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Profiling the Female Crime Writer: Margie Orford and Questions of (Gendered) Genre

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### Declaration:

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used.

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## Abstract

Crime fiction, despite its long chronicled history, has only recently become prevalent as ‘genre fiction’ in South Africa. Despite being an historically disparaged form, crime fiction offers a platform to engage critically with elements of contemporary society. This thesis focuses in particular on the ‘Clare Hart’ series of krimi novels written by Margie Orford, considering some of the ways in which the author mediates the conventions of the genre. (I base my discussion on *Like Clockwork* [2006], *Blood Rose* [2007], *Daddy’s Girl* [2009] and *Gallows Hill* [2011], with brief remarks, in my conclusion, on the recently-published fifth novel, *Water Music* [2013].) I argue that Orford seeks to exploit the thrills and tensions typically associated with the genre even as, working through a gender lens, she attempts to reconfigure genre conventions and constraints in order to tackle ethical, social, economic and political challenges in South and southern Africa, especially as they impact upon women, children, and marginalised groups of people. My study examines how Orford undertakes a possible conscientising of her readership, in a genre which is ostensibly associated with easy, entertaining pleasures. In this endeavour, of particular importance is Orford’s characterisation of her protagonist, Clare Hart, an investigative journalist-cum-profiler whom she uses to turn a “defiant observer’s eye” (Orford 2010: 187) on the naturalised violence against women and children in the country, and to up-end some of the entrenched masculinist orientations of both thriller and hard-boiled traditions. Additionally, the thesis addresses the regional situation of Orford’s novels, the expressly southern African environment. Using selected theories of space and place, I argue that while setting is often important to literary fiction, for the crime thriller, setting is much more complexly spatialised, since it may assist in carrying an author’s contextualised criticism of received spatial hierarchies as they relate (especially) to gender and race. Additionally, I point out that Orford’s novels offer her the opportunity to situate narrative in relation to troubled regional histories and geographies, *and* to move beyond the immediate southern African locality to map the mass-mediated, global vectors which constitute the present, and to situate history in relation to contentious, provocative contemporary concerns such as “organized crime, collapsing state institutions, [and] street gangsters” (Orford 2010: 184). In doing so, I find, Orford offers psychological insight into the complex and highly unsettled nature of the protracted political transition which has marked South Africa’s shift from apartheid to democracy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Crime fiction is a major, though contested, genre of contemporary world fiction, and while the growing body of critical scholarship on the genre has begun to give this genre “an academic imprimatur” (Strongman 2011: 1046), debate persists. Is the crime fiction novel merely slight trash? Is such fiction, on the contrary, increasingly more relevant to wider readerships than novels marketed as ‘literary’? Answers prove elusive. In South Africa, the tweets, blogs, essays and podcasts which tackle these questions affirm the high visibility of crime fiction among a range of local readers, and attest to the popularity of the genre. (See for instance the chapters in the recently published volume *Life is a Thriller* [2012], edited by Anja Oed and Christine Matzke.)

My own reading of such discussion in this thesis, filtered through an analysis of the novels of Margie Orford, is that crime fiction has an important imaginative purchase both on South Africans’ leisure reading habits and on their understanding of socio-political circumstances. Yes, the literary novel may be the preferred academic form – a glance at the relative scarcity of crime fiction novels from the shortlists of major literary awards implies that crime fiction, for all its popularity with readers, remains an institutionally marginalised form, spurned by those who uphold the standards of serious book culture. But sales figures show that popular audiences – rather as Margie Orford has said of herself – are increasingly turning to crime and, gradually, such books are even beginning to make their mark in the hustings of book prizes.

Mike Nicol (2011) introduces the term ‘krimi’ saying: “Pons, that excellent German dictionary, defines it as ‘crime thriller; (mit Detektiv als Held) detective novel; (rätselhaft) murder mystery; whodunnit’, and it can also mean a crime series or a crime film. Seems to me a useful hold-all for the genre” (2011: np). “South Africans use the term *krimi* for *crime novel*, just as Germans do” (Peter Rozovsky 2008 cited in Mike Nicol 2012: np) and despite Orford’s objections to the word, for the purposes of this essay, ‘krimi’ will be used interchangeably with crime fiction. (“Margie Orford says – actually ‘confesses’ is the word she uses – that she dislikes the term *krimi*. She thinks it sounds like something you stir into Ricoffy.” [Orford cited in Nicol 2012: np])

Speaking specifically about South African crime writing, it is important briefly to point out that crime fiction has a history in South Africa, with its own distinct emphases shaped as a reaction to the tightening formation of the apartheid state. Early examples of South African ‘krimi’ novels, for example, do not have either an easy relationship with the police or a reassuring belief in state control, and indeed they might be said to prefigure the postcolonial turn in crime fiction, where received orders and systems are regarded with scepticism (see Strongman 2011). The imaginative-ideological difficulty of writing crime fiction in South Africa, for example, is addressed by author Mike Nicol (2013a), who argues that the challenge “isn’t exactly surprising as the cops have been more or less an invading army in the eyes of most of the citizenry since forever. Certainly, come the apartheid state in the late 1940s, no self-respecting writer was going to set up with a cop as the main protagonist of a series. It was akin to sleeping with the enemy (2013a: np).

Despite this dilemma, however, the country does have a history of producing krimi novels and Christopher Warnes’ selective synopsis indicates that detective “fiction has been a feature of South African literature at least since Langenhoven and Leipoldt...published their *speurverhale* in the 1920s and 1930s” (2012: 986). In writing these detective stories, both authors “explicitly acknowledge[d] the influence of Edgar Allan Poe”, often regarded as ‘the father’ of crime writing. Warnes also goes on to mention “[o]ther noteworthy figures” in the crime writing landscape, among them “Arthur Maimane in the 1950s, James McClure in the 1970s, and Wessel Ebersohn in the 1980s” (ibid.). Mike Nicol adds June Drummond to this history, paying particular attention to her use of amateur detectives as a way of circumventing the limitations of apartheid governmental control. Notwithstanding the achievements of these authors, however, Nicol argues that “not much has happened in SA crime fiction over the last five decades” when compared with “the vibrancy of thriller and crime fiction elsewhere....Until recently that is” (2013a: np). Both Nicol and Warnes identify Deon Meyer as the frontrunner among contemporary practitioners of South African crime writing, although since he began publishing in the mid-1990s, being widely translated from Afrikaans into English and multiple world languages, he has been joined by numerous other authors: “In 2005 Richard Kunzmann published the first of his Harry Mason and Jacob Tshabalala series, *Bloody Harvests*, and Andrew Brown won the *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize for his *Coldsleep Lullaby*” a whodunit with dual narrative strands that shift deftly between present day Stellenbosch and the colonial town of

the seventeenth century, demonstrating that “a krimi could out-write the literary reputations. In 2011 the *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize was again won by a crime novel, Sifiso Mzobe’s *Young Blood*” (ibid.), although the author’s emphasis on the young protagonist’s township development more closely fits the bildungsroman form and, for many commentators, blurs the krimi elements of the narrative. Add to these writers “new Afrikaans figures” such as “Francois Bloemhof, Piet Steyn, Quintus van der Merwe, Dirk Jordaan, Chanette Paul, and Karin Brynard with her influential *Plaasmoord*”, and it is clear that, since 2005, crime fiction in South Africa has been on the up and up (ibid.).

This brings me to Margie Orford, South Africa’s ‘Queen of Crime’, on whom I focus in the present study. Orford’s rise to local and international prominence has been dramatic, since the publication of her first novel in 2006, a fact that my study will attribute to the deftness with which she works with and against the demands of the genre: she is able to turn an entertaining literary form to subtly serious account, in particular to suit her (and evidently her *readers*’) interest in exploring South African femaleness as both relevant narrative subject matter and as the generative, investigative agent of local crime.

Orford was born in London but raised in Namibia, and educated in South Africa and the United States. She lived, for extended periods, in England, Namibia and the USA, and returned to South Africa with her family in 2001 (Orford 2010: 187). Her familiarity with a broad locational variety is evident in her handling of place and topical issues in her fiction, with the narratives generally embedded in southern Africa even while they do not shy away from the increasingly global networks of influence which inflect the local contexts of crime.

In my reading of Orford’s life, two startling moments stand out as particularly formative influences, and they have gone on to inflect the gendered and socially-contextualised politics which inform her writing: arrest, and return.

Firstly: in 1985, while a student at the University of Cape Town, Orford was arrested at an anti-apartheid protest and held at Pollsmoor prison. She was charged with treason - the penalty of which was death. Yes, the charge was subsequently thrown out of court and Orford, along with the other detainees, was freed. Yes, approximately twenty six years have passed since the imprisonment. Yet Orford acknowledges the lasting effects of the experience, how it changed

her sense of self and agency, made her feel an extreme, female vulnerability at being locked up and at the mercy of the guards. Writing in a telling present tense she says, “My fear of them – a sexual terror – slips under my skin, heading towards the bone like a filleting knife. It gets into the marrow; it lives there still” (2011a: np). In other words, Orford has experience of “the subjective nature of threat” in a country which, empirical evidence shows, has developed “a serious problem with crime” (Warnes 2012: 985). It is this deeply embodied response to the threat of violence that recurs again and again in her crime writing, particularly as it bears upon the fragile, exposed identities of women, children, and those considered marginal to power. After her release, Orford left South Africa, and when she returned in 2001, after about thirteen years, she found the country dramatically different. This event is the second experiential prompt, than can be seen as being relevant to the shaping of her writing:

[T]he country I returned to was foreign to me. Utterly familiar and yet unknown. I felt besieged by the extravagant violence of the place. I took it very personally. This is a dangerous place for women, for little girls, and I have three, but I needed to find a way to live here, fully engaged. The barricaded suburbs don't do it for me. I was an investigative journalist and had made enough documentaries in my life to know what to do if there's a question that bugs me: go find out. (2010: 187)

Orford's return piqued a need to re-turn the violent zeitgeist into some possible form of agency, even activism, and she settled on the vehicle of documentary investigation, which in turn led her to the writing of crime fiction. (She considers the genre an instance of the “investigative novel” [Warnes 2012: 988].) Warnes explains that Orford is well-placed to carry out such an enquiry: she is a “former university lecturer who has published on Namibian women's writing” (2012: 988), co-editing the anthology *Coming on Strong* with Nepeti Nicanor; she “is a patron of Rape Crisis, and has written newspaper articles and blog entries discussing sexual violence in South Africa, identifying its historical roots, exposing the poor resources of police and prosecutors, and recommending improvements to the criminal justice system” (ibid. 987-988).

Orford understands both the restriction and the expressive-critical potential that reside within the krimi genre, pointing out that “crime fiction, with its set limits and containments, seems to me as much part of modernity, a key thread of the urban fabric as crime itself” (2010: 188) even as this naturalised quality has retained a paradoxically edgy potential for social engagement: “Crime fiction has surprised me in its flexibility and in how it works for South Africa, a country that is embedded, like a stray bullet, in both my head and my heart” (187).



Such a statement, as well as remarks by scholars like Warnes, highlights two areas which are of central importance to her novels, and to my study of her fiction. The first is the potential of the krimi to function as a critical vehicle, allowing the author to interpret and find accommodative space within the parameters of the violent country that is South Africa, turning her own “defiant observer’s eye” (187) on to the subject of crime and violence in the country. The second is Orford’s decision to locate her novels in a decidedly regional, southern African context: of her five novels, four are set in Cape Town, and one in Walvis Bay - settings of which she has longstanding experience, both geographically and cultural. This provides an excellent opportunity for her writing to move beyond ‘setting’ as mere descriptive background and to engage with the claims of place upon individual embodiment and the shaping of community.

In the present thesis, Chapter One examines Orford’s “desire to adapt what is often thought of as a non-serious genre to reflect on issues of importance to post-apartheid South Africa” particularly as a protest “[a]gainst...an array of misogynistic beliefs and practices, which have their roots in reality” (Warnes 2012: 989). The attempt to broach these concerns prompts the debate on whether a purportedly escapist genre has the capacity to sustain critique and ethical enquiry. While it is not my purpose to provide a systematic overview of such responses, it is necessary to acknowledge the split in opinion. Some critics argue that crime fiction “asks nothing of its audience...[a]nd gives nothing” (Macdonald cited in Stowe 1986: 647). Others denigrate the genre for its formulaic nature, the repetitive, predictable plot and character patterns relegating crime fiction to the literary margins. Yet others claim that the very popularity of crime writing renders it inherently incapable of dealing with significant subject matter – the form is assumed to be escapist, the corollary being that it eschews social and ethical issues in favour of the graphic, thrilling spectacularisation of crime and violence.

If much has been written about the ostensibly facile, merely entertaining orientations of the krimi, some commentators, Orford included, move beyond the supposedly defining limitations to acknowledge the socio-narrative possibilities which are embedded within the genre. She demonstrates in her novels that crime fiction possesses the critical-conceptual potential *and* the flexibility of structure to engage with serious concerns even while simultaneously functioning as pleasurable read. Importantly, for my thesis, it is feasible to suggest that crime fiction may exhibit ethical purpose while at the same time remaining true to

the central tenets and expectations of the genre. In effect, there is plenty of scope for an author to tweak or reconfigure conventions. Orford's novels have made significant inroads towards the redefinition of the crime fiction genre, shifting critical emphasis from the pop culture or masscult assumption towards what is increasingly referred to as Crime Literature. She has effected this shift through her unusually affective treatment of various themes typically associated with the krimi genre, as well as her deliberate decision to challenge the conventions of crime fiction by turning attention to socio-ethical concerns that have often been considered beyond the purview of genres supposedly dedicated to slight entertainment. By Orford's own admission, for example, her protagonist Clare Hart is "concerned, as many women are in the Mother City, with sexual violence, human trafficking, gangs, the drug trade, [and] revenge (2009b: np). Orford's characterisation of Clare Hart, and her decision to create a female lead, allows her not only to challenge the "view of crime fiction as...intrinsically masculine" (Munt 1994: 200), but to address the complex positionality of women in South African society. Somewhat paradoxically, through the persona and experiences of Hart, Orford "appropriates masculine power" (Watson 2009: np) to create new definitions of femaleness.

In the thesis, I will argue that Orford, as a female writer tackling South African crime scenarios, valuably exploits the popular formulae associated with crime fiction in order to extend the critical boundaries of the genre so that her texts engage with many of the difficult, conflicted moral concerns that shape contemporary South African society. In doing so, she not only faces social issues head on, but comments self-reflexively on the tradition of crime fiction as it bears upon local circumstances and readerships. Orford believes that crime fiction offers the potential for "telling an emotional and moral truth" (Orford 2010: 191), and she attempts to elicit, through the characterisation and plotting of her novels, a level of affect that has previously been scarce in the krimi genre. This is a difficult task. It must be weighed, for example, against reader expectation, which is determined by the precedent of those existing novels classified as belonging to the crime fiction genre. Accordingly, if authors wish to introduce new subjects or issues, hoping to expand not merely the narrative scope but the critical edge of their crime writing, such desires need to be offset against, if not balanced by, established expectations associated with the genre. To an extent, new content can be introduced, disrupting some krimi assumptions; however, the push for innovative, emotionally and ethically-critical subject matter

cannot completely disregard the murder-investigation-denouement structure that historically characterises the crime novel, as this might risk alienating the readership. In Orford's novels, this thesis will note, she attempts to engage with several serious sociological issues, yet often these subplots remain open-ended. Whether this is a flaw or a deliberate narrative technique will be part of my detailed discussion in Chapter One.

Chapter Two addresses aspects of space and place in Orford's fiction, acknowledging her desire to "write about South Africa as it is" (185). She understands this locatedness as not only a convention of the krimi genre, but as a tactical means actively to engage with the difficult claims of South Africa's uneven modernity. Slightly tongue-in-cheek she has observed that "all books by literary white South Africans seem to involve farms with frustrated women immured on them" (ibid.) – and this is not a spatiality, whether of geography or gender, to which she wishes to restrict her protagonist. Crime fiction is a genre which entails an especially active engagement with place, given that elements of 'environment' so centrally inform both the occurrence of a crime and the labours of those involved tasked with various forms of detection. David Schmid (2012) cites Phillip Howells, observing "that crime fiction is characterized by 'a rationalist or realist epistemology' and that 'geographical description plays a central role in the epistemological claims of most detective novels, as one of the most powerful constructions of verisimilitude'" (2012: 13). This geographical true-to-lifeness, of course, also represents excellent opportunity for the exploration of contemporary social issues. Schmid goes on to remind us that "crime fiction is a profoundly spatial as well as temporal genre because, as Geoffrey Hartman has pointed out, '... to solve a crime in detective stories means to give it an exact location: to pinpoint not merely the murderer and his motives but also the very place, the room, the ingenious or brutal circumstances'" (1).

Orford's venture into crime fiction offers her the opportunity critically to explore several urban environments, primarily Cape Town, but also, to some extent, the desolate environment of Walvis Bay. In her novels, she interrogates spatial patterns in terms of adjacencies and disjunctures, rather than merely offering descriptively-laden representations for the sake of credibility. Instead, she invites a reader to understand place as relational, her narratives exploring the correlations between home and street, among domestic space, residential enclaves, peripheral slums, and the environs of formal work, and popular leisure. These she links, through plot lines

and character development, to larger socio-political trajectories of gender and race. (Indeed, she also treats *time* as spatial, since many of her novels investigate the claims of South Africa's past as they impinge on a democratic present.)

In Orford's novels, for example, settings are not passive entities or scenic landscapes. Instead, setting possesses the capacity to function, in the narrative, as an active site of engagement and even critique. Very often, for instance, Orford elects as locales for her scenes those sites which already hold particular associations for the protagonist and the reader: abandoned tunnels and bunkers; unused quarries; derelict public swimming pools. These actively create an element of tension and suspense in a reader's response to the book, and spur the plot forward. Additionally, Orford explores other places in ways which counter-assume expectation: she investigates the common, yet socially taboo and hence clandestine, occurrence of violence in the home, using setting as a device in the service of her attempt at "advocacy for the rights of women and children" (Warnes 2012: 988). (In the process, she also reconfigures assumptions about the danger of public areas and the assumed safety of private spaces.)

Overall, at the macro level, Orford's desire to engage with the world that she knows tends to intersect with Hausladen's insistence on the importance of place in crime fiction, where 'site' and 'scene' function as integral to plotting, instead of as simple lyrical descriptors (1995: 63). Orford's highly deliberate depictions of Cape Town and Walvis Bay, as well as the other geographical settings that Hart and Faizal explore, give insight into the nature of contemporary society. Furthermore, just as Orford's decision to introduce serious moral concerns into her fiction necessitated adaptations of the traditional krimi structure and emphasis, so too do the distinctly regional locales of Namibia and South Africa require that she reconsider the assumption that environment in crime fiction serves mainly as local colour background. Michael Titlestad, for example, itemises several of the socio-historical contingencies which a South African crime writer with serious ethical intent might have been challenged to negotiate. He cites "South Africa's lumbering and leaky criminal justice system", a police service that is "riddled with corruption", and "a milieu in which spectacular violence is ubiquitous and routine" (2012: 18). In the light of these characteristics, some established, even sedimented aspects of the krimi genre are not easily (or logically) accommodated: a reliance on the police service, for one, and an "uncomplicated restoration of order" (ibid.), for another. As will become clear, the changes that

Orford makes to the typical genre conventions are precisely those which embody a distinct southern African setting.

Also pertinent here is the complex relationship that exists between the past and the present in contemporary South Africa. Titlestad says that “crime in South Africa is ineluctably historical: most people would argue that one cannot divorce the current tide of criminality from colonial and apartheid inequalities and injustices” (ibid.). Despite this, as Anneke Rautenbach (2013) remarks, South Africa during and after the transition has also been subject to over-optimistic rhetoric, with “the adoption of such hyperbolic tropes as ‘the rainbow nation’ and ‘the truth will set you free’ (one of the slogans for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission)” (2013: np). These slogans emphasised a positive outlook which chose to occlude the reality of “flourishing crime and corruption” (ibid.), preferring to offer an idealised view of the country’s potential. This induces a collective social amnesia towards the past despite the fact that the country’s “traumatic past ceaselessly demands to be remembered” (Marais 2010: 46). Such instability of consciousness among South Africans reads like a deceptive text, an unsettling palimpsest in which a shiny veneer is erratically striated by the violent wounds of crime. The paradox of the violence in Orford’s crime fiction, my thesis will suggest, the pain with a purpose, is that it offers a reader the opportunity to penetrate with new insight into the social body, to reach beneath the surface and to discover newly meaningful ways of mediating categories of the implied and the explicit.

Orford’s treatment of place is similarly complex. While many link crime in South Africa and Namibia to the troubled pasts of these countries, Nicol *et al* remind us “that criminality is also inextricably linked with the conditions of modernity” (2011: 2). New developments in criminal activity, increasingly conveyed in examples of organised crime, are expressed in Orford’s novels through systematised gang initiatives which are “franchising their operations and extorting money when they can, pushing out small operators. Creating a monopoly” (Orford 2009a: 250). If she shows that “criminality is an inversion of the ideals of modernity, capable of mimicking features of capitalism, the definitive modern economic system”, so too does she cast scathing doubt upon the expedient normalisation of neo-liberal capitalism as a given, when in fact it ought to bear some of the blame and burden for vastly unequal societies and established modes of exploitation, corruption and discrimination (Peach 2006 cited in Nicol *et al* 2011: 2).

Orford connects commonplace understandings of crime to such destructively enabling networks of exploitation, effectively drawing attention to the elements of modern spatial relation in terms of which crime ‘takes place’ even under the supposed aegis of progress. In the context of criticism surrounding the krimi genre, Deon Meyer shrugs that “[c]rime fiction can never be a panoramic window on society, it can only be a small window with a restricted view” (Flood 2012: np). Perhaps. Yet as my work on Margie Orford’s novels will illustrate, this view is not nearly as narrow as detractors would believe. My thesis hopes to show the window through which Orford offers readers a view of contemporary urban life which embodies “emotional and moral truth, [and offers] a forensic exploration of the physical, emotional and moral aftermath of violence” (Orford 2010: 191) in a particularly southern African context.

## CHAPTER 1 The Krimi: Entertainment, Ethics, Gender

### Entertainment and Ethics

Much has been written concerning crime fiction as a pulp genre lacking in literary merit, a critical categorisation which derives from reservations about both the habitual form and the often sensationalist content of the genre. For instance, posts on BooksLive and SLiP (the website of the Stellenbosch Literary Project) have recently generated extended debate about the value and status of crime fiction in South Africa, asking us to consider both the place of crime fiction in contemporary South Africa and, more narrowly, in local literary circles. In these hustings, Kavish Chetty presents himself as a self-proclaimed ‘genre-snob’, criticising the krimi form, while on the opposing side, through arguments articulated by the likes of Linda Gilfillan and crime fiction author Mike Nicol, there is staunch, conceptually-informed support. This discussion, a volatile to and fro, embroils us in claims for and against the genre.

My own interest, in relation to my study of Margie Orford’s fiction, lies especially in the extensive critical support that the genre is attracting, picking up on the ideas of scholars such as Ernest Mandel, as well as high profile krimi authors like P.D. James and Ian Rankin. Such writers examine the *potential* that the crime fiction genre holds despite its alleged limitations; they grant the possibility that crime writing may innovate, notwithstanding its pop cultural reputation. In the local context, certainly, as some have begun to point out, “the dividing line between “crime fiction” and “serious” so-called SA Lit is becoming increasingly blurry” (de Kock 2012: np), and in the following chapter I will argue that Orford, a writer who is highly aware of debates around crime fiction, deliberately reworks typical conventions of the krimi genre in order to embed a critical agenda within the pleasures of entertainment.

A predominant assumption among commentators on crime fiction is that it is not amenable to the exploration of serious socio-ethical concerns. Orford’s crime novels, however, investigate women’s experience, the vestiges of the apartheid military, drug lords, human trafficking and post-apartheid racial inheritances, to name but a few complex topics. That said, Orford’s ideological-narrative interests in tough social matters and even human rights transgressions are necessarily introduced under the constraints of the genre: she appreciates that

crime fiction tends to operate within a very specific narrative economy, and that any adjustments to the form cannot stray too far from the conventional genre configurations; they must be weighed against the expectations of the audience so as not to alienate readers who attach particular expectations to such novels. As my chapter will note, despite the structured nature of the genre and the finite conclusion of the primary plot, these serious social debates are often left unresolved in Orford's fiction, which raises questions about the very capacity of the genre to handle such concerns. To what extent is the open-ended narrative a cop out? To what extent is it a mark of verisimilitude driven by critical intelligence?

In relation to the krimi genre, it has been argued that the "unusual occurrence of murder has become the norm" (Erdmann 2009: 17) implying that the incidence of crime is a simple prerequisite for the crime, quite separate from emotive affect. Orford, however, refuses to allow a dispassionate remove between crime and effect, and appears motivated by a desire to engage emotively with many of the violent events she represents. In this manner, Orford is not only grappling with explicitly ethical and moral concerns widely associated with the South African context, she expands on these by incorporating into her narratives a highly-charged, powerfully *emotional* reaction to the crime and violence which has not typically been associated with the thrill of the genre. This entails not only a strategic positioning of the reader, but a considered treatment of the victims as well. Perhaps most important in this process is the characterisation of Orford's protagonist Clare Hart, and the tactical alliance Orford creates between Hart and the reader. By positioning the reader so close to Hart, Orford is able critically to engage the reader with the threats and ramifications of femaleness in a highly violent, patriarchal society. Orford's creation of her protagonist as female is also an inherent challenge to typical genre conventions of the male investigator, and in this she not only offers various advantages but numerous challenges to perceived social hierarchies and representations of violence. As Smith suggests, Orford constructs Hart to combine "conventional 'masculinity' and 'femininity' so as to blur the distinction between them" (1991: 81). Through these methods, Orford is able to reconfigure the typically popularised, masculine genre of crime fiction to include not only an undermining of conventional gender assumptions but raise various socio-ethical concerns in an intimate, affective way.



For the moment, let me explore further the polarised tendencies which characterise the critical reception of crime fiction. Here, I turn especially to William W. Stowe (1986) whose work valuably demonstrates the possibility of finding a bridge, in the understanding of this genre, between entertainment and ethics. His argument aims to show both positions on popular fiction – the elite and popularist – and to link these to the detective novel. Stowe begins by introducing the more dismissive arguments. Consider the dated (1945) disregard of Edmund Wilson, who casts “the reading of detective stories” as “simply a kind of vice that, for silliness and minor harmfulness, ranks somewhere between crossword puzzles and smoking” (cited in Stowe 1986: 646). Similarly, Dwight Macdonald snipes that crime fiction belongs to a genre which “asks nothing of its audience...And gives nothing” (647). Stowe offers an exceptionally useful summary of the elitist critical tendencies which mark much academic response to genre fiction, pointing out the wide-ranging belief that *all* “[p]opular fiction is escape, opium, palliative, cover-up ...a diversion in the etymological sense of a device to draw or turn our attention from its proper objects” (646), both a sedative and a distraction from more important things – among them the reading of books of greater literary merit. In the same outmoded vein, return to Edmund Wilson’s remarks specifically on detective fiction as against literature proper: “We represent a minority, but Literature is on our side. With so many fine books to be read, so much to be studied and known, there is no need to bore ourselves with this rubbish” (ibid.). However, with what now seems to be the rise of a global readership for crime writing, and a gradual demise in the prominence of literature and literary fiction, such hauteur strikes one as an almost laughable cultural confidence, a hubris begging for a fall.

As Stowe indicates, criticism of the genre has enjoyed a long and ideologically complicated history. If the culture critique of Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno (1944), for example, faults earlier criticisms as being simplistically premised on the assumed “*moral* superiority of high literary taste” (Stowe 1986: 646) – a “fatally self-centred” opinion (647) – Adorno and Horkheimer nevertheless imagine that they, in contrast, “have solid theoretical justification for their aesthetic judgements of popular culture” (ibid.). Stowe explains that for these cultural commentators, it is the rigid structure of the genre which places severe restrictions on both content and ethical-affective reach, precluding the dialectical tension characteristic of serious cultural texts. They argue that the “whole and the parts are alike: there is no antithesis

and no connection. Their prearranged harmony is a mockery of what had to be striven after in the great bourgeois works of art” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944 cited in Stowe 1986: 647). This statement turns on the assumption that the inherited structure of the crime fiction genre is at once so fatuous and so overbearing that it limits the possibilities of any kind of moral-representational shift, or indeed even precludes the introduction of content not typically associated with the genre. Instead, the fixed structure of the genre putatively constrains the form – understood as the conceptualisation and patterning of character, plot intensity, story arc and the like - to such an extent that the genre is by definition relegated to inferior status.

More recently, Doreen Alvarez Saar (2008) has engaged with such assumptions from the perspective of crime authors. She cites P.D. James who, agreeing with Ian Rankin, maintains “that the snobbery toward detective fiction was the result of the necessities of the form – the ‘murder, the detection and the solution’ ” (2008: 151). In other words, it is the formulaic aspect of the genre – the apparently predictable development of tightly-plotted statement, exploration and resolution – that elicits the most criticism, since this repetitious patterning is perceived as the inherent aesthetic limit, and hence the associated moral banality, of all crime novels, be they from the sub-genres of detection, the thriller, or any other turns on the familiar form.

It is undeniable that, despite some distinctive stylistic and narrative features in the individual novels, crime fiction as a genre pivots on the presence of recurrent structural characteristics, and that writers write and readers read by anticipating and responding to such features. Steve Bennet (2012) discusses the typical structure of the genre saying, “[m]ost - though not all - crime novels share a common structure. First there is the crime, usually a murder; then there is the investigation; and finally the outcome or judgment, often in the shape of the criminal's arrest or death” (2012: np). Some go so far as to maintain that these are *requirements*, or indeed narrative contracts, referring to elements such as the presence of a body (or at least a crime of some sort against the *social body*), the pervading sense of suspense or impending violence, and some form of satisfactory conclusion in which mystery or suspense is resolved. As Lucy Graham (2011a) remarks,

Instead of the classic tripartite structure that characterises most literature (introduction to the protagonists and antagonists → climax → denouement), crime writing has a peculiarly truncated form. It jumps straight into the drama, and ends without much

winding down. Basically, you begin with a body or violent crime, the novel builds to a climax and you end it as quickly as possible. (2011a: np)

Yet until comparatively recently – perhaps the last thirty years – the prevailing truth in scholarship seems to have been that the crime, investigation, and solution which typify crime fiction prohibit an author from engaging with anything beyond the narrowly predictable. Stowe has been instrumental in helping to revise this simplistic argument, suggesting that if such “fiction *is* limited by its conventions to certain kinds of experience and certain set story forms, ... these limitations do not necessarily make it bad art” (1986: 658). Clearly Stowe, for his part, does not view genre restrictions as inflexible absolutes, positing scope for “impressive artistry within the bounds of a limiting genre” (656). In aesthetic terms, then, it is possible to conceive of the genre of crime fiction as operating through conventions which, instead of being inimical to ‘art’, may deliberately turn received norms to innovative effect. It is odd, I think, that critics should find this at all surprising; were it not the case, there would be but one single crime fiction novel in existence, since ‘The One’ would by definition do for all by doing it all. Critics who argue that the krimi genre subjects authors to stultifying constraints would do well to bear in mind P.D. James’ affirmation that “[t]he novel itself is a very artificial form – and none the worse for that” (cited in Saar 2008: 151); crime fiction’s ‘unnaturalness’, too, is merely a facet of literary convention. While not all novels can be called “great bourgeois works of art” as Horkheimer and Adorno put it (cited in Stowe 1986: 647), there is innovative potential offered for all novels, regardless of the so-called necessities of form associated with each specific subgenre.

Joke Hermes and Cindy Stello (2000) argue that while some crime novels do not innovate either aesthetically or ethically, the genre potential for both exists and is regularly engaged with, eclectically realised, and sometimes highly achieved, in those examples which are widely considered exemplary. Indeed, Hermes and Stello imply that such critical qualities are often naturally included in the novel, inherent in the crime-investigation-solution formula – the author simply needs to decide to engage with them. Accordingly, despite those critics who fixate on the notion that crime fiction is a formulaic genre dominated by the inevitability of ‘crime’ and ‘solution’, a narratively rigid structure which by definition delimits the writer’s potential to include any other concerns than the murder and the investigation, more pertinent for my own

project are the views of those scholars who recognise the limitations of the genre but yet do not posit these as all-encompassing. Such scholars suggest that the genre not only allows for the excitement and thrill of dramatic plot, for instance, but may also enable a unique and distinctive way of engaging with issues that are relevant to popular, contemporary society. Appropriate here is Mandel's idea that "the crime story is a profound social document, one that mirrors society itself" (cited in Saar 2008: 152) sometimes reflecting and sometimes refracting the world. It is through 'mirroring' (clearly, the term does not imply some facile mimesis, but allows that representation entails imaginative selection, highlighting and the like) that authors are able to engage with trenchant social and ethical issues in the pages of crime fiction. As P.D. James maintains, comparing crime fiction with more conventionally literary undertakings, "[w]hat's interesting about the crime novel is [that] it can explore all sorts of problems that worry people today and often does it more realistically"; "the crime novel can tell you more about the social mores and problems and complexities of the age" (153) than the high literary text. Another prominent crime fiction author who holds this view is Ian Rankin and it is notable that his opinion is invoked by Orford in her defence of the genre. "Good crime fiction," Rankin states quite simply, "tackles big issues" (cited in Orford 2010: 184). Such a view highlights the scope for crime fiction to reflect critically on the major social, political, ethical and even economic concerns of contemporary society.

