



Universidade de Aveiro Departamento de Línguas e Culturas
2010

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Pimentel Biscaia

Expressões de Poder Feminino em *The
Screaming of the Innocent* de Unity Dow

Empowering Women in Unity Dow's *The
Screaming of the Innocent*



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica do Doutor Kenneth David Callahan, Professor Associado do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro.

To women.

O Júri
Presidente

Dra. Maria Aline Salgueiro Seabra Ferreira
Professora Associada da Universidade de Aveiro

Dra. Doutora Rosa Branca Almeida Figueiredo
Professora Adjunta de Nomeação Definitiva da Escola Superior de Educação, Comunicação e Desporto do Instituto Politécnico da Guarda (arguente)

Dr. Doutor Kenneth David Callahan
Professor Associado da Universidade de Aveiro (orientador)

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To my best female friend who, sadly, is not a feminist and to my best male friend, who is.

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To my colleagues. Without them this dissertation would not have been written.

To my feminist sisters.

Palavras-chave

Unity Dow, *dipheko*, *muti*, feminismo, Botswana, crimes violentos, assimetria de poder.

Resumo

O presente trabalho centra-se no segundo romance da escritora do Botswana Unity Dow, *The Screaming of the Innocent*. Tem por base o ritual assassino comumente designado em África de *muti* ou *dipheko* em Setswana. Partindo da ideia de que os adultos devem às crianças a protecção necessária mas que tal nem sempre se verifica, a escritora questiona este crime e os mecanismos que as algumas mulheres desenvolvem para os ultrapassar e/ou judicialmente fazer sair da impunidade a que estão grandemente votados. Paralelamente, surgem outros crimes contra as mulheres que argutamente lutam para se fazer ouvir numa sociedade caracterizada pela assimetria do poder.

Keywords

Unity Dow, *dipheko*, *muti*, feminism, Botswana, violent crimes, power asymmetry.

Abstract

The following dissertation focuses on Unity Dow's second novel *The Screaming of the Innocent*. The underlying centre is *muti*, a word commonly used to describe ritual murder in Africa, also known as *dipheko* in Setswana. Bearing in mind that adults owe children protection but that they sometimes fail them, the novel questions the general impunity of this crime and presents forms women show of bringing them into light personally and legally. Simultaneously, other crimes are committed against women, who resourcefully find forms of empowerment in a society they know to be asymmetric in power.

Empowering Women in Unity Dow's *The Screaming of the Innocent*



Dcaro Ddam (Ostrich thorn plant) 1999

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Chapter One

Introduction

Significant numbers of the world's population are routinely subject to torture, starvation, terrorism, humiliation, mutilation, and even murder simply because they are female. Crimes such as these against any group other than women would be recognized as a civil and political emergency as well as a gross violation of the victims' humanity. Yet, despite a clear record of deaths and demonstrable abuse, women's rights are not commonly classified as human rights (Bunch: 3).

The Screaming of the Innocent, as the title immediately suggests, revolves around the brutal killing of a twelve-year-old-girl by men seeking power and gratification of several sorts, and the murder goes unsolved, to some extent, which means the murderers are never faced with justice in a court of law. But the novel is about more complex and international situations that concern women in general, not only those of Botswana, and that have positioned women in a community or society where the law does not recognise them as full citizens. Because of that, crimes that are committed against them may not even be regarded as crimes by the judicial system in which they live. When some crimes committed against women are designated as such under the law, women may face an intricate system in which their gender or rather social and political conceptions of their gender, will determine the recognition or not of the crime committed.

Judith Butler in her article "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" quotes Michel Foucault's claim that "juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent" (Butler: 146), going on to say:

Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms – that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even "protection" of individuals related to that political structure through the

contingent and retractable operation of choice. [The] Feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that it is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. This becomes politically problematic if that system can be shown to produce gendered subjects along a differential axis of domination or to produce subjects who are presumed to be masculine (Butler: 146).

Apart from the problematic issues stated above, feminist critique has had to deal with another problematic term, “women”, for it presumes that the subject of research and debate is somehow common to women around the world. It is now undeniable, however, that gender is intertwined with racial, ethnic, class, sexual and other forms of identity. Judith Butler continues:

The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernable in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. The notion of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticized in recent years for its failure to account for the workings of gender oppression in the concrete cultural contexts in which it exists (Butler: 146-147).

The notion of a “universal patriarchy” and the feminist theories which address it may be highly criticized and even discarded as unreliable, not only for failing to substantiate their evidence on particular historical, political, social, racial and regional expressions of identity but also for possessing a discourse in which so called “western” theorists appropriate other cultures to support their own “western” views of women’s oppression. This discourse inevitably leads to notions of a colonising discourse with respect to a supposed “third-world woman”. Judith Butler continues by saying that a universal patriarchy is no longer credible but that:

The notion of a generally shared conception of “women”, the corollary to that framework, has been much more difficult to displace.

[However] My suggestion is that the presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions. Indeed the premature insistence

on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category (Butler: 147).

In her article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” Chandra Talpade Mohanty writes:

An analysis of ‘sexual difference’ in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy or male dominance leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogeneous notion of what I shall call the ‘third world difference’ – that stable, a historical something that apparently oppresses most if not all women in these countries.

(...) This average third-world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and ‘being third world’ (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the ‘freedom’ to make their own decisions (Mohanty: 198 -200).

Scholars have written intensively on what Woman, women, even feminist approaches to Literature are without coming to a consensus of what the words may mean or even who they may represent. Needless to say that the lack of a common basis of understanding on the part of academics makes the task of writing about women in a feminist approach not only difficult but problematic, beginning with the central terms of such an approach. Moreover, scholars continue – perhaps for lack of other words – to use these words themselves within a context where “western” feminism versus everyone else and everyone else’s is recurrent. The European presence in other continents, which has been known as “colonisation”, remains preponderant in the academic field where feminism remains a term difficult to define.

It is unquestionable that many female scholars in Europe have written about women and their oppression from a Euro-centred viewpoint. Germaine Greer herself wrote in the 1999 Flamingo edition of *The Female Eunuch* (first published in 1970) that “[it] does not deal with poor women” for when she wrote it she “did not know them” (Greer: 9), clearly stating that writing about women in 1999 took in a much larger and complex field than she had realised in 1970. It is also unquestionable that some of the so-

called “western” academic work that is published still falls into a colonising and patronising attitude that Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar argue needs “to be continually challenged” for “portray[ing] us as politically immature who need to be versed and schooled in the ethos of western feminism” (Mohanty: 201). Nonetheless, it is equally worrying for failing to assess when one crosses the boundary into unreasonableness to read Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s report in “French Feminism in an International Frame” of a Sudanese scholar’s academic approach to female genital mutilation, which she conveniently named “female circumcision” (Spivak: 51), and Ama Ata Aidoo’s report of the verbal aggression by “western feminists” she was subjected to while presenting a lecture in Hamburg on the particularity of African women (Aidoo: 29).

Both situations exemplify on the one hand the belief that some practices cannot be accepted on the grounds of “cultural respect”, “tradition” or any other reason, and on the other the persistent and disrespectful Euro-centred idea that “white feminism” is somehow more qualified to pronounce itself on the condition of African women than the female academics or observers from Africa itself. Both examples make obvious the very long road that is ahead of scholars everywhere (and consequently of people in general) until, to use Ama Ata Aidoo’s words, “the schism in the fortunes of African and European women that must inevitably haunt the relationship between the two groups for a very long time to come” (Aidoo: 28) is no longer an attempt to disempower anyone. The “schism” is felt in the academic work by not agreeing on what feminism is, along with the search for words that may represent women, their class, their history, their form(s) of oppression(s), their origin or descent, even their sexual orientation. Pinkie Mekgwe argues that words such as ‘Third World Feminism’, “‘African Feminism’, ‘Womanism’, ‘Stiwanism’¹, ‘Afrikana Womanism’ and ‘Nego-feminism’², amongst others, have responded to the anomalies exhibited by mainstream feminism, particularly its inability to address the cultural specificities out of which ‘other’ feminisms are theorised” (Mekgwe: 189). Catherine E. Harnois elaborates on these questions and uses the expression “multiracial feminist theory” to present her analysis of the issues concerning feminist theory. She argues that:

¹ From the acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa (Mekgwe: 189).

² The feminism of negation, or ‘no-ego’ feminism (Mekgwe: 189).

First multiracial theory posits that the relationship between feminist self-identification as feminist and the salience of feminism in women's lives differs for women of different racial and ethnic groups. Second, multiracial feminist theory suggests that the particular factors that lead women to embrace feminism are likely to differ for women of different racial and ethnic groups. And third, multiracial feminism theorizes that what women understand feminism to be may differ across racial and ethnic groups as well (Harnois: 811).

