THE POETICS OF CRIME THRILLER IN A SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL: THE EXAMPLE OF ANGELA MAKHOLWA'S THE REED DANCE STALKER

Youssoupha MANE
Maitre-assistant CAMES en Littératures
et Civilisations africaines des Pays Anglophones,
Université Assane Seck de Ziguinchor, Sénégal
y.m@univ-zig.sn

Abstract: This paper aims to explore South African crime writing thrillers, which have provided valuable insights into the South African landscape, society, and culture. Angela Makholwa, a qualified journalist, has been recognized as the first South African crime novelist to feature a female African protagonist as the main character. Her debut novel, *The Red Ink*, which is grounded in the case of a real-life serial killer that she has artistically fictionalized, bestowed her with a particularity and literary fame. *The Reed Dance Stalker*, the sequel to her first novel, is set in the grisly world of crime in post-apartheid South Africa, where one of the evils that plague the rainbow nation is revealed. Angela Makholwa's crime thriller is edgy, and she has made the best use of her skills to blend African traditions and culture with contemporary crime writing techniques. To better conduct this study, the analysis will be based on a dual approach: sociocriticism and psychoanalysis. I will examine the relationship between violent crime and corruption, cybercrime in the narrative, the psychoanalytic portrait of the serial killer, and how the characters' names are associated with the world of crime.

Keywords: crime novel, South Africa, Angela Makhlowa, literature, murder thriller

LA POETIQUE DU THRILLER POLICIER DANS UN ROMAN SUD-AFRICAIN : L'EXEMPLE DE *THE REED DANCE STALKER* (2023) D'ANGELA MAKHOLWA

Résumé : Cet article explore les thrillers policiers sud-africains, qui ont apporté un éclairage précieux sur le paysage, la société et la culture sud-africains. Angela Makholwa, journaliste de profession, est reconnue comme la première auteure sud-africaine de romans policiers à avoir pour personnage principal une femme africaine. Son premier roman, The Red Ink, qui s'inspire de l'affaire d'un tueur en série réel qu'elle a ensuite réécrit sous forme de fiction, lui a conféré une singularité et une renommée littéraire. The Reed Dance Stalker, la suite de son premier roman, se déroule dans l'univers macabre du crime en Afrique du Sud postapartheid. A travers son roman, l'un des maux qui affligent la Nation arc-en-ciel est mis à nu. Le thriller policier d'Angela Makholwa est audacieux. Elle a su exploiter au mieux ses compétences d'écrivaine pour mêler traditions et culture africaines aux techniques contemporaines de l'écriture policière. Afin de bien mener cette étude, l'analyse s'appuiera sur deux grilles de lecture : l'approche sociocritique et psychanalytique. J'établirai le lien entre crimes violents et corruption, la cybercriminalité dans le récit, le portrait psychanalytique du tueur en série et la manière dont les noms des personnages sont associés au monde du crime.

Mots-clés : roman policier, Afrique du Sud, Angela Makhlowa, littérature, meurtre, thriller,

Introduction

Whether crime is mythological, epic, dramatic, or cinematographic, it should be noted that few crime writers have lived the experience of crime, much less had close contact with murderers. Angela Makholwa, a South African novelist and journalist, revealed in an interview that her journalistic investigations led her to interview a notorious criminal in the 1990s. Her objective was to understand the motives behind heinous crimes, the socio-cultural context in which they occurred, the emotional life of the perpetrators, and to draw up a psychological assessment. Such psychological exploration is a hallmark of the thriller genre.

As a journalist, Makholwa was bound by professional secrecy, which forces her not to disclose personal data, not to violate journalistic ethics and morality. A friend later advised her to fictionalize the story. This is how *Red Ink* (2007), the first South African novel with a female protagonist, was crafted. Its sequel is *The Reed Dance Stalker*. The evidence indicates the presence of recurring characters in the crime novel, which will be the focus of this study. Her work shows a deliberate blurring of boundaries between literature and reality. Rather, the frequent intermingling of the two, which indicates that the often-flagrant gap between literature and socio-historical and political occurrences is not a prominent feature in the author's crime novels:

> After the end of apartheid there was a suggestion by various literary critics that the political and the aesthetic could now be disentangled, in post-apartheid fiction there are in fact continued, and in many instances new forms of, political engagement as well as aesthetic value in a commonly undervalued genre of literary production – crime fiction. (Naidu and le Roux, (2014: 289).

