is a child of the gods' (Mda, 1995:45). Jwara's words suggest that Noria is no ordinary child; she is endowed with luck that comes from the gods and it is to be expected that she has supernatural abilities. These abilities can be compared to magical realism if they arise from a realist matrix. However, *Ways of Dying* lacks these qualities. The use of details by a writer to draw attention to something that is noticeable to the extratextual world is crucial to creating a realistic impression and these are features that are not evident in *Ways of Dying* (Stoehr, 1969:1277).

Morrison's *Beloved* is a text that exhibits a finely detailed brand of magical realism. To begin with, the text makes the reader aware that *Beloved* is set in Cincinnati in 1873 and that Sethe resides in a white mansion on Bluestone Road. These are the types of specifics that *Ways of Dying* does not include. There is also background information that adds context to Toni Morrison's writing:

> Cincinnati didn't stretch that far. In fact, Ohio had been calling itself a state only seventy years when first one brother and then the next stuffed quilt packing into his hat, snatched up his shoes, and crept away from the lively spite the house felt for them. (Morrison, 1987:04)

The specific details about the setting in *Beloved* enhances the believability that the text is faithful in its representation of the extratextual world and if a similar approach was taken in

constructing *Ways of Dying* perhaps that would have stimulated the argument that the text is magical realist.

Northover (2019:114) argues that oral traditions underwent modification as a result of colonialism. As a part of this process, various cultures began to borrow from one another to discuss their common experiences with slavery (Northover, 2019:114). There is a case to be made for Mda's style, which is a hybrid in and of itself. It combines his native background with occasional Western influences. Western influences can be seen in the shift from oral to written narratives. Folktales, as Sam Ukala (1993:285. Cited in Eregare, 2017:149) describes them as a type of traditional storytelling that is made up of or is based on historical events that happen but have been embellished and changed in such a way that they cannot be verified using empirical means. This is true of *Ways of Dying*; it is based on actual occurrences, particularly the deaths mentioned in the text:

> Every one of those deaths happened, those were deaths reported in newspapers. These were deaths that I had read about in the *Sunday Times* and *City Press*. Those were the two newspapers which were the source of my information on the deaths. There might have been one or two cases from the *Mail and Guardian*, but the *Mail and Guardian* was not involved in that kind of journalism. (Naidoo, 1997:253)

Mda also acknowledges that he falsified material reported in the media, stating that 'all those deaths genuinely happened, and all I did was to take these deaths and put them in an artificial scenario with a professional mourner' (Naidoo, 1997:253). So far as I can tell, this is the sole realist element of the text that I think has been mistaken for realism. Naidoo cites the newspaper articles that informed Mda and he writes that:

> The 'realism' aspect of magic realist texts is informed by historical events that shape the lives of the characters in these novels. Therefore, it is not uncommon for magical realist texts to feature historical events or personalities who interact with the fictional ones in the stories. (Naidoo, 1998:146)

The characters in *Ways of Dying*, as Naidoo argues, are in the throes of historical transformation reflecting a fundamental component of magical realism: the realism of history provides the framework for the magical moments in the characters' lives (Naidoo, 1998:149).

Here, Naidoo commits an oversight that renders literary realism far more subtle than he regards is the case. Hegerfeldt (2005:73) writes that literary realism 'takes its cue from

empirical historiography, whose accounts are characterised by superfluous or useless details that serve no function other than to create a sense of the concrete real'. *Ways of Dying* lacks the qualities of a realist text because it does not strive to deceive the reader with 'useless' details that create the impression of a concrete reality. On the other hand, *Intsomi* is based on actual historical occurrences. According to Zola Sonkosi (1999:82), *Intsomi* serves as a foundation for people's culture, morals, social lives, and intellectual development. People frequently turn to their rich folk wisdom to help them get through challenging circumstances in their lives (Sonkosi, 1999:82). *Ways of Dying* focuses on societal issues related to the many causes of death that black people experienced in the latter years of apartheid.

The *Intsomi* performance seamlessly transitions between the natural and fantastical realms and contemporary surroundings (Opland, 1975:54). *Intsomi* occurs exactly as described by Opland in *Ways of Dying*. The narrative shifts from the city, which represents the present, to the village, which represents the past. The village, including the city that the communal voice mentions has no name. The text does not provide the reader with an accurate reflection of the material world. The world of the novel does not always feel realistic; it seems to be a dreamy place owing to the inadequacy of a detailed setting.

When I test for realism in *Ways of Dying,* I find it significantly absent. In fact, there is no understanding of the world that Toloki and Noria inhabit. The village and the city mentioned by the communal voice have no name. The text does not provide the reader with an accurate reflection of the material world. The world of the novel does not feel realistic; it seems to be a dreamy place because of the lack of a detailed setting; magical realism comprises aspects of realism that mimic reality along with a glimmer of magic.

Muti Murder an example of magical realism?

In Chapter Two of *Ways of Dying* there is a reference to *muti* murder that involves a small boy's body found in the veld (Mda, 1995:47). It is stated that a 'crazed' *muti* murderer who preys on helpless youngsters in the township has castrated the boy, sliced open his stomach, and severed the flesh from his navel all the way down to his thighs (Mda, 1995:47). The 'crazed' killer slaughters and dismembers each of his victims, whose ages range from two to six, in order to obtain crucial organs to create potent *muti* (Mda, 1995:47).

The quotation above indicates the extent to which people will go to harness *muti* magic, and they may engage in these gruesome acts to obtain potent medicine. This belief is connected to African ideas of causation. The communal voice narrates the events of the 'crazed' killer and the presence of the communal voice is indicative that this example of *muti* murder can be perceived as an example of *Intsomi* rather than magical realism. If the omniscient voice together with a realist environment were to be present in this scene, then it could be read as magical realist. However, these qualities are not present in this scene. The communal voice that narrates the sequence of the *muti* murder understands that the audience of *Intsomi* is not estranged from supernatural elements that relate to ancestral belief and witchcraft activities. This is why when a crazed killer targets children it is inferred that it is to obtain potent *muti*, a medicinal substance that has supernatural effects. The actions of the crazed killer allude to the culture of African people, which is also represented by That Mountain Woman.

According to the African theory of causation, magic can be broadly divided into two categories, good magic, which is the magic that is accepted and bad magic that is not accepted by society. The professionals, such as the medicine man, diviner, *Sangoma*, and rainmaker, who use their expertise and control over mystical forces for the benefit of their community, are considered to be the main practitioners of accepted magic (Petrus, 2009:53). Wiebe de Jong (2015:13) argues that from the African philosophy, a *sangoma* has 'clairvoyant powers that enable him to seek contact with ancestral spirits and determine the source of a specific misfortune'. The *sangoma* or spiritual experts, as Petrus (2009:53) argues, mostly employ this type of magic for community protection, the avoidance of calamities, and the detection and treatment of ailments.

According to the African theory of causation, the second form of magic is harmful magic, sometimes known as black magic or evil magic, which entails using these magical powers to damage people or their property (Petrus, 2009:54). This type of magic uses witchcraft, which includes sorcery, mental witchcraft and the capacity to control ethereal or invisible beings like familiars to hurt others (Petrus, 2009:54). Another aspect of this is the misuse of medicine. In *Ways of Dying*, the *muti* murder scene that is cited is an illustration of wicked magic. The public is appalled by the boy's dismembered body because this type of death is gruesome, and it is forbidden. The communal voice asserts that the circumstances surrounding the murder case have been politicised since the populace seeks to use the alleged murderer as a scapegoat for the killing of Noria's child. The communal voice further states that

> if it was the crazed killer who murdered Noria's son, why were people angry with the Nurse when he publicly displayed his anger with the killers? […] Why did they not want reporters from newspapers to get near Noria? No, it was not the *muti* killer. No one would have had reservations about condemning the *muti* killer and publicising the fact that he had struck again. (Mda, 1995:48)

The sentence above does not reveal the murderer's motivations. As a result, I cannot find characteristics that would make the scene comparable to magical realism. However, this is an *Intsomi* story, and the communal voice and its characteristics affirm my claim. The distinction between a witch and a traditional healer, who play major roles in *muti* murders, is undoubtedly ambiguous. The idea that they both dwell in a space between the natural and supernatural worlds is generally to blame for this uncertainty. As a result, people may be sceptical because,

> the healer may, like a witch or sorcerer, use his/her powers for evil. Implicit in the perception of a person as having a special ability to manipulate natural and supernatural forces is thus the sense that he/she is potentially dangerous to the community. (Petrus & Bongopa, 2007:05)

That Mountain Woman is described as a witch and a healer, which conveys people's scepticism toward her supernatural powers. In the text the impression arises that she performs both roles, witch and traditional healer:

> There was no doubt that That Mountain Woman had put some curse on her [Noria]. When this rumour reached the ears of That Mountain Woman, she vehemently denied the accusations. 'How can I put a curse on my own daughter? In any case, I do not mix medicine that hurts people. My medicines only heal and bring good fortune, and wealth, and love, and fertility. I am not a witch. I am a doctor.' (Mda, 1995:79)

This paragraph refers to Noria's elopement with Napu when she is fifteen months pregnant. Noria and Napu's romantic relationship is disapproved of by That Mountain Woman, and since Noria only gives birth after returning home, it is possible that That Mountain Woman casts a spell on her. In Chapter Four a brief backstory of That Mountain Woman is provided and one of the facts that stands out is that she

> was eight months pregnant with Noria before she slept with the doctor and still, Noria came with the Doctor's features. When Noria was born it was generally believed by

> the mountain people that her ears looked like those of the doctor…We insisted that Noria's ears were those of the doctor. We all marvelled, 'Xesibe has no features. How did he manage to make such a beautiful girl?' (Mda, 1995:40)

The pregnancy of That Mountain Woman suggests a supernatural moment that defeats the laws of science. It seems bizarre that Noria has acquired features of the doctor when she was already conceived by That Mountain Woman. The way that this matter is treated is careless in that as the story progresses the communal voice does not resolve how Noria came to have the doctor's features when That Mountain Woman was already eight months pregnant with her. However, That Mountain Woman is regarded as a witch and she is no stranger to supernatural activity.

In terms of African cosmology, a witch is a human being 'with a natural, physical body, and, at the same time, also a 'superhuman' being, able to control both natural and supernatural forces for evil' (Petrus & Bogopa, 2007: 03). That Mountain Woman is a traditional healer who has a consultation room where she exorcises demons and evil spirits from her patients and gives love portions to those who are love-sick (Mda, 1995:74). Woodward (2007:294) argues that this narrative technique is a classic postcolonial technique for remembering pre-colonial knowledge and re-establishing a connection to the land. Pre-colonial knowledge is represented by That Mountain Woman. The mountain people represent African communities in that they are not strangers to supernatural activity; even Napu's grandmother is no stranger to this. When Napu takes Noria to his village in the mountains, Noria suspects that Napu's grandmother bewitches her.

