

Toy(ed) Soldiers: Constructions of White Adolescent Masculinity in Mark Behr's Narratives

Kim Tracy Swinstead

A dissertation submitted to the School of Literary Studies, Media and Creative Arts,
University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts (English Studies).

Pietermaritzburg, 2007

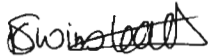
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Cheryl Stobie for her invaluable time, patience, attention to detail and insight.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their love, support and interest in my work. I would particularly like to thank my parents – Shirley and Quentin Swinstead – who have always believed in me and without whom this project would not have been possible.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work, except where specifically indicated to the contrary. This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. Where use has been made of the results of other authors, they have been duly acknowledged in the text.



Kim Tracy Swinstead

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this dissertation for submission.



Doctor Cheryl Stobie

Abstract

This thesis is a literary thematic analysis of Mark Behr's novels *The Smell of Apples* (1996) and *Embrace* (2000). Through these novels, Behr explores the nature of masculine identities and the ways in which they are developed through a process of adolescent males observing and interacting with their parents and the society in which they live. The development of the two protagonists is traced and white hegemonic attitudes to masculinity in South Africa are exposed. The novels are of importance as these hegemonic attitudes continue to exist within South Africa today.

The focus of this analysis is on white adolescent masculinities and the ways in which Behr illustrates the effects of apartheid society on their development. The study makes an in-depth analysis of the plot and themes and the way in which these guide the reader into a critical awareness of socially constructed masculine identities. Each of the four themes – namely, sexuality, race, gender and land – is explored in this thesis and careful consideration is given to the techniques Behr uses in his writing.

Of importance to this thesis are the interrelationships between character, themes and the context of the novels. While the novels are not regarded as a case study, this thesis repeatedly demonstrates the socio-political awareness that Behr uses in order to offer his reader insight into the significant realities that have faced adolescent males as they construct their identities.

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Introduction

De la Rey, De la Rey, sal jy die boere kom vry?

Want jy is gay De la Rey?

De la Rey, De la Rey, do you want to flirt with the Boers?

Because you're gay, De la Rey? (Pretorius 2007)

The popular song, 'De la Rey', by Bok van Blerk, has recently caused a stir within both South African and international media. For some, the song has been a unifying one that has offered Afrikaners the opportunity to establish a new identity in post-apartheid South Africa; for others, the song has been treated as a call to arms, asserting Afrikaner masculinity; while for yet others, the song has been adjusted to ridicule gay identity in South Africa. As the repercussions of the song have hit tabloids, one is aware that it has become increasingly important to give consideration to where these current-day attitudes stem from. Apartheid ideology led to a large number of atrocities within South Africa based on racial identity. While these racial identities were officially dismantled during the transitional period leading into the new South Africa, remnants of earlier attitudes to sexual identity, gender and land continue to exist.

Recent academic research has focused on constructions of masculine identity and the ways in which young men are moulded by father figures. By this, I mean that fathers often present exaggerated caricatures of hegemonic masculinity, and therefore deny their sons expressions of alternative modes of masculine identity. Unfortunately, these models are not necessarily healthy ones and can lead to a conflict between the young man's internal desires and external or social expectations.

A widespread belief was that the primary function of men was to provide for and protect their families. The result is that masculine identity has become closely associated with the nuclear family unit. Apartheid ideology used this sense of masculine identity to create a strong desire for national identity among Afrikaners. Militarism promoted the notion of an 'ideal' masculinity and was used to entrench firmly Christian ideology within South Africa. Historically, South Africa has partly drawn on globally accepted constructs of

society in addition to promulgating specific attitudes towards sexuality, race, gender and land under the apartheid regime. Although apartheid is over, certain attitudes of intolerance have been indoctrinated into young white men as well as society at large. Sandra Swart points out that ‘the gender anxiety of the hard right Afrikaner in a time of socio-political transition is revealing of the way formerly hegemonic masculinity roles are re-fashioned and re-entrenched’ (2001: 86).

Young men have been brought up and have borne testament to a society that has shaped their attitudes towards their own sexuality, women, other races and the land in which they live. In order for South African practices to be brought into line with the Constitutional promise of equality for all, regardless of gender, race, religion or sexuality, it is imperative that the roots of these ideologies are identified and the ways in which they are entrenched within South African society are understood.

Within his novels *The Smell of Apples* and *Embrace*, Mark Behr has given careful consideration to constructions of white Afrikaner masculine identity. The novels, which were published in 1993 (in Afrikaans and later in English) and in 2000 respectively, were written at the transitional period away from Afrikaner rule and explore masculine identity within South Africa and what it meant to be growing up as a white Afrikaans boy in apartheid South Africa. Through a thematic literary analysis of Behr’s narratives, I explore the techniques he uses to guide his readers into thinking critically about masculine identity and the effects that apartheid ideology had in influencing the way this was constructed. The four themes – namely sexuality, race, gender and land – which I analyse, offer insight into the various influences Behr perceives as having formerly influenced masculine identity in South Africa.

The reason I have chosen these texts is to illustrate the succinct points that Behr makes with regard to adolescent masculine identities during apartheid. His techniques offer his readers a means of critiquing socially constructed notions of masculinity in South Africa. Through a close analysis of some of these techniques, I explore those issues which are of value today in considering South African perceptions of masculinity and adolescent

masculine sexuality. In order to illustrate the points I make and to strengthen my arguments, I refer to a number of academic authors who have contributed to the field of exploring masculine identity either in South Africa or at a global level.

Important sources that I use include a number of chapters from *Handbook on Men and Masculinities* edited by Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and Robert Connell (2005). Although the book is an American publication, its chapters draw on global perspectives of masculinity and many have valuable implications for my analysis of the novels. In relation to the ways in which masculine identity is regenerated in society, Paul Higate and John Hopton's paper is pertinent to my thesis in its discussion of militarism and its effects on masculinity (2005: 432-47). Apartheid was governed by militarism and many of Behr's most critical climaxes bear some relation to this militaristic state.

Other authors who contributed to *Handbook on Men and Masculinities* (2005) are Ken Plummer, and William Marsiglio and Joseph H. Pleck. Ken Plummer's chapter, 'Male Sexualities', analyses hegemonic attitudes to masculinity and the way in which society has attempted to explain away anything that deviates from the accepted 'norm' (2005: 178-95). Marsiglio and Pleck have written perceptively, in their chapter on fatherhood and masculinity with particular focus on the ways in which society genders children in their chapter 'Fatherhood and Masculinities' (2005: 249-69). This has application to both novels, considering the relationship that each protagonist has with his father as well as their respective relationships with their mothers.

Looking more closely at South African research, I have focused on Robert Morrell who has contributed to the collection edited by Kimmel, Hearn and Connell as well as having his own edited collections pertaining to Africa and African masculinities. In Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, he has worked with Sandra Swart in focussing on post-colonialism and its effects on masculine identities in third world countries (2005: 90-113). His chapter in Kimmel, Hearn and Connell expands on his own earlier edited collection *Changing Men in Southern Africa*. Morrell's introduction to this edited collection considers the changes we have seen in South African men and the historical background

to masculine identity (2001: 3-40). In addition, he has focused on post-apartheid masculinities with chapters from a number of authors in Africa (2001). Jacklyn Cock offers important insight into violence amongst South African men and the myth of masculine potency from which this stems (2001: 43-56). The last piece of work from Morrell that I use is his chapter from the book *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century* which he co-edited with Lahoucine Ouzgane (2005: 271-88).

Much of the existing academic discourse on masculine identity involves 'straight'/gay, gay/lesbian or black/white binarisms. The limitation of much of the academic work I use to support my analysis of these novels is that it often looks at male sexual identity and the establishment of masculinities from either hegemonic perspectives or from gay perspectives. It is important to realise that the climactic sequences in both novels cannot be explained as resulting from incidents involving wholly gay characters but rather involve a blurring of sexual identities. In addition, although I have chosen to write specifically on representations of adolescent Afrikaner identity in this thesis, one cannot exclude English attitudes and Behr's inclusion of English families and dual-medium institutions where English attitudes are portrayed as accepting and adopting Afrikaans notions of masculinity.

I have chosen to look specifically at masculinities and masculine identities in these novels because this is a widely researched field which has had significant influence on many other aspects of South African society, a number of which Behr raises as themes in his novels. These include themes of race, gender and land which I analyse in this project. The treatment of black people and women, as well as the way in which land is regarded in South Africa, has historically been influenced by masculine identities. The above research suggests that while there have been shifts in masculine identities, there is still considerable propagation of an 'ideal' masculinity to which many men are expected to conform. Behr explores this notion of masculinity through carefully constructed plots revealing some of the ways that masculinity is regenerated through the development of his characters.

More specifically, I have chosen to write about adolescent masculine identities as it is through these youngsters that parental and societal attitudes are learnt and adopted. Adolescents observe the attitudes and behaviours of their parents and peers as well as local and global influences on society, and from these they develop their own sense of identity. Behr explores these interrelated attitudes and ideologies from the perspectives of two young adolescents whose masculine identities are constructed around their fathers and the society in which they are each being raised. While extensive research has been done on the subject of masculine identity, there is limited work available on adolescents. While Michiel Heyns (1996: 81-104; 2000: 42-66; 2002) and David Medalie (1997: 507-14; 2000: 41-61) have extensively analysed *The Smell of Apples*, they have not focused solely on issues of adolescent masculinities. *Embrace* has a few literature reviews but to date, has not generated any academic publications. I therefore focus on adolescent masculinities and Behr's climactic build-up to the final events in each novel.

In the first chapter of my thesis, I focus on the relationship which each protagonist develops with his father and the impact this has on his own sexual identity. I pay particular attention to the techniques Behr uses in guiding his readers to think critically about the militaristic state of Afrikaner identity during apartheid and the role which each father adopts in relation to this. In this chapter, I prove that each father has considerable influence in moulding his son's masculine identity and this is strongly linked with the Afrikaner society in which both protagonists are growing up.

In the second chapter, I address the relationship that each of the protagonists develops with people of colour. Coupled with this, I explore the inherent attitudes which apartheid society allowed Marnus and Karl to adopt and the ways in which it influences their development in the novel. I pay particular attention to the way in which Behr represents black people as well as the ways in which white masculinity is asserted and in turn treated by black characters. An important aspect of Behr's novels, which I raise in both the second and third chapters, is the notion of the 'other'. Behr uses the technique of 'othering', guiding the reader to an understanding of how white masculinity was asserted in terms of black people and women.

In the third chapter, I look at the role of women in the novel and the ways in which they either rebel or ratify the patriarchal system of apartheid. I make a close study of the consequences of these actions and the ways in which both protagonists develop their own masculine identity and sexuality in terms of the influence that women have on their development.

Finally, I look at the notion of land and nationhood as it is presented by Behr in both texts. Assertions of masculinity are closely linked with national identity in both novels. In this chapter, I analyse both the symbolic references to land and national identity as well as literal references to colonisation and the historical importance of land in the assertion of Afrikaner identity.

While the novels offer insight into the lives of white Afrikaans males and the identities they forge for themselves, there is a blurring of boundaries in which this focus often shifts. While the major focus is on whites, and Afrikaner whites in particular, alterity is charted by reference to English-speaking sectors of society. Although my analysis primarily addresses the question of white Afrikaner masculinity and the ways in which it is developed in the novels, I will also take time to consider black characters in the novels and the role they play in threatening white Afrikaner masculinity and in turn, representations of black male sexuality in both novels.

Chapter 1: Father and Son: An Establishment of Sexuality

On the 13th March 2007, a popular radio station announced that the South African women's soccer team were convinced that their Ghanaian opposition had two men playing on their side. In a rather lengthy aside, the disk jockey in question 'jokingly' commented that, in fact, the players had both male and female genitalia and needed to be examined by an expert in the field as they were having difficulty in deciding on their own sexuality. This is one of many examples of cruel and thoughtless jokes which are so evident in society today. In addition, this illustrates the heterosexual matrix, whereby sex, gender and sexuality are thought of in unproblematic, normative terms.

Attitudes such as these have long existed internationally as well as within South Africa. There is extensive academic discourse on the subject of socially constructed masculinities and the ways in which they are often inherited, both in South Africa as well as abroad. Academics such as Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and Robert Connell (2005) have written extensively on the subject within America as well as compiling an edited collection of works from around the world. Robert Morrell (2001 and 2005) has written extensively and has compiled collections of relevant material on masculinities within Africa.

In the course of this chapter, I apply this existing academic discourse on masculine identities to the theme of sexuality in Mark Behr's novels, *The Smell of Apples* and *Embrace*. The construction of different sexual identities is an important theme in both novels and offers us valuable insight into the ways in which homophobic and heteronormative attitudes towards sexual identity have developed in South Africa. Despite the fact that gay and lesbian activists have made significant strides in creating their own space within South Africa and gaining legal recognition, popular discourse continues to construct negative attitudes towards these issues.

Through a close reading of the novels, I illustrate the ways in which masculine identities are socially constructed. The aim of the textual analysis in this chapter is to create a platform from which to consider the techniques used by Behr to show the effects of

intolerant attitudes. I shall explore the ways in which Behr reveals aspects of social constructionism within Afrikaner communities as well as homophobic attitudes towards white men and, even more so, towards men of colour.

I shall apply research from both commentators based in developed countries, as well as those within South Africa. As a South African, I believe that the best way to create a more tolerant society in terms of sexual identities is to give consideration to the fraught history of South African gay, lesbian and bisexual rights as well as to the existing international research and its contributions to the field. *The Smell of Apples* and *Embrace* are a useful starting point in formulating an argument centred on the necessity to deconstruct socially accepted attitudes towards sexuality and masculinity.

