A Study of Masculinity, Memory and Trauma in Niq Mhlongo's *Way Back Home*

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Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English Studies in the School of Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College.

I, Nadia Inarmal (213546386), declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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   a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
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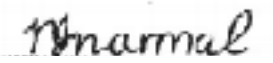
Signed  Date: 19 December 2019.

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As the candidate's Supervisor I have approved this dissertation/ thesis for submission.

Signed  Date: 19 December 2019

Dr Jean Rossmann

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Abstract

In this dissertation I explore the representations of 'struggle' masculinity and the trauma of black masculinity in Niq Mhlongo's *Way Back Home* (2013). My primary focus in this regard is Kimathi, the novel's protagonist. I begin with situating the novel in the current literary landscape as a post-transitional novel (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2010). I rely on readings on the phenomenology of gender by Raewyn Connell (1995 and 2005) to illustrate how Kimathi subscribes to a harmful form of hegemonic masculinity. Marrying Connell's concept with Pumla Dineo Gqola's (2007 and 2009) commentaries on the performance of 'spectacular' masculinities in South Africa, I argue that Kimathi is interpellated by the radicalised ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle. Reading Judith Butler (2002) in conjunction with Frantz Fanon (1986), I examine the intersections of race, gender and history to discuss how the 'woundedness' of Kimathi's postcolonial male identity is masked by an exaggerated performance of masculinity. In relation to his performance I consider how greed and corruption are presented as masculine qualities in the novel, and how the satirisation of male greed is intended as a criticism of South Africa's ruling elite.

I explore how the novel invokes the uncanny, and foregrounds Kimathi's repression of crimes he committed against the character Senami. I argue that Senami, as a ghost and an uncanny figure in the present of the text, signifies a return of the repressed. Through her journey, the novel advocates for the import and ethics of remembering the past. The return of the repressed also has a broader socio-political significance, as it resonates with issues in the post-apartheid social text. Consequently, I offer an intertextual analysis of how *Way Back Home* speaks to the silences in memory left by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which contribute to the unresolved trauma felt by many South Africans. Finally, I discuss the polysemy and ambivalence of 'home' in the novel, as both a place of belonging and a place of origin, but also as a repository of history. I apply Homi Bhabha's (1992) theory on the "unhomely" to explore Kimathi's psychic disorientation as an exile-at-home. I argue that the loss of home (material and spiritual) constitutes a trauma of displacement for Kimathi and Senami. I consider what the return home involves for these characters, and whether this return suggests the possibility of closure, both for them and for South Africa as a nation. As a concluding point, I observe how the novel invokes Njabulo Ndebele's (2010) assertion that we have "yet to return home" to justice and the ideals of democracy, implied in the novel's preference for retributive, rather than restorative, justice.

Chapter One
Introduction

This dissertation critically examines Niq Mhlongo's grim and harrowing novel *Way Back Home* (2013). Mhlongo is a Sowetan-born writer who has been described as the voice of South Africa's post-apartheid literary scene and a representative of its *kwaito* generation (Donadio 2006). *Kwaito* is a genre of music that originated in South Africa in the late 1990's, which combines the styles of American rap and house music with elements of vernacular hip-hop. It is evocative of Johannesburg township culture and is often regarded as a symbol of South Africa's unique cultural diversity. The appellation is therefore appropriate, considering that Mhlongo's writing, like *kwaito* music, blends together a variety of cultural and linguistic influences that reflect contemporary South African society. His writing style has been compared to that of Paul Mpumelelo Grootboom, a controversial South African director whose works examine the "cyclical nature of violence, its motivations and effects" (Flockemann 2010: 10). Both Mhlongo and Grootboom use their writing to explore the traumatic effects of violence, but also utilise a range of intertextual references to local and international pop culture, including music, film and literature, to locate South Africa "within the wider world" (11). *Way Back Home* is abundant with such intertextual references, both African and American. Its protagonist Kimathi is mentioned listening to Branford Marsalis' *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit*, as well as reading K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams.* In addition, Mhlongo's penchant for depicting life in South Africa's townships indicates that he is following "a distinguished tradition of writing" that includes the works of celebrated authors like Mongane Wally Serote, Njabulo Ndebele and the *Drum* writers of the 1950s (Warnes 2011: 548).

Having grown up during the apartheid era, Mhlongo admits that he was greatly influenced by the "decolonising" philosophies of the Black Consciousness Movement and the Pan Africanist Congress (Malec 2016: n.p). At the University of Witwatersrand, he studied both African Literature and Political Studies, and it is evident that his two passions conflate in his writing. He has received both local and international acclaim. Notably, the Spanish translation of his debut novel, *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) was awarded the Mar de Lettras prize, and his novels have been translated into several languages. In addition to writing fiction, Mhlongo has worked in the media, writing screenplays for *Magic Cellar* (2006-2007), a children's television show, as well as articles for *Mshana* magazine

(2007-2008), a publication which primarily addressed black urban youth culture (Cape Town Literary Festival 2019: n.p). A multitalented and versatile writer, Mhlongo is also the author of the short story anthologies *Affluenza* (2016) and *Soweto, Under the Apricot Tree* (2018). For his latest anthology Mhlongo received the Herman Charles Bosman Prize for English Fiction in 2019 (The Reading List 2019: n.p). Like his contemporaries Kgebetli Moele and K. Sello Duiker, Mhlongo's satirical, cynical, and unapologetically honest novels "reveal the complex texture of post-apartheid South African society" (Rafapa 2018: 104).

Way Back Home is a novel that explores "the implications of the past on the present," (Mhlongo in Moreillon and Stiebel 2015: 257). This temporal entanglement is evident in the structure of the novel, but also most markedly in the novel's anti-hero, Kimathi Fezile Tito, who is psychically tormented and haunted by the crimes of his past. The novel demonstrates how ideologies of the past linger on, and still have power in interpellating subjects of the postcolony, forming cycles of violence and trauma. In the following study I critically examine the representations of black masculinity in *Way Back Home*, in particular the 'woundedness' of the postcolonial black masculinity. By placing Kimathi's ideology of masculinity in a broader sociological and psychoanalytical context, I offer a sympathetic reading of Kimathi as both victim and perpetrator. Reading Kimathi through the theories of Judith Butler and Frantz Fanon, I analyse the ironies and paradoxes in Kimathi's performance of masculinity, which is revealed to be an elaborate masquerade that is intended to compensate for his feelings of inadequacy, and disguise his insecurities. I explore the various traumas that shape Kimathi's life. Firstly, I use a Freudian lens to discuss his memory repression and its resurgence in the form of Senami's uncanny hauntings. I then apply Homi Bhabha's theories on the trauma of displacement to discuss how Kimathi and Senami experience the loss of home. My study also offers a broad intertextual reading of *Way Back Home* as it examines how the novel presents a caustic review of contemporary South Africa, speaking of the continuing moral crisis faced by the country and the kleptocracy of the ruling elite.

1.1. Synopsis of the Novel

Written in a uniquely South African style, *Way Back Home* is Mhlongo's third novel in less than a decade. It is a novel which blurs the boundaries between life and death, tradition and modernity, truth and fiction, past and present. *Way Back Home* recounts the experiences of Kimathi Fezile Tito, a former guerrilla soldier of a militaristic anti-apartheid wing referred to as The Movement.[1] A self-proclaimed "son of exile," Kimathi is born in Tanzania, serves as a soldier in Angola, and eventually returns to South Africa, the country whose liberation he fought for (Mhlongo 2013: 19). He uses his political connections from exile to become co-owner of a successful company, Mandulo Construction, allowing him to accumulate vast amounts of wealth. Although on the surface Kimathi appears to be enjoying his opulent lifestyle, as he lavishly spends his millions on designer clothing, expensive alcohol, and prostitutes, his personal life is in a state of disarray. He undergoes a bitter divorce from his wife Anele, struggles to reconnect with his estranged daughter Zanu, is betrayed by his work colleagues and is plagued by graphic hallucinations of his life in exile.

The narrative conflict escalates when Kimathi is confronted by Senami, the restless and vengeful ghost of the female comrade (alias Lady Comrade Mkabayi) whom he raped and murdered at Amilcar Cabral camp, an Angolan detention centre where they were both posted, in 1988. The ghost of Senami (who appears as a very alive and beautiful young woman) leads Kimathi to her parents' house. He discovers that Senami's parents, Napo and Lola Tladi, are traumatised by their daughter's absence and believe their home to be haunted by her spirit. Senami continues to visit Kimathi in various spectral incarnations, intimating that he has been living in an illusion and must now accept the reality of his deeds. Kimathi is confused by Senami's proclamations, until it is revealed in the penultimate chapter that Kimathi, unable to accept his past crimes against Senami, repressed this traumatic memory. He also suffers from bipolar disorder as a result of this repression.

The novel oscillates between two time periods, 1988 and the present-day, eventually dovetailing during the climax when Kimathi faces his ultimate reckoning as he returns to Angola. It is here that he encounters Senami's ghost for the final time in her former prison cell. After this encounter, Kimathi's body is found hanging from the rafters of the building, but it remains undecidable wheth-

[1] While the phrase "the movement" can refer broadly to the anti-apartheid struggle, I argue that in *Way Back Home*, 'The Movement' reads like a separate (fictional) entity, one that acts as a metonym for the armed wing Umkhonto we-Sizwe (MK), due to its militaristic nature. Kenqu (2019) reads it this way too: "Kimathi Fezile Tito – a former MK commander in Angola" (157).

er Kimathi commits suicide as an act of atonement, or is 'murdered' (driven to kill himself) by Senami's vengeful ghost. In the novel's final chapter, Senami's parents find their daughter's remains and her spirit is laid to rest with the help of Makhanda, a traditional healer, allowing her parents to receive a measure of closure. According to Mhlongo, the more fantastical aspects of *Way Back Home* are inspired by the Sowetan urban legend of "Vera the Ghost," a tragic tale about a woman who was raped and murdered away from her home. Her spirit, unable to rest and seeking vengeance, began to haunt men in the townships and lead them to their deaths. The novel clearly has magical realist elements, but also draws on a range of genres to constantly subvert readers' expectations. Yolisa Kenqu (2019) observes the invocation of gothic elements in the novel; however, it also contains tropes of the psychological thriller. *Way Back Home* can therefore also be described as a *roman noir*, a literary genre in which the protagonist can be a victim of a crime or its perpetrator. In these novels, crime is "represented as an outward manifestation of the internal workings of the pathological individual psyche" (Simpson 2010: 187). This trope of the crime thriller is pertinent to my reading of Kimathi as I explore the circumstances which lead to him becoming a criminal. Against the grain of current scholarship on the novel, I read Kimathi not only as a perpetrator through his torture and rape of Senami, but also paradoxically as a victim, a man who is under pressure from internal and external forces to present himself as the epitome of (black) masculinity, at any cost.

1.2. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter, the Introduction, provides information about Niq Mhlongo and *Way Back Home*, including a discussion of the novel's significance in the current South African literary landscape, an outline of the dissertation structure, and a summary of the scholarship on *Way Back Home*. It also provides detailed explanations of the primary theoretical concepts that are apposite to my analysis of the novel.

The second chapter, "A Man Among Men," examines the representations of masculinity in *Way Back Home* through a discussion of Kimathi's construction of masculinity and how he is interpellated by the radicalised ideas of the anti-apartheid struggle. Raewyn Connell's seminal commentaries on hegemonic masculinity will be read in conjunction with Pumla Dineo Gqola's analysis of 'struggle' or 'spectacular' masculinities. Taking into account South/Africa's history of colonial violence, I also argue that Kimathi can be considered a victim of hegemonic masculinity.

Bringing Franz Fanon's theory on the trauma of black masculinity into conversation with Judith Butler's theory on gender performativity, in Chapter Three I explore "The Mask of Masculinity." This chapter provides a close reading of key passages that reveal how Kimathi 'performs' his gender as a black man in a post-apartheid setting through displays of his wealth and social status. I consider how Kimathi is a victim of the trauma caused by the internalisation of colonialist and apartheid mentalities. I look at how Kimathi becomes a parody of black hegemonic masculinity because of the excess and exaggeration of his display. In relation to this performance I examine the link between corruption, greed and masculinity in the novel by considering how Kimathi defines his masculinity in relation to his wealth, which is acquired through questionable means. I offer an intertextual reading of the novel as I argue that Kimathi is a member of South Africa's corrupt ruling elite.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation, "Uncanny Hauntings and the Return of the Repressed," uses a Freudian psychoanalytic lens to explore how Kimathi experiences trauma as memory repression, and how this trauma results in symbolic castration. I argue that Senami's ghost can be regarded as uncanny as she signifies a return of these repressed memories for Kimathi. Following Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall I argue that the city of Johannesburg serves as a metaphor for repressed

memory in the novel. I also consider what Senami's story signifies in a broader intertextual sense for the South African public imaginary.

The fifth chapter, "Finding the Way Back: Trauma and Imaginings of Home," presents a discussion of the trauma of dislocation, of being 'unhomed.' I focus primarily on the characters of Kimathi and Senami, but also explore the genealogy of loss and displacement in their respective families. I look at the multiple meanings of home that the novel suggests, both material and spiritual, and argue that Kimathi embodies Homi Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" as a result of being born in exile. I consider how the novel advocates for the relevance of indigenous knowledge in the healing of trauma, in modern African society, through the inclusion of African cosmology and spirituality.

In the conclusion to this dissertation, I summarise my analysis of *Way Back Home* and point to the broader significance of the text in the South African post-apartheid literary scene.

1.3. *Way Back Home* in the South African Literary Landscape

Way Back Home can be categorised as both a post-apartheid and post-transitional novel, having been written almost twenty years after South Africa's first democratic election. In this sense, the "post" in post-apartheid does not imply a complete detachment from the apartheid past. Such a neat separation of reading the prefix "post" to imply the end of an era indicates a lack of awareness of how past systems of power continue to influence and affect contemporary South African society (Gqola 2009: 63). Michael Chapman also notes that "phrases of chronology are ordering conveniences rather than neatly separable entities" (2009: 2). Similarly, the term post-transitional refers not only to South Africa's socio-political progression from apartheid to democracy, but is also used to indicate a shift in literary styles and a "widening of the scope of what characterises current cultural formations," especially in the new millennium (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2010: 7). Therefore, the term post-transitional both "is, and is not, a temporal marker, as it does refer to something moving but does not claim that the issues involved in the transition have been resolved" (27). Novels such as *Way Back Home* echo this sentiment as they serve to remind readers that "the past is […] refusing to be forgotten, because it is deeply imbedded in the present," and that to neglect the past is to "postpone the future" (Ndebele 1994: 158).

Literature in the post-transitional era is characterised by an amalgamation of various genres and themes, including "diasporic South African writings (often examining issues of dislocation), proletarian discourses, lyrical existential ruminations, memoir, satire, miracle narratives, and crime stories" which "address the issues of return, the dynamics of illness, and questions of space and its contestation" (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2010: 4). A central focus of post-transitional literature is a movement away from narratives of protest, and a movement towards an examination of the psyche of the "little perpetrator within, in contrast to the more starkly visible perpetrators of the apartheid state" (Flockemann 2010: 3). Novels in the new millennium are therefore marked by an inward-turn, with an emphasis on everyday events and more introspective, confessional modes of writing. Recent South African fiction indicates "a shift away from the grand concerns of the protest literature – the spectacular struggle of the oppressed – to the harsh realities of the struggle on a more personal level, to the affirmation of black people's everyday fight for survival, their meaningful spiritual and intellectual life" (Grzeda 2013: 156).

In her analysis of the works of J.M. Coetzee, Zoe Wicomb and Achmat Dangor, Emily Davis asserts that exploration of the past is a common theme in post-apartheid literature as current South African authors examine the "temporal connections and movements of dissonance that undermine conventional understandings of apartheid history" (2013: 802). These authors are inspired to delve through different perspectives of events in South Africa's past, in order to "reconstruct uncomfortable stories about the apartheid era that were impossible to tell before," and to represent "social positions that were elided and often violently suppressed by both the apartheid government and the ANC"[2] (802). Contemporary authors like Mhlongo are unafraid of topics that were previously considered taboo, such as the possibility of "black complicity with the [apartheid] regime" (Poyner 2008: 106). In a similar vein, Shane Graham argues that one of the key motifs in post-apartheid literature is that of excavation, both literal and figurative. This motif evokes "psychic echoes of the Truth Commission process, which included the exhumation of dozens of bodies whose whereabouts had been a mystery until information about their murders by security forces emerged in amnesty applications" (Graham 2011: 20). The revelation of hidden truths is a central theme in *Way Back Home*, as its protagonist is haunted by the secrets of his past which slowly come to light.

2 The African National Congress (ANC) is South Africa's governing political party.

1.4. Reading Between Texts

In this section I discuss the ways in which *Way Back Home* reflects the concerns of contemporary South African society as it resonates and engages with issues in the South African post-apartheid social text. It is not intended as a comprehensive historical account, social study or political commentary, but is instead necessary as a foundation for my analysis of the novel. As a post-transitional text, *Way Back Home* contains various "aesthetics" or "trends" which are "useful for examining the way in which prevailing ethical and social landscapes are translated into text" (Flockemann 2010: 3). Following poststructuralist thinkers like Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, I read *Way Back Home* as a text that is inseparable from the "larger cultural or social textuality out of which [it is] constructed," which contains "the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse" (Allen [2000] 2011: 35). I therefore offer an intertextual reading of *Way Back Home.*

Corruption

Way Back Home presents a satirical critique of contemporary South African society and its corrupt 'tenderpreneurs'[3] who are solely concerned with their own interests. In his interview with Olivier Moreillon and Lindy Stiebel, Mhlongo states that *Way Back Home* is an "attempt at understanding the origins" of corruption and betrayal in contemporary South Africa, especially among the country's incumbent politicians and social elite, which began during the apartheid regime (2015: 262). Corruption and bribery are now commonplace in South Africa, and the novel aims to encourage awareness of this.[4] Mhlongo's interview evinces how "ideological struggles and tensions which characterise language and discourse in society […] continue to reverberate in the text itself" (Allen 2011: 35). The novel is thoroughly imbricated in the South African socio-political text and its discourse on the moral betrayal of a liberation-movement-turned-political-party.

In his *Daily Maverick* article "Betrayal and recovering trust?" (2017), ANC stalwart and political analyst Raymond Suttner bemoans this discontinuity between the government's promises of reform and its actions, or lack thereof, commenting on how South Africa has experienced a series of be-

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[3] The word 'tenderpreneur' is a portmanteau, combining the words 'tender' and 'entrepreneur.' The term, coined by Blade Nzimande, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP), refers to "ANC cadres and government officials who abuse their political power and influence to secure government tenders" (Letsoalo 2016: n.p). As such, the term has become synonymous with corruption in post-apartheid South Africa.

[4] It was determined in a recent study that approximately twenty-five billion rand of the government budget was lost each year due to fraud, and that sixty percent of South Africa's wealth was concentrated in only ten percent of the population (Lannegren and Ito 2017: 56).

trayals at the hands of its political leaders as the country constantly faces "new revelations of state capture, corruption, and other forms of malgovernance" (2017: n.p). The novel speaks of and to the public discourse of betrayal, and of the moral fallenness of liberators turned leaders. It therefore challenges both moral corruption and betrayal within the anti-apartheid movement, as well as within the present government.

The TRC and National Memory

It can be argued that it is impossible to examine memory in South African post-transitional narratives without discussing the influence and impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[5] Following in the tradition of the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 and 1946, the TRC was established in 1996 to investigate the gross human rights violations which were committed under the apartheid regime. Spearheaded by the South African theologian and human rights activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC had laudable motives as it allowed both victims and perpetrators to tell their stories with the purpose of healing a divided nation. However, in contrast to the Nuremberg Trials, the TRC was neither retributive, nor did it have legal authority to prosecute and convict known human rights violators despite their public admissions of guilt.

According to social anthropologist Richard Wilson, although the idea of public confessions and the rhetoric of forgiveness initially appealed to the traumatised survivors of apartheid, many considered the reality of the TRC to be substantially less satisfying since it depicted "the portrayal of suffering as a necessary sacrifice for the liberation of the nation" (2000: 80). The TRC's policy of granting amnesty to perpetrators, forsaking retribution in order to "facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation," was criticised as it provided little comfort to victims and sufferers of the apartheid regime, and limited their closure (80). In the introduction to *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2008) François du Bois and Antje du Bois-Pedain suggest that the TRC's proceedings resulted in nationwide tension, with "the promotion of reconciliation threatening to inhibit the pursuit of justice and vice versa" (2008: 3). *Way Back Home* responds to this question of justice, as the novel privileges retribution over reconciliation as a means of confronting trauma. Several characters in the novel who commit heinous crimes, such as Kimathi and his friend Ludwe, are brought to justice in ways which parallel their own violent actions.

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[5] This will further be referred to as the TRC.

Another point of contention regarding the commission's proceedings was the ambiguity surrounding the term 'perpetrator.' The TRC findings determined that although "the prominent portion of gross violations of human rights was committed by the apartheid state and its security forces […] both the ANC and PAC[6] – even while engaged in legitimate struggles – also committed gross violations of human rights for which they are morally and politically accountable" (du Toit 1999: 2). *Way Back Home* implicitly criticises the TRC for burying various testimonies involving the members of the ANC and its associated armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) who tortured and abused their fellow members in detention camps, sometimes "for the sake of violence" (Cleveland 2005: 69). Allowing the perpetrators to walk free resulted in unresolved trauma for many victims and their families. In *Way Back Home*, the quest for truth and the 'excavation' of buried histories is made implicit primarily through Senami's story, as the novel explores the grief and trauma faced by both Senami at Amilcar Cabral camp, and her family, who are unaware of how, when and where she died.

Through the characters of Kimathi's paternal grandparents and aunt Yoli, who were forcibly removed from their land, the novel also references the TRC's unfulfilled promises of compensation to the many South Africans who had lost property during the apartheid regime. As stated by Mhlongo these promises remain unfulfilled "not because [the government] didn't have the capacity, but because many politicians are corrupt and want to enrich themselves" (in Moreillon and Stiebel 2015: 260). In his article entitled "The TRC and CODESA[7] failed South Africa: Its Time We Reflected on This," (2013) journalist Frank Meintjies states that the work of the TRC currently remains inadequate and incomplete as the government "has failed to follow up and prosecute the perpetrators of violence who did not apply for amnesty. In addition, it has not fully implemented recommendations for reparations for victims of gross violations. [The] government has paid reparations – a pay-out of R30,000 – to less than a quarter of victims" (2013: n.p).

South African Masculinities

Alongside the political changes in South Africa after the advent of democracy, the government and its policy makers turned their attention to the recreation of a more egalitarian society, particularly in terms of gender rights. In the introduction to *Women, Society and Constraints: A Collection of Con-*

[6] The Pan Africanist Congress, a leading political party in South Africa.

[7] The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was a plenary session where various political parties began negotiating the change of political leadership in South Africa.

temporary South African Gender Studies (2000), editor Jeanette Malherbe asserts that under the apartheid regime South Africa "had been marked by a universally deplored neglect of basic individual rights and a denial of civil liberties" wherein "sexism was as entrenched as racism" (2000: 7). Pre-democratic conceptions of masculinity were largely shaped by the effects of colonialism and apartheid, as South African men were often encouraged to exhibit a more militant and violent display of manhood "as a necessary response" to the violence perpetuated by the state (Reid and Walker 2005: 8).

In his discussion on "ANC masculinities," Raymond Suttner posits that the Jacob Zuma rape trial of 2006, which took place amidst other charges of corruption, became a "major site of focus on Zulu culture and masculinity" in South Africa and largely influenced the formation of modern masculinities (2009: 226). At the trial, Suttner argues that the ex-president presented himself as an embodiment of Zulu culture and virility through an emphasis on warrior traditions. In particular, Zuma's use of the song *Awulethu Umshini Wami/Bring me my machine gun* outside of the courtroom served as a "reenactment" of the alleged rape, and could be considered indicative of "a manifestation of male power over women," considering that the word *umshini* is "widely used as a euphemism for penis in certain villages and townships" (2009: 229).

Zuma's accuser, a woman named Fezekile Khuzwayo ("Khwezi") was also verbally assaulted and harangued outside the courtroom by several of Zuma's supporters, with some even burning an effigy of her and others carrying a banner encouraging the court to "burn the bitch" (Hassim 2009: 59). As a result of the constant harassment, Khwezi was forced to seek refuge in a safe house under police protection during the trial, and fled to the Netherlands once the trial had ended (60). In the aftermath of the trial, the One in Nine Campaign against sexual violence in South Africa was formed, honouring the memory of Khwezi, who is regarded by many as a symbol of hope and courage in the South African public imaginary. Rape is a serious concern in contemporary South African society, and this is reflected in the constant stream of its depictions in post-apartheid literature.[8] Novels such as *Way Back Home* question how acts of rape that occur in the post-apartheid present can be informed by past understandings of gender and sexuality, and also "speak to how rape can be seen to inform masculinities" (Blanton 2018: 16).