Another key factor that blurs the line between fiction and reality in this novel is that most South Africans are either direct or indirect victims of violent crimes, ranging from rape to murder. According to the 2024 *World Population Review Survey*, the Republic of South Africa has the fifth-highest crime rate globally, with a crime index of 75.5, far ahead of the United States. In nations experiencing an escalation in criminal activity, the underlying causes frequently bear a high degree of similarity. A significant contributing factor is the presence of social disparity, economic disadvantages, and pervasive joblessness. This phenomenon, particularly evident within the socio-economic framework of South Africa, is rooted in over three centuries of divergent developmental trajectories between the African ethnic groups and the White minority. Even though Angela Makholma affirms that she cannot accurately pinpoint her source of inspiration for her novels, her unwavering commitment to peering into the life of the murderer and the security situation in South Africa are undeniably the fuels that propel her crime writing. Angela Makholwa has been labeled as a prolific crime writer. From a young age, she dreamed of becoming a storyteller. Her love for the written word resulted in her first short story being published in the popular youth magazine, *Upbeat* Magazine, at 13. Among her other creative writings, there are *The Black Widow Society* (2013), where a secret society of middle-class women plot and kill their unfaithful husbands, *The 30th Candle* (2010), *Critical, but Stable* (2021), to name but a few. Through a socio-critical and psychoanalytic approach, I will study how crime is associated with corruption, new information and communication technologies, the psychoanalytic evaluation of the serial

killer behavior, and how characters' surnames are related to their fate in the world of crime.

1. Crime, Inmates, and Corruption in the Narrative

In the *Reed Dance Stalker*, the serial killer criminal trajectory and prison break story echo that of Thabo Bester[1] and gear minds towards corruption among prison officials. Employing intertextuality, Angela Makholwa has taken inspiration from such a prison corruption-based episode, which has long dominated the headlines of South African newspapers and miscellaneous facts. The act of concealing a murder, that is, disclosing it only to maintain privilege, can be considered a form of corruption. This behavioral pattern is showcased by Colonel Mabuza. The latter, during a telephone interview with the diplomatic representative of the South African brigadier. The latter came to understand the negligence and slowness in elucidating the murder of the two young maidens during the Reed Dance cultural event. The double homicide in Ludzizini bears a striking resemblance to the modus operandi of a serial killer, a fact that Brigadier Marawa has noted. To prevent the recurrence of such crimes during the next cultural event, which is scheduled to take place in two months, Brigadier Marawa has meticulously constructed a serial killer theory that consists of looking into friends, relatives, and even former cellmates of the killer and establish whether someone close to him may have idealized his crime. However, the Royal Swaziland Police authorities have not demonstrated a willingness to collaborate to prevent potential carnage. The justification provided by Colonel Mabuza and his colleague John Dube for their inaction is driven by two main reasons. The first relates to not spoiling or disturbing the upcoming event by scaring the youth away from attending. The second motive is that they may lose their jobs if the news of the murder hits the headlines. They will not be the only ones to suffer the consequences of a crime that would undoubtedly create a national psychosis, but also their superiors, who are responsible for internal security. The diplomats representing the Swazi mission offer these remarks with the Brigadier's dismay, as he finds the information difficult to comprehend:

> The time lapse between the incident itself and being called in on the investigation had compromised the case. The Swazi Police had not wanted to cause alarm lest the incident deterred young women from attending the annual event in future. […]Hmmm. That's why you chose to cover these two murders up, thought Marawa. He had been astonished to discover almost no coverage of the grisly killings in any of the Swaziland papers. The things that politicians were willing to sacrifice to save their skins continued to surprise and shock him. (53)

After being informed that the call has been recorded and that everyone will be notified about their previous laxity in addressing crimes, Colonel Mabuza and her teammate have agreed to collaborate and take firm preventive measures. This is how the retraction occurs: ''I will ask you again …, kindly, brigadier. Your expertise is needed in ensuring that we don't have a repeat of what happened to the two young maidens who perished at Reed Dance last year. Can I rely on you to resource our officers with the special skills

[1] Thabo Bester has been identified as the most prominent con man in South Africa. In 2012, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and rape. However, in 2022, a conflagration erupted in Bester's cell, resulting in the destruction of the cell and the discovery of a charred body. This event sent shockwaves throughout the nation. This incident prompts the question of whether this event signifies the conclusion of Thabo Bester's criminal activities. This narrative chronicles the ascent of a serial offender into South Africa's elite social echelons and the subsequent attempt to evade legal repercussions.