Catherine Harnois shows that whereas "white women gender politics tend to have a specific moment in which they realize that oppression exists, for Black women and other women of color oppression is a lifelong thing" (Harnois: 813). In her article "Conceptualizing feminism(s) in Africa: The challenges facing African women writers and critics" Naomi Nkealah elaborates on the political activism of feminism vis-à-vis the political neutrality assumed by other proposed words such as "humanism" and "womanism". She advocates that "feminism is a political weapon that is indispensable to the task of elevating women above the level of mere housekeepers and reproduction machines. It is a concept that can be reconstructed to acquire meaning within any given culture" (Nkealah: 138). She continues by arguing that "the heterogeneous cultures of Africa" bring to light feminisms that "aim at modifying culture as it affects women in different societies" (Nkealah: 139) and that although a writer of literature read as "feminist" may not be one in practice, her work continues to strive to free women from occupying the periphery of existence (Nkealah: 137 – 138).

In view of these ideas the question to be approached is how women are taken from a peripheral existence to the centre of a more gender equalitarian society in Unity Dow's *The Screaming of the Innocent* and how the author's work operates to lessen the effects of an asymmetric gender based society in a country with the specificity of pre- and post-colonial Botswana, comparative to other African countries. Botswana was a British protectorate, as opposed to a colony, and did not experience the conflicts or warfare of some colonial countries prior to independence in 1966. As suggested by Judith Van Allen: "Botswana can in fact be understood as suffering from a paradox of peace: its transition to political independence, absent not only a national liberation struggle but any nationalist struggle at all, produced political stability at the cost of political

consciousness” (Van Allen: 98). Unlike many other African countries that experienced political turmoil before and after independence, Botswana has had a stable democratic government (even if the Botswana Democratic Party has been the only ruling party since 1966), and well-developed medical and education infrastructures. The country, however, displays one of the world’s “greatest disparities in income” and 40% of the population live “below its own poverty datum line as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic” (Van Allen: 98). Botswana also declared its secularism at the time of independence which, according to Haron and Jenson, “placed Botswana in a predicament”, which was to fail to see the interwoven influence of old and recent religious notions of (national) identity. Eventually, secularism contributed, they argue, “not only to a crisis of religious identity but also to what might be viewed as a crisis of cultural identity” (Haron and Jensen: 186).

Before the arrival of the missionaries in 1812 political and spiritual authority operated in harmony. *Dingaka*, traditional healers, and *Dikgosi*, the Chiefs, represented authority in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate. They insightfully realised that their authority might be undermined or surpassed by the missionaries and tried to restrict their influence by allowing only the “settlement” of a limited number and asking for medical treatment and education in return. The missionaries, however, realised in turn that their influence would be more efficient if they evangelised the *Dikgosi* and through them the people. Consequently, several traditions such as rain making and initiation rites were soon banned by the *Dikgosi* themselves on the grounds of their being incompatible with Christianity. Haron and Jensen propose the idea that by adopting a “secular and modern identity” in 1966 the country marginalised “various religious identities by restricting them to the private arena and not permitting them, at least formally, to enter the public sphere” (Haron and Jensen: 185). The Presidential Task Group attempted to introduce in the document it produced in 1997 the importance of *botho*, the African ideal of communalist humaneness, suggesting awareness on the part of political structures of a conflicting identity crisis, and an attempt to deal with it.

In addressing the issue of identity in today’s Botswana most academics refer to the binary urban/rural as one that, rather than mutually exclusive, it is in fact complementary in the definition and assertion of one’s identity. In fact, many people who

live in urban areas, in Gaborone in particular, frequently visit their families who live in rural areas, thus sustaining a permanent link between “a transformative and transient locale” (Giddings and Hovorka: 217) and a “static and unchanging” one (Giddings and Hovorka: 221). Giddings and Hovorka argue that “concepts of identity, place and mobility establish a conceptual framework in which urban youth’s perceptions and performances of gender are understood in relation to the locale and its related meanings”. By identity/identities they understand “traits, roles and behaviours of an individual or group [that] encompass a number of social indicators such as class, age and ethnicity” and gender being “the process through which differences based on presumed biological sex are defined, imagined, and become significant in specific contexts” (Giddings and Hovorka: 212). Their findings suggest that gender and age hierarchically organise the Batswana³ but that young people (who constitute about 70% of the population in Gaborone) cite “women’s empowerment and gender equality initiatives as a distinctively urban advantage” (Giddings and Hovorka: 218). Significantly, however, the teachers interviewed find that exposure to new ideas on gender equality and change in gender ideologies is “beneficial solely for young women”, many of which claim to continue to feel the constraints of being women even when living in Gaborone, but that there are “no disadvantages for young men” living in the capital (Giddings and Hovorka: 218).

Interestingly, the findings by Giddings and Hovorka suggest that although young people in Gaborone are aware of and openly discuss issues on equal rights and human rights, male and female gender scripts continue to be deep-seated. All participants in this study declare a woman’s role to be a mother and household manager, suggesting, in Judith Van Allen’s words, that “motherhood, not marriage, indicates adulthood” (Van Allen: 102); this may be observed in the Setswana polite address for adult women “Mma”⁴, meaning mother. Some youths go as far as stating that a man’s leadership role is as natural as it is a cultural attribute, that “not listening to a man” is a sign of disrespectfulness not uncommon in “young women today” (Giddings and Hovorka: 224). Van Allen also states that divisions of labour and power continue to be gendered but that

³ Batswana is the plural term for the residents of Botswana, while Motswana is the singular (Giddings and Hovorka: 226).

⁴ Hence Mma-Neo, meaning Neo’s mother.

many women criticise men for not supporting their children, suggesting an idealised proximity of parental responsibility. In their article “Empowered leaders’? Perspectives on women heading households in Latin America and Southern Africa” Kavita Datta and Cathy McIlwaine claim that in Botswana “female leaders of households do not necessarily adopt egalitarian and enabling patterns of decision-making (...)”. As argued by Botswana women⁵, the “cultural” or “tswana” way of life has changed and “women’s identity now rests on other signifiers [rather than marriage] such as bearing children and acquiring a dwelling” (Datta and McIlwaine: 44-45).

Identity in Botswana results from the intersectionality of history, education, age, class, place, (im)mobility, ethnicity and gender, a process susceptible to personal, social and political conflict in a country where male and female power continues to be asymmetric in its legal, social, economic and political representations. This asymmetry is the subject matter of the article “How the global informs the local: The Botswana Citizenship Case”, published in the journal significantly entitled *Health Care for Women International*, where Unity Dow elaborates on her own opinions about the position of women in many societies and in Botswana in particular. Not only were women excluded from political decision making in the past, they continue to be in the present, where they are servants, cooks, personal secretaries and props (Dow, 2001: 321-322); that is, their presence is articulated through men’s activities or functions. She argues that “[t]here cannot be a discussion about human rights without a discussion about women and the law” (Dow, 2001: 323), which her own personal judicial battle against The Citizenship Act (1984) is symbolic of. Broadly speaking, The Citizenship Act recognized as citizens of Botswana only the children of men from the country, excluding the children of women who were married to men of other nationalities, as Unity Dow herself was. She contested the law arguing that it discriminated against her on the grounds of sex, which the Constitution did not permit. The case of *The Attorney General of the Republic of Botswana versus Unity Dow* has become symbolic of a woman’s legal confrontation against a system that unquestionably favoured the male line when awarding citizenship.

⁵ Botswana accounts for 47% of female households, one of the highest rates in the world (Datta and McIlwaine: 44).

It has been argued by some that notwithstanding its symbolism, the Botswana Citizenship Case, as Unity Dow's judicial fight later became known, is mother-centred, rather than woman-centred, suggesting that motherhood is at the core of the matter. But Unity Dow herself insists that although many people at the time "saw the children and their plight", she sees the case as opposing "a women's rights violation" (Dow, 2001: 326). The trial raised issues where the parties involved tried to establish some sense of identity in a conflict beyond American⁶ and Botswana citizenship. Faced with an accusation of sex discrimination, and presumably also because of the influence of Americans and American organisations in Botswana that supported Unity Dow and publicised the case in the American media, it was counter argued that the "the heartbeat of Botswana is not the Constitution but its culture and traditional practices" and that Botswana has a "patrilineal law in its nature" (Dow, 2001: 326). The debate then pointed to the binary of national and foreign, "traditional" and "modern" while trying to discern where the frontiers between the two were or if they were possible to discern. Unity Dow would eventually win by three to two, a victory that nonetheless was tight enough to suggest that the country continues to experience doubts in this area. Not surprisingly, it was not until 2004 that Emang Basadi! (Stand Up, Women!), a non-governmental organisation in Botswana that had adamantly sustained that both Tswana customary law and common law "oppress women and must be rejected" (Van Allen: 103), that the 1984 law was changed.