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[8] Examples of such texts include J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), Pumla Dineo Gqola's *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (2015) and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001) to name a few.

Suttner argues that in addition to perpetuating deeply embedded ideas of misogyny and sexual violence which "signals that the abuse of women should be tolerated," militaristic sentiments such as a readiness to die or a capacity to kill, are potentially harmful as many young black men aim to model themselves after the nation's beloved struggle heroes (2009: 227). In a similar approach to Suttner, Pumla Dineo Gqola notes that the development of violent masculinities has "taken centre stage since the Jacob Zuma rape trial," as well as during other political and public events since then (2009: 61). The militaristic sentiments borne from such masculinities are echoed in *Way Back Home* through the characters of Kimathi and his fellow 'comrades' who constantly attempt to prove their masculinity through the use of violence and intimidation, techniques which they claim to have learned during their days as guerrilla soldiers in the anti-apartheid movement.

1.5. Critical Scholarship on *Way Back Home* and Mhlongo's *oeuvre*

Considering *Way Back Home*'s (2013) relatively recent publication, at present there are only three journal articles on the novel, one of which is an interview. In this section I shall also include a discussion of relevant scholarship on Mhlongo's earlier novels, *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) and *After Tears* (2007), which bear thematic similarity with *Way Back Home.* Notably, scholarship on *Way Back Home* highlights the political nature of Mhlongo's writing, which directly responds to issues in South Africa's socio-political milieu, in particular the crises of black masculinity, and its association with corruption, excess and greed. This is evident in recent studies of *Way Back Home* (Kenqu 2019, Rafapa 2018, Blanton 2018), but is also evident in scholarship on his earlier works. Thabo Tsehloane (2010) observes how Mhlongo's protagonist in *After Tears* "consciously [shuns] domineering forms of 'masculinity spectacle,'" and yet still remains "enthralled" by machismo (79). In his study on Mhlongo's early writing, Christopher Warnes (2011) explores how the themes of corruption and betrayal reflect the *Zeitgeist* of contemporary South Africa, which is characterised by disillusionment and a loss of hope, while Lesibana Rafapa (2014) considers how Mhlongo's novels extol the importance of upholding holistic African traditions and values.

In "'Plunging into to the Mire of Corruption and Pleasure': Niq Mhlongo's *Way Back Home*," (2019) Yolisa Kenqu discusses the relationship between corruption and masculinity in the novel. She argues that while Mhlongo's earlier writing is preoccupied with the "performance of 'hustling,' borne out of the nervousness of urban marginal life in South Africa," his recent novel involves "a protagonist whose hustle plays out on the grand scale of nationalist politics" (2019: 158). Building on the author's confirmation that one of the main concerns in *Way Back Home* is political betrayal, Kenqu notes that "Mhlongo implicitly condemns this betrayal in Kimathi's corruption and in his unquenchable materialistic and sexual appetites," as the corrupt characters spend state resources for their personal gain (159). Kenqu further observes that the corrupt male characters of *Way Back Hom*e reflect Mhlongo's "disgust at the failure of the post-apartheid ideal of the 'Rainbow Nation'" (158). Notably, Kenqu advocates for a reading of Kimathi as a victim of his "larger historical condition" but also suggests that readers should not "let him off the hook entirely" (2019: 163).

Regarding the corrupt characters in *Way Back Home*, Rafapa argues in "Indigeneity in Modernity: The Cases of Kgebetli Moele and Niq Mhlongo" (2018) that Mhlongo "demystifies the origins of corruption not to be inherited from a scapegoat apartheid, but as inherent among a power-abusing black leadership since its days of exile" (108). This is shown through the tenderpreneur characters in *Way Back Home,* who have rendered the once virtuous rhetoric of the anti-apartheid movement empty and meaningless by using dialogue which parodies "the noble goals of the liberation struggle" (106). An example of this is the male characters' excessive use of the word "comrade," which was initially used as a revolutionary term of address in the apartheid era, typically by members of the ANC and the SACP,[9] and their respective youth organisations. In *Way Back Home*, the term is used when Kimathi and his corrupt friends address each other socially. However, these characters' contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle are virtually negligible, and they entered into The Movement for ignoble reasons, as indicated when Ganyani, Kimathi's colleague, claims that he "didn't join the struggle and go into exile to be a poor man when liberation came" (Mhlongo 2013: 39).

Rafapa is also critical of Mhlongo's depiction of the white characters in the novel, such as George, an engineer employed by Kimathi, as well as Kimathi's neighbours, the Steinmans, who are depicted as impoverished and even pathetic in contrast to the affluent and extravagant black elite. This contrast is made evident when Kimathi and his cronies are wearing designer suits while George is dressed in a "cheap blue shirt [and] a beltless pair of old blue jeans," despite them all attending the same company meeting (Mhlongo 2013: 38). *Way Back Home* indicates the reversal of fortunes that occurred in the new democratic dispensation, as South Africa is now divided by economic rather than racial denominations. However, Rafapa is discontent with the fact that the novel seems to encourage its readers to "empathise with the white neighbours for their failure to adjust to change," and their "inability to afford the luxury life" which Kimathi, an exile turned corrupt businessman, enjoys (2018: 105).

In his doctoral thesis "'A Man of His Generation': Portrayals of Masculinity in the Post-Apartheid Novel," (2018) Roger Blanton Jr. also identifies the novel's focus on corruption, but is interested in the intersections between gender and corruption in *Way Back Home*. He observes that South

[9] The South African Communist Party

Africa's Black Economic Empowerment programme has given rise to a new black bourgeoisie, who have in turn created new stereotypes and ideas of black masculinity which are predicated on possessing symbols of wealth (2018: 3). Blanton notes that "greed in the novel is a distinctly masculine quality – greed for money, for power, for alcohol and sex" (132).

Blanton views Kimathi as a victim as well as a perpetrator, acknowledging that "while some men are oppressors, they can also be seen as oppressed due to the overwhelming expectations of masculinity that construct their identity" (11). While this concern with Kimathi's 'victimhood' may appear counterintuitive, it finds validity when read through the lens of masculinity studies. Following Blanton, I am also concerned with how Kimathi may be considered a 'victim' (or casualty) of the masculine ideologies he is interpellated by. Blanton's discussion is useful to my own as he notes that under colonial and apartheid rule, South African masculinities were "patriarchal, authoritarian, and informed by violence and misogyny" (16).

Commenting on Mhlongo's earlier novels in "Welcome to Msawawa: The Post-apartheid Township in Niq Mhlongo's Novels of Deception" (2011), Warnes suggests that Mhlongo depicts a contemporary South Africa where deceit and corruption are commonplace. These texts show a distinction between life under apartheid and life in the present: "Mhlongo is purposeful in exposing the disappointments and betrayals of the post-apartheid period […] these are the central themes of both of his novels" (549). I explore the continuation of this theme of betrayal in *Way Back Home.* Interestingly, Warnes also asserts that despite having narrators who "lie, steal and cheat their ways through the novels," Mhlongo's witty and intelligent writing ensures that the reader ultimately sympathises with them (549). This also applies to the protagonist in *Way Back Home*, who, despite being wicked and the subject of satire, also elicits the reader's sympathy. This unsettling ambivalence is something I explore further in my study.

Tsehloane's article, "The Tragic and the Comic: Sello Duiker's and Niq Mhlongo's Contrasting Visions of Post-Apartheid Society" (2010), offers a critique of Mhlongo's "comic vulgarisation of hegemonic masculinity" in *After Tears*. According to Tsehloane the use of the comic in this text is ethically problematic since it "provokes laughter *rather than* righteous indignation" (2010: 83, em-

phasis added). This comic effect occurs as a result of presenting characters "externally and without any trace of emotional involvement" (84). However, in *Way Back Home* Mhlongo creates a more complex and ambivalent protagonist in the troubled Kimathi, which I argue, elicits (even reluctantly) a degree of sympathy in the reader.

While Tsehloane underscores Mhlongo's novels as a reflection of post-apartheid masculinities, Lesibana Rafapa's earlier study "Post-apartheid Transnationalism in Black South African Literature: a Reality or a Fallacy?" (2014) reads Mhlongo's early writing as an "Africanist discourse" as these novels discuss transnationalism and multiculturalism in Africa (2014: 60). He notes that Mhlongo frequently acknowledges African cosmology and traditions and incorporates them into his stories (59). Rafapa examines how the "generally pessimistic" writing of *Drum* journalist Can Themba is echoed in Mhlongo's writing as his "discourse weighs more towards an acknowledgement of the loss of black cultural identity in the post-apartheid public space," particularly in terms of questioning "black traditional ways in the urban environment" (62). By doing this, Mhlongo reminds his readers that to completely abandon black traditions and culture in favour of western customs is "to flit away from black collective identity" (60). This is relevant to my study as *Way Back Home* also accords indigenous knowledge systems and African Traditional Religion ascendancy over Western Christian epistemologies and ontologies in providing practical and meaningful ways of working through mourning and trauma.

1.6. Theoretical Concepts

This dissertation is concerned with three main areas of investigation in regard to *Way Back Home*, namely masculinity, trauma, and literary style. Firstly, in Chapters Two and Three the significant contributions made by Judith Butler ([1999] 2002) and Raewyn Connell (1995) in the field of gender studies will be read in conjunction with Donald Mosher and Silvan Tomkin's (1988) theory on hypermasculinity, as a lens to elucidate my reading of gender construction and performativity in the novel. Frantz Fanon ([1952] 1986) will inform my study on how the performance of masculinity is intended to compensate for feelings of insecurity caused by postcolonial trauma. I will be locating my study on gender in *Way Back Home* within a South African context by looking at the theories on South African masculinities presented by Graeme Reid and Liz Walker (2005) and Pumla Dineo Gqola (2009). I will utilise the theories of Linda Hutcheon (1978) and Mikhail Bakhtin ([1968] 1984) to clarify how the carnivalesque and the grotesque are used to enhance the satirical and parodic aspects of *Way Back Home*, which will be discussed alongside my analysis of gender performativity in Chapter Three.

For Chapter Four, Sigmund Freud's influential theory on the Uncanny ([1919] 2003) will also be useful in examining memory repression and 'repetition compulsion' in *Way Back Home*, alongside Cathy Caruth's (2016) writings on trauma processing and memory repression. Lastly, in Chapter Five, Homi Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" will be applied to explore how the loss of home can result in feelings of displacement and dislocation, which further results in trauma.

Gender as Performance

In her seminal text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2002) Judith Butler aims to counter presumptive views of gender and dismantle rigid gender binaries. She suggests that gender is a "corporeal enactment" which is both "intentional and performative" ([1999] 2002: 177). She describes the body as a site of cultural inscription, upon which gender is performed "through a *stylised repetition of acts*" (179). The notion of gender as a performance rather than a quality or trait which is inherent has the potential to create "gender trouble" as it challenges the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality by claiming that "the category of sex and the naturalised institution of heterosexuality are constructs, socially instituted and socially regulated fantasies" (161). According to

Butler's theory gender is not something which one *is*, but rather something that one *does* or *becomes*: "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organising gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (173). This further implies that assumptions of masculinity, femininity and their associated attributes are not natural, but are instead created and maintained through "a sedimentation of gender norms" (178). Similarly, Seth Mirsky in "Three Arguments for the Elimination of Masculinity" explains that the notion of a biological or essential manhood is fallacious, and that masculinities are "socially constructed and personally embodied" (1996: 27).

In addition, Butler discusses the consequences of failing to "perform" one's gender correctly, noting that "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of these productions — and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them" ([1999] 2002: 178). Those who fail to 'do' their gender properly are rejected by society and risk becoming abject, or 'other,' as their ambiguity challenges and disturbs the presumed natural (heterosexual) order.

Masculinities

Raewyn Connell's definitive text *Masculinities* (1995) outlines the origins of masculinity studies. Connell agrees that the idea of a definitive, 'true' gender, which is promoted by popular culture and embodied in concepts such as a 'real man,' is a fallacy: "the account of natural masculinity that has been built up in sociobiology is almost entirely fictional" (1995: 47). For Connell, this erroneous concept of a "true" or "natural" masculinity is "almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies," and is therefore often associated with aggression and violence (45). This ideology encourages a rationalisation of toxic convictions, such as men being naturally more aggressive than women and therefore more inclined towards rape or other forms of violence, or the belief that men do not possess the tenderness and patience to take care of children (45).

Connell suggests that masculinity ought to be redefined as more than a standard behavioural type or a norm, but rather as a concept that must be examined and understood within the context of gender relations. She defines gender relations as "the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives [….] the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (71).

Connell's theories align with Butler's as she suggests that gender is not an inherent quality which is assigned at birth, but rather a "social practice" that constantly refers to "bodies and what bodies do" (71).

Regarding the formation of masculinities, Connell notes that the concept of hegemonic masculinity contributes to, and acts as a basis for, the theories on male behaviour. She defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). This practice ensures that men claim and sustain a position of leadership or authority in a society, often through the use of violence (83). An important point which Connell cautions against is the use of masculine stereotypes as a template for men to model themselves on, as "the production of exemplars of masculinity" can create "symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them" (846). Connell states that it is by examining men's relationships to images of masculinity that one can discover the root of certain gender-related issues, especially those involving violence.

Machismo and Hypermasculinity

Although the practice of hegemonic masculinity can be oppressive, as it is "predicated on the subordination of women" the concept can be dangerous when radicalised, as this results in the formation and practice of hypermasculinity (Jewkes et al. 2015: 118). Donald Mosher and Silvan Tomkins refer to hypermasculinity as machismo[10] in "Scripting the Macho Man: Hypermasculine Socialisation and Enculturation" (1988). The hypermasculine ideology involves "a system of ideas forming around a world view that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men" (1988: 64). As stated by Mosher and Tomkins, "the ideological script of machismo descends from the ideological script of the warrior" (60). Hypermasculinity can be described as an exaggerated form of masculinity which occurs when men place too much value in the stereotypical masculine ideals. Characteristics central to hypermasculinity include callous attitudes toward women and sex, a predilection towards violence and aggression, and a lack of emotional expression. Mosher and Tomkins posit that sharing and participating in this behaviour has several overarching purposes, the primary one being that it "divides society into the strong and the weak in accordance with success in embodying the ideals of 'real

[10] This term is derived from the Mexican Spanish word *macho* meaning "male" or "masculine".

masculine superiority'" (64). Anticipating Butler's theory, the authors describe hypermasculine men as actors in a performance following a "macho script" (75). This macho behaviour is often catalysed at times when masculinity is threatened, granting the "performer" an opportunity to compensate for any feelings of insecurity or a decreased self-esteem: "when masculinity is challenged, the macho must seize the moment" (79).

South African Masculinities

While the works of Western theorists such as Butler and Connell provide a key theoretical lens for this study, I also rely on local, South African gender theorists to create a critical lexicon specifically relevant to the post/apartheid diegesis of *Way Back Home*. In *Men Behaving Differently: South African Men Since 1994* (2005) Graeme Reid and Liz Walker note that South Africa's complicated transition to democracy has been accompanied by substantial changes in its society, which include the disruption of an "unquestionably patriarchal system" (1). The social, political and legal developments enshrined in South Africa's constitution have "exposed previously hidden sexual practices and abuses, confronted and unseated traditional gender hierarchies," thereby creating a space "for the construction and expression of new masculinities" (1). Walker's account of "struggle masculinity" is particularly relevant to my study of Kimathi's performance of masculinity, as she maintains that struggle masculinity emerged in the context of the anti-apartheid movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Men who fought as soldiers in the ANC's and PAC's armed wings (Umkhonto we Sizwe and APLA[11]) were regarded as figures of "heroic masculinity" (8). These heroic or struggle masculinities were "marked by high levels of militancy and violence, legitimated as a necessary response to the apartheid government" (8).

My analysis of Kimathi's performance of masculinity in *Way Back Home* also involves a reading of feminist author Pumla Dineo Gqola's "'The Difficult Task of Normalising Freedom': Spectacular Masculinities, Ndebele's Literary/Cultural Commentary and Post-Apartheid Life" (2009). In this article Gqola discusses the development of the "hypervisible and self-authorising *performance* of patriarchal masculinity in public spaces" in contemporary South Africa, especially when it is connected to, or stems from, the violence of the anti-apartheid struggle (2009: 64, emphasis added). She is particularly concerned with instances where such a performance "hints at masculine violence or a contest between forms of manhood" (64). Gqola's categorisation of these masculinities as

[11] The Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) was the armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress, a South African political party.

"spectacular" refers to South African Njabulo Ndebele's essay "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa" (1986), which critiques South African protest literature during the apartheid era. He argues that "the history of Black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of spectacle" (143). According to Ndebele, this literary style was influenced by sensationalistic journalism, and, being crudely written, contained more politics than art (148). Following Ndebele, Gqola elucidates how certain masculinities were formed during South Africa's decades of oppression under slavery, colonialism and the apartheid regime; masculinities which are incongruent with the present-day views on gender and sexuality. She argues that the masculinist spectacle continues to permeate the entire spectrum of the current South African society in the "guise of violent and militarised masculinities," as it is inhabited (or performed) by men who once "embraced heroic, militant masculinities within the liberation movement" (2009: 65).

Postcolonial Trauma and Constructions of Masculinity

In my study I will also be exploring the ways in which the constructions of masculinity intersect with postcolonial trauma theory in *Way Back Home*, particularly in terms of the psychological effects of trauma on the formation of a postcolonial masculine identity. In the seminal postcolonial text *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 1986) Frantz Fanon laments the plight of the black man in the colonial world, who becomes a figure of abjection in the eyes of the white man: "My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recoloured, clad in mourning […] The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly" (1986: 113). In particular, Fanon notes how the black man is vilified under the 'white gaze.' The negative effects of this distorted perception consume his thoughts: "I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonised native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world" (143). One way to resolve these feelings of inferiority, Fanon observes, is by making himself akin to a white man, in order to "compel the white man to acknowledge that [he is] human" (98). From the perspective of psychoanalysis, black masculinity is experienced as trauma – a 'woundedness' expressed on the level of the skin, but permeating the psyche. Of the two epigraphs to *Way Back Home,* one is from *Black Skin, White Masks*, and through this invocation of Fanon – the father of decolonisation, and of black psychoanalysis – the reader assumes the novel will foreground issues of the historical and psychological effects of racism.

Trauma and the Return of the Repressed

An important thematic concern in *Way Back Home* is the implications of the past on the present. In this regard, studies on traumatic memory are apposite to understand how the characters of Kimathi, Senami and her parents experience trauma in the present, caused by past events. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (2016), Cathy Caruth defines trauma as the manner in which a "simple violent or original event in an individual's past," which remains unarticulated, returns to "haunt the survivor" later in their life (4). This return can result in an uncanny effect as the memory of a past event is both familiar to, and estranged from, the one who remembers it. In his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud investigates the aesthetics and origins of uncanny feelings and their relation to repression, repetition and the unconscious. Memories which lie in the unconscious are considered repressed, and the return of such memories in sufferers of trauma can create an uncanny feeling. While the 'canny' refers to what is familiar and known, "the prefix 'un' is the token of repression" (Freud [1919] 2003: 245). As such, the uncanny (or *Das Unheimliche*) refers to "everything that should have stayed secret, hidden, latent […] but has come to the fore" (Schelling in Ffytche 2012: 160). This uncanny resurfacing of repressed material "arouses dread and creeping horror" in traumatised individuals (Freud [1919] 2003: 219). In his clinical analyses Freud notes that victims of trauma often try to resolve their trauma by repeatedly re-enacting the traumatic event, involuntarily. I will be exploring this repetition compulsion in in *Way Back Home*, particularly in how it features as hauntings, through the uncanny 'echoes' of Senami.

'Unhomeliness' and the Trauma of Displacement

My investigation of trauma in *Way Back Home* also extends to a discussion on the trauma of displacement in a postcolonial context. In his influential essay "The World and the Home" (1992) Homi Bhabha expounds on Freud's theory on the Uncanny, drawing on the ambivalence surrounding the German term *Das Unheimliche* (uncanny/unhomely) to express how familiar or domestic spaces can become sites where the border between home and world blurs. This can create a state of disorientation: "the unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (1992: 144). Bhabha's theory is pertinent to my investigation into Kimathi's trauma, caused by his dislocation and loss of home (both material and spiritual).

Satire and the Carnivalesque

Way Back Home is a political satire, highlighting the folly of a kleptocracy through its comical and exaggerated representations of men in (economic) power. As a literary tool satire may be humorous, using "wit or humour that is either fantastical or absurd" to emphasise its argument (Childs and Fowler [1973] 2006: 211). Satire can be combined with parody in order to create moral criticisms (Hutcheon 1978: 208). According to Linda Hutcheon, parody is "criticism as a kind of active exploration" and has the potential to be "an existential, liberating force" as it draws a contrast between existing sets of conventions, prompting readers to compare the "actual" with the "ideal" (208).

In particular, *Way Back Home* invokes the grotesque body and its association with carnival. In *Rabelais and His World* ([1968] 1984) Mikhail Bakhtin defines the grotesque as a form of realism that focuses on the body of a subject, which is degraded through laughter: "the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal" (19-20). The aim of this degradation is not merely to create humour, but to "kill" or "bury" the subject in order "to bring forth something more and better" (21). It therefore serves a corrective function. In *Way Back Home*, the body becomes a point of focus, often in regard to violence and trauma, but also in satirical descriptions of Kimathi's physique.

Elucidating Bakhtin's theory, Dentith explains that parody is a cultural form which "draw(s) upon the popular energies of the carnival" (2002: 22). He describes the carnival as "an aesthetic which celebrates the anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture," one that serves as an opposition to authoritarian forces ([1995] 2005: 64). Bakhtin's study focuses on Menippean satire, which is derived from the "world of carnival folklore" (Childs and Fowler [1973] 2006: 53). In the carnival, "the social hierarchies of everyday life" are overturned, and "ideas and truths are endlessly tested and contested, and thus de-privileged" (53). The world of the carnival is a "world-turned-upside-down," and thus the carnivalesque is a useful tool for my understanding of how the blurring of the boundaries between reality and the supernatural in *Way Back Home* serve to unearth hidden truths (53). The carnivalesque also provides a lens for analysing how Kimathi's death may provide a space for renewal, as his death suggests the end of a cycle of violence. Bakhtin describes the carnival form as "an attitude in which the high, the elevated, the official, even the sacred is degraded or debased but as a condition of popular renewal and regeneration" (Dentith [1995] 2005: 66).

Chapter Two
A Man Among Men

This chapter focuses on the representations of black masculinity in *Way Back Home* by exploring how the character and personality of its protagonist Kimathi Fezile Tito is informed by the masculine ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle. Kimathi is a liberation soldier turned corrupt businessman whose "wealth is gained through questionable means" (Moreillon and Stiebel 2015: 267). The novel is narrated from his perspective, although it is a limited third person narration. It opens with an interrogation scene in 1988 at Amilcar Cabral camp, an Angolan detention centre. At this camp, members of a liberation army called The Movement[12] are posted. The reader is unaware at this point that Comrade Pilate, the primary interrogator in the opening scene, is in fact Kimathi, the protagonist introduced in the following chapter, which is set in present day Johannesburg. The dual timelines of the novel present two very different depictions of Kimathi, as both a former commander of The Movement in Angola, and an unscrupulous middle-aged businessman in post-apartheid South Africa.

The plot does not follow a chronological order as the events at Amilcar Cabral, recounted only in dreams and flashbacks, are interspersed across the present day narrative, creating a sense of disorientation which parallels Kimathi's own feelings of confusion and dislocation as he struggles to connect his current self with his past actions. The alternating setting of the chapters also alerts the reader to the inseparability of the past and the present, a recurring theme in *Way Back Home*. I argue that the structure of the novel – linking present and past – reveals how a culture of masculine violence informs Kimathi's present relationships with his friends and colleagues, and especially with women. Therefore, I posit that any understanding of Kimathi's construction of masculinity in the present of the text involves an exploration into his formative years: his birth and childhood, his years spent as a guerrilla soldier in Angola, as well as the Tito family's genealogy of violence.