> At night, the two fogeys mixed herbs, boiled them and put the water in an old rusty bathtub. Next, they ordered Noria to take off her clothes, and take a bath. But she refused […] When they thought she was fast asleep, the grandmother stripped naked, and danced over her, chanting in some strange language. The old man just sat on the bench and mumbled unintelligibly as if he was in a trance. (Mda, 1995:77)

Woodward (2007:294) conceptualises the case of spirituality among Xhosa people by stating that 'the *amaXhosa* enact spiritual affinities with the earth and the heavens, [and] their rituals of earth worship also signify resistance to colonial epistemologies of violence'. This reading of the *amaXhosa* culture and Mda's text is quite accurate. It is informative of a worldview that resonates with how Mda explains the value of magic as perceived in his culture:

> I am a product of a magical culture. In my culture, the magical is not disconcerting. It is taken for granted. No one tries to find a natural explanation for the unreal. The unreal happens as part of reality. (Mda in Fincham, 2011: xxii. Cited in Woodward, 2014:373)

The supernatural prowess of That Mountain Woman cannot be compared to magical realism as some studies suggest. One instance of equating That Mountain Woman's supernatural prowess with magical realism occurs in Bheamadu's study. He argues that,

> That Mountain Woman is associated with creating traditional remedies as well as putting curses on enemies… the oral tradition is reclaimed… the categories of oral discourse, he [the orator] narrates their adventures to his imagined audience but adopts an external point of view. In this way, the instrument of Magic Realism is used to present the communal voice as a re-definition of rural culture within urban modernity. (Bheamadu, 2004:35)

There is insufficient evidence to support Bheamadu's assertion that That Mountain Woman's supernatural skills are consistent with magical realism. Hence, I disagree with his claim. Barker (2008:07) also states that 'it does not appear sufficient to establish that magic realism mythologises particular stories.' Certainly, this is not necessary for the mode to function as it is not only the magical realist genre that utilises myths in narratives. Myths play a role in constructing magical realism, but this must occur when there is a realist environment provided by the text. Chapter Two provides an example of how myth functions in a magical realist work.

In summation, That Mountain Woman develops an African philosophical discourse that views the paranormal as a component of the natural world. It would be inaccurate to describe her supernatural skills in terms of magical realism. Therefore, the type of magic that Mda uses in his depiction of That Mountain Woman is not one that is imagined, fantastical, or done for artistic purposes. Instead, it is based on a lived fact, like the mention of the *muti* murder case.

The Lack of Individual Names

The absence of specific names in *Intsomi* narratives is the final issue I address here. Mkonto (2009:91) believes that names have an impact on the theme and plot of any Xhosa story.

Nicolaisen (2008:94) argues that names in literary narratives conjure up particular associations, sometimes of a ludic nature, or they produce onomastic allusions, similes, and metaphors. Unnamed characters appear in *Ways of Dying*, and this section of the study is informative by what unnamed characters imply in terms of *Intsomi*.

The nameless characters inform the reader that the story is an orature, based on Xhosa tales. *Ways of Dying* features unidentified characters, a crucial component in *Intsomi*. This is yet another component that is explainable if you read the text as *Intsomi* and not as a magical realist text. Mkonto (2009: 93) explains that unnaming [characters] is a rhetorical technique that is frequently used in isiXhosa storytelling when a specific name is required to convey a message. It gently advocates for a fundamental understanding of human identity and the violation of social norms. The unnaming technique has the ability to deftly unveil the ideal values of society when used by a skilled storyteller (Mkonto, 2009: 93).

According to Nicolaisen (2008:94) certain names in stories have the ability to be associated with a particular genre. As Nicolaisen suggests, some character names in *Ways of Dying* allude to a genre that is *Intsomi* such as That Mountain Woman and Napu's grandmother—these characters lack individual names. Fowler (1982:27) argues that genres in literature are flexible and a writer is free to create new sorts with rules of their own design. I discuss this in more detail in the conclusion of this section. Despite discussing several character naming concepts, Mkonto and Nicolaisen agree on the same position. What I found in both of their arguments was that naming and unnaming are not innocent acts.

Mkonto's argument about unnaming characters in *Intsomi* forms a foundation of understanding isiXhosa narrative forms. In his work, he cites various *Intsomi* narratives to make his case and I find that it resonates with That Mountain Woman and Napu's grandmother who are nameless figures. Old female and male characters in isiXhosa narratives frequently go unidentified and this implies that there is a stigma of social exclusion, that functions as a tactic of unnaming and alienation, or for the enforcement of a rigorous communal role (Mkonto, 2009:99). I argue that the purpose of disguising these people's names in *Ways of Dying* has to do with an oral storytelling method that makes use of symbolic phrases to allude to human frailties. The convention of oral storytelling, which is typically performed by older women or men, is one of the reasons older characters are sometimes left unnamed in stories. It is not a coincidence that Mda does not suggest suitable

names for That Mountain Woman and Napu's grandmother. The cultural associations of Mda and the structure of *Intsomi* in *Ways of Dying* inform this decision.

Nicolaisen (2008:96) asserts that even in the absence of good names, any name has the potential to become fictitious and should be regarded with the same respect as other names. Many names might be seen as empty shells to be filled with extra contents (Nicolaisen, 2008:95). The phrase 'That Mountain Woman' does start a conversation and, at most, gives the reader an insight into the nature of the Mountain People. The Mountain People are renowned for being unique individuals. It is stated that they have strange customs, and they live apart from the rest of the village. In addition, the villagers believe a legend about That Mountain Woman that she once crossed the rainbow (Mda, 1995:34). The inhabitants of the settlement and those of the mountain differ in their beliefs and experiences. The Mountain People are known to be familiar with indigenous knowledge systems because That Mountain Woman is

> good at identifying different curative herbs, and grinding and mixing them, and boiling them to make potent medicine for all sorts of ailments. [And] helped members of her new family or their friends when they fell ill. (Mda, 1995:34)

The author makes the point in this passage that the Mountain People are a representation of a group that follows African cosmology. Therefore, my argument underlines why reading *Ways of Dying* using *Intsomi* norms is viable. Naidoo (1997:254) questions Mda about whether the communal voice has any connection to orature, and Mda replies that, 'It is very much from orature, truly, because the story may be conveyed in the plural form. This is the manner in which Africans tell tales.' Consequently, each name in *Ways of Dying* has a connection to an *Intsomi* convention.

Mda asserts that he discovered magical realism at a point in his life when he had already been exposed to the current writing style (Naidoo, 1997:250). Therefore, *Ways of Dying* cannot be confused with magical realism as Mda's style of writing was not influenced by authors of magical realism. I conclude that if Mda had not learned about magical realism at the time he started writing the novel in question, he would still have used a writing style that naturalised the supernatural where real events and the fantastic, natural, and supernatural are coherently represented in a state of equivalence (Warnes, 2009:03). Fowler (1982:149) hypothesises that literary genres are probably formed in their earliest stages from rituals and religious rites that are associated with common activities. In Mda's work, there are several references to African

folk-cultural rituals such as the myth concepts that are integral to his narrative. Therefore, *Intsomi* as a narrative mode relates to his community, and it is an ancient tradition of storytelling.

Perhaps then, reading *Ways of Dying* one may think that this is the early form of a genre that is still in its infant stages. Fowler (1982:154) argues that a genre requires a single inventor who exerts a certain style of creativity that may play a part in forming it. However, 'in considering individual origins we have also to allow for the possibility of polygenesis' (Fowler, 1982:154). Mda writes *Ways of Dying* using several factors that influence him although most of the time he admits to not being conscious of these influences. As such, his environment is his most immediate source of influence and this ought to be scrutinised before considering other factors that are external to his work.

Conclusion

In summary, in this chapter I have provided a solution to Chapter One's problem statement in that the *muti* murder and other supernatural elements evident in *Ways of Dying* do not adhere to the magical realist genre. I argue that *Ways of Dying* demonstrates characteristics of *Intsomi*, which derives from Xhosa orature narratives. These characteristics include the incorporation of the communal voice, which acts as a social consciousness and performs a collective action while expressing common sentiments and viewpoints. When the narrator labels and refers to himself in the first-person plural to refer to a group of people who narrate and are also characters, the community voice becomes apparent (Bekhta, 2017: 165). This narrative technique has been used consistently throughout the text, in contrast to the omniscient voice that is typically used in magical realist narratives.

The supernatural elements that arise from Noria's potent voice can be read as *Intsomi*. Opland (1975:54) asserts that *Intsomi* employs paranormal components to distort reading habits. The power of Noria's voice has made her promiscuous at a very young age. It is for this reason that her voice fits into the *Intsomi* narrative: a reader may be perturbed by a promiscuous child such as Noria. Aside from the disorder that Noria's voice creates, it also mystically inspires Jwara to be creative as a blacksmith. When Jwara hears Noria's voice when she sings her meaningless song, he becomes overwhelmed by creativity. The mention of *muti* murder,

which is connected to the African notion of causation, is another supernatural aspect that is present in the text. According to African views of causality, some people possess clairvoyant abilities that allow them to communicate with ancestral spirits and pinpoint the cause of a particular catastrophe (De Jong, 2015:13). Some members of African communities abuse their powers in immoral ways, such as committing *muti* murder to create potent medicine. This portion of the text is viewed as *Intsomi* since it lacks the characteristics that would make it magical realism.

The absence of explicit names and unnamed characters is another characteristic of *Intsomi*. When a specific name is needed to convey a message, Mkonto (2009: 93) states that unnaming [characters] is a rhetorical device that is regularly used in isiXhosa storytelling. Similarly, *Ways of Dying* uses this strategy through nameless individuals such as That Mountain Woman and Napu's grandmother. As a result, there are more indications that *Ways of Dying* is an *Intsomi* text than there is evidence to support it being a magical realist text. These points address the research question in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FOUR: *SIBANDA AND THE RAINBIRD*, and *THE No. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY*

Introduction

The previous chapters provided solutions to the problem statement of this study, which sought to find the extent to which the terms 'realism' and 'magical realism' can account for the elements of *muti* murder and the supernatural in the novels. In my initial response to the problem statement, I argue that *Zoo City* is an example of magical realism owing to a succession of magical realist characteristics that the text depicts. *Ways of Dying*, on the other hand follows the conventions of an *Intsomi* rather than those of magical realism. This chapter serves as the third response to the challenges noted in the problem statement in Chapter One.