and knowledge the South African government has imparted to you…'' (55). Being aware he has his back to the wall, Mabuza desperately puts forward this sentence that reinforces his feeling of guilt: ''It doesn't sound like I have much of a choice now. […] But first I'll need any reports you have had since then of assaults on women in your country. Send me whatever you have''… (55)

In this crime novel, the instinct for self-preservation overrides any distinct and rigorous effort to identify a perpetrator like David Simelane, the Swaziland-based serial killer ''who had been active between the late 1990s and 2001'' (54). In the context of a symbolic relationship characterized by mutual protection between subordinates and hierarchical superiors, it is obvious that eradicating the scourge of criminality in post-Apartheid South Africa and neighboring Swaziland will pose a substantial challenge.

A related issue to consider is that of a perpetrator who, having already committed murder, may be driven to commit acts of revenge against individuals who provided testimony against them or against the family members of investigators involved in neutralizing and removing them from a position of potential harm. This is the ''profile of David Simelane, who, after his release in 1998, set out to seek revenge by a murder series'' (54). In such circumstances, an investigator who prioritizes the safety of his or her own life and that of his or her family may become demotivated, harming the state's internal security. This phenomenon can be perceived as a betrayal of the state or passive corruption.

From the onset, the reader is left to contemplate the plausibility that an individual of Napoleon Dingiswayo's criminal standing could successfully orchestrate an escape from Pretoria C-Max Prison. Furthermore, the hoax, surely schemed with the complicity of a corrupt prison officer, goes so far as he fakes his death by making even the most skeptical believe that he died for redemption through a letter in which are inscribed these words:

> *Remember not the sins and offences of my youth. I ran my race and prayed for redemption as I journeyed back to meet my maker. I commit this body to the ground. Ashes for ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of my resurrection to a new and better life.*
> *With Deep Remorse*
> *Napoleon Dingisswayo*
> *13 January 2006 (6)*

The content of the letter is subject to interpretation. Unfortunately, this ambiguity could not be deciphered by criminal experts or detectives such as Morapedi. The fugitive murderer's reference to ''resurrection'' does not allude to the concept of post-mortem reanimation. Instead, it refers to initiating a new life and acquiring a new identity outside South Africa. It is only through imagining and reassembling the facts that the reader, in chapter six, understands that the redemption was supposed to occur in Swaziland. The letter the fugitive killer once wrote to Lucy was another element that helped ''confuse and heighten the suspense, offering catharsis and vicarious justice in an unremitting social landscape'' (Barnes, 2012: 990). It should be remembered that Lucy Khambule, a strong-willed, sometimes too trusting, finds herself in the middle of a war between very dark figures when she decides to write a book on the notorious murderer. By comparing the calligraphic style of the letter with that of the suicide note, Lucy's investigators concluded that Napoleon Dingiswayo was the one who wrote it. So, he is dead. The process, which

culminated in a resolution, is referred to as forensic linguistics within the domain of criminal theory. For John Olsson (2004), it is a scientific method used to analyze linguistic items, whether written or verbal, to determine the linguistic data's identity or authorship. Even though in this crime thriller, the scientific approach is designed to underpin the reader in his/ her misguidedness. This spiral construction, where we move from a false lead to a new hypothesis, is the most effective narrative technique of the polar. It ensures that the reader remains engaged throughout the story, seeking to put the puzzle pieces together before the outcome. Tiltestad and Polatinsky head in the same direction, posting it ‘‘makes the reader an agent of historical meaning’’ (2010: 269)

2. Cybercrime in the Narrative

The advent of the Internet and social networking platforms such as Facebook facilitated the development of a new modus operandi for Napoleon, allowing him to harass his victims with greater ease. Cybercrime is defined as ‘‘ crimes committed on the internet using the computer as either a tool rather than the target. These crimes generally involve less technical expertise as the damage done manifests itself in real world ’’ (Aghatise, 2006:3). The narrator unearths the depth of his morbid thought as follows. ‘‘He had finally got the hang of the internet thing. The best part of it was that you did not need to be who you were, so for him, it was a true rebirth’’(90). A renewal that occurs in the very sense of the word. A good number of his victims are stalked on Facebook, where he gathers information about location, workplace, and hobbies. Unlike the Maximum-security prison, he feels less alone than he has been in those past years. That is why ‘‘sharing different versions of himself and opening to ways he had never been able to do with women’’ (91) in the real world was strangely comforting. Facebook provides him with a platform to select and track his prey, while also allowing him to fill the gap, loneliness, and moroseness. This is about his clumsiness and inability to hold a face-to-face discussion with women without violating and sexually assaulting them. He is nothing like the gentle and patient psychopath. In this way, the narrator reveals his antisocial disorder towards women and his clumsiness in the art of seduction, which required nothing but gentleness and attention toward the female counterpart. He craves attention because he has never received it. But as for him, he is unable to give it. The internet was utilized by the murderer, Napoleon, who is referred to by the narrator as ‘‘Prey’’, to ensnare his victims.