In the same article Unity Dow contends that it is also clear that law reflects the perceptions of gender roles, that it is "gender discriminatory" (Dow, 2001: 326) and that "the definition of concepts has been the realm of men and women have to either force a rethinking or accept their exclusion as legitimate" (Dow, 2001: 321). In view of these arguments, it seems adequate to say that her position was political, even politically feminist; that it took her first, and other women later, from a legal non-existence into legally recognised citizens. This struggle for women's rights and the search for identity and place in today's Botswana continue in her literary work that to be discussed herein in a feminist perspective for as Ama Ata Aidoo writes:

⁶ Unity Dow was married to an American and their children had American citizenship.

Feminism is an essential tool in women's struggles everywhere. And that includes African women. In fact, whenever some of us are asked rather bluntly whether we are feminists, we not only also bluntly answer "yes," but even go on to assert that every woman, as well as every man, should be a feminist (Aidoo: 25).

In view of the above *The Screaming of the Innocent* will be analysed in a feminist light, although Unity Dow has not openly declared herself to be a feminist. As argued by Naomi N. Nkealah, African women writers will tend to avoid the word even when they are active participants in the struggle to change the status of women in society for fear of being identified with a western ideology, an argument that works more to the advantage of men than of women (Nkealah: 137). She argues that "feminism goes beyond a search for public acceptance and recognition; it is a conscious process of self-renewal in thought, feeling and action. Feminism, therefore, has its ultimate goal the triumphal emancipation of the woman as a unique, distinct individual with a mind uncluttered by patriarchal beliefs and abusive submission to tradition" (Nkealah: 135). Some African women writers have been "agents of transformation" (Nkealah: 140), a key notion one easily relates with Amantle's consciousness and activism and with other female characters in the novels by Unity Dow.

All four novels focus on the lives of women in rural and/or urban Botswana and their endeavours to cope with family, professional and academic life in a country where the binaries traditional and modern and male and female roles may be the source of personal or family conflict, but also of growth and accomplishment. In all four novels men are almost invariably the ones to misuse power "demonstrating that villainy and oppression in African societies have migrated post-colonially from white to black practitioners" (Gagiano: 36). In an interview Unity Dow expressed her view on these binaries:

We are people in transition, a people in cultures that are weak in terms of relationship to global power. There is no doubt that we always feel under assault, culturally, that is, especially in terms of music, food, clothing...At the same time, there is no doubt that no culture can remain isolated. So for me it's about striking

a balance between remaining true to ourselves in the light of cultural interaction and also about changing as a result of that interaction (Kalua, 2009: 48).

Unity Dow's novels may be said to be concerned with issues of transition and balance in today's Botswana, with women in particular who strive to find and affirm their identity in times in which these binaries are constantly intertwined. In *Far and Beyond* (2000) Mara is brutally attacked by her partner and spends three weeks in hospital. Mimi is told that her husband to be is supposed to "go a bit astray" and hit her (Dow, 2000: 148) but that divorce is shameful, for whatever reasons. Mosa resorts to dancing and choreography to tell the Minister of Education about the well-known but not-dealt with sexual abuse of female pupils at her school. In *The Screaming of the Innocent* (2002) a twelve-year-old is barbarically killed by four men; it is a young woman, Amantle, who inadvertently returns to the family of the missing child the clothes she was wearing when she disappeared and that the police were supposed to have misplaced, re-opening five years later a case where the perpetrators are identified, if not brought to justice in the course of the novel. In *Juggling Truths* (2003) it is a well-known fact why a Catholic priest is called Rra. Vaselina. In *The Heavens May Fall* (2006) Nancy, a teenager and her family, take rape charges to court only to see that the violence lived before has been extended to the courtroom and Jane miscarries twice after being beaten by her husband. All the novels are centred on women and their multidimensional plights to break away from silence and gain equally multidimensional empowerment.

The Screaming of the Innocent narrates the events surrounding the killing of a girl for ritual murder. Neo, herself the result of a sexual assault, suffers a particularly violent death that young Amantle is determined to see properly investigated. As Amantle engages in ensuring police will thoroughly look into the crime committed in a remote village in the Okavango Valley, she realises she will have to use her education, her own short but already significant politically committed life and her professional connections to successfully challenge a male dominated profession such as the police. Her challenge manifests in language, decision making and outward determination in the pursuit of murderers who have long enjoyed impunity. Her challenge also asserts her power that, once acknowledged by villagers, police officers and even high rank politicians, determines

that she be taken as a woman who will be apt to question why the screaming of the innocent has not been heard.

Chapter Two

Empowering Women: identity and affirmation

[T]here's a lot of women empowerment here in Gaborone compared to the rest of Botswana. And women are allowed to go to schools and get an education...I think girls are now being raised that you don't conform to any man, you're not going to be submissive to any man...' I have a mind of my own. I'm supposed to be in some way independent from you [a male partner]'.
16-year-old-female living in Gaborone (Giddings and Hovorka: 218)

Although only sixteen, this young woman is aware of the intersectionality between gender empowerment and education opportunities for young women living in Gaborone. The recognition of education as a factor of social upward mobility encouraged Amantle's parents' decision and their herculean financial efforts to support her education, in spite of the impoverished living conditions they experienced and that had delayed her finishing school for some time due to a three-year-interruption. However, her father had said, "She must be prepared for a new tomorrow, for greater things: I agree the child must go to school. Yes: we must help her meet the new wind" (Dow, 2002: 24). Amantle, "child of the Motsei and Meleko had been about to embark on an unprecedented journey" (Dow, 2002: 35) that would move her from a peripheral to a centred existence. Amantle's sense of existence and indeed identity begin with her name. In an effort redolent of a crude colonising attitude, pupils were anglicised by being given English names when entering school. In spite of Amantle's eagerness to attend school, she battles forcefully for her affirmation there through her name, which was not "the English name". It is also from an early age that she perceives forms of female affirmation at school beginning with Mrs. Seme defying the status given by age and social class and questioning Mrs. Modiega's decision that children could not have smelly blankets to protect them from the cold. Mrs. Modiega, principal of the school and daughter of a chief, contends that with Mrs. Seme everything had to be a political statement to which the latter resorts "everything is political" (Dow, 2002: 40). Mrs. Seme's impertinence is explained by the fact of her being from South Africa, a remark pointing at the political

struggle that had been taking place over a lengthy period in the neighbouring country but at the time unusual in Botswana.

Amantle's outstanding academic success resulted from a concerted effort on the part of all her family that partook in the "family dream" and "banded together" (Dow, 2002: 26), a non-gendered family effort that soon revealed its power when Amantle taught her father how to write his name "so he didn't have to put his thumb print on papers at the post office when his sons sent money from South Africa" (Dow, 2002: 27). As evidenced in Jane Sunderland's work on gender and language, pupils are aware that learning English and the proficiency shown are factors of social mobility and identity. Amantle's poor but supportive and enlightened family allow her to dream of higher education and although it is postponed until she obtains the scholarship to attend medical school in Britain, it is also a means of bonding the family tighter and a proudly discussed topic. This presentation of Amantle's family seems to point to the fact that family endearment and support may exist regardless of poverty, which *per se* does not account for dysfunctional characteristics a family may have. In the meantime between finishing school and continue her education, Amantle begins her internship in Gaphala. On her first day as Tirelo Sachaba Participant (TSP) at the Gaphala Clinic Amantle pays special attention to her appearance:

Amantle was wearing a brown scarf to neatly hold back her recently braided hair. The only jewellery she was wearing today was a pair of plain silver earrings and a watch. That morning she'd been very careful not to dress up too much. She hadn't wanted to seem glamorous or in any way frivolous, and she'd been mainly concerned about being taken seriously in her job.

For her first day of work as a Tirelo Sechaba Participant – a TPS, or national-service worker – she was wearing a skirt that covered her knees. (Dow, 2002: 24-25).