In this phase of the study, I argue the degree to which Christine Elliott's *Sibanda and the Rainbird* (2013) and Alexandra McCall-Smith's *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998) are realist in their representation of *muti* murder. I make the case that although *muti* murder has supernatural effects, the supernatural aspect of it is not explored in either *Sibanda and the Rainbird* or *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. Despite the fact that *muti* is a subject associated with African cosmology, Western conceptions of realism are preserved.

My arguments are presented in the following sequence: following the model I established in the earlier chapters I give an overview of each text in the opening. I continue by explaining realism as a literary genre. I then go into detail about how, as opposed to magical realism, the depictions of *muti* murder in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* adhere to realism. Following this, I list noteworthy characteristics of each text that relate to realism rather than magical realism. I conclude this chapter by restating my claims.

Synopsis

Sibanda and the Rainbird (2013) by Christine Elliott

Detective Inspector Sibanda and his associate, Sergeant Ncube, are investigating a mutilated body that was found in the early hours of the day at the Thunduluka Safari Lodge. When they first arrive at the lodge, they discover scavenging animals eating the dead body, making it difficult to determine its identity. The body also has some parts missing. It seems that the scavengers may have eaten the internal organs. However, Sibanda is interested in the laws of

nature, so he is aware of the order in which scavengers eat. He notices that there are some discrepancies between a body that has been partly eaten by scavengers, and this body from which some organs have been removed.

There is a knife near the crime scene, and it seems that it was used precisely to cut out the missing organs. Sibanda recalls a similar incident where six men were detained for transporting three human heads hidden under frozen slabs of beef in cooler boxes. On the scene, they find the tracks of wheels and a piece of blue metallic paint that seems to have come from the car used to dump the body. Detective Sibanda and Sergeant Ncube have a description of a car that might have been involved, a blue Toyota Landcruiser.

They move on to investigate potential suspects who own a car like the one in question. Once they have investigated everyone in the area who owns a Toyota Landcruiser, the governor, Micah Ngwenya, becomes the main suspect. Ngwenya answers Sibanda's inquiries about his car. He claims that his son, Bongani Ngwenya, is wayward and uses the vehicle frequently. Furthermore, he states that he allows Bongani to use it to keep him out of trouble. Bongani manages Micah Ngwenya's farm called the Hunters' Rest. Sibanda and Ncube question Bongani at Hunters' Rest. Sibanda ends the interrogation after he discovers that Bongani is not being cooperative. Fortunately, Ncube finds a car on the property similar to the one involved in the *muti* murder case. Charles, one of the chefs employed at Hunters' Rest, provides the policemen with information that Bongani is lying. Charles states that Bongani was not on the farm on the night of the murder as he claims to have been.

Sibanda gives Charles his phone number to contact him if he sees Bongani acting strangely. Sibanda and Ncube receive additional information from Constable Zanele Khumalo that the knife that was discovered at the crime scene has Shadrek Nkomo's fingerprints on it. The two men realise that questioning Shadrek Nkomo is the next step. Shadrek Nkomo works as a chef at Thunduluka Safari Lodge. He has known Micah Ngwenya for a long period, dating back to the 1980s, during the Zimbabwean civil war. When Bongani was a youth, Nkomo saw him as a lonely youngster and met with him occasionally. When Bongani returns from the United States, Nkomo is shocked to see how he has changed from the innocent youngster he once knew. Furthermore, Bongani uses Nkomo's close relationship with his father to recruit him to his sinister plan. Bongani forces Nkomo to commit a crime. Bongani uses Nkomo because he is a chef and knows how to carefully carve out the organs he needs from Thulani Mpofu.

Bongani tells Nkomo that he will set witches on him if he refuses to stick to his plan. Nkomo obliges and carves out Thulani's organs. When Nkomo is interrogated by Sibanda he admits that Bongani coerced him into murdering Thulani. During the interrogation they get a call from Charles at Hunters' Rest, who tells them that Bongani has packed his possessions, carrying a cooler box with him. Sibanda knows that Bongani is making his escape and that inside the cooler box he may be storing Thulani's organs. The detective and his sergeant hunt down Bongani who is traveling through the Kalahari veld. Sibanda calls for backup, making it known that Bongani is making his way to the border. Soon Bongani comes to a police roadblock. He swings his vehicle to the side of the road where he hits a tree, and he is apprehended by Sibanda who has been following him.

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency (1998) by Alexandra McCall-Smith

Mma Ramotswe starts The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency using the money earned from selling the livestock her father bequeathed her. Before establishing this agency, she consults a lawyer for legal advice as she wants to be careful with how she uses what her father left her. After she receives the legal advice she needs, she finds a location for her detective firm near Kgale Hill. Mma Ramotswe renovates a ruined home at a low cost and converts it into the agency. Her next step is to employ a secretary who will manage her schedule and the office; she employs Mma Makutsi who has recently completed her secretarial studies. Mma Makutsi graciously accepts her offer and they receive their first significant case involving a woman, Mma Malatsi, who reports that her husband has been missing for some time.

Mma Malatsi tells how her husband was lured away by a church group, and he has not returned home since joining this group. Mma Ramotswe starts her investigation by locating the pastor of the church, Reverend Shadreck Mapeli. Reverend Mapeli tells Mma Ramotswe that the man she is looking for has been taken by the Lord. Mma Ramotswe is mystified by this vague statement, and she probes further, asking him to take her to the place where the church services are held. Reverend Mapeli explains how the man was taken by the Lord. He tells Mma Ramotswe that there were six sinners participating in a baptism ceremony, when suddenly, he counted only five. The sixth sinner, Mma Malatsi's husband, disappeared suddenly and according to Reverend Mapeli this is when the Lord took him.

Mma Ramotswe conducts further investigation, using a sniffer dog to search around the river for any evidence. Fortunately, the dog comes across a crocodile with its stomach full and

Mma Ramotswe makes the assumption that it is Mma Malatsi's husband that has bloated the crocodile so much. She shoots the crocodile and cuts it open. Inside, she finds what she believes is a watch belonging to Mma Malatsi's husband. Mma Ramotswe tells Mma Malatsi the bad news that her husband has been eaten by a crocodile and hands her the watch.

The second big case for Mma Ramotswe involves a boy who vanishes in the bush. The youngster's relatives write to the detective agency requesting assistance as they have consulted the police about the missing boy but have had no help from them. Mma Ramotswe takes interest in this case as she empathises with the mother of the boy. However, she has no idea how she will solve this case. She asks her long-time friend Mr Matekoni, a mechanic, for advice. Mr Matekoni believes that the boy has been taken for the purposes of witchcraft. He believes that people seek out young children for *muti* and the boy has probably been killed by now. However, this does not deter Mma Ramotswe, and she continues to search for the missing boy. Fortunately, while Mr Matekoni is working on a car owned by the notorious Charlie Gotso, he finds *muti* in a sack in the car. He shows this to Mma Ramotswe with the hope that Charlie Gotso can tell her about the traditional healer who abducts children to concoct *muti*.

Charlie Gotso is a well-connected businessman with a solid reputation. He meets with Mma Ramotswe and informs her that he has been looking for his *muti*. Mma Ramotswe gives it back to him and they come to an agreement that she will give him information about his rivals in return for him informing her where the traditional healer who has kidnapped the boy is hiding. Charlie Gotso agrees and draws a map that leads Mma Ramotswe to the traditional healer. She finds the youngster, who has been forced to herd sheep. The traditional healer claims that he does not commit any *muti* murder; instead, he purchased the *muti* of human organs from South Africa. Mma Ramotswe returns the youngster to his family, and they are grateful for her assistance. The boy resumes his normal life, going back to school.

Realism

Realism is a narrative form that seeks to represent human and physical reality in a faithful and undistorted manner (Villanueva, 1992:03). Realism adheres to a modernist secular understanding of reality, which necessitates novelists to adhere to a process of observing nature and social data and then depicting nature and human experience as empirically and

accurately as possible (Lehan, 2006:46). Novelists must adhere to this method and reject ideas of the paranormal and transhistorical explanations of the physical universe (Lehan, 2006:46). Two concepts that are frequently mentioned in conjunction with realism are mimesis and verisimilitude. Mimesis is a term that is derived from classical Greek drama and it refers to the actor's direct imitation of words and actions (Morris, 1995:5). Aristotle was a renowned Greek philosopher who proposed the idea of mimetic art as existing in a framework of cultural practices that stem from certain human inclinations (Halliwell, 2002:152).

Mimetic art, according to Aristotle, emphasises the notions of common customs, traditions, and the potential of a civilisation (Halliwell, 2002:152). For mimesis to work, there must be a common understanding between the art that is mimetic and the audience that receives it. As the term 'mimesis' was developed by Aristotle it sought to express realistic behavioural patterns, expressed by an actor to give the impression of a realistic performance. These behavioural patterns were guided by a shared cultural code of what it means to behave like a 'real' human as a performer on stage. Realism inherits the mimetic principle of creating a worldlike representation with artistic traits and incorporates it in a narrative form. A realist narrative is measured by its ability to be feasible, that is, what is seen and comprehended in a narrative piece must possess qualities that are hypothetical and consistent with the world (Halliwell, 2002:152). In essence, these are qualities that form the foundations of realist art. The distinction between mimesis and realism is that mimesis emphasises the term 'imitate' reality, which seems to suggest mirroring reality with all its qualities. Realism selects those parts of reality that are significant to the narrative, although the mimetic principle remains a crucial component in realism, nonetheless.

When a realist narrative is mimetic, it creates a hypothetical and consistent scenario that is a replica of reality. Aristotle also outlines the distinction between mimesis and realism, noting that the former applies to drama and painting while the latter is a narrative form (Halliwell, 2002:152). Given that realism adheres to the modernist secular and materialistic understanding of reality, a realist narrative plot along with the characters is created with an understanding of the factual rules of reality (Morris, 1995:5). This indicates that within a realist work, individuals and events can only be explained in terms of natural causes that are free from the influence of the paranormal or divine intervention (Morris, 1995:05). Consider, for instance, Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1861): it addresses the inevitability of conflict between old and new generations because of disparate beliefs and ideals. The story focuses

on Bazarov, a nihilist who stands in opposition to Pavel and his brother Nikholai, who uphold conventional aristocratic traditions. Bazarov symbolises new values in the story. The context of *Fathers and Sons* is provided in the opening chapter:

> 'Well, Pyotr, still not in sight?' was the question asked on 20th May 1859, by a gentleman of about forty, wearing a dusty overcoat and checked trousers, who came out hatless into the low porch of the posting station at X. (Turgenev, 1861:01)

The conversation that ensues is between Nikholai and Pyotr, one of Nikholai's servants. The setting of the text as well as the relationship between the two individuals, sheds light on the political climate in Russia at the time. The book was published in 1862, one year after the serfs in Russia were freed. Turgenev's text sheds light on the inevitability of events that lead to the emancipation of peasants from the gentry (Turton, 1995:180); the plot of *Fathers and Sons* focuses on socioeconomic issues in Russia at the time. These issues are presented and addressed with empiricism, therefore, making this a realist text.