In *The Smell of Apples*, Behr uses techniques that draw the reader's attention to the lies and hypocrisies that apartheid instilled into numerous young men as they began to develop their own masculine identities. For some, socially constructed notions of masculinity were contradictory to their own identities, resulting in what Lance and Tanesini refer to as 'rational tension':

It might never be possible to achieve full coherence between our identities since they might always make demands on us that take us in different and, perhaps, incompatible directions. In these cases one will perceive some sort of rational tension which one might try to alleviate in a variety of ways. (2005: 174)

The notion of 'rational tension' illustrates Behr's explanation in the 1973 chronotope of *The Smell of Apples*, of what it meant, for a young white Afrikaner, to be a man. Young Marnus Erasmus is raised in a typically nuclear, Afrikaans family with religion at the core of its moral structure. As he grows up within this structure, he unconsciously attempts to assimilate his father's ideologies as an Afrikaner and his behaviour at home. Key moments leading to the victimisation of Frikkie, offer the reader insight into an ever-increasing divide between the two worlds and as Marnus retrospectively realises this, he

becomes aware of his subconscious efforts to reconcile them in order to create his own masculinity in terms of the social constructions and practices to which he has been exposed. In this section, I contend that it is the nuclear family unit that constructs Marnus's notion of masculine identity while at the same time creating the 'rational tension' that is mentioned above.

The novel opens with Marnus's observation that, when his father addresses him, 'he mostly says "my son" or "my little bull", and him and Mum also like calling me "my little piccanin"' (Behr 1995: 1). The connotation of a bull is one of strength, power and machismo. In discussing the nickname, Patricia Ewer argues that 'the model of masculinity to which the child is expected to conform by his father, and by extension, by the culture into which he is socialised, is evident in the nickname' (2005: 93).

Not only is the word 'bull' associated with strength and power, it is also closely associated with farming and the Afrikaner Nationalism into which Marnus's father is trying to indoctrinate his son. Marnus is faced with the conflict of his own developing sexual identity in an Afrikaner society, coupled with his awareness of his father's sexuality. For the most part, Marnus's father has been the epitome of masculine identity, upholding the apartheid ideologies of masculinity. However, Marnus is later to witness his father sodomising Frikkie and although his father is not wholly homosexual, he cannot be classified as wholly heterosexual either. The tension that exists between the two is reflected as Marnus thinks back to the gendered nicknames his father gave him as a youngster. Rita Barnard points out:

The narrative traces a closed circle. It starts with a list of names and nicknames the protagonist's parents have given him ('Marnus,' 'my son' or 'my little Bull,' 'my little piccanin'); it ends with the narrator's acceptance of these identities and of his position in a racist, hyper-masculinist society that these names simultaneously construct and express. (2001: 207-8)

Behr's selection of nicknames is a good example of the way in which masculine identity is socially constructed. Although patriarchies and the nuclear family unit may have lost some of their more obvious potency since the 1970s chronotope of the novel, as Holter points out, '[t]here is some truth to the idea that [patriarchy] is no longer there. Its *effects* are still often there' (Holter, 2005: 19). This becomes evident in the opening scenes of war-torn Angola in which the older Marnus describes giving instructions to the sergeants and section leaders:

I called together the sergeants and section leaders and instructed them to prepare the extended platoon. While I spoke, I could see the flicker of simultaneous thrill and fear in every set of eyes. After weeks of aimless waiting for a sign – anything to relieve the deadening listlessness – the time has come. Again there is reason to understand our reason here. Once more it is a choice between life and death. (Behr 1996: 12)

Here we see the confirmation of the soldiers' masculinity as each upholds the principles of Afrikaner nationalism by serving his two year conscription in the South African army. Having been raised within the constructs of apartheid, these young men have been brought up to believe that military enrolment is the ideal representation of masculine identity. The 'thrill' they feel is one of finally being able to assert their masculinity by serving their country. Ewer argues that these interjections by the older Marnus tell 'the grim truth about the future outcome of his youthful indoctrination' (2005: 89). Although these young men have been brainwashed into believing that military conscription is the ideal standard of masculinity, their 'thrill' is misplaced as they sacrifice life and identity for a cause with which many would later become very disillusioned.

This indoctrination begins with the gendering of both Marnus and his older sister Ilse. Both are brought up within the constructs of what it means to be a 'real' man and 'good' woman. Cheryl Stobie points out that both have been socialised by their parents 'repeating pithy aphorisms which draw a line between the acceptable and the unacceptable, us and them, Christianity and barbarism' (forthcoming: 10).

A good example of this can be seen as Mum and Dad are preparing to go out one evening and Marnus compliments his mother on looking like Miss South Africa:

I heard Mum say that Mitzi Stander, who was also Miss South Africa, died in a car crash the other day. She was hardly in her grave when *Die Burger* had an article about her husband already going out with the new Miss Orange Free State. Mum said we could only pray that Mitzi's own slate with the Lord was clean when she died.

Dad came into the bedroom dressed in his black penguin suit.

'And how do I look?' he asked, and crossed over the carpet so that we could take a good look from all sides. His dark moustache was trimmed and his mouth stood out more clearly.

'Daddy, you look like Sean Connery,' said Ilse.

'Ja,' I added, feeling so proud because Dad was becoming a general, 'Dad looks just as pretty as Mum.'

'Handsome is probably a better word,' he said, and smiled at me, and tapped lightly with his fist against my chin. I could smell the Old Spice aftershave he uses for special occasions.

'Handsome,' I said, and, 'I wish we could go with you and Mum.'

'Just wait, my little Bull,' Dad said a while later, when we were saying goodbye to them at the front door. 'Your time will come. For tonight, I just want you to take good care of your sister.' (Behr 1996: 17)

A number of things occur in this passage which, on closer examination, we can identify as the deliberate gendering of both Marnus and Ilse. Although Marnus has tried to compliment his mother on her dress, she engages with the repercussions of what it means to be Miss South Africa. Rather than commenting on the fact that it is the dead woman's

husband that has entered into an affair so soon after her death, it is of more concern that she has died without having committed the same sorts of indiscretions.

The ideal home must consist of a faithful husband and wife who observe the rules of a nuclear, Christian family unit. The indiscretion by Mitzi Stander's husband is juxtaposed with the entry of Dad who is the epitome of the patriarchal head of the nuclear family unit. In the knowledge that his son is proud of him, Dad asks how he looks, affirming his masculinity and sexual power amongst the women. This is compounded by the fact that Marnus must not call his father 'pretty' when the more appropriate word is 'handsome'. The image associated with pretty is one of femininity, lacking the machismo and sexual prowess of both a military and patriarchal figure.

For Marnus, the allure is the promise that he will one day be like his father. Until then, despite the considerable age gap between the young Marnus and his older sister, he must look after her. In discussing militarism and masculinity, Paul Higate and John Hopton contend that:

By publicly demonstrating that he has at least the potential to conform to this model of masculinity, a boy or a man may have his masculinity affirmed. (2005: 433)

At this stage, Marnus is witness to his father's promotion to general and the social status he is afforded as a result. For Marnus, this is thrown into conflict later when he observes his father's behaviour after the arrival of the visiting Chilean general. Although 'Dad, as he is called in the novel, is the ideal, upstanding epitome of the patriarch, military man, and conservative Afrikaner hero' (Stobie forthcoming: 10), he in fact commits the most horrendous act of abuse against Marnus's best friend Frikkie, defiling his rank and status as a military man.

The older Marnus reflects on how this image of his father began to shift. He remembers:

Perhaps that summer ultimately determined it. Possibly not even the whole summer – just that one week in December. Yet, by now, I know full-well that you cannot satisfactorily understand an event unless you have a picture of everything that accompanies it: the arrival of the visitor cannot be divorced from what preceded his coming. To understand my own choice, I need to muster as much of the detail as possible. (Behr, 1996: 31)

Up until the arrival of the Chilean general in their house, Marnus is fully socialised into the Afrikaner culture and way of thinking. His father appears to be a heterosexual man who, despite his military rank, is not given to raising his hand to his children. Despite this, Marnus makes the uncomfortable discovery that his father is not the ideal figure to whom Marnus has come to aspire. As Marnus peers through the crack in the floorboards, he sees a figure, whom he assumes to be the General, sodomizing his friend, Frikkie. When Marnus enters his parents' bedroom and is alerted to his father's absence the reader suspect that it was his father who had committed this awful atrocity. This suspicion is later confirmed when Marnus returns to the bedroom where he observes through the hole in the floorboards that the scar on the General's back is noticeably absent. Up until that point, Marnus has created barriers that will not allow him to acknowledge his father's culpability. The concept is a difficult one for the young Marnus to grapple with at a time when heterosexual marriage was a prerequisite for having children. Fathers who deviate from the heterosexual norm present '[a] fundamental challenge to this mainstream conception of masculinity' – particularly for their sons (Marsiglio & Pleck 2005: 261).

It is only years later that the older Marnus reflects on his choice to remain quiet about the violence his father has committed against Frikkie. At the time, he justifies it by deciding:

[...] it's *better* that Frikkie didn't tell me this morning. We know everything about each other. We don't share our secrets with anyone except each other. If I want to tell anyone something in the greatest secrecy, I tell Frikkie. And I know if he wants to tell someone

something, something he doesn't want anyone else to know, then he tells me, and *only* me. If he didn't want to tell me about Dad, then he'll *never* tell anyone. And it's right that way.

Between us the secret will always be safe. (Behr 1996: 199)

Marnus has been raised within the constructs of a rigid Afrikaner identity which espouses a strong militaristic society with men in the role of heterosexual partner and provider, sanctioned by strong affiliations with the church. In this situation, these ideals provide a dual problem for Marnus. Firstly, there is the shame he experiences because of his father's identity. Research conducted on homosexual fathers suggests that 'only 46% of their adolescent children reported that their heterosexual friends knew about their father's sexual orientation' (Marsiglio & Pleck 2005: 262).

This research was conducted in the United States without the background of apartheid that existed in South Africa. Marnus is faced, not only with the global stigma of having a parent who can no longer be fully accepted as heterosexual, but he must also come to terms with what this means for him within the social context of Afrikaner identity. In writing about enforced military conscription of white men, Robert Morrell points out that:

A passive white population accepted these developments not only because it believed government propaganda about '*swartgevaar*' (the danger posed by blacks) but also because the idea of being a man – being a protector, a wage-earner and knowing the right thing to do – made such steps seem perfectly logical. (2001: 17)

Secondly, Marnus must come to terms with what this means for his own sexual identity. Up until this point in the novel, he has accepted the official, Afrikaner view of what it means to be a man. These Afrikaner ideals have largely been taught to Marnus by his father and the revelation of his father's sexual identity now poses irreconcilable problems for Marnus. Stobie points out that

Dad's occupation as a general, in addition to its connection to the military, as a prime metaphor for white South African induction into adult masculinity in the apartheid era, suggests representativity. He is Everyman in this tightly structured and highly stylized allegory. (Stobie forthcoming: 12)

By keeping the secret of his father's identity, Marnus is able to mask the confusion he feels and to deny the existence of his father's bisexuality. David Hall argues that 'naming something and giving it a history (either within an individual life or over a great span of years) does make it available as a way of organizing one's identity and of seeing and proactively creating affiliations' (2005: 96). Marnus has grown up in a society that does not accept anything other than the nuclear family unit. Marnus's discovery that his father's sexuality does not fit neatly into this ideology places his father in a place which has hitherto been made inaccessible to Marnus by societal conditioning. This is problematic for Marnus as marginalised groups such as black people, women, homosexuals or bisexuals are labelled with derogatory terms, such as those used to describe the Spiros:

On Friday afternoons we have *Voortrekkers*. I'm the team leader and Frikkie is my deputy. Our team is Lions and our motto is: *Voorwaarts*. The Spiro twins are Boy Scouts and we always fight about which is better: Voortrekkers or Boy Scouts. We always say the Boy Scouts is naff. (Behr 1996: 46)

Although Marnus is not yet fully indoctrinated into manhood and the Afrikaner notion of masculinity, at this stage, he is well on his way to accepting the power that Afrikaner identity offers him. The implication is that Voortrekkers offer a more powerful alternative to being 'naff'. In discussing such organizations and their influence on masculinity, Higate and Hopton argue that:

Although not all boys and men will ever have any connection with uniformed youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts or the Boys' Brigade, most adult males are aware of the cultural values promoted by such organizations and will have been exposed to such influences via their peers. (2005: 434)

Started by Baden Powell, Boy Scouts was an organisation intended to train anglicised boys in the fields of honour, self-reliance, cleanliness and service to others. Following the Anglo-Boer war, the Afrikaners created a similar organization that was intended to assert Afrikaner masculinity and identity. Marnus's indoctrination is socially constructed in that Voortrekkers is an organization that espouses the Afrikaner ideals and prepares young white boys for military service. In addition to this, the young Marnus undermines the masculinity of the English boys in order to promote his own superiority. In discussing social constructionism, Burr points out that:

[...] what we regard as 'truth' [...] i.e. our current accepted ways of understanding the world, is a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other. (Burr 1995: 4)

In this novel, we are faced with an adolescent who must assimilate the lies and secrets of his father and his family heritage, while trying to find his own sexual identity. This differs from *Embrace* where Karl de Man is faced with his feelings of bisexuality despite strong Afrikaner opposition from his father.

People construct their sexual feelings to the extent that they actively interpret, define, and make sense of their erotic yearnings using systems of sexual meanings articulated by the wider culture.

Sexual identities, perceptions of self as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual in relation to sexual and romantic contexts, are constructed similarly. People learn to identify and label their sexual

feelings through experiences gained with gender roles and their related sexual scripts. (Trolden 1989: 45)

Both *The Smell of Apples* and *Embrace* explore the theme of sexual identity with particular reference to the ways in which young men constructed their identities during apartheid. In both novels, the young male protagonists are confronted with ideals espoused by their respective fathers and in turn, society at large. As each of the boys grows up, he is expected to conform to apartheid and, to a large extent, global ideologies of what it means to be a 'real' man.