In making the ethical case for forms of crime fiction, Hermes and Stello go so far as to suggest that the "good detective story does not solely offer suspense, it should also offer literary qualities or sociocultural, anthropological or historical background knowledge" (2000: 224). Here I find myself pausing, for as much as I wish to concur, the statement turns on something of an injunction. On the one hand, it conveys a discomfiting 'ought,' an imperative that such fiction, if it is to be considered any good, is obligated to tackle social issues, to give them pre-eminence in a narrative that might otherwise be 'merely' slight entertainment. This residual judgemental quality I find rather disconcerting. At the same time though, on the other hand I value Hermes and Stello's belief that there *does* currently exist some measure of 'good' crime fiction, and their willingness to gesture towards a latent 'utopian' possibility in the genre, namely, the potential to offer more than merely thrill or suspense. In the South African context, Orford maintains, this potential has already begun to be fulfilled in the novels of Deon Meyer, "a

warm-hearted writer who takes on broad moral issues: vigilantes in *Devil's Peak* and the spectres of our military past in *Blood Safari*" (2009: np). As she develops this point: these "'good' crime fiction writers take you towards an understanding and a catharsis of the violence, the punishment of the perpetrators, an at least temporary restoration of order" (2010: 190).

One challenge that Orford recognises is the desire to introduce serious moral concerns into the genre while still operating in relation to established genre conventions, since the sudden subversion of typical expectations may alienate the desired readership. As I have been pointing out, crime fiction is a very specific genre of writing, and the very characteristics that critics highlight as restrictive tend to be the self-same characteristics which originally attracted readers. In their work on the sub-genre of detective fiction, for example, Hermes and Stello argue that readers have quite fixed expectations when it comes to content, plot and narrative resolution. Such novels "are about suspense, recognition and transportation into another world" (2000: 222). They also highlight the attitude that readers have when approaching these texts: "Readers give strikingly similar accounts of how and when they prefer to read a detective novel: in bed before they go to sleep and on vacation. The good detective novel, moreover, is easy to read and hard to put down" (ibid.). These characteristics draw attention to the repertoire of expectations the readership has of the experience of reading the sub-genre. The reading – in bed, on holiday – is implicitly associated with a relaxed, leisurely attitude towards both the experience of reading and towards the subject matter of the books. The content must be gripping, but the purpose is pleasure, rather than an over-stimulation of the mind or conscience whether through formal, conceptual or ethical innovation. Readers become accustomed to the cat and mouse game, the teasing invocation to crack the narrative codes and signs; they are clued in to desire the investigation/solution pattern of crime fiction, and they relish the suspenseful excitement followed by gently cathartic closure which (very often) simultaneously gestures beyond the end towards another adventure in a series which features a familiar protagonist.

Reader expectation, as determined via the precedent of previous novels written by the same author or indeed simply by features typical of the genre, to some extent influences the content that can be introduced in new novels, and the kinds of issues covered. Accordingly, krimi authors who wish to innovate in these areas must balance originality against tradition.

Extending genre boundaries to incorporate unusual, perhaps controversial, storylines, for example, must be offset by a solid dedication to the core characteristics of the genre as it is traditionally conceived, namely the crime and the solution. Overall, genre norms and reader expectations may mean that the potential available to shift boundaries while dealing with serious social issues is constrained rather than unlimited. That said, however, nor are we faced with some absolutely pre-determined landscape in which an author *may not* attempt to unsettle received ideas, turning the highs of reading pleasure towards the bleaker, more sobering shadows of socio-political enquiry. (In fact, as the focus of so many crime novels on questions of sexual abuse and violence against women might imply, one of the challenges for crime writers is how to treat characteristically gory, graphic sexual elements of narrative in ways which turn from titillation towards the subtly conscientising estrangement of deep human feeling and empathy.)

Indeed, Orford's novels represent an instance of "humanistic crime fiction" (Della Cava and Engel 1999: 38) which shifts away from tough, hard-boiled traditions of crime writing and "places the detective's psychology and human and social issues at its core". This subgenre "incorporates in-depth characterization with plot realism and social commentary with detection" (ibid.), and has come to the fore especially with the rise of increasing numbers of female authors of krimi fiction. As Gavin points out, "[c]ases in such novels resonate with contemporary issues, often those of particular concern to women such as domestic violence, abortion, and child abuse. Race and class issues are also often central" (2010: 267). Within the context of a changing South African society, Margie Orford's novels make deft use of the platform that the crime fiction genre provides, and in the next section I expand a little on her novels' moral concerns, paying particular attention to how Orford manages to introduce difficult socio-political debate into the core of the crime fiction plot. As Anja Oed and Christine Matzke's recent edited volume on investigating African crime fiction indicates, "What African literature and crime fiction share at a most fundamental level is their emphasis on the 'double' function of literature" in which "elements of entertainment and social commentary" are combined", thus "highlighting the link between social analysis and playful diversion". These editors point out that "[m]any African authors have a strong sense of responsibility towards society, which, independent of the genre they choose, is reflected in their creative writing", and thus it is not surprising that crime fiction "has often been concerned with issues relating to the society at large", the genre "absorb[ing] and

appropriate[ing] current thematic concerns” very immediately (Oed and Matzke 2012, cited in Nicol 2012: np).

Let me link such observations to Orford’s fiction. Her first title, *Like Clockwork* (2006), focuses on the abduction and murder of teenage girls whose bodies are left in public locations across the city of Cape Town. Clare Hart’s investigation into these deaths and abductions is carried out in conjunction with her investigation into human trafficking and prostitution in South Africa which leads her to an examination of the situation of illegal immigrants in the country. Clearly, this entangled series of slow revelations, obstacles and eventual discoveries entails complex conceptual and experiential reciprocities, involving the crime writer in issues and debates which refuse easy resolution. The characteristic krimi body, here is also connected to the social body, which is shown in Hart’s troubled enquiries to touch not only on immediate family or neighbourhood, but to chart a human arc that is – or *should* be – everybody’s concern. The degree of overlap among the various storylines is made explicit when Whitney, a girl who has been abducted and raped, is locked in a building known to be associated with local prostitution rings. One of the customers who visits this apartment block is Otis Tohar, the killer of the girls in Orford’s main plot, and he films Whitney’s rape and further physical assault – the same modus operandi he has already followed with his own abducted victims before killing them. While Tohar can be classed as an aberrant individual, a psychopath – often a stock character in crime fiction – his crimes, typically against young females, can be seen to perpetuate a culture of systematised violence against women, which is a difficult terrain for the female author to traverse. Consider: Tohar’s Lebanese heritage is used as an instantiating designation of his outsider status, an unbelonging that will be developed in keeping with the narrative demand in crime fiction for an element of ‘otherness’ in the killer. Yet Orford needs further to signal Tohar’s difference, and she does so through the female victims. Were it not for the killer’s signature traits of the key bound and strapped tightly in the palm of a victim’s hand, and ritualised disfigurements such as the mutilation of the girls’ eyes, his victims might simply have been forgotten, nondescriptly absorbed into the endemic cycle of violence against women and children that is so commonplace in South Africa. Orford highlights such crime as an ambiguous force in the sociopsychic imaginary: it is shocking and alien, yet also so naturalised and familiarised in South African consciousness that it is only through remarkable perversity, the

criminal himself signing and authoring upon the female bodies the crime against the larger social body in an unforgettably exhibitionist spectacle, that a death stands out as noteworthy against the regular norm of banal, undistinctive, everyday murder. Such difficult correlations between entertainment and the ethical recur throughout Orford's body of fiction.

Orford's second novel, *Blood Rose* (2007), is an investigation into the murder of boys who are living rough on the streets in Walvis Bay. This story sprang from Orford's hearing about the murder of a fifteen year old youth in this city when she was working on a project in the area. His "mutilated body was tossed over the fence of a school, where it was discovered in the playground on a Monday morning" (2010: 193). This scenario might very easily have formed the basis of a sensationalist crime novel; however, Orford's preferred interpretation of the event allows her to engage with the problem of street children and to emphasise society's pervasive attitude toward them, a criticism she embodies subtly, rather than through a pedantic political catechism or proselytising. Instead, Orford's views on the matter are dialogically embodied. By this I mean not only given *in* dialogue, but even more deeply made real *through* the discursive possibilities which dialogue as an element of narrative offers for questioning and critical enquiry. Consider the exchange between Clare as the investigator and the character Darlene Ruyters, who is critical of those involved in the so-called investigation:

'They don't care if he's dead or not, anyway. He was just street rubbish to them,' she said.

'Who doesn't care?' asked Clare.

'The police. The municipality. You ask them. They don't care about this dead boy or Nicanor Jones and Fritz Woestyn. They threw them into the grave to save themselves the trouble. There are so many orphans now that in their hearts people are glad when they're eliminated.'" (2007: 134)

As Ruyters' remarks make a reader realise, the boys are not nameless non-entities, despite being discarded by regular society. They are suffering individuals, children, albeit that their ever-increasing number has begun to constitute them as a social problem. Orford's novel also makes clear that this particular problem often stems from the fact of child-headed households – a common situation among the poor in both Namibia and South Africa. Orford has Ruyters say of the youngster Kaiser Apollis: "His sister tried to look after him when their mother died. How



does that work, a child-headed household? Bullshit. There is no household. Those kids just sit there, waiting to be picked off” (135). Not only is Orford able to touch on these concerns, but in doing so, she also ventures into South Africa’s problematic historical occupation of South West Africa/Namibia, noting the fractured local communities that were left behind after independence, as well as the consequences for such communities when all the mineral wealth has been extracted and exported. What is left but abused abandonment?

In this novel, I find Orford’s interest in Namibia to be more than merely an abstract convenience related to fictional setting. Instead, her treatment of place implies a strong emotional attachment to the country, a powerful affect which carries a critical ideological charge. This is expressed in the summary of the history of Namibia given in an appendix at the end of the novel, a paratextual device highlighting in documentary form the fate of South West Africa/Namibia as a country time and again subject to various colonising imperatives. It is also conveyed in the very narrative images and descriptive textures of *Blood Rose*, since the story is focalised through Hart, and she often offers extremely critical views of the political economy of the country:

Two years ago, the factories perched like hungry cormorants around the harbour had gorged on the bulging catches. Clare had filmed vessel after vessel offloading their silver harvests. Namibia’s suited elite, circling like sharks, had allocated ever-bigger quotas to themselves, buying farms and BMWs hand over profligate fist, ignoring the scientists and their warnings. Now the fish had all but vanished and an eerie lassitude pervaded the town. The bounty that had followed the retreat of the South African army, itself leaving a gaping hole in the town’s coffers, was gone. (2007: 44)

The vehemence of this description, expressed via an unsettling lyricism, affirms the country as a damaged place, such that the murder of the boys and the discovery of their bodies become explicable as symptoms of the decay that this exploited locale is undergoing.

In Orford’s third novel, *Daddy’s Girl* (2009), the kidnapping of Faizal’s daughter Yasmin is the primary plot event. However, her abduction fits into the narrative’s broader social concern around the pandemic of missing children in South Africa, particularly female children. “Ours is a nation of missing girls,” (2009a: 62) Orford has Hart point out. Giving additional weight to this focus, and enabling subtle meta-textual authorial commentary, Orford also has Hart working on a documentary film about missing girls, a piece called ‘Persephone’ after the myth of the goddess

who is abducted by Hades and kept captive in the underworld. Both lines of Hart's investigations throw light on various examples of gendered abuse prevalent in South Africa.

Additionally, harnessing crime fiction entertainment in the service of social commentary, this novel highlights the dominance of gangs in the lives of poor Coloured communities. Hart travels to the Cape Flats to conduct a filmed interview with the mother of a recently missing girl, and the protagonist's position as privileged outsider seeking an 'in' leads her to note the despairing state of the environment:

Three Indian Crows feeding on a dog's carcass hopped back and forth at the lights, black eyes fixed on the traffic, their timing impeccable. A huddle of boys rolling dice, betting with bottle tops, stared at Clare. Chained dogs barked in the litter-strewn yards. She was looking for a street with no name – its sign long since torn down and sold for scrap metal.

Clare looked up at the pockmarked buildings; three storeyed walk-ups that baked in the summer and froze in the winter. The Flats. The buildings were named after battles fought long ago by people who lived far away. Waterloo, Hastings. Agincourt, Trafalgar, Tobruk.

The people who lived in this place called it Baghdad (2009a: 15).

The desolation that Hart notes here is evidently more than mere local colour; it functions as an objective correlative of social breakdown and moral decay. Further, she records the subtle forms of linguistic-conceptual alienation that have occurred through the categorical processes of naming in which space is ideologically claimed by a master narrative, preferred meanings unreflectively being imposed upon those considered to be subordinate. The names of the flats, we notice, commemorate old English battles, or sieges in the Second World War; they have no germane link to the lived realities of the people whose lives the buildings house. Instead, the people live under, indeed *inside*, the empty signifiers of distant, insignificant, incomprehensible events, history reduced to abstract labels even as their own persistent struggles – the daily battle to survive the harsh circumstances of The Flats – are reduced to the inconsequential level of waste or historical detritus.

In *Daddy's Girl*, Orford also tackles the existence of the numbers gangs that rule the Cape Flats by referencing one of the leaders of a gang. Mrs Adams, the mother of a missing girl, says: "‘Harry Oppenheimer has gold mines. Voëltjie Ahrend and his gangsters have this.’ She

waved her hand at the warren of matchbox houses and backyard shacks. ‘A gold mine too[?]’ (2009a: 19). Here, Orford uses the fragile positionality of Mrs Adams critically to assess the state of the nation as a whole, discussing the shifting power balance in the country: “‘Buying, selling. Gangsters, police, politicians.’ Mrs Adams turned her green eyes on Clare. ‘For us that lives here, it’s all the same. We’re the ones who pay in the beginning and in the end’” (20). Mrs Adams represents a group of people marginalised during apartheid, and now forgotten by those preoccupied with their hungry grabs for power.

Orford’s fourth novel, *Gallows Hill* (2011), entails the discovery of the body of an artist, “a young woman in a silk dress, who was stuffed in a box and buried [in 1988], two and a half decades” prior to the narrative present of the novel. Her body is discovered on Gallows Hill, a mass burial site for “scores of 200-year-old skeletons....These were slaves, criminals and other people considered undesirable or of little importance to the rulers of the Cape Colony” in the nineteenth century (Sinkins 2011: np).

Once again, we see Orford using the framework of the krimi as a hook from which to hang her associated interest in ethical issues, since the narrative inquiry entails a social archaeology of slavery in relation to South Africa’s history of both colonialism and apartheid, and the lingering effects that this past has on contemporary society. Granted, Orford’s novel does not embark on a major project of historical-ideological recovery, an investigative exposé replete with provable data and checkable facts. However she does torsion the krimi genre in order to make connections with South Africa’s brutal, compromised past. As suggested by Mandy de Waal in her interview with Orford, in writing *Gallows Hill* the writer goes even one step further into the murk of systemic violence “by looking at South Africa’s ‘forgotten violence’ – the slavery roots that set the bedrock for all our social interactions. ‘Socially we’ve forgotten that slavery was one of our original sins that haven’t been dealt with yet’ [Orford] says” (2012: np).

One of the first links that Orford makes with the past is the persistent and ignominious lineage of sexual violence in the country, wrought in particular against women who were considered to be lower than other people in the colonial hierarchy. The curator of the slave lodge in Cape Town describes its history saying: “‘The Slave Lodge was once the biggest brothel in

Cape Town,’ said the curator. ‘For an hour at night, the doors were opened to the men of Cape Town. Sailors, soldiers, burghers. Anyone who took a fancy was let in. Given free access” (2011: 70). Pedro da Silva, Hart’s filmmaker colleague, replies: “Little wonder that South Africa turned out the way it has” (71). The history of slavery and the forced labour model of human relations that comprised the original form of colonialism in South Africa is one which is not comfortably acknowledged in the country. Faizal, too, describes his heritage sardonically: “Look at my family, spent 150 years pretending they came from Java on some fucking involuntary 18th-century package tour and just happened to like it here” (85). While I cannot engage this in detail, relevant here is Zoë Wicomb’s research on the “Case of the Coloured” in South Africa, where the subjectivity of ‘Cape Malays’ is shown to be located in “the body as a site of shame, a body bound up with the politics of location” that “haunts coloured identity” (1998: 93). Clearly, Orford raises serious concerns in her novels, issues of the kind that engage postcolonial scholars. Notably, however, this engagement is not introduced at the expense of genre norms; instead, it complements Orford’s skill in handling the pacy plot and narrative suspense which characterise traditional crime fiction novels. Including these difficult sociological and historical elements in the novels broadens the boundaries of the genre and shows Orford exploring a potential not conventionally attributed to crime fiction.

The moral and ethical issues that Orford raises are widespread and topical in South Africa, and frequently form the subject of newscasts and investigative journalism. Yet in genre fiction, the subtle balance that needs to be struck between convention and ethical prompting is an awkward process. For example: if Orford’s attempts to introduce these concerns are both narratively and ideologically accomplished, I note that the subplots are often prematurely curtailed, or they are revisited only in passing once the main plot begins to head towards its climax. I offer three examples in Orford’s novels of such open-ended, unresolved subplots.

The first instance is from *Like Clockwork*, when Orford introduces the character of Natalie Mwanga, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mwanga has been trafficked to South Africa and forced to work as a prostitute; she manages to escape from her captors and find her way to a centre for abused women and children where she agrees to recount her story for Hart’s documentary video on trafficking. She explains her situation, including that she has recently tested negative for HIV, and the fact that her daughter remains in a refugee

camp. This subplot in *Like Clockwork* is based on a factual account of the life of a Congolese woman whom Orford encountered during her career as an investigative magazine journalist. Through this narrative fragment, Orford introduces into the escapist crime plot a more sombre sociological undertone, one which unflinchingly addresses the desperate fates of women who are trafficked and prostituted as a means to survive. At the same time, however, I cannot help but notice that in treating this narrative strand, Orford relies more on plot irresolution than on closure or denouement. For example: Hart phones the director of the Southern African Refugee Centre in an attempt to have Natalie's daughter located and brought to South Africa; yet this line of plot is not revisited and the reader does not receive any resolution, whether good or bad. Natalie Mwanga is in effect a journalistic 'sidebar', a side story. She is there for a few pages, and then she and her troubles are gone. (I will return to the possible implications of such treatment later.)

Another character-driven ethical subplot that Orford introduces is the story of Pearl, the daughter of a thug in the 27s, one of the vicious number gangs that control various areas of the Cape. Orford has Hart interview Pearl for a documentary video on gangsterism in Cape Town, and Pearl recounts the story of sadistic sexual and physical abuse she has suffered at the hands of her father. Her own daughter, indeed, is the result of incestuous rape. Her attempts to evade her father's influence are prevented by his escape from jail, and his brutal retribution leaves Pearl hospitalised with severe, and potentially lasting, brain trauma. Yet when Hart goes to visit her the nurse remarks casually, "She'll make it, I think. She's a real fighter, this Pearl" (2009a: 311).

I cannot easily determine the ethical ramifications of such observations: is this merely a platitude, a facile authorial 'wrapping' of violence against women through the passing observations of a minor character in relation to one, singular instance of what is actually a much more widespread social problem? Or, is this a gentle, sisterly recognition that a woman such as Pearl, however abused and battered is, like many others of her kind, somehow possessed of the resilient life resources which enable her to survive intractable circumstances? The fact that such plot elements prompt serious questions in me as a reader, posing ambivalent ethical quandaries, implies that they have significant moral ramifications. However, I remain uncertain about how to interpret such textual elements – and I am troubled that this is the last we hear of Pearl in *Daddy's Girl*.

My final example is that of Sophie Xaba's son, Scipio, who is last seen getting into a police van in 1988 in *Gallows Hill*. Sophie Xaba was the domestic worker of Suzanne le Roux before she disappeared and Hart and Lilith (Suzanne's daughter) manage to locate her. They visit her home, where she speaks about the disappearance of her son:

'But with white people, it wasn't so easy for white people to disappear.'  
'My mother did, for 23 years.'  
'But now you find her, you can lay her to rest, Lily.' Sophie wiped her eyes even though there were no tears left. 'That is all I ask for now. Not to be angry, not for revenge, not for justice. Just for my son's bones so that I can bury him.' (2011: 228).

This story is of a piece with the many that surfaced in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings: harrowing accounts of people disappeared by various forms of apartheid and counter-insurgency violence. Yet this is the last that one hears of Sophie Xaba, even though Orford does allow a little tingling of hope for Mrs Xaba after Faizal manages to free himself from his attacker and find the official grave of Suzanne le Roux. He calls a colleague and refers to a Raheema Patel, a woman who investigates missing persons:

'Tell her she'll want to exhume whoever's buried there.'  
'Any idea whose grave it is?'  
'Not yet,' said Riedwaan. 'But the one this at a funeral that's free is the corpse. So, question is, who did Basson bury there? He had more than enough bodies to get rid of. Might be nothing. But Patel worked on his case. And there were a couple of kids from Crossroads just disappeared. It could just be someone she's been looking for all these years.' (2011: 330).

The reader has been told that Patel helped Mrs Xaba look for her son, and no matter how irrational or improbable, there is a vestige of hope that this, finally, might be the young man's burial site. His mother, at last, might locate his body. However, nothing ever comes of this plot strand, and the reader has no conclusive knowledge about the identity of the person in the grave – or, indeed, if any body was unearthed.

Possibly as a result of the difficulty, for the krimi author, of coalescing an ethical impetus with typically emotionally heightened, spine-tingling genre expectations, often these concerns,

while introduced, are not followed through to any pointed conclusion. Indeed, while the structure of the typical crime fiction novel remains intact with these subplots – the “murder, the detection and the solution” scenario referred to by P.D. James (cited in Saar 2008: 151) – the subplots which tend to introduce the serious ethical questions fall by the wayside. What is one to make of this, when it might be interpreted as lending credence to the genre’s detractors, their insistence on the limitations of the krimi form insisting that formulaic conventions over-ride the likelihood of any conscientising impulse? I would like to speculate a little further about such open-endedness. Does it imply an avoidance of serious socio-political integrity, an uncomfortable recognition that ethics sit uneasily alongside entertainment? Perhaps. Or, perhaps, it is worth acknowledging that Orford’s refusal to tie up loose ends, as the readers of the genre might prefer, constitutes her writerly recognition that lives and crimes and social patterns are more complex and elusive than any narrative treatment can honestly accommodate? Orford herself appears to be very aware of the necessary elements of the crime fiction conclusions, and the disparities between fictional crime and the volatility of actual crime circumstances. She writes about this difference saying that crime fiction is characterised by “violence and catharsis” (2010: 190) and that this is a “catharsis that only exists in the realm of crime fiction. In the realm of true crime, there is rarely resolution, peace or full recovery from the violence endured by the victims. There is sometimes imprisonment (if one is lucky) of the perpetrator (if he is caught, if the cops don’t lose the evidence)” (ibid.).

Orford’s statement speaks to the injustice that is a characteristic of much South African life – and the possibilities which crime fiction represents for reconfiguring the dissatisfaction of the real. In the crime novel, the author can easily put the bad guy in prison. She can give the mother her revenge, or the lawyer his case closure. Yet despite this, Orford’s own novels favour storylines which show no deliberate attempts at closure. Instead, the South African author acknowledges that while crime fiction might be expected to offer a satisfyingly finite ending, real examples of crime seldom evince the neatly-packaged conclusions that one finds in stories – especially in a troubled democracy such as South Africa’s. (Unless, of course, we consider violent death conclusive in itself.) Here, there is the emphatic possibility that Orford perceives the value of incorporating just such uncertainty *into* the usually more clear-cut, entertainingly untroubled narrative patterning of crime fiction. She cites Ian Rankin:

What crime fiction needs is a sense of the incomplete, of life's messy complexity. The reader should go to crime fiction to learn about the real world, not to retreat from it with comfortable reassurances and assumptions...Good does not always triumph in today's crime fiction; evil cannot always be rationalised (Rankin 1999 cited in Orford 2010: 195).

The inclusion on Orford's part of serious sociological concerns is a means to adapt the traditional conventions of the genre.

Also consequential for my study is the recognition that Orford does not aim to challenge the boundaries of the krimi genre as merely an academic exercise in aesthetic reconceptualisation. Instead, Orford appears motivated by an emotional desire to engage with, and respond critically to, some of the challenges which mark South Africa's young democracy. Consider Orford's statement about how she began writing crime novels. Of the crime which has become so prevalent in the country she exclaims: "It drove me crazy, this casually murderous misogyny and how it silences the living, erasing depth, personality, difference, life. The way I tried to counter this psychotic blur was to turn my own (evil) investigative eye, the defiant observer's eye that looks for truth, back on this invasion" (2010: 187). Orford's statement highlights her approach to crime fiction writing as not simply a genre that entertains, but as a textual means of critically engaging with the blunt and brutal vicissitudes of contemporary South Africa, where women, especially, are subject to casual violence.

Yet attempting to elicit an ethically-inflected emotional response from readers is a difficult process in a genre where the typical expectation entails entertainment taking precedence over more sobering social concerns. Pertinent here is David M. Stewart's observation about the paradoxical "relish with which people read crime literature" an ambivalent "enjoyment...about the subject" of crime (1997: 681) in which readers take pleasure from the very fictionalised crime that in reality they go to great lengths to avoid. Despite this apparently oppositional relationship, Stewart argues that the enthusiasm readers have for the genre implies an indecisiveness concerning the serious nature of crime and the impact that it has in the world. Such ambivalence perhaps inflects Orford's own reasons for writing in this genre: on the one hand, she wishes to capitalise on the genre's increasingly international, linguistically-translated opportunity to satisfy readers' longing for thrilling narrative drive, and yet on the other



she hopes to activate the genre's latent potential to prompt a more serious, critical examination of disturbing aspects of contemporary society.

This ambivalent purpose is reflected in her attempts to jolt the reader out of a sense of complacency through the affiliation that she creates between reader, perpetrator and victim. One of these examples entails having the reader become witness, as if present and immediate, to the unfolding violence on which the narrative pivots, so that the reader is likely to feel voyeuristically complicit and emotionally implicated in the crime. This positioning is unnerving, discomforting. Consider what Orford does in *Like Clockwork*, where in the prologue of the novel she narrates a scene of female sexual trafficking. An unnamed girl is brought to a wealthy house at the request of an anonymous man:

Two strides take him to the room where they have brought the new consignment. She looks at him, terrified. He finds this provocative. He holds out his hand to the girl. Conditioned to politeness, confused, she gives him hers. He looks at it. Then he turns the palm – secret, pink – upwards. He looks into her eyes and smiles. He stubs the cigarette out in her hand.

‘Welcome,’ he says.

The girl watches her heart line, curving round the plump mound of her thumb, burn away. Her sharp, shocked intake of breath breaks the silence. (2006:7)

The absolute dominance and control of the man contrasts with the helpless vulnerability of the girl, and one may well ask whether a reader is inclined to identify more with the agent of power, here, or with the victim, given that in the scene ethical integrity abrades against narrative authority, subservience against dominance – the wish for life, indeed, against the growing certainty of death. I find myself as reader placed in a disturbingly intimate position, shifting between the roles of the nameless victim and the nameless perpetrator; embroiled in the perversely casual violence of the encounter in which hospitality is transmuted into hostility, a powerful person's pleasure secured at the expense of a subordinate's pain. (How much do I want 'it', as reader – enough to read on, enthralled, while the girl is wounded for my pleasure? How will I avoid 'it', if I feel horrified – by seeking refuge in the male power which causes the pain? What kind of complicit solace is the author offering me?) In this scene, a reader is queasily

located, at once repulsed and engrossed, both an active agent who reads against the grain and the bruised recipient of authorial agency.

The reader is again placed in such a position in the prologue of *Blood Rose*, where the description also has a prominent sexual element, enhancing the intensity of a reader's disquiet while simultaneously capitalising on the bizarre psychological and somatic trajectories which may be taken by narrative pleasure:

Later, the heft of a piston in your hand. Perfect. Circled forefinger and thumb slide down to trace the blind eye. A fingertip dipped inside the barrel fans desire, warms our cold body. Pace back one step, two. He watches, the target. Hands bound. Breath held. Eyes riveted. Filled with the hope that you mean something else. Not this. Not you.

Your finger curled round the trigger anticipates the weight needed to fire. Uncurls, extends the ecstasy. Your eyes on the metal marker, an erect nipple on the barrel. Breathe out. Your breath mists the desert air. Breathe in. Breathe out as you beckon. Release. The force of it explodes through your arm, chest, head, groin and erases everything. (2007: prologue)

Here, again, Orford not only shifts the reader to the role of perpetrator, but includes the reader in the position of victim via the desperate thought “Not this. Not you” (ibid.). After this foray on the reader's part into the position of both killer and victim – each on either end of a power spectrum – there is an element of comfort in returning to an investigator-focused narrative. Orford describes this scenario saying: “I make you watch the killing of my poor boys from behind the shoulders of my perpetrators, shifting the reader from comfortable voyeur to participant, pushing the reader onto a kind of moral trapeze. There is a safety net, though: our trusty Aristotelian hero(ine) who feels with you and will bend the rules to bring the killers to justice on your behalf” (2010: 194). Orford's explanation is wryly knowing. It acknowledges her authorial desire to work with the conventions that entertain, even as she goads her readers from narratively-enthralled complacency or ebullient, unquestioning thrills towards more uncomfortable positioning. She emphasises her awareness of readers' uncertain positioning in relation to the crimes described in her novels: enthralled and disgusted; individually innocent (in all likelihood) yet also in numerous ways socially complicit in sustaining exactly the kind of society in which crimes against women are commonplace, and even enabled.

## The 'Hart' of the Matter

Pertinent in this regard are the views of Rédouane Abouddahab and Josiane Paccaud-Huguet. In *Fiction, Crime, and the Feminine*, they discuss the challenges of shifting the gaze from the female as victim to some less certain space of affective reader identification, such that “the structure of the imaginary scenario changes, and the modalities of vicarious enjoyment shift, too”. The result is “innovative montage effects produced by a wide range of narrative and linguistic strategies: spatial and temporal fragmentation of information which no longer follows a linear pattern, new economies of gaze and voice, pastiche and parody that deconstruct the frame, whose effect, among others, is to make the reader’s epistemological stance far more insecure (2011: viii). I will not claim that Orford completely achieves such complex reconfigurations of reader positioning – yet it seems clear that she is venturing an attempt in this direction, exploring the genre’s capacity to represent female experience and embodiment in ways that displace received, conventional voyeuristic trajectories, rather than writing krimis which easily contain or reinforce expectations of form.

Significant here is that Orford’s delineation of Hart as a character entails the depiction and development of a female protagonist as a deliberate vehicle through which to move beyond the naturalised, popular expectations of crime fiction. Orford attempts to extend the boundaries of the genre to accommodate what Di Pietro has called an ethical “recuperation” of form (1995: 250) which supports a critical examination of crime and its effects. A key means by which to accomplish this is through the choice and depiction of character. Sandrine Berges posits that “in reading [novels] we identify with the characters; through this identification, we experience emotions and perceive the world in ways that would not otherwise have happened. Our identification promotes an emotional engagement which leads to a finer perception of the world” (2006: 213). In this emotional, and potentially ethical, ‘fine-tuning’ of perception, character is an important device. The place and role of the characters in a novel are vital to shifting a reader’s perceptions, and no character, arguably, has more significance than the protagonist. Orford herself has remarked on this, drawing on Berges’ argument in order to confirm the importance of the protagonist in a crime novel:

There is a profound and unambiguous morality around these detective leads, the characters with whom both reader and writer identify. Is this the golden thread at the centre of good crime fiction what holds the moral centre and your attention? These characters, flawed and emotionally tainted as many of them are, behave in essentially ethical or virtuous ways. [This is an] ancient, Aristotelian concept of morality, because for Aristotle, as Sandrine Berges points out, 'a virtuous person feels the right kind of emotions, at the right moment, and is thus driven by them to the right course of action'. This is essentially what the detective does, and what the crime writer tries to do for you. (2010: 197)

Thus it is through the vicarious narrative device of the protagonist that the author attempts to lead a reader not only into the plot action, but also into the more subtle, relational ideas which constitute the ideological-conceptual thought-scape of the text. The protagonist is a fundamental vehicle for guiding and shaping a reader's experience of the world created in the novel. Readers tend to feel strongly about the key character of a novel. If, on occasion, there occurs a natural affinity and trust between reader and character, more often there develops a complex web of emotional proximity and distance, a negotiation premised on endorsing and withholding. Such dialectics of identification and questioning are central to the experience of reading, and tend to have been preferentially associated with the ameliorative moral power of those forms of literature designated serious, or canonical, rather than with the supposedly lax, easy pleasures of genre fiction. I am suggesting, however, that a writer like Orford manages to use her protagonist in order to lead a reader into difficult, demanding areas of critical thought and emotional affect. While the novels are written using third-person narration, it is through the protagonist's eyes that judgments are made. If complacency is to be challenged and serious concerns raised, it is through the protagonist's thoughts and experiences that this can very effectively be managed. Clare Hart, then, is a fundamental narrative element through whom Orford reconfigures typical genre conventions, in particular challenging expectations surrounding the masculinised orientation of the genre.

