On Men and Masculinity in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*[1]

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Summary

This article is an attempt to analyse the representation of masculinity in the novels of two black South African authors, namely Mpe and Duiker. It is significant that, although both provide us with an urban perspective on masculinity, in the case of Mpe the focus is on black heterosexuality, whereas Duiker writes about black homosexuality. Issues discussed are: What is masculinity? How is it constructed? Is there a revision or affirmation of stereotypes?

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel het ten doel die ondersoek na die representasie van manlikheid deur twee swart Suid-Afrikaanse skrywers, te wete Mpe en Duiker. Wat die ondersoek insiggewend maak, is die feit dat beide oor 'n bepaalde stedelike manlikheidskonsep skryf. In die geval van Mpe word 'n perspektief gebied op swart heteroseksualiteit, terwyl Duiker eerder fokus op swart homoseksualiteit. Wat is manlikheid? Hoe word dit konstrueer? Word stereotipe sienswyses van manlikheid bevraagteken? Hierdie en ander kwessies word te berde gebring.

1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the representation of masculinity in two novels by black South African men, namely, K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001). In the case of Duiker's novel, the emphasis is on the experience of a young gay black man in an urban context (Cape Town), whereas Mpe presents the experiences of a black heterosexual in an urban context (Johannesburg).

Connell (1995: ix) points out that in the last five years, in particular in the capitalist world, "men's gatherings, magazine and newspaper articles on masculinity have multiplied". Yet criticism has also been expressed, however, against a focus on masculinity and issues concerning men as a form of inquiry, in particular from those who feel that the exclusive

1. This article is based on Crous (2005), completed under the supervision of Prof. Annie Gagiano (University of Stellenbosch).

emphasis on men's issues will merely perpetuate existing sexist assumptions. One example is the following: "All men benefit from sexism. We live in a patriarchal society. It operates in men's interests" (Flood 1990: n.p.). This also explains why feminists tend to treat the notion of an alleged "crisis in masculinity" (Morrell 2005: xi) with suspicion:

> [Such a crisis in masculinity] is regarded as a Trojan horse intended to roll back the advances of women under the pretence of concern for the declining fortunes of men. [We] acknowledge that the fortunes of some men have changed for the worse but note that their responses to changes are not uniform. Some have seemed able to respond positively to opportunities to live more harmoniously with women, children and themselves, while others have experienced crises of identity.

Morrell (1998: 7) says that even though gender studies have always been equated with women, "gender analysis involved both women and men" and, he concludes:

> Masculinities studies forced the restatement of gender understandings and relations to include men and women. Agreeing with the feminists that men oppressed women, they acknowledge that masculinity was something constructed.

In post-apartheid, post-1994 South African society it is interesting to study masculinity, albeit it from a fictional perspective, especially if one takes into account that one of the founding provisions of the new Constitution guarantees a society based on non-sexism. As a result the new constitutional democracy in South Africa leads, according to Reid and Walker (2005: 1) to changes in the "gendered ordering of society" and the former patriarchal society has "given way to new ideals of equality between men and women, which are enshrined in the Constitution." Furthermore, this has "unseated gender hierarchies" and provided the space for what Reid and Walker (p. 5) see as "the construction and expression of new masculinities". Ratele (2004: 2) believes that in order for men to accept democracy, they have to "go against a long history of social and economic relations, a global history that goes far beyond apartheid and 1994". Men need to "pay attention to what [their wives] or girlfriend[s] or female friend[s] [say]" and accept that although they are physically stronger, in a democratic society, men should no longer "use [their bodies] as a weapon to intimidate women" (p. 2).

South African society, unfortunately, remains patriarchal in essence in spite of the noble intentions set out in the Constitution. Morrell (2001: 29) claims that the "guardians of African patriarchy" have not "reacted to the

challenge of women" and that there is still serious opposition to "the improvement of women's positions" in society, as well as a lack of tolerance towards gays. According to Morrell three responses dominate the reaction to a new gender dispensation in South Africa: They are (a) reactive, (b) accommodating and (c) responsive (or progressive). A reactive response tends to be shown when white males react to the contemporary changes in society: they see government being taken over by black people and in the business world note that affirmative action policies "[are] giving jobs to blacks" (Morrell 2001: 27). They fear being made redundant within the working environment. The second reaction refers to a "[resuscitation] of non-violent masculinities", whereas a responsive or progressive reaction refers to "emancipatory masculinities" (p. 31), most evidently in the gay movement. An example of accommodating responses to the new gender dispensation in South Africa manifests itself in the case of initiation practices amongst African youth:

> The practice of circumcision has never been stopped and, if anything, it is currently on the increase in rural and urban areas .... Being initiated into manhood has strong ethnic connotations but it also invokes the ideal of manhood, which is responsible, respectful and wise. This is distinct from the anti-social masculinities of the many street youths where the knife, crime, rough behaviour and a loyalty to one's gang and nobody else are more the norm.
>
> (Morrell 2001: 29)

In the aftermath of apartheid, white men, and in particular Afrikaner men associated with the National Party apparatus of the state, have lost their privileged positions. In the new dispensation a distinct loss of political power (but not necessarily a loss of economic power) is experienced, especially by older members of this group and the younger generation of white males tend to feel threatened by affirmative action and gender equality (du Pisani 2001: 171). Swart (2001: 77) captures the essence of this trend as follows: "[Being a] white male meant being kept from poverty, with jobs in the traditional Afrikaner preserves like the mines, the railways, the police and the civil service being handed down 'from father to son'. Now fathers are retrenched and the sons face competition from blacks in the work place".