In the first section of this chapter titled "'You are a revolutionary': Kimathi and Struggle Masculinity" I argue that *Way Back Home* exposes a genealogy of male violence that is informed by radicalised 'struggle' or 'spectacular' masculinities. Raewyn Connell's landmark study *Masculinities* (1995) is useful in my analysis of the novel's representation of struggle masculinity as a form of

[12] I read *Way Back Home*'s Amilcar Cabral camp as synonymic for Quatro, the infamous ANC detention centre which was also located in Angola. Accordingly, I argue that The Movement is shorthand for the MK.

hegemonic masculinity, while Pumla Dineo Gqola's (2009) commentary on the public culture of spectacle provides a critical vocabulary to talk about the spectacular masculinities in Mhlongo's novel. Drawing on Ndebele, Gqola explains how what seems a contemporary post-apartheid phenomenon is deeply rooted in the militarised ideas of the anti-apartheid struggle. I then examine in "The Masochism of Machismo: Kimathi as a Victim of Masculinity" how the interpellation of an ideology of machismo has shaped Kimathi's actions and perspectives, and how he can be considered a victim of hegemonic masculinity.

Through a discussion of Kimathi's relationships with strong women like Senami and his ex-wife Anele, I propose in "Intimate Inequalities: 'Real' Men and Strong Women" that *Way Back Home* exposes the lie of male potency and questions the legitimacy of male dominance. Donald Mosher and Silvan Tomkins' (1988) article on the radicalisation of hegemonic masculinity and its link to gender-based violence illuminates my analysis of Kimathi as a hypermasculine figure. While current scholarship such as Rafapa (2018) and Kenqu (2019) foregrounds the connections between masculinity and corruption in *Way Back Home*, little attention has been given to the construction of Kimathi's masculine ideals and how this affects his relationships with women in particular. I intend to address these concerns in my study.

2.1. "You are a revolutionary": Kimathi and Struggle Masculinity

Kimathi was born in 1969 in Tanzania to a Tanzanian mother and a South African father. As a self-proclaimed "son of exile" who was "conceived in an act of unromantic lust,"[13] Kimathi appears to be destined for a life of tragedy (Mhlongo 2013: 19). He is born into a militarised environment,[14] is raised by a high-ranking official in the South African liberation army and even attends a military school[15] (20). Kimathi's ideas of masculinity thus become shaped by the high levels of militarisation surrounding him. In addition, he shares a birthday with his father's struggle hero, Dedan Kimathi Waciuri, leader of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya in the 1950s, whom he is also named after (19). As the instigator of a violent anti-colonial revolution, Dedan Kimathi is an ambiguous

[13] I read this as a euphemism for rape, and a parallel to the later rape of Senami.

[14] In the 1970s Ugandan forces under the dictator Idi Amin invaded Tanzania, resulting in a war between the two countries.

[15] In *Way Back Home* this school is referred to as Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. As with The Movement, Mhlongo uses creative license to suggest that this college offers military training. In reality it was not a military school but an educational institution for those in exile between the years 1978 to 1992 (Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani 2004: 2).

historical figure: "Kimathi could be a tragic folk hero, a misunderstood rebel commander, a power-hungry despot, a prophetic patriot, a reminder of the lost dreams of revolution, or a dangerous precedent for future dissidents against postcolonial order" (MacArthur 2017: 3). The contradictory nature of Dedan Kimathi is echoed in Mhlongo's Kimathi, who believes that he is a hero of the anti-apartheid struggle when in reality his violent actions towards others – especially women – are more suggestive of terrorism than heroism. Although the two men share a name, they are inherently different as "Mhlongo's Kimathi is a sell-out who turns his back on his revolutionary ideals and has more in common with imperialist forces than his namesake" (Blanton 2018: 137).

Kimathi relocates to South Africa when the country is on the brink of a violent revolution against the apartheid government, moving from one volatile environment to another. Gqola notes that during the apartheid era, people were "socialised into societies that were constituted by violent interaction in their very fabric" (2007: 114). Kimathi's father serves as a soldier in the anti-apartheid militia referred to as The Movement, and during his conversations with Kimathi he passes down his radicalised ideas. This is evidenced when Kimathi is teased in school for being a foreigner, and his father attempts to console his son by explaining he is destined to be a freedom fighter: "'I want you to fight for your country, South Africa […] Tell those morons in Dark City that you're not a *wakimbizi,*[16] but a social reformer. Tell them you're from a country where the cities are built on top of gold and diamonds. You are a revolutionary" (Mhlongo 2013: 20). The irony of this statement is that in the context of colonial liberation, becoming a 'social reformer' should be viewed positively, but Lunga's attempt to reassure his son "that he is part of the process of [a] social reformation" is "framed in strictly materialist terms" (Kenqu 2019: 158). The sense of entitlement that Kimathi feels as an adult due to his participation in the anti-apartheid struggle is informed by these beliefs, a theme that will be explored in the following Chapter. Lunga's statement also illustrates how Kimathi is directly interpellated by the prevailing discourse of 'revolution' which requires a militant and heroic masculinity. This is a gendered role that is assigned to Kimathi practically from birth: he is referred to as a *son* of exile, and a *son* of the revolution (Mhlongo 2013: 19 and 113). This is a role that is romanticised and idealised by both Lunga and Kimathi.

Through the character of Kimathi and his relationship with his father, *Way Back Home* reflects how the concept of 'struggle' or 'heroic' masculinity becomes entwined with hegemonic masculinity and

16 This is a Swahili word for 'refugee.'

forms the standard to which black men should aspire in pre-democratic South Africa. Hegemony is defined as "a position of dominance attained through relative consensus rather than regular force, even if underpinned by force" (Jewkes et al. 2015: 113). In relation to masculinity this consensus is "built among those who benefit from the promotion of masculinity, as well as many of those who are oppressed by it, notably women" (113). As a prevailing standard of masculinity it is "a culturally idealised form" that is "both a personal and collective project" (Donaldson in Jewkes et al. 2015: 113). However, while it can be regarded as a legitimised standard, hegemonic masculinity it is not a fixed or static definition but is predicated on the "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action" and so it "can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 836). Thembisa Waetjen in *Workers and Warriors: Masculinity and the Struggle for Nation in South Africa* (2006) notes the importance that black men award to struggle masculinities. She states that during the apartheid era "the definition of being a radical, a militant, a freedom fighter, and a comrade […] was significantly bound up in what it means to be a man" (2006: 89-90).

A crucial element of both hegemonic and struggle masculinities is the use of violence, as it is often through violence that men assert their patriarchal authority. Gqola notes that in South Africa the relationship between violence and manhood can be found in the form of 'spectacular' masculinities. She describes this as the performance of patriarchal masculinity in public spaces, particularly when it is linked to ideas of violence. According to Gqola, this 'spectacle' is founded upon the "violent and militarised masculinities" which were central to the anti-apartheid struggle (2009: 65). Under apartheid, a regime which infantilised black men, "the struggle to be a man meant the struggle for dignity and reclaiming of rights and the need to be treated as an adult being" (Suttner in Gqola 2009: 66). Thus, in the public culture of what Gqola and Suttner refer to as "ANC masculinities," any "assertions of political agency" can become "codified as heroism" (66).

Through small details about Kimathi's genealogy, *Way Back Home* points to Kimathi as being the latest participant in a cycle of male violence and self-destruction. This cycle begins in 1972 with his grandfather who was arrested for murder and hanged for his crime, after killing an Afrikaner farmer who dispossessed his family of their ancestral land (Mhlongo 2013: 30). It continues with Kimathi's father Lunga who, before killing himself, "shot dead six of his colleagues in their sleep" in their training camp (19). Lunga places great pride in being a struggle hero but his actions are anything but heroic, as he is suspended by The Movement "because of allegations that he had lured new fe-

male recruits into his bed by providing them with the supplies he stole from the logistics section, including clothes, toothpaste, meat and alcohol" (19). Despite these crimes, Kimathi's father is still regarded as a struggle hero by his peers, who are dissatisfied that after his death, Lunga was not "given the respect other struggle heroes were afforded" (19).

After his father's death, Kimathi is raised in part by his paternal aunt Yoli, but also by Ludwe, a family friend who served as a soldier alongside Lunga. When Yoli asks about the circumstances surrounding her brother's death, Ludwe claims while "wiping an imaginary tear from his left eye" that his friend "died in Tanzania from gunshot wounds in 1985" after being "shot by the Boers" (27). He fabricates an account of Lunga's actions instead of confessing the truth to Kimathi's aunt in order to preserve his friend's reputation as a struggle hero and as a man. It is worth noting that Lunga's, and eventually Kimathi's, horrific actions towards women are minimised and subsumed by the fact that the men were part of the struggle against apartheid, and so their actions should be seen only in a heroic light. This coincides with the men's standard of hegemonic masculinity which emphasises the "overall subordination of women" (Connell 1995: 79).

Connell and Messerschmidt posit that hegemonic masculinity is influenced in part through "the production of exemplars of masculinity […] symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them" (2005: 846). These "fantasy figures" can be regarded as "visible bearers" of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995: 77). For Kimathi, as a soldier in The Movement, these symbols and fantasy figures include public members of the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggles, but also more personal role models like his father and Ludwe. Kimathi is described as being eager to visit Solomon Mahlangu's[17] grave as a child, and his friend Sechaba names his son Castro after the revolutionary Cuban leader (Mhlongo 2013: 126). In the present of the text, Kimathi also ponders whether he will be buried in Avalon Cemetery in Johannesburg, a place that he "had been eager to see" as a teenager after his father tells him "that most of the students killed by police in June 1976[18] were buried there" (143). Moreover, in the present day, when Kimathi invites Senami to lunch, he reserves a table for them at Perro Restaurant because "he wanted her to catch a glimpse of the photo of him with Nelson Mandela" on the restaurant's "wall of

[17] Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu was a member of the ANC and a solider in its armed wing, the MK.

[18] In June 1976 during the famous Soweto uprising – a series of demonstrations by South African students who protested the 1953 Bantu Education Act – almost two hundred youths were massacred by the South African Police Force.

fame" (55). These scenes demonstrate how deeply struggle mentality is rooted in the male character's minds.

2.2. The Masochism of Machismo: Kimathi as a Victim of Masculinity

As a reader, it is not difficult to despise the wicked and unsavoury protagonist of *Way Back Home.* He is presented as a (largely) unsympathetic character particularly through the scenes in which he brutally tortures his fellow comrades in Angola, sexually assaults Senami, and, in the present day, engages in corrupt business deals. However, following Kenqu (2019) I am offering a sympathetic reading of Kimathi as a victim of the masculine ideals to which he desperately aspires, although like her I will not "let him off the hook entirely" (2019: 163). In order to understand how Kimathi's past circumstances influence his personality, it is necessary to 'read against the grain.' In her article on 'spectacular' masculinities, Gqola maintains that "although much scholarship reads assertions of manhood as straightforward patriarchal statements, context demands attention […] even when such assertions are patriarchal" (2009: 65). It is my intention to understand the complex context that informs Kimathi's expression of masculinity.

In considering how Kimathi defines his masculinity in relation to the anti-apartheid struggle, it is important to note that for many people under colonial rule, violence was regarded as necessary to survive and served as a means to an end. As stated by Gqola, "slavery and colonialism were rooted in violence and violation" among non-white subjects, and subsequently under these living conditions "self-defence in the face of colonisation also found expression as taking up arms, leading to centuries of warfare across the breadth of the African continent" (113). She elucidates how the apartheid government "capitalised on the physical violence of contestation through the militaristic control as well as the structured violence of the economy," resulting in the systematic brutalisation of black people (113). In *Way Back Home* the soldiers of The Movement, the organisation to which Kimathi belongs, often express violent sentiments in relation to freedom from apartheid rule: "We have to fight those Boers! […] We have to take back our country the Castro[19] way!" (Mhlongo 2013: 72).

[19] Notably, the Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro is also credited with founding a militant group called The Movement.

When Kimathi's fellow Comrade, Idi, asks the soldiers at Amilcar Cabral camp to consider how they will attack the Boers with insufficient weaponry, the soldiers reply: "All we want is to fight them. There *must* be a war. We *have* to fight for our land" (72, emphasis added). Kimathi's brutal methods of torture and interrogation can also be regarded as a reflection of how deeply he is inculcated with the strategies of violence and domination under apartheid rule. In this sense he is a victim of the militarised environment which surrounded him and interpellated him, and as such he should be "given the sympathy of victims in a larger historical condition" (Kenqu 2019: 163). As suggested by Blanton, "while some men are oppressors, they can also be seen as oppressed due to the overwhelming expectations of masculinity that construct their identity" (2018: 11). In comparison to the male protagonists of his earlier novels, *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) and *After Tears* (2007), who embody the *tsotsi* or 'hustler' masculinity, Mhlongo paints Kimathi as a more complex and ambivalent protagonist who is both a perpetrator of grievous crimes but also the victim of a masculine ideal which ensures him that committing such acts of violence is his prerogative as a man.

Way Back Home also draws attention to the impact of colonial rule on its subjects by alluding to Africa's history of violence. While unlocking a cell door at Amilcar Cabral, so that Kimathi can begin his interrogation of Senami, Comrade Bambata, another soldier at the camp, is suddenly perturbed by the very "architecture" of the building which "seemed to whisper the secrets of past torturers" (Mhlongo 2013: 94). Bambata considers the rumour which had spread across the camp "that the place had been used centuries earlier to house slaves before they were sent away across the Atlantic" (94). Similarly, when Kimathi returns to Angola in the present, he drives past Kinaxixi Square on his way to Amilcar Cabral, a place "where the Portuguese had beheaded slaves centuries before" (183). In creating a parallel between the slaves of the colonial era and the current prisoners at the camp, some of whom are being wrongfully detained, the novel suggests the idea of learned violence, that "the violence of the colonised is […] an outcome of the violence of the coloniser" (Kebede 2001: 550). Considering the novel's concern with the implications of the past on the present, the scenes in Angola demonstrate the power that ideologies of the past have to speak to subjects of the present, further pointing to the fact that the legacies of inequity persist in the present. This correlates with Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's assertion that patterns of conflict, especially in countries recently emancipated from colonial rule, "tend to reproduce themselves, turning victims into perpetrators in an unending vicious cycle of repetition of vengeful violence and hatred" (2008: 47).

Despite placing Kimathi's experiences in a broader colonial context, reading him as a victim becomes difficult when at times he appears to genuinely enjoy his acts of aggression. He is described as behaving "sadistically" when beating a fellow comrade with an acacia branch (Mhlongo 2013: 10). It is even implied that Kimathi only joined The Movement in order to act out his macabre fantasies. In the penultimate scene of the novel Senami's spirit urges Kimathi to confess his crimes to her parents: "tell them that your career as a freedom fighter was motivated by your dark and hidden desires" (204). When describing Kimathi to Senami's parents, her friend and fellow solider Mongezi claims that "there is a monster behind that man […] he is a freak of nature" (206). Similarly, when Kimathi is confronted by Senami's ghost after returning to Amilcar Cabral camp, he offers her an apology for his acts of violence against her, but Senami rejects this insincere effort as she believes that Kimathi continued with his actions despite knowing "the difference between right and wrong" (205). This corresponds with Jewkes et al., who suggest that even men who subscribe to a hegemonic masculinity which predicates violence "have a choice about whether to not actively to occupy oppressive positions […] This choice maybe highly constrained due to a lack of exposure to ideas and information, but it is ultimately still a choice" (2015: 112-113).

Additionally, although decades have passed since their years at Amilcar Cabral, Kimathi and his colleagues continue to act in ways which reflect the practices and mentalities of their violent pasts. These practices should have ended along with the apartheid regime but continue into the present. The brutal torture techniques and unflinching betrayals at Amilcar Cabral inform the male characters' convictions of the relationship between strength, dominance, and masculinity: "ruthlessness is seen as expedient for survival […] and is to be expected in the present as well" (Blanton 2018: 132). The persistence and pervasiveness of the discourses of struggle masculinity is encapsulated in Gqola's assertion that "it is exactly the complicated combination of struggle parlance and violent masculinities that leads to the unregulated effects of the spectacular masculinities" in the present (2009: 66). Her definition of spectacular masculinities as performances of masculinity in public spaces, especially when they are connected to the anti-apartheid struggle, is germane to my reading of Kimathi. He proudly states that he "grew up in an organisation where backstabbing was the norm," and so he feels justified in using such a tactic to succeed, even in business (Mhlongo 2013: 193). This behaviour is taken to lethal extremes as Kimathi even murders Ludwe, his former business partner and father-figure, for helping his niece sue Kimathi after she is retrenched from their company. In his commentary on Mhlongo's *oeuvre*, Christopher Warnes notes that "apartheid-era survival strategies underlie the moral flexibility that characterises Mhlongo's narrators," which in-

dicates that the legacy of violence and radicalism is "shown to still be very much present in the post-apartheid moment" (2011: 552). Although Kimathi is a victim of history and is interpellated by ideologies of violence, his extreme sadism, amorality and lack of self-reflection alienate him from the reader. The reader is therefore caught in a double-bind, where they are bound to Kimathi as he is the primary focaliser, but at the same time they are repelled by him as they wish for an alternative voice and vision.

2.3. Intimate Inequalities: Strong Women and 'Real' Men

Kimathi and his peers subscribe to a form of hegemonic masculinity which is linked to the more radicalised and violent ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle. It therefore extols aggression, especially in the face of oppression, and creates a more malevolent form of hegemonic masculinity that does not solely focus on men but is also "predicated on the subordination of women and girls" (Jewkes et al. 2015: 118). However, women are also implicated in this hegemonic masculinity, as certain masculine traits are tacitly supported and endorsed by them. In this section I explore how Kimathi's masculine ideology influences his relationships with the central female characters in the novel, namely Senami, Anele, and to a lesser extent, Zanu. I argue that through Kimathi's interactions with strong women who refuse to submit or comply, *Way Back Home* exposes the fallacy of patriarchal power and simultaneously delegitimises hegemonic masculinity.

2.3.1. Kimathi and Senami

The reader is first introduced to Senami under the code name Lady Comrade Mkabayi, a moniker she is given at a training camp "where many of her comrades had likened her courage to that of King Shaka Zulu's aunt" (Mhlongo 2013: 104). Mkabayi kaJama was a Zulu princess who attempted to rule as queen regent when her stepbrother died. She also served as the head of a military unit and reportedly rejected many suitors because of her commitment to her role as leader. Mkabayi is described as strong-willed, proud and independent, and is most famous for her attempt to assassinate King Shaka and seize control of his kingdom (Masuku 2014: n.p). Senami's code name may also thus suggest the direct threat to patriarchal power presented by strong and resourceful women as Mkabayi's attempt to supplant Shaka proves that male authority and power are not inviolable. Like Mkabayi, Senami's dedication to her cause means that she is forced to make many sacrifices,

as she forsakes attending medical school in order to join The Movement (Mhlongo 2013: 60). Both women also died in exile, outside the lands that they loved and fought for – Mkabayi was banished from her homeland and Senami dies in Angola, at Amilcar Cabral, away from her home in Johannesburg.

Following Senami's arrival at Amilcar Cabral camp, Kimathi and Idi are instantly threatened by her confidence and charisma. She proves to be an excellent soldier, surpassing the other comrades in her fierce courage and tactical skill, thereby living up to her namesake. Enraged and jealous, Kimathi resolves to assert his dominance through Senami's sexual subjugation, but she refuses his "clumsy offer" (104). Growing desperate and frustrated, Kimathi falsely accuses Senami of being an undercover spy for apartheid agents, and of "disrespecting The Movement and its capable leaders" (104). He and Idi place Senami in solitary confinement where she is tortured. The men then offer "to release her and secure her tickets to fly to East Germany if she slept with them," but she rejects them a second time, and so Kimathi and Idi continue to torture her (104). Their fury heightens further when Senami, even under torture for her supposed crime, "had insisted on being called Lady Comrade Mkabayi," resulting in the men beating her bloody "using the soles of their boots" (104). Kimathi's destructive behaviour towards Senami appears to be fuelled by his deep feelings of insecurity since her rejection and her obvious disinterest in him calls his masculinity into question. Through the character of Kimathi, *Way Back Home* reveals that beneath the facade of male power and potency there is a deep vulnerability and insecurity which stems from feelings of inadequacy.

Kimathi attacks the innocent Senami for several reasons, with the most prominent one being that "she refused to make her body available" to him (104). In the novel's climax, when Senami's mother learns the truth about her daughter's death, she asks Kimathi's ex-comrade Bambata why Kimathi killed Senami and receives the rather vexing reply that Kimathi "was in love with her […] and jealous that she didn't love him back" (207). His reaction to her rejection is a reminder of how even contemporary understandings of masculinity do not "exist in isolation from femininity" and are often defined by "an expression of the current image that men have of themselves in relation to women" (Brittan in Crous 2005: 100). Michael Kimmel also notes that when most men realise they cannot live up to the burdensome ideals of masculinity placed on them by society and by themselves, they experience a dramatic loss of self-esteem, and one response to this decrease in self-esteem "has been a rise […] in the assaults and rape of women" (2005: 103). After Kimathi's attempt

to woo Senami fails, she is no longer admired by him, but becomes his adversary. Scalded by Senami's rejections, Kimathi aims to 'punish' her in the worst conceivable way.

According to Connell and Messerschmidt the "relationships to collective images or models of masculinity" that men have are "central to understanding gendered consequences in violence" (2005: 841). Kimathi has two personal models of masculinity: his father Lunga, and his father's friend Ludwe, neither of whom are positive influences. Lunga took advantage of women in his training camp and coerced them into having sex with him, and Ludwe encourages Kimathi to be promiscuous by claiming that "sex is one of the most basic needs of life because society has to reproduce" (Mhlongo 2013: 21). Kimathi follows these precedents in his treatment of Senami. Raised in a culture which is predicated on male authority and female submission, Kimathi cannot understand why Senami remains unafraid of his violent threats and actions, and he himself begins to feel threatened by her indifference. He soon develops an insatiable desire to dominate Senami, and I argue that in this regard he displays hypermasculinity. In their analysis of hypermasculine behaviour, Mosher and Tomkins note that men who feel their authority is threatened by women can sometimes engage in a display of dominance to counter feelings of insecurity, as "challenges by adversarial females require their physical subjugation or their physical and sexual subjugation" (1988: 79). According to these authors the general procedure that men follow to assert their hypermasculine authority is to "escalate anger, daring, callousness until dominance is established" (79).

When Kimathi and Idi enter Senami's cell, they claim to be guided by "the relentless burning of what they called the 'friendly assault weapons' between their thighs" (Mhlongo 2013: 177). Phallic symbolism is literalised here as the penis becomes a gun, illustrating how weapons are often closely linked to "enactments of violent masculinity" since they are used as "tools to achieve economic, social and sexual gains" by "wielding power over unarmed males and females" (Myrttinen 2004: 29). The phrase 'friendly assault weapons between their thighs' recalls the *Awulethu Umshini Wami/ Bring me my machine gun* song, made infamous by ex-president Jacob Zuma's renditions outside the courtroom during his rape trial. Raymond Suttner posits that the performance of this song served as a "reenactment" of the alleged rape, considering that the word *umshini* is "widely used as a euphemism for penis in certain villages and townships" (2009: 229).

At Amilcar Cabral, Kimathi and Idi soon realise that, based on their standard of masculinity which revolves around participation in the anti-apartheid struggle, Senami can be considered as more 'masculine' than either of them.[20] This only increases their aggravation. Senami is shown to be more patriotic than either of her torturers, and this is highlighted when the men offer to have sex with her in exchange for her 'freedom' after wrongly imprisoning her. Senami bravely refuses, retorting: "I will not sleep with you […] I have come here for a great cause, the revolution, and not to make babies with comrades" (Mhlongo 2013: 111). In addition, Senami is shown to be skilled with weapons, and is a formidable soldier, even rescuing Kimathi when their camp was under siege. This fact further incites Kimathi's anger:

> "I just can't understand why you, Comrade Pilate, of all people, are accusing me of being an enemy agent. I killed the paratrooper who was about to shoot you on the day of the raid."
>
> "Shut up, you temptress Delilah!"' Shouted Pilate[21] in a sudden fit of rage (105).

The use of the word "temptress" is significant here as it echoes the common sentiment found within toxic ideologies of masculinity, which states that women 'provoke' men into raping them by acting in a certain manner. In her research on rape as a means of social control in South Africa, Helen Moffet notes that there is a disturbing but unfortunately widespread practice of describing women as 'asking' for rape when they exhibit a degree of pride, vanity or independence:

> when [women] dare to practice freedom of movement, adopt a confident posture or gait, make eye contact, speak out for themselves: in other words, when women visibly demonstrate a degree of autonomy or self-worth that men find unacceptable, they are perceived as sufficiently subversive and threatening as to compel men to 'discipline' them through sexual violence […] if rape is believed to be deserved, if a woman is simply being 'corrected' or 'taught a lesson,' it is somehow not considered to be a criminal activity (2006: 138).