In *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, the plots are organised in accordance with empirical principles, and do not contain supernatural components that complicate the story. In *Sibanda and the Rainbird*, Sibanda and Sergeant Ncube attempt to solve a complex *muti* murder case that implicates many individuals, including Sibanda's girlfriend and a well-connected son of a politician, Bongani Ngwenya. Bongani commits this crime to make money by selling human organs for *muti* so that he can pay for a trip back to the United States. His father has ordered him to return to Zimbabwe as he has failed at a university in the United States. When Bongani arrives in Zimbabwe he is carrying cocaine, which he plans to sell to raise money for a flight back to the United States. Instead, he finds that the economy of Zimbabwe is in such a dismal state that his initial plan to sell the cocaine will not bring in the necessary funds. Thus he comes up with a plan to sell *muti* and exploit people who believe in traditional healers.

Khanyi is the catalyst in Bongani's plan. She has issues with her brother Thulani Mpofu, who has returned from South Africa. Khanyi has mismanaged the money that Thulani has been sending home while working in South Africa. Out of fear of what Thulani might do, Khanyi instructs Bongani to take him away for a few days while she figures out how she will raise the money that she has misappropriated. Unfortunately, Bongani sees this as an opportunity to take Thulani's organs and sell them for a high price. Ultimately, Bongani is caught by

Detective Sibanda and Sergeant Ncube as he makes his way towards the South African border, where he will sell Thulani's organs.

It is clear that this plot follows realist conventions that suggest that events are explicable in terms of natural causation. Every event can be justified with rational thinking. *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* follows the same realist conventions. Mma Ramotswe opens a detective agency, naming it The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. The plot comprises vignettes and reaches a climax when Mma Ramotswe solves the *muti* murder case. As a detective, Mma Ramotswe employs unorthodox approaches to resolving some of her clients' difficulties. For instance, in her first case, Happy Bapetsi comes to her with a problem concerning an imposter who claims to be her father. Mma Ramotswe dresses up as a nurse and visits the imposter father to tell him that Happy Bapetsi has suffered significant blood loss in a gruesome car accident and she needs a blood transfusion, and only a family member will be able to help. This performance leads to the man refusing to accompany Mma Ramotswe to the hospital and admitting that he is not Happy Bapetsi's father. The man leaves Happy Bapetsi's home on that very same day and Mma Ramotswe informs Happy Bapetsi in a note about the events that have taken place.

Unlike a detective in a hardboiled crime scenario, Mma Ramotswe employs crude methods in her detective work. For instance, in order to resolve the *muti* murder case she makes an agreement with Charlie Gotso, a man who is known to use *muti* for his success. Mma Ramotswe will give him information about his rivals in exchange for him telling her the whereabouts of the traditional healer who performs *muti* with human organs. Charlie Gotso agrees to the offer, giving her the directions of the traditional healer. Mma Ramotswe finds the traditional healer's hideout along with the boy who is presumed to have fallen victim to *muti* murder. She questions the traditional healer about the *muti* he makes for clients such as Charlie Gotso. He counters that he does not commit *muti* murder; rather, he purchases processed *muti* from South Africa. In other words, the traditional healer admits being an accomplice to murder that is committed in South Africa.

It takes Mma Ramotswe's rational thinking to solve all the problems that she encounters. This indicates that the plot is based on the idea that things happen as a result of natural causes. A realist novel is presented as corresponding to the world as it is and using language as a means of communication. It also offers a rational, secular explanation for all the events of the world that are represented. These explanations are usually mundane details that function as a

representation of a lifelike narrative. The mundane sequences in Chapter Fourteen of *Sibanda and the Rainbird* help to prove my claim. In this chapter, the author provides minute details of Constable Zanele Khumalo working in her office. Constable Khumalo is depicted as going about her daily business at the counter where she sits and fills out documents in triplicate:

> She occasionally put the ballpoint's tip in her mouth in the hopes that her saliva would help the running-out ink supply. Several people stood waiting patiently on a bench beside the wall on the right side of the office. Everybody was waiting their turn to report a crime. She wrote down information about the person she was helping in a box designated by Police Standard Crime Reporting Form 24e/417B. (Elliott, 2013:156)

These mundane details support the text's credibility as a picture of life. They mimic human behaviour, giving the impression that they are real. *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* uses the same technique of developing mundane details that offer a rational explanation for all the events of the world. In Chapter Twenty-One of the text, the author gives a detailed description of a boy who almost becomes a victim of *muti* murder.

The young boy is eleven and he is very short for his age. It is stated that 'when you saw him, you would say that he was only eight or nine, rather than eleven' (McCall-Smith, 1998:71). He has a hobby that sets him apart from his peers. He is a curious young fellow and his curiosity sends him

> scuttling about the bush on mysterious errands of his own, his parents were used to his being out of their sight for hours on end. No harm could come to him, unless he was unlucky enough to step on a puff adder or a cobra. But this never happened, and suddenly he would turn up again at the cattle enclosure, or behind the goats, clutching some strange things he had found – a vulture's feather, a dried *tshongololo* millipede, the bleached skull of a snake. (McCall-Smith, 1998:72)

These everyday details about the young boy are deliberate since they aim to inspire empathy for the character, providing a picture of a youthful, naive boy who lives a carefree life. This method ensures that, if something awful happens to the young boy, the reader will have a particular emotion about it. Indeed, the boy is abducted by two men in a truck who offer to take him home. The youngster realises that the men are strangers and that their accents are different when they speak Setswana. Nonetheless, he jumps into the truck after accepting the offer. As the truck drives closer to the boy's home, he indicates, 'There it is. There is my

father's place. You see – over there. Those lights' (McCall-Smith, 1998:75). The truck drives past his home, and the men say,

> 'We are not stopping. You have something to do for us. You can help us with something'.
>
> 'They are expecting me back. They will be waiting.'
>
> 'There is always somebody waiting for somebody. Always.'
>
> He suddenly felt frightened, and he turned to look at the driver. The younger man smiled at him. (McCall-Smith, 1998:75)

From this point on, it can infer that the child, who lives an innocent life, suffers a sad fate. The reader may come to this conclusion from the boy's background information since it gives the idea that he is innocent and does not deserve to be kidnapped. Morris (1995:36) refers to the dialogue that comes after these details about the youngster as a 'dramatic technique' that aids in persuading the reader that the characters are acting and speaking for themselves. This technique heightens the effect of believability by including the reader in imagining the boy's predicament. When these elements of writing are integrated, a rational, plausible and realistic narrative unfolds. Thus I argue that a realist novel provides an accurate portrayal of a society where rational thought is the dominant discursive mode.

As I have demonstrated thus far, *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* employ realist conventions. Both texts accurately mimic the reality they set out to depict. The plots of these novels and their characters are governed by logical reasoning following realist literary conventions that emerged in the aftermath of realism during the Enlightenment era. Likewise, *Fathers and Sons* by Turgenev shares realist prose conventions with *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and *Sibanda and the Rainbird.*

Does *muti* murder adhere to realist or magical realist conventions?

There is a common focus on *muti* murder that *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* share. *Muti*, as I have discussed in previous chapters, is believed by many traditional Africans to be a potent medicine that is produced from plants and human body parts such as the tongue, eyes, heart, genitalia, and other parts of the body (Matthee, 2014:142). The term *muti* denotes medicinal substance with a supernatural outcome that

people seek out from a traditional healer to overcome their difficulties (Tempels, 1953:36 and Matthee, 2014:141).

I stated in the preceding section that while *muti* is imagined having a supernatural outcome, realism denies elements that cannot be explained by natural causation. Furthermore, Williams (1978:02) argues that 'realism' is an emphasis on the 'real world' as opposed to the way that romance and myth typically describes the world, which is perceived as including supernatural, extra-terrestrial, and illogical (non-comprehensible) forces. The references in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* to *muti* murder mean that there is the potential that the conventions of realism may be contaminated. In a hypothetical description of magical realism, *muti* murder fits in well since it describes a narrative form in which 'magic' refers to any extraordinary occurrence, especially anything spiritual or unexplainable by logical science (Bowers, 2004:19). Nevertheless, realism has also given voice to some spiritual convictions, particularly those that relate to Christian beliefs, despite the emphasis on natural causality. Another excellent illustration of a strong confidence in God's ability to influence the material world is *Fathers and Sons*. In Chapter Five of *Fathers and Sons,* Arkady has a discussion with his father Nikholai and his uncle Pavel about his friend who is a nihilist.

Pavel and Nikholai experience a culture shock when they learn that someone can be a nihilist since, in Pavel's opinion, a nihilist is someone who believes in nothing. A person cannot recognise God's works if they do not recognise anything. Pavel adds that God gives men possibilities like becoming an army general, and hope for improved health or greater prospects in life (Turgenev, 1861:19). However, Arkady describes his friend Bazarov as a nihilist because he regards everything from a critical point of view. As such, these are contradicting views of life that the author manages to present successfully. Pavel and Nikholai's belief that one's fate can be shaped by the power of God is an example of how traditional values endure despite the advancement of reason and science, while Arkady's theories regarding Bazarov suggest more recent developments in science and logic. The existence of supernatural forces in which Pavel and Nikholai believe is mentioned but not proven. These concepts are nonetheless conveyed in a realistic narrative. The same logic holds true for the representation of *muti* murder in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. These texts accept the cultural power associated with *muti* murder even while its strength is not explicitly shown, much like Pavel acknowledges the influence

that God has on the world. Even though a supernatural aspect like God and *muti* murders are mentioned, the rules of realism as outlined by Williams above are still in place.