In the modern patriarchy of South African society, where African men have acquired political power, African women are faced with new difficulties, in particular assumptions relating to the maleness of African power. Rape is on the increase and this could be an effect of the mindset that was predominant during the struggle years, namely, that women were considered to be fair game. Posel (2005: 21) argues, however, that before the mid-1990s sexual violence "languished on the margins of public debate

and political engagement" and it was only recently that it has entered the public domain, particularly following the brutal baby rape in December 2001. The anger following that incident has focused particularly on the sexual behaviour of South African men and called for a moral regeneration campaign.

The predominantly white colonial notion of manliness associated with "Anglo-Saxon virtues" (Midgeley 1998: 196) is in contemporary South Africa replaced by "new hegemonic reifications of race, nation, citizenship and sexuality" (Spurlin 1999: 232) aimed at establishing a South African identity. It is especially important to bear in mind, however, that to imply that all South African men are chauvinistic, misogynistic and homophobic is to adopt a reprehensibly essentialist perspective because, as Morrell (2001: 33) points out, there is "no one typical South African man".

2 What Is Masculinity/What Are Masculinities?

What is "masculinity"? From the outset it should be emphasised that one should not talk of "masculinity" but rather of "masculinities", or as Flood (1995: n.p.) puts it in an article entitled "Men Plural": "Any writer on men worth his or her salt knows to write about 'masculinities', not 'masculinity'. This is because there are multiple versions of how to be a man in any particular society, and the relations between them are a crucial part of the makeup of gender relations in general."

Ouzgane and Morrell (2005: 4) also reject the notion that "all men are the same" and conclude that "gendered writing on men shares an anti-essentialist foundation that explains the highly differentiated life trajectories of men around the world". When writing about "African masculinities" they reiterate that they start from "a position of diversity" because "the variations are infinite".

Concomitantly, concepts such as "male" and "gender" also need to be addressed here, because as Leach (1994: 36) points out, unlike the fact that maleness is a "biological state", masculinity is a gender identity category constructed "socially, historically and politically" and interpreted from a cultural perspective.

In his first groundbreaking study on masculinity, Connell (1995: 67) shows that in all cultures there is some or other account of gender, but that the concept "masculinity" is not part of all cultures. In contemporary use the term is often associated with violent, domineering behaviour by men and contrasted with femininity. According to Connell, some cultures do not have a polarised view that stereotypes the individual and thus "[do] not have a concept of masculinity in the sense of modern European/American culture".

Gendered relationships in institutions and social struggles, as mentioned by Connell, are necessarily controlled by power. There is indeed a direct link between masculinity and power, because as Ratele (2001: 250) shows, the main nexus of social power is determined by gender, class and hetero-sexual masculinity. This places men in what Pronger (1990: 51) calls "the spectrum of power" and the phallus is the symbol of male sexuality and power (Segal 2001: 103). Shefer and Ruiters (1998: 38) support this and regard masculinity as "predominantly associated with a man's capacity to exercise power and control", suggesting that this is sustained within the realm of heterosexuality. In the latter sphere women can be dominated and made subordinate to men, and it is one where male sexuality will be in a position of privilege. Sex is often used as a power tool to oppress women, especially if it is associated with being "menacing, predatory, possessive and possibly punitive" (Kimmel 2001: 271). Men often confuse maleness with masculinity at their own peril and following Butler, Warnes (2005: 2) remarks that "[m]en are not men because of what they are, but because of what they do, and what is done to them".

All the aspects of the above-mentioned definitions could be incorporated into a working definition, which, according to Connell (1995:71) recognises that masculinity is not merely a character type or a behavioural norm, but part of "the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives", which implies that we should focus on (a) the place of masculinity in gender relations, (b) the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender and (c) the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. Connell (1995: 65) motivates the point more clearly: "The social semiotics of gender, with its emphasis on the endless play of signification, the multiplicity of discourses and the diversity of subject positions, has been important in escaping the rigidities of biological determinism" (p. 65).

For the purpose of this investigation into presentations of masculinities in two post-apartheid male-authored novels, the theoretical framework will be underpinned by what Judith Butler (1999: 173) terms performative acts:

> That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality ... interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse. Words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.

She explains the idea that gender identity is a performative construct as follows in an interview with:

> The first point to understand about performativity is what it is not: identities are not made in a single moment in time. They are made again and again ... [being] human is always about becoming. There is always the question of what I will become .... There is always a question of whether what I was yesterday will be precisely the same as what I become in time.
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> (Butler in Reddy 2004: 116)

Butler further identifies three dimensions of sex and gender, namely "anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance" and Mirsky (1996: 31) applies her three dimensions to the field of masculinities as follows:

> Although the full implications of such a schema remain to be developed, in a men's studies context, the corresponding terms for analysis might be "men", "maleness" and "masculinity", respectively. That is, men's studies might explore how (anatomical) men are gendered male within society and perform or do not perform masculinity according to society's norms .... Masculinity is always a contested term within the larger context of gendered power relations between men and women.

Connell (1987: 35) argues that the imbalance in power between men and women is the result of "a need for social reproduction", that is, "the reproduction from generation to generation of social structures as well as bodies". Hegemonic masculinity or the image of masculinity of those men who hold power (Kimmel 2001: 271) is often seen as homophobic, especially since gay men tend to challenge specific definitions of what is meant by masculinity and male roles. Heterosexual men impose certain definitions and set certain boundaries and use their power to maintain it. Or as Connell (1987: 108) describes it, "accounts of patriarchy give the impression of a single, orderly structure like a suburban war memorial".