Amantle's perception of signs of femininity is interrelated with their incompatibility with professionalism and professional seriousness. For that reason she purposely hides what she believes would be physical representations of frivolousness, had she "dressed up", and meagrely keeps to a skirt that covers her knees and a scarf that covers her hair, lest her recent braiding might be noticed. Michelle Commeyras and

Mercy Montsi write that “it is obvious that dress is a powerful means of communication that is closely linked to gender and sexuality. Many social distinctions can be communicated by dress. One of the most important is sexual, with regard to learned gender roles” (Commeyras and Montsi: 337). Amantle’s preoccupation is an expression of the gender-based ideas that involve the participation of women in the public sphere and that Unity Dow alludes to by saying these rare women are immediately confronted with “issues of adaptations [that] are so basic that many think they hardly deserve mention. One example is that of dress”. She exemplifies by revealing that a colleague woman judge was required to dress “in a particular way” following her appointment. Although it might be argued that men have to “comply to proscribed ways of dress, (...) the point is that many women entering the public sphere feel they must change in many ways in order to be able to fit in. They feel they must change in terms of dress, manner of speaking, and manner of relating to others. They feel they must adapt to the culture they find in place” (Dow, 2001: 322). Taking into consideration that the dress code is an issue made known to women entering the public sphere, notions of suitability, professionalism and even femininity underlie the choices they make or are asked/induced to make. These notions are discussed by Pumla Dineo Gqola who, in the line of Unity Dow’s ideas, writes that “the dominant talk of ‘empowerment of women’ also translates into the expectation that women should adapt to the current system, being ‘empowered’ into position, rather than transforming the workplace into a space that is more receptive to women’s contributions, needs and wants” (Gqola: 115 – 116). By being required to adapt rather than transform the workplace these women are granted the status of “honorary men” (Gqola: 116), which ultimately results in the invisibilisation of women. When women occupy places of economic and social importance they are often portrayed as examples of “more than pretty faces” or asked to display traits of femininity, suggesting they “submit to the patriarchal ‘cult of femininity’ in a global late-capitalist patriarchal order” (Gqola: 116). Paradoxically, outside work women may often be asked or influenced by the dominant gender-talk to set limits on their femininity. This discourse is particularly recurrent in courts of law where a female complainant of an alleged sexual assault will see her perceived forms of femininity as the triggering factor for the alleged defendant’s

behaviour. Pumla Dineo Gqola argues that these notions derive from inscribed codes of feminine passivity and masculine aggression where the claim that women cannot say what they mean or mean what they say becomes a serious form of oppression (Gqola: 117). Both Liz Kelly and Steven Robins give an accurate account of how this claim takes a central position in a society where, in the words of Robins, the “sexualisation of politics and the politicisation of sexuality” (Robins: 412) have become an inescapable issue. Robins’s article on the Zuma Rape Trial analyses sexual politics within the context of competing public discourses on sexuality and masculinities that continue to be only too active in the present. During the trial it was argued that Star⁷ was a seductress and that the defendant only responded as he was expected to.⁸ In Pumla Dineo Gqola’s ironic words it is a contradiction to live in a country “where women are so ostensibly empowered and yet cannot communicate what they want sexually” (Gqola: 118).

Perceived notions of femininity that women are expected to show expand to the gendered discourses used by men and women and that Ige and De Kadt, quoted by Jane Sunderland, say play a significant role in constructing gender and identity. (Sunderland: 130). Processes such as the semantic derogation⁹ of women, the tendency for a female word of a male-female pair to change over time in a derogatory way, have their respective representation in social relations and activities. It is because Amantle’s grandmother is seen as a witch that she is beaten almost to death by the villagers, whereas diviners are respected for their knowledge and summoned to assist people in multiple situations, enjoying social prestige and recognition. Women are expected not to talk or talk very little in the company of men, suggesting that their silence is gender-based and that discursively¹⁰ limited women will also be unable to exhibit empowered responses. Breaking this discursive silence becomes a form of affirmation that Motlatsi Kakang uses when she goes to the distant Police Station accompanied by Shosho, who

⁷ Name used to refer to the complainant during the trial.

⁸ The Zuma Rape Trial was the stage for many notions. It was presided over by judge Willem van der Merwe who, among many misinformed assumptions on how rape victims behave, had the unfortunate idea of quoting Kipling at the end, saying “If you can control your sexual urges, then you are a man, my son” (Robins: 316).

⁹ Expression used by Muriel Schultz in “Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance?” in 1975.

¹⁰ Discourse in this context is used “as a practical, social and cultural phenomenon through which users of language accomplish social acts and participate in social interaction” (Thetela: 178).

had found Neo's clothes, to enquire after the presumed ongoing investigation on her daughter's disappearance. Age, social status and gender establish the rules in the dialogue that unfolds:

An uncle told the police officer, 'We've come to find out about the clothes Shosho has found: we want to see if they're Neo's'. The officer had responded, 'Do you want to make a statement?' Mma-Neo interjected. 'Statement about what? I don't understand: we made statements describing how Neo was dressed the day she disappeared.' The previous taking of statements had been laborious: each person had had to tell his or her story in Setswana (...) after which the police officer had muttered the translation into English (...). Mma-Neo hadn't been in the mood for a repeated performance. 'I'm sure this man here – what's your name: Shosho? – yes, Shosho here must've told you what we've found.'

'But we want to see for ourselves. That was my daughter. I have to see what was found; I can't just hear it from others. Please.'

'Listen: we'll get the clothes, and we'll bring them to your village.' The detective sergeant had hoped to use his authoritative voice to make the mother retreat.

'Why can't we see them today? We've come this far.' Neo's mother had been insistent.

'You can't see them today (...).'

'Then we'll wait,' Motlatsi Kakang had stated, stubbornly.' (Dow, 2002: 61 – 63)

The dialogue with the police officer is introduced by a presumably older uncle of Motlatsi's, but she soon intervenes to ask her own questions, thus breaking the chain of silence and assuming an empowered participation. The reference to the translation from Setswana to English suggests that for the villagers the inability to speak both languages may at times be a form of disempowerment, but Motlatsi does not permit this to deter her from her line of questioning and dismisses the need to write anything down, and with it the use of English, gaining control over the situation. The police officer, in return, uses his own social and discursive power by proposing to take another statement and resorting to an authoritative tone, an approach which proves unsuccessful. In her research with young people in Gaborone Giddings and Hovorka report an example of the relationship between conforming to a gender script and challenging it. While a nineteen-year-old male explained the "importance of a woman having a 'deep respect for her husband'" an

eighteen-year-old female interrupted him saying 'okay, I disagree with this'. They write that "[A]s such, she challenged the rural-based gender script in two distinct ways: first, by interrupting an older male while he was speaking and second, by disagreeing with the ideas an older male was presenting" (Giddings and Hovorke: 223- 224). By challenging the gender script, Motlatsi demonstrates firstly her awareness of it, has adequate self-reflexivity to understand her stance on gender scripts and has sufficient agency to intervene with respect to the issues.

Amantle's uniqueness vis-à-vis her male colleagues is made known from the moment they are chosen to stay with a host family, whom they are supposed to assist in several house chores. In a TSP selecting proceeding that Amantle finds humiliating, Daniel Modise is not an asset a family wishes to take for, as a young man, his chores will not include looking after children or the elderly unlike Amantle herself who "was a girl, and taking care of other people was what she'd been trained to do from an early age" (Dow, 2002: 42). Daniel's indifference to being "picked up" also derives from his longing to be at home where technology and family would much rather please him. He is finally taken by the head man and his wife, who "were not at all happy to take [him]" (Dow, 2002: 42), but who wish to set an example of collected effort and sacrifice. Daniel's gender is therefore a drawback that will be tolerated. Daniel will however participate in the group of five led by Amantle, who gather to assist the villagers, and he will contribute to assess facts and people involved in the murder.

Once a home is selected, Amantle plans her professional posture. Empowered with eagerness to work to the best of her abilities, she punctually arrives at the clinic, only to realise that her enthusiasm is not shared by the nurses, who abuse their position as her superiors and know of the patients' needs for their medical knowledge. The generalised realisation of these unbalanced powers dictates that social/professional status, not age, is the deciding factor in the relationship between nurses and patients. The latter abdicate of any discursive or behavioural expression of challenge, for fear of not being given the medical attention they need. At this stage Amantle has to refrain from displaying signs of resentment or challenge to the recognised authority when the nurses refuse to call her by her name thus asserting her unimportance in the clinic's hierarchy

and work. Power is shifted from the nurses to Amantle only when the clothes of the missing girl are retrieved and identified by her mother. “The TSP girl” or “the storeroom girl” (Dow, 2002: 51) gains identity and becomes Amantle. The box with the clothes, which had obviously been in the clinic before Amantle’s arrival but that had not been given to the family, is cause for alarm on the part of the nurses. Simultaneously, this discovery sets in motion a chain of events that had been interrupted five years before and that all realise as pivotal in the accusatory position the villagers will adopt henceforth. Aggression and anguish replace the former acceptance of authority. Once at the Gaphala Police Station the “simple villagers” (Dow, 2002: 67) are once again dismissed with the excuse that the girl had been killed by lions. The police officers once again use their social and discursive power to secure their authority over the villagers and the situation in which all participants are aware of the central focus verbalised by Motlatsi as she leaves, “My daughter was killed – by people who expected you’d do nothing about it. Are you going to let them get away with it, as has been the case every time they’ve killed?” (Dow, 2002: 65). The basic notion of the trafficking of human beings being something “big men” want to “harvest” to “strengthen their business or maintain their position of power” (Dow, 2002: 129) as the reason for Neo’s disappearance is never a debatable question to the villagers or the police, but it is the discovery of the box with the clothes that prompts the villagers to act, unite and rebel against faceless untouchables. The village unity which derives from the box with the clothes may invert the position of power and “the villagers may execute their own brand of justice” (Dow, 2002: 147). As Amantle is asked to give her statement at the male-dominated police station she demonstrates through her discourse she will not be intimidated; calmness and self-confidence sided by formal education bring the police officer to inadvertently disclose information about the case. As suggested by Ige and de Kadt, “the central concept of ‘respect’ is highly gender sensitive” (Ige and de Kadt: 151) and Amantle’s skilful ability to affirm gender differences is seen as female insubordination, rebelliousness and non-cooperation. Seeking to sustain male power, the police officer responds to Amantle’s challenge with orders and accusations of interference with police investigation. For Constable Nnono, who identifies Amantle as having been involved in another “disruptive” situation two years before, the young

woman represents a threat to the male social and professional order he feels to be already at peril. The typing of documents equates him with a girl in a place where “Pretty girls wearing short skirts would [only] be good for morale” (Dow, 2002: 93).