It is noteworthy that the very same technological apparatus was employed by detective characters such as The Hunter, The Black Bomba, and The Sniper to ascertain his whereabouts. During the detectives' inspections, ‘‘one internet café owner claimed that he thought the man had been in on a couple of occasions but he could not locate his search browser history as it had been wiped out by other customers visiting the café ’’(139). The cybercafé owner had no information about Napoleon except that he would spend about thirty minutes online, pay his due, and depart from the premises. Furthermore, in his relentless pursuit of Lucy, the serial killer experienced a sense of astonishment and pleasant surprise at his ability to access all the information he required about his target with a few keystrokes on the keyboard. Thus, the narrator says: ‘‘This Facebook app and the internet just made things easier. He had searched on the internet to find out more about her business, and all the information was just laid out, especially for him to uncover” (49)

The South African female novelist is deeply aware that the internet is now ubiquitous in people's lives. That's why she deems it relevant to blend the traditional crime approach with cybercriminal activities, which result in a hybrid genre, what Stephen Harrison (2024) called ''technothriller''. The incorporation of the digital world in the narrative reinforces the realistic nature of the novel, an honest portrayal of real life. The novel's historical context matches the advent of the World Wide Web in the 2000s. This could undoubtedly explain the fact that Angela Makholwa has resorted to the only social media tool, Facebook, available at that time. Consequently, the novelist's literary approach is echoed in James Elroy's sentence: "The crime novel is the great moral literature of our time''. It also reveals how technology mediates human experience, unearthing the gloomier aspect of it.

3. The Psychopathic Serial Killer: A Psychoanalytic Portrait

Solomon Makhathini's obsession with Lucy is due to the fact that the former firmly believed that the crime reporter was the only person to whom he could talk without being judged. It will be worth remembering that, beyond reporting violent crimes, Lucy's willingness is to help former inmates to be rehabilitated. According to the journalist, society remains one of the biggest challenges. Notwithstanding the considerable risks associated with the endeavor, including the potential for recognition by others and subsequent reporting to law enforcement authorities, the narrator effectively demonstrates that the allure of observing Lucy supersedes these concerns. Such pathology is often secretly nourished from within before it becomes apparent through excessive, clumsy, borderline-aggressive behavior. Such a hazardous endeavor has been successful insofar as self-confidence and the ability to stay calm under harsh pressure pertain to a psychopath's personality trait. Napoleon Dingiswayo, who changes identity as one changes shocks, is impulsive and a risk-taker. Often known as great strategists, psychopaths like Napoleon always intervene when people are focused on activities or events. In this romantic context, all the young ladies who were raped and murdered during The Reed Dance cultural ceremony held in Swaziland. The narrator puts it as follows:

> The dance was hosted by the Swazi Queen Mother and ran from the last week of August to first week in September. The event attracted maidens from different villages in Swaziland who gathered for eight days to prepare for the festival celebrating the rich history and culture of the Swazi people. […] Following the Swazi tradition the ceremony involved young girls cutting reeds from the riverbed which they would present to the Queen Mother to repair the windbreak around her royal residence. (93-96)

The Reed Dance has been used as a trope to topicalize and? South Africanize the murder scene. This can be read as a literary means to steep the novel's plot into a socio-cultural context. As it is common for serial killers, they often operate in crowded and isolated areas where they are liable to find their favorite victims.

The paratextual choice of the color of the words on the cover page of the novel, that is, the title itself, does not appear to be an arbitrary selection. Rather, it symbolizes the forest, nature, and the space of crime perpetrated by the killer. This stands in contrast to Red Ink,

which is photographed in red letters and symbolizes crime scenes that transpired in urban areas, thereby simultaneously representing danger and atrocities, as well as the blood that flows in torrents.