When Ouzgane and Morrell (2005: 10-11) regard masculinity as "a fictional construction" they pose the following questions:

> How are myths of masculinity reinforced or challenged in literature and the popular media? Do the new practices reinscribe or modify conventional understandings of men and masculinities by offering different images, different roles, and different options for men? What modified forms of sexualities and genders are produced and maintained in the hybrid societies of postcolonial places?

3 Black Masculinity Studies

Within the field of black masculinity studies there is a definite need to "rethink the sexual cultures of black men apart from dominant racial and stereotypical representations" (Marriott 1996: 192). Two issues that need to be addressed in this regard are the "racist stereotypes of sexual superiority" of black men and the phallocentric misogyny associated with an almost heroic worship of "black manliness" (p. 190). The so-called "genital sexuality of black men" (p. 190) is usually emphasised from a white point of view to show the loss of white phallic power, particularly in post-colonial societies.[2] Furthermore, there is also resistance to a monolithic view of black masculinity, which identifies the former as "an unsuccessful version of white masculinity" (Mac an Ghaill 1996: 10). Gause (2000: 2) points out that white society feels that the black male is unable to fulfil what is perceived as "the ideal male gender role", particularly because black society is associated with high rates of imprisonment, criminality, poverty and unemployment.

Whereas most post-apartheid novels focus predominantly on the portrayal of heterosexual masculinity, a text such as the one by Duiker focuses on the portrayal of homosexual masculinity in an urban environment. Initially the main character, Tshepo, experiences a sense of uncertainty with regard to his sexuality but through his interaction with his housemate, Chris, and in his work as a masseur in a gay brothel, Steamy Windows, he becomes aware of his sexual identity – as will be evident from a reading of the novel below.

Central to any theoretical discussion on homosexuality from a masculinity studies perspective is the notion that homosexuality is "[a] revolt against the symbolic domination" (Bourdieu 2001: ix) of heterosexual masculinity. Thus, when South Africans went to the polls in 1994 to vote for a democratic government, homosexuals also voted for "the legalisation of homosexuality" (Reddy 1998: 65). They did not only vote against the symbolic domination of the white apartheid regime but also against the symbolic domination of a heterosexist patriarchy. The result is, according to

2. Marriott (1996: 194) suggests that it indicates the "fragility of white hegemonic masculinities" and the loss of the "white man's hegemonic symbolization of the ownership of the phallus". This is aptly described by Doane (1991: 220) as sexual anxiety over the "genital nigger" or the "oversexed black male who is envisaged as an enormous penis". Compare also Fanon's discussion on the alleged sexual prowess of the black male and the fact that "in relation to the Negro, everything takes place on the genital level" (1967: 157). See also Saint-Aubin (2005: 33-38) for a discussion of the "anatomy of sex" as part of his "grammar of black masculinity".

Reddy (p. 65), that homosexual men view themselves as men now and they operate in "a more liberalised context".

Traditionally in the South African context homosexuality was considered to be "sinful, unnatural and abnormal" (du Pisani 2001: 169) and was a threat to "a patriarchal and racial order that shaped interlocking structures [of] power in South Africa during apartheid". The main criticism of homosexuality from a hegemonic, heterosexual point of view is that it implies "the taboo of the sacrilegious feminization of the masculine" (Bourdieu 2001: 119). From a masculinist, phallocratic point of view, the masculine principle is the active and penetrating principle whereas the feminine principle suggests passivity and "being penetrated". In a machismo culture like that of Mexico, Mirandé (2001: 346) points out that homosexuality "is defined not by object choice but by the distribution of power". He explains this intricate dynamic as follows: "Mexican men, then, are able to engage in homosexual acts without impugning their masculinity or homosexual persona as long as they assume the active inserter role". Similarly, Louw (2001: 292-293) shows that in the African context the term "gay" for instance, "cannot be uncritically used to describe same-sex desire among Africans" because the distinctions are far more subtle, particularly in Zulu culture. Sometimes men who "are effeminate in manner" and hermaphrodites are classified as homosexual – the latter is based on the commonly held myth among heterosexual Africans that homosexuals are hermaphrodites.

Male-male sexual relations are a direct challenge to the heteronormativity of the dominant heterosexual culture (Nardi 2001: 289), particularly since it subverts the hegemonic definition of masculinity. Connell (quoted by Nardi 2001: 290) also examines intimate non-sexual relations between homosexual men and women and points out that such non-sexual relations between members of the opposite sex also challenge the social relations of gender and create a sense of "relative equality" between the sexes. By studying homosexual masculinity, according to Still and Worton (1993: 51), we learn more "of what a man is" and how the category of "manliness" can be subverted. Following Foucault, they believe that by challenging dominant notions about manliness and masculinity, we might "re-appropriate or invent" terms that would play a central role in the establishing of sexualities.

In their discussion on homosexual identity, Isaacs and McKendrick (1992: 6) point out that for the homosexual man, "a duality of experiences exists" since he "gains two sets of behaviours". Firstly, there is the influence of his immediate environment (family, friends, school and community) and secondly there is his "direct or indirect exposure to homosexual sub-culture". In my discussion of homosexual masculinity in K. Sello Duiker's

novel I focus on his interaction with Chris Swart – his first object of affection; his relation with his father and friends and finally, his exposure to a homosexual subculture while he works as a masseur in a gay brothel.