In her article “A coming of age? Re-conceptualising gender and development in urban Botswana” Kavita Datta argues that several women’s organisations have pointed out that “the inclusion of men would pose significant challenges to their working practices. Two respondents (...) highlighted this concern when they reported: Working with men is not easy, especially if there are many men. [In such a situation], you will need more women in there - and women who are not intimidated” (Datta: 263). Amantle’s empowerment also derives from her dismissal of any kind of intimidation, whether discursive or the result of age, profession or gender.

Consequently, her insurgence at the Maun Police Station leads the commander to make use of other forms of persuasion to disentangle the obstacle the young woman has shown to be. He telephones Mrs. Molapo, the head of the TSPs in Gaborone, and asks her, as a favour, to move Amantle elsewhere in a tactic that is supposed to protect her. Mrs. Molapo is socially and professionally in a position of power that conveniently allows her to openly display her disregard for police officers. The station commander knows that “Mrs. Molapo wasn’t about to be tricked into organising a transfer just because some station commander thought the police ruled the world” (Dow, 2002: 95), which is why he argues that she would be ensuring the young woman’s protection. As suggested by Ige and de Kadt “discursive strategies are employed by men in their attempt to resist change and hold on to power” (Ige and de Kadt: 159). Instead of adopting a more authoritative discursive approach, the police officer refers to Mrs. Molapo’s inability to “appreciate the seriousness of the matter” and shifts responsibility of further events from him to her (Dow, 2002: 96). The strategy reveals itself not only ineffective, but counterproductive for Mrs. Molapo is so intrigued that she telephones Amantle herself attempting to discern the real reasons behind the police officer’s request. Amantle does not completely disclose what has erupted in the village but requests and is granted permission to continue her work there.

Amantle stays in Gaphala and because “she became intrigued and involved” (Dow, 2002: 101) she “was finding herself in the centre of the action” (Dow, 2002: 102). She strategically plans what to do and her friends Boitumelo Kukama, Naledi Binang and Nancy Madison, later on also Daniel, join her. In common they have youth, education and a clear idea of righteousness. Amantle takes a position of non-complicity¹¹ adopted by women such as Disanka’s mother, wife and even his daughter, who comfortably requests to go to a boarding school when she realises that her father is a murderer.

Once Boitumelo is contacted, Amantle gains the self-confidence to begin working on the standpoint that will change her centrality and empowerment in the unfolding of the events. She telephones the police commander and immediately sets out empowering discursive strategies: she identifies herself as Ms. Bokaa and will not accept being called “little girl” or “young lady” (Dow, 2002: 107); she interrupts the police officer and uses irony to refer to the complexity of his bureaucratic work. By engaging in these strategies, Amantle breaks away from age, gender and social status as determinant factors in interpersonal relationships and establishes herself as the leader:

As soon as Amantle finished her phone conversation with Boitumelo, she addressed the group of villagers around her. ‘Let’s start by agreeing on what we want, what you want.’ She was undoubtedly the leader: through finding the box, she’d become the central person in the affair. Also because she was standing to the police, she’d earned the villagers’ respect. By now the clinic had evolved into being the nerve centre of the events taking shape (Dow, 2002: 116).

Amantle’s leadership reflects on her lapse between “we” and “you”. Although she is not one of the villagers, she partakes in their quest for justice. She personifies incorruptibility and her transgression against a system they know to be inefficient is regarded as brave for it aims at achieving a greater good. Motlatsi herself had consciously transgressed her gender and social position at the police station five years before when Neo’s clothes were found and the family deceived as to their whereabouts. When told the clothes were not there anymore, she rhetorically asked the constable ‘Why didn’t you say so before?’. “She hadn’t been fooled by any of the officers: a dead daughter gives people

¹¹ Pumla Dineo Gqola sees complicity as the silence of people regarding gender based violence. She argues that patterns of complicity require historicised feminist undoing (Gqola: 111).

strength. She'd never had thought she could challenge a man of the law" (Dow, 2002: 64). The villagers had later also challenged the law by symbolically destroying a police vehicle, an act the police presumed was an isolated one, expecting that the furore that gave rise to it would soon wear down, as indeed it did.

Amantle's demand that the villagers be given an answer brings about a meeting at the Conference Room in the Ministry of Safety and Security in Gaborone to discuss the course to give this challenge. Five men and two women are present; the minister himself, Mading, Rolang, the minister's permanent secretary, Selepe, the chief of police, Pako, the deputy attorney general, Gape, the Health Minister, Mrs. Molapo, director of Tirelo Sechaba and Naledi Binang, a state council. The meeting soon becomes a display of power and battle ground for protagonism. Selepe exhibits his virility in his being "almost completely covered in medals" jacket (Dow, 2002: 140) and symbolically places his phallic baton on his right and his hat on his left. He initiates the meeting by immediately questioning young Naledi's presence and not only does he object to it, he wilfully asks the "young lady" to "pour the tea" (Dow, 2002: 141). Selepe uses his discursive power to ascertain the gender scripts he identifies with. He "was clearly in charge" but he "knew he wasn't really the boss, although he'd loved to be" (Dow, 2002: 141). By introducing the people at the table and putting forward the reasons for being there, he seeks to compensate his own frustrated ego for the establishing of a ministry where he held a junior position. He directs his anger at the men there who hadn't "taken stern measures" (Dow, 2002: 142) against Amantle and most particularly at Mrs. Molapo. In his words Mrs. Molapo would not be at this meeting, if one of her TSPs did not think she was Sherlock Holmes. Male linguistic power expresses itself in the irony used and topic control, in this case, the villagers and their claims. Dominance is therefore asserted and gender asymmetry is conveyed in the form of verbosity. Along with dominance Selepe establishes gender difference by deprecating Mrs. Molapo's perceived emotive female nature:

The first question came from TSP director Mrs. Molapo. 'In your assessment of the evidence before you, what would you say happened to the child?' Police Chief Selepe now used Mrs. Molapo's question to put her in her place. 'That, director, is confidential police information. This isn't a trial; it's a briefing to enable the police to resolve a potentially volatile situation peacefully. What I need from you is

information to assist in that resolution. I hope I'm making myself clear.' 'No, sir, you haven't made yourself clear at all.'

Police Chief Selepe implored her: 'Director, director, please be professional: there's no need for emotions in this room.' He knew he was being condescending; he meant to be: he'd believed for a long time that the best way to rile a woman was to suggest she was being emotional (Dow, 2002: 143).

One can suggest that the tone of voice and perhaps even body language might also have concurred to establish gender differences and polarisation. Mrs. Molapo does get angry and Selepe is able to divert the topic of the conversation from the motives behind Neo's disappearance and the men responsible for it to Amantle and the eminence of a riot. As suggested by Ann E. Cudd and Leslie E. Jones "Accepting the activities, attitudes and proclivities which are typically associated with men as 'normal' or 'standard' for human beings would render the activities, attitudes and proclivities which are typically associated with women, when different, abnormal or substandard. For instance, women will appear 'highly emotional' or 'hysterical' when they display more emotion and concern than men" (Cudd and Jones: 75). Mrs. Molapo's line of dealing with the actual centre of the matter, the disappearance of a child, could also imply another sign of her own womanhood, one more reason for Selepe to use motherhood as a means to "put her in her place".