It is important, here, briefly to summarise the history of detectives in this genre in order to emphasise the shift that has taken place in contemporary crime fiction with regards to a sense of gender and emotional affect. This becomes very clear once we understand the history of the characterisation of the male detective. A few apt comments must suffice. For example, David Trotter (1991) cites Moretti (1988) and Most (1983) saying:

The detective's hermeneutic zeal converts facts into clues, into signs of other facts. 'He is not moved by pity for the victim, by moral or material horror at the crime, but by its *cultural quality*: by its *uniqueness* and its mystery' (Moretti 1988: 135). Thereafter, his detachment will ensure the continued suppression of moral and material horror: 'investigation and event, thought and object, are kept entirely distinct from one another' (Most 1983: 346). The ideological function of such stories is to ensure the triumph of mind over matter. (1991: 68)

According to both Moretti and Most, the male protagonists adopt a sense of distance between themselves and the victim. Moretti conjures an image of the male detective who is driven to solve the crime not through his emotional identification with the victims, but rather by the intellectual, rational challenge of solving the crime as a mystery – identifying the solution is a personal challenge that demands mastery and expertise. Most concurs, arguing that the *investigation* of the crime is almost a separate entity, needing to be considered distinct from the *effect* of the crime which so frequently tends to be made visible upon the human body. For Moretti and Most, it seems, in crime fiction the resolution, for the reader, is premised on the successful puzzle solution, instead of on what we might consider to be an ethical contract which has, metaphorically speaking, been drawn up between protagonist and reader, and has been slowly, gradually developed by the writer over the course of the narrative experience.

However, in contemporary crime fiction there has begun a dramatic shift from the impersonal remove identified by Moretti and Most, towards a more empathetic or emotive approach to crime and victims of crime. These new detectives appear to be "moved by pity for the victim, [and] by moral or material horror at the crime" (Trotter 1991: 68). In South Africa, the likes of Deon Meyer and Jassy Mackenzie join Orford as authors whose protagonists are driven by a sense of justice for victims of crime. Benny Griessel, Jade De Jong and Clare Hart are characters who do not investigate crimes as a result of their uniqueness but rather they are portrayed as characters who are deeply affected by the impact of crime on people and society.

Meyer's Benny Griessel often tends to feel an emotional bond with victims of crime. In *7 Days*, Meyer writes Griessel's thoughts at whether or not he should delve into a victim's personal life and he describes his hesitation. If he looked through these personal letters and photographs, Griessel knew that this victim "would become flesh and blood, a person with a life, and emotions and regrets and a few secrets. It would rob him of his distance, his objectivity, it

would all become that bit more personal” (2012: 73). Nonetheless, he opens the (Pandora’s) box. Similarly, Mackenzie’s Jade De Jong is describes as becoming “something of a fearless, rogue vigilante. While what she chooses to do is not always legal, she always has the victim at heart” (Fletcher 2011d: np). Orford’s Clare Hart correlates well with such protagonists, and indeed is also an innovative development, as my discussion will show.

Despite Hart’s professional approach to the solving of crimes, she shows none of the icily detached remove that has tended to characterise detectives of the past. Hart becomes embroiled in the lives of the people she meets, often developing personal relationships with them. One of Orford’s important achievements in her crime novels is that she does not maintain the separation between investigation and effect. Instead of relying on the habitual narrative containment of the krimi, Orford mediates the character of her protagonist in such a way as deliberately to blur these categories, precisely in order to lay claim to a reader’s mind *and* heart. It is not for nothing that she names her protagonist as she does. The moniker ‘Clare’ implies both rational clarity and purity of intent, while ‘Hart’ very richly signifies feeling, love, vulnerability, even ‘deariness’ – traits which Clare evinces in her bonds with the victims. In other words, Orford is adept at introducing the narrative complications required to intrigue a reader and, simultaneously, she manages to use these strategically to offer an emotional insight into the effect of violence on individuals and in the nation as a whole. (In comparison, as Susie Remilien points out in her discussion of Dorothy Sayers’ detective fiction, women writer’s introduction of any “non-detective element[ ]” into the krimi genre, “chiefly the amateur sleuth’s romantic relationship”, tended to be “viewed as an impediment to the crime-solving function of the detective. Jacques Barzun and other critics of the 1930s lamented this kind of intrusion” into the established genre parameters of crime fiction [2010: 96].)

For the moment, let me focus on Orford’s process in the creation of her female protagonist, bearing in mind her specific desire to include a sense of emotional affect in the crime fiction genre. Orford describes her decision to make her protagonist as follows:

Crime fiction offers a way of telling an emotional and moral truth, a forensic exploration of the physical, emotional and moral aftermath of violence. It was out of this insight that my lead character, the investigative journalist and profiler, Dr Clare Hart, emerged fully clad with a PhD in femicide and serial rape and an apartment in the Seapoint Promenade.

And from her rib – her feminine weak spot – Captain Riedwaan Faizal was born. (2010: 191)

The potential that Orford perceives within the genre to engage with emotion appears a deliberate focus. Her statement regarding the creation of Hart implies that she materialised almost instinctually, however Orford's narrative treatment of Hart – particularly her positionality as a female – is also an acknowledgement that her characterisation is a tactical narrative treatment decision on Orford's part as she utilises Hart's femaleness to shift genre expectations. For example, Hart demonstrates a deeply affective sense of identification with victims, a bond very often premised on the femaleness shared by both the victims and the investigative profiler and, sometimes, on the similar degrees of powerlessness, exclusion or vulnerability which tend to be recurrent social markers of women's experience in South Africa. Hart's close bond with victims such as Whitney and Pearl highlights this point. In *Like Clockwork*, Hart finds Whitney, a victim of kidnapping and rape, and takes her to the hospital. When she hears the girl is trying to avoid medical care she retrieves her and, as Whitney won't yet speak, takes her back to Hart's own flat. Later still she organises a room for the girl at a farm out of town, a safe house, in effect, a refuge. Notice that Whitney allows Hart to take her to the hospital, to her apartment, and to the farm, a mobile spatial relation which straddles and indeed creates connection amongst different types of social environment. This correlates with emotional trust and expansive horizons of feeling and relation. Her immediate trust of Hart is in sharp contrast to the instinctual, visceral mistrust she has of a male truck driver who gives her a lift. Her suspicions are confirmed, for the man seeks sexual favours in return for the lift. Whitney's dramatic response – at once, she reaches for the gun in her backpack – is indicative of the habitual violence she has experienced at the hands of men, and the characteristically reactive position she feels obliged to adopt.

Of course, it would be rash to claim that it is *solely* Hart's femaleness that enables her connection with girls such as Whitney, and in making my case for Clare Hart as an unusually affective instance of the krimi protagonist, I am aware of the “serious risk of falling into a kind of biological essentialism which presents women as being nurturing, caring people, and so on, *by their nature*” (Littler 1991: 130-131). However, in this case, Hart's femaleness *is* an advantage that allows her a different relationship with the victims of crime – a more open and emotional

connection than tends to have prevailed in more traditional, masculinist examples of the genre which very often exploit angles of detached investigation, or sensationalism.

In attempting to substantiate my argument that Orford consciously envisages Hart as a character who blurs the conventional boundaries between criminal investigation and emotional affect, I note the attention given in the Hart series to *life* alongside death. The ‘defiant observer’s eye’ that Orford creates for Hart admirably highlights the quotidian lives of victims rather than focussing, for perverse readerly gratification, mainly on their gory deaths. This is an authorial tactic which complicates assumptions about krimi sensationalism. In Orford’s descriptions of women, and in the relationships Hart develops with women, Orford creates and expands the protagonist’s personality, showing her investigator’s capacity for strong feeling. (This may take the form of a heart-rending empathy that might more typically be dismissed as female sentimentality, and/or an articulate anger which, along with hard-boiled bluntness, has characteristically been the province of male investigators.) Additionally, Hart’s investigations refuse to flatten and compress women into the category of ‘victim’. Overall, even beyond gender, Orford is particularly meticulous in her representation of victims. In all her novels, for example, the victims are given by name, brought to imaginative life as personalised beings. In *Like Clockwork*, the murdered girls are Charnay Swanepoel, Amore Hendricks, and India King; in *Blood Rose* the victims are the young boys Kaiser Apollis, Nicanor Jones, and Fritz Woestyn. In *Daddy’s Girl*, it is not only Yasmin Faizal, but Chanel Adams who has disappeared. This very naming becomes an acknowledgement of the humanity that the victims share with the reader, the names refusing the formulaic space of the anonymous, crime-ravaged body. The name becomes a small marker of remembrance, which invites a reader not merely to dump these ‘bodies’ into a generic ‘mass’ grave, but to vest interest in personalised lives.

Throughout her oeuvre, Orford is very deliberate in her construction of characters in order to elicit an emotional response. In *Like Clockwork*, the brutal deaths of teenage girls provoke an immediate sense of shocked pathos from the reader, the shock mutating into an invitation to empathy. Orford explains that these “victims are beautiful, nearly innocent” (2010: 193) implying that “Edgar Allan Poe’s formulation that the most poetic subject is the death of a beautiful woman holds true” (2010: 193). Orford’s statement emphasises the deliberate way in which she attempts to elicit a sense of poignant emotional response from her readers. These



girls are described as attractive, balanced on the cusp of adulthood while still remaining under the protective care of their mothers. The deaths of such girls offer readers a moment of ethical pause in which to consider the violently premature end to young female lives. Yes, the attractiveness of the victims might be construed as ideologically problematic – should it matter what a victim *looks* like, as if her good looks somehow heighten the shock of the crime, and even shadow, somehow, the crass popular assumption that attractiveness solicits male attention, constituting a woman's sexual invitation to a man, killer though he may prove to be. Yet we may also speculate that Orford hopes to offer a writerly intervention into the sexual politics of the krimi genre – she does not overemphasise violence as spectacle, but draws a reader's attention to terrible, searing loss. In other words, the easy sensation conventionally associated with women's deaths in the krimi is re-shaped so as to elicit deeply emotional *feeling*, subtly alerting a reader to her (or his) own implication in the parameters of crime, and raising the question of readerly responsibility.

Orford's determination to stake an emotional claim upon a reader, despite the hardened, dismissive responses of certain characters in her fiction, is emphasised in *Blood Rose*, in which the victims are street children. This is a highly contested demographic in South Africa, encompassing both the vulnerable child *and* the figure of latent social threat. Orford discusses the difficulty of eliciting sympathy for this kind of victim: "The killing of someone male and marginal is not an easy thing to make readers worry about. When you kill a young woman, you bring years of artistic conditioning around pathos, reproductive value and innocence. You kill a delinquent boy and you've tidied up the street" (2010: 193). She elaborates on her strategy:

So I decided to imagine his story, stitching it into Namibia's violent and un-discussed past, unaware of how much literary trouble it would cause me. Because my chosen victims, homeless teenage boys who live on a dump site, were a challenge to the easy aesthetic, the tested connections of crime fiction which likes its plot-triggering victims to be innocent, or at least attractive.

I had to make these dead boys alive in the text as a beloved child lost, an individual snuffed out, a little chap who had just stepped out of childhood in order to make the plot and pulse race. I had to create a sensory affect of smell, of proximity, of childishness, of a sense of responsibility in the reader for these dead children. With one boy, I showed his outgrown spider man pyjamas – a child's garment that carried the imprint of his little body before his death. (193-194)

Here, we see Orford drawing explicitly on the imaginative writer's repertoire of sense-based description in order to embody character through image, object, idea, rather than allowing character to remain an abstracted cipher which serves merely to be crushed in the service of plot excitement. She emplots the death of the boys *as* the death of children, marking their youthfulness through signifiers such as pyjamas, and superheroes. In this way, a reader is invited to side with the boyish, childlike innocence of the victims, rather than invoking the negative underside of opportunistic, feral crime. Indeed, in the context of homelessness, the homely intimacy of pyjamas is freighted with all the tenderness of motherly care, the comforting solace of domestic routine – precisely what these boys lack. (Additionally, the violent demise of these boys becomes not only a cutting short of individual potential; it is also associated with the destruction of the latent youthfulness of Namibia's potential as a country. These boys have already become homeless, alienated and marginalised by regular society, which sanctimoniously refuses their difficult normality and prefers to construe them as deviant outsiders. Orford's narrative, however, hints that these youngsters embody the youthful possibility of a young nation, and that they are an important, denied human resource for the future of Namibia. In this way, crime does not only have personal repercussions, but social implications for the future of a country as well.)

In *Blood Rose*, Orford describes Hart's experience of finding the pyjamas of Kaiser Apollis, one of the murdered boys:

The faded Superman [sic] pyjamas brought her up short with the realisation of how recently the dead boy had been a child. She slipped her fingers inside the frayed blue cuffs. His skinny wrists and ankles would have protruded from them as he grew into his malnourished and delayed adolescence. She picked up the top and held it to her nose, breathing in the lingering, wood-smoky smell of him. (2007: 82)

By showing the vulnerable and childlike aspects of this character, a child who had no choice other than to live the fragile, fraught life of a marginal, Orford can evoke a much stronger emotional response to the victim than might occur simply via the presentation of a nameless, featureless body. Further, she takes her female profiler into a moving, motherly space, having her project her empathy into the ragged, empty piece of clothing, which becomes sensorily imbued with the now snuffed life of the dead child. However perverse it may seem, Orford clearly animates the dead in order to give them more chance of securing an emotional,

imaginative life in the mind of a reader. In other words, her goal is not expedient plot drama or narrative excitement.

Here, it is important to note how often the histories of the victims in Orford's novels are described, and the lives of their families examined. The *relational* impact of the loss on close relatives is highlighted. Hart's career as investigative profiler necessitates that she must explore these lives in substantial detail, yet a reader is shown that Hart does not merely mine the dead lives for pro forma facts and clues that will expediently assist in solving the crime. Instead, through the insistent "humanizing labour" of Orford's writing method, "whereby the blood that was shed is channelled back into the living pattern of a new creation" (Abouddahab and Paccaud-Huguet 2011: xv), Hart is plunged into a shared world of loss which opens the world of the krimi text to surprisingly domestic and emotional spheres. This loss is felt, rather than dryly or factually recounted; often, it is felt by members of the victims' families – mothers, fathers, children; sometimes, conversely, a reader is struck by a relative's callous inability to extend human feeling. In the course of Hart's data gathering, questions of loss generate a difficult emotional lacuna for Hart, one in which she must examine her own role in the detection process, and acknowledge the devastation occasioned by the violent, often indifferent society in which she lives. In other words, if I may adapt the ideas of R douane Abouddahab and Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, the "novel highlights...not what lies *there*, far from the sphere of the subject, but what lies *here*, within reach", such that emotions become "subversive and disruptive forces" obliging crime and feeling to "partake of the same reality" (ibid.).

Orford articulates Hart's positioning as a female protagonist through the troubling paradox that in order to continue living, she must at once feel, making herself vulnerable to tears, anger, dismay, horror...*and* yet manage or buffer that flayed openness, lest she be rendered too vulnerable. Instead of being moved by the mystery of the crime – the abstracted who or why – Hart is moved by the suffering of the victims. As Deborah Jermyn (2003) might point out, such an authorial tactic "adds another agitating element to the mix" (2003: 51), eroding the more brusque, ratiocinative aspects of police procedural and detection. Hart refrains from treating the investigation of a crime as an intellectual exercise in which her astute, professional intelligence challenges the cunning or calculating schemes of the murderer. Her goal appears to be to address questions of feeling *as* ethics, in addition to gaining some kind of social justice for the

present victim, and making it less likely that there will be future victims. At the same time, however, Hart is often obliged to face the futility of her constrained agency, limited as it is to individualism, and she is unable to quell the persistent, frustrated melancholy that nothing she can do will alter the unequal social parameters which allow criminals to thrive at the expense of the vulnerable. In this sense, while Orford's crime fiction is not of the postmodern type favoured by Paul Auster, she does sometimes have Hart's insights verge on the metaphysical recognition that no manner of immediate solution can ever be found to the calumnies, perversities and injustices endemic to human behaviour. Life, it seems, can wreak criminal injustices upon unsuspecting, vulnerable human beings – and neither deep emotion nor the reasoned workings of cognition and language, can do much to shift this reality. And yet Hart soldiers on...

It is significant, here, that Hart's own sister has been a victim of gang brutality. Constance was assaulted and gang-raped; the perpetrators have never been found and prosecuted. This failure becomes an important element in the search for reparative justice which mobilises Hart's investigative inquiry into other crimes against women, even though Orford does not allow the personal element to overwhelm either the wider sociological context of her stories, or the narrative energy. In *Daddy's Girl* Hart has an exchange about her sister with the medical examiner, who warns:

'You're running on empty, Clare.'  
'I'm just running.'  
'It won't fix things.'  
'It might fix me.' (2009a: 40)

Instead of keeping the personalised trauma separate from the investigation, as Most (1983) suggests is typical of conventional detection novels, Clare Hart is envisaged by Orford as being spurred on by the very inhumanity of the crime against her immediate family member to identify with those victims who are strangers to her, whether the point of imaginative connection is their shared femaleness, or a more general powerlessness and exploitation.

In *Like Clockwork* (2006), after Hart has conducted an interview with Natalie Mwanga, a woman who has been a victim of human trafficking, Orford writes: "Clare sat in her car. She lifted her hands to her temples and pressed, trying to contain the horror that pulsed there" (2006: 48). Natalie's story has had such a profound effect on Hart that she experiences a deep physical

reaction, absorbing the trauma into her own body. A similar reaction occurs in the case of Whitney, a victim of a gang rape which was filmed. Whitney says, “That’s what makes me feel sick. That they did that to me and now it’s there for anyone to watch. It feels as if what happened is happening over and over and over. I can never stop it now because it’s there on their tape” (208). After she has left Whitney, Clare is described as experiencing almost a proxy suffering: she “could not get the film Whitney had told her about to stop playing – the unseen images were like circling vultures in her head” (210).

This graphic, image-based description does not offer a facile equating of the rape of Whitney and the profiler’s mental distress, yet the visual conceit of the film, playing constantly in Hart’s imagination just as it does in that of Whitney, the images looping, linking and overlaying, is an effective, indeed moving, device which connects the physical-mental pain of the victim with the emotional investment made by the profiler in her attempt to envisage the scope and scale of the crimes she is covering. The film becomes a projective device through which the profiler is obliged to imagine, as a form of proxy witness, the young woman’s physical and emotional pain, and to develop an embodied emotional insight into the protracted nature of her trauma.

The personal reaction means that the impact of such crimes takes an emotional toll on Hart and it is this emotion that drives Hart to find justice. Again, since the narrative draws nuanced links with Hart’s sister’s suffering at the hands of gangs and the failure of the system to give her even the small satisfaction of justice in court, each victim profiled by Clare Hart becomes no mere shadow figure; the particular details of the victims’ lives are simultaneously informed by the personal connection which, buried in the profiler’s past, motivates the emotional-ethical reactions that repeatedly drive Hart’s investigations. Engaging with such serious concerns with a protagonist who acknowledges the explosively emotional ramifications of her work allows Orford greater depth of expression and psychological motivation than has conventionally been associated with the krimi genre.

Clearly, through Hart, Orford is attempting to mobilise the thrilling, escapist elements of the crime genre in ways that nevertheless enable her to prompt moral questioning, without simply ‘moralising’. She hopes to use the character of Hart as a device through which to “find

the voices of the brutalised and the dead” (Orford 2010: 187). Notable here is that for Hart, as a female character, it is more socially acceptable to exhibit empathy than it would be for a male character involved in a police procedural. This might elicit criticism from some scholars; they might claim that Orford is trading in convenient gender stereotypes rather than substantially reworking gendered patterns of behaviour. Jermyn points out, for example, that the TV show *Prime Suspect*, with its forceful female Detective Chief Inspector, has suffered just such criticisms (2003). However, I believe there is sufficient blurring of gender behaviours in Orford’s novels, always in relation to questions of solution and affect, to allow her innovatively to explore the ethical ramifications of empathy in crime fiction. It is empathy that enables Orford to extend and even transgress complacent generic conventions in a way that doesn’t simply entertain, but provokes thought in a reader, encouraging the development of sympathetic emotional identification with the victims of crime. Berges sees this as a feature of novels in general, remarking that they:

...are not morally admirable because they preach, or because they present examples of morally admirable people and actions, but because they force us to work through moral dilemmas in a way that is both emotionally engaged and original. They force us away both from complacent dogmatism, and from the rehearsed middle-of-the-road attitudes which we are always tempted to adopt for sheer peace of mind. In short, reading novels can help us to develop morally good attitudes, responses and emotions, which we can then transfer to real life (2006: 213).

In the krimi genre, creating protagonists who engage with the trauma of crime is one of the most effective ways of coaxing readers towards emotionally analogous behaviour. The positioning of the investigator near to the emotional trauma that occurs when violent crime takes place means that the reader is *also* positioned closer to the emotional trauma and encouraged to engage with it. In the case of Orford’s novels, a reader is inclined to be swayed by Hart as a potent female protagonist, thus Hart’s own moral principles are important. Orford hasn’t created Hart’s sense of ethics as an absolute; rather, her orientation is more ambiguous and shifting, demonstrating the struggles in which she becomes embroiled as she is confronted by the violence and trauma which are the staples of her professional life. In this way, the reader is able to work through his or her own concept of morality under the masked guidance of Hart. I note, here, that Hart’s morality is a transgressive one that is not bound by legalistic definitions of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ in terms of the law. Berges makes reference to the work of Martha Nussbaum (1990) who argues

for a distinct definition of good with regards to moral action. Berges states that “Being morally good, for Nussbaum, means being educated in one’s perceptions and emotions...so that one can deliberate and act beyond general rules, with an eye for what is called for by each particular situation” (2006: 213-214). Indeed, Berges goes on to argue that such transgression of the law is a characteristic of the Aristotelian moralist saying that “the main virtues the hero/heroine of the crime novel displays, and which we are encouraged to identify with, are just those most clearly identified by Aristotelian ethics” (219). I pay particular attention to the first characteristic which she describes:

First: there is a willingness to go beyond the *rules*, which are seen as inadequate guidance for action in difficult cases. Instead, the detective is typically shown as psychologically and emotionally observant, and *intuitive* to an extent that suggests that she has ‘some sort of complex responsiveness to the salient features of one’s concrete situation (Nussbaum 1990: 55); something, in other words, very like what many Aristotelians call *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. (ibid.)

Berges’ sense of “practical wisdom” (ibid.) is characteristic of Hart’s personality. An example of this wisdom is when Hart is in the King’s house in *Like Clockwork*, and she takes a videotape that proves Brian King to be a sexual sadist, involved in the orchestrated rape of his wife. She removes the tape, believing it might give insight into the disappearance of India, the Kings’ daughter. There is no question but that she is stealing possible evidence. However, her instincts allow her to evaluate the situation within a larger moral frame, and her initial assessment of Brian King proves correct. Her theft, then, despite being illegal, can be interpreted as being impelled by a just and moral impulse. Here, the reader is complicit in Hart’s transgressive act. In this case, the complicity is justified by the content on the tape and as such, the reader has been brought to experience a sense of practical wisdom that teeters on the edge of the dubious. This is a subversion which materialises the very uncertainty of the notion of the threshold rather than insisting on a cut and dried, abstractedly officious understanding of legality which prefers to deny personal implication in favour of the Letter of the Law. It is in such complex ways that Orford pulls a reader into the life-world of her characters, confounding polarised conceptions of right and wrong.

At this point, it is appropriate for me to address the way in which Orford situates her protagonist strategically in order to lend credence to Hart’s ambiguous morality. Here, it is

necessary to recall exactly how Clare Hart works, and what professional function she fulfils. We remember that she is an independent investigator working on selected cases in which the police request her assistance. However, while she collaborates closely with them through each step of the investigation, she operates outside their official field of structural control. This positioning is important as it allows Hart the flexibility to transgress laws that she perceives to be limiting or restrictive, and from this position she is able to exploit both her distance from the police, and her affiliation with them. When introduced in Orford's debut novel, *Like Clockwork*, Hart has both consulted with the police and been contracted to lecture the police on profiling sexual predators. This means that while Hart is considered an expert and is actively working with officers on various cases, she is also excluded from some police procedures. In *Like Clockwork*, Faizal asks Piet Mouton, the medical examiner, if Hart may attend the autopsy and Mouton replies, if "she's not in the police force, no way. You can tell her everything later" (2006: 24). Despite her combined repertoire of investigative, forensic and psychological expertise, then, she is firmly situated outside the police service.

However, as Hart is involved in an investigation from its inception, she has access to police information, data and records such as interviews, as well as any physical evidence that has been analysed. This assists her – and by implication a reader – in coming fairly quickly, in terms of narrative pace and revelation, to the point of status quo, where things are 'at', so to speak. The device means that the author can range fairly freely across a large, and potentially interesting range of police-related characters and practices, all of whom (or which) might reveal (or not, as the case may be) necessary information to the main protagonist. And yet Hart's position outside the police also makes her an easier target for intimidation, especially since she is female, and an individual contractor – a 'one-woman-show'. At the same time, though, Hart is at liberty to operate independently from the police force; she is not bound by their regulations, ranks and orders, nor has she accrued the negative ideological ascriptions with which the police are often burdened. Klein discusses the regulations of the police, pointing out that police officers "are bound by bureaucracy, hierarchies, and politics. Historically, they are paid by a system which inhibits individual action and decisions; they are assigned to cases, bound to standard investigative behaviour, and responsible to the state's vision of justice" (1995b: 59). Hart's position outside this constraining structure is severally advantageous. For example: she is not



impeded by the protocols of authority when trying to gain information, and should it happen that one individual in the force refuses to help, she may request assistance from an/other officer/s. Additionally, over the course of the four novels, a reader sees how Hart has established close working relationships with a variety of people both in the force and affiliated to it, all with a view to extending her professional range and the likelihood of solving cases.

Hart's independence from the South African Police Service (SAPS) is especially useful to her when she deals with people who are suspicious of police, cops, 'amapoyisa', or are too afraid to work directly with them in case of gang or crime syndicate reprisals. In South Africa, as a reader needs to understand, often the police service still carries the stigma of apartheid and people are instinctively distrustful of the force. In *Like Clockwork*, for example, when Hart goes to speak to the parents of a murdered girl, we get the observation that a "woman out of uniform might be easier for Charnay's family to talk to" (2006: 56). Even beyond the historical parameters of apartheid, the police service currently accrues further opprobrium, as fresh instances of corruption, ignominy and complicity arise. When she is investigating missing girls in *Daddy's Girl*, Hart goes to interview a mother who says that she cannot contact the police about her daughter's disappearance. When Hart tries to convince her otherwise, Mrs Adams says of the gangs, "They own the police. If I go to the police then my baby is dead, for sure" (2009a: 19). She goes on to insist that the "cops are owned by the gangsters – and it's us...the women, our little girls, who pay the men's price" (20). It is debatable, here, whether the mother would so willingly have envisaged Clare Hart as 'us', including Clare in a fragile collectivity, were Clare a member of the police force rather than an independent investigator with a reputation for criticism of dubious police practices.

As Orford points out in her critical commentary on her fiction, the same characteristics that differentiate a woman in the public realm make her blend in, in the private sphere (2011b: np) and Clare Hart is able to use this to her advantage while attempting to gain the confidence of women who seem hesitant to discuss emotional or gendered concerns with men who represent patriarchal officialdom, considering them variously complicit and/or part of the 'perpetrator' problem. In addition, she is not limited by the restrictions that govern the police officers and this allows her a different capacity for investigation. Of course, while she is self-reliant, her position outside the police means that she is to some degree reliant on police decisions for involvement in

the investigation, and for information on the case, and in some instances it is evident that Hart's participation is not wanted. In *Like Clockwork*, Faizal tries to convince his boss, Phiri, to allow Hart to work on a murder case with him. Phiri strenuously objects, and Faizal has to 'argue his case' for her inclusion:

'She pisses off everybody that she works with,' Phiri argued.  
'Maybe because she's a woman and she's good.'  
'Bullshit, Faizal. It's because she's a loner and she does what she wants.' (2006: 28)

Faizal counters that argument, saying "Whatever her faults, you know she's the best, sir" (ibid.). Overall, the discussion between Faizal and Phiri is deliberately used by Orford to highlight aspects of Hart's character as an investigator, and also to draw attention to Faizal's belief that there is gender prejudice in the police service. This is sharply rebuked by his superior, who argues that his reluctance to include her is not a result of her femaleness, but the fact that she tends to operate too single-mindedly, too iconoclastically, a rogue individualism prompting her to eschew the more regularised restrictions and teamwork which govern the behaviour of members of the SAPS. This ambiguous relationship of the determined individual to official, institutional (and often bureaucratic) structures is evident throughout the Clare Hart series, and offers an excellent opportunity for the writer to tackle femaleness in relation to questions of personal disposition *and* social constraint and custom.

Orford is able to use her female protagonist to highlight the position of women in a male-dominated world. As a woman, actively engaging in investigations of crimes against women means that Hart is operating in a context where she is subject to analogous intimidations and challenges as other women. There might be differences between the class and education of Hart and the female victims, but the novels make it clear that middle class women are vulnerable too, not only trafficked women, or gang girls. Orford is at pains to make the point that they all share female bodies, a simple fact which not only constructs them socioculturally, but renders them susceptible to forms of sexualised brutality designed to injure and degrade their biological sex through displays of violent male authority. In many of the novels, the crimes against women are at once horrifying, in the imaginative space of 'literature', and all-too-familiar from the relentless features of print and television news. Raping. Maiming. Child pornography. Orford uses the experiences of Hart as investigator in relation to the family members of victims very graphically

to evoke the fact that women and girls, by dint of simple biological femaleness, bear the terrible, historical weight of social violence. Helen Moffett is enlightening in this regard; she refers to democratic South Africa's "current climate of violence" and the "'narratives of normalisation' surrounding sexual violence", citing examples of the inordinately high incidence of assaults against women in this country, and the ways in which "the siting of women's bodies and sexuality as political and cultural capital [occurs] whenever nationalist, religious and ethnic agendas are invoked in the process of political transformation" (2006: 131). Moffett also cites acclaimed writer Sindiwe Magona, who has found herself "appalled and bewildered by the fatalism of a society that simply accepted that it was women's lot to be raped" (134).

Similarly, it is through Hart that Orford draws attention to the subtler, more naturalised examples of gender difference which continue to mark South African social norms, and in this way Orford is able better to show the position of women living in a dangerously patriarchal society in which male power – across a range of cultures and contexts – has become so customary as to seem unremarkable, rather than unjust. Hart's position in society, albeit as an educated professional woman, is imbricated in the vulnerability of all other women who experience daily victimisation and intimidation by men. Orford highlights this: "Clare walked faster, as most women did, when she went past the clubs. She ignored the speculative eyes of the bouncers who looked her over and then lost interest" (2006: 35). This example emphasises the objectification of women that is an everyday fact of life. Within the unfolding narrative context, too, Orford parallels Hart's experiences with those of other women. For example, she describes Cornelle, a friend of one of the abducted girls, walking along the Waterfront: "Two men painting a Chinese ship watched her progress, turning back to their work only when a directed wolf whistle failed to even register in her stride" (65). Later still we have: "A raucous group of men were coming down the stairway. Theresa didn't feel like enduring the predictable moment of mock-threat before they let her pass..." (250). It is such re-iterated narrative nodes, in Orford's crime fiction, that emphasise the casual gender interpellation and intimidation that women experience everyday as a result of their sex, whether by individual men, or by established social norms which seem collectively to permit particular forms of male behaviour towards women. Important, here, is the constant need for Orford's female characters to weigh the worn banality of cat-calling against the latent threat of male sexualised violence, and Orford's implied

question invites a reader to wonder: when might such blasé, non-violent yet degrading male behaviour erupt into a crime against a woman? If such a question is difficult to answer, in the space of Orford's novels, the implication is that the supposed boundaries between acceptable and criminal forms of behaviour are unsettlingly porous.

As Hart's uncertainty emphasises, not knowing when ordinariness might turn manifestly violent becomes an integral constituent of the female socio-psychic drama. Orford underscores the serious threats which might underlie the ordinary, situations where physical harm is a real possibility simply as a result of a person's femaleness. In *Like Clockwork*, after questioning people about a missing girl, Hart walks to her car: she "held her bag closer and quickened her stride, her key braced in her hand. She scanned the darkened street. Nothing. She let go of the tension in her shoulders and unlocked the door" (2006: 69). This reaction highlights the perceived threat that women experience on a daily basis in a dangerous society. In *Daddy's Girl*, when she is approached by Faizal for the first time, Hart "clenched her fist around her keys, the longest one protruding between her second and third fingers, a weapon" (2009a: 74). Hart's apprehension about being accosted by an unknown man at night leads her immediately to fashion an impromptu weapon with which to defend herself; additionally when she knows that she is going to dangerous places, she carries a pepper spray, and sometimes her gun. These examples serve to underscore the anxiety that comes with a woman's being perceived as an easier target. By including Hart in these examples, alongside many other women, Orford serves to highlight the pervasive extent to which this danger occurs, discriminating against neither class nor race.