4 "Love. Betrayal. Seduction. Suicide." – Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*[3]

In Mpe's depiction of masculinity he comments in particular on heterosexual men who are guilty of perversion. A clear-cut example in this regard is the character of Terror, who is called a "womaniser of the worst kind" (p. 64) and as someone who has made himself a "career" out of raping women. This, together with the reference to his "greedy ever-erect penis" (p. 69) characterises him distinctly as the representative of the oversexed, genitally obsessed black man.

His assault on Lerato is a good example to show that the seduction process and the subsequent sexual intercourse with a particular woman is to him nothing more than a game of some sort. The whole sordid incident is even described in terms of soccer imagery[4] and her thighs are seen as "a playing field" with his penis as "the player, referee and spectator simultaneously" (p. 65). If one is the player, the referee and the spectator in a particular game, then one does not allow any opposition. He wants to have sexual intercourse with her and act as voyeur so that afterwards he can tell everyone of her "open-thighedness" (p. 69) and boast that she is "just as cheap as [all women] are" (p. 65). A woman is a mere object to be conquered and the penis is the ultimate weapon with which to dominate women and make them submissive. This explains why the penis is often referred to as the phallus because it becomes endowed with power. Despite the fact that in the new South Africa dynamic young black women get a chance to get out of the misery of the townships and the rural areas and be professionals, there are still the patriarchal black males who rule over them

3. Page references refer to Mpe (2001).

4. Soccer indeed plays a major role as a sport that unites the community. On Refentše's arrival in Hillbrow the events are set against the background of the people watching a soccer game (p. 17). Even the xenophobia that dominates Hillbrow is suggested by the fact that one should not support "black non-South African teams" (p. 17). Morrell (2001: 18) points out that sport in South Africa has always been popular with both black and white, and associated with the chauvinism of South African men. Compare also Goodman's analysis of the death of the child amidst the rejoicing of the people over a Bafana Bafana victory (2003: 92).

and exert a dominant force which controls the women. A case in point is Refilwe who is portrayed as "a hard worker" (p. 32) and who finds work as a commissioning editor and later continues her studies at Oxford Brookes University.

From Terror's perspective Lerato is a mere sexual object and he can use her to "play games between her thighs" (p. 67). To him the rape of a young woman is similar to a soccer game, which supports the notion that he is a career rapist. It is shocking to realise that once his lust has been satisfied, he uses that as a way of proving his point that all women are "cheap" and can easily be coerced into sexual submission. This reaffirms the assumption that he presents the oversexed and promiscuous urban black man who sees all women as mere sex objects.

For Lerato, the only way of escaping Terror's unwanted attention and protecting her honour, especially when he threatens to tell her mother about her role in Refentše's death, is to commit suicide (p. 69). She represents the young woman who falls prey to the assault of the black male of the kind described above. Not only does Terror regard the rape as a game, but sexual violence also becomes a pawn in a sick personal game to keep control over his female subject. He deliberately uses his sexuality and the rape of his victim to "put her in her place", keep her submissive bodily and also make sure that she does not tell on him, thereby "protecting" his own status. This silencing of the female through phallic subjugation supports the stereotypical notion of the black male as sexual predator. Similarly, Refentše is also responsible for silencing Bohlale when she feels compelled to tell Sammy of their transgression (p. 52).

In contrast to Terror who defiles all honour associated with "manhood" (p. 65),[5] we have the character of Refentše. As an intellectual and author he stands in direct contrast to Terror and depicts another perspective on black masculinity. When one reads his criticism of Terror's conduct, the question arises whether in fact he himself has always acted in an honourable manner. Issues that relate to this are Refentše's judgmental attitude towards Refilwe's sexual looseness (p. 32), his "generous expression of sympathy and support" for Bohlale (p. 36) and his disdain for Sammy and Lerato, whom he calls "traitors" and "Devils" (p. 50). Ironically enough, the

5. "Manhood" or the determination to become a man, according to Morrell (2001: 8), is a powerful feature of masculinity. Segal (1990: 104) equates it with "manliness" and is of the opinion that "the guardians of true manhood still believe that living one's life as a man involves toughness, struggle and conquest". According to Refentše Terror has violated the values associated with manliness and "left it to swim in the pools of AIDS spilling into the night streets of our Hillbrow" (p. 65). His promiscuity and lascivious conduct have resulted in manliness being associated with death and disease.

narrator points out that what has transpired between the four people should be seen as "humanness" (p. 50) and that sexual infidelity remains human only if it "[remains] uncovered [sic] by prying eyes and unpublicised by enthusiastic tongues" (p. 50).

Somehow, Refentše's behaviour seems critical of the other black men who only abuse women, but he himself abuses his friend's girlfriend. Perhaps we have here confusing or conflicting ideas about black urban maleness, where Western ideas about the way a man should act and the way a man (read here urban black male in modern supposedly Western society) should conduct himself are in conflict. The idea that there is this duality in someone's behaviour where he says one thing the one moment and then does something else the next is not too easily accepted. Gause (2000: 3) regards sexual promiscuity among urban black males as "[c]ompensating for feelings of insecurity in a Eurocentric world" particularly because they feel the need to "redefine what it means to be a man in the present world".
The incident with Bohlale occurs when she calls Refentše (p. 35) and informs him of his friend Sammy's drug abuse. Immediately the self-righteous and judgmental Refentše tries to analyse Sammy's conduct and concludes that the latter is not "a violent man" nor is he a "womaniser" (p. 35) as is the case with Terror. The impression is created that Sammy was a victim of foreign drug abusers and a foreign woman ("a *lekwerekwere* woman"; p. 35) and that he was not to blame for his actions. By viewing the issue in this light, Refentše acts exactly like the xenophobic community at large who blames all their problems on the foreigners.