The all-knowing narrator is the only one endowed with the ability to get to the bottom of the murderer's feelings and thoughts, revealing the dual pathology, characterized by an obsession and possession, which afflicts the victim-murderer and results in significant emotional and psychological distress. In this regard, the omniscient narrator undertakes an emotional assessment of the perpetrator: ''Seeing her Facebook, without smelling her perfume or being close enough to see her face, was tormenting him'' (71). Napoleon Dingiswayo, in his new identity as Solomon Makhathini, could not help thinking about the very day he set sight on Lucy, strengthening his desire to meet her again at any cost: ''He had started dreaming about her again and he had the feeling that the hands of time were ticking away from him'' (71). Further, the narrator puts it as follows: The need had become like gnawing pain deep in the gut, almost like the hunger he used to feel as a child when all the adults in his life had cast him out and he had been left to fend for himself on the streets (71). Further in the novel, the narrator adds: ''[…] now remembering how he used to wail when his own mother used to thrash him on the back with a sjambok. Ever the sociopath, the initial images of the women who had cried in torment at the endless pain he'd inflicted upon them were quickly replaced by his own pain.''(192). These excerpts provide a significant insight into the emotional realm experienced by Napoleon. The profound sentiments of love, consideration, and esteem that Napoleon has long yearned for appear to be finally realized through his relationship with Lucy. This sentiment had hitherto been absent from his earliest years. It can be argued that South African society, by restriction the relatives of the suffering victim, is explicitly culpable for the odious crimes he had committed. They have turned him into a monster by depriving him of humanitarian feelings. A more thorough examination of the subject reveals that the black South African society from which the perpetrator came was the first victim to suffer a century of separate development, racism, poverty, and unemployment to such an extent that Napoleon struggled to find daily bread. Consequently, the perpetrator can be regarded as a mere incidental casualty of a marginalized black population, one that has been systematically deprived of fundamental human rights and opportunities for better living conditions. Chelsea Geach, in the newspaper entitled *IOL*, reported that a great number of serial killers do not possess a vehicle, therefore, they are unable to pick up a prostitute or other victim, drive them to a secluded place, and perform their crimes. Instead, they must lure the victims to remote and desolate spots. They do this by taking advantage of unemployment. Based on the journalist's estimation, almost 95 percent of serial murderers will approach a person and offer him /her a job, and one in ten women will go immediately. We are here confronted with a form of infernal dualism. There is no question: serial killers are, like Napoleon, victims of poverty and hopelessness in life. This poverty pushes them to become psychopaths to a certain extent. They use the same misery and hardship to trap their victims. In *The Reed Dance Stalker*, the serial killer has taken advantage of Sihle's precarious financial situation. All he had to do was to send ''some perfume and a pair of Size 5 sandals''(133) to trap her once again. Upon receiving the gift, Sihle expressed a profound elation, as if she had been given the moon. The nature of the present indicates the extent of the endemic poverty affecting South African women, such as Sihle, who frequently become victims of psychopaths.

Moreover, historical analysis consistently demonstrates a correlation between the rise in violent crime and the presence of significant social inequalities within a nation. Birds of the same feathers (Napoleon and his community) flock together in times of peace, but when things go wrong, in times of hardship (hunger, antipathy, joblessness) each flies its way. Consequently, neither he nor his community is responsible for the increasing number of criminals, rapists, robbers, etc. This lies instead with the drawbacks of the coercive system and systematic exclusion of Apartheid. Thus, the psychopathy theory according to which there is a strong connection between psychopathic behavior and socio-environmental milieu (Bowlby, 1969). Roussy and Toupin (2000) assert that early symptoms of psychopathy are ‘‘persistent, frequent, and varied asocial and antisocial behavior start at an early age’’ (414). Nevertheless, childhood exposure to a hostile and violent environment seems not to be a unique factor. Next to this theory, Pamela R. Perez (2012) pinpoints the association of genetic and biological aspects. In this African crime story, the medical theory, which states that the psychopath would be the victim of a brain dysfunction whose frontal part does not control the posterior instinctual zones, suffers from clues and allusions in the text. Upon examining Napoleon's profile closely, he may not be a ‘‘born criminal’’ whose criminal tendencies are hereditary, as Cesare Lombroso once suggested in *Criminal Man* (2006). The serial murderer's social milieu, jampacked with hostility and aggression, is what the narrator has attempted to highlight. Moreover, the theory that places considerable importance on socio-environmental factors resulting in extreme physical violence with acute post-traumatic sequelae is evident in the life of the young Napoleon Sigmund Freud through his works such as *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and Fetichism (1927) emphasized the violent and hostile universe where psychopaths emerge generally.