Despite perceived dangers to women, implied violence is overtaken in the novels by far more explicit, aggressive instances of violence against female characters. In the novels, in many instances, women are socially and culturally subordinate to men who are jealous, possessive, manipulative, savage and yet for all intents and purposes, apparently normal. Such novelised instances of violence against women are substantiated by Moffett's research. Her years working as a women's hotline counsellor, "rapidly disabused me of the notion that domestic and sexual violence were the province of poor, black, or ill-educated men. I received distress calls not only from women living in townships or ghettos," she continues, "but from the wives of professional men living in Cape Town's exclusive suburbs; I listened to women who had been sexually

assaulted or beaten not only by gangsters, illiterates, alcoholics and unemployed men, but by ministers of religion, teetotalers, university professors, doctors and lawyers” (2006: 134). Orford’s narrativisation of violence against women leaves a reader in no doubt that she is determined to challenge simplistic discursive constructions which ‘understand’ rape primarily through the lenses of race (black men as perpetrators) and class (only poor women as victims). Instead, she “places discussion of rape squarely within discourses of violent gender and patriarchal domination” (Moffett 2006: 136), using the actions and emotions of her protagonist and other female characters to prompt debate about the aetiology of rape and associated violence, pointing to *gender* as a crucial, undeniable determinant.

For example, Orford represents domestic abuse as a central element of *Like Clockwork* (2006) and, as my comments have already suggested, it is not simply marginalised illegal immigrants such as Natalie Mwangi who are at the receiving end of male aggression, but suburban housewives such as Cathy King, who despite family wealth and home comforts, is alarmingly vulnerable to her violent spouse. Additionally, Orford does not ‘other’ such abused women, refusing to pathologise them as especially ‘weak’ women who somehow *invite* their victim status. Instead, she shows her strong protagonist Clare Hart experiencing similar forms of physical and psychological intimidation, which suggests the pervasive extent of women’s subordination and the difficulty of breaking free not merely from individual men who may be violent, but from an all-pervading and a casually misogynistic status quo. There are numerous illustrative examples of male violence against Clare. In *Like Clockwork* (2006), for example, she is approached by Kelvin Landman as she is getting into her car in a deserted area at the Waterfront in Cape Town. He grips her arm, and while she tries to struggle free, he “held her for a single menacing second, his physical power needing no other demonstration” (2006: 70). In *Daddy’s Girl* (2009), she is randomly attacked by an unknown assailant outside a strip club, and, in *Gallows Hill* (2011), she is accosted and threatened by Hond (‘dog’) Williams. In both *Like Clockwork* and *Blood Rose* she is physically attacked. Hart, remember, is a character decidedly *not* a victim, and the litany of her threatening or violent treatment by men she is investigating suggests that Orford, in subjecting Hart to violent experiences so typically associated with the simple fact of being female, is seeking to emphasise the pervasive misogyny of society. For all

her feistiness, intelligence and sass, Clare Hart is nevertheless obliged to bear patriarchy's demeaning and abusive attitude to women as a group.

Notably, Hart's reactions to threats illustrate not only anxiety; they also challenge preconceived notions of the word 'victim'. She does feel vulnerable. She does worry about walking certain routes at night. But in the service of crime narratives which attempt to balance the thrill of vicariously-experienced danger in relation to the ethical questioning of received social mores, Margie Orford constructs her female protagonist as a woman who grapples to discover – and to display – the emotional and physical strength that will enable her to reconfigure the power of fear as the impulse of her actions. However, while Orford situates Hart firmly in relation to the range of difficult physical and emotional experiences widely associated with femaleness, she does not construe her protagonist as beyond criticism. In *Like Clockwork*, for instance, Orford describes a scene where Clare visits a strip club in order to speak to a suspect in the disappearance and murder of girls. She watches one of the women dancing and is sexually aroused:

She desperately needed to get out. The cool night air was cleansing, and she gulped it in as soon as she was outside. She felt complicit in Landman's misogyny and ambition. And defiled by her own fascination with what she had watched, by the pulse she had banished from between her legs only after it had left its wetness behind. She opened her window wide; hoping the sea air would blow her clean. She would have another shower, scrub herself, as soon as she got home. (2006: 162)

In some ways, one might argue, this scene is subtly transgressive; it reworks the established assumption that female desire is tied solely to the satisfactions of male sexual agency. Perhaps. Yet Orford even further unsettles expectations, refusing to allow a reader to understand this scene as some liberating countermanding of restrictive heteronormative sexuality. The encounter – and indeed the passage – does not permit Hart the comforting escape of sexual thrill without ethical constraint, for it highlights even the informed investigator's susceptibility to arousal by the forms of power and bondage of which she is purportedly critical. Indeed, Hart's feeling her body 'addressed' or 'hailed' by the sexy dance emplaces her deeply within the parameters of patriarchal social norms. Orford then has a reader notice how Clare feels sullied, aware that her pleasure has been won at the expense of female debasement. The profiler understands that the embodied, physical reaction cannot simply be separated into a space distinct from the critical and

intellectual. The passage also emphasises the difficult process of extricating oneself from this imbrication: she is deeply complicit, to the very depth of the sensory and limbic systems; there is no clear thinking or rationality that can obviate the perverse, contrary cathections through which the erotic stakes its claim on her mind, life, body.

### Re-gendering the Genre

As I have argued, Orford uses the character of Hart to realign the reader's relationship to the popular genre of crime fiction by offering an affective and emotive response to the presence of crime. In addition, the above instances suggest that Orford depicts Hart as an outspoken, emboldened and voluntaristic subject of her own life even while her actions and consciousness are also inevitably inscribed by the limits of existing gender paradigms. It is this conflicted positioning which enables Orford, exploring the relationships amongst Hart and other female characters rather than situating Hart as some "lone heroic subject" (Druxes 1996: 13), to address the attitudes, perceptions and practices through which gender norms are sustained. As Judith Butler might remark of Hart, the "paradox... is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power" (1993: 15).

Orford's creation of her female protagonist raises numerous issues concerning krimi patterns of the past, among them the representation of violence in fiction featuring women, the relationship of the traditional detective to the investigation, along with the legitimacy of placing an active, engaged female intelligence in this role, rather than reducing the female star act to that of seductive body which ends up a mutilated corpse. In my analyses of the novels, I suggest that Orford investigates not only conventionalised (indeed *naturalised*) crime, much of it against women, but that she also explores the gendered norms, expectations and traditional gender roles which continue to structure relations between men and women in the wider world.

Traditionally in crime fiction, the investigator is male; having a female investigator challenges not only preconceived expectations for the genre, but also the pervasive, perhaps unconscious cultural expectations for women. Broadly speaking, women who were represented

in this genre tended to be supporting characters, serving mainly to highlight the protagonist's masculinity. In the masculine private-eye fiction of the past, Alison Littler points out, "female characters...are usually victims or betrayers who remain background figures; their function is to act as a foil for the male hero's superiority" (1991: 125). As the genre developed, there were various attempts to shift from a male-dominated narrative by introducing female characters as investigators rather than background figures. However, this gentle experimentalism did little to alter the fundamental role of women in the genre. As Klein points out, "Women might be successful amateur detectives as long as they employed the more stereotypically feminine talents of gossip and intuition, but they were barred from detective careers" (1995b: 3). Orford is alert to such received norms, and embeds the understanding in her narratives. For example, in a conversation between Hart and Rita Mkhize, a policewoman in *Daddy's Girl*, Rita mocks tired hierarchical distinctions between female and male characteristics, telling Clare:

'All I have is female intuition. And how am I going to table that as a point on the agenda?'

'Call it "gut feel",' said Claire. 'That's what they call it.' (2009a: 221)

The professed inferiority of a characteristic classified as 'female' is also emphasised in Joke Hermes and Cindy Stello's useful summary of Klein's research. They explain that "Klein shows how, despite the considerable number of female protagonists in the early 1980s, they are usually the inferior detective, use intuition rather than logic and bow to men's superior wisdom or serve a patriarchal system that tends to victimize women" (2000: 215). The use of intuition then, is not only understood as particularly 'female', its perceived female qualities occasion its denigration as a lesser, more inferior capacity than serious reason and considered, intellectual investigation. Not surprisingly, then, female characters whose handling of crime was premised on this 'felt' characteristic did little to alter the perceptions of crime fiction as a predominantly masculine genre. Klein states that "Since the 1894 appearance of the first professional woman detective, she and her professional competence have been consistently undercut despite overt claims for her abilities, successes, intelligence, and cunning. Although she is identified as a hero, her authors – whether male or female – seldom allow her to function as one" (1995b: 1). Clearly, this is not the case with Orford's Clare Hart who, through her actions, beliefs and demeanour, chafes against persistent genre norms.



Of course Orford is not the first female author to fashion her protagonist female. It must be acknowledged that Orford's krimi predecessors or antecedents in this regard might well be the female protagonists of authors such as Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton. Their protagonists, Sharon McCone, VI Warshawski and Kinsey Millhone, respectively, "made their mark in the early 1980s"; they were "single, intelligent, and in their thirties", "urban private investigators" who took "a physically active approach to crime" that was far removed from the cosy spinsterism of much British crime fiction. Instead, these women were "[f]it, self-contained, and street-wise"; they could "handle guns, face threats and attacks from men, and kill when they [had] to". They revealed "women's experiences in the face of patriarchal systems of both crime and justice, and despite their detective successes their vulnerability is in places acknowledged". The originators of such protagonists took "detection in new overtly feminist directions" (Gavin 2010: 264-5). In relation to the South African context, it is additionally worth mentioning my contention that Orford, via Hart, has herself initiated an invigorating trend in South African crime fiction written by women. Since the appearance of Clare Hart on the krimi scene, we now also have Jassy Mackenzie's feisty character Jade DeJong, and Joanne Hitchens' Rae Valentine – women who challenge predictable expectations about female behaviour, agency and even appearance.

According to Johanna M. Smith (1991), "[o]ften women writers use the form [of detective fiction] to show women coping with masculine definitions of femininity" (1991: 80). This masculinist inheritance, a naturalised ideology, proves extremely limiting because the female characters are constrained by a definitional scope which appears to be 'perfectly' relational – 'female' in relation to 'male' – yet in fact comprises a male-favouring hegemony that sets limitations upon innovative female agency. In this frame of understanding, a woman's actual and emotional actions, her responses, tend to be prompted and constrained by established (male) perceptions of how women (others) are expected to behave. Many critics find that while such limited exploration of gendered behaviour may constitute an attempt to alter prevailing stereotypes, it is ineffectual simply to challenge the current standard, rather than seeking to renegotiate perceptions through explicit re-workings of the conventions of the crime genre. Take Littler's point: some feminist writers of crime "consciously set out to respond to masculinist stereotypes of women by constructing tough women characters who are not victims and who

retain control of their own lives” (125). These characters are clearly an attempt to subvert traditional ideas of masculinity in the genre, and the agency exerted by these women characters redefines a space previously occupied solely by men. However, the reactive tendency is to typify female protagonists according to the masculinist imperatives of what Littler calls the stereotypical “cold hard bitch”. Some scholars argue, for example, that in portraying female protagonists coolly handling “shocking scenes, violence against women is condoned or capitalised upon by authors. Others respond that in describing confrontations with violence the feminist detective and writer are simply telling it like it is, and in so doing are asserting, if not control over violence, then the power to express it in their terms” (Gavin 2010: 268).

Yet lest we too easily wish to label this female expressive agency ‘feminist’, Hermes and Stello conclude, via their interview-based research, that many readers find “feminism [to be...] relatively marginal to the pleasure of and reasons for reading...[T]here is a domestication of feminism that is shocking not so much for its deradicalization of the issues involved (such as violence against women, or how women have to fight for respect and acknowledgment in the workplace) but for its acceptance of the status quo” (2000: 217). Orford’s novels, in contrast, refuse to conform to the accepted gender roles of the past and reflect deliberate attempts to destabilise traditional investigator characteristics. Even if feminism remains an uncertain term in relation to her fiction, it does seem clear that she repeatedly uses Hart in order to tackle issues which are central to a feminist agenda. As Gavin points out, the “central concern of feminist crime fiction remains violence against women. Women are victims: captured, raped, murdered, butchered and in the hands of forensic detectives dissected into evidence”. In foregrounding “violence against women, feminist detective fiction makes a gendered protest. It also implies a gendered question: if even the detective figure is violated and attacked, is justice possible?” (Gavin 2010: 268).

It is through difficult, socially-inflected forms of female agency that Orford imagines the character of Clare Hart. Hart is a strong, independent woman who negotiates her own rules, favouring idiosyncratic norms not obeisant to established preconceptions. Central to Orford’s characterisation of Hart, for example, is that she has an earned doctorate in femicide, a substantial piece of academic scholarship entitled *Crimes Against Women in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Such scholarship functions as a form of intellectual credentialising, asserting the

high-achieving independent-mindedness of Orford's female protagonist. Additionally, Hart is presented as an investigative journalist who has a distinguished career history, her reports and documentaries highlighting difficult, often women-centred, topics such as human trafficking, child abduction and sexual assault. Nevertheless, despite all Hart's unquestionable scholarly and experiential qualifications, Orford reveals in the plots to her novels that there remain numerous concerns about the legitimacy of Hart's participation in crime investigations, and she makes it clear that these narrow, prejudicial reservations are premised on the fact that Hart's femaleness, in the eyes of many, overrides her professional credentials. By having a woman in the role of 'investigator' – in effect a female protagonist 'driving' the detection scenario which is central to crime fiction – Orford challenges the limitations of the genre, exposing naturalised assumptions to the reader as the stereotypes they are. She also confronts traditional ideologies of masculine and feminine by having a female character negotiate various male dominated worlds. Introducing a female character into such a male-dominated environment enables a rethinking of accepted norms around the roles of men and women in society. Even Hart's sexuality as depicted in the novel series is relatively uninhibited, a liberty characteristic of contemporary female detectives who are "free of the sexual difficulties male detectives groan under: they are sexually active, without either the standard masculine fear that sex will distract them from detection or the supposedly feminine need for sexual monogamy" (Smith 1991: 80).

Overall, Hart exhibits the requisite level of independent-minded toughness needed to operate in the often callous, unfeeling world she investigates. The world that criminals inhabit is steeped in physical violence, and criminal hierarchies in the cultures of gangs and drug cartels are formed with, and reinforced by, precisely such violence, often against women who are vulnerable *because* they are female. With Clare Hart, however, Orford fights back, since her protagonist, in solving and attempting to combat crime, shows an equivalent degree of ferocity if confronted. Even here, of course, Orford opens herself to the charge that a woman must be masculinised in her behaviour if she is to succeed. As Littler remarks of females in crime fiction: "Being tough is rationalized as being part of the job requirements" (1991: 125). The level of toughness that needs to be maintained leads to more serious questions concerning violence.

Littler discusses the difficulties of placing a woman in the role of detective or investigator, and for the purpose of the argument requires to be cited at length. She says “Violence is not only the necessary starting point for the narrative in masculinist private-eye fiction, it is also the site around which the narrative action takes place, and more important, it is also a test of the hero’s physical and, by extension, moral superiority and fitness to be an heroic figure” (124). Littler critiques the reactive aggression shown by female investigators, especially since the women in many cases seem to enjoy participating in violence, and to derive from it a vicarious frisson. She quotes Kinsey Millhone, Sue Grafton’s protagonist in *‘F’ is for fugitive* (1989), who announces, right after she has engaged in a physical altercation, “I felt giddy with power, happiness surging through me like pure oxygen. There’s something about physical battle that energises and liberates, infusing the body with an ancient chemistry – a cheap high with a sometimes deadly effect” (126). Clearly, the creation in crime fiction of tough women with greater agency than the traditional female corpse or seductive siren can generate ethical quandaries: attempts to depict strong female characters may lead to an adoption of masculine characteristics instead of explorations of innovative forms of relational female space.

The sensationalism of violence in the crime fiction novel is a concern that is noted by many authors in this genre, and is certainly an ethical predicament for the female author of crime fiction. Littler cites Marele Day discussing her character Claudia and the struggle which Day, as writer, had with the issue of physical violence. Without this violence, according to Day, “the book just wasn’t working” (125). For ethical intensity, you need the woman, it seems, and for narrative tension you need the violence, which might be construed as the constant implied threat of another dead female body. In keeping with the conventions of this genre, “Claudia had to be threatened, had to confront physical violence”. But, most importantly, she also needed to “survive to tell her tale” (ibid.). It doesn’t take much to appreciate the bind in which these expectations place a female writer. As Littler remarks:

Marele Day’s recognition that the hero has ‘to be threatened’ and has ‘to confront physical violence’ and has ‘to survive to tell her tale’ falls short of acknowledging how violence becomes *the test* of the hero...Yet this ‘testing,’ this ‘surviving,’ is precisely what is masculinist about the genre’s use of violence. In masculinist ideology, selfhood is defined and constantly reaffirmed by bodily strength and physical performance, both displayed through the ability to fight and a man’s ability to ‘look after himself’. (ibid.)

Littler's argument that a man's physical strength and the ability to defend himself are characteristics of the masculine genre means that a woman's physical strength and the ability to defend herself are not necessarily inherently empowering, either of herself or of women as a whole. Instead, the female protagonist runs the risk of merely straying into the masculine, and mimicking received male behaviours. Yet Littler, playing devil's advocate, proceeds to offer another facet to the argument, explaining that:

...one would not want to go as far as to say that women should not fight or should not be represented as doing so, since there is a serious risk of falling into a kind of biological essentialism which presents women as being nurturing, caring people, and so on, *by their nature*. Of course women can be strong; they can fight to protect themselves; they can carry weapons; they can fight in war. But using the private-eye genre is not simply a matter of representing women as strong and able to fight and look after themselves, or of constructing a strong heroic woman as a role model. The important issue is the values which underlie, justify and valorize this behavior. The private-eye genre is more than the sum of a series of individual narrative techniques. To use the genre is to take part in, give credibility to, and to perpetuate a masculinist ideology which privileges individualism, heroism, violence and sexuality. (1991: 131)

This argument, while allowing an expression of physical violence, seems to separate physical strength and ability from femaleness. Unfortunately, it also rehashes the tautology that women's participation in crime fiction cannot occur on the basis of equality but necessarily "perpetuate[s] a masculinist ideology" (ibid.). This implies the solution that women must be excluded from the genre as a whole in order to prevent the further propagation of masculine principles. Every which way, it seems, the knot draws tighter.

While Hart has numerous close encounters with physical violence, Orford takes great pains not to involve Hart in gratuitous violence; rather her actions are always in self-defence, no grievous bodily harm is caused, and her own survival is primary goal. Such a tactic on the part of the author is not surprising. Violence is a current crisis in South Africa, and we may realistically expect it to be reflected in Orford's crime novels. However, in attempting to expose and negotiate the trauma that violence entails, Orford does not depict violence originating with Clare Hart, perhaps lest she, as writer, be accused of graphic sensationalism for the sake of expedient narrative thrill. Consider the following example from *Like Clockwork*, when Hart has to confront the serial killer Otis Tohar. Despite the fact that Hart carries a gun, her immediate objective is not to apprehend Tohar or to achieve justice for his victims, but rather to ensure the survival of

his fourth victim Theresa. In this case she is able to shoot the lock off the door and escape from the boathouse to the awaiting police. In this scenario, she allows Faizal to arrest Tohar. This is a significant tactic on the author's part. Elisabeth Fletcher, for instance, argues that "Faizal is a crucial access point for Hart," (2011a: np) meaning that he allows Hart admission to the world of sanctioned investigation through his link to the Police Service. Perhaps more importantly though, he allows Orford to divide some of the necessary characteristics of a protagonist between himself and Hart. Fletcher argues that he "fulfils the hardboiled expectations of the novel, allowing Orford to explore her feminist concerns through Hart as well as the narration of the novel's setting and their norms without stretching the genre beyond its boundaries" by having the female protagonist engage in extreme violence (2011a: np). In effect, Hart does not have to confront the ethical dilemma which the use of extreme physical violence would occasion because Faizal is there to step in for her. In this case, then, through a form of proxy or transference, the author does not have Hart engage with Littler's conviction that "violence becomes *the test* of the hero" (1991: 125).

With Faizal assuming the role of the 'hero', the question remains: what role does *Hart* occupy? If Orford's goal was to develop an independent and resourceful female character who is able to take care of herself, one could argue that Faizal's persona as protector conforms to the generic conventions that have come to typify the crime novel: a female relies on the protection of a man in order to survive in this world. Faizal rushing to Hart and Theresa's rescue, and his subsequent arrest of Tohar, appears to perpetuate typically masculinist conventions informing the genre. At the same time, however, it could be argued that Hart's ultimate plot goal was to prevent Tohar from killing Theresa, which she achieves. Furthermore, Hart had already managed to get Theresa out of the boathouse by shooting off a padlock before Faizal stepped in, thus independently achieving her own primary goal without his help, and proving her capability as an investigator.

Other examples abound. In *Blood Rose*, for instance, Hart engages in violence when she shoots Gretchen – Der Blaue Engel, and Orford's depiction of violence by her protagonist is neither indulgent nor sensationalised. Rather, she has Clare shoot Gretchen only in order to prevent her from executing Riedwaan, who is handcuffed on the floor, gun to the head. Gretchen is in a firing position, "knees parted and bent just a fraction" and "[b]efore her mind had a

chance to even register, she fired” (2009a: 342). Hart’s quick response is an immediate muscle reaction to the threat to Faizal’s life. In this way, Orford deliberately shows Hart’s encounter with violence as instinctual, prompted by the imminent, visceral danger that Day identifies as a requirement of this genre (Day cited by Littler 1991: 125). Similar instances occur in other Orford novels, where Hart’s turn to violence occurs only under duress, and in the service of protecting another person. Once again, it is clear that Orford is faced with the challenge of working within the action-based, excitement-driven conventions of the genre even as she wishes to address, in her novels, the agency of a strong female protagonist who is capable of various degrees of physical action – whether instinctual and/or considered, alongside the quieter, more interiorised narrative movements of nuanced emotional and intellectual behaviour.

My final illustration is from *Gallows Hill*, the closing scenes in which Hart is at the mercy of Gilles Osman who is dragging her up the side of the quarry using dog’s choke collar. In this case Hart, believing she is alone and without backup (although Faizal is desperately trying to find her) manages to escape from Osman and when he comes at her, she kicks him off the edge of the cliff. Orford writes “He grabbed at a tussock of grass and Clare stamped on his fingers” (2011: 348). In this finale Hart’s desperation for survival leads to an instinctual and rather brutal response to the possibility that Osman may be able to climb back up the cliff. This reaction by Hart is one of extreme violence. That said, however, Orford has in the plot structure already supported this scene, having framed Hart’s experience within the specific context of male-to-female violence: ‘Dr Hart’ is known to be an expert in that gut threat which “women fear most” – “That a man will kill her” (344). Time and again in the novels, we encounter the author’s tricky negotiation of the need for violence in relation to the desire to avoid violent solutions. In the majority of cases, it is Hart’s desperate desire to survive, despite the odds stacked against her, which are used narratively to justify her aggressive response. Each display of violence that Hart participates in is carefully crafted by Orford to highlight Hart’s *unwillingness* to initiate violence; she turns to violence either as a last, considered resort, or as a first, instinctual, adrenalin-driven response to a situation of crisis.

On the whole, then, I find Orford’s depiction of violence to be consistent with her humanistic interest in developing a nuanced female protagonist capable of both action and interiority. I am not convinced by Littler’s argument, which seems to maintain that any display

of physical vehemence by a female character means that the character has strayed irrevocably into masculine ideology, capitulated, as it were, somehow compromising her femaleness. Littler insists that “this ‘testing,’ this ‘surviving’, is precisely what is masculinist about the genre’s use of violence” (1991: 125). Since I fail to see what is masculine about the desire to ‘survive’, I turn instead to the work of Kate Watson (2009), who offers a slightly different take on the approach to female investigators participating in physical force. Watson argues with reference to P.D. James’ (1972) *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* in which James’ female character shoots the murderer of her son saying that this act: “overturns masculine control and appropriates masculine power” (2009: np). Where Littler sees a misguided crossing into the masculine, Watson finds a creative adaptation which serves to reconfigure expectations of female agency in the krimi. In interpreting Orford’s novels, I find Watson’s approach persuasive, particularly since Hart’s participation in acts of violence is not gratuitous or indulgent. She reacts under extreme provocation, rather than initiating the violence and generally, her actions are defensive. Bear in mind, here, that in the world of criminal investigation and its representation in crime fiction, violence is standard. Investigators are exposed to violence by nature of the work they do and authors writing in this genre are aware of this necessary labour. What is narratively governable, however, is the way in which authors have their protagonists respond to the threat of violence. Orford’s Clare Hart does not shy away from danger but, unlike Grafton’s Kinsey Millhone, for example, she does not relish the confrontation. Hart’s violent response to violence occurs only in the interests of self-preservation, or for the safety of others. Elizabeth Fletcher quotes Gill Plain who says: “Whether the detective is male or female, straight of gay, she or he always exists in negotiation with a series of long-established masculine codes. The extent to which the detective conforms to or challenges these models is thus essential to the understanding of crime fiction and the changing role of the investigator within the genre” (Plain 2001 cited in Fletcher 2011a: np). Hart’s participation in violence *does* challenge typically masculine conventions of the genre; Orford does not allow Hart simply to adopt masculine traits but rather reconfigures genre expectation to accommodate the author’s and the character’s critical attitude towards the casual, socially-endemic violence which has become a feature of post-apartheid life in South Africa.



In this respect, it may be that a different view is possible even of those violent female krimi investigators who have tended to be caricatured by critics as invariably mimicking male behavioural norms. Consider Smith's views. She suggests that a feminist gendering of the detective fiction canon can be achieved, making reference to Sue Grafton's protagonist, Kinsey Millhone. She does not dwell on Millhone's thrill at overcoming her opponent in a physical confrontation, but views her as a female character that "combines conventional 'masculinity' and 'femininity' so as to blur the distinction between them" (Smith 1991: 81). Smith goes on to explain that while "Millhone's obsessive independence might seem 'masculine' or her emotional vulnerability 'feminine,' in conjunction these conventions lose their gender coding. Gender-blind in a positive way, Grafton's novels de-masculinize hard-boiled detection by representing it simply as a job with Millhone simply the (female) person doing it" (ibid.). This interpretation of character traits destabilises Littler's theory that it is "masculinist ideology which privileges individualism, heroism, violence and sexuality" and offers the opportunity for females to adopt such traits, in conjunction with those traditionally seen as feminine – empathy, intuition and the like – in order to create a new kind of empowered female character in the krimi genre.

This appears to be what Orford had in mind with the creation of Clare Hart. Orford's protagonist is fiercely independent and prefers to rely on her own skills and insights and attempts to be self-sufficient – in spite of her reluctant reliance on Faizal which she constantly rationalises away. Overall, the qualities that Littler believe to be masculine are embodied in Hart's character *along with* a high level of empathy and compassion for victims. Smith's argument for a female investigative personality which highlights the combined elements of masculinity and femininity within an individual could easily be reduced to a vapid, genderless hybrid. However, I believe that the type of character Smith describes is embodied in Hart: one replete with what Anna Maxted calls "intangible complexities". (Maxted reminds us that it is the human complexity of krimi's protagonists that intrigues us as readers, not simply the predictable fascinations of police procedural plot structure. We can identify with the "[i]mperfections, quirks and contradictions" which mark characters like Sarah Lund and Lisbeth Salander; the very qualities which make them "so brilliant at their jobs" are generally those that make them "exasperating" when it comes to relationships and friendships [2013: 14].)

I would say, overall, that it is the interplay between two mistakenly polarised fields of social behaviour – masculine/feminine, reason/emotion – that Orford explores in her protagonist. Orford is thus able to offer a sense of agency to her protagonist which allows Hart the scope to involve herself in the world without Hart becoming a simple melange of masculine traits. Through Clare Hart, Orford eschews simplistic gender binarisms, as well as arguments which associate krimi fiction with entertainment rather than social and ethical engagement. She develops a strong female protagonist whose troubled, affective emotional intelligence inclines her to project empathetically and imaginatively into the lives of abused women and vulnerable children, even as she is also capable of challenging a variety of social norms. To adapt the words of Margaret Kinsman, my understanding of Clare Hart emerges from “a profound conviction of the specificity of gender to the systemic social injustices that women suffer across the divides of race, class, nationality, sexuality. This results in constant puzzles and problem-solving: of how to be, of what to say, of how to stand up for the self, of what is expected, of how to resist, of how to write a woman’s life” (1995: 17). It is such issues that Margie Orford tackles through her protagonist, Clare Hart.

## CHAPTER 2 Crime: Taking Place

### Interrogating Spatiality

Orford contends that the genre of “[c]rime fiction parachutes [the] writer...into a dramatic moment in the present” (2010: 187), which offers the opportunity to engage with contemporary social issues as they are in the process of being worked out in a range of spaces and places. Jonathan Amid points out the “social responsibility” imperative of local crime fiction, since it is “employed to offer sharp social commentary” and “‘state of the nation’ narratives” (2011: np). He explains that a number of writers (among them Diale Tlholwe and Sifiso Mzobe) write novels marked less by “conventional detection” than by “a sobering assessment of post-apartheid disorder” (ibid.). This chapter will discuss Orford’s treatment of such disorder, but it will also demonstrate the importance of appreciating the definite *spatial* lineations of such social commentary, rather than emphasising some rather vague notion of ‘post-apartheid’.

In this respect, I maintain that current krimi scholarship increasingly accommodates the importance of place or setting in the crime fiction genre, an element which has previously been overlooked in favour of the (a)synchronicities associated with narrative ordering and plot structure. As David Schmid confirms, much critical engagement with crime fiction “has tended to treat the genre primarily in terms of narrative structure and temporality, rather than in terms of spatiality, mostly because of the teleological bent given to that criticism by the understandable emphasis on the solution to the crime” (2012: 1). He goes on to say, however, that “crime fiction is a profoundly spatial as well as temporal genre because, as Geoffrey Hartman has pointed out, ‘...to solve a crime in detective stories means to give it an exact location: to pinpoint not merely the murderer and his motives but also the very place, the room, the ingenious or brutal circumstances’” (ibid.). In this way, crime fiction not only highlights elements of life’s contemporaneity – topical concerns, issues which intersect with the *zeitgeist*; it also quite emphatically grounds narrative in precise locations, often enough places with cultural-geographical specificity (‘Joburg’, ‘New York’, ‘Liverpool’...) *and* emotive-symbolic import (waterfront, squat, penthouse, abandoned mine...). Indeed, following Schmid, it becomes possible to understand the spaces of crime fiction not merely as passive descriptive background or setting, but as “determinative forces” – “characters, or *actants*” (8) which are invested with

differential social powers. This means, in turn, that they “have material consequences in so far as fantasies, desires, fears and longings are expressed in actual behaviour” (Harvey 1993: 22).

Following Gary J. Hausladen, I suggest that this particular grounding of an event reconfigures abstract space into meaningfully-loaded *place*; it does not simply use the surrounding landscape as a foil for the unfolding events but is rather an active feature within the crime novel form. Hausladen discusses this characteristic in the subgenre of crime fiction known as the “cultural murder-mystery novel” (1995: 63). He states that the “sense of place found in an ever-larger number of murder mysteries is more than simply backdrop or setting for the plot”. Instead, “site is...an essential element in the novel” (ibid.) and more and more crime fiction authors are placing emphasis on localised and identifiable environments in which to set their crimes. It is not implausible, perhaps, to claim that for all the attention placed on *bodies*, crime fiction actually “goes to the heart” of human sociality; it tackles what spaces such as nations, cities and homes are, “how they work and, in particular, how people inhabit them” (Foster 2009: 175). The fictional text is thus itself a space in which struggles over meaning and representation are made, and Orford’s treatment of the crime fiction genre demonstrates her canny mediation between popular pleasure and more ethically engaged concerns, creating an innovative narrative space in which to allow a reader to explore a range of issues pertinent to South and southern Africa.

Orford sets her novels in South Africa and Namibia, concerned with a deep-seated emphasis on place as it relates to time. Over the course of her career, her narratives have invoked the specific cultural and geographical characteristics associated with both the histories and the immediate presents of these countries. Orford’s representations of Cape Town and Walvis Bay, as well as the other locales which her investigators visit, are emblematic examples of the forms of contemporary sociality which characterise these countries. In this chapter, then, I will explore issues that pertain to the locatedness of Orford’s novels within recognisably southern African times and places, moving my discussion between elements of history and geography, as needed.