Refentše approaches Bohlale and her problem "with a sympathetic gaze" (p. 36), which contrasts with his conduct towards someone like Terror, who "immediately [thinks] of making advances to [a woman]" (p. 64) when he sees her. Refentše's gaze is one of compassion, concern and interest, whereas in the case of Terror one could describe it as pure lust. It would be apposite to refer in this instance to what Driver (1990: 246) describes as characteristic of the so-called new African man and the new African community. The new African community is marked by "gentle, loving, responsible men, with the standard gendered role divisions otherwise unchanged" (Driver 1990: 246). Driver writes in particular about Bessie Head's short stories, but the arguments are just as applicable here. Bessie Head, according to Driver, "castigates men for their irresponsibility" and "sexist abuse" of women and tries to create feminised heroes to disrupt the patriarchal notions about masculinity and femininity.[6] Refentše's "generous

6. In the case of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* there is indeed a similar perception. Compare remarks such as "men do spread like pumpkin plants" (p. 70), "he left [his manhood] to swim in the pools of AIDS" (p. 65) or the reference to

expression of sympathy and support" (p. 36) could be interpreted as an example of behaviour that befits this new African man, but indeed he remains cast in the role of the stronger and dominant male. Gause (2000: 4) mentions that one of the dilemmas faced by the inner-city black male is that he is often "grounded in masking strategies" and these strategies "require him to deny and suppress his feelings". Often the urban black male comes across as "the epitome of control, strength and pride" (Gause 2000: 4), whereas in fact it is often a facade "to ward off the anxiety of [his] second class status".

Directly after this expression of both spiritual and physical support, the events take a turn for the worse and Refentše finds himself sexually stimulated by the closeness to the body of his female friend. Reference is made to the "the boy in [his] trousers" (p. 37) who has decided to "express his sympathies too". The choice of words is another example of what Goodman (2003: 88) calls the "parodic-travestying" nature of the novel: The narrator's description of Bohale's consolation is presented by means of elements of humour and the grotesque, and it results in an almost satirical moment commenting on the majority of men and their genital inclination.[7] During the colonial period the designation "boy" was often used to refer to adult African men (Brown 2003: 157), and by using it in this context, Mpe conveys an impression of humour and mockery. It could also be read as an expression of camaraderie between men because of the tone and the nature of the word choice. One could also interpret it as turning the penis into a fetish, as an object or persona with a life of its own. Significantly the penis is addressed as "the boy", suggesting that unlike an adult man's phallic power, the penis-as-boy has no real phallic power. The use of "the boy" further suggests that he uses the excuse that it cannot be expected of a boy to act responsibly. It is a useful form of denial of the possibility of male self-control. Greer (2003: 228) points out that a boy is usually not associated with phallic power and one could thus assume that in the case of

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the "semen found flowing aimlessly in the streets" (p. 82), which emphasise men's irresponsibility and lasciviousness. Green (2005: 12) comments on the treatment of the AIDS epidemic in the novel and the lack of "alignment" with movements such as the Treatment Action Campaign: "[It] tends to flip the novel over into a moral – even moralizing – rather than a political agenda".

7. This incident calls to mind Ruben's consolation of Tessa in André Brink's *The Rights of Desire*, where he as the comforting male also becomes sexually aroused during a crisis. For an extensive discussion of this and other related issues in Brink's novel, see Crous (2006).

Refentše, the narrator does not necessarily want to emphasise his phallic prowess or genital endowment, as is the case with Terror, for instance.

This "first and last [act of] sexual betrayal" (p. 37) leads to a serious crisis of conscience in Refentše. Not only does he acknowledge his treachery towards Lerato, but also towards his friend Sammy. He also comes to the realisation that he was unfair to criticise Refilwe for her sexual misconduct, which according to Ticha (2003: 86) suggests that the author wants to raise "the contentious idea of mediating and distinguishing between the ethics and functions of an action". Despite Refentše's inner turmoil, he remains the stereotypical male who hides his frustration and depression (p. 48). He does not share his problems with Lerato, even though she is the Bone of his Heart and the only one who, with her "kisses and embraces" (p. 38) can be powerful medicine to him. Her physical presence (and her bodily expressions of love) are sources of support to him. The use of the description "Bone of his Heart" signifies that she is the core of his heart and his existence. As she is his beloved and the person who knows him best, Lerato notices his "loss of appetite for food and love and life" (p. 49) and decides to speak to Sammy about it and determine whether the two of them can do something to improve Refentše's mood. Since she realises that he does not want to share his problems with her as a woman, despite his being an urban intellectual man who is aware of his inner turmoil and his bouts of depression, she opts to discuss her problems with his best friend and try and find a solution – probably since one man would better understand the psyche of another.

This meeting between Sammy and Lerato is, to some extent, a repetition of the one between Refentše and Bohlale and there is indeed an interchange of sexual partners involved. Yet, the narrator cautions the reader not to indulge in self-righteous condemnation because the emphasis should be on the "humanness" (p. 50) of what the two couples did. Refentše is requested by Bohlale to assist her with Sammy and his problems, whereas Lerato decides to speak to Sammy about what is bothering Refentše. The result is that Sammy and Lerato end up "doing exactly what [Refentše] and Bohlale had done" (p. 49), and this mutual consolation of one another is described as attempts to make their lives "more livable" (p. 49).