The fundamental difference between the novels is that, in *Embrace*, the protagonist is left to face issues of his own bisexuality with strong opposition from within the Afrikaner culture while, in *The Smell of Apples*, he must face the lies and hypocrisies of Afrikaner identity, having witnessed his father's assault of the young Frikkie. In *The Smell of Apples*, the plot moves between two chronotopes. The first is expressed through the naïve and innocent voice of the child who, as Michiel Heyns points out 'is granted absolution through the legal fiction that the child is not accountable, and the related fictional convention that children are "innocent"' (2001: 50). The second is that of the adult, who reflects on the decisions he has made and the circumstances that have allowed him to make the choices he has and to accept the lies and hypocrisies of apartheid.

The purpose of this shift is to allow the reader to witness the far-reaching consequences that these events have and the ways in which they affect the decisions and thinking of the older Marnus. Similarly, *Embrace* also moves between two different chronotopes, but it looks at the crisis of adolescent sexual identity as well as the social structures of Afrikaner identity in which the young child, Karl de Man, grows up. The lies and deceit in which Karl grows up are more acutely felt by the reader as small pieces of information are imparted before the truth behind the event is actually revealed. The technique is one which Behr repeatedly uses in the novel, offering the reader flashes of Karl's childhood memories as they affect him and, at the same time, keeping the reader's curiosity piqued. In one instance, the seemingly loving father, Bok, threatens to kill the 10-year old Karl

(Behr 2000: 208), the memory surfacing at intervals in his life, each time revealing to the reader slightly more of the cause for this comment. These flashbacks create a sense of how troubling this memory is for Karl that he cannot recall it in its entirety until the end of the novel where he is forced to face it in an attempt to reconcile his own identity. The reader is subsequently astonished to read that it is the trivial theft of a hairclip which provokes Bok into the dramatic over-reaction of threatening his son with death.

Another instance is in the initial stages of his involvement with his choir master, Mr Cilliers. Karl clutches at moments with his teacher by referring back to the incident the year before:

‘Sir, do you remember, last year, Sir?’

He frowned. ‘What about last year?’

Silence. A drop of perspiration trickling down my back. I must speak. I must. But the possibility, the likelihood, of this thing turning horrible now threatened to dumb me. I cannot do it. I knew, had all along; cannot go through with it. Speak, Mr Cilliers, you say something. I must get out. It’s all wrong and he’s going to cause endless shit. What am I doing! I must think up something now to make him think he’s misunderstood ...

‘Have you been doing it again?’ he asked.

Eyes terrified on his.

The face was open, even affectionate. Nothing there to say he would break this confidence. He won’t, he won’t: ‘No. No, Mr Cilliers. I’ve just ... It’s just that I’ve started having dreams.’ I felt dizzy at the tension, the sight of the man in front of me, the fear, the lies. (2000: 45-6)

Early on in the novel, Karl reminds his teacher of the events of the previous year. The reader becomes aware that whatever has occurred is acutely traumatic for Karl as he addresses his teacher. Sweat pours down Karl’s back and his panic is emphasized by the

short, sharp sentences and sentence fragments. It is his teacher who breaks the silence when Karl is unable to speak, prying into that which is so obviously causing Karl his distress. Mr Cilliers begins to take advantage of the vulnerable Karl whose infatuation with him has been developing during Karl's time at the school.

The irony of the situation is that although Karl is the victim of child molestation, his homophobic fears and heteronormative beliefs do not stem from this association. In this regard, he has made his own decisions despite being up against heavy opposition. Glen Retief observes that:

Another weapon in the state's arsenal is moral panic. One of the most tenacious myths about homosexuals is that we reproduce ourselves by corrupting the young into our sick and evil ways. And the most virulent manifestation of this myth is the figure of the 'child-molester': the drooling old man who hangs around playgrounds, promising little boys sweets if only they will become homosexuals so that they can have sex with people like him. (1994: 105)

The situation in this novel allows Behr to break down the stereotypical notions of homosexuality, bisexuality and paedophilia. Mr Cilliers is not the drooling, old man but a young, good looking teacher who takes advantage of a pupil's infatuation with him. In addition to this, the headmaster suggests that Mr Cilliers is to blame for Karl's sexuality:

'He forced you to perform disgusting acts with him, didn't he, Karl?'

'No, Mr Mathison. I love him.'

'Karl, he has done the most abominable thing an adult can ever do to a child.' Mathison's eyes now darted around the room, cast around, searched for the right words to say: 'He has indoctrinated you to speak of this aberration as love. Do you know what love is Karl?' (Behr 2000: 666)

The implication of these lines is that it is Mr Cilliers who has caused Karl to say that he loves his teacher. The fact that Karl has previously been punished for homosexual activities amongst his peers is overlooked by the headmaster. Up until this point in the novel, homosexuality is something which is not to be discussed and is shrouded in feelings of negativity and evil. The irony of this situation is that the ‘disgusting acts’ are ones which Karl has actively engaged in and perceives as acts of love. In the meantime, it is his parents and teachers who try to indoctrinate him into the socially acceptable constructs of white South Africans. Rita Barnard makes an observation about *The Smell of Apples* that can be readily applied to *Embrace*:

There the masking of power remains immensely important to its perpetuation: should it ever turn out that the reproduction of the system cannot be ensured through the loud and insistent discourse of the stereotype, the silent bond of secrecy takes over, creating its own process of subjectification, offering the system a certain protection against the inevitable slippages and instabilities that are inherent in a discourse of repetition. (2001: 216)

As already mentioned, Karl’s previous sexual ‘indiscretion’ is ignored by the headmaster, who now tries to blame Karl’s sexual orientation on pederasty. Previously, the English-speaking headmaster had tried to indoctrinate Karl and his peers into homophobic disgust, stereotypically associated with Afrikaner thinking. Behr’s inclusion of an English-speaking headmaster at a school that alternates between English and Afrikaans suggests that the ideologies of homophobia and heteronormativity are not exclusively Afrikaans ones, but were also central to other masculinities. The only exception that Behr offers his reader comes in the form of the Webster family. Dominic’s liberal attitudes, such as his kind and unwavering affection for Beauty, are inherited from his parents, who unconditionally accept his sexuality. Dominic’s aberrant family are in the minority in the novel and their attitudes to masculinity are rare.

In contrast, the headmaster condemns the boys' sexual behaviour by using the Bible and forbidding the subject to be spoken about again:

‘You know what happened to Lot’s wife, don’t you? She turned into a pillar of salt. Lot se vrou, ’n Soutpilaar, verstaan julle my? Because she looked back.’ He paused. ‘Don’t look back at what you’ve done, never. Never speak about it, for to speak about it is to look back and turn into a pillar of salt. You must move on.’ He again seemed on the verge of tears. I looked at him but could only catch phrases of what he was saying. Something by Samuel Barber.

‘You three must go.’ He motioned at the others. ‘Back to prep. You have been caned for not changing your sheets. Do you understand me?’ (Behr 2000: 278)

The headmaster uses the Biblical story of Lot and his wife to scare the boys and make them feel ashamed of their sexuality. Lot’s wife was turned to salt as she looked back to the life of luxury she had enjoyed in Sodom, the city of excess and depravity. David Plummer argues that ‘much of the discourse on homophobia relies on religious imagery for its authority and occult imagery to discredit homosexuality’ (1999: 25). As religious imagery and reference are at the heart of Afrikaner Nationalism, the apartheid system used the Bible as a means of containing chaos and perceived disorder.

In an effort to ensure that Karl reproduces the system of apartheid and the sexual stereotype of masculinity, he is sent to a psychologist by his father. The psychologist insists that Karl must ‘stop acting like a girl in plays,’ ‘learn to be aggressive in the scrum,’ ‘stop reciting poetry,’ ‘quit acting girlish at school,’ ‘stop being friends with girlish boys,’ be friends with boys who were ‘young and manly,’ and stop writing in a ‘curly and girlish’ style (Behr, 2000: 256). The expectations are to abandon any activities that do not reinforce Afrikaner identity while adopting those which do. His aim is to develop masculine traits in Karl such as a veneration for sports – particularly rugby – while developing an aversion to artistic pursuits which are coded effeminate.

Looking at Queer Theory and psychoanalysis, Hall remarks that ‘Freud’s heterocentric, normative system of value and reference, heavily influenced generations of psychoanalysts and therapists, whose all-too-frequent condescension towards homosexuals reinforced a sense of self-hatred and shame’ (2005: 109). This self-hatred and shame are evident in Karl’s thought-patterns as he tries to reconcile his sexuality with the expectations of parents, teachers and the wider community. His friend Dominic offers a more relativistic perspective when he tries to assure Karl that ‘there are all sorts of things in the Bible that have zero relevance in modern times’ (Behr 2000: 318).

Karl’s confusion is compounded by the fact that the headmaster makes a request for Karl to report ‘anything similar to “the business” of last term’ (295). Although he feels a momentary thrill in his new-found masculinity, it is short lived as it conflicts with his sexual desire. In discussing the dawning perception of homosexual identity, Troiden points out that men in this position ‘can no longer take their heterosexual identities as given, but they have yet to develop perceptions of themselves as homosexuals’ (1989: 53). The term ‘homosexual’ is problematic in analysing *Embrace*, as Karl is neither exclusively heterosexual nor homosexual. This becomes evident as Karl’s erotic fantasies are described and he acknowledges his desire for a number of different men as well as for Alette and Marguerite Almeida (Behr 2000: 611-2).

To encourage heterosexual behaviour in him, Karl is given the ‘responsibility’ of spying on the boys who engage in same-sex relationships. In talking about Behr’s life, Stobie points out that he is ‘cast in the role of scapegoat, bearing the sins of the community, not only of Afrikaners but also of all white South Africans’ (forthcoming: 8). Similarly, Karl bears the sins of the homoeroticism that is rife throughout the school as he is constantly plagued by his own sexual desires. Instead of reporting his peers to the authorities however, Karl attains power by maintaining silence about surreptitious homosexual activity.

The one relief from this conflict is his escape to the fort where he engages with his Uncle Klaas and his silent black companion. Klaas embodies everything that resists Afrikaner masculinity and nationalism. Karl's enquiries lead to his discovery that his uncle does not in fact have a 'mad gene,' as family lore has suggested:

'What happened, Uncle Klaas?'

He takes the zol from the Silent One, inhales, holds it in his lungs and passes the hot stub to me.

'Great-Grandfather Liebenberg, and Great-Grandmother – let us not forget her – they chased me out. For loving.'

'What do you mean, they chased you for loving?' Flick the butt into the river. Tss.

'For not loving a girl.'

'But you said it was for loving?' Suddenly the story, the one I have grown up with, is unravelling. My heart beats in my mouth. I now want him to stop. I do not want to hear the rest. He leans over to the Silent One and rests his hand briefly on the man's exposed ankle. Then he leans towards me and runs his hand up my arm. (Behr 2000: 629)

Karl's self-hatred stems from his sexuality and at this point, he makes the horrifying realisation that his uncle does not have the hereditary 'mad gene' but is homosexual. This is compounded by the fact that Karl is left to identify homoeroticism with a life of secrecy resulting in poverty and rejection. Karl's panic is revived when he reflects on his mother's words that 'a white man who cannot make it in this country is not worth being called white' (629). Owing to the fact that he has been brought up within the social constructs of Afrikaner identity and religion, Karl does not make the distinction that it is not his uncle who can't make it in society but his family who have made it impossible for Klaas to do so. In writing on homophobia during apartheid, Stobie argues that:

In a society that was not only homophobic, but also racist and sexist, the most vocal and well-organized group during this period consisted of

white, middle-class, urban gay men. The relative privilege of this group of homosexuals did not, however, protect them from the normalizing power of 'Christian National' hegemony. (2003: 38)

Karl's terror at being cast out on the grounds of his sexuality is compounded by his uncle's observation that "In some ways you and I, Karl'tjie, are alike. You – I." The pronouns connected by a dash' (Behr 2006: 629). Karl is convinced that his success or failure in life hinges on his sexuality and, identifying similar sexual preferences in his uncle, he presupposes that he will end up not only as a tramp but also with a black man as his partner. The so-called 'Christian' attitude that Karl has grown up with lacks any form of human understanding and results in his not only hating himself but hating anyone else who is not indoctrinated into Afrikaner identity.

In addition to showing how Karl genders himself within the context of the broader Afrikaans community, the passage raises issues of gendering black men. Behr draws attention to the status of Klaas's partner through the label of the 'Silent One' which Karl gives him. Although it has been over ten years since apartheid was dismantled, current popular narrative suggests that attitudes which are developed within the novel are still prevalent today. Stobie discusses this prevalence throughout Africa. Referring back to apartheid she points out that:

Over the apartheid era, a shift occurred from social/supportive groups to gay activism, the tempo increasing as the apartheid machine was dismantled. At the same time, such influences as a growing democratic movement and feminism led to expressions of dissatisfaction and feelings of exclusion from blacks and women within the queer community, and a number of organizations underwent radical transformation. Queers also worked for rights within political groups. (Stobie 2003: 38-9)

Although Behr's novel is set prior to the existence of many social and supportive groups and certainly prior to any political activism, we see the beginnings of activism expressed through the voice of Klaas. It is Klaas who draws Karl's attention to the shortcomings of Afrikaner identity and forces him to face up to the reality of his own sexuality. While the 'Silent One' appears to be his partner and equal in every sense, he never voices his opinions and occupies a liminal space. The result is that the reader is more acutely aware of the emasculation of black men during apartheid.