Important here is the understanding that the situatedness of crime fiction is more than simple descriptive embellishment. Crime fiction, albeit often spurned by scholars as a trite popular genre, often inclines away from the distanced comfort of lyrically descriptive passages

about place and setting that marks highly literary fiction and instead takes a reader deeply *in* to place in order to prompt not only pleasure in atmosphere, for example, where a reader can respond to a character's development within familiar home, office, leisure and so on, but to enable a subtle interrogation of the status quo which prevails in a particular environment.

Due to the locatedness of the occurrence of crime, its investigation often necessitates a greater examination of not only individuals and events but particularly of the spaces in which crime typically occurs. While the crime fiction novel is partly associated with 'escape' from socio-political constraints and the rootedness of everyday demands, transporting a reader into the realm of pleasure, I will suggest that Orford, as a South African crime writer, mobilises "the dire subject matter of her novels" as a correlative of "her self-professed intention to draw attention to violence perpetrated against women and children" (Graham 2011a: np), and the alarmingly diverse locations in which this occurs. Especially given her interest in the contingencies of female identity, which in South Africa is paradoxically at once less important than the masculine and yet everyday also highlighted in the media as the primary body of social suffering, Orford in her fiction subtly brings supposed polarities of shallow surface meaning and deep social knowledge into new, challenging alignment, cleverly mediating between the apparently immediate, taken-for-granted visibility of geographical place and the embedded, invisible layerings of historical time. To adapt a point that Craig-Odders *et al* make in the context of Spanish crime fiction: each of Orford's novels "is a work of social awareness that seeks to raise the profile of issues impacting" on forms of South African public (2009: 6), and these issues are located in both time and place.

Let us briefly consider, by way of example, how Orford's five novels explore elements of contemporary post-apartheid, postcolonial spatiality in South Africa and Namibia, showing how naturalised contemporary spaces, the very cultural specificities of these countries, are invariably shaped, in convoluted ways, by difficult historical inheritances. In the case of Namibia, for example, Orford depicts not only the destruction left by the apartheid military, but the devastation to the fishing industry in Walvis Bay, a regional niche that once offered financial promise to communities in the area. In the case of South Africa, she draws particular attention to the prevalence of crime and violence that many argue have become endemic to democratic South African as a nation and a country. In a newspaper article on local crime fiction, for example,

Orford refers to Patrick Anderson's remarks (in the *Washington Post*) on Deon Meyer's novels. They "explore the complex reality of South Africa ... At the most obvious level, they are exciting stories of crime, conflict, revenge, but they are more than that: ambitious attempts to show us the pain and greatness of a troubled nation that is still being born" (cited in Orford 2009b: np). Her narratives in several respects work to embody, in a popular fictional form, some of the urgent issues of truth, guilt and complicity which have characterised the post-apartheid South African political-ideological landscape.

Instead of simply relying on the term 'landscape', it is advisable here to think in terms of differentiations between the concepts of 'space' and 'place', as the distinction between them is particularly apt for the crime fiction genre. While often used interchangeably, many theorists have begun to explore more subtle differences between these concepts, drawing attention to the fact that place is produced from space via use, decree, convention, and expectation. I cannot cover the theory in detail; a few examples must suffice. Paul Carter, for example, contends that place is "space to which meaning has been ascribed", implying that space, albeit apparently an abstraction, is in fact practical and habituated, "a product of human practice, both material and meaningful" (1993: xii). The Comaroffs assert that as "Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) and others (e.g. Soja 1989) have insisted, [space] does not exist in unmediated form, as a thing without determinations of its own" (Comaroff 2006: 230). Hubbard and Kitchin, similarly, in seeking to understand how space is configured through use into place, invoke Doreen Massey, drawing on her idea in their description that "a place is the locus of complex intersections and outcomes of power geometries that operate across many spatial scales from the body to the global. Places are thus constituted of multiple, intersecting, social, political and economic relations, giving rise to myriad spatialities" (2010: 7), among them institutional and individual, material and imaginative. "Places are thus relational and contingent, experienced and understood differently by different people; they are multiple, contested, fluid and uncertain rather than fixed territorial units" (ibid.). This understanding of place as constituted through inter-linkages and interdependencies, giving rise to "a relational geography", a "dense assemblage of mobilities" (ibid.), is very helpful in understanding Orford's treatment of locality in her novels.

In her negotiations of both urban and peri-urban space, Orford's Clare Hart illustrates something of Walter Benjamin's remarks concerning the figure of the sleuth "as an evolution of

the flâneur” who “becomes the searcher, digging into urban space to find clues beneath the appearance of the metropolitan exterior” (Pezzotti 2012: 1). In the specific locations of Orford’s novels, often Cape Town, Hart eschews the spectatorial relation to city space stereotypically associated with contemporary femaleness in consumer culture; instead, she actively engages in forms of urban practice designed to disclose and reveal space as a material entity which has consequences for embodiment. Hart’s “knowledge of the local environment becomes the fundamental competence necessary to investigative work,” enabling her to navigate space. At times, too, her *lack* of familiarity brings her into surprising relation with the need to seek direction from others, locals who “would know the sudden stops, the hidden turns, the dead ends” (Erdmann 2009: 19). In effect, the spatial relations of her novels entail comparative series of disclosure and concealment, and in this regard work well in the service of crime solving.

At this juncture, though, let me briefly extend the notion of ‘space’ by discussing South Africa’s transition to democracy as introducing a period of conceptual uncertainty and gradual transformation in South African fiction. Some predicted that the political transition would hold potential difficulties for authors who would find themselves suddenly faced with the loss of apartheid as both subject matter and oppositional imaginative imperative. As any number of scholars have pointed out, among them Njabulo Ndebele (1986), spectacular, even stereotypical apartheid characters and self-evidently political trajectories had previously dominated South African fiction, in some part because writers were expected to demonstrate their anti-apartheid credentials. However, in the post-apartheid space emphases alter, and David Attwell and Barbara Harlow quote Rob Nixon’s concerns: “How will writers adjust to the loss of those dependable obstacles, which had become their signal themes, and even, for some, their creative mainstays? ...These epic shifts have cast doubt on the writer’s social status, public role, motivation, and imaginative focus” (2000: 2). Yet Attwell and Harlow point out that if “these misgivings imply that South African writers were likely to fall silent before the uncertainties of the time, that prediction has not been fulfilled. Writers have been challenged, but they have not fallen silent” (ibid.). As my own study is suggesting, the rise of the South African crime novel offers an intriguing alternative to the socio-politically explicit utterance and alignment of (anti)apartheid literary fiction, as well as an interesting mediation between the angst of post-apartheid literary fiction, with its serious sociological concerns, and more popular genre novels supposedly driven by escapism (see for example de Kock 2010, and Frenkel and Mackenzie 2010.)

Such shifts, however, are not unproblematic. If it is widely accepted that crime fiction has specific, even formulaic, genre requirements, the specific contextual contingencies of the South African socio-political and socio-cultural environment offer challenges that necessitate an alteration to typical form. Michael Titlestad's speculations are useful here, for he gives an overview of post-apartheid South African crime fiction drawing attention to the particular changes to the genre which have arisen as a result of South Africa's locational specificity:

Writing crime novels in crime-saturated societies raises particular difficulties: one cannot represent – especially in light of South Africa's lumbering and leaky criminal justice system – an uncomplicated restoration of order; the usual dynamics of the police procedural have no credibility in a context in which the capacity of the police is stretched to breaking point, and in which the force is riddled with corruption; and crime novels and thrillers circulate in a milieu in which spectacular violence is ubiquitous and routine. A further complication is that crime in South Africa is ineluctably historical: most people would argue that one cannot divorce the current tide of criminality from colonial and apartheid inequalities and injustices. As a consequence of these realities, local writers have been forced to adapt and stretch the conventions of the crime novel (2000: 18).

Perhaps it goes without saying, but the complications of the established crime fiction form that have arisen in relation to South African challenges tend to be precisely those characteristics which render these novels recognisably South African. In particular, Orford's novels are indicative of the importance she places on the informing social context as a determining feature of her handling of the genre. Her novels, for instance, straddle the boundary between the genres of police procedural and private-eye, and this mobility of form renders them aptly suited to a depiction of unsettled South African realities. Faizal's role in the force, for example, emphasises not only the frustrating bureaucracy and ineptitude of the SAPS, but the corruption that is evident, even from the inside. Faizal's location within the SAPS also offers the writer a narratively-persuasive, plausible means of access to forensic evidence, testing and information that is accessible only to the police. All of such details help Orford to concretise her depiction of the locational 'South Africanness' of her narrative setting and action. Similarly, Clare Hart's role in agencies outside the police means that she is not bound by the stringent rules and monumentally inefficient slowness of the police service, and that she has a degree of license to act outside typical legal procedures. In *Blood Rose*, Orford makes reference to the ineptitude of the police when Faizal asks Mrs Hofmeyr whether the police had ever caught the man who killed her husband: "'No,' said Mrs Hofmeyr, acidly. 'How often do the police find anyone?' Riedwaan shifted in his chair. He had no answer for that" (2007: 202).



Through such characters, firmly located in place, Orford's narratives institute a potentially satisfying structural balance for a reader, in that Faizal's frustration with the ineptitude and corruption within the force is productively offset by Hart's dedication, original thinking and efficiency. Within the limits of South African investigative and detectional institutions, the partnership between Faizal and Hart is able to utilise the benefits offered to police inquiry and private-eye investigations and circumnavigate the negative aspects and limitations of each. This arrangement seems nicely to diminish what would otherwise be the determinative role of the flawed police service in failing to solve the crimes that Hart and Faizal face, as repeated failures would not make for especially intriguing crime fiction.

As Titlestad's comments indicate, one of the traits most indicative of the police procedural, and to an extent the private-eye genre, is the restoration of order at the end of the novel. The text in effect becomes an imaginative space in which idealised, or perhaps 'preferred', representations of difficult social realities are played out. Such a denouement offers a reader a form of narrative closure which in effect mimics the proper, efficient workings of law and order, which in turn reassures a reader about a just and reliable moral economy outside the world of the text. In a country like South Africa, however, where crime, particularly violent crime, is commonplace, order isn't a precondition of ordinary life. Instead what appears to exist in South Africa is "a constant sense of suspense" (Titlestad and Polatinsky 2010: 265). Titlestad and Polatinsky refer to the work of anthropologist Robert Thornton to describe these tense yet commonplace conditions:

The apocalyptic threat of a 'bloody and final conflict' resides deep within the South African psyche. Thornton, facing the advent of democracy in South Africa, suggested a contrary mindset: that we should interpret 'transition' (the transcendental signifier of the post-apartheid dispensation) not as teleology, not as a journey to 'a final state', but as a permanent condition (2010: 265).

This "constant sense of suspense" (ibid.), a state of permanent transition which Thornton identifies as characteristic of recent South African life, is the status quo from which many South African crime fiction novels begin. Established theories of crime fiction suggest that when the mystery of the crime is resolved, there occurs the restoration of order. However, if we take into account the specific historical-geographical emplacedness of current South Africa, the permanency of South Africa's protracted, even endemic, state of transition means that when the

solution to the crime is discovered, the criminals apprehended and the mystery eliminated, what occurs is not the restoration of order but merely a threatening reprise – the return to the very state of chaotic uncivility in which it was feasible for the crime to be committed in the first place. The compromised apartheid nation state has given way not to the functioning of a hopeful, just democracy, but to a more volatile space (at once physical and part of the conceptual geography) in which, it often seems, ‘anything goes’ and the borders between criminal and law-maker are disturbingly porous. The implications for our understandings of space are evident: the circularity occasions a space of common-place lawlessness in which violence is a given. If this tense spatial state is not quite naturalised in the sense that South Africans are blithely inured to crime, it is nevertheless such a defining feature of the social topography that it has begun to shape the collective psyche or social imaginary. (See Padayachee and Desai [2011: np]) for insightful commentary concerning the “crisis of expectation and crime” in relation to the “growing disquiet” and “the declining human development trajectory” which have characterised post-apartheid South Africa as a country since 1994.)

Also relevant in relation to contemporary South African crime fiction as an uneasy generic space is the role of the country’s apartheid and colonial past in shaping the parameters of the present. In a special issue of *WordsEtc* dedicated to crime fiction, Jassy Mackenzie expands on this question. She maintains that the

influence of apartheid on South African writing can be compared to the influence that Hitler and the Nazi regime had on Germany. This had the same lasting repercussion on the culture and society it affected, and the way that everybody involved ended up perceiving themselves...The same thing is happening here in South Africa. Some crime fiction villains have their roots buried in the rotting carcass of apartheid, and some of today’s books are still set in that era. (2010: 13)

While Mackenzie’s phrasing is conversationally informal rather than scholarly (and while some might challenge the ‘Nazi regime’ analogy as inapt), her comments nevertheless remind us that the structure, or formula, of crime fiction tends to require an investigation of the past, and that ‘pastness’ is a complicated frame of spatial reference in South Africa. Ronit Frenkel and Craig Mackenzie, for instance, in their piece on ‘post-transitional’ South African literature, point out that “History is often interrogated in the literature of the transitional years in the form of buried histories being excavated from a variety of perspectives to add to the growing body of new South African stories” (2010: 2). If the crime novel frequently turns on the investigation of a ‘before’ in

relation to an ‘after’ (often enough that span of time in which someone became a murdered ‘some’ body, or the narrow window period in which an investigator had the slimmest chance of finding a person alive), in South African crime fiction the exploration of time parameters often necessitates exploration much further back than mere hours, or days. The crime novel, then, is an intriguing textual space, as it offers opportunities for a local writer to engage with the burdens of South Africa’s troubled national history.

This is especially evident in Orford’s *Gallows Hill*, where a major element of the plot is dictated by apartheid era events. While the original crime occurred twenty years ago, this by no means relegates the violence and danger to the past, the forgotten spaces of distant memory. Instead, the discovery of the body of a female artist rumoured to have fled the country and the security police some twenty years before necessitates a delving back into deep history, the author pulling her readers from the pleasures of the contemporary back to that which many might prefer to forget. The initial shock of the artist’s disappearance had been casually discounted by a racist, spatially divided and even disjunctive society in which people were accustomed to sudden, unexplained acts of intimidation by security police and the disappearances of activists. Disconnection was the spatial order of the day in physical terms – us/them; conceptually too, people were not encouraged to make the necessary links which might lead to sociopolitical questioning and ideological understanding. People, and spaces, were separate.

Unsurprisingly in Orford’s narrative, the artist’s murder goes undetected for decades, as if both the very landscape and the social imaginary had simply absorbed and accommodated her disappearance, continuing indifferent and unchanged. Unmoved. However, subsequent investigation into the murder of Suzanne Le Roux leads to the discovery of weapons and drug smuggling in art crates by brother and sister Gilles and Merle Osman. This investigation succeeds thanks to ties to the Special Branch through Gilles’ friend Jacques Basson. Hart and Faizal’s investigation into the murder of Suzanne, in comparison, works to open up rather than foreclose on historical time; their research painstakingly exposes a concealed period of personal and political history that the Osmans and Basson would kill to keep hidden. This almost leads to the murder of Hart, Faizal, and Suzanne’s daughter, Lilith, implying the violent inherited consequences, for the present time-space, of an incident which occurred twenty years before.

In *Blood Rose*, a similar interest in unearthing the ideologically dangerous past occurs. The narrative recounts elements of South Africa's military presence in what was then South West Africa, and the devastation left behind when South African troops evacuated. The chaos and confusion lead to a situation in which six cakes of Uranium 235 'disappear'. Orford hints at the extensive reach (and possible repercussions) of this potentially explosive scenario. The occupation of South West Africa by the South African Defence Force was characterised by secrecy and covert military protocols, and such circumstances contrive to conceal the disappearance of the uranium – and by extension many other politically-motivated disappearances. In the narrative, three ex-army personnel return to Walvis Bay to retrieve the explosives in order to sell the materials. (Again, in this Orford novel, we have forms of neo-colonial resource extraction linked to the unequal relations between alpha nation-states and service-order 'supply' countries. The ex SADF soldiers represent larger historical patterns of exploitation as they plan to draw continued profit from their privileged access to knowledge and power in the previous social order.) The laziness of ex-soldier Malan, however, means that he involves four street children in the men's retrieval plans, an expedience which occasions the children's murder, the murder of four other people, and the attempted murder of Hart and Faizal. In other words, the crimes perpetrated during apartheid have an insidious reach that extends firmly and persistently into the interlinked spaces of contemporary society, penetrating lives and relations which are supposedly now those of democratic post-apartheid.

Clearly, the literary text is itself a space in which an author may explore questions of crime, violence and corruption in a particular national, regional or local space, paying attention not only to the present, but to the impact of the past on the current arrangements of space and the relations which obtain among areas and people. The crime and violence that was a predominant feature of the apartheid regime has been torsioned into newly expedient form in the post democratic country. Attwell and Harlow argue that the prevalence of much of the crime today can be attributed to South Africa's past saying: "apartheid's legacy remains evident in extensive poverty, educational deprivation, and a warped criminal justice system which because it was developed as an instrument of political oppression, seems incapable of dealing with ordinary crime" (2000: 2). The Centre for the Study of Violence and Retribution does not attribute such a direct link to the influence of the past, however it still maintains in a 2009 report that:

There is not one single factor which explains the high levels of violence or violent crime in South Africa. Violent crime in South Africa, as in other countries, is therefore the product of a variety of factors. While none of these factors are entirely unique to South Africa, the way in which they interact is shaped by South Africa's apartheid past, specific features of the post-apartheid period, and other factors. (2009: 10).

In *Like Clockwork*, Orford's character Hart is described as having this opinion too. Notably, Hart's doctorate is titled "Crimes against Women in Post-Apartheid South Africa" (2006: 27), and elaborates her premise that "unspent violence was sublimated into a war against women" in particular (27-28). This gives a gender inflection to the spaces of violence, and although some of Hart's colleagues, such as Senior Superintendent Phiri, are sceptical, the recognition that apartheid is given as a cause for crime in the country is plausible, and we see Orford shaping accepted academic logics for crime into a form that can accommodate her own interest in the spaces allocated to women in South African society.

I will return to this later in the chapter; for the moment, let me continue to substantiate my assertion that Orford's fiction enables her to investigate the impact of the past as a constitutively formative element of a South African present. As I hope to demonstrate, this, too, is a *spatial* parameter related to distance and proximity. Sarah Nuttall, in her work on the representation of youthful identity in post-apartheid citiness in local fiction, characterises contemporary society as the protracted moment of "the 'Now'" (2004: 731), emphasising that the present does not consist solely of the current moment but rather comprises complex relationships across time and space. Nuttall argues that any attempt to understand contemporary South African society necessitates an active recognition of the impact the past plays, and that to do so, there must be an attempt at "working out what remains of the past, and how we relate to both the past and its remainders, or its traces in the present" (732). The difficulty of engaging with the space of the past in both the amorphous spaces of the democratic present *and* in the neuro-affective spaces of individual character psychology is one that Orford acknowledges. Many of her characters tussle with the challenge of trying to understand actions through the spatial relation of causality and chronology. Mrs Hofmeyr, for instance, asks, "Where does it start? That's what I never know about the past. Kobus was a soldier. The army was his life and 1994 was the end of it. Is that the beginning or the end of the past?" (2007: 202). In this way Orford hints at the continuity of the past, questioning when in fact 'the past' comes into being. The past only becomes significant in the present, and the past only exists as a construct in its continual relation

to the present. (Orford's epigraph at the beginning of *Gallows Hill* is further indicative of this; she quotes novelist William Faulkner's observation that the "past is never dead. It's not even past" [2006: np].)

In crime fiction novels, the past is often a "potent presence" (Prestidge 2012: np), given that the narratives tend to turn on discovery, on uncovering the identity of a hidden and an elusive antagonist the results of whose actions – dead bodies, injuries, fear – are, paradoxically, highly visible. To offer a genre example beyond the South African context: consider Jim Kelly's 'Philip Dryden' mysteries, in which the past is an inescapable force impacting on the lives of characters as well as on the very crime fiction plot which grants the narrative its force and forward momentum. In other words, it is ostensible 'pastness' which contributes dramatically to the immediacy of the present crime scenario, correlating the spatial markers of distance and proximity in challenging ways:

Time and time again, the plots hinge around long-forgotten events which come spinning up from depths to disturb the placid surface of the present day. A skeleton is discovered in the cellar of a derelict house used for target practice on MOD land; workers relocating ancient graves from a flooded cemetery uncover a secretly buried body; a corpse, dead for 30 years, is discovered in a tower high above Ely Cathedral; the disappearance of a 15-year-old girl casts a long shadow over a community nearly two decades later. It is said that the past is another country, but for Kelly it is a land which his contemporary characters must inhabit whether they like it or not (Prestidge 2012: np).

Such inescapable tension, a legacy located between forgetting and being *bound* to remember – in effect a suppressed dichotomy between the corporeal and that which is unseen, that which lies beneath – is integral to the contradictory spatial indices which constitute contemporary South Africa, and which inflect forms of cultural engagement even beyond the krimi novel. For example, this sentiment is dramatically represented in William Kentridge's short film *Felix in Exile* (1994), in which he depicts numerous dead bodies strewn on the ground, the corpses slowly transforming, dissolving, becoming "naturalized as a topographical feature" of the landscape (Bunn 2008: 142). Kentridge's depiction emphasises that these bodies physically alter the landscape of the present even while no clear trace of them remains. They are disturbing absent-presences. In some respects, such bodies are so customary as to *seem* invisible. In other instances, however, while not being dramatically evident as scars or wounds on the social body, the very process of deep absorption implies a toxic internalisation, the unremarked deaths

substantially altering the unseen configurations of the country's human relationships and social infrastructure. It is such an embodied burden which informs Orford's crime fiction.

Both Orford's and Kentridge's treatments of the progression of time and the processes of change which leave little indication of the traces of the past, mirror the fractured South African psyche which promotes a social amnesia towards troubled history. Despite this, however, the spectre of both apartheid and South Africa's colonial history sits just below more socially acceptable (even vestigially utopian), narratives of South Africa, affecting the present while its presence is seldom properly acknowledged. As Mike Marais points out, for example, in an article entitled "Bodies that Belong: Race and Space in Elleke Boehmer's *Nile Baby*", if it is rare in local literature to locate "texts that attempt to engage with the problem for the present posed by what Sam Durrant has termed 'racial memory', that is, the collective memory of the unspeakable violence done to the black body" (2010: 45), it is simultaneously the case that writers are still faced with "the interminable imperative to remember the victims of racial oppression" and to consider how this "acts on our present states and future possibilities" (ibid.). (While I cannot explore this here, Durrant draws on Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia and Derrida's infinite mourning and spectrology in order to theorise the "various ways in which writers like Wilson Harris, Toni Morrison, and JM Coetzee memorialize the immemorial, because traumatic, past in their writing" [Marais 2010: 47].)

Marais' discussion may be extrapolated beyond racial categories: as in the case of so many of the TRC testimonies, 'race' was differently inflected through gender and class affiliation (see Krog's *Country of My Skull* for a personalised account of the effects upon victims and even perpetrators of the varied social crimes wrought under the aegis of apartheid). As Marais observes, "precisely because it is unnamed-able and therefore inassimilable, South Africa's traumatic past ceaselessly demands to be remembered" (46). It is true, of course, that oversimplified versions of the past repeatedly surface, among them corrupt and inept government ministers' insistent attribution of current inefficiencies and injustices to 'the apartheid regime'. Yet even this facile interpretation, however, may be said to imply the difficulty of coming to both conceptual and experiential terms with the 'after-life' of South Africa's fraught history. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to suggest that in South Africa many people are living in a

contradictory present, forging ahead without properly acknowledging the impact of history on their daily lives. This tension is something that evidently intrigues Orford in her handling of crime stories. In spatial terms, then, I suggest that even crime fiction is “one part of the massive national project of transforming the ways social spaces are produced, used, and occupied, and the ways social memory is encoded in those spaces” (Graham 2009: 3), since a writer like Orford engages with the “recodings of land, history, and peoples” (Winkiel 2011: 369), the difficult – indeed often inhumanely *criminal* inheritances – that accrue from “the particularly racialized geography of colonization and apartheid in South Africa” (ibid.).

Cameron *et al* expand on the duality of South African mentality and the impact of the past by examining people’s attitudes towards the process of transition from the end of apartheid, toward the beginning of democracy in South Africa:

It’s a particularly South African phenomenon of the late 1980s and 1990s to have contradictory thoughts running in tandem. You had people rebuilding their homes while simultaneously planning to emigrate. These contradictions work at an internal level in terms of the different views one has of oneself from one moment to the next...I question the cost and pain engendered by self-multiplicity...There is a kind of madness that arises from living in two worlds. Life becomes a collection of contradictory elements (Cameron *et al* 1999 cited in Nuttall and Mbembe 2008: 30-31).

These contradictory actions are indicative of a ‘doubleness’ or duality of consciousness that many South Africans experience, evident in many attitudes towards the country as an entity whereby the striving for a satisfying ‘whole’ life is simultaneously inflected by, even overwhelmed by, the constant fear of imminent potential violence. Indeed Willet argues that: “Crime fiction cannot avoid the reproduction of negative images but they may co-exist textually with utopian longings” (1996: 139). The coexistence which Willet describes is not a peaceful one however. There is a remarked distinction between desired urban life, and that which undermines its idealised existence. This is represented by what seems to be an increasingly common ‘solution’ by many people to remaining in South Africa despite the fear of becoming a victim of violent crime. There is the attempt to create, artificially, desirable lifestyles: the construction of enclaves of gated communities which enhance the semblance of safety and security, for example, and maintain the semblance of a privileged lifestyle unaffected by the challenges of democracy. Orford’s description of the gated communities in Johannesburg



acknowledges the uncomfortable spatial co-dependence of such enclaves: “Shacklands besieging the gated estates with their red-roofed villas, homes flanked by a blue square, a green one. Swimming pool. Lawn. Armed guards” (2011: 183). In terms of rhetorical style, the very syntactical curtness, here, undermines any illusion of satisfied pastoral bucolic, implying that life in these communities is an attempt to negate the negative characteristics present in much of the country, despite the pervasive, highly visible presence of shacks, indigence, and suffering as the obverse, the other side, of guarded wealth.

Orford further describes this familiar South African form of spatial arrangement in *Like Clockwork*, where the Kings’ house “was positioned discretely at the end of a three-kilometre cul-de-sac that traced the crest of a wooded ridge. The avenue was lined with stately oaks that obscured the palatial houses set far back from the road. Security guards, stupefied with boredom, sat at the gateways. The King mansion was a sparkling white jewel set in an acre of emerald lawn” (2006: 210). This seemingly idyllic and opulent lifestyle, however, in another characteristic feature of South African spatial proximity, namely the premise of surveillance, is qualified by the presence of the security guards – who as it happens, have little to do. This paranoia over security is over-kill at its best.

Orford is quite clear, then, in her description, that the spatial realities of South Africa are based on the ironic illusion of an ideal lifestyle, almost the illusionistic, forced perspective of *tromp-l’oeil*. This is an unstable, *ostensible* realism which gives way under closer inspection, collapsing almost into scornful bathos. However, in this particular Orford novel, the misguided illusion is also displaced, embodied in the unexpected violence of patriarchy that occurs within the supposed domestic sanctuary. The writer manages to question, through the simple process of representation, many of the naturalised spatial hierarchies (of race, class or gender) which have been normalised in South Africa and which in turn normalise what ought rather to be considered criminal forms of ordinary human existence: the servant who is dismissed to the invisible margins yet is intimately involved in the raising of children; the subservient wife who lives vicariously through the highly ordered domestic environment, yet is simultaneously an emotional hostage in this very space.

The contradictions that exist within and below apparent spatial normalcy prompt a writer such as Orford to read the landscape of South Africa as a deceptive text. Not only are such

contradictions often not easily perceived, but the visual aesthetic of South Africa's natural landscape provides an added cover or mask. Consider the example of Cape Town, often the preferred setting for Orford's fiction. 'The Mother City' is known for its beauty and blend of South African consumer lifestyles and cosmopolitan image cultures. Indeed, the visual beauty of the city is predominant in discourse: the characteristically scenic representation of the city is through photographic and linguistic texts that emphasise vistas, natural spectacles and a range of landscapes variously sublime or picturesque. Frequently, these magnificently beautiful, exquisitely lovely or culturally sophisticated views place the spectator in an elevated, scenic position overlooking an aesthetically pleasing city, locating the view through the pleasures of "distance and detachment and the personal inconsequence of all that" the viewer "survey[s]" (Smith 1993: 78-79). In effect, one might say, this position effaces problematics and disjunctures, smoothing out discrepancies and inconsistencies in order to 'resolve' the constituent elements of an environment – buildings, people, vegetation – precisely into an artfully patterned landscape. To some extent this is a valid criticism. However, it is important to accept that the ostensible coherence of this pleasing visual aesthetic is also inherently unstable; if the position of voyeur enables the pleasure of 'overlooking' and detachment, it is also associated with a characteristic tendency to draw one in, an empathetic affect that has the potential to expose the unsettling contradictions inherent in the effort required to sustain any superior elevation.

A genre such as crime fiction, premised on questioning and investigation of the apparent, refuses acceptance of the aesthetic ideal, instead inviting a closer examination of that which sits beneath such a surface. As I have been suggesting, one of the characteristics of the krimi genre, often subsumed under the emphasis on *time*, is a correlative interest in *spatiality*. Under the guise of narrative thrill and pleasure, such novels invite a reader to engage in an exploration of space beyond a mere superficial glance, leading a reader in and through 'landscape' in the investigative process of unveiling crimes. The grounding of crime in specific geographical locations not only has an impact on that particular location (which will be discussed in more detail later), but emphasises the movement that is associated with the occurrence of crime, and its investigation. In this sense, Orford's crime fiction corroborates Shane Graham's belief that "the predominant motif of recent South African literature is one of spatial disorientation" such that "the sense of being both physically and psychically lost" complicates krimi trajectories of resolution. It also

allows Orford “to connect space and place to memory and the body”, and to offer a spatially located connection to more commonplace postmodern commonplaces of “cognitive mapping, spatial disorientation and historical amnesia” (Winkiel 2011: 369).

It is important briefly to consider the setting of Cape Town in Orford’s novels (with some detour to Walvis Bay), examining the characteristics of the contemporary South African city using an extended passage from Nuttall:

Post-apartheid fiction offers a fruitful site for understanding city-culture in a more extended idiom – the intricacy of the city as a spatial formation, its density as a concentration of people, things, institutions and architectural forms; the heterogeneity of lives juxtaposed in close proximity, the citiness of cities, the ways in which they gather, mix, remix, separate, conceal and display and the ways in which urban life becomes the irreducible product of mixture, each urban moment sparking performative improvisations which are unforeseen and unforeseeable. The city...has emerged as the primary site for the creation of the social imaginary in much of the newest writing. The city in fiction, that is, has become a vivid and explicit template for an entire array of social fears and possibilities. (2004:740)

Orford’s depiction of post-apartheid citiness in Cape Town offers this kind of multidirectional exploration, paying particular attention to the tension between the strata of surface and underneath. Her representation of Cape Town illustrates a city of many contradictory facets. In areas such as the City Bowl, Green Point, Sea Point, and the northern Suburbs, there are uneven attempts to maintain a life premised on the controlled, coherent surface narrative of democratic progress and first world citiness; however crime and violence have begun to penetrate this surface logic, in some areas becoming pervasive. Clearly, Orford’s fiction tussles with difficult notions of spatial truth, a recognition that crime fiction – like literary fiction – “can highlight ambiguity, traumatic gaps in memory and representation, and flexible interconnections between language, self, body and space” (Winkiel 2011: 369).

It is important to acknowledge that for a writer, negotiating spatiality with the end of finding the culprit of a crime is not facilitated by the depiction merely of a collection of isolated locales. Instead, the writer needs to negotiate an emphasis on movement through and between environments. David Schmid discusses the spatiality of the krimi genre, paying particular attention to investigation saying “a concentration upon the spaces of crime fiction apparently de-centres a critical emphasis upon the solution of the crime *per se* and instead focuses on the

movements (both literal and metaphorical) that lead to that solution” (2012: 7). If the investigation of the crime is characterised by a series of movement, the actual crime, too, is a result of a succession of actions that has entailed the traversing of places – movements associated with the offender, the victim, and the various experiential shifts which occasioned the criminal event. Schmid’s interest lies in “the potential of crime fiction, through its representations of space, to produce what Fredric Jameson (via geographer Kevin Lynch) has famously described as a ‘cognitive map’ of the social totality. It describes the phenomenon by which people make sense of their urban surroundings”, and “works as an intersection of the personal and the social” (2012: 4). Colin MacCabe expands on this saying “For Jameson, “cognitive mapping is a way of understanding how the individual’s representation of his or her social world...is intimately related to practice”, to “the negotiation of urban space” (1995: xiv). Even if this goal of mapping or understanding is always in process and impossible fully to achieve, as Jameson acknowledges, the metaphor is potentially valuable for the way it implies the psychic and social facets of people’s relation to space. In terms of research into crime fiction, the concept of cognitive mapping encourages “us to study systematically what crime fiction has to tell us about the ways in which power is spatialized” (Schmid 2012: 4). As this chapter is suggesting, such issues permeate Orford’s treatment of space in her novels.