4 "[A] paean to male love" – K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* [8]

The first interaction between Tshepo, the main character of this text, and Chris Swart, "a coloured guy" (p. 150), occurs four weeks after Tshepo's release from the asylum where he was treated for "cannabis-induced psychosis" (p. 9). What is evident from Tshepo's narrative – he is both narrator and focaliser – is that his description of Chris has homoerotic undertones and there is a strong preoccupation with the latter's virility and physical attributes. Illustrative of this is his first remark about Chris's "sort of gait" (p. 151), which appeals to him immediately after he has met him. From the first encounter between the two male characters, the two are contrasted: Chris is an ex-convict, Tshepo was in an asylum; Tshepo is more verbal and eloquent than Chris; Tshepo manages to get a job as a waiter while Chris is content with the dishwashing job (p. 151) – to mention but a few. When they are required to make their choice about rooms in the two-bedroom flat, which they share, this already suggests something of the discrepancy in their relationship. Chris assumes the position of the dominator and occupies "the bigger room", whereas Tshepo opts for the smaller room (p. 151). There is a strong pecking order within their domestic sphere, which is reversed in the outside world, as there, Tshepo is the one who manages to get a better job and earn more money than Chris. Yet their sense of both being outsiders is constantly emphasised. Chris was convicted of murdering a close friend ("I stabbed someone and he died"; p. 152), whereas Tshepo spent time in an asylum ("I wasn't crazy. I had an episode"; p. 152).

Putting these two outsiders together in one confined space is effective since it not only emphasises the differences between the two men, but also comments on male-male relations between a Black and a Coloured man in the South African context. When the two men are juxtaposed against each other, Chris is portrayed as the more aggressive of the two, probably because he believes that Tshepo is better off than he is: "He's a little spoiled, one of those darkies who went to larney schools and learned to talk like them" (p. 156).[9] In contrast to Tshepo's privileged life, Chris's life has

8. The title is taken from Heyns (2001): "The novel, in fact, turns into something of a paean to male love, which is a welcome relief from the self-flagellation of so much gay fiction". Page references to the novel refer to Duiker (2001).

9. Viljoen (2001) analyses the issue of "non-racialism" in the novel and shows how bigotry is "omnipresent not only in white minds, but in black as well"

always been that of living in "a growing ghetto" (p. 154) characterised by urban squalor and misery.[10] Chris regards Tshepo as a spoilt brat and emphasises his privileged upbringing ("larney schools and learned to talk like them") while Tshepo's clothing also signifies his privileged state. Noticeably, once Chris starts to earn more money, he also starts buying expensive clothes with the right labels (p. 203). After years in jail, it is important for him to regain his self-respect and one way of accomplishing that is to keep the flat tidy.

One detects that after Chris and Tshepo have been out together a few times, that Tshepo has homosexual feelings for Chris and he mentions that "[he] desperately [likes] him" (p. 166). Tshepo is constantly bent on pleasing Chris. His attitude is evident in his description of Chris doing the dishes, a scene he finds "enthralling to watch" (p. 167).

Tshepo provides us with a voyeuristic and erotic description of the object of his desire, namely the body of the other man. His reference to "the shy innocent place", however, is tender and cherishing and underpins his romantic nature. He is entranced and his gaze focuses firstly on what is visible to him, namely the arms and the neck. Chris's powerful arms and a strong neck signify virility, male strength and power. Tshepo is, however, also curious as to what is hidden under Chris's clothes. Since it is impossible for him to caress the skin of the desired other, he can only contemplate the texture of the skin ("how soft or rough his skin is"). Mention is also made of Chris's scars, the result of his life as a gangster and his spell in jail. The scars act as markers of his suffering in jail and also emphasise his vulnerability and humanness. Tshepo idolises Chris's body, yet the scars are blemishes on his body. During the rape of Tshepo later in the text, Chris also shows him "[his] twenty-eight number on [his] left hand" (p. 212), a scar that shows his allegiance to the Twenty-Eights, a gang notorious for sodomising other prisoners in jail (Gear 2005: 89). Ironically, the object of Tshepo's homoerotic affection is also a male rapist and

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Gagiano (2001: 74) is, rightfully so, critical of the fact that the text is "not always free of disappointingly crude stereotyping" especially when it comes to the issues of racism and misogyny.

10. From Chris's description of his life we learn about the impact of his life as a gangster on his mother. Initially she was the one who "used to come faithfully for the first year of [his] ten-year sentence" (p. 153) to visit him in jail. Later on, being the mother of four gangsters, life became unbearable to her and she did not want to be reminded of her ongoing suffering. One can contrast her suffering to that of Tshepo's mother who was allegedly killed by his father (p. 320) to get some perspective on the suffering of mothers from the disadvantaged communities in South Africa.

gangster and in jail; one way of his gaining acceptance is to join a gang specialising in male rape.

Since Tshepo is not "comfortable in his own skin" (p. 167) it explains why he is so enamoured with the body of the virile ex-convict. In order to hide his own vulnerability Chris constantly acts out some form of masculine aggression – shown for instance in the habitual clutching of his groin. This action also suggests that he wants to emphasise his phallic power in Tshepo's presence. Tshepo's only weapon against Chris's physical masculine aggression is to speak in a verbally aggressive or a sophisticated manner.

His infatuation with Chris is presented to the reader in a romantic, albeit kitschy discourse, such as the following: "It is like watching a beautiful flower and not being able to comment on its luminous beauty" (p. 168). Tshepo is unable to find the apposite language to describe the desired other. Even when Chris looks at him in anger, it feels to him as if "he's plucking a delicate flower" (p. 168). In Chris's presence Tshepo feels vulnerable and he is exposed to the whims of the other. He even plays with the idea that if Chris wants him to, he will commit a murder for him (p. 168). From this we deduce his submissive adoration of the stronger man, which even suggests something of self-sacrifice to propitiate the godlike Chris. Perhaps this pre-empts his sacrifice later on when he is brutally raped by Chris and his two friends. When he is raped by Chris and his friends he is sacrificed to them instead of being allowed to offer a self-sacrifice to Chris.