The topic is eventually turned to the missing girl and, although *dipheko* (traditional strengthening medicine) is recognised as the doing of powerful men and a highly possible reason for the disappearance of the child, the issue returns to the control of the recently and temporarily empowered villagers. Mading, who had preferred unrestrained force in the past, now prefers conciliation and proposes a *kgotla* meeting. The discourse of the people present at the meeting evokes distinct notions of what is expected from the men and women there. Mrs. Molapo, who raises questions regarding even the very thin size of Pako's file, evinces a discourse of resistance and even subversion. The men, in turn, perform a discursive competition that reflects their own animosity impelled by their knowing about each other's corruption. Whether these men suspect the involvement of one of them in a ritual murder or not is not entirely clear. Still, when Selepe says "These people can, and have, in the past (...) influenced police

investigations” he knows he is “swimming in dangerous waters” (Dow, 2002: 146). It is not in the best interest of the men in this room to pursue this line of enquiry. Not surprisingly, it is therefore agreed that “few ritual murders are solved” (Dow, 2002: 146), that “These ritual-murder cases aren’t easy to handle” (Dow, 2002: 150).

Nonetheless, this one is eventually faced at the end of the novel when the *kgotla* meeting takes place. Strategically placed on a stand are Disanka, Mading and the Maun police commander, later joined by Amantle, Boitumelo, Motlatsi and Rra-Naso. Unlike the meeting held in Gaborone, women are not so overwhelmingly outnumbered by men suggesting that power has shifted a little. This change might be seen as a sign of transition where women empowered by education and youth have been able to hold a position in the meeting traditionally male dominated. Unknowingly, however, the young women sit at the side of murderers and, the villager who helped them and that they referred to as the “village link” (Dow, 2002: 163), Rra-Naso, sits in front of them. Motlatsi and Rra-Naso are asked to “ascend the podium” (Dow, 2002: 198), suggesting recognition of their claims and elevation to the level of men. “She [Amantle] and Boitumelo looked very out of place among the older and predominantly male government officials.” (Dow, 2002: 200). They are unaware that the people involved are close and that they are only playing the final piece of a chapter whose ending is not for them to decide. The dominant discourse is supposed to be that of the villagers and their representatives, a tactic aimed at securing their confidence and retrieving the evidence that would implicate them in the murder. Mading says he is there to “*request, not demand*” (Dow, 2002: 200) (Italics in the original) that the items of clothing be returned so that the police investigation can continue. The government officials and their supporters get the clothes back, clearly more at ease with and knowledgeable of the means to employ to reach their objectives. Age, education and social position do play a part in the final result, but are insufficient for the young women to obtain a satisfactory victory. To be sure, had it not been for Rra-Naso’s confession, they would have wrongly believed themselves to have achieved all their goals. Youth and naivety may be interrelated and be ultimately the reason for failure, but they also empower them with considerable strength to continue questioning a system they know to be imperfect and pursue a more just one. So that this meeting could take place,

the young people had already followed paths and engaged in law breaking activities by making an unauthorised copy of the Neo Kakang file, taking a government vehicle and hiding in the Okavango Valley. It is in spite of their achievements as individuals and as a group that they fail to accomplish more satisfying results. Nevertheless, and in view of the profile of the murderers they had previously made, that men, not women are driven to *dipheko* and that “there must be a village link” (Dow, 2002: 163) they conclude that “It’d be irresponsible of us to lead the villagers to think this murder will be solved; it most probably won’t” (Dow, 2002: 166). As the novel closes, Amantle is faced with the task of telling the villagers that the only evidence linking the men – indeed Disanka’s blood was on the recovered shirt since he used it to cover his hand bitten by Neo; this would link him directly to the killing – it is “once again in the hands of the enemy” (Dow, 2002: 215).

Women’s empowerment takes a particular approach in the character of Amantle who is often seen vis-à-vis other characters, mainly Motlatsi Kakang and Rra-Naso, for her being able to decidedly, even courageously, act in a manner that will direct the villagers to the discovery of the people involved in Neo’s death. Motlatsi is an educated woman; she had been a teacher before deciding to live in Gaphala and had been involved in a committee for preventing crime. But her own rape and Neo’s death have rendered her dispirited and even defeated. She wonders whether Neo, being the child of a violent encounter and small for her age, “was [not] born marked for something like this” (Dow, 2002: 79). Although Motlatsi finds courage to continue living and searching for answers, it is insufficient to make her organise a well-planned response. She wilts physically and mentally and it is for Rra-Naso to support his neighbour, even if he too suffers from a debilitating illness. He knows that Neo’s death cannot be imputed to god or the ancestors, but to “cruel men seeking power” (Dow, 2002: 79) for he was involved, even if his involvement was the consequence of intimidation, manipulation and poverty. His participation has without a doubt caused him distress and premature aging, but his support derives from guilt and remorse. He feels that his supportive attitude praised by fellow villagers is undeserving and refers to himself as old and weak:

Some of the villagers murmured about how Rra-Naso had been affected by Neo’s death: ‘Neo would be the same age as Naso – seventeen, she’d be.’ ‘A man with a

white heart, Rra-Naso; this has aged him before his time.’ ‘Such a sweet man; so much love. He’s supported Mma-Neo through her ordeal – a good man.’

In response to the compliments and expressions of sympathy, Rra-Naso reached for and squeezed Mma-Neo’s hand. It was obvious he was embarrassed by the villagers’ sympathetic looks and comments. ‘It’s Mma-Tebogo who needs your sympathies, not me. I’m just a *weak old man*: don’t mind me’ (Dow, 2002: 118) (My italics).

Rra-Naso demonstrates that he is a complex human being. He is clearly the voice of reason when he alerts others to the importance of not spilling blood by not harming the nurses. He rationally states that murder is the work of other human beings, not the result of god or the rage of ancestors. Nonetheless, when Neo was still alive, he was one of the men to hold Ramago down, a deaf-mute who was brutally lashed to be cured of his “insanity” (Dow, 2002: 178). This holding down of a young man whose disability was not to be overcome by such violence may be symbolic of Rra-Naso’s future participation in holding Neo down. Rra-Naso had “only been doing his duty” (Dow, 2002: 179) but the “strength and determination that had seemed to possess him that day” (Dow, 2002: 179-180) have given place to the awareness that once blood is spilt, it cannot be washed away. His appeal for caution is interpreted as softness caused by sadness. For Amantle, however, he is the image of gentleness and inspires respect in her from the moment she meets him. It is not until Rra-Naso’s disclosure of his participation in the murder that Amantle wonders what a murderer might look like, reassessing at the same time her own inability to have perhaps at least glimpsed that the link in the village might be this man. As Annie Gaggiano writes, the novel “depicts[s] processes of learning, rather than cut-and-dried programmes or pre-digested conclusions” (Gaggiano: 39). Rra-Naso’s decision to come forward and reveal the circumstances and people involved in the murder and his subsequent suicide may be interpreted as a form of atonement as well as a demonstration of courage he had lacked before and which he attributed to the drug the killers had given him.

Motlatsi and Amantle do not differ insofar as being women who probe the status quo where their gender determines their discursive participation, but the former is motivated by her dead child, suggesting that motherhood is the propeller of her

challenge. Amantle, conversely, is motivated because she becomes “intrigued and involved”, because she does not “run away, as most people would” (Dow, 2002: 101). Her own participation derives from her sense of responsibility and courage that result in her affirmation and assertion of righteousness in a social context where women are not expected to demonstrate these characteristics. Courage versus cowardice (she does not run away, unlike most people), agency versus passivity and education versus illiteracy are the binaries she faces. These ultimately result in the woman versus man binary and in the protagonist’s representation of perceived socially highly regarded merits.

Motlatsi and Amantle do differ insofar as age and personal suffering are concerned. Suffering has debilitated Motlatsi but not Amantle whose youth enables her to organise and lead the struggle against men who have long been in control of many forms of power. Motlatsi’s religious convictions place god and the ancestors together in her speech and prayers, suggesting that she combines original spiritual beliefs with beliefs introduced by Europeans. In fact, the villagers wish to retrieve the clothes so that they can take them to a diviner who, hopefully, will solve the murder, a definite improvement considering the police’s ludicrous explanations. The young people, however, fear that the clothes might be ruined and evidence lost. Once again the juxtaposition of traditional and forensic practices is represented by older and younger people, suggesting that transition is at work.