Nuttall and Mbembe (2008), though referring specifically to *Johannesburg* as a metropolis, point out the extent to which urban theory and sociology imagine South African citiness as a form of “spatial embodiment” associated with “unequal economic relations and coercive and segregationist policies” (2008: 10), since South African urban space has “traditionally [been] conceived...in terms largely of segregation and division” (Putter 2011: np). The relevance of such spatial segregation to crime is discussed by the Comaroffs in “Figuring Crime: Quantifacts and the Production of the Un/Real” (2006). They explore the matter of crime statistics and patterns of crime in ways more complex than I can account for here, but of particular relevance is their attention to crime maps as linked to space. They argue that these systems “plot insecurity in space” (2006: 228), and while they are loathe to plot the occurrence of crime through rigid superimpositions of spatial ideology, they do grant that there are certain ‘crime’ associations – both formal (e.g. crime statistics), and informal (e.g. beliefs and perceptions) – which are undeniably linked to particular types of South African human

geography. The informal settlement, for instance, prompts associations of criminal permeability due to haphazard, makeshift structure and civic ungovernability, as well as to assumptions about such settlements being the primary dwelling place for socially unsettling demographics, such as the unemployed and the poorly educated. This encoding contrasts with areas such as The Waterfront, for example, which is commonly associated in the public imagination with hospitality and leisure, consumer glitz, and international tourism. Such examples of space offer extremes in terms of socio-economic associations, but Schmid (2012) would work to persuade us that, understood through space and movement, there are linkages and connections between such environments that are not easily perceived. The weapon used to kill the homeless boys in *Blood Rose* in Walvis Bay is a succinct example: the gun is found also to have been used in the death of an old army major who was killed in McGregor, a small farming village in the Western Cape. The diligence of ballistics expert Shorty De Lange allows Hart and Faizal to make connections that would ordinarily have gone unnoticed.

In effect, Orford as crime writer is aware of the powerful social currents amongst geographically distinct spaces; she appreciates that spaces are relationally-imbricated through flow and movement, rather than existing in isolation. This is evident in her description of the investigation into the deaths of the street children in *Blood Rose*, where she describes the link between the murders through reference to a map:

De Lange unrolled a long sheet of white paper. The image spread out on the table was an explosion of colourful lines, branching off from clusters of dates and place names.

‘What is this?’ asked Clare. ‘A family tree?’

‘It is, in a way,’ said De Lange. (2007: 194).

This chart that De Lange has created, correlating bullets and locations across the province, is indicative of significant yet often imperceptible associations. They evade casual observation, but can be made manifest under close scrutiny. Here, again, we see Orford writing into being for her readers some of the elusively embedded connections between ‘here’ and ‘there’, surface and beneath, the writer insisting on relationality rather than a disabling spatial separateness. If this is conscious-raising, moreover, it has the subtle advantage of persuading a reader through narrative

intrigue and character relation, rather than relying on the didactically annoying authorial device of proselytising.

Speaking more widely of crime fiction, Schmid emphasises the prevalence of spatial networks in the genre, and their importance to the smooth functioning of the krimi as a textual space:

Two points immediately emerge here: one, studying representations of space in crime fiction can give us a way of contesting a characterization of the genre that dismisses it as a closed, formal system; two, it is possible that space i[n] crime fiction is rhizomatic in the Deleuzian sense, that is, it consists of what Manuel Castells has described in another context as a ‘space of flows,’ a series of connected nodal points forming a large network, rather than a group of mutually exclusive spaces with no connection from one to the other. (2012: 6)

Schmid’s description of crime sites differs from the lay view that locales are isolated and segregated entities. Instead, he proposes a contradictory graphic of linkages which, in the context of South African crime fiction and history, allows us to ‘peel back’ the separatist apartheid ideology, for instance, and to see the occluded forms of connectedness which assisted in maintaining segregation.

What has become increasingly clear to me is that crime fiction offers the opportunity to explore controversial connections amongst varying locations, especially when we consider the communities and individuals who inhabit them. Orford pays particular attention to the disjuncture that appears between worlds when individuals from varying socio-economic statuses interact. This appears to have been a catalyst for Orford’s creative energy as a writer in the crime genre. Consider an interview in *The Daily Maverick* in which Orford recounts the following incident:

The call girl told Orford that after the fathers had dropped off their kids at a private school in that plush suburb, they would see her before heading off to work. ‘I thought this is where the visible world of privilege with that moral impunity that people think they have, intersects with this other world from Belhar. Those two worlds intersect in that very intimate sexual act, and it was like a little writer’s window had opened for me,’ says Orford. (De Waal 2012: np)

This conversation enables the chance meeting of two different spaces, a meeting which instantiates for the writer a disturbing yet productive disharmony, allowing her to develop an estranging imaginative insight into the glossy beauty and sophisticated wealth that is often

perceived to be the defining characteristic of ‘first world’ Cape Town, South Africa’s ‘Europe in Africa’.

Relevant here in relation to a discussion of surprising connection amongst different spaces is Orford’s work on *Fifteen Men* (2008), in which she ran a creative writing workshop for prisoners serving time in Victor Verster Jail: “under ‘normal’ circumstances there’d be no way she’d be having ‘conversations’ with men ‘like that’ unless they were hijacking her car or breaking into her house”, concludes the interviewer (De Waal 2012: np). The contrasting positions of those involved in these interactions draw attention to the differing worlds of which the individuals are part, and it is arguably only Orford’s culturally-mediating status and authority as a writer specifically of *crime* fiction which persuades officialdom to grant her access to the prison and the prisoners, permitting her to cross material-spatial boundaries and then, perhaps, further to rework this traversal into material for fiction.

### Complicating the Surface and Beneath

Let me return, here, to the terms ‘surface’ and ‘beneath’ which as I have indicated inflect a number of articles on contemporary South Africa society. Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe (2008), for example, acknowledge David Pike’s affirmation that “there is no surface without an underground” (2008: 22), and that the surface, far from being an easily legible or ‘superficial’ texture, serves to conceal and distort much of the trauma that exists and shapes current narratives of South African life. Nuttall and Mbembe argue that the “privileging of surfaces and visibility can conceal the ubiquity of the metropolitan form” (ibid.). Movements through the city are not simply lateral but involve a vertical intersection too in the often unintentional exploration of the surface and the underneath. Nuttall and Mbembe go on to claim that it “is at these deeper levels and in the way the world below interacted with the surface and the edges that the origins of the city as a metropolis are to be located” (16).

The visible presence of crime on this constructed surface is one such example of a slicing through of these strata. One of the most alarming of these is the presence of a body as evidence of the presence of crime. Orford pays particular attention to the discovery of the bodies of victims of crime in all her novels. In this way she unsettles the established spatial arrangements of the city, in which propriety and impropriety, stable surface functioning and unsettling erosion,

all traditionally kept neatly differentiated, are brought emphatically into a reader's view. One example occurs in *Like Clockwork*, where the murderer, Otis Tohar, places the bodies in spaces that will deliberately be considered shocking. The first body is discovered on the promenade in Sea Point. Tohar, as the perpetrator, seems explicitly to desire to capitalise on horrified emotion in his placement of his victims' bodies. He positions the bodies in well-populated leisure areas, such as the Sea Point promenade, the rocks at Graaff's Pool, and on the beach close to a popular sushi restaurant. The bodies are on display in places he knows they will be quickly discovered. He appears to want his crimes to be dramatically visible, understanding that his actions threaten the received spatial organisation in terms of which Cape Town and the established, patterned geographies of ordinary life are understood. Orford uses Tohar as a device, since his is a pathological variant of the exhibitionary complex, in that the killer challenges the openly institutionalised, yet increasingly ineffectual, networks of law and order that mark the surface of post-apartheid South African life.

Also informative is Hart's reaction to the discovery of the first victim's body: "A dead body was not that unusual in Cape Town. Ports discard human flotsam, and last night had certainly been cold enough to take a vagrant off before receding with the morning sun" (2006: 14). Such a casual observation (almost verging on the pathetic fallacy in which nature is endowed with the human capacity for mood and agency) implies the extent to which death has become a naturalised part of a marginalised sub-set of city life – people whose lives appear to matter less, in cities, than those of consequential people who keep the engines of modern corporatized culture turning, through constant production and consumption. However, Hart soon sees that the body belongs not to a vagrant who had succumbed to the cold, but to a young woman. At the sight of this victim, Hart's reaction shifts from her customary professional remove, even calculated indifference, to sharp dismay, and the scene stays with her as a horrifying sublime that cannot be erased from her mind even as it can only properly surface in moments of distraction. Orford writes: "Clare was slipping back into her nightmare. It took an immense exercise of will to bring herself back to the present. To this body. Here. Today. Then her mind made the switch to trained observer, and all emotion was gone" (15). In this way Orford is able to show the barrier that is placed between the human mind (and emotion) and the horror of crime. Hart's exposure to bodies, violence, and murder has taught her to compartmentalise the occurrence of crime (much as space itself in South Africa has historically



been organised into white and black areas, putatively safe and unsafe), and it is when crime breaches the barriers of protection that it becomes a thoroughly unnerving experience. The similarity in age of this victim to Hart's sister Constance when she was attacked has a significant emotional impact on Hart. But what makes the body especially shocking for Hart is its appearance in an unexpected place. Hart, like many people, has particular expectations of crime and its occurrence and when it intersects with her daily life, she is subject to the displacing shock of estrangement.

The breaching of mental barriers needs to occur, Orford implies, in the reader as much as in her protagonist, if the deep effects of crime 'taking place' are allowed to claim affective space in the mind and the heart. Orford repeatedly uses her plotting to effect spatial disruption. In *Blood Rose*, the bodies of the street children are found dumped in areas such as the local school and popular travelling spots, their presence dramatically challenging the orderly structures of preferred, normal spatial reality. While in *Like Clockwork* Otis Tohar wishes to display his victims, in *Blood Rose*, Gretchen and Renko abandon the bodies where the victims were killed, in the remote desert. Orford, however, contrives narrative trajectories which will ensure discovery, blurring the spatial boundaries between there and here, far and near, a lawless environment apparently beyond the remit of judicial control and the more ordered sociality of the urban civic space. The bodies are not, in the text, 'deserted'; instead they are returned to the locus of human interaction, where possibilities of justice exist even if they do not automatically prevail. Orford has Spyt, a topnaar (an indigenous desert dweller), make the gruesome discoveries. He refuses to allow the deaths to go unnoticed as he brings the bodies to well-populated areas knowing that this will entail revelation; he understands that in confronting people with the bodies, obliging them to face the blunt, shocking fact of the bodies' presence, there is greater likelihood of an investigation than were he simply to be complicit in allowing the bodies to remain disappeared. The moving of the bodies reflects the same intentions that Tohar has in *Like Clockwork*, but in this case a different, more civic-minded motive prevails. While in *Blood Rose*, the bodies aren't displayed in affluent areas, the type of violence that the society is confronted with, similar to that in *Like Clockwork*, emphasises the shock that results when crime claims the familiar spaces of the everyday setting.

The destabilisation of the reserved spatial norms of a quiet, wealthy area by the presence of a dead body serves to emphasise the fragile purchase of any idealised South African life in which complacent surface assumptions will not be subject to disruption by deeper currents. Despite attempts to maintain the surface integrity of ‘life as usual’ in specific affluent areas, often the ‘underneath’, in an Orford novel, is a latent characteristic simply waiting to be revealed. Even the succinct description of Sea Point by Frommers, an online travel advisor, implies evidence of an underground which lies almost visible beneath the approved, preferred surface, despite attempts to discount its presence. The guide describes the Sea Point area to potential customers as slightly spoiled by the high-rise apartments. It continues: “come sunset, the seaside promenade is still a salubrious place to walk, jog, or hold hands” but “pockets along Sea Point's Main Road are hangouts for hookers and drug dealers” (Website 1). A similarly uneasy treatment (in which ostensibly factual description segues into more obviously slippery rhetorical-ideological registers) characterises Orford’s treatment of the city of Cape Town. A city widely famous for its affluence, exclusivity and beauty is gradually undermined in the course of Orford’s narratives by the looming spectre of that which has been othered and marginalised.

Through such permeable tactics, Orford attempts to reconfigure two official, preferred narratives of Cape Town’s first world urbanity. Firstly, she highlights the darker aspect of Cape Town’s reputation as a sophisticated and cosmopolitan site of cultures such as film, tourism and the modelling industry. Secondly – counter to theories of citiness popularised by influential scholars such as Michel de Certeau (1984) – she demonstrates scepticism about the tendency to moot only the celebratory possibilities of ordinary people’s re-scripting of place through their own pleasurable, individual use of urban sites. As Orford implies, city space, when not understood as a civic collective, runs the risk of devolving into idiosyncratic and even pathological individualism. The criminal here takes his liberties at the expense of tentative formations of democratic collectivity.

While Orford does draw attention to the sharp and shocking contrast of crime in affluent areas, she also examines communities where the idealised world of “utopian longings” (Willet 1996: 139) is a very fragile prospect. In *Gallows Hill*, Orford’s rather sardonic description of Woodstock illustrates this point: “The drive from the Flats to Woodstock seemed interminable. Once there, the veneer of gentrification seemed as thin as a soap opera’s plot” (2011: 332).

Indeed some areas exist solely as displays of the ‘underneath’ without any pretence of idealised life – areas where attempts at pretence would prove futile against the extensive poverty and pervasive violence. One such area is the Cape Flats and Orford represents this locale during an interview between Mrs Adams, the mother of a little girl who has been abducted, and Hart. (Clare is filming the account for her documentary series on missing girls.) Mrs Adams begins:

‘Harry Oppenheimer has gold mines. Voëltjie Ahrend and his gangsters have this.’ She waved her hand at the warren of matchbox houses and backyard shacks. ‘A gold mine too. They own the police. If I go to the police then my baby is dead, for sure. They’re not going to watch so much power get sold out from under them.’

‘Who’s buying?’ asked Clare.

‘Buying, selling. Gangsters, police, politicians.’ Mrs Adams turned her green eyes on Clare. ‘For us that lives here, it’s all the same. We’re the ones that pay in the beginning and in the end. (2009a: 19-20)

The criminality and violence that impact South Africa as a whole are often most clearly formalised in vulnerable, exploited locations such as those described by Mrs Adams. In the Cape Flats, Ahrend controls the area so thoroughly that Mrs Adams would rather not contact the police for assistance, as she risks dire repercussions for her daughter if she is seen to thwart Ahrend’s clandestine (yet openly understood) control of the area. This is an apt instance of Orford’s blurring of surface and beneath, a subtle way in which she, as the writer of crime fiction, is able to critique the status quo.

Despite the violence in impoverished areas being a prevalent characteristic of contemporary South Africa, those from wealthier areas view the occurrence of crime as an alterity which ought not to impinge on their own lives. This lack of relational understanding is reflected in *Daddy’s Girl* when Hart is interviewing a parent of a wealthy child about Yasmin’s kidnapping. Orford sums up the interaction between Hart and the parents in an effective ideological ‘snapshot’ which carries an embedded critique of the parents’ facile generalisations:

It was everywhere in the press, but it happened so often to those children.  
Which children?  
Poor children was their reply. (312)

This casual reply to questions about the kidnapping of Yasmin draws attention to the perceived gap between the lives of those who are privileged and the lives of those on the margins. Both in addressing the subject, *per se*, and in her abrupt sentence structure, Orford deliberately destabilises any comforting assumption that crime is habitually a feature of poor, othered lives, something that most people would prefer to imagine happens elsewhere, indifferently and invisibly.

In addressing the notion of othered spaces, along with the surface and the underneath, we must bear in mind that the less visible spaces of South African life are not to be reduced to simple material physicality. Mbembe and Nuttall elucidate on this concept:

The underground is not to be understood simply in terms of an infrastructure and various subterranean spaces (sewers and drainage systems, underground railways, utility storage vaults and so on). The world below (the underworld) is also made up of lower classes, the trash heap of the world above, and subterranean utopias. (2008: 22)

In other words, the boundaries between above and below are sometimes perplexingly permeable. If the surface is a civic order which derives in part from the vested interest of an individual's willingness to submit elements of personal good to the functioning of the social whole, for example, it is also the crass materialism of avaricious and egotistical drives, such that a wealthy husband can callously prey on his vulnerable wife. Similarly if the beneath is in part a metonym for ungovernability and danger, it is also, potentially, the site of female coming-to-consciousness and even refusal, a space in which mothers, daughters, sisters, are struggling to garner the freedom of self and agency that has been denied them because of a collective femaleness.

For the moment, though, let me focus on Orford's use of the literal spaces of Cape Town's 'underneath', as she makes these a dramatic narrative feature of her fiction. In *Like Clockwork*, for example, she sets part of the story in the network of subterranean passageways which spread out from the beach in Sea Point underneath the city. When Hart first discovers the existence of the tunnels, a woman describes them to her saying, "It's like a whole underground city" (2006: 244). This city however is one which is masked in darkness and is ungoverned by the explicit societal laws and regular expectations of the civic world. Orford describes the entry to the tunnels: "The bird landed in front of a huge storm water drain, a dark maw leading under the road into the belly of the city" (2006: 194). These remarks hint at a life form behind and

beneath the city façade, that while necessary to everyday urban functioning, so often obscures the unspoken criminality (whether of corporates or of municipality structures), which implicitly goes into sustaining a major urban metropolis like Cape Town.

The tunnels offer Orford an alternative (or perhaps parallel) method of negotiating the city in contrast to the signposted, familiar highways and stylish architectural built infrastructure of Cape Town as a notable modern metropolis. The arterial networks comprising the surface city are subject to query via the metaphors of intestines, belly, bowels ('maw'). And yet of course the metropolis is a body entire, albeit that separate components tend to be more hegemonically visible, and others marginalised. The received image – the gloss and glamour that are linked to the assumption of progress – are in Orford's depiction of the underground tunnels thrown into a startling new perspective, one which insists on the co-presence of sewage and shiny surface, a co-dependence which casts simple oppositions of 'good' and 'evil' into disarray. (Indeed, as Orford's fiction implies, 'City Hall', corrupt urban management, and crooked government contracts comprise a medusa-like tentacle of the shady 'subterranean' network.)

With the spatialised divisions characteristic of South Africa, what is important in the necessity of investigating crimes is the investigator's ability to navigate amongst different kinds of environment. Schmid elaborates, explaining that a "premium is placed on the detective's ability to move through a variety of spaces, which might mean, among other things, a concomitant emphasis on how this mobility is actualized, what restraints may be placed upon it, and so on" (2012: 8). The navigation of space, whether the vast space of 'South Africa' or the specifics of Cape Town as a vast metropolis, is a process made particularly complex because of the violence of the past. Orford points out: "In all countries, but in South Africa particularly, because of our segregated past, cops and journalists are the only people who can believably navigate through this fractured and stratified society" (2010: 187).

As I have already suggested, Hart is an amalgamation of both these figures. Her position as a consultant for the police grants her movement legitimacy, as does her investigative journalism. Her position as a woman, however, complicates and restricts this ability to navigate space. Margaret Kinsman (1995) describes Sara Paretsky's protagonist V.I. Warshawski's movements through Chicago saying: "Paretsky's literary 'maps' of Chicago and the life of an

autonomous female appeal to me because of the way in which a single professional woman is authentically and accurately portrayed holding her own in the potentially corrupting milieu of city civic spaces” (1995: 15 - 16). Hart is a character who seeks not to allow received ideas of femaleness as limitation to impinge on her freedom of movement. One such example occurs in *Daddy’s Girl* when Hart interviews the mother of an abducted girl in the Cape Flats – a place generally associated with danger and violence. In this environment she feels at risk and she “checked the car’s central locking” and her “pulse quickened” (2009a: 16) at her own vulnerability. Orford goes even further in describing the Flats through a character who grew up there – Pearl, the daughter of a gangster. Orford describes Pearl’s opinion of the Cape Flats: “She pointed behind the camera towards the cinder block flats bedecked with washing and adorned with graffiti; stone-eyed men were draped against the entrances. ‘It’s not a place for a woman’” (35). Particularly in South Africa, the violence and intimidation directed at women lead to significant limitations on freedom of movement for women. A man is able to negotiate the violent environment of South African with much more ease than a woman. His place on the streets is legitimised by his gender while, for women, their presence on the streets endangers them. As Schmid remarks in his research on crime fiction and space, it “is imperative to remember the simple and brutal fact that women’s experience of public space is undeniably different from that of men, because of the ways in which women’s mobility and behaviour in that space is constantly regulated, or even prohibited, by violence and harassment. However, one also has to emphasise resistant, the possibility that women who are not solely victims but are also active participants in the improvement of urban space can alter the city” (2012: 16). (Just as he finds this combination of “awareness and resistance” in the crime novels of Sarah Paretsky, I am arguing a similar case for Orford’s Clare Hart.)

In contrast to females’ presence on the streets, ‘women in the home’ is an expected occurrence. While the concept of home will be dealt with in greater detail later in the chapter, here I briefly expand on the sense of legitimacy that is given women in the home, even while homeliness is simultaneously unsettled. In *Gallows Hill*, Faizal and his colleague Mkhize go to interview a potential suspect; he is not there, but his wife is. She is home, overwhelmed by a new city, and a new-born baby. While a slight woman like Rita Mkhize might not be as effective in policing the streets, she steps easily into this domestic environment. Indeed, as a woman, she

feels *at home*. (The fact that the suspect's wife feels *trapped* at home by the roles conventionally associated with femaleness offers a telling, though subtle comment on assumptions about women and home.) Orford writes: "Rita was busy with the kettle, clearing a space on the grubby kitchen table. Preparing a bottle. Packing dishes into the dishwasher. Opening the windows to clear the smell of sour milk and beer" (2011: 111). Faizal, as a man, does not assume this busily efficient, nurturing role. He is even out of his depth. Mkhize, in comparison, uses her female knowledge both to assist the depressed wife, and, in the process to advance their police investigation. Because of Rita's apparently kindly gestures (gestures in kind, as it were, in keeping with female typicality), Mrs Mtimbe opens up to them. Note that Orford does not sentimentalise Rita's actions, saying, she "had played her perfectly, tea, sympathy and female solidarity" (114). Here, the author plays devil's advocate, at once implying and ironising the capacity for female sympathy. Rita Mkhize's position, in this situation, could not easily have been adopted by Faizal who instead plays the role of the male gaze to a neglected Mrs Mtimbe. At her ignorance of her husband's whereabouts Faizal responds: "'He's a foolish man,' ... He gestured towards the baby, but his gaze lingered on her. She preened a little. A man's attention – what had sustained her since she was 14 years old" (113). The different roles that Mkhize and Faizal play in this little domestic drama highlight the ideologically hegemonic repertoires through which such places are brought into being, and maintained in both material and psychic terms. Mkhize confidently adopts the role of confidante and domestic manager in the home, while Faizal shows none of this familiarity. Instead, he invokes a naturalised masculine range of response, turning to flatter and compliment the neglected wife, interpellating her femaleness in relation to a man.

In this case, the home is but one example of the settings that Orford uses to achieve her various goals. As I have earlier indicated, Orford's representation of place and space is affected by the genre in which she is writing. This genre relies on the thrill derived from the narrative and, as such, specific places are chosen by the author to generate the sense of anxiety or tension that is required to push the plot forward at the same time as there are elements of delay which heighten tension. Orford highlights areas with high incidences of crime as these have particularly generative associations surrounding them, enabling the writer to ratchet up the tension. One such area is the Cape Flats, which is known as a particularly dangerous place, associated with criminal gangs, drug dealing and social neglect. This spatial history, linked to

violence, coupled with Hart's outsider status in an area already marked by social outcasts and marginal, prompts a constant sense of unease: what will happen? When will violence erupt? Orford writes of Hart: "The *hoekstaanders* eyed her, the smallest of them disappearing down an alley as she passed. News of her presence was travelling ahead of her. She checked the car's central locking" (2009a: 16). This 'otherness' that she feels is reinforced when she arrives at her destination: a "boy detached himself from a wall, sauntered over, jeans slung low. Clare was in his territory and he knew it; knew that she knew it. Smiled. Her pulse quickened..." (ibid.). This example emphasises the territoriality and ownership of a space of casual illegality by characters such as Voëltjie Ahrend and 'the boy', Lemmetjie Adams. Here, if we already understand Hart to be construed as an outsider to the police and the official criminal investigation structures by virtue of her role as profiler-cum-investigative journalist, in this context her otherness is intensified to the degree that her person, a confluence of gender, class and her race that Bourdieu would designate as her habitus, mark her as unusual, as posing at once a possible challenge *and* a potential, opportune target.

The emotionally saturated associations of the Cape Flats as an environment therefore remind us that place in crime fiction is much more complex than simple passive landscape. To further explore this view, I return to Stijn Reijnders, who I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Reijnders, via the work of writer and painter Armando, speculates that certain historically-loaded landscapes are not mere recipients of a visual picturesque but take on a more active role in inflecting a 'view' with a provocative, sublimated ethical burden.

Let me acknowledge that this notion did not immediately strike me as plausible, or congenial, given the curious implication that a place is somehow responsible for, or a perpetrator of, actions in fact carried out by human beings. However, I have come to understand the point through more complex nuances which emphasise a reciprocity between place and person, the difficult truth that an action is always physically located in an environment partly because the environment itself is imagined by people to invite certain kinds of response. A particular place, it appears, may seem 'apt' for one type of physical action rather than another. A place, rather perversely, because of its makeup, may extend the promise for, and complicitously nurture the secret of, either ordinary or outrageous human action. In this sense, locality may be paradoxically envisaged as an accomplice which, burdened with repressed guilt, evokes a



lingering sense of horror or pathos. I hope that such issues will acquire clarity in my ensuing discussion.

In particular, Reijnders (2009) turns to Armando's concept of the 'guilty landscape' in order to assert the active function of a landscape that acquires agency, firmly eschewing the passivity that is traditionally associated with 'environment' conceived as inanimate entity. It is worth quoting Reijnders at length:

The term 'guilty landscape' was introduced by the Dutch artist and writer Armando (b. 1921) in the 1970s. Armando spent his youth in the vicinity of Camp Amersfoort, which served as a Polizeiliches Durchgangslager (Police Transit Camp) during the Second World War. What surprised Armando after the war, and what continued to influence him during his career as an artist, was the fact that this former war zone had acquired such a proper, peaceful feeling. The natural beauty was so luxuriant that it seemed impossible that murder and torture could have taken place here. But the woods around the concentration camp had witnessed horrible war crimes, and were, according to Armando accomplices. They constituted, in other words, a 'guilty landscape' (Armando, 1998).

The power of the term 'guilty landscape' is that it assigns an active role to the landscape. Just like people, landscapes can harbour guilt. Of course, at first sight this appears to contradict sound reason, as the landscape is generally seen as the passive recipient, or as something that needs to be tamed. (2009: 175-176)

Reijnders goes on to point out that Armando's concept of the 'guilty landscape' derives from a long, if marginalised strand of phenomenology in Western philosophical thought, and that philosophers "from Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty, have pointed to the importance that place has in the experience and observation of reality" (Malpas 1999 cited in Reijnder 2009). In effect, says Reijnders, events "take place because they can find a space somewhere, and because there is a place in which the event can come to be" (2009: 175). This means that certain locales are so marked by occurrences that have happened there that the weight of the events becomes intrinsically bound up with the very composition of place, with its appearance and ambience, and with the way in which people respond to the place. (As I will suggest, Orford chooses places that have the potential for bearing this weight in which to set her crimes. Gallows Hill, the place which provides the title of her fourth book, offers an apt instance.)

The importance that Armando attributes to landscape not only emphasises the possibility of a locale being endowed with an active nature, but emphasises the interdependent relationship between people and place. The active quality that a locale acquires is inflected by events that have taken place there – indeed, have *taken* the *place* into the ambit of particularised meanings.

Subsequently, the continued agency of the place relies on the enduring significance projected upon it by people, who because of a sense, a feeling, or even a series of blunt historical facts prompted by knowledge of the place, attribute to the place a certain 'disposition'. Reijnders goes on to complicate this idea further, arguing that if landscapes "can play an active role in the way human beings experience reality... this doesn't mean that every landscape is equally important. Some landscapes or spaces appear to be more 'active' than others" (2009: 176). This is a suggestive imaginative resonance which derives from the "power of a landscape" to "rise[ ] to the surface" due to the "negative associations" generated by historical events. Perhaps Dominick LaCapra is relevant here, in his comment that "[s]omething of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence" (2001: 49).

In my view, while Reijnders cites examples such as "old war zones", or sites "where major disasters or serious traffic accidents have taken place" (2009: 176), it is possible to extrapolate from these to the scenes of crime, particularly violent crime which, I am arguing, has a capacity similar to war and disaster when it comes to effecting atmospheric and perceptual-experiential claims upon people's relation to an environment. It may be that a "'guilty landscape' frequently has few physical indicators that remind us of its past," but the potential for the place to "retain an important, sometimes even traumatic significance to the survivors and others who were involved" (ibid.) offers structurally useful material in terms both of plot and mood for the crime fiction writer. As I will subsequently discuss, Orford, for instance, in *Gallows Hill*, clearly wishes to attribute to a particular location in her text a haunting, historical-personal uncanny borrowed from the spatial biography of a specific regional or local territory. (As Stigsdotter [2010] implies in her work on various examples of Swedish crime fiction, there is possibly a productive tension or dialectic in this treatment, as the author may well need to make the landscape seem empathetically familiar, even as she wishes to heighten its exotic or sublime allure.)

It may go without saying that much of South Africa (and, through various forms of violent colonisation and military-industrial incursion, Namibia) exists as an historically guilty landscape. Missing persons. Unacknowledged murders. Bodies buried covertly and anonymously on remote farms – all this in the context of spectacularly beautiful scenery and a passionate attachment to nature espoused by many South Africans. The 'land', indeed, becomes a metonym

for national identity and belonging. (Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* [1998] in this respect invites a quirky reading as a strikingly unusual example of the 'true crime' genre, for it contains harrowing accounts of the most extreme criminal violence and murder variously sanctioned by the apartheid government and/or by the ANC resistance movement. Such crimes are 'investigated' by Krog and her team of SABC journalists, these narrative strands set in relation to Krog's moral-emotional interrogation of her conflicted identity as a member of the Afrikaner perpetrator 'class', and yet as a cultural renegade who distances herself from criminal actions. In *Country of My Skull*, the entire land of South Africa is subject to guilty disclosure, tourist qualities of beauty and scenery stripped away to reveal extensive social and personal injury.)

How is all of this pertinent to Orford's concerns as a novelist? It is important to acknowledge that if Orford's novels may feature some dramatic, individualised occurrences of violence that are the typical stock-in-trade of the crime fiction genre – rapes and murders carried out by a damaged psychopath, or some morbidly malicious personality – she also includes many instances in her narratives in which readers are asked to confront not the perverse behaviours of idiosyncratic criminal lunatics but the continuing, institutionalised effect of colonialism and apartheid on the South African socio-political and human environment. Such effects continue, despite the fact that institutionally public contracts such as the constitution, voting, and neighbourhood integration have democratised space.

An especially significant example of guilty landscape is Orford's fourth novel *Gallows Hill*, which bears considerable traces of a damaged past. Gilfillan astutely recognises how the spatiality of such an inheritance informs the novel. She refers to the vagrant woman Eva Afrika, the first character we meet in *Gallows Hill*, pointing out that her name "ironically conjur[es] up the Hottentot Eve, or Krotoa" who "was the stammoeder, the wife of a prominent Dutchman at the Cape, who bore many children, and whom many white South Africans vogueishly claim as an ancestor today" (2011: np):

In introducing Eva/Eve, Orford skilfully sketches the history of South Africa: significantly, the Slave Lodge lies at one end, and Parliament at the other end of the stinking alley that Eva calls home. Nearby is a "bronze statue of a Boer general on a warhorse. Botha had his eyes levelled at the Hottentots Holland Mountains, where his people had trekked into South Africa's harsh hinterland nearly two hundred years before". Colonial conquest is the original sin in a

country where an entire racial category of people became the beneficiaries of a system that refined itself into a machine that committed untold crimes against the Evas, its first, forgotten nation. (ibid.)

An especially relevant part of the story focuses on Hart's making of a film on the history of the slave trade in Cape Town, and this project necessitates a visit to the old slave quarters in Cape Town's city centre. Orford's descriptions are evidence of a location that is hauntingly evocative and hence emotionally active, despite the long years that have passed. Consider Hart's initial reaction to this place as an "icon[ ] of local identity" (Reijnders 2009: 171): "There was a well in the centre of the courtyard next to a gnarled olive tree. She looked down. A shaft of sunlight illuminated a face reflected in the black water. Hers. Buried deep. She drew back, chilled" (2011: 68). In this case, the realisation of the trauma that must have been undergone in this place is apprehensively intuited by Hart when her image is reflected back at her – the self she sees is helpless, darkly shadowed, in effect trapped in the oppressive prison of the bottom of the well. Still later, when exploring the inside of the building, Hart experiences an instance of the "traumatic significance" (2009a: 18) that Reijnders describes. "The odour caught at the back of Clare's throat. Damp and despair. The same smell as a prison, or an opened grave" (2011: 69). I notice the insistence on the senses – sight, smell, touch – all of which synaesthesia helps the writer to embody the relationship between place and person, hinting at the imminence of revelation which lies beneath the concealing layers of historical time and distance. The senses make the place immediate, and animate the otherwise remote past in ways that bring history vividly into the immediate time and space of Hart's present. The sensations and associations that are prompted in Hart in reaction to the disorientating location in which she finds herself are suggestive of the buried, guilty landscape of the slave quarters. Her equanimity is disturbed; she loses her poised self-containment as her identity is uncannily glossed by a spectral presence.