Chris, like Tshepo's father, is preoccupied with whether he is homosexual or not. In a typical, machismo manner Chris talks about women, "and boasts a little about some of the ones [he] had" (p. 171) and how "to make [other men] envious and their piels stand up a little" (p. 171)**.** By talking about his sexual conquests, Chris believes that he heightens other men's erotic feelings, but it probably only serves as a projection of his own poor self-image and emphasises his sexual inadequacy. In jail he had to join a gang of sodomisers to express himself sexually in a violent manner, particularly to fit in with a particular group in order to survive. Outside of gaol he is no longer part of that peer group and that explains his disdain for Tshepo, who he feels is unfairly privileged by society.

To Chris, women are mere sexual objects and represent some trophy to be won during a conquest among men. When Tshepo does not share his phallic victories with Chris, he becomes a peeping Tom, willing to spy on Tshepo when he uses the toilet: "I sometimes peep through the key hole in the hope of catching him having a skommel, and then walking in and laughing" (p. 171). It reiterates the distance between the two of them and that the only real sexual intimacy between them is limited to voyeurism through a keyhole. His preoccupation with Tshepo's supposed masturbatory fantasies

link with the idea of getting men erect when one is talking about sex in their presence. Chris had to perform the role of a homosexual rapist in jail in order to survive, and outside of jail he no longer needs to perform that specific role, yet one may infer from his behaviour that the homosexual tendencies are still there, even though they are mostly repressed. His behaviour is similar to that of the married man who later frequents the gay brothel, not necessarily for sex but to find some kind of male solidarity among other men.

When Chris urinates and it sounds to Tshepo "like an industrial pump" (p. 176) and walks around the house with "his cock and balls in his hand" (p. 176), his conduct is similar to what Woods (1993: 168) calls "the pomp and posturings of virility". One has the impression that he unknowingly attempts to seduce Tshepo, but it could also be seen as the type of behaviour that would be disallowed in jail. Since he cannot show his real feelings, and since he is only familiar with violent sexuality, he attacks Tshepo physically and punches him. Yet, Tshepo, in his naïve and romantically inclined way, is "caught somewhere between lust and fear" (p. 176) and interprets Chris's reaching out to him for some form of bodily contact as a sexual invitation. His only consolation is to sleep next to Chris and to smell his clothes the following day (p. 176).

The brutal rape of Tshepo by Chris and his gangster friends, Brendan and Virgil, could be seen as an attempt to show allegiance to the gang, especially in front of his two fellow gang members ("these are also my brothers"; p. 212). But it could also be interpreted as some form of revenge on Tshepo, who, despite the fact that Chris tries to act cruelly towards him, is still acting so "fucking nice" (p. 210). "[N]iceness" arouses vengefulness in Chris because all his life he has been used to violent treatment and he associates niceness with the feminine aspect of one's personality. As an exponent of virile and aggressive masculinity "niceness" does not fit in with or even challenges or undermines his frame of reference. Despite attempts at humiliating him, Tshepo "won't break" and thus remains a challenge for Chris to humiliate and treat in the same manner as he has been treated all his life: "Maybe I want to see that he's not as strong as he thinks he is, not as good as he pretends" (p. 211). He wants to submit Tshepo to the same humiliating and dehumanising behaviour he had to endure in jail, particularly the male-on-male sexual violence and the rape of one another: "Now you know what I had to do all those years in Pollsmoor, you check, you naai, gemors" (p. 212). Only once he has been submitted to this brutal treatment does Tshepo realise that the virility and machismo that he admired

in the object of his affection, is now used to torture and humiliate him and to rob him of his romantic idealism.[11]

With reference to the role of Chris, it is interesting to note that the male-male relationship between him and Tshepo (in the context of the brothel he is called Angelo) is in direct contrast to Tshepo's relationship with the white Afrikaner, Karel (known as West in the brothel).[12] Once again we have the adoration of the body of the other male – Tshepo finds in West a substitute for Chris. One should also remember that the adoration of the male body is often an indication of indirect desire for masculine contact (Pronger 1990: 157). Eventually Tshepo realises that West has other qualities to his personality and a strong sense of moral being that is just as significant.

Tshepo experiences serious bouts of jealousy when the other sex workers even look in West's direction ("A dagger of jealousy stabs me"; p. 248). Even when Tshepo and West share a bed (p. 258) it recalls the incident earlier in the text when he shared a bed with Chris. Whereas during that incident he was completely infatuated with the object of his desire and was sexually turned on by Chris, now with West he feels it is a case of "men seeking comfort in each other" – a commonly held view within the context of the brothel. Duiker's depiction of homosexual masculinity closely follows Tshepo's struggle to accept his homosexual identity. Initially there is a strong sense of denial ("Not everyone in Cape Town's gay, you know"; p. 181), but once he gets involved in the gay subculture of Cape Town, there is an exploration of what it means to be a homosexual, and eventually there is a sense of acceptance.

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11. Samuelson (2002: 88) observes that in South African fiction of the period during transition from apartheid to multiracial democracy, "race [is inserted] into the scene of rape by focusing almost exclusively on interracial rape". She also points out that in the case of Duiker's novel, we have "the rape of a black man by a coloured man". See also Graham (2002) for a discussion on rape in recent South African fiction.