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[20] In the present of the text Senami is also 'symbolically' buried at Avalon Cemetery, the place where many other struggle heroes are buried, and the place where Kimathi aims to be buried. This also proves that she was more of a hero than Kimathi.

[21] Kimathi's moniker at Amilcar Cabral is Comrade Pilate, and I read this codename as a reference to the Biblical figure Pontius Pilate, as it is Kimathi's actions which sentence the innocent Senami to torture and then death. As the man who condemned Jesus to crucifixion, Pilate is an ambiguous historical figure. He is viewed by some as a ruthless tyrant and by others a coward who capitulated to political pressure.

Furthermore, in what I read as an attempt to justify her eventual rape, Kimathi continually refers to Senami as 'Delilah' whenever he and Idi torture her: "this fitted her sins well – in the Bible, Delilah betrayed her man, Samson, and similarly Lady Comrade Mkabayi had betrayed The Movement to the enemy" (Mhlongo 2013: 104). According to the Old Testament story, Delilah is an infamously treacherous courtesan, a woman with whom the hero Samson falls in love (Sasson 1988: 334). The Book of Judges (Chapter 16) describes Samson as a man endowed with great strength by God, with the proviso that his hair remains uncut. His lover Delilah eventually discovers this secret and uses her knowledge to ultimately betray him by shaving his head and surrendering him to the Philistines. If Senami is Delilah in Kimathi's eyes, then he believes himself to be Samson – a relatively accurate description considering that Samson is a man who engages with women "purely to gratify his sexual urge" (334). Kimathi's insistence on calling Senami 'Delilah' and 'temptress' indicates that he believes she is guilty of betrayal and deserves to be punished, or that she is trying to seduce him into having sex with her, and deserves to be punished.

Later in the narrative, Senami's wandering spirit takes the form of a woman called 'Dee,' which I read as a nickname for Delilah. Dee taunts and torments Kimathi, who is already on the brink of insanity after experiencing graphic nightmares and seeing Senami's ghost just days before. Thus their roles become reversed, with Kimathi as the hapless victim and Senami as the merciless torturer. As Dee, Senami fakes drowning in Kimathi's pool an attempt to either give Kimathi the opportunity to save her (perhaps offering him a chance at redemption) or to lure him to his death (as a punishment for his actions). Kimathi emerges from the incident justifiably traumatised, and convinced that he is being haunted. When visiting a *sangoma* (traditional healer) to exorcise himself of Senami's spirit, Kimathi's head is shaved "with a razor blade," making the parallel between Mhlongo's protagonists and the Biblical characters evident (Mhlongo 2013: 154).

2.3.2. Kimathi and Anele

In the decades since his time at Amilcar Cabral camp, Kimathi's general attitude toward women remains unchanged. The only relationship that Kimathi ever expresses wanting to have with women is a sexual one, as he constantly searches for "the kind of passion that comes without the exchange

of tender words" (Mhlongo 2013: 21). Over the course of his brief marriage to Anele, Kimathi engages in an extra-marital affair with their domestic worker, Moliehi (45). He is also accused of sexual harassment by a female colleague, although his case is dismissed due to a lack of evidence (26). He and his friends also extol sexual acts over expressions of emotion and displays of affection, as they believe that "romance is a fallacy created by lonely poets to make people think that they are cleverer than everyone else" and that "there is no such thing as romance" (141).

Upon meeting Anele for the first time, Kimathi instantly becomes obsessed with her, and his attraction is based solely on her appearance. He relentlessly pursues her despite her initial reluctance: "he had only managed to give her his business card. She confessed later, when they had been together for a while, that she had lost the card the same day. When he finally had Anele's contact number, he had tried to ask her out on a date. She was not comfortable with it at first, and refused, giving him silly excuses" (16). In her commentary on sexualities in South Africa, Gqola notes that heterosexual flirtation can contain harmful codes that "inscribe feminine passivity and masculine aggression," such as "the assumption that girls play 'hard to get' and therefore should be pursued at all costs regardless of what they say" (2007: 117). Kimathi's lavishness seem to pressurise Anele into entering into a relationship with him, as she only agrees to a date with Kimathi because he "completely overwhelmed" her (Mhlongo 2013: 17).

Kimathi also sends twenty-five bouquets of roses to Anele's workplace, and after receiving them, Kimathi claims that Anele "hadn't even tried to resist" him (17). He later proposes to her in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, after a candlelit dinner in an expensive restaurant (140). It is worth noting that Kimathi's reliance on grandiose and highly clichéd romantic gestures to woo Anele is possibly an over-compensation for the fact that he never shows Anele any original or personal signs of love or affection. The manner in which Kimathi courts Anele could also suggest that he is not only trying to impress her, but her friends and colleagues as well. After sending Anele the roses he is delighted to learn that "all the girls had envied [Anele] on that day" and that "every one of her colleagues had wanted to meet Kimathi, the romantic guy" (17). The women's reactions to Kimathi's romantic gestures confirm how hegemonic masculinity is "as much for women as for men a cultural ideal of manhood, which is rewarded by women's interests, attentions and effort" (Jewkes et al. 2015).

Despite his unsuccessful attempts at a meaningful relationship over two decades, Kimathi refuses to improve his attitude towards women. He reflects on how he often adopts a charming and charismatic persona in order to persuade women to sleep with him, and he is convinced that if he could make a girl smile "then he was halfway up her legs" (Mhlongo 2013: 53). His attraction toward Anele remains purely physical, and even after their divorce, Kimathi only pictures Anele when "he was drunk and craved sex" (45). He never mourns her absence in any other capacity, such as an emotional one. To compensate for his lack of a committed and monogamous relationship, Kimathi develops a fetishism for Anele's lingerie, which he uses as a substitute for an actual woman:

> As he walked into the room he had once shared with Anele, he picked out a red bustier and matching G-string. These had belonged to Anele, but he had hidden them from her when she'd moved out. Souvenirs, he called them, to remind him of her. From the dressing table he retrieved Anele's favourite fragrance – Lancôme Tresor Midnight Rose – and sprayed it on both the bustier and G-string. Sucking in his breath, Kimathi sat down on the bed, holding the lingerie (18).

Kimathi's fetishism, in Freudian terms, points to a male fear of women as "the horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute" (Freud 1927: 199). The only way Kimathi can actually gain control over his fear is through a 'proxy' object – something feminine that stands in the place of the real woman. In contrast to the many attempts it took Kimathi to court Anele, fetishism requires no effort on his part: "the fetishist feels that he enjoys yet another advantage from his substitute for a genital […] it is easily accessible and he can readily obtain the sexual satisfaction attached to it. What other men have to woo and make exertions for can be had by the fetishist with no trouble at all" (199).

Kimathi tries to "understand women" by looking at Anele's underwear, thereby "processing his ideas of gender dynamics through sex and money while being unable, or unwilling, to recognise how his ideas are informed" (Blanton 2018: 134). Notably, of all Anele's possessions, Kimathi chooses to keep her lingerie as a "souvenir," suggesting that the only aspect of their relationship that he values is the sexual one (Mhlongo 2013: 18). Moreover, as a child born from rape, Kimathi has no model upon which to base his understanding of a meaningful intimacy between a man and woman. His mother also dies when he is young, and it appears that he is trying to find a replacement for his mother in the women he courts, which is why he can never have a meaningful sexual

relationship with a woman. This is hinted at when Kimathi describes his first meeting with his ex-wife Anele, whom he only found "extremely attractive" because she "reminded him of his mother, Akila" (16).

In the present day chapters of the novel, Kimathi spends a large portion of his wealth on prostitutes, most of whom he encounters on Johannesburg's infamous Oxford Road. Kimathi's true perception of women can be gauged while he engages in these sexual escapades, as he objectifies the women and views them solely through the lens of their sexuality: "his eyes scanned the three prostitutes as he checked for the assets he desired. Large breasts, a big behind and dark pigmentation were his obsessions" (22). At one instance he compares a prostitute to a gemstone, and in this act his greed for money and his greed for sex conflate: "In his mind, she became a pure, pink, twenty-seven carat diamond from the Big Hole of Kimberly" (22). Through Kimathi's comparison of the prostitutes to a valuable objects, the novel reflects on the post-apartheid culture of commodification. This culture of commodification is further highlighted through Kimathi's use of the word "assets" to describe features of women's bodies, as the term has a financial connotation and suggests that his relationship with women is purely transactional.

2.4. What Women Want: Female Stereotypes in the Masculine Ideal

In a half-hearted attempt to understand relationships, Kimathi and his friends also create their own fallacious theories on the way women behave and why. In one memorable conversation, Kimathi's business partner Sechaba complains about how superficial and demanding women are:

> "What I can advise you is that women are meant to be loved, not understood, comrade […]. What is there to understand about them? They wear fake hair, false nails and fake lashes, and they buy fake tits, fake lips and get Botox. On top of all that they want a real man […]. As long as you know that their G-spot is located at the end of the word 'shopping,' you'll be fine, comrade" (Mhlongo 2013: 141).

Sechaba hypocritically "derides women for their 'falseness' in appearance while also faulting them for their expectations for men," although "what constitutes as a 'real man' isn't explained" (Blanton 2018: 133). Instead, the men in the novel convince themselves that an "ideal man does not exist in this world, but women keep searching for him because they are big dreamers" (Mhlongo 2013: 142). Rather than attempting to improve themselves, the men decide that all they can do "is to coexist with [women's] dreams" (142). It does not occur to them that their complicated relationship problems may have occurred due to lack of effort or affection on their part. If they do consider being more involved in their relationships with women, their solutions are unoriginal, patronising and juvenile. Sechaba advises Kimathi: "maybe you should have sent [Anele] flowers every now and then […]. They like flowers. And you should have tried to go to the mall more often and held her hand in public […]. Women always need reassurance" (142). Similarly, when Kimathi notices that Anele is distressed, he recommends that she "must get laid" (15).

Kimathi and his friends also appear to regard marriage as a "game," or a competition, and not as a serious commitment or a gesture of love and loyalty (143). To them, a man's sexual prowess is an indication of his masculinity and virility, a quality upon which their relationship with women hinges: "Like they say, comrade: he who has the longest sword will survive the marriage" (142). Kimathi is particularly angered by this comment by Sechaba, as he was once told by a prostitute that he was not well-endowed, which "had bruised his ego and left him with very low self-esteem when it came to sexual matters" (142). Like the gun, the sword is regarded as a phallic symbol that further highlights how "the connection between men and weapons often takes on highly sexualised characteristics" (Myrttinen 2003: 39). Ironically, the men in *Way Back Home* also chide women for being fickle or disloyal but pride themselves on their own promiscuity: "the problem is that [women] want commitment before they become loyal to you. What they don't know is that men want loyalty first, and after that they might consider commitment" (Mhlongo 2013: 142).

2.4.1. Zanu: The Only Exception

Although Kimathi's treatment of the female characters in *Way Back Home* is reprehensible, he treats his seven-year-old daughter Zanu with tenderness and genuine affection, referring to her as "sweetheart," "my angel," and "my little princess" (Mhlongo 2013: 25, 174 and 175). Aside from focusing

on his own selfish interests, the only other person whom Kimathi exhibits any approximation of concern for is Zanu. When Kimathi visits a *sangoma* he is warned that Senami's restless spirit may exact vengeance on members of his family, and immediately "[his] thoughts turned to Zanu" as he realises that he cannot risk his daughter's life for his own sake (157). Blanton suggests that "what remains of Kimathi's humanity can be seen in his interactions with Zanu, his role as the doting father offering his only demonstration of kindness," despite the fact that it exists alongside "his misogyny and commodification of women" (2018: 133).

Following Blanton, I argue that Zanu is also the only character who is able to encourage Kimathi towards self-improvement, even in small measures. This can be seen when Kimathi, after being hospitalised following a blackout, argues with Sechaba about their upcoming presentation at the Department of Public Works. Kimathi becomes frustrated and swears at Sechaba, but when he "felt Zanu's little hand withdrawing from his" it immediately "attracted his attention" and he apologises for his crudeness (Mhlongo 2013: 102). Moreover, before Kimathi departs to Angola to lay Senami's spirit to rest, thoughts of Zanu prompt him to consider the shameful deeds of his past which led to the dissolution of his marriage: "He thought of Zanu and of Anele's love that he had betrayed and lost forever. He felt lonely, ashamed and sorrowful" (171). It is at this point that he also transfers the necessary money into Anele's account for Zanu's remaining school fees. While this may appear to be a superficial act, it is all that Kimathi can do to help at the time. Sensing that his life may never be the same after his trip, Kimathi uses his last days in South Africa to pick Zanu up from school and he takes her out to lunch to spend time with her. He also plans to sell his house and put the money from this profit into an account for Zanu. In spite of the fact that he is an otherwise unsympathetic character, Kimathi's relationship with Zanu shows his potential for love, however limited it is, and is his one redeeming characteristic.

Kimathi's construction of masculinity, informed by ideas of the anti-apartheid struggle and a highly militarised environment, is presented in the novel as being a particularly harmful form of hegemonic masculinity. The propensity for violence which this masculinity encourages influences Kimathi's interactions with women as he displays aggression to anyone who refuses to submit to him, with the singular exception of his daughter Zanu. The formation of this masculine ideal is an important aspect of Kimathi's characterisation, and expressed through the way in which he 'performs' his mas-

culinity. This topic will be addressed in the next chapter, as it forms the basis for my argument that Kimathi's (parodic) performance of masculinity is a compensatory act which disguises feelings of insecurity engendered by trauma.

Chapter Three

The Mask of Masculinity

This chapter examines how the characterisation of Kimathi, the protagonist of *Way Back Home*, emphasises the performative nature of gender, and explores how parody is used in the novel to offer a critique of hegemonic South African masculinities. Judith Butler's conception of the socially constructed and highly performative nature of gender is applicable to a discussion of Kimathi, as he seizes every opportunity to prove his masculinity with various 'performances.' As stated by Butler gender can be defined as "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actor themselves, come to believe" ([1999] 2002: 179). Although some of Kimathi's performances are comical due to their exaggerated nature, they are all acted out in an attempt to prove he meets the definition of a 'real' man. He is interpellated by a hegemonic masculinity that was once predicated on violence and dominance, but which now emphasises social and economic success. The establishment of such a legitimising masculine ideal "silences or subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself […] it presents its own version of masculinity, of how men should behave and how putative 'real men' do behave, as the cultural ideal" (Morrell 1998: 608). Butler's theory aligns with Morrell's here as she argues that the limits of gender are "always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse" ([1999] 2002: 13).

I begin this Chapter with a section titled "The Man Behind the Mask," where I argue that Kimathi's masculine performance is intended to compensate for his deep feelings of inadequacy that stem from the effects of postcolonial trauma. I read Kimathi through the lens of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 1986), which comments on the formation of a postcolonial male identity and how it is shaped by racialisation. In the following section, "From Military to Metrosexual: Kimathi's Performances of Masculinity" I illuminate in more detail what Kimathi's masculine performances are by offering a close reading of select passages in the novel. Fanon will be read in conjunction with Butler to explore how Kimathi's excessively lavish lifestyle disguises an underlying narrative of loss. In "The Grand Hustle: Money and Modern Masculinity" I examine the link between corruption, greed and masculinity in the novel by considering how Kimathi defines his masculinity in relation to his wealth, which is gained through dubious means. I offer an intertextual

reading of the novel as I argue that Kimathi is one of the infamous 'tenderpreneurs' who contribute to the widespread corruption in contemporary South Africa.

In this chapter I continue my concern with the novel's critique of hegemonic masculinities by focusing particularly on the use of satire as a corrective. I utilise Mikhail Bakhtin's ([1968] 1984) theories on the carnivalesque and grotesque in the section titled "'Our ancestors don't believe in fashion, but *bheshus*': Kimathi as a Parody of Black Masculinity" to demonstrate how the novel seeks to disrupt the notion of an 'ideal' black masculinity. I also consider how the novel suggests the adoption of a 'new' and 'better' masculinity that is not based primarily on physicality or violence. While existing scholarship is primarily concerned with depictions of masculinity in Mhlongo's earlier novels, at present there are no studies on gender 'performativity' in *Way Back Home*, and I aim to fill this lacuna with my study.

3.1. The Man Behind the Mask

Kimathi's world of present-day South Africa, which was previously divided along racial lines, is now determined by economic ones, and both he and his peers aspire to ideals of wealth, social status, and their associated symbols. According to Roger Blanton, "the effects of the government-supported Black Economic Empowerment programme" in South Africa have created "a new black bourgeoisie" which "informs the ideas of black masculinity" (2018: 3). Kimathi and his fellow tenderpreneurs fall victim to this new idea of black masculinity which is "conceived of in both acquisitive and competitive terms" (Vetten and Ratele 2013: 4). They define their masculinity by Western capitalist values which extol social and economic success above all else, and they perform their masculinity by displaying the array of luxury and designer brands which they pride themselves on owning. For Kimathi, the cost of such a performance is high as no amount of acquisition is able to compensate for his sense of inadequacy or alleviate his feelings of loneliness: "Despite his luxurious mansion, his top-of-the-range cars, expensive bottles of whisky, and imported swag, Kimathi is deeply troubled by past events which he has seemingly repressed" (Kenqu 2019: 157).

The sense of loss which Kimathi feels, and the trauma which he experiences as a result of trying to embody a masculine ideal, can be said to originate from a broader colonial context. Fanon's theories are appropriate to my analysis of Kimathi as he asserts that the traumatic effects of racialisation contribute to the formation of an inferiority complex in postcolonial black male. He describes the

"white gaze" as the original traumatic event, one which turns the black man into "an object among other objects" ([1952] 1986: 109). Drawing from his own experience, Fanon lists the negative stereotypes associated with being a black man under colonial rule: "I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships […] A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man – or at least like a nigger" (112-115). While Freud locates the original trauma in the family drama, for the black man the original trauma occurs in the racial drama – the castrating and alienating white gaze.

In *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel: Essays* (2012), editor Michela Borzaga provides a cogent summary of Fanon's argument. He elucidates that as a result of the trauma engendered by the white gaze, the black man will "suffer mainly from an inferiority complex and a sense of abasement in such a way that his life will consist of a series of compensatory acts to counteract these feelings. He will be desperate to find confirmation of his value and worth in the white man to the point of behaving in a compulsive and obsessional way" (2012: 82). The psychic wound caused by this trauma is inescapable as it is "played out on the surface, on an epidermal level" and is therefore "*always open*, as it revolves around [the black man's] body, its blackness and its negative associations" (83).

One of the ways in which the postcolonial subject can disguise this 'woundedness' is by attempting to 'mask' his skin – the marker of his inferiority – by donning the external markers of white cultural ascendency. In *Way Back Home*, Kimathi's obsession with clothing and the accoutrements of success can be explained as him attempting to assimilate with Western society, even if only by altering his outer 'skin' or surface. His performance of masculinity is also evocative of how black identities can continue to be "sculpted through performances and non-performances influenced by globalised White hegemony" (Meghji 2017: 6). Kimathi's fixation on Western designer labels and their link to his performance of masculinity will be discussed further in the following section.

3.2. From Military to Metrosexual: Kimathi's Performance of Masculinity

According to Butler, a person performs their gender "through the stylisation of the body" which can be understood "as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" ([1999] 2002: 179). Throughout the novel,

Kimathi attempts to perform his masculinity in various ways. During the apartheid era, his struggle credentials are what give him credibility as a man, since in his youth being a liberation soldier belonged to an idealised form of masculinity and so was privileged above others. However, in the present, Kimathi's dressings of struggle masculinity – his uniform, his weapons and their associated social status – are gone, and with them, his sense of potency and authority. Post-liberation, he tries to compensate for this by finding new ways to remind people that he is a wealthy and powerful man. He is no longer the rugged, athletic soldier of his youth, but he takes great care in his outward appearance and tries to be stylish and sophisticated through his fashion choices, and the phallic symbols with which he surrounds himself. Kimathi turns into a metrosexual man, as he adorns himself with all the "dandified accoutrements of self-beautification" (Viljoen 2008: 315). Coined by Mark Simpson in 1994, the term metrosexual refers to a man "with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis – because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are […] he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference" (Simpson in Viljoen 2008: 315). The narcissism of the metrosexual is evident in Kimathi.

Kimathi's behaviour also reveals the paradox of the solider, as while the military "emphasises aggression and physical fitness" they also place value on the "discourses of cleanliness, a neat appearance and showing attention to detail" (Mankayi 2008: 25). When Kimathi's physical appearance fails him as he gains weight and becomes lethargic, he begins to overtly refer to his time as a soldier in the anti-apartheid movement to advertise his accomplishments. When he meets Senami in the present day, he tries to seduce her by calling her beautiful, and when she scoffs, he then tries "to impress her" by swearing: "with every fibre in my revolutionary bones, I swear I'm not lying" (Mhlongo 2013: 49). When she mentions her boss, Mr Nyoka, Kimathi immediately blurts out that he "know[s] him from exile" in order to appear reputable (48).

Undoubtedly, the most transparent manner in which Kimathi attempts to demonstrate his wealth and masculinity is through his fashion, which he takes great pride in. I argue that Kimathi over-compensates with regards to his appearance in order to disguise his intense feelings of insecurity and fear of being considered a lesser man. Fanon asserts that "if at a certain stage [the black man] has been led to ask himself whether he is indeed a man, it is because his reality as a man has been chal-

lenged" ([1952] 1986: 98). Borzaga, reading Fanon, describes the black man as a prisoner of his own mind, "living in a continuous state of stress and tension," the effects of which leave "invisible scars on the psyche but are lived in and through *the body*" (2012: 84, emphasis added). The great lengths that Kimathi goes to in order to dress fashionably are evidence of this, as he constantly aims to "make an impression" and perform his masculinity correctly (Mhlongo 2013: 90). Butler's theory is in agreement with Fanon's as she claims that a person's performance of their gender is a matter of survival: "because gender is a project which has cultural survival at its end, the term strategy better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs […] gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences […] indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" ([1999] 2002: 178). For Kimathi, the punishment he fears is social exclusion or social alienation, as this is akin to death for him. He has no rich personal life and no meaningful relationships, and his whole sense of self is located in an elaborate but fragile masquerade.

Notably, the luxury clothing brands which Kimathi wears are all associated with the white/Western world, namely Dunhill, Valentino, Armani, Rolex and Prada. His accoutrements of success – cologne, cigars, alcohol and sports cars – also belong to Western brands or companies. Fanon's writing offers a reason for such behaviour, as he maintains that the social effects of colonisation prompt black men to try and "make [themselves] white" in order to "compel the white man to acknowledge that [they are] human" ([1952] 1986: 98). Fanon elucidates that "when the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitising action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak […] The goal of his behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth" (154). Kimathi only wears designer clothing, and each ensemble, with its accompanying accessories and even cologne, is meticulously chosen in a manner which ensures that it speaks "of status and the culture of a person who has risen from rags to riches" (Mhlongo 2013: 112). While waiting outside Senami's house, Kimathi reflects on his choice of style for their date:

> His clothes spoke of money – he was wearing his favourite orange Valentino jacket, blue Hugo Boss jeans and purple Valentino shoes […] Kimathi opened the glove compartment and took out a bottle of Acqua Di Gio Homme, his favourite fragrance from Giorgio Armani, which he always kept in his car to make an impression on special occasions (55-56).

Kimathi's obsession with his appearance means that even while he prepares to attend a friend's funeral, an event which is supposed to be somber and poignant, he is more concerned about what to wear:

> Dissatisfied with the Prada suit, Kimathi put it back in the wardrobe. He took out his lime Giovanni Gentile for a few minutes, but put it back again as if unable to make up his mind. He finally settled on the orange Eduard Dressler, with a white Fabiani silk shirt and purple Roberto Botticelli shoes. Before he opened the door to leave, Kimathi looked at himself in the mirror again and smiled with a sense of self-congratulation. He was sure that he would make an impression at the memorial (90).

Such highly detailed descriptions of Kimathi's attire are interspersed extensively across the narrative, drawing attention to how his constant displays of wealth and luxury, through his fashion choices and personal appearance, serve as the manner in which he performs his gender. The excess of detail highlights the excess of his lifestyle, and points to the absurdity and futility of this. Kimathi's fastidiousness of appearance correlates with Butler's statement that "the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*," and that this repetition is a reenactment "of a set of meanings already socially established," legitimated in a "mundane and ritualised form" ([1999] 2002: 178).