The modern city space, Orford implies, is built on the bones of an othered history which reaches beyond the official bounds of the memorialising museum. The institution of slavery leaves a disturbingly indelible trace, one that cannot simply be contained within the officially recognised site of the old slave quarters that have been refurbished as heritage, a commodified token intended to remind individuals of the trauma that has occurred there precisely by packaging exploitation as distant legacy, separate from current complicity and emotional claim. In the built structures associated with heritage practice, as much as events are remembered, so

too are potential ramifications separated from the wider scheme of daily life, removed from affective and personal meaning, *contained*. James E. Young (1997) discusses the relationship between history and memory saying:

On the one hand, Friedlander concedes that we must continue distinguishing between public memory and historiography and that ‘the process involved in the moulding of memory is, theoretically at least, antithetical to that involved in the writing of history. Nonetheless,’ he continues, ‘the representation of a recent and relevant past has to be imagined as a continuum: the constructs of public-collective memory find their place at one pole, and the “dispassionate” historical inquiries at the opposite pole. The closer one moves to the middle ground, that is, to an attempt at general interpretations of the group’s past, the more the two areas – distinct in their extreme forms – become intertwined and interrelated’. (1997: 47)

Memory therefore is an extremely personalised process; it works dynamically, however-much official registers might seek to manage forms of historical discourse through written account, signage, and architecture. The believed objectivity of history is inextricably bound up with the subjective positioning of the individual to create an individualised relation to the past that may extend an active impact on the individual’s present. Hart’s reaction to slavery is an example of this. She has no first-hand experience of slavery, no singular memory bound up with the historical period of the early colony at the Cape. Yet at the slave quarter well – clearly intended by Orford as a wellspring or source, the very site a metaphor for deep emotional connection and haunting – she experience an effect of emotional transference. This uncanny frisson derives from her learned knowledge of slave history, from her anticipation about visiting the site, from her hopeful expectation that she may find some clue to her present investigation – a collocation of emotional investments in this historical location which prompts her body and intellect into a co-incident sensory encounter that ripples through her like a stone dropped into a pool.

Unlike the slave quarters heritage site, there are other locations in *Gallows Hill* where there is no physical reminder of the trauma associated with a specific place – and yet these places somehow resonate with what Reijnders terms “traumatic significance” (2009: 18). Consider the occasion in *Gallows Hill* when Hart interviews a South African who immigrated to Australia after he witnessed the necklacing of his driver. His attitude towards South Africa – Cape Town in particular – attests to the irrevocably ‘guilty landscape’. In this example, the guilt of the landscape, for Tony Gonzalez, is a reminder of his own powerless inability to prevent the necklacing. His reaction to Hart’s questions about the discovery of a body where he once worked

stresses this point: “I don’t want anything to do with that place. I don’t even want to think about it...If you want me to come to Cape Town, you’ll have to subpoena me...I’ve made another life here. Door’s closed” (2011: 95). In this case, the felt perception of guilt is bound intricately with the troubled South Africa socio-political environment – his refusal to return to South Africa highlights his reluctance to confront the landscape that both occasioned his guilt, and remains an active receptacle of his guilt. He cannot go back to the place, because this would entail the heart and mind having to open onto vividly painful experiences that presently, for the sake of his own emotional sanity, he prefers to contain in painless truisms (“another life here”, “Door’s closed”) that screen memory.

A particularly active instance of guilty landscape in a krimi is the crime scene, since the violence that has occurred there is felt to have marked or stained the landscape. Reijnders expands on this saying that “with the arrival of the police and the coroner, the space is literally taken over. The red and white police tape cordons the murder scene off from the rest of the surroundings” (2009: 175). This site, which has been claimed by the violence that has occurred there, is then further demarcated as different in public consciousness, whether through the temporary boundary markers of official tape, the qualities of newsworthiness and media significance, or even merely local gossip and anecdotal exchange. Over time, through an accretion of such factors, the site is likely to retain a disturbing significance for those who know the location’s disturbing history. This is evident in *Like Clockwork* when Hart interviews Harry Rabinowitz about his discovery of the first victim on Sea Point promenade. Orford writes: “They got up to walk to the place where Charnay had lain. The flowers people had left for her had been whipped away by the wind or scavenged by vagrants and sold for a few rand” (2006: 85). In this case, Orford’s treatment of the place where Charnay’s body had been left is memorialised not only by Hart’s remarks, her poignant recollection of what she had seen, but by people – devastated family, moved strangers – who have done what little they can to mark the violent passing of a young girl’s life. Thus this location is one which might be expected to remain particularly active in local consciousness. Daily walkers will recall the spot as that where the dead girl was found. However, Orford also acknowledges that wider circumstances work against longstanding remembering. In this scene, memory and memorialising have already altered with Hart’s second visit: street people have stolen the flowers for re-sale, and the Cape weather itself seems to have conspired, indifferently dispersing memory to the wind with a

casualness that mirrors the expediency with which her life was snuffed. Clearly, Orford does not romanticise memory; both nature and human nature contribute to the process of forgetting so that in the long term, especially if a crime remains unsolved, it may only be the surprising punctum of new evidence or an investigator's nagging persistence which puncture a landscape in order to reveal its guiltiness.

As mentioned earlier, in the crime fiction genre, there is a certain level of suspense that is necessary to propel the plot. Often this is achieved by having the protagonist navigate landscapes which have associations of danger. Authors are thus able to use these areas to heighten a sense of dread, an atmosphere of narrative anxiety. For Orford, often these areas are well-known danger spots such as isolated parts of the waterfront at night, or the Cape Flats. She also makes use of less locale-specific places that still have very distinct connotations and associations. Reijnders discusses such places and the legacy associated with them:

Fictional stories about gruesome murders or accidents can also make a place active. In Western folklore, there is a long tradition of legends regarding 'haunted' spaces: abandoned houses, cellars, cemeteries or lakes, which are supposed to have their own, evil force (Ellis, 1989: 10). This narrative tradition reappears in literature, as well as in film and television culture (Hausladen, 2000). These sorts of stories, widely known, told and remembered, contribute to making the landscape active. (2009: 176)

Such tales have, over time, branded specific places with a quality of danger that becomes one of their defining features. In Orford's novels, she chooses specific places and locations which can convey a sense of suspense and even a gothic atmosphere of the uncanny which Martina Ulrike Jauch describes as "the haunted imagination" (2010: 2). One such place is the warren of tunnels running under Sea Point which Orford uses as Otis Tohar's storage area for the abducted girls before he kills them in *Like Clockwork*. While old and abandoned tunnels fall easily into Ellis's list of "'haunted' spaces", Orford's treatment serves further to stress the tunnels as an ominous environment, an atmospheric device which is necessary in this genre in order to enhance plot tensions.

Orford first describes Hart's discovery of the tunnels saying "Clare went down and had a look into the closest one. It was carved like a crypt out of the rock, and only the roof sections were bricked. 'Spooky, hey,' said one of the women who was sweeping" (2006: 244). She goes on to describe the sea wall that concealed the tunnels: "The sea wall bulged broadly before it

flattened towards the lighthouse. There were several large openings on the edge of the curve. They studded the sea wall like blind eyes” (245). The casual introduction of the tunnels as ‘spooky’ by Orford’s unnamed bystander is intensified by the reference to sightless eyes, a simile which offers a presentiment of the discovery of the first victim:

Mouton reached over and lifted an eyelid.

‘Ja,’ he said, ‘he cut her.’ He pointed to the incisions that formed a cross on the cornea. ‘The eyeball is just a ball of gel. Make a hole in it like this guy did, and the eyeball will collapse.’ (23).

The grotesque comparison of the holes in the wall with damaged eyes introduces an unease that becomes an objective correlative of the place and the underlying emotions. Hence it is no surprise when Orford returns to this locale for the final scenes of this book. The point is that the characteristic ‘private eye’ of so much crime fiction is transmuted through the concerned agency of Hart into what Comaroff and Comaroff (2004: 9) term a filtering “moral eye” an evaluative, guiding consciousness which is searching and questioning, rather than simply a palliative which reinforces the ‘superior’ or surface meanings associated with the material and moral comforts, the feel-good ‘human decency’, of more official depictions of an idealised democratic South Africa.

The disconcerting animus associated with the tunnels increases greatly when Hart discovers what Tohar has used them for and decides to venture into them in an effort to find Therese, the fourth abducted girl. Orford takes full advantage of this potential in her aesthetic rendering of the tunnels. Orford describes the entry saying: “The darkness closed in on her” (2006: 287). And later: “[Theresa] stood still in the dank tunnel, trying to orientate herself in the dim light filtering from the stone chamber behind her”; “The walls were rough, and covered with slime” (304). Tunnels are claustrophobic by nature; they are severely restrictive of movement and seem to permit only one, forward-directed route of escape, a sensation which is doubtless heightened when one is being pursued, and the mind is desperately focussing on one solution: escape. Tunnels also, as a result of being underground, have an element of nether-worldliness about them. The subterranean is virtually a foreign landscape to those who have to navigate it, stripped of the familiar signposts which guide behaviour in contemporary life. (This holds even if the tunnels are intrinsically part of the ‘hidden’ civic services which ensure that surface infrastructure keeps running: electronic cables, sewers, water...) In the tunnels as Orford depicts



them, there is also no light, and the enveloping darkness is a site of constant potential threat. Through all of these characteristics, Orford describes and creates for her readers a picture of an estranging and alienating space, where an individual's skills are pitted against not only the criminal's intent, but against the dangerous unknowns of an environment which appears complicit in terror and murderous design. Through the strategic use of the abandoned tunnels as narrative location, Orford is able to engage the reader's own imaginative repertoire of associations. In doing so, she creates even greater tension and makes the environment an even more active one for both Hart, and the reader.

Orford also makes intelligent use of other forms of social space in her fiction. In *Daddy's Girl*, for example, the final showdown between two gangsters, as well as that between Riedwaan and his old partner and surprising kidnapper, van Rensburg, takes place in a derelict swimming pool. Again this is a location which, as a result of its abandoned status and the unnerving associations conjured by such ruined sites, located as they are beyond the ambit of orderly social control, immediately coaxes a reader to anticipate danger and suspense. Orford's particularly macabre treatment of the site imbues it with a sense of foreboding and fear, a frisson completely counter to more conventionalised expectations of leisurely fun and pleasure. The derelict pool, indeed, starts to suggest the seeping contours of institutional decay, the increasing dissolution of comforting mores.

Orford exploits this build-up as sadist, and killer, Graveyard de Wet follows his prey into the building, the same that housed Yasmin, Faizal's daughter:

He watched Voëltjie duck into a hole in the dilapidated building half-hidden in the trees. A light shined through the grimy glass for a moment, then vanished. He relaxed. In the dark, in the passages twisting through the old building, Voëltjie wouldn't stand a chance (2009a: 343).

De Wet experiences a hunter's sense of satisfaction in negotiating this marginalised urban space, recognising that the indirection of the labyrinthine passageways – with characteristics very similar to those of the tunnels – gives him a locational advantage. Although readers don't have any sympathy for a brutal gangster such as Voëltjie, Orford cleverly situates Hart, Riedwaan and Yasmin in this location as well, such that the ramifying consequences of de Wet's threat are transferred on to characters about whom readers have grown in the course of the narrative to *care*. The danger that these characters are experiencing from de Wet, who takes on the features

of a predator stalking his prey in an enclosed, indeed terrifyingly trapped, environment, means that Orford yet again has managed to use the notion of an active landscape as a means to develop narrative suspense and tension, and to establish in a reader's mind a push-pull between representatives of moral good, and amoral evil.

These examples are ones which, as quoted earlier, have a "long tradition of legends regarding 'haunted' spaces" (Reijnders 2009: 176). Orford, however, does not allow herself to be limited by what has traditionally been associated with suspense and fear but explores examples of sites not typically associated with danger and violence. One such example is the home, which has a long history of being perceived as a nurturing and protected environment, one dedicated to familiar care and comforting domestic routine. Dennis Moss describes the home as "a refuge; that's where you are safe" (2006: 19). Yet in crime-ridden environments, this is not the case, and the home invariably exists as a much more complex, ambiguous entity. Consider the assessment of the home as described by Catherine Wiley and Fiona Barnes (1996), who point to 'home' as an uneasy union of contrasting conceptions:

The concept of home, much like the concept of identity, is a fertile site of contradictions demanding constant renegotiation and reconstruction. Home is not always a comfortable place to be...we contend that home is always a form of coalition: between the individual and the family or community, between belonging and exile; between home as a utopian longing and home as memory; home as safe haven or imprisonment or site of violence, and finally between home as place and home as metaphor. (1996: xv)

These contradictory concepts imply that 'the home' is also an 'active', indeed contested site of meaning, susceptible to excellent exploitation by the writer of crime fiction. For my present purposes, I focus on the tension that exists between home as a "safe haven or imprisonment or site of violence" (ibid.) towards women and children. Rachel H. Pain (1997) highlights this perceived distinction between places of safety, and places of danger in an article titled "Social geographies of women's fear of crime". The aptly-named Pain highlights women's perceptions of danger between the public and private space pointing out that "the impact of women's FOVC [fear of violent crime] is largely located in public space" (1997: 235) and that "most women hold powerful concepts of public space as dangerous and private space as safe" (ibid.). Yet, Pain points out, "for the majority of women, most incidents of violence are domestic" (ibid.), meaning that the home space is fraught and contested, marked through struggles over genre and authority at the physical rather than merely the discursive level.

In *Daddy's Girl*, Orford examines crime's presence in spaces typically believed to be the safest through the figure of Pearl. She is the daughter of the ominously-named gangster, Graveyard de Wet. Pearl has been brutally and systematically abused – repeatedly raped and assaulted – by her father throughout her youth, and in an attempt finally to be free of him, she helps to have him arrested and starts to believe in a new, untainted life. De Wet however manages to bribe and threaten his way out of prison and when Pearl arrives home at her little Wendy house and begins doing mundane chores, her father appears in the doorway, trapping her in what should be a safe, private space. In Pearl's case, it is in the home, and with the man who fathered her, that she is most in danger:

He was in the room now, bringing the cold with him. The door was open onto the sandy patch of yard, where the washing hung forlornly on a line.

Outside.

The illusion of safety. All outside was a place from which you'd be dragged inside.

Inside.

Where she was now. Alone with him. How it'd always been. (2009a: 273)

When Hart goes to find Pearl, she discovers the young woman barely breathing; her pulse is weak. Despite the fact that Pearl has sought a new home, away from her gangster father, believing that such distance will enable a different life, the move to a new place provides no safety from him and he has the time to do what he wants, just as he did when she was a child. The little Wendy house is no haven; it is almost a childish dream lifted from a nursery tale – except that in Orford's story-world, the narrative place based on the real world of Cape Town is one of gangs and structured criminality.

Pearl experiences an invasion of her small, fragile, girlish home by her father, and for other women, for example Cathy King in *Like Clockwork*, the home is also the site for violence perpetrated from within. In both cases the perpetrator is a close family member: for Pearl it is her father; for Cathy King it is her husband. Hart witnesses this when she watches the tape she has taken from the King's house and she sees Brian instigating and participating in the gang rape of his wife – inside their home. Cathy King arrives home from shopping: "She set her bags down and closed the door behind her. Then strangely, suddenly, she was looking directly at the camera, her face frozen in horror...The woman's body sank down, as if the weight of what she

saw crushed her” (2006: 227). In effect, the home, what Bachelard (1994) calls the most intimate topography, is with the rape most brutally violated. When Hart asks about the crude manner with which a lock has been placed on the door to the bedroom of India, Brian’s stepdaughter, the domestic helper, Portia, explains:

‘You remember you asked about that lock?’

‘Yes,’ said Clare.

‘I put it there for her. So she can be safe.’

Clare looked up at the house. Security beams were discretely positioned everywhere. Portia shook her head.

‘The danger in this house – it is right inside.’ (2006: 218)

Bachelard says of ‘the house’ as a space: if “I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace” (1994: 6). The importance that Bachelard gives the home is further evident in Kirby’s explanation of Bachelard’s point that “[s]pace that has been lived and that has entered the imagination ‘cannot remain indifferent space’” (2009: 16).

Far from typifying Bachelard’s interpretation of the home space, however, the Kings’ house is marked by a typically paranoid upper middle class South African architecture of security systems and guards. Such apparatuses have been put in place by wealthy South Africans post-apartheid, but paradoxically they can do nothing to protect the family from the real danger, *within*, of Brian King, a violent man who enjoys the torture and rape of his wife. The lavishness of such houses, the elaborate surveillance along with the cushioned lifestyle, serves in fact *not* to mark privilege, but rather to reinforce the isolation that Cathy King feels. Orford emphasises this, saying: “The houses here were so far apart that no sound you made would ever carry to your neighbours” (2006: 167). Certainly the privacy that this home offers is not a peaceful one but rather an almost ominous seclusion which can be seen to represent an intersection between the surface and the underneath in one of the most intimate places, that of the domestic home.

For some, however, it is not necessary to invoke the threat of physical abuse to subjugate women in the home. Often these roles are adopted by women in accord with societal norms. While one might aver that this is becoming less and less the case, Michiel Heyns (1991) argues

that the gender roles adopted in relation to the home by authors in the Romantic era still have power and purchase for many contemporary South African households. Camille Tabosa-Vaz summarises Heyns' argument: "Confined to the home, women did not often *own* the space of home and so were relegated to position of housekeeper as opposed to householder, a position occupied largely by men" (Heyns 1999 cited in Tabosa-Vaz 2006: 6). This position is evident in Brian King's treatment of his wife. King's physical demeanour is more powerful than Cathy's, and as a result of this, and the systematic abuse she has experienced, she has adopted a submissive stance in relation to her husband, meaning that she does not usually challenge him, but obeys, and even sinks to her knees. The only time she counters her husband's authority is when she realises something might have happened to her daughter. As Portia says, "Cathy waited all night but she [India] didn't come back. Mr King never came either. In the morning Cathy was more afraid for her baby than she was afraid of her husband. That is when she went to the police" (2006: 218). In this incident, the dominance of her husband overwhelms her whole being and in the end the only escape that she can envisage is her own death.

Such disconcerting gender roles in relation to spatial relations are even more explicitly dealt with in *Gallows Hill* when Faizal and his colleague Rita Mkhize go to interview Aaron Mtimbe, an allegedly corrupt business man. He is not there, and instead they manage to interview his wife. Faizal assesses the situation, thinking: "Staying awake all night, waiting – the lot of the trophy wife. There are only so many nights you can leave a young bride at home. Red eyes and an angry heart" (2011: 110). Still later, with a little more urgency when Faizal asks if she knows her husband's whereabouts, she responds: "'I have no idea.' Tears welled in her eyes. Humiliation and rage and impotence" (113). In this case, her shambolic house is evidence that the expectations surrounding the role she was presumed to adopt leave her overwhelmed. Despite the fact that there is "a bruise just visible on her dark skin" (112) it does not appear to be fear *per se* that keeps her in place, but rather a sense of helplessness and lack of other options. Michael P. Johnson (1995) defines this type of violence saying: "Patriarchal terrorism, [is] a product of patriarchal traditions of men's right to control 'their' women, is a form of terroristic control of wives by their husbands that involves the systematic use of not only violence, but economic subordination, threats, isolation, and other control tactics" (1995: 284). The emphasis on patriarchy as a contributing element in this kind of violence speaks to a long history of male domination and female submission. In this way, Siphokazi Mtimbe is

imprisoned in her house, bound by societal and cultural expectations of what it means to be a wife and mother and subject to physical violence of a most personal kind.

### Body and Country

One further area which Orford gives attention to is that of the body – particularly that of the female body – as a site for crime. I briefly refer back to the video by Kentridge (1994) and argue that it is noteworthy that Orford, in the context of crime writing, an artistic genre that is more popular or demotic than Kentridge’s intellectual, conceptually-inflected film, *also* explores such blurring of surface and beneath in relation to individuals who comprise what Hausladen calls the “human landscape” (1995: 64). While Kentridge’s film depicts the violent effects of the past changing the landscape, its naturalisation refuses active recognition of the impact that this violence has had on the landscape; the body however often retains evidence of this as a site for violence.

Orford describes in great detail the physical damage that is inflicted on victims of violent crimes. Women are scarred. Bruised. Bones have been broken. The catalogue of visible physical damage is a subtly rippled mirror for the fact of internal, psychological damage. Orford acknowledges not only the impact that such crime and violence have on the external body, but the effects that remain buried in the character’s psychological landscape, and the disassociating schism that this disjuncture can create between body and mind, between what seems, and what is.

Prominent in Margie Orford’s fiction are treatments of the body as a site for violence – particularly rape or murder. Not only is the crime in question a brutal violation of body and self, she pays particular attention to what happens to the body after the crime, emphasising the role not only of the perpetrators but of those tasked with investigating. In this way, the body is not relegated only to the centre of spectacular krimi action, it is invoked as a vulnerable place in which being and non-being are constantly mediated. Let us return, again, to the examples of Cathy King, and Pearl. Not only is their rape a violation of their bodies, but there appears to be the attempt to inflict permanent physical reminders of this violation. Orford describes Cathy King’s experience watching the video her husband saved from her assault saying: “[Cathy] watched as he used his beautiful knife to carve his initials delicately into her back, her hand

reaching instinctively to touch the scar” (2006: 268). In *Daddy’s Girl*, Orford describes the scars on Pearl, the gangster’s daughter, which she shows to Hart for her documentary. Pearl “peeled back her clothes, revealing the script that bore witness to her secret. Tattoos, scars, cut marks...” (2009a: 37).

These examples of physical violation may be but the first trauma for the victim, for after the initial violence, Orford points out in a recorded interview at Stellenbosch University, the individual’s body is also subject to the agency of various investigators and their procedures. She says: “...the body becomes a crime scene... Anyone who, who has survived a rape will know that your body is simply a crime scene. And it’s...extremely disturbing for rape survivors...or for the families of murder victims to deal with the fact that this beloved body that you hold and care for and clean and sleep with or have fed if you’re the parent...is now simply just a piece of evidence” (2011: np). In a case of rape, for example, after the police are finished collecting evidence from the victim’s body, this body is returned to the victim. After such an experience, there is a certain disassociation that occurs between the mind and body throughout this experience. A similar manner of ‘separated duality’, for example, is expressed in Orford’s depiction of Whitney in *Like Clockwork*. Whitney is abducted, assaulted and raped before being found by Hart. Physically, she is thoroughly brutalised. And yet she is alive. Her doctor, when describing her battered condition, concludes that “Her body will heal, she’s young. It’s the rest of her that I’m not so sure of” (2006: 143). His view suggests, at the poignant level of the individual suffering body, the persistent disjuncture which a violent South African society inflicts upon its inhabitants. The options are clear: stay alive – *somehow* (in effect live with the constant threat of dying, as Zakes Mda demonstrates in *Ways of Dying*), or die. And even under the most stringent physical duress, while the body may survive, the healed physical wounds obscure lasting internal, psychological and emotional trauma. Whitney’s mother expands on this point when Hart returns her daughter to her saying, “The body survives...But the spirit?” (151).

This creation of dualism that is referenced in relation to the body and crime is one which Orford pays attention to, in particular, the blurring of believed space between body and psyche – the effects of such violence having lasting impact on both. The state that is alluded to here is perhaps most epitomised through the character of Constance, Hart’s twin sister who survived a

brutal gang rape and torture but bears both marks of physical suffering, but emotional trauma as well. Orford describes Constance's body saying:

Constance's body was soft. Criss-crossed with scars, her thighs and breasts carried the knife emblems of the gang that had used her to initiate two new members. On her back, illegible now, were brutal signatures where they had carved their initials. Her left cheekbone was curved as sharply as a starling's wing, the other had been reconstructed out of the shattered mess left by a hammer blow that had glanced off her skull and spared her life. (2006: 51)

Hart speaks to her sister Constance, a victim of a gang rape, about her scars saying: "What does it say, Constance?" Clare always asked her this question. "What did they write on you?" "Can't you read it?" she always replied. "Don't you *feel* it?" (173). These permanent scars on the body highlight enduring damage that does not diminish. Constance's body is marked by this violence in a way that separates it entirely from Clare's previously almost identical one. Her damaged mental fragility remains a constant reminder of what occurred and also works to personalise, at the level of intimate family relation, Clare's professional daily dealings with the suffering social body.

Here, again, Orford's readers are asked to intuit a subtle blurring of boundaries between personal and political, between past and present, drawing readers closer to the protagonist as the writer shows her caught in her own process of trying to reconcile the traumatically layered histories of her on-going obligations as a professional criminal investigator with the responsibilities and trauma she feels toward victims of crime.

Hart's emotionally proximate relationship with crime survivors and with dead victims' families draws attention to Orford's careful rather than sensationalist treatment of the effects of crime in her narratives, and also enables her to offer insight into the specifics of South African and Namibian place. Gary Hausladen's views are enlightening here, since they substantiate the potential that is held by certain characterisations in crime fiction novels to evoke a greater sense of place. Place, he believes, is not confined merely to a crime author's depiction of 'geography'. Instead, he avers that "human interaction and behaviour, or dialogue, and symbolism...convey a sense of place" (1995: 65). The implication is that action and behaviour *also* contribute to the meaning that place accrues in the narrative, guiding a reader towards insights into society, family, and the like. Orford, for her part, mobilises her cast of characters, primary among them



her protagonist Clare Hart, to present the reader with complex, detailed representations of the human spatial mapping of locations in contemporary Cape Town, as well as Walvis Bay. I will discuss this shortly, but for the moment let me emphasise that Orford has explicitly acknowledged her turn to crime fiction as a preferred genre was prompted by her concern to connect character and plot to larger questions of human life struggling in difficult social space:

I wanted to write about Cape Town, this cruel and beautiful city, about dislocation, about the survival of love and hope. I wanted to write about South Africa as it is. I did not want to write about how it was meant to be. So I turned to crime. Reporting crime at first: gang initiations, special police units, rape crisis, organised crime, the sex industry. I started interviewing cops, pathologists, ballistic experts, crime survivors, victims, their heartbroken relatives. And that led me to crime fiction. (2010: 185)

What is important about this statement is that Orford's attempts to come to terms with the occurrence of crime in the country and her desire to write about the country "as it is" led her to the ethically tangled interrelationship among those damaged by crime, those involved in the solving of the crime, and those who had perpetrated crime. This series of social relationships is well represented by the array of characters she introduces in her novels, and their attempts variously to work together or to evade collaboration speak to the persistently fractured and uneasily co-existing characteristics of contemporary southern African space. While Hart and Faizal occupy the centre roles in the plot, Orford makes reference to the many others who play a part in the solving and prevention of the crimes, and in so doing she sketches a narrative map of the sociocultural diversity of democracy and its hopes and failings

To illustrate this point, here are examples from Orford's first novel, *Like Clockwork*. After the body of the first victim is found, Hart summons Faizal to the scene. Orford then immediately introduces by name a number of people who will be involved in the solving of Charnay Swanepoel's murder. We meet Piet Mouton, a forensic pathologist whose humorous, yet straightforward and serious approach to crimes is a valued aid to Faizal's investigations. Then we have Constable Rita Mkhize, Faizal's partner; Riaan Nelson, the police photographer, and Anna Scheepers, a forensic investigator. Even in this introductory cast, we can intuit Orford's authorial decision to people her krimi world with characters who broadly represent a range of South African racial, gender and linguistic demographics.

Subsequently, Hart's and Faizal's enquiries bring them into contact with an expanding circle which includes, Giscard, an illegal immigrant who gives Hart tip-offs, and whose cooperation with her could jeopardise his stay in South Africa. Such a range of character interactions, whether within the fields of professional services which support criminal investigation, or whether more informally across dialogue and encounters with a victim's family, peers and associates, numerous witnesses, as well as potential suspects, of course contributes to the general pattern of narrative intrigue associated with crime fiction. A reader has the pleasure of being drawn to follow false clues, to take mis-turns, all along the gradual path of discovery. But the method also has the additional advantage, for an author like Orford who is motivated by social concern, of demonstrating that both the event of the crime and the investigation of the crime necessarily bring together a variety of characters from very different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, since crime is an event which indiscriminately cuts through such groups. In this regard, Orford works to unsettle received assumptions in which X-racially marginalised location is more typically associated with the perpetration of crime while Y-racially privileged site is assumed to be victim rather than perpetrator. In other words, the narrative 'map' of crime which she authors in her novels may imaginatively reconfigure the latent ideological norms which the reader brings to the reading of the text. In addition, by bringing together for the purposes of the investigation a wide cast of characters drawn from extremely diverse demographics she is also able subtly to imply that, even beyond the immediate solution to the particular crime on which a novel focuses, the social stability and happiness quotients of an environment are likely to depend on people's willingness to work for a greater, collective good. This may be an idealising imperative, given South Africa's fraught present and historical inheritance, but she nevertheless hints at the desirability of such imagined community, beyond Rainbow Nation or 'Simunye' (We Are One) sloganeering.

Further, the particular group of people who focus on arriving at the solution to a crime all work with a striking connector – the human body – and how to accommodate these shocking remains. The dramatic and traumatic presence of such a body also prompts a curious form of active, living community that is focused around the event of the crime, its effects, and attempted desire to achieve some level of justice for the victim. This tentative community is one which is created by necessity and involves both the formal structures of the police service, as well as more

informally adaptive turns in the investigation. In this way, numerous people are brought together out of necessity in the solving of a crime.

In addition to characters that are brought together for the direct solution of a crime, Orford includes other characters in other plotlines which serve to extrapolate a reader's awareness of, and insight into, what we might call the 'state of the nation'. Mrs Adams offers insight into the danger and violence of life on the Cape Flats, while Natalie Mwangi is able to show South African life through the eyes of an outsider. Graveyard DeWet is an example of an individual who, born into poverty, experienced the early death of his mother and, at age ten, became the murderer of his mother's killer. He has spent most of his life incarcerated. The debate about the pros and cons of such spatial constraint is set by Orford in relation to Hart's interaction with Pearl, his daughter, whose own life struggles have been to separate from the submissive, destructive path she has inherited from her father, whether in terms of his long absence or, subsequently, through his violently abusive male presence. (In her tenuous attempt to 'write' her own life, Pearl's small 'room of her own' is a rented wooden Wendy house in someone's back garden, a vulnerable space through which Orford poignantly leads a reader to anticipate the likelihood of this young woman's ongoing subjection via destructive father-daughter patterns established in her childhood. Pearl is, after all, a 'lost girl'; she cannot be saved.)

In Orford's human, indeed *humane*, relational treatment of space, it is importance to grant the emphasis she places on the interactions that Hart and Faizal have with people. These encounters offer the potential for greater understanding of human concerns in southern African than if Orford had relied solely on the limited view of a single character. Moreover, we need to appreciate that Orford's characters occupy a narrative status that blurs the boundaries of highly individuated realist creation, and more socially typical 'types'. The peripheral characters in an Orford novel, for example, often strike me as carefully-strategised authorial representatives of specific socio-economic or racial groups. This may not be quite to the extent of a Lukascian 'world historical individual', but it does link with Hausladen's discussion of the interaction in crime fiction, through dialogue, between characters from different spheres of life. Dialogue "carries with it the perspective of specific characters and is especially forceful when they represent a segment of society" (1995: 65). In this way, he argues, characters are no longer

simply fictional representations of people, but rather become symbols of specific character types, or group identifications. The conversational markers of dialogue work to locate characters within specific social geographies: a certain speech pattern, register, or idiomatic turn of phrase will be associated with Constantia, for example, while another marks the woman from the Cape Flats, the habituated street child, the Congolese migrant, or the SADF soldier in Namibia. Additionally, conversation may be said to signal a dialogic quality in the text, in which (I find), a Bakhtinian heteroglossia comes into play, the author mapping a world by incorporating many heterogeneous voices into her novel. In part, this may be considered a sign of realist verisimilitude, but to my mind it also signals Orford's perhaps utopian longing for a space in which to hold together, humanely, extreme social diversity. If a democratic South Africa is a national-geographical space not yet the ethical equal of the complex, accommodating South Africanness towards which Orford's novels reach, it may be valid to suggest that the textual space of an Orford krimi does gesture, for the brief durational moment of reading, at the complications associated with a longed-for future text in which crime is not the defining feature of the contemporary South African narrative.