Chapter Fifteen of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* can be regarded as an example that demonstrates my argument. In this chapter, Matekoni, a mechanic and close friend of Mma Ramotswe, discovers a little bag made of animal hide while working on a customer's car. The bag has a dry, musty smell and inside it is a bone, skin fragments, and a tiny wooden bottle (McCall-Smith, 1998:147). These valuables and the car belong to Charlie Gotso, a well-known and powerful figure in Botswana. Charlie is also known for other things. It is believed that nobody can turn down a request from Charlie if he needs a favour:

> If Charlie Gotso asked you to do something for him, you did it. If you did not, then you might find that life became more difficult later on. It was always very subtly done – your application for a license for your business might encounter unexpected delays, or you might find that there always seemed to be speed traps on your particular route to work, or your staff grew restless and went to work for somebody else. There was never anything you could put your finger on – that was not the way in Botswana, but the effect would be very real. (McCall-Smith, 1998:147)

Here the effects of *muti* are spoken about in a similar way that Pavel speaks about God's abilities. In a sense, the potency of *muti* is not demonstrated by allowing the reader an opportunity to experience it; rather it is spoken of in a manner that presents it as something that is not verifiable.

In *Zoo City* (2010), the narrator does not describe *muti* as something that cannot be verified; rather, the reader witnesses the power of *muti* as it affects Zinzi. Baba Dumisani Ndebele offers *muti* to Zinzi in Chapter Eighteen. In this scene, Zinzi consumes *muti*, which causes her to convulse. The *muti* also puts her in a trance condition, which causes her to have a series of dreams (Beukes, 2010:173). Zinzi eventually achieves her goal, which is to locate Songweza, attributing this to a dream. This experience is unlike anywhere you are told what has happened, as is the case of Charlie Gotso's *muti*. Here you experience the stages of how the *muti* works to meet Zinzi's objective. The representation of *muti* in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* is realist because it does not disturb the conventions of realism, whereas *muti* is depicted in *Zoo City* as having actual supernatural efficacy.

A similar approach is taken in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and the conventions of realism are not violated. Chapter Fourteen provides an outline of *muti* murder in Southern Africa.

Sibanda begins the discussion by providing a history of traditional healing and explaining that it was outlawed during colonial times because it was thought to be witchcraft, even though some traditional healers did not practice witchcraft. Traditional healing became legal in 2006, but this did not apply to *muti* murder, which involves the use of medical products derived from human organs (Elliott, 2013:160). At this point, Sibanda emphasises the fact that children are likely to be victims of *muti* murder:

> 'It's children they go for mostly, Ncube,' continued Sibanda, 'I suppose they are small and easily manageable. You see, the organs have to be harvested from the living for the *muti* to be at its most potent. The louder the victim screams as their eyes, liver, breast or tongue is cut away, the more potent the medicine. The sexual organs are the most prized, particularly those of a fully grown, fertile man. The dying screams as his genitals are sliced off bestow mighty sexual prowess on the recipient of the *muti*.' […] 'It's the screams of the living, tortured children that add the magic to the flesh.' (Elliott, 2013:161)

The manner in which *muti* murder is spoken of in the passage is similar to the reference from *Fathers and Sons* and the conversation about God. There are no minute details provided by both authors to illustrate the effects of *muti* and God to the natural world. Sibanda claims that the magic used in *muti* murder comes from the screams of the victim. Sibanda's claim can easily be dismissed as something that is imagined as there is no textual evidence to prove that when the victims scream for their life it makes *muti* potent. Therefore, the idea of realism is unaffected. There is no impression that the magic operates the same way as it does in *Zoo City*. Therefore, the realist conventions are still in place.

Zoo City is a magical realist text and the manner in which it represents *muti* murder has magical realist elements to it. These elements include the involvement of *shavi* animals whose organs are extracted for *muti*. *Shavi* creatures are mythical. However, the text has given these mythical creatures creative embellishments that make them cease to be realistic. Zinzi's abilities to locate misplaced items cannot be explained by natural causation and this contributes to the elements that make *Zoo City* magical realist.

Therefore, if you can compare the narrative structure of *Zoo City* and the narrative structure of *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* it is clear that they differ. *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* follow a sequence in which events are explained using natural causation while in *Zoo City* events have

supernatural elements. In addition, *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency muti* murders are committed by people who are driven by their selfish reasons, which can be equated to a natural cause. In addition, the potency of *muti* is spoken of as an unverifiable phenomenon.

African Realism?

If the potency of *muti* in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* was demonstrated in a similar fashion as in *Zoo City,* would the texts still be read as realism, or as magical realism? Firstly, this would be a complete violation of the rules of natural causality in realism. As a result, this would not be regarded as a realist text by a Western audience. However, African people would traditionally view these components as being plausible as science to Western audiences. To understand how African people traditionally perceive reality one needs to incorporate what Petrus (2006:03) identifies as 'phenomenology', a term used to describe the study of things as one experiences them. Spiegelberg (1975:12) explains that phenomenology examines things for what they are in themselves and according to its principles. This means one looks at the subject of *muti* murder for what it is according to African thought, without imposing Western notions that may suggest that it is illogical for medicine made from human body parts to have a supernatural effect, unethical or unscientific (not adhering to objective science). When the subject of *muti* murder is examined from the position of understanding the African belief system then it may not seem like an illogical action. Further steps to curb murder rates can be taken upon understanding the belief. There must be an understanding between traditional healers who engage in *muti* murder and law enforcement in order to persuade traditional healers to find alternative ways.

Spiegelberg (1975:12) argues that phenomenology reclaims philosophies of the world that science has rejected as being too private and too subjective, and finally grants access to areas of our experience that have not been explored in our daily lives, thus providing deeper foundations for both science and life. Since realism aims to accurately portray nature and human experiences, reality for African people is defined by a constant interaction with the supernatural. A shortcoming of realism is that it limits itself to Western notions of reality. Despite the fact that *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* demonstrate elements of realism that are governed by natural causation, there is an

impression in these narratives that *muti* has genuine supernatural effects in the real world, specifically in Chapter Fifteen of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and in Chapter Nineteen of *Sibanda and the Rainbird*.

In *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* this is suggested in Charlie Gotso's influence and his seeming ability to control the fate of his enemies. Charlie Gotso's enemies experience difficulties that are beyond human comprehension, such as unexpected delays or misfortunes when they disagree with him (McCall-Smith, 1998:147). These events may seem coincidental but given that Charlie Gotso is known to use *muti* it can be inferred that this *muti* gives him luck or sorcery powers. The text hints at this idea but presents it as hearsay. Regardless of how the potency of *muti* is presented, however, the works of *muti* exceed the bounds of logical science, which also means that they go beyond the conventions of realism. Despite transcending the scope of realism, the text does not qualify as magical realist. As I argue in Chapter Two, magical realism is governed by a set of principles, one of which is a clearly defined realist narrative that is occasionally disrupted by clear magical elements. These principles are not present in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency.*

As an example, *Zoo City* features the Undertow, a mystical component, and *shavi* beings that appear as animals rather than as human ghosts. Consequently, there is a blatant manipulation of what African people believe to be real so that the text can be seen as magical realist. There is an artistic embellishment applied to *muti* as well, such as including the blood of a *shavi* creature. According to beliefs, *shavi* spirits are taken to be invisible but the text transforms them into tangible creatures that one can extract blood from to concoct *muti*. With the *muti* that is referenced in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* there is a true representation of it that is understood by African people. Consequently, the text transcends the scope of Western realism, while yet within the boundaries of realism according to African thought.

In *Sibanda and the Rainbird*, Shadrek Nkomo's reaction to witchcraft and *muti* murder indicate how supernatural elements have genuine effects in the natural world. In chapter nineteen, Nkomo tells how Bongani Ngwenya forced him to harvest certain organs from Thulani's body while he was still alive. Should he speak out about this experience, Bongani will in turn harvest his organs for *muti* and feed what remains of his body to crocodiles (Elliott, 2013:223). Nkomo further states that Bongani threatens to send witches who ride hyenas to come for him, and he knows *nyangas* (traditional healers) who have magic strong enough to send a plague of chameleons to walk all over him, clinging with their evil toes,

unfurling their long sticky tongues and wrapping them around Nkomo's naked body (Elliott, 2013:223).

Suppose that Bongani's threats are turned into reality and there is evidence of a *nyanga* that sends a plague of chameleons with their psychic powers. This would definitely transcend the scope of realism. The Western audience would perceive these ideas as relating to magical realism. This is because the West has discarded supernatural ways of understanding the world as a result of the rise in scientific thinking; any narrative that has supernatural elements is read as magical realism or fantasy. However, Petrus (2006:03) argues that in African societies it is believed that humans have the ability to control both the natural and the supernatural world and thus become the centre around which natural and supernatural forces interact. African people do not consider the mention of a *nyanga* with magical abilities to be outside the realms of possibility, although Osei (2003:189) acknowledges that within the population of the African people there is also a group that embraces modernist views of reality. This suggests that there are multiple beliefs within populations of African people: one group respects both traditional and Western scientific concepts while the other subscribes to Western perceptions that they inherit from colonial education. I acknowledge that modern scientific views have long been integrated into African communities. However, my focus in this chapter is traditional African perceptions of reality.

Bongani's threats are presented in a particular tone. The author does not present them to persuade the reader to accept the possibility that a human can possess psychic powers nor does the author present them to persuade the reader to think that these threats are ludicrous and that Nkomo is foolish to fall for them. Instead, the author does not take any stance, meaning that it is left to readers to make their own assumptions based on their notions of reality. This is a clever trick in realism, as noted by Turton (1995) when reading *Fathers and Sons*:

> Turgenev integrates questions of far-reaching social importance with the delineation of individual human personalities […] In Turgenev's work, nature appears to remain impassive, and impervious to the inner life of human beings […] I think that we should take Turgenev's frequent recourse to mood as a fictional device as a mark of his realism, since it is in mood, or atmosphere, that we may be said to experience in potent form a sense of our own reality in relation to the world. (Turton, 1995:174-176)

Turton (1995:176) argues that realist texts published in the nineteenth century were characterised by balancing conflicting ideas. These concepts dealt with either politics or the societal institutions and norms that were in place at the time. Turton (1995:176) observes that a realist text is recognised for reserving criticism of societal norms, institutions, and opposing views. In other words, a realist novel does not make comments about which side is right or wrong, but rather offers an impartial representation of society. This idea is clear in the way that Elliott and McCall-Smith approach the subject of *muti* murder and its impact on the real world with objectivity.

In Nkomo's response to Bongani's threats, Elliott may have been alluding to some Matabeleland inhabitants who think that some people have psychic abilities. The Ndebele and Kalanga ethnic groups predominate in Matabeleland, which is located in southern Zimbabwe (Msindo, 2005:79). To reflect the regional Matabeleland culture, the author writes in both English and Ndebele. Elliott conveys the idea that because the Ndebele are members of the African group, they believe that supernatural aspects cohabit with the natural world. This notion is demonstrated by Nkomo's character. Nkomo's response and the narrative's overall consistency in reflecting this idea demonstrates Elliott's successful representation of it. Although this approach to represent the beliefs of the people of Matabeleland is mimetic, it conflicts with Western notions of realism. African people will perceive the potency of *muti* as realistic. This reflects how awareness and knowledge are equivocal, that is, one's reality might be another's illusion. People reside within their perception of reality that is either shaped by cosmology or science or sometimes by both.