This portrayal of Kimathi's masculinity is also reminiscent of how Patrick Bateman, the deranged protagonist of Bret Easton Ellis' controversial novel *American Psycho* (1991), describes his appearance in painstaking detail. Ellis' novel is regarded as a satirical commentary on the materialist culture of wealthy American businessmen in the 1980's, particularly through its portrayal of wanton excess. The parallel between the two characters is evident in this description of Patrick's well-manicured appearance:

> I'm wearing a wing-collard jacquard waistcoat by Kilgour, French & Stanbury from Barney's, a silk bow tie from Saks, patent-leather slip-ons by Baker-Benjes, antique diamond studs from Kentshire Galleries and a gray wool silk-lined coat with drop sleeves and a button-down collar by Luciano Soprani. An ostrich wallet from Bosca carries four hundred dollars cash in the back pocket of my black wool trousers. Instead of my Rolex I'm wearing a fourteen-karat gold watch from H. Stern (1991: 126)

Patrick, like Kimathi, is "an idea and an image, but empty and void of deep identity. As a walking billboard for elite, conspicuous consumption and high-end product placement, he lacks inner resources and glosses over an emotionally sterile existence" (Blazer 2002: n.p). This sentiment also corresponds with Mark Simpson's definition of the metrosexual man as a "commodity fetishist," and a "collector of fantasies about the male sold to him by advertising" (Simpson 2019: n.p). For both Patrick and Kimathi, revelling in such excess evokes momentary feelings of joy, which temporarily assuage their feelings of displacement and loneliness. It is also plausible that in *Way Back Home* Mhlongo is commenting on the consumerist culture of post-apartheid South Africa, as his black male characters emulate and appropriate white/Western symbols of opulence. The novel exemplifies how Western images of masculinity are appropriated and localised, and how the expression of contemporary black masculinity is mediated through popular culture.

In stark contrast to Kimathi and his friends, who fuss over every detail of their designer outfits and endeavour to drive the most expensive cars, their colleague George, a white man, drives an older model car and is always dressed in plain attire. Kimathi and his friends often joke about this at George's expense: "Kimathi whispered to Sechaba that George's clothes were a serious fashion crime, and that their total value did not exceed six hundred rand. Kimathi boasted that, with the clothes he was wearing, he could buy a brand new Toyota Tazz, which was what George drove" (Mhlongo 2013: 112). The men consider themselves superior to George because of their branded clothing and luxury cars, which serve as symbols of wealth and masculinity in the current era. However, the irony of Kimathi and his friends' scoffing at George is that it only highlights their own moral bankruptcy and naiveté, as George is an essential member of their construction company and is the "only qualified engineer among them" (38). Unbeknown to the men, their narcissism and arrogance only points to the fragility and flimsiness of their pretending power. Notably, George is also under considerably less stress to perform his masculinity, as he has access to cultural capital simply by being white and male. The fact that George is so nonchalant about his appearance points to the power and persistence of "the globalised hegemony of whiteness" in contemporary South Africa, even in the new democratic dispensation (Meghji 2017: 9). Unlike Kimathi, George needs no accoutrements and no 'façade.'

In addition to his clothing and accessories, Kimathi performs his masculinity by flaunting his "material possessions" which "locate him within the acquisitive class" (Kenqu 2019: 163). He is often depicted smoking a cigar, the classic phallic symbol, laced with sexual innuendo. In films *noir* of the 1940s and 1950s it was the typical prop of the 'tough' protagonist, indicating their status as a symbol of male power and domination. Kimathi smokes distinctly branded Cuban cigars – Cohiba Behike, one of the most exclusive brands – which are meant to conspicuously display his wealth. When Kimathi first encounters Senami in the present day (ignorant of the fact that she is an apparition) he is nervous and shy, but upon smoking a Cuban cigar he "regained his air of superiority" (Mhlongo 2013: 49). This scene deconstructs the tenet of hegemonic masculinity which assumes that men have an inherent dominance and superiority, as Kimathi is often shown to be uneasy during various confrontations or interactions with intelligent people, whom he feels threatened by. Kimathi's behaviour is evocative of how "the black man […] does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other" (Fanon [1952] 1986: 112). When he and Anele consult a lawyer to discuss their daughter's maintenance, Kimathi wears "fine-framed designer glasses" even though he does not need to, because they give him "the appearance of an educated man" (Mhlongo 2013: 82). He also carries three cellphones and wears two watches at all times, one a Rolex and the other a Breitling. He justifies the latter eccentricity to his friends by claiming that it "was necessary to wear both watches at all times so that he knew when to call his American business partners," quickly adding as an afterthought, almost as if to convince himself, that "he was definitely not showing off" (43). Kimathi also ensures that during all his business meetings, he drinks the most expensive alcohol available, which is often the Johnnie Walker Blue Label brand, priced "at six hundred and fifty rand a tot" (31).

Kimathi's performance of masculinity is further alluded to through his ownership of a replica of Pablo Picasso's *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust*, which he displays in his house in the hope that his unsuspecting guests will believe it is genuine and compliment him on acquiring it.[22] When they do, Kimathi's "ego swell[s]" (77). In reality, Kimathi knows "nothing about art" but had only bought the painting "after overhearing the president talking to someone about Picasso" (78). The irony of this revelation is highlighted by the fact that Kimathi claims to possess a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the Underground People's University of Siberia, a degree and institution that are as fake

[22] In 2010 this painting set a record for the most expensive auction sale of a painting, at £66 million pounds (Jones 2011: n.p).

as his Picasso. These incidences suggest that in post-liberation Africa, the cultural ascendancy of Western art still remains unquestioned, as Kimathi's appreciation and knowledge of the icons of European modernist art are assumed essential to complete his masquerade.

While Kimathi endeavours to appear urbane – to present a 'soft' masculinity – some tropes of the tough military masculinity remain. This is particularly apparent during instances in the novel when Kimathi feels the need to compensate for feelings of insecurity with aggression, especially in relation to women. After losing an argument with his ex-wife Anele over their daughter's maintenance, Kimathi "slumped in his chair, limp and defeated. He felt weak, lonely and helpless […] He balled his hand angrily into a fist as he watched Anele walk away" (16). This behaviour indicates that Kimathi's immediate reaction to feeling intimidated or emasculated is to resort to violence. This aggressive nature is also evident when Kimathi is arrested for soliciting sex from a prostitute. He is taken to the police station where the officers tease him, emasculating him with their mockery. He is particularly angered by their comments about his manhood, which is a sensitive topic for Kimathi and one which easily upsets him. He initially escapes by bribing the police officers but it is later revealed that Kimathi returned to murder them in revenge. Kimathi's actions are also evocative of Fanon's contention that a black man, as the victim of the emasculating "white gaze," will spend his life trying to compensate for his feelings of abasement and fragmentation, in an attempt to confirm his worth: "having cast the same objective gaze on himself as the white man, the black man will look for lines of flight, will try to escape from himself, and will be torn between the desire to disappear and the narcissist impulse to 'dominate the other' in order to achieve self-security" (Borzaga 2012: 83-84). From the analysis of his character thus far, it is clear that Kimathi is a narcissist. Consequently, to counter his feelings of inadequacy, he must dominate. The novel thus foregrounds the crisis in black masculinity as Kimathi's life of excess – in particular his obsession with the 'dressings' of success – is revealed to be a disguise, or compensatory act, for an underlying sense of inferiority.

3.2.2. The Grand Hustle: Corruption and Modern Masculinity

The initial descriptions of Kimathi's lavish lifestyle – his mansion in Bassonia, his BMW X5, and his designer clothes – indicate his status as a millionaire, a "rich BEE" (Mhlongo 2013: 31). How-

ever, it is revealed as the novel progresses that Kimathi reached his millionaire status through procuring illegal tenders. Upon his return to South Africa after serving with The Movement, Kimathi and his fellow comrades from exile establish a construction company and are aided in this endeavour "because of their strong personal connections" (38). Kimathi even acknowledges that "was not interested in running a company but he had gained financially from doing so" (38). Kimathi therefore represents "the current trend in South Africa [where] everyone is hustling to get rich. The more you're politically connected like him, the more it becomes easier for you to make lots of money" (Mhlongo in Chronic 2013: n.p.). While the protagonists of Mhlongo's earlier novels embody a hustler[23] or *tsotsi* masculinity, commonly depicted in literature of the township, *Way Back Home* presents "a protagonist whose hustle plays out on the grand scale of nationalist politics" (Kenqu 2019: 158). Following Blanton (2018) and Kenqu (2019) I discuss in this section how corruption and greed are regarded as 'masculine' qualities in the novel, and how this forms part of Kimathi's performance.

In his interview with Moreillon and Stiebel, Mhlongo describes Kimathi as "the epitome of all the social ills" that characterise South Africa, and as "a true reflection of South Africa today, where most wealth is gained through questionable means – either through a government tender […] or struggle credentials because they have been into exile or know someone who was in exile" (2015: 267). This corresponds with Emily Davis' supposition that in contemporary South African literature, there is a "continuing desire to read post-apartheid fiction – especially by black writers – in the national allegorical mode" in which the individual represents the nation (2013: 801). The rampant corruption in the fields of business and politics in South Africa is alluded to during the scene when Kimathi attends a business meeting and begins his presentation not by listing his accreditations but by introducing himself as "a true son of the revolution," thinking that this is the only title that he requires (Mhlongo 2013: 113). He then proceeds to mention "all the comrades that he knew from exile, and how most of them were the incumbent ministers and deputy ministers in the government," as he assumes that this will help him impress the committee (113). He even incorporates an arbitrary quote by Nelson Mandela on the pamphlets on Public Works that he distributes, although the committee remains unimpressed with this farce. Kimathi's behaviour here illustrates how name-dropping, cronyism and nepotism are the new language of business in contemporary

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[23] The hustler/*tsotsi* figure is an ambivalent one, as it "marked the emergence of a newer masculinity that […] evoked mixed feelings from his community" since the hustler was both "admired for his opulent life style and his ability to evade power" but also reviled as "he visited violence upon fellow community members" (Dlamini 2015:163).

South Africa, and is evocative of Gqola's assertion that men who perform 'spectacular' masculinities in contemporary South Africa often "claim legitimacy through indexing real or imagined struggle credentials" (2009: 68).

Kimathi's bold declaration in the novel's prologue suggests that he believes in the ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle, such as justice, equality and integrity. He swears to place himself "in the service of the people" and promises "to serve with discipline and dedication at all times" (Mhlongo 2013: n.p). However, the reality is that Kimathi fails to act in accordance with these beliefs. In contrast to the struggle veterans and political leaders that they model themselves on, the men in *Way Back Home* are the antithesis of heroic as they constantly engage in sexist, violent and disreputable activities. Kimathi and his friends, whose time together as soldiers forms the sole basis of their relationship, distort the ideologies of the struggle, and use the fact that they were part of the anti-apartheid movement to further their own selfish endeavours. Ganyani, one of Kimathi's colleagues, complains that his salary is insufficient in comparison to his fellow 'comrades' and crudely comments that he "didn't join the struggle to be a poor man when liberation came. I cannot betray the spirit of our noble revolution by taking such a small percentage while you guys walk away with the lion's share" (39).

The novel suggests that in contemporary South Africa the honourable goals of the anti-apartheid movement are being replaced with new ideals that espouse luxury and social status. The accumulation of wealth has therefore become "a revolutionary endeavour" (Blanton 2018: 131). This ideology has replaced the ideals of the struggle as the acquisition of wealth and status symbols informs the new, modern masculinity which Kimathi and his friends strive to perform. In addition, the men never appear to be content with their wealth and are always scheming to make more money. Ganyani even refers to a seven million Rand profit as a "small percentage" (Mhlongo 2013: 39). This greed for money and the power that comes with it is presented in the novel as a "distinctly masculine quality" (Blanton 2018: 132). The comrades' rampant greed for money further extends to greed for food, alcohol and sex, further satirising the corruption and conspicuous consumption of the ruling black elite.

Kimathi's betrayal of The Movement's principles is intended as an allegory for the widespread betrayal occurring in South Africa today, as the ruling elite and wealthy politicians exploit the country's past for personal gain: "the ruling party is betraying what we fought for because it is

corrupt" (Mhlongo in Moreillon and Stiebel 2015: 260). The novel's criticism of South Africa's ruling elite is encapsulated in Senami's vitriol: "a conversation with them means talking about their wealth" and "the property they own" (Mhlongo 2013: 50). She fumes that South Africa's incumbent leaders "learnt only one thing while on Robber's Island […] How to steal. I think God created terribly flawed human beings when he created politicians" (50). After listening to the indignant Senami, Kimathi "felt like he was being granted a free assessment of politics in South Africa" (50). He then foolishly attempts to justify his way of life to her: "I know it may appear to you as if I've sold out my country because I drive this car and smoke only Cuban cigars. But the nature of the world today is such that we have to survive and make money" (51). Senami, like the reader, remains unimpressed with Kimathi's reasoning.

Kimathi's vast accumulation of wealth grants him a higher social status and plays a significant role in his performance of masculinity. His experiences as a corrupt businessman in post-apartheid South Africa encourage him to believe that most, if not all, of his problems can be solved with money. He is able to evade arrest by bribing two policemen despite driving under the influence of alcohol, and when his ex-wife Anele asks him to be more present in their daughter's life after he forgets Zanu's birthday, Kimathi responds by giving Zanu two hundred rand to buy herself "a big birthday cake" as compensation (15). When he learns that Senami is the one haunting him, Kimathi also pays for himself, the *sangoma* Makhanda, and Senami's parents to fly to Angola in an attempt to locate her remains, as he believes these acts of feigned generosity can compensate for his past crimes. However, it is when he confronts Senami's ghost in her prison cell that Kimathi realises his money cannot always rescue him. Upon seeing Kimathi's corpse, Makhanda the *sangoma*, comments that "blood doesn't wash off easily" and Senami's father Napo agrees with him, claiming that "the filth of crime and corruption can never be erased" (208). Through the characterisation of Kimathi as a corrupt tenderpreneur whose masculinity is greatly defined by his material possessions, *Way Back Home* contributes to South Africa's national narrative of disillusionment in the post-apartheid era.

3.3. "Our ancestors don't believe in fashion, but *bheshus*"[24]: Kimathi as a Parody of Black Masculinity

In this section I argue that Mhlongo, through the characterisation of Kimathi, parodies the stereotypical image of struggle masculinity through his exaggerated performances. Kimathi is interpellated by a hegemonic masculinity which is founded on the belief that black men are physically strong, athletic and virile. This masculinity has been popularised in modern culture through the use of various one-dimensional stereotypes. Cultural theorist Herman Gray notes that black men are often viewed in four distinct ways, which are all predicated on their physicality: "as the basis of masculine hero worship in the case of rappers; as naturalised and commodified bodies in the case of athletes; as symbols of menace and threat in the case of black gang members; and as noble warriors in the case of Afrocentric nationalists" (1995: 402). The image of masculinity which Kimathi tries to emulate is quite paradoxical, as he aims to present himself as the softer metrosexual man – in terms of fashionable attire and his fake Picasso – but also as an embodiment of the rugged struggle hero. Ironically, despite Kimathi's constant reminders to others of his military background, the image of him as a soldier is overshadowed by his bold fashion sense, which is often quite outrageous and 'camp'[25] due to the unusual colour combinations and opulent accessories. Kimathi's performance of masculinity ironically defeats his intentions to appear masculine, causing him to appear "derived, phantasmic and mimetic – a failed copy" (Butler [1999] 2002: 186).

In *Way Back Home* the parody of masculinity revolves primarily around Kimathi's physique, which has deteriorated over time due to his indulgent lifestyle. When the reader is introduced to Kimathi (as Comrade Pilate) in the first chapter, he is described as a "hungry lion" not only because of his proud and aggressive nature but also, I argue, because of the way he eventually preys on all the women he becomes enamoured with (Mhlongo 2013: 9). In the present of the text, Mhlongo uses unflattering imagery to paint a comical picture of the man his protagonist has become, at one instance comparing him lounging near his swimming pool to "a bull seal basking on the rocks of Duiker Island" (13). Kimathi is later described as staggering towards the exit of a restaurant "like an overfed penguin" (44). In stark contrast to the lithe, predatory lion, these animals are soft and plump, and are often quite amusing in their bumbling movements. Even in Kimathi's youth, his at-

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[24] A loin cloth made from animal skins, and a symbol of Zulu masculinity (Waetjen 2006: 98).

[25] The term 'camp' when referring to style can be defined as "ostentatious, exaggerated, affected [and] theatrical," and it is often associated with stereotypical male homosexuality (Bekhrad 2019: n.p).

tempt to seduce Senami at Amilcar Cabral camp is described as a "clumsy offer" which she rejects without hesitation (104). Through the use of grotesque imagery, exploiting "similarities between people and animals," Kimathi as the subject of satire is degraded in a humorous manner (Childs and Fowler [1973] 2004: 101). The use of the grotesque is also typical of Mhlongo's writing style (Tsehloane 2010). In *Way Back Home*, these amusing observations have an ulterior purpose: to educate the reader on the dangers of a radicalised masculinity, or a hypermasculinity. The "parodic repetition of gender" exposes the illusion of an apparent gender identity and reveals its "fundamentally phantasmic status" (Butler [1999] 2002: 187). By attempting to prove that he is a 'real' man, Kimathi unwittingly becomes a parody of the masculine stereotype that he endeavours to emulate, thereby emphasising the performative and constructed nature of gender.

3.3.1."The Knight of the Sad Countenance": Kimathi as an Embodiment of the Carnivalesque and Grotesque.

On a superficial level, satire as a literary genre is intended to entertain an audience, but its underlying purpose can involve constructive criticism. Bakhtin's theories on the carnivalesque, informed by the folkloric aspects of Menippean satire, are also useful in discussing the depictions of Kimathi as a parody of masculinity. Bakhtin refers to Sancho Panza, the squire to the titular knight from Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha* ([1605] 1847) as "the knight of the sad countenance" in his capacity as a carnivalesque and grotesque figure ([1968] 1984: 22). In this section I argue that Kimathi embodies elements of both the grotesque and carnivalesque, and that through this (largely) unsympathetic characterisation of Kimathi, the novel asserts how it is problematic for men to define themselves in relation to how masculine they appear.

Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque is embodied in Sancho Panza, whose "fat belly," in addition to "his appetite and thirst" conveys "a powerful carnivalesque spirit […] Sancho's materialism, his potbelly, appetite, his abundant defecation, are on the absolute lower level of grotesque realism" (22). Sancho is also defined by his "love of abundance and wealth" (22). In considering this depiction of the carnivalesque figure, I observe several similarities between Sancho and Kimathi. Among the unflattering images of Kimathi's physique, he also appears to possess "unquenchable materialis-

tic and sexual appetites" (Kenqu 2019: 159). Kimathi and his cronies are always dining at expensive restaurants, and Kimathi in particular has a seemingly insatiable appetite, to the extent that he even eats the bits of food which he picks out of his teeth after leaving the restaurant (Mhlongo 2013: 44). For Kimathi and his comrades, it is during their 'business meetings' at restaurants that their greed for money and food conflate. Kenqu notes that the constant references to "the comrades' protruding stomachs" in *Way Back Home* are suggestive of their "exploitative relationship to the state" as they siphon state resources for personal gain (2019: 162). Such carnivalesque imagery of "the lower bodily stratum," namely that of "huge bodies, bloated stomachs, orifices [and] debauchery" are present throughout the novel (Allen [2000] 2011: 21). In addition, Kimathi's penchant for "drunkenness and promiscuity" is also suggestive of his carnivalesque characterisation (21). He is rarely pictured without an alcoholic drink, and repeatedly visits Johannesburg's infamous Oxford Road to find the "few girls who, for a small fee, specialised in making lonely men like him happy" (Mhlongo 2013: 21).

Simon Dentith, reading Bakhtin, describes the carnivalesque as "an attitude in which the high, the elevated, the official, even the sacred is degraded or debased but as a condition of popular renewal and regeneration" ([1995] 2005: 66). This degradation can be comic. Kimathi, as a representative of the corrupt ruling class, is degraded throughout the novel through satirical descriptions of his dwindling physicality, and his zealous efforts to dress fashionably are seen as excessive and ridiculous. This is highlighted when Kimathi prepares to visit a traditional healer to consult with his ancestors, and his friend Sechaba advises him not to wear a suit, but a *bheshu* instead, mocking Kimathi's constant need to dress ostentatiously. The novel parodies and satirises Kimathi and other struggle-heroes turned tenderpreneurs who have appropriated Western global images of masculinity. The satirical depictions of Kimathi correlate with the aim of the carnivalesque and grotesque, which is "corrective laughter" (Bakhtin [1968] 1984: 22). Mhlongo's critique of the masculine ideal which Kimathi subscribes to can be seen in his parodic descriptions of Kimathi's performances of masculinity.

Building on Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque in literature, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White postulate in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986) that the grotesque subject "may become a primary, highly charged intersection and mediation of social and political forces, a sort of intensifier

and displacer in the making of identity" (1986: 25). By displacing the emphasis on the physicality of masculinity, extolled in hegemonic or 'struggle' masculinities, *Way Back Home* encourages readers to consider an alternative form of masculinity, although it does not present one. However, while the novel does not explicitly offer an alternative construction of masculinity, I argue that it provides suggestions of what this 'new' or 'better' masculinity entails through its criticism of Kimathi's undesirable qualities, namely his promiscuity, his vanity, his selfishness and his aggression, especially toward women. The novel also considers the effects of subscribing to such a harmful masculinity as Kimathi becomes bankrupt after planning his trip to Angola, where he finally confronts his past. In his quest to become a millionaire, and the epitome of 'spectacular' masculinity, Kimathi loses everything that once held importance for him; he undergoes a bitter divorce, becomes estranged from his daughter, and slowly alienates himself from his friends and colleagues.

In *Way Back Home* Kimathi's masculinity is depicted as a performance which is carefully constructed and maintained through his dress, accessories, and desire to possess symbols of wealth and a higher social status. On the surface this performance appears as a grand display of success but in reality it conceals a deep-rooted sense of inadequacy and inferiority that is informed by trauma. Through satirical descriptions of how Kimathi presents himself, the novel illustrates the constructed nature of gender but also demonstrates how certain constructions can be self-destructive. It is Kimathi's blind interpellation by (seemingly contradictory) ideologies of masculinity, of the 'soft' metrosexual, and 'tough' struggle hero, that leads him down a path of self-destruction.

Chapter Four

Uncanny Hauntings and the Return of the Repressed

This chapter addresses the ways in which traumatic memory is presented in *Way Back Home* through the disruption of linear time and instances of the past recurring spectrally in the present. Trauma is described as a "temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment," as it is a "repeated suffering of the event" and a "continual leaving of its site" (Caruth 1995: 10). It can therefore be experienced as a return of repressed memory. Reading *Way Back Home* through the lens of Freud's essays "The Uncanny" ([1919] 2003) and "Remembering, Repeating and Working-through" ([1914] 1950), I argue that Kimathi is so traumatised by his past actions toward Senami, and by her consistent rejection of him, that he has repressed the memories of them in order to cope. *Way Back Home* reflects many aspects of the uncanny, as conceptualised by Freud, from eerie recurrences that take the form of 'doubles,' to the threat of blindness and its link to castration anxiety. It is therefore possible to read the relationship between Kimathi and Senami as an expression of repressed desires and fears.

According to Freud, everything that is not consciously known to an individual can be described as unconscious, and memories which are unknown or forgotten are repressed and stored in the unconscious (Frosh 2002: 13). These repressed memories can resurface through "repeated, intrusive hallucinations" and "dreams," as they are "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event" (Caruth 1995: 4). In *Way Back Home* Kimathi is described as being "troubled by dark, bloody dreams," which initially only occur at night but eventually progress into hallucinations and visions during the day, as he begins to see Senami's ghost in various locations and grows increasingly distressed (Mhlongo 2013: 74).

In the first section of this chapter, "Eyes Wide Shut: Kimathi as Oedipus," I assert that Kimathi can be considered as an Oedipal figure, in Freudian terminolgy. The tragic tale of Oedipus involves the titular character becoming the king of Thebes by unwittingly murdering his father Laius, and marrying his mother Jocasta. Oedipus eventually blinds himself once he realises the truth of his deeds, and Freud interprets this act of occulation as a symbolic castration. I argue that Kimathi experiences

a similar symbolic castration after being emasculated by Senami's rejection of him. In "Senami as the Return of the Repressed," I then explore how Kimathi's memories resurface in the present in the form of various 'hallucinations' and hauntings in the novel, while in the following section titled "Senami as the Voice of the Wound" I explore the parallels between the central traumatised characters of *Way Back Home* and Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* ([1581] 1890). In addition to Freud, Cathy Caruth's *The Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History* (2016) illuminates my reading of Senami as symbolising the return of the repressed. In "What Lies Beneath: Metaphors of Memory," I explore how the city of Johannesburg functions as a metaphor for repressed memory in the novel, and in "Remembering to Forget: Repression and Unspoken Confessions" I discuss what the return of repressed memories signifies in a broader intertextual sense for the South African public imaginary. Reading the novel through the lens of Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall's *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (2009), I explore the relationship between the city's surface and its hidden depths, and how this serves as a corollary for Kimathi's own memory repression. There is currently no scholarship which deals with postcolonial trauma and the allegorical potential of *Way Back Home*, and its call for the resurrection of traumatic memory. My study aims to address this lacuna.