As the novel progresses, it becomes evident to the reader that Napoleon's profound and potentially destructive love for other girls, such as Sihle and Nandipha, which stalks through social media, transcends the physical realm, embracing a spiritual dimension. Following his baptism by the prophet Morova while being an inmate, Napoleon now perceives himself as a pure and highly spiritual being whose sins and wrongdoings have all been absolved. It is further revealed that Napoleon perceives young maidens like Sihle and Lucy as the sole female entities with whom he shares a congruence of values and principles of purity. Even though he pretends to be a ‘‘new man’’, closer to God, his words should be taken with a grain of salt since they can be read ironically. The first time the word "One" is written with a capital O, the reader will understand that it refers to God, the singular entity. There is no such thing. These sentences blur the lines: “The One came back into his life, he would have undergone a complete rebirth’’(90). The killer was referring to his favorite prey, Lucy Khambule. This element of surprise will be revealed later in the novel. The word ‘‘rebirth’’ alludes to the chance to start a new criminal life, and to reconnect with all those female quarries, especially Lucy toward whom he harbored a burning desire to rape and kill violently or kill and rape the lifeless body. Nonkululeko, one of his girlfriends, trapped on Facebook, has been ‘‘dragged to the woods a little way back from the river, where her lifeless body was sexually assaulted’’ (99)

In selecting potential targets, Napoleon deliberately omits those whom he perceives to be promiscuous, like Ntokozo, who is used to ‘‘opening her legs to every man who gave her so much as one glance’’ (90). It is this very act that ultimately led to the seduction of

Shile, resulting in her becoming a victim. The psychopathic murderer and paraphiliac also harbors a particular affinity for women such as Nandipha, despite her lack of purity, a quality that distinguishes her from Shile. His attraction to Nandipha can be attributed to her capacity to induce relaxation and elicit laughter. In this regard, Gianluigi Ponti and Ugo Fornari, two Italian psychiatrists, believe that the motivation of a serial killer lies in the destructive and sadistic association of sex and death. What then characterizes the serial killer would be a murder committed "for sex or during sex". His motivation to kill comes from his paraphilia[2]; his lack of empathy and guilt comes from his psychopathy. It is when you combine psychopathy with paraphilia that you get a very dangerous individual. Napoleon seems to exhibit all of these, making him a fearsome serial killer. His psychopathological character enables him to kill and rape without remorse or empathy. His paraphilic character, which pushes him to fantasize intensely about a certain type of virgin and pure woman, is also present. It is how he tracks down another girl named Matata, whose "quite sensuality'' he finds fascinating. He ‘‘watched her hips move from his hiding spot as she swished the grass broom in the yard (91). He found her mesmerizing. Paraphilia is not considered a disorder unless it harms and distresses, as is the case with the novel serial killer, Napoleon, who possesses such a deviant personality trait.

4. How Characters' Patronymics are Related to Their Fate in the Crime Narrative

A closer look must be centered on the female surnames of Napoleon Dingiswayo's favorite victims and targets. Certain names given by female characters refer to femininity or sexuality, and we detect a clear parallelism between feminine surnames and the physical and psychological traits of the characters who wear these patronyms. It is in this light that Sengani declares that ‘‘naming reminds people of what happened, or what is happening or what might happen in the future''(2015:3). Mutema and Njanji continue in the same vein when they argue that ‘‘most of the sampled African names are ideas concerning certain life issues that names put across'' (2013:253) Nandipha, a Xhosa feminine pronoun, means ‘‘good taste''. Sihle means ‘‘beauty'' in Zulu. Nandipha, with her generous shape, is one of the women who have sexually overexcited him to such an extent that he can no longer control his impulses: ‘‘You are a real cock tease, aren't you?'' (119), Napoleon cries out to expose his longing for sexual intercourse. He goes so far as to masturbate in public restrooms while looking at the nude photos that Nandipha had sent him. To satisfy his ardent sexual desire, he tries to kidnap her, rape her, and then kill her before the victim slips through his net. The serial killer sets his sights on Sihle's ‘‘beauty'' because she knows how to keep her virginity and purity. Here, it is not physical beauty that attracts him to the young woman, but inner beauty, marked by chastity, prompts him to believe that he is spiritually linked to Sihle.