Acknowledging this idea that the supernatural permeates the natural in African thought is truthful to the definition that realism involves claims about the nature of reality, and it is evaluative towards reality (Morris, 1995:02). In this case, the nature of reality presented in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* and in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* involves African cosmology in which the supernatural and the natural have a symbiotic relationship. In fact, despite being impartial, the omniscient narrator in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* makes the claim for Charlie Gotso's potent *muti* that 'there was never anything you could put your finger on, but the effect would be very real' (McCall-Smith, 1998:147). This assertion supports the phenomenological concept that one should describe reality as one experiences it (Petrus, 2006:03). It can be argued that this introduces the idea that some events are outside the realms of logical science. This also introduces the idea of transcendence, which is a synthesis of science and life as we know it, considering those aspects of existence that

science alone cannot explain. Aspects such as the power of God, as in *Fathers and Sons*, suggest that there are times when you cannot put your finger on the works of God, but when the effects are real. Similarly, the notion of *muti*; the supernatural effects of *muti* may be mysterious but the consequences are real.

Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude is a strategy developed by an author to enhance his illusion of life by including 'authentic' dialogue, newspaper clippings and other nonfictional items that enhance the illusion that a narrative is representational of life (Stoehr, 1969:1271). The term verisimilitude relates to creating a lifelike, quotidian narrative by developing a world that is familiar and identifiable as the material world. Mimesis, which has its roots in classical Greek drama, is an analogous term for verisimilitude. These terms are frequently applied when realism is discussed, and they refer to how realism produces a quotidian effect—ordinary daily activities which are made up of mundane details. In this section of the study, I discuss verisimilitude as a concept that is frequently employed in conjunction with realism.

Aristotle uses the term 'mimesis' in a variety of settings, mainly referring to its association with poetry, paintings, sculpture, music and dance (Halliwell, 2002:152). Mimesis is still commonly translated as 'imitation' which, according to Aristotle, means that human craftsmanship or artistic endeavours 'follow the pattern of nature' or 'imitate nature by imputing form to matter and conducting organised pursuits of ends' (Halliwell, 2002:153). As a result, the term 'mimesis' overlaps with verisimilitude, which aims to produce a lifelike and quotidian narrative. However, language in narratives functions differently and it may fall short in imitating reality. Unlike paintings and sculptures, language in a narrative cannot operate like mirrors that produce an undistorted representation. Instead, a narrative focuses on the specifics that are important in advancing the plot's objectives. Mimesis does not seem to work as well as verisimilitude in narrative form. Verisimilitude produces what appears to be truth-likeness, or something that resembles what is true (Morris, 1995:03).

In literary realism, language constructs what is familiar through communicating and conveying a succession of signs that resemble the material world. In other words, the world as it exists is framed by producing what is familiar. As a result, verisimilitude is constituted by familiar objects that create a framework of the hypothetical world that is represented. It

represents what is hypothetically present and what can be discovered in the material world. It is a precise description of identifiable things and this creates verisimilitude. Consequently, with a realistic frame it then paves the way for realistic events and dialogue that will match the frame. In magical realism, this operates differently. It is usually constituted by a realistic frame that is succeeded by magical events that contradict the realistic frame. With this in mind, in this phase of the study I examined how verisimilitude is established in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*.

In the opening chapter of *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* the author refers to a place and other objects that are familiar to our extratextual world. This creates a simulation of the real world. It deceives readers into believing that they are engaging with the realistic world. In creating this simulation, McCall-Smith begins by mentioning the setting of the main character Mma Ramotswe, which he describes in detail as follows:

> Mma Ramotswe had a detective agency in Africa, at the foot of Kgale Hill. These were its assets: a tiny white van, two white desks, a telephone, and an old typewriter. Then there was a teapot, in which Mma Ramotswe the only lady private detective in Botswana brewed red-bush tea. And three mugs – one for herself, one for her secretary, and one for the client. (McCall-Smith, 1998:01)

The method McCall-Smith employs serves to construct a picture of a detective's office out of commonplace items that can be found in any working office. As such, these commonplace items are believable to any reader whether they have been to Botswana or not. These are everyday items that are needed for an operational detective office universally. Therefore, verisimilitude is achieved by this strategy. The author also mentions landmarks such as the Kgale Hill in Botswana. The Kgale Hill is a recognisable place that is associated with Botswana; by mentioning it, the author establishes a realistic setting. McCall-Smith provides a brief background of Botswana's history as follows:

> But only a few years ago there was no detective agency, and before that, before there were even any buildings here, there were just acacia trees, and the riverbed in the distance, and the Kalahari over there, so close. In those days there was no Botswana even, just Bechuanaland Protectorate, and before that again there was Khama's Country, and lions with the dry wind in their manes. (McCall-Smith, 1998:03)

In the passage above McCall-Smith refers to the stages of history that the country has gone through, and he inserts Mma Ramotswe into the history of Botswana. This strategy creates

verisimilitude in an illusion of a real person. Furthermore, it connects the events in *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* with the history and the natural landscape of Botswana to make the text appear authentic. All these strategies combined develop a realistic impression and these details produce a lifelike effect.

In *Sibanda and the Rainbird,* Elliott explores different locations in her narrative as Sibanda and Ncube attempt to solve the *muti* murder case. From the opening chapter, the body is discovered at Thunduluka Safari Lodge, which is a fictional place. However, according to the description of the location, the lodge is in Matebeleland in Zimbabwe. This is a similar strategy that McCall-Smith adopts when he inserts a fictional character into the actual history of Botswana. In the case of *Sibanda and the Rainbird*, Elliott inserts a fictional lodge into an actual place in Zimbabwe. These strategies both develop an impression of a lifelike narrative.

The other locations that are explored in the text are Bulawayo, which is frequently mentioned throughout the story, and the Kalahari, the largest desert in southern Africa. These locations are mentioned when detective Sibanda and Ncube hunt Bongani who is on the run and attempting to flee across the Zimbabwean border. The route that Bongani takes is through the Kalahari veld and will lead him to South Africa where he will sell Thulani's harvested organs. Then he will have the money he needs to start a new life in the United States of America. The Kalahari is a known location and helps to establish verisimilitude.

Elliott also uses history to establish verisimilitude in a manner similar to that of McCall-Smith in *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. *Sibanda and the Rainbird* concerns the consequences of land redistribution, which has been undertaken in Zimbabwe to return land taken by European colonists to the native population. This theme is developed throughout the text. When Sibanda and Ncube investigate the case of a vagrant who has been killed by Mr McClean for trespassing on his property, Mr McClean's attitude suggests that the land that was taken from him. Mr McClean is a belligerent and an irate man who frequently treats his wife Isabelle harshly. A possible explanation for his attitude is that his resentment begins after he receives a notice of eviction, which is a severe blow to his ego. It is said that 'he never coped well from the first moment until the settlers began arriving to take over' (Elliott, 2013:71). When Sibanda and Ncube question Mr and Mrs McClean about the murder of the intruder, they realise that Mrs McClean's reaction and her bruises are suspicious. Despite this, they choose not to take the matter further.

During this moment at the McClean's farm, they find that his pickup truck matches the car that is suspected to have been involved in the *muti* murder case. After probing further, they find that McClean has no connection to the *muti* murder case. Instead, his attitude is that of a bruised man who seeks to protect his property from further government intervention. Therefore, Sibanda inquires if he owns weapons that could have killed the intruder. McClean responds by stating that he owns

> Two shotguns and a 308. a couple of boys from Kestrel Vale came over last Sunday. They may have used some birdshot in one of the shotguns. They didn't bag anything. I haven't used them at all recently. I don't have enough land anymore to hunt for the pot…' He left this last comment deliberately hanging. Sibanda let it pass. Land redistribution was a hot potato. He was glad he was not involved in the policing of it. (Elliott, 2013:78)

The experiences of land redistribution resonate with Turton's (1995:174) argument that a realist text of any culture must bear the imprint of the society in which we live, so that a writer who wants to give an account of 'things as they are' must balance the individuality of characters against their social identities. Turgenev was influenced by Russian society that was made up of landowners and peasants. It was marked by a division between people who held aristocratic principles and those who did not. These ideas are illustrated in *Fathers and Sons* from the opening chapter when Nikholai and his servant are introduced. Bazarov represents newer modes of thinking while Pavel and Nikholai represent older ways of living. These are elements that categorised Russian society in the nineteenth century and which Turgenev focuses on in *Fathers and Sons.* Of course, there are other themes that the text deals with but these are not included in this study.

Elliott's realist text develops what categorises the society of Zimbabwe: the problem of land redistribution. The character Harry Burke conveys that same anxiety about the land redistribution policy as Mr McClean. When Harry is visited by Sibanda and Ncube when they are investigating the *muti* murder case, his initial reaction is 'I thought I was done and dusted with police visits, Detective. Have you come to take the rest of my few remaining acres?' (Elliott, 2013:151). Harry's reaction is indicative of the government system in Zimbabwe; the land redistribution policy placed other people in precarious situations. Richardson (2005:01) explains that the Zimbabwean government started a land reform programme in 2000 that lasted until 2003. As part of this programme, white commercial farms were forcibly taken

over, most likely to be redistributed to loyal supporters of the President. The policy for land redistribution was therefore defective because it missed its intended objective. Primarily, the policy was instituted to make up for the British occupation of productive farmland in the late 1890s, which led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of black people onto lower-quality communal farms (Richardson, 2005:01).

Since the laws of property rights had previously been upheld and maintained, these land reforms were a significant turning point for Zimbabwe (Richardson, 2005:01). As a result, the mention of this historical incident strengthens the text's believability since it makes references to a historical context that readers are more likely to believe and identify with as familiar. All these references enhance the credibility of the text because they rely on fact. Stoehr (1969:1283) argues that factual material enhances verisimilitude because it operates like a still photograph, capturing a moment in life. The strategy of incorporating historical facts such as the land redistribution that occurred in Zimbabwe under the regime of President Robert Mugabe works in a similar manner. Equally, the strategy adopted by McCall-Smith in including the stages of Botswana history in his narrative enhances verisimilitude.