Klaas is cast in the role of surrogate father to Karl as he attends boarding school. Karl sneaks out of the hostel, seeking Klaas's opinions even though they are so repugnant to him in many ways. The opposing ideologies which Klaas offers the adolescent Karl are contradictory to the masculine identity Bok expects of him. During Karl's initial visits to the fort, he refuses the hallucinogenic drugs from his uncle, symbolising a rejection of his uncle's ideologies and sexuality. Later, he is able to take cognizance of his uncle's beliefs if not accept them and following this shift of perspective, he partakes of the drug with a mixture of defiance and repulsion. In this respect, Klaas has been offered as a father-figure to Karl while simultaneously challenging the social conventions of Bok's idea of masculine identity.

Chapter 2: Race and the 'Other'

In the spheres of the workplace and street, city and 'homeland', the struggles over political ideals, strategy, and agency also involved struggle over the meanings of manhood. The definition of what it meant to be involved in the fight for liberation as a radical, a militant, a freedom fighter, a comrade – and conversely, what it meant to be a traitor or a 'collaborator' – was significantly bound up in what it meant to be a man. (Waetjen & Maré 2001: 198)

Apartheid has had considerable influence on constructions of masculine identities among black South African men. During apartheid, white, male Afrikaner nationalists used their power over other races as well as all women to assert their authority, thereby affirming their masculinity. Although there were consequences for both women and black groups, I look at Behr's reflection on the way in which Afrikaners asserted their masculinity and in turn the effects that apartheid has had on the representation of black masculinities in his novels.

In both novels, there is a strong sense of the highly militaristic state of apartheid. White men were conscripted into the army and were trained in the use of weaponry and violence. In turn, black men were excluded from these masculine roles and came to see the gun as a means of fighting for freedom and rights. Using the novels, I analyse the ways in which power dynamics and militaristic behaviour influenced attitudes towards the 'other' as well as affected constructions of masculinities among men of other races.

The following passage from *The Smell of Apples* alerts us to a variety of attitudes to race that were developed during apartheid and to some extent are still prevalent in South Africa today. Although apartheid has ended and racism has been eradicated from legal and political authority, there are still issues raised in the passage below that Behr offers as reflections on current issues within South Africa:

The food is ready and dished into mum's big porcelain set, so Doreen asks whether it's all right for her to leave. She says her youngest son, Little-Neville, is arriving by train tomorrow from Touwsrivier where he goes to school. I've never seen Little-Neville, but Doreen talks about him a lot – much more than about any of her other children. She always says that he is a clever boy and that she wants to give him an education. That's why she sends him to school in Touwsrivier, to get him away from the influences of Grassy Park and Cape Flats. All the coloureds live on the Cape Flats and at weekends they get drunk and then they murder and rape each other. (Behr 32: 1996)

Two things are striking in this passage: in the first instance, the control that white people had over black people is evident in the fact that Doreen must ask permission to leave the house, and she can only do so once her duties are completed. Marnus is being raised within the constructs of Afrikaner identity with the aim of becoming a 'real man' and being the head of his own home. Within the social hierarchy, men were afforded more control than women, and black or coloured women in particular were afforded the least status. It is interesting to note that despite her treatment, Marnus later notes that 'we all love Doreen' and she packs little surprises for his lunch while lunches that his mother prepares are normally thrown away (Behr 1996: 32).

Jenny Altschuler points out that 'it was at home that white children became aware of the structure of difference and authority in which they took up a position based on gender, class and race' (32: 2006). It is shocking that despite the fact that Doreen has worked for the Erasmus family long enough to know what Marnus enjoys for lunch, they have made little or no effort to learn anything about the dynamics of her family. Marnus has absorbed his parents' attitude that 'Doreen is always telling some story about why she was late, or why she was going to be late' (32). The family shows very little empathy for the plight of black or coloured people, giving scant consideration to Doreen's family or circumstances. Again, Altschuler observes that 'children learned to render domestic

workers invisible; they learned that while some people are valuable enough to be noticed, others did not warrant a “reciprocal gaze” (32).

The second instance of race and the assertion of masculine identity relates to the education of Little-Neville. Although he is a ‘clever boy’, he is not afforded the same education as Marnus and must be sent to Touwsrivier for a better education. In the young Marnus’s eyes this is as a result of the drinking in coloured communities which culminates in murder and rape. At this young age, Marnus is brainwashed into believing that murder and rape are evils prevalent only among coloured people, while the constructed and sanctioned Afrikaner masculinity in which he is growing up is idealised and a test of his manhood.

Patricia Ewer has pointed out that the aim of indoctrinating Marnus into ‘parroting’ his parents’ prejudices and ‘formulaic utterances’:

[...] was to keep the other as far distant as possible from the self, so that the binaries, “white”/ “non-white,” civilised/ barbaric, were never recognised as being supplementary one to the other, but maintained in a position of artificial polarity. (2005: 88)

Although there are distinct associations with the polarities of ‘white’ and ‘civilised’ and ‘non-white’ and ‘barbaric’ in the novel, these are often not acknowledged. When Little-Neville does not make it home on the train, Doreen’s maternal instincts are brushed aside by Marnus’s mother and yet the latter is clearly distraught, later on, at the fact that this young boy has been so brutally burned. Ilse says:

‘Tell him, Mummy! Tell Marnus what they did to him,’ and her shoulders start shaking so much she stops speaking.

I don’t know what’s going on any more, and Mum has tears in her eyes too. Mum gets up from her haunches and leans against the basin. She presses her lips together and starts speaking slowly: ‘Little-

Neville and one of his cousins went to the railway yard in Touwsrivier – to steal some charcoal. They wanted to take it to Doreen’s sister, before he came to Cape Town.’ She closes her eyes before going on: ‘Then someone caught him. They took off his clothes and rubbed lard or something all over his back. And then ... they held him up in front of the locomotive furnace.’ Now mum is crying and I’ve got tears in my eyes. I don’t know what to do. If only Mum and Ilse would stop crying I’ll be able to think. I put my hand on Mum’s arm and say: ‘Don’t cry, please, Mum.’ (Behr 1996: 130-1)

At this stage it is unknown who Little-Neville’s assailants were and Marnus’s mother and sister offer a maternal and gut reaction to an appalling crime committed against a child. Later on, when it is revealed that Little-Neville was attacked by whites, his mother’s moment of liberal humanism is negated by the fact that she adds the rider ‘it probably wasn’t right for him to steal charcoal’ (138).

Marnus finds himself caught between his mother’s observation that Little-Neville shouldn’t be stealing and the fact that the punishment does not fit the ‘crime’: ‘Whether Little-Neville’s a Coloured or not, it doesn’t matter, you shouldn’t do things like that to someone, specially not a child’ (138). Despite social conditioning, Marnus is aware of the inhumanity and injustice of the crime that has been committed. Within the novel we are aware of the way in which Afrikaners asserted their power through the Group Areas Act, Bantu Education and the sanctioning of unprecedented violence.

One of the concerns in South Africa, thematised by Behr, is the rise in crime and more particularly, in violent criminal activities. The passages I have discussed so far offer insight into violence against black people and in turn, just cause for retaliation. Jacklyn Cock has attributed the current use of firearms to constructions of masculine identities:

Every day 32 people are murdered with a firearm in South Africa (*Gun Free Newsletter* 1998). The level of violent crime and conflict linked to

the proliferation of guns and other small arms is an indicator of a level of social disintegration in South Africa which threatens among other things the consolidation of democracy. Guns are a key feature of hegemonic masculinity. Their ownership and use varies across racial lines and between institutions, but nevertheless is central to the way many men act out their masculinity. (2001: 43)

Early in the novel, in a discussion between Marnus's mother, Leonore, and her sister Karla, we get a sense of black men rebelling against white militaristic rule. Karla takes a more liberal view, trying to challenge her sister's preconceived notions while Leonore adopts the racist attitude that her husband instils in his family. Karla's views see her banished from the family, forbidden to communicate with her niece and nephew:

Tannie Karla said she thought it was a disgrace that we never even went to the trouble of finding out why Chrisjan hadn't come back to work. After all, she said, he had worked in the garden for more than thirty years. Mum said it wasn't necessary for us to go looking for him to find out why he walked off.

'Karla,' Mum said, 'there is nothing to find out! Things have changed. That's what the Coloureds are like nowadays. The days are long gone when an employer could rely on their loyalty and honesty. That's how they've become – drifting around from place to place.'

'But Chrisjan worked in your garden for years, Leonore! How can you say *the Coloureds* drift around?' Tannie Karla asked, and frowned at mum.

'That's exactly what I'm saying, the Coloureds aren't what they used to be. There's restlessness and unreliability about them. They're becoming more and more like the Bantus. You've seen for yourself the way things are going down in Durban with the dockworkers – striking in their thousands. Now they're even speaking about forming *trade unions* and the like. They're changing – ' (Behr 1993: 106-7)

The result of the conversation, coupled with Karla's attack on Leonore's marriage, is that Leonore leaves her sister and will not engage in any discussion that undermines the hegemonic Afrikaner way of thinking into which she is indoctrinated and in turn into which she is indoctrinating her children. The irony of her statement is that the dockworkers' strike came about as a result of white Afrikaner attitudes to race and the rigid militarism used to maintain their positions of power. In discussing violence by men and gender, Morrell makes the observation that:

African men have historically been active in resisting, accommodating, and attempting to end class and race oppression. Class and race oppression had a specific gender impact on black men: it emasculated them. They were called "boys," treated as subordinates, denied respect. (2005: 283)

Leonore believes that Chrisjan is just one of many coloureds who are no longer to be trusted. He is one of 'the Coloureds' who just wander off after stealing their fishing tackle from the garage. She is blinded to the fact that it is white oppression which has led to this rising up against apartheid and that the system in which she and her husband are raising their children is fundamentally flawed.

Despite the sympathy she feels for Doreen and Little-Neville, Leonore does not know the other woman's surname and maintains a hold over her by exercising control through her status as the wife of a white Afrikaner. The status of this white patriarchy is adopted by Marnus who admits he 'didn't know there were also coloured Malans' (Behr 188: 1996). Patricia Ewer has observed that:

The knowledge of a family name shared between white Malans and Others would have been an admission of everything apartheid sought to deny. The binary dualisms of self and other, rather than being poles

apart, are thus shown to be supplementary to, and part of, each other.
(2005: 95)

Leonore's prejudices are echoed in an extreme version by Ilse as they leave the hospital:

'I think it's better if he dies.'

'My child!' Mum says. 'How on earth can you say something like that?' Mum and I are completely shocked to hear what Ilse said.

'Mummy, just imagine what he's going to feel like once he starts remembering what happened to him. Think of how he's going to *hate* white people.' (Behr 1996: 191)

Leonore has previously expressed a growing paranoia about the change in coloured people and their resistance to white patriarchal rule. Taking her views to their logical conclusion, the only way to eradicate black hatred would have been death. In the case of Little-Neville this would mean a death that would be a result of an act of violence on a child. Although Marnus is shocked by his sister's logic, he too is indoctrinated in a culture where masculinity is affirmed by power.

Marnus has also been raised to accept these prejudices and although he claims they all love Doreen, he unwittingly accepts her subservience. Unlike her counterpart, Gloria, who works for the Delports, Doreen is 'not as forward and cheeky as Gloria, and she only speaks when spoken to' (32). However, the binaries of black and white prove to be problematic as Marnus and Frikkie consider the General's racial background:

Frikkie asks whether I found out how the General got his scar. I answer that I haven't asked him, and I warn Frikkie *not* to call him 'the General'. It's Mister Smith. I tell him that the General is half-Spaniard and half-Indian.

'But then he's coloured!' Frikkie cries out. 'I *thought* he was as dark as anything.'

‘You’re mad!’ I answer. ‘You have to have real black blood in you to be a Coloured.’

‘Well! What do you think Indians are?’

‘I don’t know, but they’re not black. And anyway, you’re not meant to know about it.’ (166)

The interaction of these two boys is suggestive of the problematic black/white binary which Behr sets up here. The Chilean General can be seen as analogous to Marnus’s own father in his physical appearance as well as the topographical landscape and the ideological landscape from which he comes (Ewer 2005: 102). Despite their similarities, the General is not white and Frikkie struggles to categorise him according to one of the accepted binaries of either black or white. Conversely, Marnus, who is fascinated by the General’s masculinity, considers his military power to be the defining factor in establishing his race and acceptance within Afrikaner nationalism.

The boys’ discussion mirrors Gloria’s comment that ‘there is *lots* of milk in this coffee’ when Marnus observes that she must be ‘half-kaffir herself’ (Behr 1996: 54). Although Gloria is of mixed race, she holds no power as she is considered to be of black descent and is female. Conversely, Doreen is humble and subservient, unlike Gloria who, as Ewer points out, ‘as a victim of Apartheid, insists on her own system of binary differences as a means of accessing power’ (2005: 99).

Unlike *The Smell of Apples*, *Embrace* is set in Natal and deals more particularly with masculinities in terms of relationships with black game rangers rather than from within the more liminal space of coloured and Indian people. Early on in the novel, we are introduced to Boy, whose name is suggestive of the power differentials that existed within apartheid South Africa. These power differentials are exposed by the young Karl, whose naivety is apparent in his childlike speech:

Jonas and Boy carry guns like Bok. Because Bok must look after them when they are scared of elephant in Ndumu. Because Jonas and Boy are

kaffirs and kaffirs don't know anything Bok must take care of them. Kaffirs are dangerous. Kaffirs are stupid. Thick like pap and their lips. They also stink because they never bath. Kaffirs are also niggers and wogs and houtkoppe and boys and coons and baboons and Afs and natives and Zulus and Muntus and Sothos and Xhosas and the piccaninnies hang rocks on their filafoois to make them look like black mambas. Bokkie doesn't allow Jonas and Boy into the house they must wait outside. Me and Lena go to the hut and sit and drink magou with the boys and they teach me the drums and we sing with the drums and how to cut wood for masks and statues. I love Jonas best. Jonas is best on drums. Jonas teaches me to sing 'Ihashi igabane'. I love Boy too. Boy carries me on his shoulders and his hair is like Lossies's feathers and he smells like fire and grass and if I fall asleep he carries me home. Boy is strong and looks after Bokkie when Bok's away with Jonas on elephant patrols or chasing poachers. When Bok's away on the Save the White Rhino then Boy sleeps with the gun outside the kitchen wall so we can call him if something happens. In the bush kaffirs know their place. In town Uncle Michael says that Munts are restless like in Tanganyika. (Behr 2000: 69)

As with *The Smell of Apples*, we see the children's natural bonding with the employees interspersed with the parroting of their parents' ideologies. The passage begins with the observation that Bok and Jonas both carry guns; guns which Karl later admits are used to protect the family in Bok's absence. Despite this realisation, the young Karl adopts the broader societal attitude that 'Kaffirs are dangerous. Kaffirs are stupid.' We later learn that this attitude is one which stems from the fears of men like Uncle Michael whose authority as a white male is permanently at risk.