4.1. Eyes Wide Shut: Kimathi as Oedipus

Although *Way Back Home* is predominantly set in present-day Johannesburg, several chapters in the novel are situated in Angola, at Amilcar Cabral camp, in 1988. During this time Kimathi, under the pseudonym Comrade Pilate, undergoes military training with Senami (alias Comrade Mkabayi) and falls in love with her. Senami constantly rejects Kimathi's "clumsy offers," which humiliates and enrages him (Mhlongo 2013: 104). Considering Kimathi's young age at the time of their training – he is nineteen when they meet – it is likely that Senami was Kimathi's first love, and as a result her rejection of him would have made an indelible impression on him. In the novel's final scene Senami's friend Mongezi (alias Comrade Bambata) explains that Kimathi killed Senami because he "was in love with her […] and jealous that she didn't love him back" (207). The concomitance of his stationing in Angola with spurned love becomes a (traumatic) point of origin in Kimathi's identity formation. Senami's rejection spurns resentment and rivalry. She proves to be a better soldier than Kimathi and even saves his life on the battlefield, an act that he considers more emasculating

than heroic. Overcome with jealous rage, Kimathi and a fellow comrade, Idi,[26] conspire to rape Senami. The two men attack Senami and after a vicious struggle, bludgeon her to death. In the present of the text, both the reader and Kimathi remain unaware that the perpetrator of these crimes is Kimathi until the penultimate chapter, when Senami addresses Kimathi by his alias. It becomes evident that Kimathi has repressed the memory of Senami entirely, from being spurned by her, until her torture, rape and death.

Throughout the narrative, Kimathi experiences several blackouts as an effect of his memory repression. When he decides to consult a doctor, she informs him that he is "suffering from the after effects of some kind of past trauma" and advises him that the only way to resolve this trauma is to "confront whatever it is" (101). Kimathi explains the doctor's diagnosis to his friend Sechaba: "They say it is precipitated by a stressful episode, an earlier life trauma. There is this dream that always comes to me, and it's very frightening. It's about the exile days, comrade […] The thing is that I no longer know whether it's a dream or whether it really happened" (144). Kimathi's nightmares form alternating chapters in the novel's structure alongside the present day narrative, creating an uncanny effect. The sharp contrast between the opening interrogation scene in Angola, and the description of Kimathi's lavish mansion in the following chapter, creates a degree of undecidability regarding whether the first chapter is real, or whether it is the dream "about the exile days" that Kimathi is referring to. The connection is not made explicit, and this in itself introduces an uncanny moment for the reader. An uncanny effect is created in literature when a writer keeps readers "in the dark for a long time about the precise nature of the conditions he has selected for the world he writes about" as he "cunningly and ingeniously avoid[s] any definite information on the point at all throughout the book" (Freud [1919] 2003: 251). It is only later, when Kimathi's more violent dreams begin to form a narrative of their own, that the reader suddenly realises that the dream sequences are intended to fill the gaps in the main narrative.

Kimathi's diagnosis corresponds with clinical descriptions of trauma patients, particularly his inability to remember the past traumatic event: "the patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it" (Freud [1922] 1961: 12). As stated by Robert Kaden, traumatic memory can be "unreliable" and "unknow-

[26] Idi is later revealed to be Ludwe, Kimathi's business partner and mentor.

able" because it "resists language and articulation" (2012: 105-106). The inability to articulate and confront past trauma can subsequently "lead to a formation of repressed memories" (106). Senami attempts to explain this to Kimathi when he fails to understand what he has done wrong and why she continues to haunt him: "Your past deeds are so shameful that only by forgetting have you been able to live with them" (Mhlongo 2013: 97).

Kimathi's memory repression can also be explained through Freud's analysis of the Oedipus myth. Freud elucidates his theories by linking repression to sexual desires which develop in infancy that are repressed in adulthood. In the myth, Oedipus gouges out his eyes when he discovers the truth of his actions, and Freud reads this occulation as a form of castration: "the self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration" ([1919] 2003: 231). A morbid anxiety connected with one's eyes and with the threat of going blind is therefore a substitute for the dread of castration. In *Way Back Home* the threat of occulation is implied when Senami appears at Kimathi's bedside after he is hospitalised following a blackout. She admonishes him: "If you deliberately choose to forget the past, you'll lose both eyes" (Mhlongo 2013: 97). Freud's theory of the uncanny can also be applied to my reading of Kimathi as an Oedipal figure as he states that "the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached" to the "idea of being robbed of one's eyes" ([1919] 2003: 203).

As maintained by Samuel Weber, the uncanny is also "bound up with a *crisis* of perception and of phenomenality, but concomitantly with a mortal danger to the subject, to the 'integrity' of its body and thus to its very identity" (1973: 1131). Therefore, the threat brought about by castration is not necessarily related to the loss of a body part but instead to the loss of identity. Applying Freud's theory to Kimathi's experience in Angola suggests that what Kimathi has repressed is a moment of symbolic castration and emasculation as a result of his rejection by Senami. He has repressed this memory in which he is made to feel insignificant, publicly stripped of his (purportedly inherent) masculine power and authority, and denuded in front of a woman. Even when he holds Senami's life in his hands, she refuses to yield to him (Mhlongo 2013: 177). This memory is unbearable for Kimathi as it 'undoes' his sense of self.

While Senami's threats of occulation can be understood as a reference to Oedipus, it is also possible that she is mocking Kimathi by referring to the oath which he swore upon becoming a member of The Movement. The oath, which functions as a prologue to the novel, states that if a member fails to act in accordance with its principles, which include serving "with dignity and discipline," they should be severely punished: "a tooth for a tooth, *an eye for an eye*; a life for a life" (Mhlongo 2013: n.p, emphasis added). This oath shares the same principles as the Mosiac Law mentioned in the Old Testament, which is concerned with retributive justice and punishment: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Rosenberg and Rosenberg 1999: 509). In continuing with the Biblical allusions in *Way Back Home* (mentioned in my previous chapter) Senami's threats could also be referring to her torture and interrogation sessions at Amilcar Cabral, during which Kimathi would refer to her as "Delilah" and "temptress" (Mhlongo 2013: 105). In the Biblical tale of Samson and Delilah, Samson's eyes are gouged out by the Philistines after his hair is cut and he is subsequently robbed of his great God-given strength. Senami's reference to the oath, and to the Mosaic law it is based on, corresponds to the novel's approach to retributive justice as a means of confronting past trauma, a topic that will be further explored in Chapter Five.

4.1.1. Repression and the Split Self

It is revealed early in the novel that preceding his dreams and dark delusions, Kimathi "started to get treatment for bipolar disorder" two years prior to his divorce from Anele (Mhlongo 2013: 45). This occurred after Kimathi experienced "several manic episodes" during which he "had spent huge amounts on his credit cards on gambling and prostitutes" (45). Kimathi's mental state continued to worsen as he "became delusional and started having sleeping problems," until Anele pleaded with him to consult a doctor (45). Despite receiving treatment for this condition, Kimathi continues to suffer with frequent headaches and intense anxiety attacks in the present-day, which he describes as "stabs" that pierce him "to the core" (145). When these feelings are exacerbated after seeing Senami's ghost, leading to blackouts and hysteria, Kimathi assumes that the problem stems from inadequate medical treatment and not from his own mind, although the "failure of his medication speaks more to his inability to escape from his past misdeeds and his conscience" (Blanton 2018: 135). Kimathi's bipolar disorder is also evocative of his 'double' or split sense of self which is torn between past and present. This divided mental state is also symptomatic of memory repression, as "repression creates what might be called a second self, a stranger within, a place where all that cannot […] be expressed or realised in civil life takes up residence" (Rivkin and Ryan [1998] 2004:

389). Moreover, Kimathi's mental disorder is a marker of his troubling duality as both hero and villain, perpetrator and victim.

I argue that in addition to being diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Kimathi is also suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a debilitating condition which occurs in "distressed individuals who have been exposed to a stressful event or situation […] of exceptionally threatening or catastrophic nature […] resulting in intense fear, helplessness or horror" (Jakovljevic et al 2012: 241). Typical examples of such a 'stressful event' can include experiences with natural disasters, combat exposure or rape and sexual assault. The general symptoms of PTSD include re-experiencing the trauma through intrusive thoughts or memories of the event, emotional numbness, difficulty sleeping, being easily angered, and experiencing anxiety, recklessness and self-destructive behaviour (Parekh 2017: n.p). Throughout the novel Kimathi displays all of these symptoms, as he is plagued by nightmares of Senami's rape and the events leading up to it, he is indifferent to Anele's pleas to provide maintenance money for their daughter Zanu, and when his friend Ludwe dies Kimathi obsesses over his choice of clothing instead of mourning his passing. In addition he is short-tempered, often arguing heatedly with Anele even in their daughter's presence, and he indulges in alcoholism, gambling and recreational sex to alleviate his anxiety.

4.2. Senami as the Return of the Repressed

Freud's theory on the uncanny (or *Das Unheimlich*) is useful to elucidate how Senami's presence signifies the return of repressed memories for Kimathi. As a spectral figure, Senami can be described as uncanny, as she "arouses dread and creeping horror" in Kimathi ([1919] 2003: 219). The term is also related "in the highest degree" to "death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, to spirits and ghosts" (241). This notion of the "return" in Freud's theory is also evocative of the uncanny as it suggests "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (241). Throughout the narrative, Senami's ghost visits Kimathi in various incarnations to lead him towards acceptance of the truth of his past, such as: a version of herself prior to joining The Movement, whom Kimathi offers to drive home; a guest at Kimathi's friend's memorial who is dressed in combat fatigues; and Dee, the mysterious woman who tries to drown herself in Kimathi's swimming pool.

Connected to the resurgence of repressed memory is also the notion of the uncanny "double," described by Freud as a "thing of terror" (236). According to Freud, themes of uncanniness are "all concerned with the idea of a 'double' in every shape and degree," with characters "who are to be considered identical because they look alike" (234). I argue that the repetitive nature of the double is reflected in Senami's many manifestations. The uncanny is also present in the doubling of events or experiences, and in "the constant recurrence of similar situations, a same face, or character trait, or twist of fortune, or a same crime, or even a same name recurring throughout several consecutive generations" (234). Notably, Senami also shares her name with her grandmother, and the recurring name reinforces her status as an uncanny 'double' (Mhlongo 2013: 58)

When Kimathi encounters Senami's ghost for the first time, he realises that there is something familiar yet unsettling about her, but he dismisses the thought from his mind and chooses instead to try to seduce her. This correlates with Freud's definition of the uncanny as "nothing new or alien, but something familiar and old – established in the mind and which has become alienated only by the process of repression" ([1919] 2003: 241). Senami also intimates during their meeting that Kimathi may be repressing his memories of her: "Sometimes beauty can deceive you, allow you to ignore something about someone […] Our eyes always choose to see what our hearts wish were true" (Mhlongo 2013: 52). The link between lack of sight and castration is made apparent here as Kimathi remains blind to the fact his love was not returned. The (re)appearance of Senami, as a manifestation of Kimathi's unconscious desires, indicates his continued love of her. Kimathi's initial encounter with Senami's ghost, during which she kisses him on the cheek and agrees to a date with him, can be considered as fulfilling Kimathi's desire for a romantic or sexual relationship with Senami. Freud claims that incorporated in the idea of a double are also "all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling to in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse circumstances have crushed" ([1919] 2003: 236). After Senami steps out of his car, Kimathi feels "like he had been deserted by someone he loved" (Mhlongo 2013: 53). Her reappearance thus embodies an unfulfilled utopian dream that she shattered in refusing him, and he forever foreclosed by raping and killing her: the desire to undo time, and to start all over again, so that he could woo and win her. This dream, his desire to be with Senami, remained unfulfilled at Amilcar Cabral camp as she rejected Kimathi's advances.

Another way in which Kimathi's trauma manifests itself is through his repetition compulsion. According to Freud, repetition compulsion occurs when a traumatised individual "does not *remember*

anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without […] knowing that he is repeating it" ([1914] 1950: 150). Similarly Caruth, expounding on Freud's theory of trauma, suggests that the unclaimed experience of a trauma "repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will" (2016: 2). Unbeknown to Kimathi, he repeats his experiences with Senami when interacting with her incarnations, although the circumstances differ slightly in the present day. The first incident occurs when Kimathi meets Senami and offers her a ride home in rainy weather. After repeatedly flirting with her, despite her initial indifference towards him, Kimathi manages to procure a date with her and she even gives him "a friendly and light-hearted kiss as if she was acknowledging his courtesy" (Mhlongo 2013: 51). He later repeats the experience with a woman named Dee, whom Kimathi tries to rescue from drowning in his swimming pool. Kimathi nearly drowns in the process, but after dragging Dee out of the water, he notices that she has a "gash on her left cheek," which each of Senami's manifestations bears (125). As discussed in Chapter Two, I posit that 'Dee' is a shortened form of Delilah, which refers to the Biblical nickname given to Senami by Kimathi during her interrogation sessions at Amilcar Cabral. This is evinced when Kimathi is seen "standing outside naked, reading the Bible" by his neighbours while he imagines Dee drowning in his pool (129). The passage that he had been reading came from "the story of Delilah and Samson" (132). Kimathi's repeated reenactment of his time with Senami also corresponds with Freud's conceptualisation of the uncanny as he notes that "whatever reminds us of this inner compulsion to repeat is perceived as uncanny" ([1919] 2003: 238).

Otto Kernberg notes that repetition compulsion can represent the "unconscious repetition of a traumatic relationship with a frustrating or traumatising object, with the hidden hope that 'this time' the other will gratify the needs and wishes of the patient" (2009: 1012-1013). This desire to re-write the past is evident when Kimathi attempts to rescue Dee from drowning while risking his own life. In this waking dream or hallucination Kimathi unconsciously re-writes the tragic events of the past, switching his role from violator to redeemer. This time around, perhaps he can save Senami instead of hurting her. Kimathi's actions also demonstrate how traumatic experiences can "continue to manifest themselves in symptoms of distress and unconscious re-enactments of the original traumatic situation" until they are "recognised, understood and 'owned' by the survivor" (Kaminer and Eagle 2001: 146). Despite being provided with various clues about Senami's identity and her link to his past, Kimathi remains obtuse and as a result he is doomed to repeat his encounter with her until he realises the truth. When Kimathi is admitted into a hospital to recover from a blackout, Senami's

spirit appears and explains the reason behind her recurring presence: "It seems your memory betrays you, comrade […] I must help to refresh it for you" (Mhlongo 2013: 96). Senami's various manifestations are therefore meant to prompt Kimathi's self-reflection.

Senami's uncanny quality is further foregrounded as her presence causes Kimathi to feel anxious and disturbed: "when he looked up again his eyes locked with those of a woman who had just entered the theatre […] Kimathi's nervousness intensified as she ran her fingers over her scarred left cheek" (92). He is later described as becoming "hysterical" and he even collapses from the mental strain of encountering Senami's ghost (93). Freud associates the uncanny experience with anxiety, which "can be shown to come from something repressed which *recurs*" ([1919] 2003: 241). In *Way Back Home* thoughts and images of Senami continue to reappear in Kimathi's mind, resulting in him experiencing intense anxiety. Moreover, Freud's theory on memory repression states that an increase in anxiety is caused when "when repressed desires threaten to surface at the conscious level," and that constant efforts to repress one's memory can lead to "neurotic and moral anxiety" (Meyer 1989: 52). Throughout the narrative, Kimathi becomes increasingly paranoid after each visit from Senami. His mental state slowly deteriorates, and he is perturbed by anything which vaguely resembles her, even the fake Picasso painting which hangs in his home:

> He liked referring to the painting as Mary, his mistress, whenever he talked to his friends about it. Every time, Kimathi would pretend to caress the breasts of the nude woman in the painting, but today Mary scared him. The Picasso reminded him of Lakeisha, the prostitute from Oxford Road. The image, too, of the mysterious Senami kept intruding into the secret gallery of his mind (Mhlongo 2013: 78).

The link between Picasso/Kimathi's 'Mary' and Senami also suggests that Kimathi has developed what Freud identifies as the Madonna-whore complex. This polarising view divides women into two opposing types; those that are good and chaste, and those that are bad, seductive and promiscuous. In this theory Freud asserts that "sexual arousal is only possible with a sexual partner who has in some way been degraded (the whore), while the adequate and respected partner cannot be fully desired (the Madonna)" (Hartmann 2009: 2335). It is fitting that Kimathi refers to Picasso's nude, which reminds him of Senami, as Mary, as it points to his idealisation of Senami in the sense that she is equitable to the Madonna. It also explains why Senami then becomes Delilah (the whore) when she rejects his love and sexual advances.

4.3. Senami as the Voice of the Wound

Through her reading of the story of Tancred, a knight whose life is shaped by a traumatic experience, Caruth defines trauma as "the crying wound" (2016: 8). In the sixteenth century epic *Jerusalem Delivered*, composed by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso, the hero Tancred mistakenly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel, as she had disguised herself as a knight. Tancred later wanders into an enchanted forest where he slashes at a tree with his sword, but when he does, blood pours out from the cut and he hears Clorinda's voice. It is revealed that Clorinda's soul was imprisoned in the tree, and was lamenting that Tancred had wounded her a second time. This tale of trauma bears a resemblance to the story of Kimathi and Senami, as there are several parallels that can be drawn between the two. Although Kimathi is represented as a womaniser, even as a young soldier in Angola, and is often shown treating women as sexual objects, his attitude towards Senami is (initially) different and it is plausible that she is his first love. When he describes Senami to her parents Napo and Lola in the present of the text, he remembers that she was "very brave" and "very intelligent," indicating that she made a lasting impression on him because she possessed these qualities which he admired (Mhlongo 2013: 160). He is also clearly physically attracted to Senami as all the other women he encounters in the novel, and Lakeisha in particular, echo aspects of her physical appearance.

Drawing upon the literal meaning of the Greek word *trauma*, Caruth describes it as a wound "inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (2016: 2). She proposes that the voice of Clorinda in *Jerusalem Delivered* is "released through the wound," and that it "cries out to [Tancred] to see what he has done […] The voice of his beloved addresses him and, in this address, bears witness to the past he has unwittingly repeated" (2-3). This is comparable to the actions of Senami's restless spirit in *Way Back Home*, as she appears to Kimathi and urges him each time to confront the reality of his past actions and acknowledge his crimes: "There is no hiding place when you have hurt someone, comrade […]. Just take a journey into your past, and you'll have all the answers you want" (Mhlongo 2013: 96-97). As maintained by Caruth, trauma can be defined as "the story of a wound that cries out […] in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (2016: 4). To borrow Caruth's phrasing, Senami is the 'voice of the wound,' or the voice of trauma, in *Way Back Home*. Despite being his victim, she acts as a guide for Kimathi to help him come to terms with his past. She elaborates that the reason she is unable to find peace in the afterlife is because her murderer was left unpunished: "If we live in the hearts of those we killed, we will never

die […] And that is why I am stuck with you" (Mhlongo 2013: 205). Although the experiences of Torquasso and Mhlongo's protagonists are similar, there is a slight difference between them as Kimathi does not 'mistakenly' or accidentally kill Senami. However, it is clear that he wishes he could undo the act and re-write the past. The fact that he has repressed the memory of her death indicates that his actions are repugnant to him, which is why they have been relegated to the realm of the unconscious.

My interpretation of Senami as a 'voice of the wound' is emphasised by the fact that she is literally wounded, as she bears the scar of this wound in each of her manifestations, a "scar below her left cheek" (52). This is a reference to Senami's time as Lady Comrade Mkabayi, when she was subjected to torture by Kimathi and Comrade Idi at Amilcar Cabral camp: "her left cheek was still swollen from the beating they had given her the previous week" (105). In the present-day when Kimathi first sees Senami and offers to drive her home, unaware that she is a ghost, he sees a "scar below her left cheek" which "looked like a teardrop" (52). Senami's other manifestations also bear the same resemblance. The second is the unnamed woman in a "camouflage army uniform" with a "scarred left cheek" who attends the memorial of Kimathi's friend Ludwe (92). The third incarnation is Dee, who appears on Kimathi's doorstep seeking shelter from the harsh weather. Kimathi notices that Dee has "a fresh gash on her left cheek" near her eye (125). The link between Senami and the other women is further evidenced when Kimathi is hospitalised, following a blackout, and Senami appears at his bedside. While "pointing at the scar on her left cheek" she advises Kimathi to "remember your enemies by the scars you inflict on them" (97). Senami's wound is a recurring image in the novel and it serves as a reminder to the reader that all the female figures Kimathi encounters are uncanny repetitions or manifestations of the original wounded woman: Senami.

4.4. What Lies Beneath: Metaphors of Memory

While the 'flashback' chapters in the novel are set in Angola, the present-day narrative of *Way Back Home* takes place in the wealthy suburbs of Johannesburg, where Kimathi spends most of his time driving around the city, visiting lavish restaurants, attending various business meetings, and even soliciting sex from prostitutes. As a child, Kimathi is told by his father that South Africa is "a country where the cities are built on top of gold and diamonds," and Kimathi imagines Johannesburg to be a South African El-Dorado, a modern-day city of riches: "He knew little about Johannesburg and South Africa. Before he came to the country, he had imagined cities built on gold" (Mhlongo 2013:

20). Following Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, who foreground the historical and cultural significance of Johannesburg's landscape in South African literature, in this section I read the city of Johannesburg as a metaphor for the repression of memory in *Way Back Home*.

In *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (2009) Mbembe and Nuttall explore the geographical relationship between the city's surface and its hidden depths, stating that it is "the intertwining of surface and depth – in its historical and psychic senses – that defines the life of the city. Surface and depth exist in a set of relations in which each relies on the existence of the other, in which they are entwined or enfolded, suggestive each of the other, interpenetrating, and separating out at different points" (2009: 83). The authors note that beneath the surface of Johannesburg there is "a deeper diagnostic, a layering which retains the viscosity of an unresolved history, the imprint of a scandalous signifier" (84). This refers to the gold rush in South Africa in the nineteenth century, when European investors employed African, Indian, and Chinese labourers in the mines to work for minimal pay under extremely hazardous conditions. Building on Nuttall and Mbembe's theories, Anthea Buys and Leora Farber (2011) suggest that in addition to the political and economic links between the city's surface and what lies beneath, "the interconnectedness of Johannesburg's underground, surface and peripheral spaces" can also act as a metaphor for "repressed trauma and anxieties" (2011: 2). They maintain that the connection between "the underground and the surface in the context of Johannesburg contains an echo of the literary and artistic trope of burial and resurrection, or exhumation, and the related trope of the spectral or ghostly" (3). Furthermore, they argue that in literature "the underground can function as a metaphor for that which is repressed, or lies beneath the surface of consciousness" (3). This theme of buried histories and unspoken confessions is alluded to throughout the novel. During Kimathi's first encounter with the ghost of Senami, she asks him: "What if I told you that what you see in front of you today is just an illusion? […] You know, my mother always used to tell me that there is another reality beyond what we choose to see with our eyes" (Mhlongo 2013: 51). Kimathi is at this point unable to understand the relevance of this question as he is still in denial of his violent actions at Amilcar Cabral camp.

Buys and Farber also note that in literature the "spatial motif of constant oscillation between that which lies beneath the visible landscape" is expressed through comparing "the metropolis's surface and that which is concealed or embedded" (2011: 7) In *Way Back Home* one memorable scene involves Kimathi searching for prostitutes while driving past Gold Reef City. As he passes the casino Kimathi laments that he lost twenty-five thousand rand in one night as a result of his gambling ad-

diction (Mhlongo 2013: 21). Gold Reef City, a luxurious South African amusement park, is built on the remains of a nineteenth century gold mine. The commercial success of the casino in the present contrasts with the dreadful history of the old gold mine, thereby drawing together the past and the present in an interesting parallel. In another scene, Kimathi is driving along the freeway, travelling south of Johannesburg when he falls asleep at the wheel and dreams of "sweating, hard-working miners […] labouring painfully with picks and spades" (121). Kimathi is lulled to sleep by Billie Holiday's rendition of *Strange Fruit*, an iconic and jarring protest song about the violence of colonialism and the savage consequences of racism in North America. Coupled with the details of Kimathi's dream, this scene appears to refer to South Africa's own brutal history. The two instances correlate with the novel's exploration of how the past remains relevant even in the present, but also how tragic events from the past can be obscured and, in the case of Gold Reef City, can be replaced with something more palatable.