Character as destiny

The last item covered here that resonates with verisimilitude and mimesis is the approach realism takes when constructing characters. Morris (1995:8) argues that characterisation in realism tends to follow a character's process towards self-awareness and moral certainty. This process usually involves a painful emotional event that leads to a compelling reason for a character to change the way he or she perceives the world (Morris, 1995:8). Turton (1995:178) argues that in a realist text character is destiny. This means that a character's identity changes with time; this raises questions about the extent to which they are influenced by material and ideological factors (Turton, 1995:178). As a result, characters in a realist narrative should display the sense that they are unique individuals who also reflect a hypothetical person in the material world.

It seems to me that in constructing a realist character the author must describe convincing layers of this hypothetical individual that resonate with the material world both locally and universally. This factor plays out successfully in *Fathers and Sons* in the relationship of Pavel and Princess R. Pavel is an attractive man in his youth and he is loved by women and secretly

envied by men. Society pampers him and he has the opportunity to be a captain in the army at the age of twenty-eight. Pavel's character takes a shift after meeting Princess R. at a ball; from this point on his life is devoted to pleasing Princess R, consequently neglecting his career. When Pavel and Princess R. dance, she does not utter a word to him but he falls in love with her regardless. Pavel thinks of Princess R. as a mysterious woman. He does not know what she will do next. Princess R. loses interest in Pavel while he clings to her and follows her everywhere. Unfortunately, Princess R. becomes annoyed by Pavel's persistence, and she decides to leave the country.

Pavel's pursuit of her does not die when she leaves the country; instead, Pavel resigns from his successful career despite the advice of his friends and his superior officers. He follows Princess R. abroad and four years go by while he pursues her in a foreign country. At times Pavel tries to forget her. He becomes aware of his indecisiveness, and he is ashamed of it. Eventually he rekindles his relationship with Princess R., but it seems that she never loved him as passionately as Pavel does her. After about a month the relationship ends for good; although Pavel still attempts to keep it alive, this does not work. She leaves the city, avoiding Pavel, and he travels back to his home country, Russia. Upon his return to Russia, Pavel becomes disoriented and does not know how to return to his old routine. He grows old and lonely spending most of his evenings at a club, embittered and bored. When he hears that Princess R has died, he decides to abandon his memories. After these experiences Pavel becomes a silent individual who keeps to himself and occupies his time with reading, rarely meeting other people.

The story of Pavel underlines the definition provided by Turton that a character is destiny because a character starts at one point and ends at a different one. Pavel's character changes from the moment he is introduced as an attractive man with a successful career. He is indulged by society, but he later ends up lonely and miserable. He is loved by women but the one woman he falls in love with does not love him back and he does not know how to accept this. Instead, he gambles his life on her and in turn loses everything. This aspect forms the basis of characterisation in a realist narrative. Of course, this by no means suggests that every character must have a tragic story in a realist text. However, there ought to be an impression that they are hypothetical individuals who the audience can relate to in the material world. Furthermore, Pavel demonstrates the idea that a character must undergo a painful emotional journey that will eventually lead to his self-awareness and moral certainty.

A similar effect is created in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* in the characters Detective Sibanda and Sergeant Ncube. The first time that Sibanda appears in the text is near the Thunduluka Safari Lodge with Ncube and other policemen after discovering a mutilated body. As in *Fathers and Sons*, the opening passages of *Sibanda and the Rainbird* give the impression of the main character interacting with an authentic social world:

> Detective Inspector Jabulani Sibanda stood for some moments over what remained of the mutilated body. He stroked his chin several times, a habit which his fellow police officers understood to mean, 'Don't interrupt me, I'm thinking.' (Elliott, 2013:01)

This first impression is of a careful and analytical individual who prefers solitude, especially when he is facing tough situations. Sibanda has the traits of a romantic rebel, a term that was popular in the late eighteenth century and which refers to an individual who rejects social and political orthodoxies (Turton, 1995:180). Such individuals tend to be governed by their free will, contrary to the popular will. Sibanda rejects particular methods of indigenous medicine and tends to look at the aspect of *muti* murder logically and critically. This is demonstrated in the first chapter of the text when Sibanda and Ncube recall a similar case involving a mutilated body, similar to the one they discover near Thunduluka Safari Lodge:

> 'Ncube, do you remember the incident last year at the Plumtree border post?'
>
> 'Yes, sir,' said the Sergeant cradling his aching stomach at the memory, 'several men were arrested carrying three human heads in cooler boxes disguised under frozen slabs of beef.'
>
> 'Since then, the gang has clearly had two downsides, leave the head and just take the features. You could stuff bits of a face in one packet of frozen peas and no one would be the wiser,' said Sibanda. Ncube blanched further at this thought. (Elliott, 2013:10)

Sibanda seems to be stoic while Ncube is disturbed by these cases involving mutilated bodies. This lack of emotion from Sibanda is consistent with his characterisation and it proves his lack of belief in witchcraft while his counterpart is terrified by it. Later in the novel there is a shift in Sibanda's character and he warms to notions of witchcraft, using methods that are contrary to his beliefs in order to get Nkomo to confess. In that scene, Sibanda reaches into his pocket and pulls out a lion's claw with a silver mount that he received from Berry, a beautiful woman whom he adores. Berry got this from her father, who

killed a lioness and took her claw. When they are in England, she presents this to Sibanda as a birthday gift. Sibanda places the claw in the palm of Nkomo and tells him that

> [t]his is the claw of *isilwane*, the king of the beasts, the most feared animal on earth. No ordinary lion, Nkomo, this was from the lioness, Aslan.' […] 'He ruled vast kingdoms over the seas and had powers beyond all-knowing. When I have this with me, I am invisible, like the great Zulu king, Shaka. […] This thing is a sacred talisman that gives me powerful protection. Take it, Nkomo, it will give you a safeguard against the *abathakathi* and their hyenas, and chameleons.' (Elliott, 2013:226)

This scene illustrates Sibanda's ability to warm up to the notion that some people believe strongly in witchcraft and he manipulates Nkomo to believe that the claw is imbued with magic. Nkomo starts to confess, falling for the trick, believing he will be protected by the lion's claw. Sibanda's actions demonstrate how far he will go to achieve his objectives, including deceiving Nkomo into believing that he is embracing the same traditions.

Ncube's terror and fear of witchcraft reflects that he has spent most of his life in Zimbabwe while Sibanda has had the opportunity to be trained outside his country, at the Nottingham Police College. As one who has been trained in a Western country, he tends to view witchcraft with logic instead of being terrified by it. Consequently, Sibanda's character can be interpreted as being dismissive towards certain African traditional beliefs. Even though Sibanda is introduced as an analytical and organised individual, he does face challenges in his life that ultimately affect his perception about himself. Khanyi Mpofu and Sibanda have a hopeless romantic relationship. Sibanda is dedicated to his work and often postpones time to be with his girlfriend and intended wife. He dedicates so much time to his work that his romantic relationships suffer. As a result of Sibanda's unavailability, Khanyi becomes involved with another man, claiming that he gives her time and money. This man is Bongani, the instigator of the murder that Sibanda is investigating. This implicates Khanyi in the crime. She blames Sibanda for prioritising his work over their relationship saying, 'I thought marrying you would get me out of this hole, but that wasn't going to happen' (Elliott, 2013:207).

Khanyi's argument suggests that she is an individual who is complex and manipulative. Eventually, her accusations lead Sibanda to feel guilty: perhaps she was right to blame him. This is demonstrated in Chapter Eighteen when Sibanda sits in his office reflecting on the conversation he has had with Khanyi:

> He sat at his desk rubbing both hands [and the] side of his face. There would be time to reflect on Khanyi's words later. Could he untangle her accusations against him, sort out the truth from the emotional blackmail? (Elliott, 2013:208)

This moment clarifies the fact that Sibanda has his shortcomings as an individual despite his portrayal as an individual who has his life organised. Sibanda's character illustrates that a painful emotional experience can lead to self-awareness. In his case, he starts off as an individual who has control over everything but as time progresses, he realises that he cannot balance work and his relationship. Consequently, Sibanda's character reflects the qualities of a realistic character.

The characterisation of Mma Ramotswe in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* follows a similar pattern in which the main character undergoes a traumatic experience that eventually leads to her life changing drastically. Mma Ramotswe is a patriot in a peaceful country, Botswana. She loves Africa and all its trials. She is compassionate and has demonstrated that she understands the needs of the individuals who come to her detective agency. She consults the Bible occasionally when she considers how to respond to situations. Sometimes she asks herself 'What would Solomon have done?' (McCall-Smith, 1998:09). When younger, Mma Ramotswe learned about good and evil at Sunday school. She attended Sunday school without fail until she was eleven. She struggled with romantic relationships as she fell in love with a jazz musician, Note Mokoti, who turned out to be abusive towards her. Eventually, Note Mokoti marries Mma Ramotswe when she is expecting his child. However, Note Mokoti changes drastically, and becomes a terrible alcoholic:

> He came home late, and he smelled of beer when he returned. It was a sour smell, like rancid milk, and she turned her head away as he pushed her down on the bed and pulled at her clothing. 'You have had a lot of beer. You have had a good evening.' He looked at her, his eyes slightly out of focus. 'I can drink if I want to. You're one of those women who stays at home and complains? Is that what you are? 'I am not. I only meant to say that you had a good evening.' But his indignation would not be assuaged, and he said: 'You are making me punish you, woman. You are making me do this thing to you.' (McCall-Smith, 1998:55)

Note Mokoti has the qualities of a typical abuser and a terrible drunk and Mma Ramotswe's reactions in these scenarios are genuine and convey hypothetical characteristics of a victim of domestic abuse. Following this incident, Note Mokoti vanishes without a trace. Five days

later Mma Ramotswe gives birth but the child soon passes away. Later, Mma Ramotswe suffers the loss of her father who has tuberculosis. According to sources, Mma Ramotswe's father worked at the mine and while working he accumulated dust in his lungs (McCall-Smith, 1998:04). Before he dies, he gives Mma Ramotswe a large herd of one hundred and eighty cattle, including several rare breeds such as a white Brahmin bull (McCall-Smith, 1998:03). She sells all her father's cattle to a livestock agent for a good price. With the proceeds, she opens the first detective agency run by a woman in Botswana, The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency (McCall-Smith, 1998:03).

Mma Ramotswe's character faces great adversity, and this is evocative of everyday struggles that ordinary people face every day of their lives. The fact that she has had huge losses in her life and that things have not unfolded according to her plans, makes her character credible and authentic. What makes Mma Ramotswe's character credible and authentic is that it conforms to Morris and Turton's description of what constitutes a realistic character, namely experiences that may be emotionally painful but may lead to self-awareness. Mma Ramotswe embodies the qualities of realist characters. This might make a reader sympathetic towards Mma Ramotswe because she has overcome adversities and is an exceptional woman because she overcomes challenges and starts her own detective agency without the assistance of a man.