As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, white domination was guaranteed by the power of nationalist militarism. Any rebellion against this militarism was therefore a threat to the existing white, Afrikaner domination. In their research, Higate and Hopton

argue that a reciprocal relationship exists between militarism and masculinity, each validating the existence of the other (2005: 434). This can be seen in a closer analysis of Bok, who, although he carries a gun for the purposes of his work, had previously served in the army and considered it to be a true indicator of masculinity:

‘I don’t want to be in the army either,’ I spoke through chewing, ‘but that’s the way things are.’ Then, without checking myself, unable to keep the thought off my lips: ‘There’s no way out and I cannot face the scorn of not going. Bok will want me to go; he was in the army for three years in Potchefstroom. He says it makes a man of a boy.’ [...]

‘Yes,’ Dominic interrupted my thoughts, steel in his voice. ‘Dad says the army makes a man of a boy in the same way a rape makes a woman of a girl.’ I chewed on the meaning of Dr Webster’s words. (Behr 2000: 49-1)

It is only as he matures that Karl is made aware of the lies and hypocrisies of the system of masculinity into which his father is indoctrinating him. Remembering his earlier argument, that it wasn’t Karl who needed a psychiatrist but rather Bok (321), Dominic yet again challenges Karl to reassess Bok’s flawed rationality. In writing on *The Smell of Apples*, David Medalie makes a trenchant point which can be applied to *Embrace*:

Not only is it virtually impossible for an impressionable young mind to escape such an assault unharmed, it is also difficult for the reader to do much more than register the pronounced ironies. (2000: 51)

Karl has grown up with complete faith in his father’s absolutist ideologies and it is difficult for him to see beyond these. For example, early on, Karl is led to believe that while it is important for Boy and Jonas to be armed, it is his father that will have to save them from an attack by elephant. Despite the fact that he parodies his parents, Karl trusts that Boy will protect the family in Bok’s absence. In addition to this, although Boy and Jonas may not enter the De Man house, the same privilege of privacy is not extended to

them. Despite the incessant flow of insults, the young Karl admits that he loves both Boy and Jonas, a feeling which the older Karl doubts he has for his own father:

And Bok, did I love him or like him or neither? It was chilling to wonder whether I neither liked nor loved my father. The recognition that my mind could even entertain such a separation shocked me. This, like those terrible thoughts I'd had of Bok at Lake Malawi was something never to be said out loud. (Behr 2000: 370)

Where Karl's father can only accept him in the mould of the ideal Afrikaner man, Jonas and Boy are seen to protect him at his most vulnerable. It is at Lake Malawi that Karl realises that his father has known about Karl's homoerotic experiences since his caning at school and has refused to engage in any effort to understand his son. The irony is that Bok fails to live up to Karl's perception of his father's Afrikaner heroism, showing up the lies and hypocrisies in which Karl finds himself trapped. Interestingly, the result is that Karl wishes to be like 'Chaka Zulu' and feed his father to the hyenas:

Like nothing more than an old black kaffir girl imprisoned in a hut, you will feel your own arms tear off, beg me for clemency denied, cry out in pain when hearing your own bones crunch in the foulest of the night's jaws. (Behr 2000: 343)

Although Karl has been raised to despise black masculinity, it is Chaka to whom he turns in the heat of the moment to exact the worst possible punishment he can imagine on his father. He wishes to reduce his father to the lowest perceived denominator in apartheid South Africa – a despised black 'girl'. This is heightened by Bok's firm belief that an important aspect of masculinity is heterosexual potency. He affirms his own potency, and by association his power, to his son at a young age by visibly caressing Bokkie in front of Karl, 'his bronzed fingers venturing briefly between her barely covered thighs' (12). Ken Plummer has pointed out that:

Not only is the penis the source of the male's erotic pleasures – a feature that even young boys can learn, and one that can make masturbation such a prominent feature of male sexuality – but it is also an enormously *potent* symbol. Engorged and erect, it is a sign of male power, assertion, and achievement, a gun to conquer the world. (2005: 178)

Although Karl wants to reduce his father to the status of a black woman, it is sad that he is still able to assert his own masculinity in terms of both race and gender. This is rooted in an earlier assertion of his power as a young white boy when he enters Boy and Jonas's living quarters and steals items, threatening them for wanting to report him to his father:

I grab a mask and a grass place mat and run away with Jonas and Boy calling after me to return their things. Jonas follows me as I run. He grabs me from behind and holds me by the shoulders.

‘No steal Kal. Kal no steal.’ Shaking his head, frowning at me.

I burst into tears and say: ‘Mina tell Bas Bok wena shaja Kal. Bok shaja wena.’

He has done nothing more than grab me by the arm. Yet, I have threatened to tell Bok that he, Jonas, has hit me. I'm warning him that Bok will beat him. Bok will of course do no such thing, that much I know. But of my power and Jonas's language – or rather our commanding variant of imperatives – I know enough, already at five, to threaten him even as I weep. Yet, the moment when I will grasp the meanings of our daily barbarism, the layers upon layers of brutal significance, as well as when I care enough to inquire with any measure of self-awareness about the boys and myself, that moment is a future telling point beyond the pages bound in your hands. (Behr 2000: 272)

Even at a young age, Karl learns to manipulate, to his advantage, the fact that he is white. As with the confessional narrative of *The Smell of Apples* it is only many years later that

Karl will be able to reflect on the inhumanity of his actions and the actions of those around him. As a youngster, Karl is moulded by the social constructs in which he grows up and to which he is exposed. His friend Dominic offers some measure of balance in Karl's adolescent years and the flashes of guilt he experiences culminate in his later realisation that his behaviour was unacceptable. In some respects, this realisation reflects on Behr's own real-life experience and his acknowledgement of his spying and the consequences of these actions. This picks up on Stobie's observation which I quoted earlier in which she recognises that Behr was merely a scapegoat (forthcoming: 8).

Similarly, Karl is placed in the role of the scapegoat in this passage as the reader feels considerable disdain for a five-year-old who has learnt that he can treat a black man so callously and with such little regard. Although Bok would not condone Karl's behaviour, Karl's ability to threaten a black man with his father's wrath reflects the immense power Bok has. He exploits Jonas and Boy in order to eke out a living for himself and is only better off because of the colour of his skin. While Jonas and Boy are more fortunate than some, in that they are employed, 'this should not divert attention from the fact that, relative to the bosses, they are poor, and they probably support a great many family members on their wages' (Morrell & Swart 2005: 102). The reality of this situation is made clear when Boy is accused of stealing a firearm and unlike Karl, who gets away with his crime, Boy is convicted and the worst possible view is taken of his crime although he was merely trying to feed his family:

We go to court to see how they send Boy to jail. Magistrate says Boy was going to help the poachers but Interpreter says Boy says that's not true. Interpreter says Boy has a wife and kids. He's lying says Bok. I sit in the middle between Bok and Bokkie and it's hot and sweaty where my legs are on the wooden bench and there's nobody else in the court. Everyone doesn't speak and only the Magistrate must ask questions and Interpreter says into Zulu and Boy talks to Interpreter in Zulu and Interpreter tells Magistrate in English what Boy said in Zulu. Then Boy starts crying and Magistrate asks Interpreter what's wrong with Boy.

Interpreter asks Boy something in Zulu and Boy cries and says something in Zulu and the Interpreter tells Magistrate that Boy says his wife and children need money and how are his children going to eat if he goes to jail? Magistrate is sweating on his bald pink head like a plucked pigeon. Magistrate says he will show mercy because it's the first time Boy has stolen. Boy will get twelve cuts. Bok blows through his nose and shakes his head. Boy stops crying and doesn't look at us when they take him away. Bok says there's no justice in this world. Boy won't be a game guard anymore and he's only getting twelve cuts for stealing a firearm. What's becoming of this country? Going the same way as Tanganyika. Maybe it was like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. (Behr 2000: 217-8)

Although Boy has served the De Man family as well as the surrounding wildlife, he is accused of stealing a firearm with the intention of aiding poachers. While Bok has known Boy and entrusted him with the task of protecting the family in his absence, he refuses to accept Boy's testimony that he has a family of his own for whom he is trying to provide. Morrell has pointed out that:

For white men, the uneven distribution of power gave them privileges but also made them defensive about challenges (by women, blacks, and/or other men) to that privilege. For black men, the harshness of life on the edge of poverty and the emasculation of political powerlessness gave their masculinity a dangerous edge. Honour and respect were rare, and getting it and retaining it (from white employers, fellow labourers or women) was often a violent process. (2001: 18)

While we realise that Bok would never have tolerated the behaviour of his five-year-old son stealing from Boy, we see that the 'respect' he shows Boy is limited to his expectations of the other man. As soon as Boy steps out of the confines of their understanding, he becomes a threat to Bok and to the larger white community. The

unfortunate irony is that his wages are insufficient to provide for his family and it is in an effort to maintain a sense of his masculinity that he is forced to steal. The situation is further fuelled by the court, which reduces Boy to what some perceive as the feminisation of tears. Boy's punishment is to be physically assaulted and to be removed from his job.

Throughout the novel, Behr raises the theme of race in relation to the establishment of masculine identity during apartheid. Behr approaches this from two perspectives. We see the fear that black men and their sexual prowess pose to white society coupled with the ways in which a white militarism oppresses and asserts power over black men. As Karl grows up, he is exposed to the conflicting attitudes of his father, Klaas, Dominic and society and must somehow find his own masculine identity from amongst these.

Chapter 3: Women and Masculine Identities

The family is typically considered the main institution for both the production and reproduction of polarized gender values. Although individuals are socialized in many different contexts throughout their lives (school, neighbourhood, community, peer group, workplace, church, polity), family tends to be the primary initial socialization agent, acting as a microcosm of society and providing a child's first exposure to interaction with others. (Adams & Coltrane 2005: 232)

In both *The Smell of Apples* and *Embrace*, we see the ways in which the young protagonists' gender construction is represented within the structures of their home lives. Through the naïve confessional narrative of both boys, we can clearly begin to see the effects of this gendering and the ways in which both boys are socialised into asserting their power and authority.

Coupled with this, we see the ways in which women are gendered and the ways in which they are moulded and at times the way in which they reject and rebel against this system of gendering. In *The Smell of Apples* we see the polarised figures of Doreen and Gloria and the ways in which they react not only to gendering but gendering with regard to race. In addition, we see the polarised characters of Leonore and Karla and their differences in opinion on the patriarchal society in which they find themselves. In *Embrace* we also have polarised figures in the characters of Karl and Dominic, this time exploring their learnt, masculine attitudes to women and race.

Although the novels offer us insight into the assertion of masculine power over women, the novels do not offer a cut-and-dried case of gender roles. Rather, we see the individuality of women and the effects that class and race have on their roles within the family and the larger community in which they live.

In *The Smell of Apples* Behr delineates men's attitudes to women and in turn their reactions to a patriarchal society. We are offered insights into the characters of both the white and coloured women in the novel as well as the young Zelda Kemp.

In the first instance, we are introduced to the polarised characters of Gloria and Doreen. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Doreen is a subservient woman whose aim is to provide for her family and to survive within the social constructions of a white Afrikaans family. The young Marnus is convinced that owing to her subservience, she treats in his lunchbox and his mother's more favourable views of her, compared to other coloureds in the novel, 'she might go to heaven. In heaven she'll live with other Christian Coloureds in small houses and the Lord will reward her for never boozing it up like the rest' (Behr 1996: 39).

In discussing Marnus's skewed perspective, Stobie has contended that 'Marnus speculates about their chances in the hereafter, which in his mind mirrors the hierarchical conditions under apartheid' (forthcoming: 25). Religion, which is one of the underlying principles of Afrikaner identity, is used by Marnus to justify his understanding of the position of coloured and black people within the system of apartheid.

Compared to Doreen, Gloria is a more vivacious character who defies white patriarchy and the role she is expected to fulfil:

Because Mrs Delpont is seldom there in the afternoons, Frikkie and I can wander around the streets while Mum thinks we're doing our homework under Gloria's supervision. But Gloria is hardly ever there herself, and even when she's there, she doesn't care two hoots about what we get up to. Mostly she is painting her lips or standing in front of the bathroom mirrors sticking a funny comb into her afro, trying to make it look bigger. Heaven knows when she gets time to clean the house and do the ironing. (Behr 1996: 4)

The young Marnus recognises that Gloria is neglecting her responsibility of supervising the boys' homework. However, he finds it odd that she is applying make-up and combing her hair. Although Marnus is intrigued by the brush and Gloria's efforts to enlarge her afro, his racism precludes him from recognising that she is claiming her own sexual identity. Simultaneously her afro is a large hair style the boys cannot help noticing and is representative of racial pride she feels. Marnus's reaction is completely different when his own mother dresses up for his father's promotional dinner. He says that he 'couldn't help staring [...] she looked even more beautiful than Frikkie Delport's mother who came second in the Miss South Africa competition' (15).