4.5. Remembering to Forget: Repression and Unspoken Confessions

In this section I look beyond the inner workings and motivations of psychically wounded protagonist of *Way Back Home*, to the broader socio-political implications of the text. I read Amilcar Cabral camp, the site of Senami's demise, as synonymic for Quatro, the infamous ANC detention centre which was also located in Angola. Accordingly, I argue that Kimathi and his cronies, the members of the fictional liberation army called The Movement who escape the camp and evade punishment for their crimes, represent the "former members of MK or iMbokodo[27] who were responsible for human rights abuse in Quatro" (Kaden 2012: 119). Many of these wrongdoers "remained in positions of power, despite being summoned to appear before the TRC" (119). Regarding the implications of Quatro testimonies on South Africa's national memory, Robert Kaden argues that the traumatic memory of Quatro was largely repressed during the TRC's proceedings for the sake of fostering a unified "collective memory" and a "shared history" despite the fact that this presented "a highly reductive version of the past" (102). Kaden laments that these testimonies are still purposefully being repressed, creating a constant forgetting of the past.

Through the relationship between Kimathi and Senami, *Way Back Home* asserts the importance of unearthing the secrets of the past and explores the consequences of unspoken confessions and

[27] The iMbokodo (the 'grindstone') functioned as the ANC's secret police during the apartheid era.

repressed memories. Senami's death, at the hands of fellow comrades who consider themselves 'struggle heroes,' echoes the fate of all the real-life victims who suffered in similar circumstances. In official reports of the anti-apartheid struggle, such as those recorded by the TRC, many victims' accounts were reportedly eclipsed by and buried under "the heroic [South African] nationalist narrative," which simplified the overthrowing of the apartheid regime as a general account of good triumphing over evil (Kaden 2012: 75). *Way Back Home* questions this narrative, as the numerous torture scenes in the novel, including Senami's, challenge "any romanticised heroism of the underground struggle in exile. Instead, [they uncover] troubling scenes of what amounts to crimes against humanity perpetrated by leaders within The Movement against their own comrades" (Kenqu 2019: 157). *Way Back Home* therefore forms part of a post-apartheid literary tradition wherein novels question the authority of "historical evidence and officially sanctioned accounts of the past," thereby exposing "the selective nature of South African historical discourse in its attempt to re-write a more representative history" (Grzeda 2013: 167). In a similar vein, Shane Graham notes that recent South African literature advocates for reading history "as a palimpsest,[28] by paying careful attention to what has been erased as well as that which is inscribed on the surface" (2011: 20). The importance of a palimpsestic reading "lies in the revelation of how one transitional experience is already present in another. By inscribing one discursive act over another, the ruptures and continuities between textualisations reveal a wealth of imaginaries that […] define the idea of post-transitional South African literature" (Frenkel 2013: 25). I offer a palimpsestic reading of *Way Back Home* here.

In this section I posit that the circumstances leading up to and surrounding Senami's death are reminiscent of the account of Phila Portia Ndwandwe. Mhlongo states that his story is inspired by the Sowetan urban legend of Vera the Ghost, but I suggest that the parallels between Senami and Ndwandwe are equally significant. Ndwandwe was a female guerrilla soldier and high-ranking member of the MK, who was captured in 1988 and interrogated by four members of the South African Police (SABC 2019: n.p). Like Senami, Ndwandwe was betrayed by her comrades, refused to reveal any information during her interrogation, and was eventually murdered when her captors considered her to no longer be useful. Her body was buried in an unmarked location on a local farm in Elandskop and was only discovered by her family nine years after her death, after which she finally received a proper funeral. Ndwandwe's captors and killers were granted amnesty after confessing to

[28] A palimpsest is traditionally a piece of writing material from which one piece of writing is erased in order to inscribe a new one, often leaving traces of the previous text behind (Webster 1981: 682).

their crimes during the TRC. Significantly, the year 1988 is also when Senami is raped and murdered in her prison cell in *Way Back Home*. In addition, Senami's parents also only discover the fate of their daughter upon excavating her remains many years after her death. These parallels between history and the novel are evocative of how the theme of "excavation" or exhumation is prevalent in literature of South Africa's post-transitional period, as it mimics the unearthing of "buried histories" (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2010: 2).

In view of this reading of Senami, I argue that *Way Back Home* also addresses the silences of the TRC's proceedings through its depiction of Senami's parents Napo and Lola Tladi, and their traumatic experience involving the death of their daughter whose body was never found. The Tladi's experience is similar to the many South Africans who were brought before the TRC expecting to receive closure, but who were reportedly informed that their loved ones were simply casualties in the war against apartheid. According to historian Todd Cleveland, some victims' claims were often dismissed as "corollaries of the violent political struggle" and a necessary sacrifice for the downfall of apartheid (2005: 64). This is also alluded to in the novel when Kimathi visits Senami's family after seeing her ghost for the first time, and her parents inform him that the search for their daughter's remains was fruitless. Senami's father Napo explains to Kimathi: "We tried the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but they told us that they were sorry but they could not locate her […]. We then went to the ANC head office in Shell House in Johannesburg to talk to someone who was dealing with such things […]. That man was very rude […]. He told us that in every struggle there are bound to be casualties" (Mhlongo 2013: 58). Kimathi also notices that the tone of a letter which Napo received from Shell House was "dismissive" (58). This corresponds with the reported dissatisfaction and frustration faced by many of the TRC's participants, as Cleveland notes that the investigations often focused "primarily on the nature of the violence while ignoring what it meant to those who endured it" (2005: 64).

Roger Blanton posits that Kimathi's nightmares of his time in exile represent "the violent and exploitative excesses of his past recurring spectrally in his present," and are evocative of the novel's theme of the past 'haunting' the present (2018: 134). Similarly, regarding the continuity between the past and the present in Mhlongo's *oeuvre*, Danielle Gantt comments that his writing "seems to suggest that even though apartheid is 'dead,' South Africans are still experiencing its lingering effects" (2012: 86). In an interview with *Chimurenga* entitled "Home and Away" (2013), Mhlongo attests to the allegorical intention of his novel, foregrounding the presence of the past:

> My main character is a metaphor of South Africa as nation. He had killed people in exile, and these people […] are coming to haunt him (South Africa) and this affects the whole nation. So many people have been killed in the name of apartheid, and their tears are haunting us. We have not cleansed properly as a nation, and that is why we have so many problems (in Chronic 2013: n.p).

The spectrality of the present that Mhlongo refers to, is referenced in the novel in the traumatic experiences at Quatro. These repressed or eclipsed stories continue to 'haunt' South Africa. Mhlongo's call for a national "cleansing," implies that healing requires an exhumation or 'exorcism' of memory. *Way Back Home* suggests that this can be achieved through remembering and bearing witness to the past, and by acknowledging past crimes. In the novel's penultimate scene, Senami urges Kimathi to "tell the truth […] tell them everything" about his actions toward her in exile (2013: 204). It is only when Kimathi decides to confront his past and return to Angola that Senami's remains are discovered, allowing the Tladi's to find closure and "carry [their] daughter's spirit home" (208).

In *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-apartheid* (2009) Sarah Nuttall posits that one of the dominant themes in post-apartheid literature is an "impulse […] to assert continuity with the past, producing a critique based on reiteration and return" (2009: 17). In *Way Back Home*, Senami's ghost and her various incarnations can be said to symbolise the return and the resurfacing of repressed memory, and with it, the confession or acknowledgment of truth. The novel draws on elements of magical realism to aid in this representation, as the real world and the realm of the supernatural imbricate to allow Kimathi to come to terms with his past. This is an important focus in post-apartheid magical realist texts, which revolve around a "marked preoccupation with history and an urge to revisit and critically re-examine the past" (Grzeda 2013: 154). Kimathi's reluctance and inability to account for his past crimes is the reason Senami appears to him in various forms, urging him to confront his past and in doing so, grant both her and her family closure.

Chapter Five

Finding the Way Back: Trauma and the Imaginings of Home

In this chapter I explore genealogies of trauma, focusing particularly on Kimathi and the patrilineal Tito family line. I will also consider the trauma faced by Senami and her parents, as her spirit is unable to return home. In relation to this I also question the role that indigenous knowledge plays in the healing of such trauma, as I argue that the novel foregrounds the immanence of the spiritual in African cosmology. The reference to home in the title of the novel is polysemic, and in this chapter I discuss both the literal and figurative implications of home, and consider to what extent the return home – a *leitmotif* in the novel – can help with confronting the trauma of displacement. In his interview with Moreillon and Stiebel (2015), Mhlongo states that *Way Back Home* explores why home is particularly significant to African people: "Home is where a spirit rests forever. Home is where your ancestors are buried" (2015: 258). Home is therefore connected to the land, which is important in African religious and cultural identity as it is "more than the sustainer of life; it is the basis of people's identity and group consciousness" (Draper 1995: 13). The loss of home in any capacity can therefore result in a trauma that may never be fully resolved, creating an unhomely experience. I argue that *Way Back Home*, as a postcolonial and post-apartheid text, demonstrates how South African identity politics, land ownership and spirituality are entangled as the novel foregrounds the "confluence of material and spiritual" in African cosmology, which is "intimately connected to place and the earth" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin [2000] 2007: 69).

Notions of home and belonging are central in the novel, but the notion of returning home in particular also takes on another more disturbing meaning in the context of the crime novel, or psychological thriller. In this sense, finding the way back home does not just imply a return to the ancestral home – a place of familiarity and safety – but also a return to the scene of the crime – a place of violence and trauma. While recent scholarship on the novel (Kenqu 2019; Rafapa 2014) has made brief mention of the representation of African spiritualities, there is no scholarship that examines how these aspects can be linked to healing the trauma of displacement. Similarly, while Moreillon and Stiebel's (2015) interview with Mhlongo provides a foundation for understanding the significance of the title and the notion of the return home, there is no critical literature which foregrounds the connection between home and trauma in the novel. I intend to fill this gap in scholarship with my study.

In the first section of this chapter titled "Home as a Place of Belonging" I apply Homi Bhabha's (1992) concept of the "unhomely" to analyse how Mhlongo draws attention to Kimathi's feelings of displacement as an exile-at-home, and as a member of a family who has been displaced from their ancestral home. I posit that the motif of bipolarity – as discussed in the previous Chapter – is evident in Kimathi's divided sense of self as he is both citizen and stranger in his home country. Following David Borman in "Literature of Return: Back to Africa, Belonging and Modernity" (2014) I argue that Kimathi experiences a "revenant belonging" as a result of his displacement since he attempts to substitute his connection to a lost ancestral home with tenuous family ties, although he does not succeed in this. Through the lens of African spirituality I also explore the significance of Senami's displacement and her soul's eventual return home.

In the second section, "Home as a Final Destination," I discuss how Amilcar Cabral camp signifies home for Kimathi as it is a place of origin for him, as well as the scene of his most heinous crime, and as a place to which he ultimately returns. In relation to this return I analyse the final scene of the novel and question its implications. Rosemary Marangoly George's *The Politics of Home* (1996) is useful in my discussion of Kimathi's journey home, which both begins and ends at Amilcar Cabral. In the third section of this chapter titled "Home is Where the History Is," I examine the broader intertextual implications of Kimathi's death and the ending of the novel. Njabulo Ndebele's "Arriving home? South Africa beyond transition and reconciliation" (2010) will inform my argument that the notion of a return home extends to a return to justice and equality, which the novel suggests could aid in confronting the trauma faced by South Africans as a result of a violent colonial past.

5.1. Home as a Place of Belonging

In this section I offer a close reading of what may seem relatively minor or insignificant background details to Kimathi's family history and biography. Firstly, I focus on passages in the novel that point to the legacy of trauma in the Tito patrilineal line, resulting from the violence of colonialism and apartheid. Secondly, I focus on Kimathi's 'bipolar' or hybridised identity. Indeed, Kimathi can be seen as the victim of trans-generational trauma passed on from grandfather, to father and finally to the son. Through brief but poignant textual details, *Way Back Home* highlights how the origins of trauma and psychic dislocation are rooted in the history of white colonial land dispossession. I also explore how Kimathi's hybridised identity is congruent with Bhabha's concept of the

unhomely, as Kimathi does not feel at home in Tanzania or South Africa. This results in a sense of dislocation as his identity is "split and doubled" (Bhabha 1992: 145).

Home, and the loss of home, is a recurring theme in postcolonial literature as it encompasses "the psychic and physical experience" of the colonised (Bradford 2003: 104). Due to colonial and apartheid laws, such as the Native Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, many black South Africans were dispossessed of their land and separated from their families, severing their connection with their ancestral homes. This resulted in feelings of displacement and created an unresolved trauma, as the government's promise to restore land ownership to the rightful owners remained unfulfilled for many people even after the institutionalisation of democracy and the establishment of the TRC. According to Judge Mbuyiseli Madlanda of the South African Constitutional Court, the "ejection from homes; the forcible loss of properties; severing from kin, friends and neighbours; the wrenching of those affected from their beloved connection to place and community" resulted in "immeasurable emotional and psychological trauma" (Mji 2018: n.p.). Madlanda observes that "the continuing post-apartheid realities of land dispossession" are even more distressing to "those who are yet to enjoy the fruits of restitution or equitable redress" (2018: n.p.).

The link between land ownership and identity is foregrounded in *Way Back Home* through the experiences of the Tito family. When Kimathi returns to South Africa in 1992 to meet his paternal family, his aunt Yoli describes how their family was forcibly removed from their ancestral home in 1972. She explains that they were prevented from returning there because they did not have the proper documentation: "I went to the council to reclaim that land and they say I must come with title deeds. Where do they think I'll get that paper, huh *mtanami*?[29] When I told them that our farm stretched from the two tall fig trees to the stream, they didn't believe me because those trees are gone now. The Boers have chopped them down to hide the evidence" (Mhlongo 2013: 30). Yoli urges Kimathi to one day "go back to Middleburg and claim [their] ancestral land from the Viljoens" since their "great-grandparents' graves are there" (30). She resents that her family was dispossessed of their home by "those white bastards" and explains that the Tito family was unable to "perform [their] traditional rituals" for their ancestors due to this displacement (30). The body of Kimathi's grandfather Fezile was not returned to his family and so he was never given a traditional burial. Similarly, Kimathi's father Lunga died in Tanzania, away from his home, and his family was

[29] A Zulu term meaning 'my child.'

also not given the opportunity to bury him and perform the appropriate funeral rites. It is implied that Fezile and Lunga will remain spiritually adrift as the connection to their home is severed. This alienation from the land is thus experienced "as a disruption of the continuity between the living and the dead," a concept that is central to African spirituality (Draper 1995: 13). While Yoli's vitriol is initially directed towards the Viljoens, who stole their land, she also resents the incumbent government for failing to restore her ownership rights. I will be returning to Yoli and the Tito family's experience with displacement in the final section of this chapter.

When Kimathi is eventually united with his paternal family in South Africa, the country of his father's birth, he attempts to establish a bond with them. He stays with Yoli, where he meets his cousin Unathi and his stepbrother Nakho, and he even visits the cemetery where his grandmother is buried, but all this fails to grant Kimathi a sense of belonging as he feels estranged from his relatives: "despite everything, Kimathi felt no connection with his father's home" (Mhlongo 2013: 30). This sentiment is rendered particularly tragic as Kimathi describes the day he meets his family as "the happiest day of [his] life" (27). Paradoxically, it is by coming home that Kimathi experiences the unhomely. He becomes 'unhomed,' as he finds himself "taking in the measure of [his] dwelling in a state of profound unease" (Jacobs 2016: 265). The family home, which ought to be familiar to Kimathi, has become strange. In "The World and the Home" Bhabha draws upon the German term *Das Unheimliche* to express how familiar or domestic spaces can become sites where the border between home and world blurs, thereby creating a state of disorientation (1992: 141). In his study of the etymology of the German words *heimlich* or *heimisch* (literally translated as familiar, native or belonging to the home) and *unheimlich* (uncanny or unhomely) Freud points to the ambivalence of the uncanny. He suggests that the two words intersect in meaning: "among its different shades of meaning the word '*heimlich*' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, '*unheimlich*' […] *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*" ([1919] 2003: 224). When *heimlich*, which implies familiarity and the known (the homely) begins to blur in meaning with *unheimlich*, the unfamiliar and the unknown (the unhomely), the ambiguity of the term "unhomely" can therefore indicate an uncertainty that points to a crisis of identity.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Kimathi's father commits suicide while serving as a member of the anti-apartheid militia known as The Movement, and his mother dies eight months after his father. Kimathi is never introduced to his maternal family. The only fact which the reader and Kimathi are sure of about his mother is that her name is Akila. Notably, it is suggested that Kimathi is also con-

ceived through the trauma of rape: "an act of unromantic lust" (Mhlongo 2013: 19). Kenqu maintains that this "inauspicious coupling" of Kimathi's parents foreshadows his "permanent sense of out of placeless and/or a hyphenated identity […] which culminates in his deep desire for rootedness" (2019: 158). Kimathi chooses to describe himself as "a real son of exile" to assuage his feelings of unhomeliness, as this epithet gives him a sense of pride due to its association with the anti-apartheid struggle (Mhlongo 2013: 19). As the child of a Tanzanian mother and a South African father, who was born in Tanzania and forced to leave his homeland to become a refugee in South Africa, Kimathi's origins are complicated. His hybrid identity is not presented in a positive view which celebrates the blending of cultures, but instead Kimathi exemplifies how hybridity can be "a complex negotiation of split subjectivity" and a fractured sense of self in a world that is equally fractured (Krige 2009: iii). Kimathi's transcultural identity is not represented as a celebratory moment of African unity. Rather, it has the opposite effect. The novel foregrounds how entrenched, and assumed 'natural,' the colonial dissection of African peoples has become. In "The Scramble for Africa: Inherited Political Boundaries," geographical scholar Ieuan Griffiths states that these boundaries, which were drawn up by European colonial powers, "have survived the transition from colonies to independent states" even years after many countries in Africa achieved emancipation (1986: 204). Mhlongo claims that by creating a character like Kimathi who has "complex origins" he intends to highlight how "apartheid and the Berlin Conference of 1884 has [sic] done a lot of damage in dislocating people" through the implementation of such "artificial boundaries" (in Chronic 2013: n.p).

Kimathi is unable to feel at home either in Tanzania or South Africa, and this dislocation causes his identity to be "split and doubled" (Bhabha 1992: 145). While Kimathi is clinically diagnosed with bipolar disorder because of his lack of impulse control, 'bipolarity' also becomes a figure for psychic scission and duality in his characterisation (Mhlongo 2013: 45). In a broader sense Kimathi is a divided or split self: born of a mixed heritage, both outsider and insider, torn between past and present, victim and villain. He is a stranger to his own homeland and home language. One instance which illustrates Kimathi's outsider status occurs when Kimathi accuses his friend Ganyani of being stereotypically "Shanganese"[30] by complaining too much, and his friend chastises him: "Its actually Shangaan, not Shanganese. You mean to tell me that since you came back from Angola you haven't learned anything about our country? You don't even know how to pronounce the word 'Shangaan'?

[30] The Shangaan-Tsonga people are a diverse cluster of tribes in South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (South African Tourism 2019: n.p).

You are pathetic, comrade" (38). Kimathi immediately reacts "defensively," showing his chagrin by claiming that he was destined to be born in exile: "it was not my choice, but the revolution's" (38). He also attempts to quickly dismiss his *faux pas* by exclaiming that the only language he needs to speak is "Money!" (39). This further points to Kimathi's characteristic of attempting to assuage his feelings of loss and inadequacy through extravagance, as mentioned in Chapter Three. The scene is suggestive of Bhabha's theory which states that when the world enters the home, it becomes unhomely and renders the distinction between the two concepts unclear. Here, Kimathi is representative of the world entering the home, which creates a feeling of strangeness or uneasiness for him. His time in exile as a 'struggle hero' is reduced to the punchline of a joke.

Kimathi becomes synonymous with Edward Said's description of the exile, as he exists "in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another" (1994: 36). He expresses a fondness and nostalgia for his life in exile, as it was during his time as a soldier of the anti-apartheid struggle when he felt the most powerful and accomplished. At the same time Kimathi also expresses a desire to belong in South Africa and to connect with his father's home, a place that should be *his* own home, a country whose liberation he fought for. However, he is not quite the "adept mimic" as he advertises his status as a foreigner and an outsider with his language blunder. It is in this moment that Kimathi's elaborate masquerade of cultural mimicry fails.

Drawing on David Borman's (2014) analysis of the migrant experience, Kenqu (2019) asserts that Kimathi's inability to forge a connection with his family or his ancestral home indicates that he experiences a revenant belonging. According to Borman a "revenant belonging" is one of the "alternative modes of belonging when citizenship is no longer available" (2014: 133). In lieu of the lost ancestral home, relationships with the family, which includes family members who have died, can constitute an alternative belonging "when the nation has lost its ability to provide a sense of identity" (134). Reading Borman, Kenqu notes that Kimathi "exhibits a kind of 'revenant belonging' because his link to this family is through a dead father […] and an undead past" (2019: 159). Following Kenqu, I argue that this "undead past" also returns in the form of Senami's restless spirit. He is inextricably and existentially bound to Senami because he murdered her, as she explains to him: "If we live in the hearts of those we killed, we will never die […] And that is why I am stuck with you" (Mhlongo 2013: 205). Borman states that a revenant belonging is also associated with "the notion

of coming back from the dead, or conversing with the dead," and that this return further "suggests that the past refuses to remain dead or in the past" (2014: 134). This is particularly relevant to Kimathi, for whom the past has returned and revivified itself in the ghost of Senami, and her various alternative manifestations, who visit him and talk to him.

Kimathi's journey to South Africa is an attempt to find his way back home, but the primary association with home made by the reader involves the journey of Senami's spirit. The trauma of displacement, caused by a loss of home, is also foregrounded through the story of Senami's restless soul. As stated by Mhlongo, "in African culture, the dead are not gone forever because there is an afterlife […]. If we do not bury our dead accordingly, they can come back to haunt us, and they have every right to do so. In the book I have tried to show the importance of this culture and tradition" (in Chronic 2013: n.p.). A great emphasis is placed on this aspect of African spirituality in *Way Back Home* as Senami's soul is unable to find peace because she died and was buried away from her ancestral home, like Kimathi's father and grandfather. As a result, she is never given a proper funeral with the traditional burial rites. This is explained when the *sangoma* (traditional healer) Makhanda informs Senami's parents, Napo and Lola Tladi, that their daughter's spirit is "hovering around and will remain restless" because "she died in a foreign place" (Mhlongo 2013: 159). He instructs the Tladi's to "bring [Senami] home from wherever she is" (159). When Senami (as Lady Comrade Mkabayi) confronts Kimathi for the final time during his return to Amilcar Cabral camp, he questions the possibility of her existence and she sorrowfully explains to him: "Comrade Pilate, I thought you knew that a person does not simply disappear when they die […]. They go to another world" (204). Senami also appears to be mourning for her childhood home, which had recently been spiritually cleansed by Makhanda: "Comrade Pilate […] where do you want me to live now? You and your *sangoma* have chased me out of my parents' house" (204).

After discovering Senami's remains in Angola with the help of Mongezi (alias Comrade Bambata, the man who betrayed Senami to The Movement), Makhanda performs a traditional burial ritual and beseeches Senami's spirit to return to her home: "You have been lost for many years […] But we have found you on foreign soil here in Angola. Your father Napo and your mother Lola are here with me and want you to come back home. Please, allow us to take you back with us. We plead to you also, our ancestors, to guide us well on our way back home with Senami" (207-208). Although the novel never explicitly states this, it is implied that Senami's spirit is finally laid to rest after Makhanda's ritual: "A strong wind started to blow as Makhanda spat again on the bones. Dust rose

from the gravesite and coiled upwards like a snake" (208). The fact that Senami's spirit assumes the form of a snake is particularly important as Makhanda's apprentice claims that snakes are regarded as "spirits of our ancestors" in an earthly form (146). Napo and Lola admit that they now "have found closure" and will be "able to carry [their] daughter's spirit home" (208).