The journey to the Okavango Valley and camping there is another illustration of the binaries at play and of Amantle’s leadership. “Boitumelo was usually so self-assured and in charge, but tonight she was falling apart when her colleagues needed her to be focused” (Dow, 2002: 165), but being in an unfamiliar place that she also senses as dangerous causes Amantle to intervene and restore focus on the case. Discursively aware of the strategy to use to regain power over the work at hand, she “offer[s] her a cup of tea and [speaks] to her as if she were speaking to a child” (Dow, 2002: 165). The narrator refers to the stay in the Okavango Valley as an adventure and it is not without some humour for the tent was made in China and the little the group knows about wildlife is from television programmes, evidencing that these young people are distanced from the rural, originally traditional Batswana and very much out of their element in the Okavango

Valley. They seem to find the balance between being “true to [them]selves in the light of cultural interaction” (Kalua, 2009: 48) as the knowledge acquired at school is not used as a form of power that overwhelms the villagers but an asset to helping them and a form of defence, hence empowerment, against those, mostly men, who have misused the power they have. By finding the ideal balance, the youngsters and Amantle in particular, are enabled to “rise above [their] society’s limitations” and “the sheer brutality of oppression of women in [their] society.” (Kalua, 2009: 50, 52). In Margaret Lenta’s words:

Amantle, nominated by the villagers as their spokesperson, refuses to be bullied by the police. She has power – more than she first realises – because she has the confidence afforded her by formal education, and because she has already learnt how to organise herself and others in opposition (Lenta: 43).

As a leader Amantle knows that seldom may she demonstrate her own fears. She is aware of the responsibility that is handed over to her by Rra-Naso:

I have to tell you this because although you’re just a young woman, you’re not afraid of their power. I think you have the guidance of God in you: God won’t allow their power to touch you (Dow, 2002: 213).

The responsibility involves not only letting the villagers know about the old man’s part in the murder, but letting them know about the failure at ensuring the clothes would lead to a thorough police investigation. Unlike Rra-Naso, who tells the young outsiders the truth and then hangs himself, she opts to confront the villagers and tell them the disagreeable truth personally. Amantle’s empowerment also originates from her sense of righteousness and her capacity to act according to a higher ethical code.

Chapter Three

Empowering Women: struggling against sexual violence

Truly empowered women do not live with the haunting fear of rape, sexual harassment, smash and grabs and other violent intrusions into their spaces, bodies and psyches (Gqola: 116).

Pumla D. Gqola's words directly ascertain that women's empowerment must encompass the end of sexual violence in its various manifestations. The expression sexual violence is frequently criticised for failing to express the gender of the perpetrators, overwhelmingly men, and all the forms and representations it may have in different cultural contexts. Nevertheless, two books on the subject have long been established landmarks for their pathbreaking data and the questions they raised regarding a society that has shown evident complicity in, even encouragement of, forms of sexual violence against women: Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will...Men, women and Rape*, first published in 1975, and Liz Kelly's *Surviving Sexual Violence*, first published in 1988. The former gives rape a historical timeline in which the perpetrators and their motivations seem to be crossculturally similar. Susan Brownmiller successfully shows that myths regarding this offence are deeply entrenched in the minds of men, and women, and that those have migrated to the law and courtrooms. Liz Kelly seeks a feminist definition of sexual violence in terms of the conjunction of the words "sexual" and "violence". She puts forward several aspects of this approach saying that sexual violence does present itself in forms that the law recognises as offenses but that a wider definition that distances itself from legal codes is also necessary. Sexual violence may also find forms of representation in language and images, in pornography, stereotyping and objectification. She writes that:

A feminist definition must be sensitive to woman's perceptions and understandings. Whilst the definition I have come to is rather lengthy, it does attempt to reflect both the extent and range of sexual violence and to include women's perceptions within it. Sexual violence includes *any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or*

takes away her ability to control intimate contact (Kelly, 1988: 41) (Italics in the original).

Liz Kelly's definition is particularly important in feminist studies in the sense that it includes the woman's perceptions of sexual violence in an immediate or later timeframe, the sense of violence being a means of hurting and degrading her and the notion that it may cover a large range of forms of violence beyond standard legal definitions. The book also shows sexual violence as a continuum of assaults on women from visual violence, obscene phone calls, pressurized sex and coercive sex to rape. Since the first edition of *Surviving Sexual Violence* other concepts have been introduced to name forms of sexual violence that have in the meantime gained more light, such as multiple perpetrator rape, streamlining and stalking, all of them involved in the problematic but necessary task of naming offenses.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) remains an important and marker document as it is primarily concerned with the rights of women and has global relevance, at least on paper. It seems relevant to make use of this document because it was successfully used by Unity Dow in her case against the State of Botswana, thus suggesting that education is a form of women's empowerment¹². The Convention was first adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and has been ratified by 182 states¹³ as of June 2006 (Saksena: 482). Article 1 states that:

For the purpose of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, cultural, civil or any other field (CEDAW).

¹² The document is not without fault or criticism. As pointed out in the United Nations' report by Yakin Ertürk, it now strives to elevate women from "victimization towards empowerment". Still, the author acknowledges the rightfulness of some feminist critique, namely "arguing that exclusive reliance on violence in claiming rights casts women as victims who must be rescued, prompting responses that may be imperialist, protectionist or charity-based". Responses may "reinforce stereotypes, often that of the disempowered brutalized Third World woman as the authentic victim" (Ertürk: 34-35).

¹³ CEDAW was signed but not ratified by the United States, which in view of its assumed political world leadership is sadly significant. Botswana has signed both the 1979 and the ratified 2006 documents.

The expression “discrimination against women” used in the first article has been surrounded in debate as to what discrimination is and its operating mechanisms are in diverse cultural contexts. Some have argued that “discrimination against women” also includes crimes such as domestic violence and sexual violence, which are gender-neutral in this definition. However, expressions such as gender-based violence or domestic violence are used by the United Nations, perhaps as a result of the lack of understanding in the naming of offenses. Seemingly, words such as “victim” have been criticised for suggesting passivity on the part of women when research indicates that many have found mechanisms of coping and surviving, hence preferring the word “survivor” – which CEDAW has also adopted - and using the former only in very specific or legal contexts. Concurrently, agreeing on definitions that will possess relevance nationally and locally in so many countries and that will reflect the cultural specificity of each has taken its toll on the implementation and effectiveness of the rights of women. In view of these constraints, the United Nations has proposed legislation that aims at defining sexual violence and at stating the legal path each State should contemplate hereby. As far as rape is concerned, for example, the United Nations’ definition has diverted from the traditional framework of morality and public decency or honour this crime had in the past into being a violation of the individual’s bodily integrity with aggravating circumstances that cover a sizeable range of threats to women. Most significantly, it is the requirement of the definition of rape of each State that it not include “unequivocal and voluntary agreement” and that its “coercive circumstances” must cover a “broad range irrespective of the nature of the relationship” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for the Advancement of Women: 27). This configuration of rape implies that consent, a central claim in this offense in many countries, must be sought beyond socially conventional forms of acceptance. In an admirably progressive law Namibia and then Lesotho, as pointed out by Karen Stefiszyn, have completely removed the element of consent from rape charges in an effort to protect the survivor from a “secondary victimisation” in which the complainant, rather than the accused, become the focus of the trial (Stefiszyn: 4). Seemingly, in Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa rape within marriage is illegal, but it is not in Botswana and other southern African countries.

The debate encircling CEDAW is somehow proportional to the arduous task of finding a much desired balance between cultural differences and the inalienable rights of women. In her article “CEDAW: Mandate for Substantive Equality” Anu Saksena states that notwithstanding the very long path for equality, CEDAW “explicitly elevates its conception of women’s rights above cultural values, affirmatively requiring that signatories take appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct to eliminate prejudices and customary practices that perpetuate gender-based stereotypes” (Saksena: 488). In countries that have ratified CEDAW such as Turkey, Canada, Australia and Botswana women have either successfully seen the Constitution of their countries change to include concepts that are established in CEDAW or sought it to represent their plights. Anu Saksena significantly mentions the Botswana Attorney General vs. Unity Dow Case (Saksena: 496) as one example where CEDAW has been advantageously used to women and by women. CEDAW is, however, silent on the issue of abortion, although General Recommendation No 19 does “call on state parties to ensure that ‘measures are taken to prevent coercion in regard to fertility and reproduction and to ensure that women are not forced to seek unsafe medical procedures such as illegal abortion because of lack of appropriate services in regard to fertility control’” (Saksena: 485). Although CEDAW could not be expected to be a convention in which solutions are to be provided, it is for each State to ensure that the legal system operates within a code that respects the classification of this document. At the same time, by delegating in each State the authority to produce its own legal mechanisms to protect women, each country is expected to respect CEDAW within its own cultural context. Possibly because CEDAW addresses women’s rights and elevates their rights to human rights thus suggesting that power cannot continue to be asymmetric, some countries have throughout the years continuously decided to hold reservations as far as some articles are concerned. As Cees Flinterman and Catherine Henderson write:

The Women’s Convention holds the dubious distinction of being the human rights instrument with the most reservations. The lofty number of reservations, as well as the serious nature of many of them, is a significant obstacle to progress toward non-discrimination and to the effective implementation of the Convention’s principles (Flinterman and Henderson: 133).