Marnus's reaction to the two women's efforts reflects not only the role of women within apartheid, but the role of women according to their colour. In discussing the way that boys and men are socialised in the United States in the 20th century, Adams and Coltrane make the following point:

The way we raise boys in our society not only reinforces masculine personality ideals but also encourages behaviour that reflects those ideals. We valorize manhood from the start, from the beginning of their lives, to transmit that valorization to our children. Children realize, early on, that if they are fortunate enough to be born with the legitimating penis, then they are likely to receive rewards, rights, privileges, and entitlements that come along with it, although the amount of those rewards is premised on other social factors as well. On the other hand, if they are female, they realize that they are destined to help provide those rewards to their more privileged brothers. That is, children begin to 'act out' the gender scripts that they have learned. (2005: 236-7)

This point is clearly reflected in Marnus and Frikkie's treatment of Zelda Kemp at various stages in the novel. At one point in the novel, Marnus recalls that Frikkie was only allowed to come and stay provided he behave himself. On his previous visit, Frikkie

'got into trouble for breaking leaves off Mum's aloes and then rubbing the aloe juice in Zelda Kemp's mouth' (Behr 1996: 53). The phallic imagery of the aloe, coupled with the bitter aloe juice, provides the reader with a strong sense of masculine power that Frikkie has learnt as a young white male.

In commenting on the later incident at the lighthouse in which Zelda is tormented by the boys, Patricia Ewer points out that:

Zelda is also excluded from accession to the privileges of the phallus, but in more ways than the more fortunate Ilse, whose appropriately ill-fitting garments she inherits. Her red-haired brothers are allowed to go hatless as it is considered acceptable for boys to be freckled. Zelda, at the risk of a beating, is constrained to wear her hat out of doors at all times so that her skin remains "as white as paper" (58) She is almost killed in the attempt to retrieve this protective covering, guarantor, in the face of her family's poverty and their social proximity to the "coloureds," of her credentials as a "white" girl, when Frikkie steals it and dares her to reclaim it at personal risk (60). [...] The terrified figure, still obediently clutching her hat to her head and running from them, is the dispossessed female child who has no privileged access to, and who is permanently under threat from, the phallic structures of culture. (1995: 109)

In a society where social hierarchy is determined first by colour and then by class, Zelda is forced to try and establish any form of status in her attempt to affirm her 'whiteness'. Frikkie is able to take advantage of this and torment her, and through his complacency, Marnus is equally responsible for the violation of Zelda as an 'inferior' woman. Comparatively, Ilse, from whom Zelda has inherited her clothing, has more power in that she is born into a more affluent family of social standing.

However, despite this, Ilse is still confined to the role of an 'inferior' female. When the General assumes she will follow in her mother's footsteps, Ilse points out that she does not necessarily have to do so; she could 'become a doctor or a teacher' (Behr 1996: 41). Despite this, her aspirations are largely overlooked and certainly not encouraged. Ewer observes that 'Ilse's relinquishing of her participation in the paramilitary organisation, "*Voortrekkers*" is accepted with disappointment by her father (46), Marnus's decision to give up singing is delightedly encouraged by "Dad" to whom male singers are "poofsters" (104)' (1995: 108).

Both Ilse and Marnus are socially conditioned by their parents and, particularly Dad, into adopting the role of the nuclear family unit. Cheryl Stobie has observed that 'Marnus's sister's name, Ilse, is an anagram of the Afrikaans word "siel," or soul. The three of them function as Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (forthcoming: 12). The social conditioning to which Marnus has been subjected becomes evident when comparing his response to Gloria's dressing herself up in front of the mirror with his mother's dressing up. As the relationship between Leonore and her husband develops, we are witness to the conditioning which has led Marnus to internalise these gendered roles. Unlike Frikkie's mother, Marnus's mother fetches and carries her children and predominantly adheres to the accepted role of women within the patriarchal Afrikaner household. Although she teaches music lessons her commitment to her children is evident when Mum tells the General: 'I have quite a full programme running these two from one activity to the next. They're involved in a hundred activities which keep me on the go. Being a mother is my full-time job!' (Behr 1996: 40).

Music has evidently been an important part of Leonore's life but her singing ability has been sacrificed for home life. Her decision is subtly reaffirmed by her husband when she justifies her reason for giving up:

'My mother,' says Ilse, chipping into the conversation, 'could have been a great contralto –' but Mum cuts her short.

‘Oh Ilse, please! I was terrible...’ And mum holds her glass up for Dad to fill.

‘No one who’s terrible sings *Dido* at such an early age!’ says Ilse, and Mum looks shy.

‘You were *Dido*?’ the General asks, and Mum nods with a smile before saying: ‘Yes, but that’s a century ago. Now I teach others the lessons I learned.’

Dad rests his hand on Mum’s arm and begins telling the story of how they met while he was at West Point Military Academy: ‘We were introduced by a military attaché during an informal gathering of South African diplomatic staff in Washington. Leonore had been asked to the US and Europe to perform traditional Afrikaans music at all our diplomatic missions. She stayed on for a few months after we met, and came back to South Africa with me once my course was over. We tied the knot the moment we got home.’

‘Yes, once one is married with kids, one obviously has different priorities,’ says Mum, and Dad gently strokes her forearm.

The General nods his head. He smiles at me and Ilse, and asks Mum, ‘Have you ever regretted your decision ... to give it all up?’

‘Heavens no! How could I, with everything I have now?’ Mum laughs and takes a sip from her crystal wineglass. (40-1)

While Leonore is seemingly content with her decision to marry and be homemaker to her family, it is she whose career has been reduced from singer to music teacher and it is she who has made life-altering choices in order to raise a family within the confines of Afrikaner patriarchy. Although it is a number of years since they married, her husband affirms her decision with small gestures such as stroking her arm and refilling her wine glass, asserting his role as head of the house and financial provider.

Despite her apparent acceptance of her role Leonore is attacked by her sister Karla, who points out:

[...] that she'd seen enough women who sacrifice everything for their husbands – even their minds. She'd seen enough of how Dad oppresses Mum to make sure she'd stay away from marriage for life. She'd never allow a man to tread her into the ground like Dad does to Mum. She said, because she loves children so much, she might even have a child *without* getting married. But she'd steer clear of a husband and marriage. (107)

While we encounter two polar opposites in Doreen and Gloria, we similarly see two opposites in the characters of Leonore and her sister, Karla. While Leonore raises her children within the culture and patriarchy in which she grew up, Karla takes up a career with an English newspaper, she is a more liberal thinker and is highly critical of the nuclear family unit her sister has recreated. Karla refuses to perpetuate this system and affirm Afrikaner masculinity. Leonore, on the other hand, is willing to accept the system, using less overt methods to resist the system of patriarchy:

Mum puts on her dark glasses and turns on the tape player to listen to some jazz. Dad doesn't like us listening to jazz. Dad likes classical music, so Mum doesn't want us to tell him about the jazz in the car. Dad says jazz is just one step away from pop music. It belongs in nightclubs like Charlie Parker's at Sea Point, not in a Christian home like ours. (101-2)

While Leonore is prepared to indulge in this minor deviance the irony is that the jazz stems from black jazz musicians such as Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong against whom Leonore is more than willing to discriminate. At the same time, the very lies and hypocrisies of her husband's behaviour are repeated in Leonore's secretive actions. Rita Barnard has pointed out:

[...] the culture evoked in the novel is, if anything, a furtive and devious one. [...] These secrets, as it turns out, range from small things, like Leonore's furtive enjoyment of jazz, to grave affairs of state, like South Africa's covert war in Angola, represented here as deceitful on every imaginable level, boldfaced denial of the presence of South African forces in the country, to the officers' refusal to tell their troops about the enemy's numerical superiority, to their failure to disclose the circumstances of individual soldiers' deaths to their kin. (2001: 216)

The secrets that Leonore harbours extend to an affair she tries to have by offering herself to the Chilean General. Although she has no reason to suspect her advances have been witnessed, the reader is aware that Marnus has secretly witnessed her actions through a hole in the floor. Although, to a certain extent, Leonore is giving her children the means to act in opposition to the patriarchal system in which they are being raised, she unwittingly encourages the secrecy and lies that allow her husband to get away with the rape of the young Frikkie. Leonore's choice to stray from the marital bed is, in part, explained by Adams and Coltrane who suggest that the psychological energy it requires for a man to appear unemotional, independent, and uninvolved can result in detrimental effects on marriages, with men showing a lack of communication and affection (2005: 241). Superficially, Dad demonstrates affection to Leonore as he 'rests his hand on mum's arm' and later 'gently strokes her arm' (Behr 1996: 40-1). However, the love and affection that are visible to the outside world have not come without sacrifice for Leonore who has given up a singing career to marry and raise a family. Although she is not as overtly opposed to patriarchal rule as her sister is, it ultimately takes its toll on her and she succumbs to entering the Chilean's room which, as Stobie points out, 'can be juxtaposed with her husband's rape of Frikkie, against which it must be judged as a minor peccadillo, despite the absolutism of the religious claims in the text that all sins are equal, and that one lapse will lead to a descending pit of consequences' (forthcoming: 27).

As with the Erasmuses' marriage in *The Smell of Apples*, duplicity begins to appear in the De Mans' marriage in *Embrace*, and the reader becomes increasingly aware of the

hardships that Bok lives through as the novel progresses. After the family leaves Mkuzi and moves into a cramped apartment in Durban, the fissures within the marriage widen as Bok travels further afield with the aim of expanding his business and providing for his family:

Bokkie wept that she was tired of Bok coming home smelling of drink, cigarettes and other women. She said if it were not that she had to take care of us, she would go out and find herself a job. But what job would she get, she who had no training, had only ever worked in a bicycle shop? The only job she could get was working behind the till at Checkers with poor white Makoppolanders. Maybe she could get a job cleaning other people's houses like kaffir girls? Would that make him happy? To see her scrub the shit stains out of white people's underwear? Then she wailed again, sobbed that she was going to leave the following day to find a man that really loved her and her poor children. Now Bernice and I were also crying. After a while it seemed our mother had quietened down. (Behr 2000: 419)

The strain of being provider and head of the house has led Bok to spend numerous evenings in the company of elitist groups where he fraternises indiscriminately with unencumbered women while Bokkie is left with the household chores. In addition, the question of her taking a job offers a duality in which she is both controlled and in turn is able to exercise power over her husband.

Bokkie has spent the majority of her adult life as mother, caregiver and wife; thus, as she observes, it has become increasingly difficult for her to find what she would consider to be any reasonable form of employment. Her position, as Behr presents it to his readers, is reflective of a situation that, as Adams and Coltrane have pointed out, stems from the 19th century and continues to exist today:

While social, economic, demographic, and cultural contexts have changed since the 19th century, idealized perceptions of masculinity and femininity have remained remarkably consistent. Even today, the notion of separate spheres and attendant sex differences in temperament are invoked to substantiate gender stratification institutionally, as well as to privilege male power and interests in the home. (2005: 233)

It is this inherited attitude regarding the role of men and women that results in Bokkie being trapped at home. Her only escape, as she sees it, is to accept a menial job, taking on the role of a black woman. The insult for Bok is two-fold. Firstly, there is the suggestion that he is unable to provide for his wife and is therefore unable to live up to his masculine status. Secondly, there is the threat that his wife will not only take a job, but she will demean his status by taking work that was beneath a white woman and considered fit only for black labour. Looking at the financial circumstances of men, Marsiglio and Pleck have pointed out that:

Money begets power, and those men fortunate enough to have adequate incomes are better positioned to orchestrate their paternal identities, fathering activities, and family arrangements so they can display their masculinity vis-à-vis their contributions to family life. (2005: 260-1)

As the novel progresses, the reader picks up on signifiers which suggest that although the De Mans are solvent financially, there are things that they must go without and it is a setback for them to afford Karl's fees in the Drakensberg. Despite this, it would be a slight on Bok's masculinity if he were unable to provide for his family as a white man in apartheid South Africa. Karl, who is witness to his parents' bickering, later uses this inherited attitude to women, and black women in particular, to threaten Beauty. Having given his school blanket to the Silent One, he realises that he will be in trouble and has made Beauty his scapegoat:

'Don't tell stories about me; you understand!'

‘You would never speak like this to Dominic, never. You would lick his arse if he asked you. Just because of all the little presents he brings you every term.’

‘Keep your mouth off me.’

I rise from the chair: ‘Listen, it was for one of your people – the black man – I took the blanket. Stop being so ungrateful.’

‘I am not interested in what you have to say about me, what do you know about me, nothing, white boy, shut up about me.’

‘Who do you think you’re talking to? Get out of here or I’ll report to Mrs Booyesen that you’ve been carrying secret notes. Mathison will give you the sack...’

‘Uzokuzwa mfanawomlungu kuyoquma nhlamwana esinye ziyofekela, hey – I ...Hei-i...’ She turns and walks away. It is as if I’ve been stricken by lightning, clueless about what she has said.

‘Go fuck yourself, black bitch,’ I whisper, just loud enough. She doesn’t stop. Glances over her shoulder and walks away. Anger, like a hot blush, through my face and arms. Then realise it is not anger. It is shame. Fear of her mentioning to Dom what I have done, how I’ve spoken to her. (Behr 2000: 523-4)

As Karl begins to panic at the realisation that he will not only get into trouble for having lost his blanket, but for having lied about it, he resorts to begging, pleading, cajoling and threatening. Having seen his father’s masculinity challenged by his mother as she threatened to take on the work of a black woman, Karl feels threatened when Beauty reverts to her native tongue, removing the power from Karl. In a desperate attempt to regain the upper hand, Karl resorts to asserting his white masculinity through a verbally abusive assault on Beauty.