Hausladen argues that the "use of symbolism in the development of various characters, in descriptions of ordinary daily activities and the interplay of the characters, and in selected scenes, *strengthens a sense of place*" (my italics. 67-68). While Hausladen is referring to the fiction of Martin Cruz Smith, the statement can be extrapolated to Orford's novels, since symbol and speech assist her in creating a textual emblem which stands for South/southern Africa as a contested social space. Admittedly, this is not unproblematic. One difficulty with allowing individual character to become representative, for example, is that "characters as symbols are by their very nature stereotypical" (75). There is great risk that these characters become formulaic, and one-dimensional: DeWet = pure evil, Pearl = self-sacrificing martyr, and the like. Hausladen believes that such over-simplification is inevitable, yet the importance that Orford places on her characters as *participants* in her novels, and the complex backgrounds and emotional lives that she gives to many of her narrative cast, significantly alleviates the charge of flattening a character into a vacuous stereotype or cipher. Through Orford's array of characters she attempts to reconfigure ideal notions of rainbow nationhood by examining the still-contested and conflicted relations that exist in southern African countries like South Africa and Namibia. The characters represent a microcosm of the challenges which entail in the move towards social

integration, an enlivening sociality which would shift the signifier of ‘South Africanness’, for example, from historical trauma and a present of violent corruption to a more sustaining, humane ordinariness. The textual community that Orford brings into being is fragile and vulnerable, yes, but it nonetheless offers an example of a future space in which longstanding separatist divisions and callous disregard are mitigated in the service of a collective.

### Globalised Crime

In this final section of the chapter, I will briefly discuss the globalised spatiality of crime in Orford’s novels, with crime shifting from the rigid confines of apartheid and its inheritance to encompass internationalised flows. In “From the Locked Room to the Globe”, David Schmid points out “the range of spatial scales crime fiction works with” (2012: 19). He also suggests that while many crime writers “produce convincing analyses of the ways in which power is spatialised in urban settings...crime fiction is stubbornly reticent about how to change the ways in which space is organised”. This problem of representation, he suggests, is “thrown into even sharper focus when the genre deals with units of space larger than the city, up to and including the globe” (ibid.).

There are two brief points concerning krimi novels and the internationalisation of space that I wish to make as asides, en route towards engaging with elements of the globalisation of crime in Orford’s novels. Firstly: much contemporary online crime such as illegal money transfers and scamming is not closely tied to a physical geographical location (despite the commonplace invocation of ‘Nigerians’ as the primary villains in internet crimes, for example). This expression of globalisation is a feature of what Ingebritsen calls the “deterritorialization of society” in which technology may be a socially and morally “destabilizing attribute” (2011: 6) that facilitates modern crime. Orford’s novels do not focus on this element, although as my discussion will show, she *does* address crime as an increasingly global phenomenon. Secondly: spatial internationalisation is increasingly a feature of the krimi as a genre. If Orford has stated her particularly *localised*, South African goal of “[w]riting the nation into crime fiction” (Orford 2010: 195), she has also rapidly established an international reputation, with her novels having been translated into nine languages. The paradox, here, is that the South/southern African specificity of her narratives gives her the innovative angle she needs to enter this global market. As Erdmann points out, the “internationality of crime in fiction is accompanied by the real

international popularity of the crime novel”, and crime fiction as a genre “has encompassed the globe in terms of its reception, and in terms of its content” (Erdman 2009: 25-26), even while it initially tends to be the specific regional or national localities in which krimis are set which hooks reader interest.

Let me now consider how the expanded, global reach of contemporary space is pertinent to Orford’s crime fiction. If Orford’s novels are able to offer great insight into, and exploration of, the locally spatialised specifics of South Africa and Namibia, the author also acknowledges that many of the crimes and links that are discovered during the investigation process ramify to acquire international association. She develops narratives which reach not only into the spaces of the past, seeking to work through the localised inheritances of apartheid as it inflects democracy; in addition, she considers how crime spaces are changing, extending trends and tentacles into new areas of development, where “the crime and the criminal” are defined “in explicitly systemic terms”, rather than merely malevolent or psychopathic individualism (Schmid 2012: 20). In a discussion of this globalisation in krimi fiction, Erdmann elaborates: “In literature, the spread of crime has taken on topographic proportions that reflect the globalization processes of the late twentieth century” (2009: 13). Thus, in addition to the local knowledge that Hart, Faizal, and their various sources possess, they also require a certain familiarity what Erdmann has described as “Nationality International” (11), which emphasises a globalised community, even a network of nations. Nicol *et al* (2011) concur, pointing out “that criminality is inextricably linked with the conditions of modernity” and neoliberal globalisation (2011: 2). They cite Linden Peach’s recent study *Masquerade, Crime and Fiction: Criminal Deceptions* (2006):

criminality is an inversion of the ideals of modernity, capable of mimicking features of capitalism, the definitive modern economic system – the aspiration towards power, control and the promotion of ruthless competition, resulting in criminality being ‘forever a symbol of [modernity’s] failings...[C]riminality mimics and mocks modernity, holding a mirror up to its fragmentation, its excesses and what it mythicizes and denies’ (2011: 2).

Contemporary criminality exists as a mirrored underbelly of society; its practices reflect, with bizarre distortions, the expediently controlling characteristics typical to contemporary life. One such example occurs in *Daddy’s Girl* when Faizal describes to Hart the development of the gangs in Cape Town:

The old gangs are moving on from simple extortion to holding entire communities hostage by selling drugs to their children, and then selling their children, who need to pay for those drugs. The Flats gangs and the prison gangs are consolidating, franchising their operations and extorting money when they can, pushing out small operators. Creating a monopoly. (Orford 2009a: 250)

In this way modern crimes become a crime system, syndicated operations often being managed according to the typical business models or characteristics of standard commerce. In this way, Nicol *et al* argue, “Criminality does not merely mirror or shadow modernity; arguably, modern culture shapes or even produces forms of criminality” (2011: 3). The economic shift from micro or small-time drug dealing to substantial economies of corporate scale is reflected in Orford’s depiction of the collaboration or consolidation of gangs on the Cape Flats. Additionally, she shows in her fiction that throughout Cape Town gang dominant sectors comprise emergent forms of spatial domination and even terror that coercively hierarchize human relations, creating fiefdoms or no-go zones within what is purportedly public space.

Additionally, collusion between government officials and those in big business is an overarching occurrence in Orford’s novels. Lasslett describes this collusion saying: “states and corporations are functionally interdependent, consequently it is rare for the deviant actions of one to occur without some assistance” (2010: np). Orford makes reference to this through the critical lens of Faizal: ““Government and business,’ said Riedwaan. ‘Hard to tell these days where one ends and the other begins’” (2011: 61). One example of this in South Africa is that of Jackie Selebi, previous national police commissioner and ex-president of Interpol, who was convicted of corruption for the receiving of bribes. Orford makes reference to this in *Gallows Hill* when Faizal is confronting a lawyer who is involved in the corruption Gallows Hill building tenders:

‘The men you are fighting are your own bosses.’

‘With two police chiefs in custody,’ said Riedwaan. ‘We can make it a hat-trick.’

‘They’re expendable,’ said Malan. ‘You’re expendable. Plenty more gangsters willing to put on a shiny uniform,’ he said, the sibilance in his voice more menacing than a shout. ‘You’re dead wrong, Faizal. Your unit, even your own boss expendable. Finished.’ (258)

This is particularly telling in the widespread use of the word ‘tenderpreneur’ (a portmanteau of tender, and entrepreneur) which has become part of post-democratic South Africa’s vocabulary

due to the prevalence of corruption during the tendering process. Orford uses this term in *Gallows Hill* when Faizal finds the recording that Rita Mkhize made of government officials conspiring with various businessmen – their desire to keep it secret led to Rita’s murder. Orford writes:

The pop of a champagne cork. ‘Hey, comrades, this magnum of Dom Perignon is just right for this occasion.’ Mtimbe’s smug singsong toast to arrangements that would consolidate a malignant web of deals. Tenderpreneurs, Rita’s blood-stained recording attesting to the fact that the octopus tentacles originated in a monstrous head much higher up than even he had imagined. (274-275)

The prevalence of such unpunished, effectively ‘franchised’ crimes, Orford implies, is an indication of extensive links between the South African government and service providers such as building contractors, road engineers, textbook suppliers and the like. Such cosy kickback and top-slicing forms of insider business relations negatively reconfigure civic spatial relations, exacerbating spatial distances between rich and poor, contributing to the creation of a new black elite which depends on insidious vectors of privilege and patronage

Schmid draws attention to the link between globalisation, modernity and crime, arguing that “neoliberalism is a form of what Slavoj Žižek has called ‘objective violence,’ a normally invisible type of violence that represents the smooth everyday functioning of the capitalist system” (2012: 18). Crimes that are typically classified as ‘white collar’ – fraud, embezzlement, corrupt tendering – are in fact often bound up with physical violence, or the implied threat of such violence. This kind of collusion is evident in Orford’s depiction of the crimes of contemporary society in the characters of Aaron Mtimbe in *Gallows Hill*, and Calvin Landman in *Like Clockwork*. In *Gallows Hill*, Faizal is investigating putative corruption in land sales and government permits. He begins enquiring about an ‘Aaron Mtimbe’ whose name routinely recurs in his searches. A source informs him: “[h]e runs the province. Not one tender is awarded unless he gives it the nod. And his nods cost. So does refusing him. Three councillors decided to follow the correct tender procedure, and all their wives ended up cashing in their funeral policies” (2011: 61). In this example, Orford overtly identifies the link between murder and corruption in the higher levels of government, pointing sardonically to the unethical power in which criminal allegiance secures enhancement, while criminal refusal entails death. This is a spatial relation of the most fundamental sort, since an unwillingness to collaborate narrows one’s



space to the confines of a coffin, while the implicit obverse brings the grandiose enrichment of spacious mansions and expensive cars. Corrupt transactions between state, province and supplier, Orford suggests, is a form of powerful intimidation which bears striking similarity to the methods used by gangs to consolidate territory. As Faizal says of such complicit territorialisation:

‘If they don’t have to take it by force, then they pay for their new territory. Easier, quicker, and gets fewer officials into awkward situations.’

‘And how do the officials fit into all of this?’

‘If your plan is to take over the running of a city’s night-time economy, you need a lot of official collusion. Airports, harbours, courts, city council for rezoning permission. You need them all – and they’re cheap to buy. If they refuse to cooperate, they’re easy to eliminate’. (2009a: 250)

The strong-arming and intimidation that is used by both business and gangs and the similar outcomes that each form achieves is reminiscent of Nuttall and Mbembe’s arguments for the increasingly blurred distinctions between surface and beneath. Nicol *et al* extrapolate, arguing “that criminality is not simply one aspect of modernity, an inevitable by-product, but its underside, something from which it cannot be separated” (2011: 2-3). This relationship between the two is not characterised by a distinct division, but rather the space between legitimate business and illegality has grown increasingly clouded in post-apartheid South Africa. In Orford’s fiction, such unsettled liminality is made apparent through the characters of Landman in *Like Clockwork* and Williams in *Gallows Hill*. Both characters have been involved in gang culture, and have risen through the ranks before making the transition to ostensibly more legitimate, respectable varieties of Cape Town commerce and society. Orford writes: “Lately, Landman had become notorious for insinuating himself into the highest echelons of business and politics. He had even been profiled as a ‘man about town’ by a respectable Sunday Paper” (2006: 18). The character of Williams, in turn, elicits the following description: “He used to run Woodstock – tik, abalone, girls, guns protection for brothels, later for politicians” (2011: 34). The facility with which he segues from brothel boss to smooth political sidekick emphasises the ease of traversing, or even permeating, the supposed border between legitimate and illegitimate, criminality and conventional sociality. Herzog argues that to “avoid living in a continuous state of crisis, we need to control our anxiety that anybody is a potential criminal threat by clearly distinguishing between the criminal and the noncriminal” (2002: 34). Orford’s krimi fiction

insists that such distinctions are often untenable, as the characters like Landman and Williams, to single out but a few, are implicated in such a variety of legal and illegal transactions that the very distinction of the dichotomy is destabilised. The resulting overlap enables Orford to “interrogate[...] the borders between the criminal and the noncriminal that the traditional criminal case history normally patrols and defends – ultimately locating the criminal squarely within society, rather than outside of it” (36).

If Orford’s novels explore the complex spatiality of contemporary South Africa and Namibia, often in relation to historical burdens and the ideological-material criminality arising from apartheid and the transition to democracy, she is also careful not to depict local or regional identity in isolation, or to turn inwards on itself towards a claustrophobic provincialism. Instead, she emphasises the convoluted connections and dubious reciprocities that develop when locality is imbricated in sinuous and expansive global practices that are difficult to map, cognitively, in terms of crime. This is not unique to her fiction. As Erdmann explains, the “new crime novel is...distinguished by a sort of outward internationality” (2009: 16) which means that while a crime may occur in an apparently narrow, highly defined local space, the lines of investigation and vectors of implication that need to be followed in examining the crime are likely to have international ties with “powerful transnational capital flows” (Ingebritsen 2011: 9).

The permeability of borders, for example, is something Orford emphasises, along with associated ethical questions of increased opportunities for the satisfying of consumer desires. The international links that Orford depicts offer examples of the flows of movement and capital, and just as the divide between legitimate and illegitimate business is permeable, so is the commerce of goods – legal and illegal – across international borders. The legal international links reflect the globalisation of spatial relations that is characteristic of contemporary life. Two such examples of this are a pen that is found in *Daddy’s Girl* – it is a definitively European brand, and the dress in *Gallows Hill* that is available specifically from an outlet in Amsterdam. Even here, however, borders are fluid, since items travel, and may be purchased online and delivered anywhere in the world. Such legal examples of globalisation, however, are also spatialised through what Nicol *et al* have characterised as the disturbing underside of modernity, where privilege and poverty closely co-exist (2011: 2-3). In this reflection, or refraction, of modern culture, the commodities which are bought and sold are boundless, refusing ethical

borders and moral categorisation as if such were merely tiresome, old-fashioned entities, superseded by the legitimate demands of contemporary appetites: drugs, girls, cheap labour, arms; in krimi fiction, these are often treated as commodities by criminal groups, much as regular business might trade in bulk sugar or mass electronic imports. These illegal goods mimic much of the structure and flow of legitimate financial transactions. An example of this is the human trafficking in *Like Clockwork*. Orford begins her first novel with a prologue describing a man involved in human trafficking: “Two strides take him to the room where they have brought the new consignment. She looks at him, terrified” (2006: 7). Such an example is supplemented by Orford’s depiction of Calvin Landman, a South African who has become a kingpin in an international crime syndicate: “Landman, one of her police sources had told her, had moved rapidly up the ranks of a street gang. He was a man with vision though, and the porousness of South Africa’s post-democracy borders had been a licence for Landman to print money. His name had become synonymous with trafficking for the sex industry” (17). A further internalisation of space is evident in the planned sale of the Uranium 235, which Hart and Faizal prevent:

The cakes had been buried there for over ten years, waiting for Janus Renko to broker a deal with some Pakistani businessmen. When he did, Goagab had signed off the safe passage to Spain for a cut.

‘One city, one cake,’ Phiri said. ‘Enough highly enriched uranium to make dirty bombs for six European cities. Which were they? Paris? Berlin? Antwerp?’

‘You’ll be sorry for this,’ said Renko calmly, ‘when my lawyer gets hold of you.’

‘I hear the Americans are clearing a cell for you in Guantanamo,’ Phiri continued, unperturbed. (2007: 345-346)

In this passage, Orford seeds her description with a slew of globalised markers, the names of cities and countries spread widely across the globe attesting to the intercontinental journey that was planned for the dangerous precious metal. This multiple movement across sites is indicative not only of the globalisation that exists but the development of a system that is being developed to respond to such examples of international crime. Interpol is one such example, but Orford makes specific reference to Guantanamo Bay – a place of incarceration created for those involved in international acts of terror. The common phrase ‘war on terror’ is defined as follows: “The Bush administration and the Western media used the term to denote a global

military, political, legal and ideological struggle targeting both organizations designated as terrorist and regimes accused of supporting them” (Boundless 2013: 1265). These countermeasures which have been adopted for such devastating examples of international crime are indicative of the extent to which global crime has not only developed, but the impact that it can have on such countries.

Spatial globalisation is a characteristic of the twenty-first century made particularly easy by technological advancements. Orford’s depiction of these advancements is reflective of the ease with which they can be used. One such example is the way in which Hart managed to discover the identity of the body that is unearthed in *Gallows Hill*. The body was discovered without any identifiable characteristics except a dirty, yet still expensive-looking dress, with the brand label intact. In order to pinpoint the origin of the garment, Hart involves her twenty year old niece who is a student at a fashion school. Imogen’s response is “I don’t know it. But mail it to me now – we’ll soon see if there’s anyone who recognises it” (2011: 55). Orford explains the process saying: “Imogen opened the files as they pinged into her laptop, then she fired off a series of posts” (ibid.). Hart has a swim and while she is still outdoors, someone posts a Facebook response with the information she needs. “Social networking,” replies Imogen, “Someone always knows someone who knows someone...” (ibid.).

A vast ‘out there’. An intimate here. In Orford’s crime novels, both distance and proximity may be variously enabling or threatening. She does not fix space into pre-determined value systems. Instead, Orford’s narratives work simultaneously “with a variety of spatial scales” (Schmid 2012: 10), a difficult yet necessary practice which allows her to investigate ways in which “to connect the microspace of the body with the macrospace of...‘globalization’” (Harvey 2000: 49). Her narratives move among small “functional unit[s] of space” such as the locked room or the tunnel, associated with enclosure and entrapment (Schmid 2012: 10) to wider international spheres. While I certainly have not been able to offer a comprehensive account of Orford’s treatment of space, by acknowledging the entangled complexity of the multiple movements which marks her fiction I have sought to begin “contesting a characterisation of the [krimi] genre that dismisses it as a closed, formal system” (11). Borrowing from Manuel Castells, I am inclined to understand Orford’s fiction, instead, as comprising “a series of connected nodal points forming a large network, rather than a group of mutually exclusive

spaces with no connection” (2001: 171). As Schmid argues, “a concentration on the spaces of crime fiction...de-centres a critical emphasis on the solution...and instead focuses on...movements”. In other words, my reading of Orford’s fiction in this chapter through “a spatial emphasis produces a processual rather than teleological understanding of crime fiction” (Schmid 2012: 13). This understanding is one which accommodates Orford’s own evident recognition that the place where a crime occurs may “stand[ ] in a synecdochic relationship to much larger spaces and concepts” (ibid.), among them gender equality, troubled democracy, and the struggle for social justice. My reading of Orford’s fiction as spatially diverse, even unresolved, emphasises a view of crime fiction as interconnected spatialities; it stresses the “ambiguities and open-endedness” of her novels (12) in relation to a society that is no longer closed and insular, but opening up to possibility and potential, alongside new threats and challenges.

## DENOUEMENT

I hope to have demonstrated that while there remain numerous critics who continue to disparage the krimi genre, claiming that it is “associated with easy pleasures and lower-class taste” (Hermes and Stello 2000: 225) along with restrictive, formulaic patterning, Orford’s Clare Hart series clearly complicates such assertions; as Gilfillan argues, the novels are most definitely not “schlock” (2011: np). Rather, Orford’s novels embody the belief that “the crime story is a profound social document, one that mirrors society itself” (Mandel cited in Saar 2008: 152) and that it thus offers significant potential for a writer to engage with questions of socio-economic injustice, class disparities, human-rights violations, political corruption, and rampant gender-based inequalities and outright violence. To quote Gilfillan once again: Orford’s “crime novels are canvases where she sketches the social and psychological workings of criminality, and the way it functions in the interstitial spaces of post-apartheid South Africa” and in relation to her writing, “it soon becomes apparent why many critics perceive crime fiction as the new ‘political novel’” (2011: np).

Orford not only utilises the krimi genre as a way of highlighting contemporary southern African concerns; in doing so, she draws attention to the impact which a troubled national past continues to have on contemporaneity, *and* she acknowledges, in the spirit of Anthony Altbeker, that male violence has begun to assume the proportions of a cultural norm, one whose perverse attraction is not directly attributable to histories of colonial violence (see Warnes 2012). My discussion has argued that crime fiction, far from being a fatuous popular genre, bears a powerful ethical relation to serious socio-moral questions about gender, politics and economics, and that in the service of such critical investigation Orford’s female protagonist, Clare Hart, is at once a sophisticated stylistic device *and* a humanly credible, empathetic force which carries the writer’s purpose. It is this which renders Orford’s crime thrillers so effective in the South African context.

And yet, just as I completed the main body of work for this thesis, Margie Orford launched her fifth novel, *Water Music* (2013), further expanding the reach of her authorial terrain and reputation. So much for conclusions, I thought.

*Water Music* has already been fêted as the best in Orford's oeuvre. It employs similar subject matter and narrative methods as the other books in the Clare Hart series, the author highlighting child murders (or, as Orford terms it, "South African Paedocide" [2013: 186]), prostitution, Cape gang culture, and South Africa's endemic corruption. In *Water Music*, specifically, graft has become so pervasive that both Faizal's position in the police force and Hart's collaborative relationship with the police are under threat. Jakes Cwele is disbanding Faizal's elite gang crimes unit, and Faizal is summarily redeployed. Of this reassignment Cwele says to Hart, "By Monday your captain's going to be gone. Then there's no one watching out for you. This is not a place for a lady, and you're not a cop" (34). Hart's sharp retort is "I'm not a lady either...So that balances things out" (ibid.). Clearly, Orford's female protagonist has lost none of her sassy edginess in the new novel. Similarly, even a passing conversation between Phiri and Faizal archly encapsulates the tensions and stressors associated with the corrupt state of the nation. Phiri asks for a cigarette:

'I never saw you smoke, Colonel,' said Riedwaan.

'I haven't since Mandela came out of prison.'

'The end of an era,' said Riedwaan. 'You keep the box; you're going to need it'. (181)

This brief exchange combines reference to iconic, public markers of South Africa's hoped-for-potential with the individually-embodied accommodations that have been demanded of people, among them government affiliates, as democratic transition begins (by all accounts) to segue into a failing state. Such a view of the future of South Africa leaves little room for an honest, driven cop such as Faizal, and none at all for an ethical profiler like Hart either.

What are the implications? That in *Water Music* Orford decides to effect several significant adjustments to her successful krimi formula. Let me consider two things. Firstly, by the end of the latest novel, for example, Faizal and Hart are no longer involved in criminal investigations. As Margaret von Klemperer writes (without wanting to offer any spoilers):

they have both made themselves too many enemies in the higher echelons of the service: Riedwaan finds himself posted to the Riot Squad and sent off to the platinum belt. [His] and Clare's ...aversion to corruption and inefficiency is not wanted any more. Those ranged against them in the police service are at least as frightening as the criminals they are trying to catch. This is one of the darkest strands in a dark story. When a country can no longer trust its

police service to protect its citizens, what hope is there? The question runs like a sinister thread through Orford's [latest] plot. (2013: np)

Secondly, adding a further twist to Orford's longstanding interest in combining features of the krimi with complex human relationships, in *Water Music* Hart discovers that she is pregnant. In effect, Orford makes a strategic authorial decision to complicate the fiercely defended autonomy and independence on which her protagonist's reputation, indeed her life, is based, at the same time as readers realise (and have come to relish) the deep allure of the albeit erratic physical attraction between these two charismatic figures, protagonist and antagonist.

As we know from the earlier novels in the series, being a *female* investigative profiler, in the context of South Africa's difficult crime and policing scenarios, has proven a serious challenge to Hart. And now, in the latest book, Hart's challenges are to be compounded by the demands, dependencies and self-effacements which come with motherhood. On a light-hearted note, Orford remarks in an interview that Clare Hart "sprang, I suppose, from how I imagined I could be if I was thinner, cleverer and had had fewer children". (Lord nd: np). More seriously, *Water Music* tentatively enters the emotionally-charged space of adoption and abortion debates, and women's (now legal) yet still contentious right to choose. For a while, the narrative leaves some uncertainty about whether or not Hart will have the child, which enables Orford to entertain the ethics of various possibilities without necessarily needing to action them. Termination. Adoption. Single mothering. Happy married family? Clearly, the pregnancy allows Orford an interestingly intimate space in which to make visible further aspects of the complexity of her protagonist's identity, the expectations and assumptions associated with her femaleness.

That the father is Faizal is not unexpected, but the most immediate implications of parenthood and responsibility are faced by Hart. That said, Orford soon has Hart tell Faizal of the pregnancy, and after long discussion they decide jointly to keep the baby. However, the massive ramifications of this decision are left open: are they, now, definitely a couple? Will they ever marry? How will domestic arrangements be resolved? How (in the light of his difficult family history) will Faizal handle this new fatherhood? Such questions nudge at a reader's consciousness, but Orford cleverly leaves them unanswered...both material for the next book, and an acknowledgment that simple solutions to such challenges are unlikely, either in terms of personal relations, or at the level of societal gender expectations. Of the relationship between



Riedwaan and Clare, Orford says in an interview with *Shots*, a crime and thriller e-zine, that “I was thinking of making them marry but I find weddings too depressing. So they will carry on as they are – he’ll want to live with her. She’ll want to be alone” (ibid.). This difficult space, no doubt, hardly the romanticised union of any racially-idealised ‘New South Africa’, will make for useful narrative material, interesting parenting, and perhaps an unusual child. As Jonathan Amid explains:

*Water Music* places [Clare] in vastly unfamiliar personal territory: she is pregnant with Riedwaan’s child, and must come to terms with the fact that she is now responsible for a life more than her own, less in control and more emotional than she is accustomed to being. In turn, Riedwaan has to deal with his pending divorce, the fact that his estranged wife now lives in Canada with their daughter (traumatised after her kidnapping in *Daddy’s Girl*), his deployment to the Northwest Province after already being stationed in Johannesburg (straining his relationship with Clare even further), and the rapidly declining health of his mother. Childhood memories and previous traumas also come back to haunt him this time around. (2013: np)

In other words, this latest novel in the series sees Orford entering even more deeply into the realm of troubled emotions and fraught relations, such that memory and emotional difficulty is highly personalised in the lives, loves and family connections which have made her main characters into the ‘people’ they are.

Concerning the question of what is next for Clare and Faizal, I am inclined to contextualise any possibilities in relation to Orford’s familiar scepticism. She repeatedly reminds us that South African is characterised by “extreme patriarchal structures”. She goes on to say “We have had such a long and enduring attack on the family and intimate relationships between people” and “the wilful political destruction of ...family space” which has “created what I have called a hyper masculinity” (De Waal 2012: np). Even the imaginative origins of Riedwaan Faizal are intriguing: he is “based (weirdly enough) on a cop who detained me when I was a student in the mad South Africa 1980s. I don’t remember his name – but I remember thinking he was a good man in an impossible situation” (Lord nd: np).

Given such complexities of context, origination and allegiance, it is not surprising that Orford’s latest krimi, *Water Music*, ends on an intriguing note. During the novel, it has been discovered that drug trafficking is going on between the castle and the harbour, but in the closing pages devolve upon the following, intimate relation:

Clare leaned against Riedwaan's shoulder. He drew her into the circle of his arm, said nothing as two trucks pulled out from behind the Yacht Club and drove up towards the castle. Their purpose, their cargo, someone else's business now" (2013: 328).

The implication is telling. The lovers, on the brink of parenthood, turn inwards towards each other, deciding to nurture the nascent growth of new commitments centred on parental responsibility. Yet this inevitably raises questions: is Orford implying that the roles of 'investigator' and 'mother', for example, are completely incompatible for her "gutsy heroine" (Ashton 2013: np)? Is she suggesting that if 'the family' is to function as a locus of safety and emotional well-being, it must be spatially and conceptually set apart from the increasing intricacies of corruption among police and government, entangled as they are with corporate criminality? In other words, is Orford, here, drawing a line, refusing the murky ethical space of blurred boundaries in which previously her "realistic, tough-but-tender heroine", "a harried creature of our time" who has successfully been able to "work[ ] hard, but squeeze[ ] in a little R&R for passion between police alarm calls" (ibid.), is now faced with the biggest challenge of all for the professional woman: motherhood. I cannot do more than point to intriguing features of the gendered provocations which Orford has introduced into her latest offering, but this unusual turn in the Clare Hart series will surely attract further discussion by future scholars of Orford's oeuvre. Again, it is Amid who offers an intriguing assessment, concluding that *Water Music* is

a moving and emotive novel constructed around human entanglements, shaped by the predicaments that none of us can escape...The writing, a product of this time, and resolutely of this place (yet appealing to a transnational readership), is exemplary of how the form in question can be artistic, accommodating a rich variety of concerns and voices without seeming contrived. South African crime fiction in the guise of Orford's writing is elevated to a plane that once again rubbishes the binary between high and low forms of culture and writing. (2013: np)

Another sphere of interest worth raising in my conclusion is how Orford's crime fiction writing bears upon her prolific output in other discourses and publication fora. It is important to attempt an understanding of the discursive variety which characterises Orford's written production, as she herself, rather like crime fiction, eludes easy categorisation. Not only is Orford an "award-winning journalist and film-director", she is "also [the] author of children's fiction, non-fiction and school textbooks" (ibid.). This

presents a reader with a multi-faceted writer: we have Orford as the best-selling author of krimi novels; Orford as outspoken gender activist and commentator; Orford as public intellectual; Orford as low-key pedagogue. This is a remarkable range of discursive engagement, and especially in relation to debates about the contested relevance or supposedly minor qualities of crime fiction, it implies that ostensibly simple entertainment and more serious impact cannot be kept separate.

Once again, it is worth noting, for instance, that Orford's piece on "The Deadly Cost of Breaking the Silence" which was originally published in the popular women's consumer title *Marie Claire*, subsequently appeared in a special issue of *Feminist Africa* on "Subaltern Sexualities", and that it has provided both plot impetus and subject matter for her popular crime fiction. In addition, she is one of the editors of the Feminist Press anthology *Women Writing Africa: the Southern Region*. In other words, Orford has a high profile as an author of crime fiction, but she is also noteworthy for her outspoken written and oral contributions to what might be called (without sounding too grandiose) a civic consciousness. In an interview, Orford explains something of the practical nature of this discursive boundary crossing: "I didn't think: 'Oh my God I am going to write a crime novel.' I was looking at South Africa and trying to make sense of it. I wanted to find out why things had gone so right in terms of politics, but so wrong in terms of our social interactions with people, and with this massive amount of crime" (2012: np). Gradually it dawned on her "that a 2,000 word article would never be able to begin to answer the question 'why'"; she "needed a 100,000 word book, or series of novels to begin to answer the questions she had about this country" (De Waal 2012: np).

However, she has also continued to need a diverse range of publication platforms and commentary spaces. For instance, in the context of South Africa's so-called Protection of Information Bill, consider this extract from her address, as Vice President of South African PEN, on the issue of censorship:

Censorship means the selective criminalization of thought, of reading, of enquiry, and of association. It is patently bad. It imprisons people, it burns books, and it curtails the political and the personal life of individuals and of nations. Censorship has other pernicious effects. It stifles creativity because it attempts to police the imagination by making people afraid to write, read, talks and think freely. Censorship, authoritarian, hierarchical and usually

patriarchal, infantilizes people because the state usurps the individual's responsibility for deciding. (Orford 2012 "Some Thoughts": np)

Such ideas develop her comments on the censorship by stealth that characterises the "Kafkaesque environment" of contemporary South African politics, in which "new assaults on freedom of expression...dovetail with increasing levels of corruption between government and business". She continues: "It is essentially the job of the writer and the press to be critical and to hold people to account" (Orford 2011 "Free Expression": np). Similarly, one could point to her talk on "The Grammar of Violence" at the PEN America World Voices Festival 2013 in New York, or her scathing feature in the national Sunday press on the "Déjà Zuma" of the Zwelinzima Vavi sex scandal. Orford, it is clear, is no 'mere' writer of crime; she is actively keeping a writer's eye on the wider political society, and making a point of offering critical-analytical comment, in widely-read spaces, on the infractions of democracy which have become commonplace among those in political-economic power.

Orford's most recent article appears in the scholarly journal *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*. Elsewhere, Orford has previously acknowledged that in South Africa we "have a very flamboyant crime scene here. I think that's probably what we're best known for: democracy and crime," and writing crime fiction is "a way of understanding the violence we have" (Orford 2011 "Free Expression": np). In her latest scholarly article though, Orford (2013) goes a difficult step further. She very provocatively discusses the dramatic shift which she sees in the South African crime landscape, post Marikana: if the police are so expediently attacking those they are meant to protect, and if they can do so with assumed impunity, where does that leave her, Orford asks, as a writer of krimi fiction? She admits to feeling unsure of future possibilities for the genre, in a country where everyday occurrences increasingly stretch imaginative belief to breaking point, and are yet not construed as crime, per se.

Rautenbach argues that "the form of crime fiction allows it to fulfil its primary function: to thrill and to entertain. However, whether its form is appropriate for fulfilling the complex social function its proponents claim it has[,] is a question yet to be answered" (2013: np). Although it is unlikely a unanimous decision will be reached, through my discussion of several Margie Orford novels in this thesis, I have aimed to create a space in which the genre can be

critically positioned, shown to engage with numerous topical concerns and subjects, even while this sometimes sits awkwardly with generic conventions. I suggest that despite the received conventions of the genre, Orford's novels unsettle the classifications of pulp fiction, or genre fiction, and struggle to discover ways in which to "find the voices of the brutalised and the dead" (2010: 187), "a way of telling an emotional and moral truth" (191).

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