[2] Paraphilia is the experience of sexual attraction that is considered abnormal. The term "paraphilia" was proposed by Friedrich Salomon Krauss in 1903. It is used in some psychiatric circles in the United States as a substitute for the word ‘‘perversion''.

Nonkululeko is another female character whose name means ‘‘The mother of freedom’’ in Zulu. Her innocence, naivety, and credulity—which translate into her carelessness and her freedom to flirt with a stranger to the point of being an easy prey—are reflected in her surname, which describes the sexual freedom of the character. The question is whether the novelist deliberately chose these South African female surnames to reflect each character's traits, or if it is a coincidence? One might be tempted to say it is the product of pure chance. However, a thorough examination of the main character's name, Lucy, reveals that the choice of names, though not African, was deliberate. Lucy, dubbed by the psychopath ‘‘the One’’, translates to ‘‘light, hope’’ in Latin. Among all the women, Lucy is the one Napoleon desires the most. In his neurosis, he firmly believes that he will be definitively freed from the darkness and demons that confuse his heart and his sick mind the day Lucy is in his arms. When she is kidnapped in the boot of his car, the narrator uncovers Napoleon's lugubrious thoughts: ‘‘This was the beginning of his life, and it was going to be legendary’’(180). The phrase ‘‘the beginning of his life’’ refers to the hope he had always nurtured in Lucy. The one without whom his miserable life would be devoid of any hope of regeneration. With Lucy, his light hope is reborn.

The first name of detective Morapedi, ‘‘warrior’’ in Zulu, is also notable. His profession in the security forces and his determination to track down criminals, like Napoleon, are very telling. These elements align to support the deliberate selection of characters’ surnames. Alongside her stylistic and literary approach, the novelist deliberately chose South African surnames for most characters to maintain a strong local flavor. The main character's name, Napoleon, is sometimes negatively associated with a tyrant, influencer, manipulator, and good orator, a natural gift he generally resorted to cakehole and prey on his victims.

Napoleon’s madness of grandeur, like that of the French emperor-conqueror, is uncovered by the omniscient narrator who thus reveals his intrepidity: ‘‘Nothing could stop him now, not even his greater self. Not even his faith…’’(134). According to the Hebrew conception, a name could describe the spirit that dwells in the body, otherwise called the inner man. Napoleon’s strong determination is linked to an inability to control his impulses, pushing him to commit rape and murder against women. Angele Makholwa's Napoleon bears a striking resemblance to Bonaparte. The latter, if we are to believe Robert Mosnier (2001), also suffered from a psychopathology that manifested itself in an instinct to dominate and an intolerance of frustration. Multiple abandonments, absences, rejections, and mockery of his appearance also marked his childhood and continued throughout his adolescence. Angela Makholwa deliberately and carefully chose the characters' names to signal their destiny since such an occurrence cannot be coincidental. From the local angle, we got some wonderful South African culture and languages sprinkled into the story. In most African cultures, names reflect various aspects of people’s lives and serve as valuable sources of information.

Conclusion

The South African novelist employs a literary approach that denounces and cries out against the violent crimes that have plagued her country for decades. These crimes persist despite the dismantling of the Apartheid segregationist and separatist system. The dehumanizing system that has imposed three separate centuries of development has thus

contributed to unprecedented inequality in terms of opportunity, employment, and well-being, which brings about a huge wealth divide. The prevailing theoretical consensus posits that nations afflicted by high crime rates frequently exhibit pervasive social inequality. Due to economic disadvantage, young girls like Sihle were easily trapped for cheap shoes. From an early age, Napoleon was exposed to the harsh realities of life, violence, and a socio-environment characterized by hostility. Such exposure led to the development of psychopathological symptoms, which contributed to the transformation into the monster he became. Angela Makholwa's writing is clear and unrelenting in its depiction of the dire security situation in post-Apartheid South Africa. She does not merely describe it; she also boldly attacks society's quick judgment of inmates released from prison, making it difficult for them to integrate into society. This repulsive attitude only reinforces those trapped in a vicious cycle of crime, rape, and robbery, making them repeat offenders. As a result, Lucy Khambule, who is passionate about the history of violent crime, is also concerned about the lives of former inmates behind bars, even going so far as to set up a rehabilitation program to give them a new chance.

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