In discussing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in relation to narratives of masculinity, Rosemary Jolly has observed that ‘one needs to think through the precise

nature of the complicity between the apartheid state and the denigration of women, in this case, black women' (1999: 4). While Karl ashamedly realises that he has used his power as a white person to assert his masculinity, he has done it at the expense of any relationship he imagines he has forged with Beauty. In her chapter on domestic labour, Jenny Altschuler has explained that domestic work 'creates a context in which employer and employee are easily drawn into a fantasy friendship, a sharing of intimacy and rivalry, bound by a highly asymmetrical balance [...which...] quickly collapses when the domestic worker is seen to cross a boundary and is dismissed' (2006: 36).

Although Karl does not have the power to dismiss Beauty from her employment, he realises that because he is white and male, he has the power to threaten her. She has carried Karl's messages from Klaas and has acted as a conspirator. While Karl cannot literally dismiss her, he exercises his power through racist and sexist jibes.

It is not only through race and gender that Karl tries to assert his masculinity. Power is also afforded to those who adopt hegemonic, heterosexual behaviour. The lies and deceit that we encounter in *The Smell of Apples* are replicated in *Embrace* as Karl and Mr Cilliers check into a hotel on the west coast posing as father and son. In order to carry off the appearance of an accepted father and son relationship, Karl embellishes a story about their fictitious family:

'My sister is a ballet dancer,' I said, catching his eye. A fleeting frown cautioned me not to colour the story too much.

'Oh how wonderful! Does she do shows and stuff?'

'She recently danced Gizelle for NAPAC,' I said, nodding my head.

'Oh I'd love my little girl to do ballet one day!' she beamed, dragging on her cigarette. 'Or gymnastics! Oh there's a farmer up the road with TV and I went to watch the Olympic Games there the other night. And there was this little girl, Nadia something, you know all those communist names sound the same, who got ten out of ten for her

exercises. The first time ever in the history of gymnastics. Did you see?’

‘Yes she was very good,’ he spoke before I could continue. ‘Shall we get ready to order?’ (Behr 2000: 211)

The stereotypical gendering of girls into activities such as ballet and gymnastics together with the appearance of father and son bonding, allows Karl to create the façade of a nuclear family unit. However, his teacher is more conscious of the threat of being exposed as the lies become more numerous and involved. Kobus du Pisani has observed that even today ‘in much of the Afrikaner community the basic idea that a man and a woman can only find complete fulfilment in a heterosexual love relationship in an atmosphere of domestic stability and security is still upheld’ (2001: 164). Karl’s over-zealous enthusiasm for ballet threatens to give away the real reason for their trip to the west coast and is reminiscent of Karl’s childhood desire to take ballet lessons:

I asked her whether she would ask Bok a last time whether I couldn’t just try ballet once or twice. If I weren’t the best in the class I’d stop. I promised. She said no, I’d heard what my father had had to say on the subject and she herself didn’t think it a good idea for a boy to do ballet anyway. And what’s more, best for me to stop gesturing so wildly with my hands when I spoke, because that could also create all sorts of suspicions. And if I didn’t stop she would ask my teachers to tie my hands to my chair. And she’d heard that boys who did ballet only ended up being full of sights. And that wouldn’t look good in a boy like me. (Behr 2000: 423)

Hegemonic discourse has dictated that men and women should adhere to socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity. Behr reflects here on the unacceptability of a young boy wishing to break with traditionally accepted roles during apartheid and take ballet lessons. While it is his father who has refused permission for

Karl to dance, his mother upholds and reinforces the stereotypical value system of masculine identity.

The literary techniques that Behr uses reflect on a society in which gender roles were very specifically formulated. Given the advances of women's rights, the fact that Bokkie is 'given special permission from the diocese to wear shorts on church property' is a minimal victory (419). This is juxtaposed with Bok's need for men to maintain a firm grasp on Afrikaner masculine identity, as Karl remembers:

I was to stop handling Lena's dolls and [...] I could no longer play with girls' dresses and tea sets. We were no longer living in the bush he said, I was now in the eyes. This was civilisation and I could not go about pretending to be something I was not. (237)

The irony of Bok's words is that Karl ends up doing exactly that which his father does not want him to do – pretend to be something he is not. Behr's characterisation of Bok offers the reader the opportunity to think critically about the lies and hypocrisies surrounding gender identity that existed during apartheid.

Behr counteracts stereotypical views with Klaas's perspective when Klaas observes that Bokkie is 'Just so insecure. Very insecure. Pity. And so long-suffering. Martha the Martyr. Her selflessness will drive you crazy', finally resolving that Bok 'is a basic shit' (269).

The accepted gender roles that have been drilled into Karl are challenged by his uncle and simultaneously allow the reader to challenge stereotypical norms. Women are presented as representing objects that are to be possessed by men and treated as infants. The result, as Klaas observes, is Bok's insecurity as an individual, despite his masquerade of masculinity.

Chapter 4: Land as Power

In the conversion of land into farm, nature into culture, the homologous relationship with other and self is developed, so that apart from the land's commodification, the natural claim of the savage native is effectively countered. Awareness of such claim was, of course, repressed as the early colonisers, both Boer and English, apparently encountered vast tracts of empty land that invited occupation, a literary construction of space that failed to include the presence of indigenous people. Such human absence allowed nature to represent freedom: expansion into the interior was after all a product of the Afrikaners' love of liberty, as they trekked away from the disciplinary social space of the Dutch colonial authority and later from British imperialism. Since they could not claim autochthony, the settlers adopted the myth of the Israelites who after trials and tribulations abroad reached the homeland assigned to them by God. This they tilled and developed as farmland, thus establishing a white ethnic identity that relied on a slippage between nature and culture. (Wicomb 2001: 165-6)

In this extract, Zoë Wicomb discusses the genre of the *plaasroman* and representations of land. She points out that the genre dates back to the 1920s and the theme of land is one that has formed an important part of Afrikaans literature. As she points out, land has been of significance as the Boers attempted to establish their own land, away from the Dutch and free from British imperial rule. Africa was a free land in which they justified their colonisation of the land through God's will.

Wicomb also points out that the representations of the land we encounter in the *plaasroman* have subsequently developed and shifted over the years. Despite this, the theme is evident in both *The Smell of Apples* and *Embrace*.

In *The Smell of Apples*, land evolves as an important theme as the young Marnus recaptures the stories of his grandparents' arrival in Cape Town from East Africa. He parrots his family's deep rooted resentment at the fact that their land was going to be taken from them and that '[b]y the time they left, the blacks hadn't only taken over everything, they had even changed the country's name to Tanzania' (Behr 1996: 21).

Behr reflects here on land as an important element in the history of Afrikaner identity. Marnus's incredulous disbelief that even the name of the country was changed, mimics his parents' and grandparents' disbelief at their complete displacement. Although we see the oppressive nature of Afrikaner nationalism reflected in *The Smell of Apples*, it stems from a deeper sense of displacement that Melissa Steyn discusses. She points out that:

Afrikaners contended with the more powerful forces of the British empire throughout a history that was experienced as a long and bitter struggle for freedom on white-on-white overlordship. The self-esteem, indeed the very self-image, of Afrikaner nationhood was forged within a mythology that celebrated the courage of a people who refused to be subordinated to the British empire on more than one occasion in their history. The rise of extreme Afrikaner nationalism in the early part of the twentieth century is generally understood as a reaction to the defeat of Boer forces in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1899 – 1902. (2004:147)

Although the Erasmus family was not in South Africa at the time, oppression at the hands of British imperialism is more acutely felt as Behr places the characters in a country where British rule was followed by the 'chaos' which Marnus's Oupa foresees as Tanzania struggled for freedom (Behr 1996: 21). This becomes evident when Marnus discusses his father's attitude to Afrikaner history:

Dad says the history of the Afrikaner, also the Afrikaners from Tanganyika and Kenya, is a proud history. We must always remember

that and make sure one day to teach it to our own children. Even the Prime Minister, Uncle John Vorster, said something similar in Pretoria the other day when someone asked him about the Coloured question. Uncle John said that the Coloureds will never be able to say that we did to them what the English did to the Afrikaners. The Afrikaners' struggle for self-government, and for freedom from the yoke of British Imperialism, was a noble struggle. (38)

Afrikaner Calvinism as presented by Behr becomes an important point in justifying the treatment of black, coloured and Indian people. While Marnus's father firmly believes that the treatment of coloureds cannot be equated with the treatment of Afrikaners at the hands of British imperialists, Behr leads the reader to feel differently as we read of coloured people being used to 'help' Oupa build the house in St James Street while they are simultaneously being denied basic necessities in their own accommodation. On Uncle Samuel's farm they resort to using 'the toilet bowls as fireplaces' which suggests that no piped water was made available, rendering them useless for their intended task (39).

In trying to form their own unified identity, the Boers took land which, although not commercially farmed, was in use by indigenous groups. Historically, South Africa came to represent a place of Afrikaner identity and nationalism, governed by militaristic rule. The hypocrisy behind the colonisation of African land is reflected in Oupa's decision to settle in False Bay, a place which, according to Ouma, 'was going to be their place of peace' (22). The irony of this, as Ewer points out, is that:

The name "False Bay" is a constant reminder of the untruth at the heart of the patriarchal dogma that structures apartheid thinking and the steep, narrow strip of land between mountain and sea echoes the constraints of apartheid ideology. Its circumscribed terrain offers no latitude for growth or divergence in either direction. (2005: 98)

Despite the fact that Behr offers us the idyllic life of two boys growing up in apartheid South Africa, there is an overriding sense of the lies and hypocrisies which the young Marnus internalises as he grows up. One of the most important of these is his relationship with the land and his father's claims that South Africa 'was empty before our people arrived. *Everything, everything* you see, *we* built up from nothing. This is our place, given to us by God and we will look after it. Whatever the cost' (Behr 1996: 124).

While Marnus's father assures him of his right to the land, it has come as a result of Afrikaner nationalism which is characterised by the lies, secrets and hypocrisies of its militaristic rule. It is this secrecy which ultimately allows Marnus's father to get away with the atrocious act he commits against Frikkie. Michiel Heyns points out that in the early stages of the narrative, Marnus's father offers him the myth of an idyllic, empty landscape, colonised by Afrikaners. The innocence of this childhood memory is lost as Marnus registers his friend's comment that the 'apples are rotten' (2001: 51).

Although Marnus is disillusioned by his father, Behr clearly establishes a link between nationalism and affiliations with the land and masculinity. It is the Afrikaner soldiers, like the General, who have fought for an Afrikaner identity and as a result feel that the land is theirs to claim. Joane Nagel has pointed out that:

[...] the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes. Terms such as honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery, and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculine because they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manhood. (2005: 402)

Behr carefully constructs the character of Marnus's father so that his apparent embodiment of everything that is both manly and national makes his fall from grace appear to be an even greater one, as everything he espouses is embedded in the hypocrisies of the system in which he is raising his family.

In *Embrace*, we encounter similar attitudes although Karl's father is not a military man. He insists that his son must conform to the image of a tough Afrikaner whose duty is to family and nation. He is expected to play rugby, lift weights and have macho friends rather than playing with dolls or dancing.

His father's job is closely associated with the land and from a young age, Karl is terrorised by the notion of white people being removed from that land:

And at night after we went to bed Lena and Bernice told me about the terrorists. Had heard them spoken of at school. Kaffirs. Black and swarming everywhere through Mozambique and Rhodesia. It was the terrorists who stole our land in Tanganyika. With guns from Red Russia. Terrified. I listened for anything that sounded like a tread outside the window. Was ready to scream and flee the room if I heard a twig trod on in the night. I waited till my sisters were asleep. Rose and ran down the passage and crawled into bed between Bok and Bokkie. (Behr 2000: 28)

The threat of terrorists is internalised by Karl as a result of the deep-rooted fear that the land, and with it the masculine, Afrikaner identity, would be reclaimed from the Afrikaners. Again, Behr creates a sense of the threat to the nation and to masculinity as he builds into his narrative the disdain the Boers had for English imperialism. Karl's grandmother, Mumdeman, was willing to accept her daughter-in-law Siobhain because she was 'not really English' but rather, she was Irish and therefore came from a heritage which had known 'centuries of suffering under the English' (150). Although the family were relieved that Siobhain was not English, Mumdeman was even more noticeably pleased that being white, Siobhain was another person to join them 'against the kaffirs' (150).

While they are willing to accept Siobhain as one of the family, it is Karl's mother, Bokkie, whom they more clearly identify with as she was a '[f]ull-blood Boere girl'

(151). Of vital importance to them was a woman who could preserve the Calvinistic Afrikaner identity. Afrikaner nationalism stood a greater chance of survival with increased numbers. Mundeman's acceptance of a poor Afrikaans girl and an Irish girl reflects on this and is made even more poignant by the fact that they are both of child-bearing age and will add more young Afrikaners to the community. Greater numbers equated to greater control over the land, and maintaining a sense of ownership over the land was important to Afrikaner identity. Sarah Nuttall makes a comment regarding Galgut's *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* which has certain relevance to *Embrace*:

Galgut's text raises the question, too, of what it means to 'belong' to the land, and how far a sense of belonging relates to a sense of being 'owned' by the land. Afrikaners, who took the South African land by conquest, and practised an illegitimate form of 'ownership' in the view of the majority, nevertheless have asserted a sense of belonging in the land; more than an instrumentalist view of the land, they have asserted a relationship to the land for its own sake. (1996: 220)

As an Afrikaner, Karl's father has been permitted through his relationship with the land to assert his masculinity but alongside this, there exists the threat of loss and displacement. Karl is raised with a firm belief in his inherent right to the land. For the duration of Karl's childhood, his father provided for the family by working at Mkuzi and Umfolozi Game Reserves. As an adolescent, Karl recalls that his happiest days were in the Reserve and that his love for that land is as deep as Lukas's is for their family farm:

It's easy to love something you own, I thought. And yet I saw at once the error of my thinking: I thought to myself that the only place I had loved as he seemed to love the farm was the Mkuzi low veld and Umfolozi. Even though we hadn't owned one inch of the land and bush, not a single wild animal, and even though we hadn't money to wipe our arses or even dream of going on European vacations, and even though we lived in a reed house without ceilings and doors, I could not imagine

Lukas's passion for their farm, their land, their gullies, their ruins, their horses, their everything, could be any more intense than whatever I had felt for the wild thorn bushes, the ficuses, the Mkuzi River's dry bed, the yellow flakes peeling like skins off the fever trees, the impala, the steenbok, nyala, vervets, baboons and the warthogs. January's sweet scent of acacias in bloom. And that was lost. One need not own something in order to lose it. No, loss was not the preserve of those who owned. And what of Tanzania, I wondered. There we owned. And lost. Could ownership enhance the feeling of loss? (Behr 2000: 454-5)

Although Karl's parents never owned Mkuzi, his father's and therefore the family's survival has been dependent on the land. In addition to this, Mkuzi is a place of childhood innocence coupled with Karl's blissful unawareness of his father's lies and his parents' marital issues. For Karl, these only come to the fore when the family move to Durban into a small flat and his father's business fails to adequately provide for the family. What Karl does not realise is that his enjoyment of the land has historically come at the expense of others, a responsibility which Karl does not want to take:

'I wasn't even born when we got the farm! Neither was Bok. Dademan gave it to him. But I had nothing to do with it, if you please, dear Great-Uncle Klaas. My hands are clean and my pockets are as empty as yours. The ... plurals stole my birth-right.'