12. Chris reappears in Tshepo's life, one evening when he goes to a restaurant with one of his clients (p. 281) and only now in a new context does Tshepo realise that "[he] was so wrong about Chris. He wasn't that beautiful at all" (p. 282). Despite attempts to humiliate Chris in public and get some form of revenge on him for having raped him, Tshepo still feels "unwelcome tenderness" (p. 283) for Chris, his first object of sexual affection. He cannot avenge himself completely on Chris, because vengeance, to him, is "a kind of self-mutilation" (p. 283) – perhaps pre-empting the sense of forgiveness and reconciliation later on in the text between Tshepo and his father, as well as the conciliatory tone that he takes towards the Afrikaner.

Another facet of homosexual masculinity in South Africa that is explored in this novel is the fact that "gay friendly places are still a white male preserve" (p. 417). During one of his evenings out on the town Tshepo encounters a group of young boys and one of them is a black boy (p. 419). Tshepo is aware that being black in such a group emphasises one's sense of "schizophrenia" (p. 419), particularly if you have to "[switch] between two cultures and languages." Even as part of the brotherhood of Steamy Windows, Tshepo has to realise that this brotherhood of homosexual solidarity "has its own, racist, frayed edges" (Gagiano 2002: 74). As one of the "black stallions" (p. 204) he is mostly appealing to German tourists who are "always looking for an authentic African man" (p. 205). The Europeans regard him as an exotic sexual animal. Their assumptions are similar to those summarised by Fanon (1967: 157): "In relation to the Negro, everything takes place on the genital level …. [T]he Negroes have tremendous sexual powers …. They copulate at all times and in all places." Illustrative of this sexual predilection for the exotic Other is the encounter with Arthur, "a tall coloured looking man" (p. 314) from America: '"I've never had a real African man. So what tribe are you from?' he says, still sipping his drink. I hate that question. It's like asking 'what's your breed.'" (p. 315).

For the American from the so-called First World the prospect of sex with an African man evokes imagery of the untamed savage willing to copulate for an unlimited period of time. He describes this stereotypical notion of the sexually endowed African man euphemistically as follows: "Yes, but Africans are so …. How shall I put it? You're expected to be manly, aren't you?" (p. 315). It is noteworthy that he equates "man[liness]" with sexual prowess.[13]

Outside of the brothel, Tshepo has to deal with the grim reality that as a black man he is one of the "pigments in a whirlpool of colour" (p. 344) and the centre of that whirlpool is "lily white" (p. 344). He draws the conclusion that within the gay subculture it is usually the affluent black men who are able to participate. They are not the black people associated with "the

13. Tshepo is curious why it is mostly white men who come to the brothel and wonders whether it "has something to do with money" (p. 331). Black men, according to Tshepo, feel it is "too foreign for black culture" to pay for sex. An interesting twist is the issue of the black men who do come to the brothel, but who do not ask for him. Is it not similar to the white Europeans asking for black African masseurs? The black clients participate in an Othering process of the white prostitutes. They see themselves as "turning the tables" on the Othering that blacks have historically (or personally) been subjected to. For a discussion on Cape Town's pivotal position in international gay sex tourism, see Elder (2005).

township" or "the squatter camp", but people "dressed in a certain way" and who "spoke with a certain accent" (p. 344). According to Isaacs and Mc Kendrick (1992: 94) urban gay culture has always been characterised by a strong sense of racism: "White gays, who have been suckled on racial prejudice, maintain the status quo. They seek out coloured counterparts for sexual interaction, but refuse to extend this into all aspects of egalitarian living". Evidently this is also the notion that Duiker tries to put across in his investigation of the life of the urban black homosexual in South Africa. There is a false sense of brotherhood and acceptance, but tolerance is merely based on one's exoticism. As an exotic sexual object Tshepo will benefit the brothel and as such is considered an economic asset by the management. As a black sex worker the other white masseurs accept him, because he is in a similar position as they are. Within the brotherhood of Steamy Windows his exotic, animal-like sexual energy can be controlled. Once he finds himself outside the brothel, the grim reality is that he is forced to realise that most white gays are "white people before they are gay" (p. 343). Within the homosexual ghetto he is tolerated because of his sexual preference, but in the hegemonic heterosexual world he is both black and homosexual and becomes a victim of prejudice.

Conclusion

By studying "male-authored" presentations of masculinity, I wish to argue that it provides us with some insights into male-centred views on what men do, what men think and how men react to their environment. Adapting Kaplan (1985: 38) slightly in this regard, my approach implies looking at the studies of the images of men in the works of male authors to establish, among others, "how an author's own absorption of patriarchal values [and views on masculinity] might cause [him] to create [male] characters who fulfil society's stereotypes of [men]". Accordingly, my analyses have also shown to what extent male authors deconstruct stereotypical notions of masculinity, especially seen in the light of the reconciliatory interaction between men in the post-apartheid society depicted in the case of Duiker. There is also a strong sense of duality in the urban black male's perception of what is regarded as good moral behaviour and what is not. There is a stronger sense of brotherhood and cameraderie among black men than is the case with the white males in the different novels under discussion.

In contrast to this black cameraderie, the world of the black homosexual is characterised by sexual violence, sometimes even as a result of jealousy or class differences. Intimate spheres such as gay bars and brothels are seen as the ideal place to pursue one's sense of identity because outside these

spaces, in particular in the rural areas, homosexual behaviour is seen as not being part of black culture. In this regard Woods (2001: 163) refers to the "heteronormative paradigm" that is specifically applied in the case of black Africans, which regards homosexuality as belonging to "the make-believe world of white gays".

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