To summarise this section, the characters in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* fit the description provided by Morris and Turton. Sibanda and Mma Ramotswe demonstrate complexities that are informed by the life events they encounter. As a result, from the point where they are introduced to the closing chapter, they do not remain the same. Sibanda realises that he does not have complete control over his life as he once thought. His relationship with Khanyi demonstrates that he is an ordinary man with weaknesses. Mma Ramotswe, on the other hand, manages to overcome the obstacles she faces and becomes a phenomenal woman. Both these characters are realistic.

Conclusion

To recap, the representation of *muti* murder in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* follows the same principles as Pavel's discussion of the power of God in *Fathers and Sons.* This means that the potency of God is presented as a subject that

has not been verified. The subject of *muti* murder and the potency of *muti* is presented as something that has not been verified. Consequently, the conventions of realism remain intact and are not violated by the existence of *muti*. In this chapter I argued that if authors present minute details where the reader is given the opportunity to see *muti* affecting the material world in a similar fashion as shown in *Zoo City* then the conventions of realism would have been violated. If this was the case, then this would present an opportunity to talk about realism as perceived by African people. A African realism would reflect minute details which *muti* magic affects the natural world. Nonetheless, these texts do reflect the characteristics of realism rather than of magical realism. With this debate, I have offered a third response to the issues I raised in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This thesis discusses whether *Zoo City*, *Ways of Dying*, *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* should be described as realism or magical realism in their representation of *muti* murder. Each text explores *muti* murder in a different way. *Zoo City* adopts magical realism characteristics, and *Ways of Dying* follows an *Intsomi* form, which is unique among the four books under consideration. *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* adopt a realistic style when describing *muti* murders. The problem statement posed in Chapter One is 'To what extent do the terms "realism" and "magical realism" account for the elements of *muti* murder and the supernatural in the novels?' This is addressed in the following three chapters. This concluding chapter provides the fourth and final response to the problem statement.

As noted in Chapter One, this research study sought to examine the selected novels and their representation of *muti* murders to determine whether they adhered to the conventions of the genre of realism or of magical realism. I adopted postcolonial theory as the theoretical approach with which to explore the representation of *muti* murder in the selected novels. While advocating a tactical shift away from Western cultural forms dominating post-colonial states, postcolonial theory offers a critique of Western concepts of representation. It is on this basis that I adopted postcolonial theory to explore the representations of *muti* murder in these novels.

It can be observed from the four novels that the aspect of *muti* murder, which most critics have neglected to investigate more deeply, has the potential to shape a generic form. The four books in question exhibit the hybridity that often emphasises the creation of new transcultural zones that are born out of the results of mixed cultures (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000:109). While Western culture typically predominates in hybrid states, *muti* murder offers a viewpoint of African culture and its understanding of reality. I demonstrate that the dead and nature spirits are believed to interact with humans in African cosmology and that for good communication, people seek out the assistance of a traditional healer (Kail, 2008:72). In contrast, Western empirical conceptions of reality discard notions of the supernatural. As a result, the selected novels demonstrate a consideration of the two conflicting ideas of reality. Postcolonial theory conceptualises the hybrid nature of such perceptions of reality. A new

interpretation of the four novels has emerged while considering the hybrid perceptions of reality.

Magical realism frequently makes use of various planes of reality and literal representations of their syncretised or hybrid societies (Aljohani, 2016:74 and Cooper, 1998:15). I find in *Zoo City* that Beukes appears to employ both African and Western conceptions of reality; *Zoo City* is written with meticulous attention to detail, adhering to realist conventions only to reject the very same realism. Beukes rejects the notions of realism through the inclusion of supernatural elements in her narrative. She further rejects the notions of reality as perceived by African people, achieving this by employing symbolic effects to *muti*, *muti* murder and *shavi* spirits that make these myth items aspects of magical realism.

The text features *shavi* spirits that are animals that appear as physical manifestations of a person's sins. The myth concept of *shavi* spirits dictates that they are roaming ghosts of people who have passed away far from their homes and were not brought back to receive a proper funeral (Masaka, 2013:135). The emphasis on this part is that they are people while the text represents *shavi* spirits as animals. Therefore, this is the first attempt by Beukes to alter the concept of *shavi* spirits to accommodate it in the fictional world. These alterations are what makes *shavi* spirits creatures of magical realism. In Chapter Eighteen of *Zoo City*, *muti* transcends its general function in the material world. Baba Dumisani Ndebele combines *muti* with the sloth's blood. The sloth is already established as a magical realist subject. As a *shavi* creature, it is a physical manifestation of people's transgressions, and it appears as an animal when *shavi* are dead people. Combining the sloth's blood to concoct *muti* means that the notions of *muti* as known in the real world are transformed and embellished to fit the conventions of magical realism.

In Chapter Twenty, the description of *muti* murder also fits the magical realist convention when it appears that body parts are collected from *shavi* animals as opposed to human body parts. Once more, Beukes alters a myth concept to inject magical realist conventions. In this chapter, the victim of *the muti* murder is a porcupine that Zinzi notices is limping while its owner boasts about selling parts of its limbs for *muti*. Usually, victims of *muti* murder die from excessive bleeding when organs are extracted but the porcupine does not die. It is these simple details such as *muti* murder being practised on *shavi* animals instead of on people, and the survival of the *shavi* animal that makes this magical realism. Beukes relies on mythical concepts for the 'magic' aspects in *Zoo City*, specifically on a strand of magical realism

known as faith-based magical realism. This strand considers the magic to be connected to a cultural worldview. In this case, the worldview is that of the African people. Consequently, *Zoo City* is the perfect example of a magical realist text that employs multiple planes of reality by accommodating both African and Western notions of reality.

When it comes to *Ways of Dying*, the representation of *muti* murder takes a different direction from that which followed in *Zoo City*. In *Ways of Dying muti* murder is represented through the conventions of *Intsomi*. As noted in Chapter Three, *Intsomi* is a traditional Xhosa oral and literal narrative that has performative art with core cliches, magic, the communal voice and a lack of individual names as its tenets (Neethling, 1996:49, Opland, 1975:54 and Mkonto, 2009:93). The communal voice is an aspect of *Intsomi* and it narrates the events where *muti* murder occurs from the text. This narrative voice makes frequent use of the first-person plural pronoun for self-designation and self-reference to refer 'to a group of persons who narrate and who are also a character' (Bekhta, 2017:165). As witnessed in the scene from Chapter Two of *Ways of Dying* the communal voice narrates the events that led to *muti* murder. The communal voice is omnipresent. *Ways of Dying* also has other characteristics of *Intsomi* such as magic that creates disorder and an absence of individual names.

Mkonto (2009: 93) explains that *Intsomi* is a rhetorical technique that is frequently used in isiXhosa storytelling. Characters are unnamed to convey a specific message and theme in the plot. As is clear in *Ways of Dying*, Noria's mother does not have a proper name but goes by That Mountain Woman. This strategy conveys a cultural association belief among African people; magic is not seen as something disconcerting. I also observe in this dissertation that there is a population of African people that acknowledges Western scientific thought and a population that embraces both traditional African beliefs and Western science. The unnaming technique can unveil the ideal values of society when used by a skilled storyteller (Mkonto, 2009: 93), these values can be the idea that there are people with clairvoyant powers that can manipulate the supernatural realm.

The supernatural components in oral stories and in magical realism tend to share similar qualities such as creating disorder in reading patterns (Opland, 1975:54) by providing a realist narrative that is disrupted by magical events that contradict the realist plane. *Intsomi* uses magic to disrupt by conveying what is morally taboo and does not require a realist context as magical realism does. For instance, in Chapter Three I provide the example of Noria's promiscuity that has a supernatural undertone to it. Noria gives pleasure to Jwara,

enhancing his creativity as a blacksmith by singing for him. She also gives pleasure to old men who are taxi drivers and conductors while she is a minor. In this way, Noria's potent voice creates a reading disorder because it is connected to her promiscuity. The most important aspect about the supernatural elements that occur in *Ways of Dying* is that they do not arise out of a realistic matrix. They arise in a simplified narrative that reflects an oral tale. Consequently, *Ways of Dying* falls within the umbrella of orature that is specific to Xhosa people, known as *Intsomi*.

Sibanda and the Rainbird and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* follow realist conventions in representing *muti* murder. *Muti* murder, a practice with a supernatural outcome, is presented as something that is not verified. In a sense, the authors do not give the reader a direct experience of the effects of *muti* murder, as occurs in *Zoo City*. In *Zoo City* the reader is given minute details of how *muti* becomes potent whereas in *Sibanda and the Rainbird* and *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* the authors address the subject in the same way as Western scientists handle the supernatural aspects of religion. This means that the supernatural is treated as an irrational subject that is outside the realm of proof or disproof. Therefore, its effects remain speculation. Chapter Fifteen of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* demonstrates that the author does not provide the reader with the minute details that make Charlie Gotso's *muti* potent. Instead, these are presented as hearsay to retain the conventions of Western notions of realism by telling the reader about Charlie Gotso's potent *muti* instead of showing it.

Elliott observes a similar strategy in *Sibanda and the Rainbird*. Detective Sibanda gives an overview of the issue of *muti* murder in southern Africa, stating its frequency. Once more the author tells but does not show minute details of what makes the *muti* potent. In *Zoo City*, the author shows instead of telling the reader what makes *muti* potent. Beukes offers minute details of how the *muti* Zinzi obtains from Baba Dumisani Ndebele becomes magically effective, assisting her to locate Songweza in a dream. If Elliott and McCall-Smith presented the idea of potent *muti* in this way, that is, with clear magical effects, they would have disrupted Western notions of realism. Realism rejects notions of the supernatural. Consequently, Elliott and McCall-Smith perform an excellent task by telling and not showing how *muti* is potent.

On the other hand, if Elliott and McCall-Smith demonstrate potent *muti* as in *Zoo City*, then a new strand of realism would have arisen. This is because the text would not qualify as

magical realist as it would lack the necessary qualities of a magical realist text. Therefore, African realism would be an ideal choice to describe the kind of realism that portrays potent *muti*.

With these findings in this study, it is appropriate to note that African religions have an important influence in shaping the genre of each text. The subject of *muti* murder has been explored in different ways by the various authors. It is thus important to understand African thought when subjects of this nature are analysed. Each strategy in these texts could be further explored in future studies. The concluding remarks provide the fourth and final response to the issues raised in Chapter One. Comparative studies on magical realism and the supernatural elements in southern African literature could be conducted in future research. Another option would be to examine orature texts composed in native languages and contrast them with magical realism.

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