He laughs, and asks why a minute ago I had said they stole *our* land, which *we* had cleared for civilisation. Now I am saying I had nothing to do with it. If, he says, you want to stake a claim on the good parts, you have to take ownership of the bad parts too. I raise my head and look up into his face. He casts his eyes at me: 'You have everything you need, Karl. Self-pity doesn't become you as it seldom becomes anyone. Stop pretending that you're poor. Most black people are poor. And some white of whom you are not one.' (501)

Afrikaner identity has historically been maintained through numbers and oppressive force. Having escaped British imperialist rule, the Afrikaner nationalists were not about to allow 'their' land to be reclaimed by 'natives'. As Karl speaks, he feels vindicated in his argument, given his masculine identity within the Afrikaner community. However, when Klaas forces Karl to take responsibility for the removal of the land, Karl distances himself from the group, denying any involvement. In relation to white colonisation, Anderson has pointed out that:

The sheer size of the immigrant community, no less than its overwhelming military, economic and technological power vis-à-vis the indigenous populations, ensured that it maintained its own cultural coherence and local political ascendancy. (1991: 189)

As Karl enters adolescence, he is not only expected to conform to such cultural ascendancy, but also to become actively involved in it. Karl's father is strongly opposed to his son participating in the arts and only allows Karl to attend a vocal training school provided he plays 'rugby until you become the man I want you to be. No communist kaffir-loving queer will ever set foot in my house' (Behr, 2000: 596). In addition, he is expected to see an 'educational' psychologist who advises him on gender appropriate behaviour.

Behr leads the reader through the process of Karl being groomed into an 'ideal' man who will form part of the national Afrikaner identity. The irony is that Karl's disillusionment is reflected at various stages in the novel as he attempts to write a poem on oranges. As with *The Smell of Apples*, the fruit represents the Boers and the farming which they introduced into South Africa. The subject for a poem is decided as Karl and Dominic are lying in the orchard at the school and Dominic suggests:

'The scent of oranges.'

'Not scent. Smell. The smell of oranges.'

'What's wrong with scent; it's far more poetic to say scent.'

‘It’s a sissy word. Like something homos would say.’
‘Tchaikovsky was a homo. And Britten. And Beethoven kissed Liszt a long sloppy one. Jesus Christ, what do you think we are!’
‘Stop saying that, Dominic.’
‘Why? What’s wrong with you now?’
‘You’re blaspheming again and I don’t like the other word.’
‘I don’t care what anyone says.’
‘Jissis Dominic!’ I hear the pitch of my own voice rising. ‘If anyone ever finds out. Last year...’ I broke off the words, the thought, aware of reaching into a place of which he knew only a skewed lie. Somewhere I would never go again in language. (105)

The association of oranges and homosexuality is one that Karl is uncomfortable making, not identifying himself as homosexual and convinced that it is blasphemy to talk of such things. Karl avoids the use of ‘feminine’ words such as ‘scent’, preferring the word ‘smell’. In addition, Karl has grown up within the constructs of Afrikaner identity – which has led to his Uncle Klaas being labelled with ‘the mad gene’. The image leaves the reader with a sense that madness is less shameful than homosexuality or that homosexuality is tantamount to being mad. It is in the orchard among the orange trees which were brought by the colonisers that Karl continues to develop those lies, not wanting to acknowledge any part of his erotic desire for men or the events that occurred the previous year.

Behr clearly links land, and with it, national identity, to constructions of masculine identity and the effects that these had on men who were homosexual or bisexual. Having acquired land, the Afrikaners saw it as their inherent right to protect and maintain authority over ‘their’ land. This was done by creating and conforming to a unified masculine identity which disallowed any deviance from this accepted identity and was reinforced by a strongly militarised state.

Conclusion

A female was far more acceptable than a fag. She could be held at bay, her needs and emotive untidiness satisfactorily explained, then set aside. But in a man, those qualities were far more troubling. They could get inside, infiltrate, threaten and, worst of all seduce. The odd man out was dangerous, like the slightest touch at a pressure joint that could bring the whole edifice down. It was a crisis they were well rid of. (Vincent 2006: 179)

In these lines, Norah Vincent recounts her time spent living in a monastery, disguised as a man. Even within the remote isolation of a monastery in the United States, men are threatened by the presence of a ‘man’ who has effeminate qualities and must, by association, be gay. As soon as the monk she is speaking to realises that he is faced with a woman, she becomes far more acceptable displaying these qualities. The above quotation suggests that homophobic attitudes are still very prevalent in society today. Vincent observes that even in a monastery, it was easier for a group of monks to accept that the person who was staying with them was a woman rather than an effeminate or gay man. What this raises however, is the issue of where these attitudes have developed from.

Through a thematic literary analysis of Behr’s novels, I have explored the ways in which adolescent masculine identities are constructed in the characters of two novels by the same author. Behr guides his readers into a critique of historically accepted attitudes as he develops the characters of his two protagonists, Marnus Erasmus and Karl de Man.

The Smell of Apples is set in an Afrikaans community in False Bay where Marnus Erasmus is developing his own sense of masculine identity. Marnus’s father represents the ‘ideal’ Afrikaans masculinity as a patriarchal military man and head of a nuclear family unit. His masculine identity is one that Marnus spends considerable time striving towards as his father asks ‘does that little man of yours stand up yet sometimes in the mornings?’ (Behr 1996: 63). In addition, while out fishing, Marnus’s father tells Marnus

‘pull yourself together now, and bring in that fish’ (96). Despite Marnus’s best efforts he often fails to live up to his father’s expectations of him. Marnus is conditioned from childhood into believing that his parents’ way of life is one that is to be idolised and aimed for. However, the pedestal on which his father is placed is shattered as Marnus discovers that his father has sodomised his best friend, Frikkie. With this knowledge comes the realisation (but not necessarily acceptance) that most of his father’s espoused ideologies are based on lies and hypocrisies, a number of which stem from apartheid ideology.

This thesis has explored a number of literary techniques which Behr has used in order to draw his readers into an understanding of these lies and hypocrisies and their historical relevance. In each novel, these techniques include a differentiation between two chronotopes, highlighting the naivety and innocence of childhood experience, contrasted with a developing social awareness, at different levels, in the adult Marnus and the adolescent Karl. In addition each has an antagonistic father who simultaneously inspires a desire for ‘ideal’ masculinity, but is the cause of tremendous disillusionment for their sons as well as for the reader. There are characters who offer challenges to accepted societal norms, such as Tannie Karla in *The Smell of Apples* and Klaas in *Embrace*. The theme of masculine identity is an important one in both texts and is made even more poignant as we watch the protagonists grapple with socially constructed notions of masculinity, compared to the disillusionment they experience as they discover that this is not necessarily the ‘ideal’ they have been raised to strive for.

In *Embrace*, Karl de Man is raised in a mixed heritage home where masculinity is an important qualifier for functioning in apartheid South Africa. He is allowed to attend a school where he trains to sing. This is considered to be a feminine attribute and his father, with the help of a psychologist, insists on tempering this with more masculine activities such as rugby and weight-lifting. Karl lives in perpetual fear of failing to achieve the standards his father sets for him and cannot acknowledge his homoerotic desires for fear of what will happen to him. The painstaking agony of an adolescent boy unfolds in

flashes as the reader slowly gathers that Karl's father once threatened to kill him for the very minor act of stealing a hair clip to wear.

As the reader is offered these glimpses of Karl's childhood, he or she is simultaneously introduced to a young man who wants to play the part of the 'king-queen' (Behr 2000: 253), is happy to show off his bravado as he falls from the front of a Landrover his under-age sister was driving, with the 'wheel just centimetres' from his head (246), but he also enjoys 'girly' activities such as ballet and art. The result is that Karl is faced with acute shame on the one hand and an inner sense of a special destiny on the other, which are revealed in his visits to a psychologist (253-7). Although he insists that Dominic must not call him a 'homo' (105) and he vows to act less effeminately and mentally promises 'I'm going on with my life' (364), Karl sees the possibility of a special destiny as he sees himself as 'predestined for some or other as yet unspecified greatness' (257). This duality is akin to the mystique attached to Native American two-spirit people who embody both male and female traditional attributes.

This thesis has analysed the literary techniques which Behr has used in developing the characters of the two adolescent protagonists in his novels. Adolescent masculine identity is an important aspect of society as it is through adolescent males that dominant white hegemonic attitudes have been entrenched. Although structures of apartheid have been dismantled, evidence of hegemonic attitudes to masculinity continues to exist within South Africa and internationally. In order to change these attitudes, it is important to understand the history behind them and the ways in which this influences current-day attitudes. The way in which this is done is succinctly reflected on by Behr, as he weaves into his narratives points which constantly conflict and challenge the protagonist and the reader. In each of my chapters, I have expanded on a theme which Behr has made central to developing the masculine identity of each of the protagonists. In turn, Behr creates a plot which also explores the ways in which they respond to these themes.

In the first chapter, I have given consideration to the role that Marnus's and Karl's fathers each played in shaping their identities. Each boy is thrown into conflict as the plots

develop and their respective fathers' ideologies are challenged and proved to be flawed. This is developed in the second and third chapter in which I unravel Behr's treatment of the 'other', and the ways in which both protagonists learn to treat black people and women, are indoctrinated into ideological apartheid thinking and are challenged by stereotypical thinking of the day. In the final chapter, I have addressed the theme of land and its contribution to masculine identities. I have proved that a sense of national identity and nationhood is important to English and Afrikaans communities, as well as people of colour in the novel, and the protagonists each develop a relationship with the land, based on both inherited attitudes and points of view that challenge beliefs that the land belongs to white Afrikaans men.

I set out to explore the ways in which adolescent males in Behr's novels are simultaneously moulded into the role of toy soldiers and are psychologically toyed with as they develop into young men. My thesis proves that Mark Behr has used carefully constructed techniques in weaving a plot that guides the reader into a critical awareness of some of the ways in which society constructs adolescent masculine identities. Although the reader is painfully aware of the difficulties that face both the young men in these texts, there are brief glimpses of hope which the reader is offered in both narratives. In the final pages of *The Smell of Apples*, Marnus's dying words are:

I feel Dad's face against my chest and my arms around his head, and I feel safe. But now it is a different safety. Death brings its own freedom, and it is for the living that the dead should mourn, for in life there is no escape from history. (Behr 1996: 198)

As Marnus lies dying, the reader senses that the safety he experiences in his father's arms is not the conditional safety that his father offered him as a child. Rather, it is a safety that comes without the historical baggage that society constructs and propagates. In the final sentence, the notion of the living mourning for the dead is inverted and Marnus is finally able to transcend historical thinking; his realisation offers the hope that apartheid ideologies can be overcome.

In *Embrace*, the concluding moments of Karl's time at the Drakensberg Boys' Choir offer us hope as he vows:

Starting tomorrow! It will be the first day of the rest of his life. His new life. Life is remarkable, truly, re-mark-able, he mimics the word into syllables, feeling the tongue on his pallet, the lips close, then open into a new shape, lips touching on the b and the tongue's tip coming to rest against the pallet and top teeth, the mouth slightly open. A new Karl De Man! It is going to be fine, everything is going to be just fine. Perfectly, perfectly fine, as they drive through the gate and park beneath the mahogany, he can hear, already feel it! Like applause flowing over him, audience calls of Bravo! More! Massed voices in unison demanding: Encore! Encore! Encore! As he glides back onto stage, beaming, smiling, as if he were back, again poised to perform. (Behr 2000: 718)

As the reader begins this passage, the 'escape' from the school and all it holds in terms of Karl's masculinity threatens to be forgotten as he eagerly attempts to put his experiences behind him. However, the passage concludes with Karl's overwhelming desire for artistic recognition; a place within the 'effeminate' arts and a sense that a special destiny does in fact await him. In discussing *The Smell of Apples*, Cheryl Stobie makes a poignant remark which can be applied to both novels when she says that:

Behr's text offers readers an understanding of the anxieties, hypocrisies, choices, and complicities which soiled all under apartheid; however, it also offers fragments of discourse which bode well for the future. (forthcoming: 29)

The distressing and difficult paths that the reader observes Marnus and Karl following through adolescence emphasise the prevailing attitudes towards masculinity and masculine identity. Behr's literary techniques are highly suggestive of a society that

needs to reconsider its attitudes regarding masculinity. This can best be done in the manner which Jung suggests:

If there is anything we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is something that could be better changed in ourselves.
(Jung 1932: 194)

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