In the novel, Makhanda uses *muti* to assist in carrying out his rituals. *Muti* can be defined as traditional medicines which consist of "substances fabricated by an expert hand, substances designed by persons possessing secret knowledge, to achieve […] positive ends of healing, involving cleansing, strengthening and protecting persons from evil forces" (Ashcroft 2005: 212). *Muti* is an important aspect of South/African culture, as it "plays a part in communications between humans and spirits," since spirits can enhance its effectiveness (213). While traditional medicine is still valued by many South Africans, others have eschewed the practice completely. As a result *muti* is often disregarded by some, such as the "born-again Christians who find the whole enterprise of traditional healing anathema" and consider the use of *muti* "as a means of engaging with demonic forces" (213). In *Way Back Home* Senami's parents have converted to Christianity and are so secure in this religious belief that they initially consider the indigenous customs of African culture to be obsolete. When asked if Senami may have consulted a traditional healer before joining The Movement in order to ensure an auspicious future, Napo explains that this is unlikely as to his knowledge Senami "was deeply religious […] so the *sangoma* stuff is out of the question" (Mhlongo 2013: 161). After discovering that their house is being haunted by Senami's ghost, Napo and Lola experiment with different methods to try and lay their daughter's spirit to rest, including "a symbolic burial and funeral" for Senami in a local cemetery (59). When Kimathi visits Senami's home, Napo expresses his desperation and claims that the couple turned to indigenous medicine as a last resort: "You see, my wife and I are Christians, but we agreed that we would do anything we could to bring our daughter back. When [Lola] started having frequent disturbing dreams and going into trances, that's when we decided to consult a *sangoma*" (59).

Napo and Lola follow Makhanda's instructions for a year, which include abstaining from certain foods and slaughtering animals as religious offerings to appease the ancestors. After meeting Kimathi and discovering the connection between him and their daughter, the Tladi's ask Makhanda to cleanse the house of her restless and volatile spirit. The Tladi's spiritual about-turn, and the constructive advice and support offered by the *sangoma*, make an argument for validity of the spiritual care offered through African traditional religion. Makhanda expresses genuine concern for the Tladi

family, and addresses all of their apprehensions with sincerity. Through his communication with the realm of the spiritual and supernatural, Makhanda allows the Tladi's to retrace their daughter's journey from Johannesburg to Angola and witness the sacrifices she made while fighting for the liberation of South Africa. He helps them to grieve, and even travels with them to Angola to perform Senami's funeral rites. His words of wisdom are a comfort to the Napo and Lola in their time of need: "You need to grieve in order to heal. If you don't, the sadness will just reside in your heart and worsen your mind every day […]. This is why it is so important that we do all the rituals properly, so that you are able to grieve. After this I want you to feel calm, confident, optimistic and relaxed" (64). The novel thus illustrates the relevance and validity of African spirituality and indigenous knowledge in contemporary South Africa.

According to Karen Flint, South Africans in the post-apartheid era are now beginning to reassert the relevance of African tradition, and are "rediscovering traditions long-disparaged by the previous colonial and apartheid governments" (2008: 12). Through the experiences of the Tladi's, *Way Back Home* explores how trauma caused by a loss of home can be confronted through the assistance of traditional African methods, as Napo and Lola are only able to locate their daughter's remains and receive closure through the help of a traditional healer, despite their initial reluctance to consult one. The entry of Makhanda is also a plot device as his intervention moves the action forward and is the catalyst for the moment of reckoning between Senami and Kimathi, a moment which leads to truth, retribution and reconciliation.

5.2. Home as a Final Destination

For Kimathi, home is presented as a place of (un)belonging which provides him with a tenuous link to his paternal family, but it also has a broader symbolic significance. Although he was born in Tanzania and lives in South Africa, I argue that Amilcar Cabral camp represents home for Kimathi as it signifies a point of origin. It is the moment of first love for Kimathi but also the moment of his 'birth' as a killer; the origin of his psychopathy. As such, it is a defining period of time in Kimathi's life. According to Rosemary Marangoly George, home is "an ahistoric, metaphoric and often sentimental story line;" it is the place where one starts out, and where one returns to "at the end of the day" (1996: 11). As a son of exile, Kimathi is a citizen nowhere and a stranger everywhere, except

in The Movement. When he arrives in Angola with Senami's parents in the present of the text, he announces that "this trip feels like I'm on my way back home" (Mhlongo 2013: 194). In returning to Amilcar Cabral at the end of the novel, Kimathi also returns to the scene of his most abhorrent crime, a crime that has since haunted his thoughts and dreams.

Kimathi's return 'home' to Amilcar Cabral is foreshadowed when a beautiful young woman mysteriously appears in his car, after he had fainted from seeing a mysterious, one-eyed old woman standing in the middle of the road. Once he regains his composure, he asks: "May I have the civilised enjoyment of accompanying you home? Otherwise I'll never have peace with myself" (49). Unbeknown to Kimathi, this sentiment ultimately proves true. Kimathi's ill-fated attempt to flirt with Senami also proves to be prophetic: "I think that I have already fallen in love with your smile, and I am willing to go to hell with you" (49). Although the reader does not yet know that this Senami is Lady Comrade Mbakayi, this statement is particularly ominous as the journey home is equated to the road to hell. For Kimathi home is death – the final destination, the place where his last judgement occurs, when he is finally able to confront his past and is punished for his crimes.

Kimathi is also aided in his journey home by various supernatural entities, drawing attention to how the realms of "the supernatural and natural" are "inextricably linked" in African cosmology (Petrus and Bogopa 2007: 2). An important element of African spirituality which the novel gives prominence to is the use of animals as "familiars" or guardian spirits (3). In *Way Back Home* Kimathi is guided towards the truth by various animal avatars.[31] He seems to constantly find himself in the presence of an animal which appears to be monitoring him, and this makes him suspicious: "Kimathi heard an owl hoot from the top of a nearby tree. The sound scared the breath out of him. Since childhood, Kimathi had hated owls, as they were regarded was an omen of witchcraft in this culture" (Mhlongo 2013: 44). When Kimathi sees the owl a second time while driving, he considers the possibility that "the bird was guiding him home" (46). When he returns to Amilcar Cabral, he abandons the Tladi's and Makhanda to follow an owl which ultimately leads him to Senami's former prison cell. Kimathi remains oblivious to the fact that the birds he encounters are avatars of Senami, and are not simply leading him 'home' but are guiding him toward his final reckoning. In addition, Kimathi engages with a different animal avatar during his visit to the traditional healer Makhanda. He imbibes a hallucinogenic mixture and enters into a trance, where he sees an anthro-

[31] The term 'avatar' originated in Hindu theology and initially referred to the earthly incarnation of a Hindu deity. The term is now widely used to describe any spiritual incarnation (Merriam-Webster 2019: n.p).

pomorphised python who explains that the only way to stop his dreams is to investigate his past: "The answers lie deep in your subconscious […] And you are the only person that has access, I'm afraid" (149). The python is then revealed to be Senami, as it assumes her face.

Throughout the novel, Kimathi is assisted by the ceaseless admonitions and urges of Senami's restless spirit (in its various forms) as she encourages him to confront his past: "The best way of dealing with your pain is to acknowledge your part in causing it, Comrade Pilate" (205). Through his communication with the realm of the supernatural, Kimathi is able to confront his traumatic experience. Moreover, it is Makhanda the *sangoma* who informs Kimathi that he is being haunted by the vengeful spirit of a woman who died in exile, although at the time Kimathi cannot fathom who this could be. With Makhanda's help, he eventually travels to Angola with Senami's parents, encounters Senami's ghost one final time, and in doing so comes to terms with his harrowing past before his own death. Indigenous knowledge and African spirituality therefore plays an important role in allowing Kimathi to return home and address both his trauma, and the trauma he has caused to Senami.

While Kimathi's trip to Angola does bring him closure in the sense that it allows him to confront his past and come to terms with the trauma he has inflicted on Senami, it also brings him "the reckoning that has pursued him since the end of the border war" (Blanton 2018: 137). In an idiomatic sense, Kimathi and his crimes 'come home to roost' as he experiences the repercussion of his past wrongs. Significantly, Kimathi's family's cycle of displacement, which began with his grandfather, continues even after his death as he too dies on foreign soil, away from his home and his family in Johannesburg. It is plausible that his spirit, like Senami's and his male ancestors', will remain in a state of purgatory as a result of remaining unburied. Kimathi is therefore unable to find a home even in death, as he experiences no transcendence and remains spiritually adrift. Senami alludes to this with her final words to Kimathi at Amilcar Cabral: "It is a long way home from here" (Mhlongo 2013: 205). Kimathi is thus rendered doubly 'unhomed' as he has no material home and no spiritual home.

5.2.1. An ending and a beginning

In the final scene of *Way Back Home*, Senami's parents and Makhanda discover Kimathi's lifeless body hanging from the rafters of Senami's former prison cell at Amilcar Cabral. Although a central plot resolution occurs when Senami's spirit is laid to rest, the abrupt and jarring end of the novel is problematic. It leaves unsaid whether Kimathi's death is sufficient justice for the immeasurable trauma he caused to many people, not only to Senami but also his fellow soldiers at Amilcar Cabral whom he ruthlessly tortured. It also fails to address whether Kimathi should have been more publicly exposed for his crimes, as it is likely that no one outside of Senami's parents and their *sangoma* Makhanda will know of Kimathi's wicked deeds. The families of the other soldiers who died at Amilcar Cabral by Kimathi's hand may also not have received closure over their loved ones' deaths, and the novel does not attend to the complexities of this issue but instead ends with Napo and Lola being surprisingly satisfied with the modicum of "closure" that they receive after laying their daughter's spirit to rest. Moreover, after being immersed in Kimathi's mind for the entirety of the narrative, the reader is suddenly denied access to Kimathi's final moments, at the crucial time when he faces his ultimate reckoning. The aporia surrounding the novel's macabre ending is evocative of how post-apartheid literature is often "marked by dystopian elements" which depict an unjust society or a corrupt political system (Medalie 2012: 3). If Kimathi is indeed intended as "a true reflection of South Africa today" and as an "epitome of all the social ills" that characterise the country, then in an intertextual sense, the ambivalence of the ending causes the reader to question whether South Africa as a nation has returned home (Mhlongo in Moreillon and Stiebel 2015: 267). This concern will be addressed further in the following section.

However, despite the novel's cynicism, it also suggests the possibility of hope. While Kimathi and Senami are regarded as the central traumatised figures in *Way Back Home*, it is revealed towards the end of the novel that Kimathi's daughter Zanu is also experiencing trauma. She is traumatised by her parents' bitter divorce and their animosity towards each other, as well as her father's lack of interest in her, to the extent that he even forgets her birthday. Fortunately Zanu is different from her father. Unlike Kimathi, she is able to articulate and express her trauma productively. She achieves this though her art. When Kimathi arrives at his daughter's school to pick her up, Zanu's teacher Mrs Thompson shows Kimathi one of Zanu's drawings which depict an unhappy family standing over a birthday cake. In the picture, one of the figures has "hands curled into claws" like a monster, ostensibly representing her father's barely concealed aggressiveness (Mhlongo 2013: 147). Mrs

Thompson then tells Kimathi that Zanu is a talented young artist: "I think you've got yourself a young Frida Kahlo at home, Mr Tito" (174). Frida Kahlo was a Mexican activist, artist and feminist, whose art "is often subjected to psychological analysis" due to "her large number of self-portraits, many of which reveal her physical and psychic pains" (Helland 1990: 399). Like Kahlo, Zanu attempts to express her sorrow and loss through her art instead of violence and aggression, as she comes to terms with her feelings of displacement as the result of a divided family. The character of Zanu can be said to indicate the potential for new, productive ways over overcoming trauma through art and creative production. As the only daughter in a male line of violence, betrayal and self-destruction, which began with the murder of Kimathi's grandfather in 1972, Zanu indicates a break in the cycle and the possibility of a hopeful future.

5.3. Home is Where the History Is

In his commentary "Arriving Home? South Africa Beyond Transition and Reconciliation" (2010) prominent South African author Njabulo Ndebele contends that home is more than a physical place, it is also a space of shared experiences and narratives that foster intimacy. Ndebele defines home as "a complex experience made up of many facets of our varied private and social lives" (2010: 55). He claims that despite experiencing "remarkably stable transition" from apartheid to democracy, South Africans "have yet to arrive home" (67). With reference to the TRC, Ndebele suggests that one possible reason for this failure to arrive home is that the "democratic state" has not yet sufficiently met "a variety of basic needs" which were ignored by the apartheid government "over decades of institutionalised discrimination" (55). Ndebele's argument aligns with my intertextual reading of *Way Back Home*, as Kimathi and Senami reveal the (im)possibilities of returning home. The characters' struggles to return home (in its various forms) is partially impeded by what they consider to be inadequacies on behalf of the TRC and the incumbent government, resulting in trauma.

By both directly and indirectly referring to the TRC *Way Back Home* depicts "the difficulty, and in some cases impossibility, of reconciliation" (Blanton 2018: 25). I argue that the South African public's dissatisfaction with the government, and in particular their policies on land redistribution in the wake of the TRC, is embodied in the character of Yoli. She bitterly declares that she is "no longer voting for any political party because they are failing to solve our problem of land" (Mhlongo 2013:

30). Her resentment is evidenced when she sneers at the idealistic tenets of the new democratic dispensation, inspired by the values of the TRC: "They are dogs […]. Now they want to reconcile? Reconciliation *se voet*![32]" (29). When she recounts the traumatic story of her father's murder at the hands of the Viljoen family to Kimathi, he notices "a spasm of hatred pass across Yoli's face," indicating that she "was obviously not the forgiving type" (29).

For South Africans, a return home is also a return to justice and equality, and a return to the ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle which appear unattainable in the post-apartheid era. In stark contrast to the ethos of the TRC, which was founded on Christian dogmas that extolled forgiveness and restorative justice, *Way Back Home* suggests retributive justice as a means of finding closure and returning home. This is implied in the novel's climax, when Senami's childhood friend Mongezi (alias Comrade Bambata) eventually reveals to the Tladi's that Kimathi killed Senami in exile. The incensed parents are determined to punish Kimathi for his crime: "That dog! […] He must pay for what he did to my daughter" (206). Hearing this, Mongezi, who betrayed Senami under duress in Angola by labelling her a traitor to The Movement, claims that vengeance had always been on his mind: "I knew that one day I'd avenge her death" (207). Before Kimathi dies, he begs for forgiveness for his past crimes, claiming that he has changed since his time at Amilcar Cabral camp. Senami remains indifferent to Kimathi's pleas: "But the man inside you knew the difference between right and wrong […] Remember the saying: 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you?'" (205).

According to Ndebele, returning home involves introspection and taking active steps towards transforming one's history, as he believes that home is about "recognising [problems] in ourselves […] and then confronting them" (2010: 67). I find this interpretation of home apposite to my reading of *Way Back Home*, as the structure of the novel – linking present and past – allows the reader to understand Kimathi's ' bipolarity' as both victim and villain. However, Kimathi himself does not engage in any introspection and fails to understand why his past actions have returned to haunt him, since in his opinion he was simply "following the orders of The Movement" (Mhlongo 2013: 204). His final apology to Senami at Amilcar Cabral therefore appears insincere and contrived, a final attempt to escape his circumstances. He takes no steps to actively change even when he knows that he is wrong, and so never he confronts his problems until it is too late. Although the solutions to these

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[32] This South African colloquialism can be understood as an exclamation of dismissal.

problems are within his reach, he often ignores them. This is particularly evident in the manner in which Kimathi disregards his nightmares, which are the manifestations of his troubled conscience. Instead of questioning what his dreams might signify, Kimathi dismisses them as his thoughts upon waking turn immediately to the prospect that "money is on its way" (13). In an allegorical sense, Ndebele's call for South Africans to return home corresponds with Mhlongo's assertion that *Way Back Home* is intended to encourage readers to become "politically aware" (Moreillon and Stiebel 2015: 264). In addition to this political awakening, coming home is also presented as a moral and ethical awakening, a return to the ideals that South Africa's democracy is founded upon.

In terms of the novel's various imaginings of home, significant parallels can be drawn between *Way Back Home* and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002). In an article on Vera's novel, Dorothy Driver and Meg Samuelson (2007) invoke Ndebele's theory as a lens through which they view the themes of home and intimacy. They describe home as both "a physical or material space and an intellectual-linguistic-ethical space […] the site of historical knowledge" (2007: 104). Driver and Samuelson note that in the aftermath of colonialism and apartheid, South African families are still coming to terms with the trauma caused by being uprooted and evicted from their homes. This rupture of home leads to what they call "the demise of intimacy," which renders the postcolonial nation "un-homely" (104). According to Bhabha the state of being unhomely is a "paradigmatic postcolonial experience" that resonates in "fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions" (1992: 142). Driver and Samuelson suggest that the return home for postcolonial nations like South Africa can be aided by literature, as by examining the "entanglement of temporalities" in the post-apartheid era reading and writing can help "work through loss" (2007: 105). Novels like *The Stone Virgins* (and, I argue, *Way Back Home*) which oscillate between past and present, causing readers to consider how one might influence the other, can grant both fictional characters and readers "the opportunity to come to terms with loss, but not by forgetting aspects of the past" (105). This corresponds with Bhabha's assertion that "to live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction […] is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity" ([1994] 2004: 27). By remembering the past, in particular one's heritage and history, it is possible to recreate the intimacy of home.

Conclusion

According to Michael Chapman, literature since the end of the apartheid era "has raised challenging questions as to what it is to be South African, what it is to live in a new South Africa […] what requires to be forgotten and what remembered as we scour the past in order to understand the present" (1998: 85). This study on Niq Mhlongo's *Way Back Home* reveals how the novel, as a post-apartheid and post-transitional text, is woven into the fabric of the South African social text. My analysis in the preceding chapters has revealed how the novel reflects the concerns of South Africa's socio-political milieu, namely the rampant corruption among the country's political elite and the dissatisfaction faced by those who have not received their promised reparations for the injustices they experienced under apartheid. Exploring the implications of the past on the present is a prominent theme in contemporary South African literature as authors consider the vestigial effects of apartheid, over two decades after its dissolution. The proclivity for writing uncompromising narratives that respond to the issues faced by a democratic South Africa cements Niq Mhlongo's reputation as "one of the most high-spirited and irreverent new voices of South Africa's post-apartheid literary scene" (Donadio 2006: n.p).

The characterisation of Kimathi Tito, the protagonist of *Way Back Home*, attests to how ideologies of the anti-apartheid struggle can be said to inform present masculinities, and highlights how the "ideology of militarism" still endures, post-liberation (Cock in Gqola 2007: 114). By considering the intersections of race, gender and history in a postcolonial context, I illustrated in Chapter Two how Kimathi is a traumatised victim of the masculine ideal that he is interpellated by, as a result of coming of age in a highly militarised setting. The novel implicitly criticises the perpetuation of such violent and oppressive patriarchal masculinities (including radicalised 'struggle' masculinities) by depicting a flawed protagonist whose vices include promiscuity, vanity, greed and aggression – particularly towards women. The manner in which *Way Back Home* demonstrates the harmful effects of an oppressive form of hegemonic masculinity evinces the need for South Africans "to confront violent masculinities […] and the patriarchal men and women who protect and enable them" (2007: 118).

Although the novel maintains that ideologies predicated on male violence and dominance are reprehensible, it also suggests the importance of understanding how such ideologies are formed. In Chapter Three I have therefore offered a sympathetic reading of Kimathi as both villain and victim

by placing his masculinity into a broader sociological and psychoanalytical context. Reading the novel through the lens of Fanon, I explored the fundamental 'woundedness' of black masculinity in a postcolonial context. By bringing Fanon into conversation with Butler and Gqola, I then argued that Kimathi's highly crafted performance of masculinity is intended to compensate for and 'mask' his feelings of insecurity and inadequacy as a man. The contrived and artificial nature of gender, as theorised by Butler and Connell, is reflected in how Kimathi performs his masculinity. These 'spectacular' performances of masculinity in the novel are presented as the subject of satirical laughter, with Kimathi embodying elements of the carnivalesque and grotesque, in Bakhtinian terms. Satire and parody are used in a corrective capacity to highlight the decadence and excess of Kimathi's life, and point to the futility and fragility of his elaborate masquerade.

Corruption and greed are also presented as distinctly masculine qualities in *Way Back Home*, and form part of Kimathi's masculine performance. The moral bankruptcy of Kimathi and his cronies (representatives of the current ruling elite) stands at the centre of the novel's critique. Post-liberation, these "comrades" are rewarded with business contracts and tenders because of their struggle credentials, and have adopted neoliberal and capitalist values that extol the acquisition of material wealth and (Western) symbols of success. As a liberation soldier turned black diamond,[33] Kimathi's drive and desire for acquiring money has replaced his former passion for the anti-apartheid revolution. By satirising Kimathi and the comrades, *Way Back Home* contributes to the ongoing political discourse of South African state corruption, cronyism and nepotism, particularly in the context of the Zuma dispensation. The novel therefore serves as a "powerful indictment of a disgraceful decade, in which words such as 'tenderpreneurship' and 'state capture' entered the South African lexicon" (Kenqu 2019: 163-164).

In addition to examining the representations of masculinity in *Way Back Home*, another primary concern of this study was to explore how the novel contributes to the collective witnessing of trauma in South Africa, through references to the TRC and its repercussions. As stated by Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, "unless the enquiries of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are extended, complicated and intensified in the imaginings of literature, society cannot sufficiently come to terms with its past to face the future" (2005: 30). *Way Back Home* contributes to this en-

[33] 'Black diamond' is a pejorative term that refers to the black nouveau riche and their consumerist lifestyles. It can also refer to black people who are wealthy "because they are politically aligned to the ruling party, having greater access than others to government-related projects and employment opportunities" (Donaldson et al. 2013: 115).

deavour as it explores not only the physical or emotional effects of trauma, but also the psycho-spiritual effects. In Chapter Four I explored Kimathi's memory repression, and its eventual resurgence in the form of Senami's restless spirit. Through a close reading of select passages that illustrate the trauma surrounding Senami's death and her parents' lack of closure, I also foregrounded how *Way Back Home* implicitly challenges the dominant national narrative of the anti-apartheid struggle. This narrative reduced the struggle to a romanticised account of good triumphing over evil, casting the apartheid government as the "evil perpetrator" and the anti-apartheid movement as the "noble victim," thereby "eliminating all ambiguities and complexities" (Kaden 2012:102). In this sense the story of Senami's traumatic experience in *Way Back Home* encourages a re-examination of the past, especially when certain experiences have been purposefully silenced. These eclipsed narratives of trauma need to be integrated into national consciousness, so that they may contribute to a "pluralist interpretation of history" in South Africa (Cleveland 2005: 73).

According to Rebecca Fasselt, emerging trauma theories in the post-apartheid era are concerned not only with the traumatisation of individuals but also "the historical conditions of colonialism and apartheid" which "led to the collective traumatisation of generations" (2014: 93). As discussed in Chapter Five the novel reveals the effects of trans-generational trauma through the legacy of land dispossession and displacement in the Tito family. The loss of an ancestral home further contributes to the fracturing of Kimathi's already divided sense of self as an exile-at-home. Shifting the focus from Kimathi to Senami, I then explored the trauma of displacement through the journey of her restless spirit, and considered the relevance of indigenous knowledge in the healing of trauma for Senami's parents.

Finally, this study returns to the significance of the novel's polysemic title, and the ambivalent (im)possibilities of returning home for the characters, and for the nation. Home is primarily presented as place of (un)belonging for both Kimathi, but it also becomes synonymous with death – his final destination and his moment of reckoning. Continuing in the legacy of his grandfather and father, Kimathi dies away from his ancestral home, and thus becomes 'unhomed' both materially and spiritually. In a broader intertextual sense I argue in my final chapter that 'returning home' invokes Ndebele's essay: "Arriving Home? South Africa Beyond Transition and Reconciliation" (2010) and implies a moral turn: a return to justice and the ideals of the anti-apartheid struggle. Ndebele suggests that this can be achieved through introspection. Literature seems to be responding to this call

by “[turning] inward” and urging “self-reflection” in the wake of the TRC and its proceedings (Davis 2013: 799).

Way Back Home forms part of a post-apartheid literary tradition which contributes “to the ongoing political discourse about South Africa’s legacy of betrayal and the ways in which the past haunts the present” (Kenqu 2019: 157). The inseparability of past and present that the novel points to is evocative of Wilson Harris’ assertion that “we arrive backwards even as we voyage forwards” ([1999] 1997: 187). Through the relationship of its central characters, Kimathi and Senami, the novel extols the importance of investigating the past and confronting the trauma caused by past events as a means of moving forward into the future.

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