The awareness that the Convention needed improvement led a group of women's rights experts to convene in Maastricht in 1995 to draft a text for an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. "Under the Protocol, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women will be granted the power to receive and consider communications submitted by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals claiming to be victims of a violation by a State Party of any of the rights set forth in the Women's Convention" (Flintermann and Henderson: 135). So that an individual or group of individuals can claim that one or more rights have been violated, they will have to know of the existence of such rights in the first place. Information and education are therefore indispensable instruments in the protection of the rights of women. This also inevitably requires that women be given equal education opportunities. Educated women will be empowered women, able to demonstrate and challenge displays of gender asymmetry and seek a more balanced gender power allotment. Furthermore, education will enable them to identify forms of construction of gender asymmetry in language, most particularly, in legal jargon, which continues to reflect cultural assumptions of what sexual violence and offenses are expected to be. As written by Deborah Cameron:

As the linguistic anthropologist Susan Gal puts it, language ideologies are 'systematically related to other areas of cultural discourse such as the nature of persons, of power and of a desirable moral order' (...). Thus what purport to be representations of language may be very revealing about the other ideological concerns for which language readily becomes a symbol or figure. Language ideology and political ideology are both obviously and intricately interwoven(...). Language can be used and abused as an instrument of political domination (Cameron: 146-147).

In this line of thought, language in a court of law and in legal texts becomes a vehicle for the representations people have of what sexual violence is. Research on sexual violence has shown that in a court of law it is not unusual for a female complainant to be asked questions regarding social concepts of female respectability or even attractiveness as a tactic aimed at diverting responsibility from the men defendants to the women complainants. Interestingly, the men who were interviewed by Yandisa Sikweyiya and

Rachel Jewkes did not use the word “rape” but “temptation”¹⁴ to refer to the women whom they reported as having sexually assaulted them. They conclude writing that “the findings of this study demonstrate that acts which men report as pressurised or forced sex were quite different in nature” even when they relate feelings of misgiving and disgust (Sikweyiya and Jewkes: 537).

In her book *Surviving Sexual Violence* Liz Kelly presents a table with common myths and stereotypes about sexual violence (Kelly, 1988: 34 – 35) that considering its still contemporary manifestations, seems to be deeply entrenched in the minds of many. One of them concerns the myth of what a victim is supposed to evidence after sexual assault and that conveys the notion that unwilling women will indisputably show physical signs of refusal such as bruises or physical evidence of struggle. Literature concerning sexual violence has evidenced that women respond to sexual violence differently and that these cannot be analysed as being completely separated from the specific circumstances in which they occurred, the victim’s social, cultural and family background or even the relationship the victim¹⁵ may have had with the assailant. The women that were interviewed, and whose life experiences gave Liz Kelly her title, referred to being aware of the violence suffered, even when they lacked a word for it. They were also aware of the importance of information and collective resistance, even if feminism was not perceived by the majority of the women as providing the necessary framework that would validate their understanding of sexual violence (Kelly, 1988: 231). Considering, however, their participation in this study and the assistance some of them gave in self-help groups and other organisations aimed at supporting and providing information for women, it seems that they were able to find ways of contributing to ending violence against women by putting their own experiences to use. Unity Dow has also drawn on her experience as a lawyer to write novels suggesting her political concern with social issues regarding women. In an interview given to M. J. Daymond and Margaret Lenta she clearly states

¹⁴ The word “temptation” used by the men who were interviewed did not carry the moral and religious connotations of religious texts. “Men perceived ‘temptation’ as pressure to have sex (...) and was something that made most men ‘feel good’” (Sikweyiya and Jewkes: 535).

¹⁵ The word “victim” is used in a legal context in this sentence. Should the “victim” see her charge reach a court of law, she would be referred to as “complainant”.

why she has chosen to write about Motlatsi's rape by a traditional doctor in *The Screaming of the Innocent*:

That's another very common offence. I saw that when I was practicing as an attorney, and when I had cases on appeal, where exactly that had happened. It's the power of the traditional doctor, but also fakes, fake prophets, foaming-at-the-mouth Christians who probably haven't even read the Bible and just abuse and use people (Daymond and Lenta: 53).

Unity Dow's professional experience with women who are abused by men in a position of confidence is not the only indicator of violence against women to be a matter for concern in Botswana. In their article "Place, ideological mobility and youth negotiations of gender in urban Botswana" Giddings and Hovorka write that 56% of the participants referred to violence against women as the primary urban constraint for young women in Botswana (Giddings and Hovorka: 218). This category includes partner-murder suicide, rape, battering and violence resulting from young women who engage in relationships with middle-aged men from a higher social status for financial gains. In this last example known as the Triple C, cash, cars and cell phones, women are foremost to fall in an "unbalanced power dynamics and in some cases threats of violence from their older partners" (Dunkle quoted by Giddings and Hovorka: 219). In "How the global informs the local: the Botswana Citizenship Case" Unity Dow writes:

Notwithstanding the obvious evidence that there is systematic and continuous battering of women, it was not until recently and not even now in a handful of countries, that governments started to see the problem as a national issue. Had one tribe, in any one country, perpetrated the nightly assaults, I believe that it would have made national and international headlines a long time ago. The fact that nothing has been done so far is a testament to the position of women in our societies. And the fact that the assaults have not been seen as an issue of human rights violations until recently tells us a lot about what we have come to accept as parameters defining that notion (Dow, 2001: 324).

Unity Dow's words follow the same arguments presented by Charlotte Bunch and Roxana Carrillo and that underlie the CEDAW document; if women's rights are to be human rights, violence against women must be faced by politicians as a question to be addressed on a national and international basis and covering a large group of instances,

such as the specific preparation of police officers and other people directly connected to formally reporting women's complaints. They argue that these concerns may have some reflections in political decisions, but that they lack insufficient expression in the legal systems, their representatives, political agendas or even daily news in the media. If it is undeniable that recent decades have discussed women's rights and notions of inalienable human rights and that "the language of human rights has become integral to international declarations, regional treaties, national legislation, and grassroots activism" (Wyrod: 800), it is equally undeniable that some assumptions of women's consent continue to be embedded in myths or assumptions that are conveniently embellished to discredit the complainant. The recently highly mediatised case involving South Africa's current President Jacob Zuma on charges of rape revived the violence a woman complainant may continue to have to endure in a court of law, not only in the person of the defendant and his lawyers, but more worryingly in the person of the judge, in this case, Justice Willem van der Merwe, whose sense of professionalism might have compelled him to have procured sufficient information on rape before presiding this case, which he apparently did not. Considering his assumptions in court, one may assume that he dismissed the profuse academic literature, including some very specific material by South African researchers. In the article "Sexual Politics and the Zuma Rape Trial" Steven Robins quotes what the judge said to be "odd":

As far as the rape itself is concerned there are a few and very strange odd features. The complainant is not in any way threatened or physically injured. Her clothes are not damaged in any manner. At no stage did the accused resort to physical violence or any threat...

A very odd feature is that the alleged rape took place within ten metres of a uniformed policeman with the accused's grown up daughter not far away.

It appears to be very odd that from the time the complainant in rolling onto her back and having her clothes removed, she did not utter a single 'no' (...)

After the 'rape' (...)[T]he complainant was in a position to leave the house immediately but she preferred to stay there for the rest of the night and not even locking the door. (Robins: 424)

In view of the “oddity” of the complainant’s representation of a female victim, it is no wonder that the judge thoroughly dismissed her evidence and endorsed Zuma’s claim that she had consented. The trial also exhibited male verbosity as a means for affirmation of perceived forms of identity, in this case, Zulu identity, which the judge and the victim’s lawyer seem to have overlooked. Jacob Zuma referred to the accuser’s genitals as ‘her father’s kraal’ (Robins: 412) in Zulu, rather than using English or the words he knew to be required in legal contexts of rape charges, especially by police officers. He then resorted to a double strategy in order to assert his perceived identity: he not only spoke Zulu he *also* used a Zulu expression. Puleng Hanong Thetela shows in her article “Sex discourses and gender constructions in Southern Sotho: a case study of police interviews of rape/sexual assault victims” that “discursive functions for men and women ‘talk’ on sexually related topics, potentially contribute to the gendered legal system” (Thetela: 177)¹⁶. In her study, Puleng H. Thetela states that the women, who had gone to the Police to report rape, were unable to “express themselves in the type of register required by the legal system, and hence the violent and the criminal nature of the rape event is not captured” (Thetela: 186). Steven Robins also points to the fissure between written forms of recognised rights and their daily lack of evidence, for although gender and sexual equality are safeguarded by the South African Constitution, “the claiming of these rights has generated a groundswell of conservative opposition in broader society” (Robins: 413). In his article “The Jacob Zuma Rape trial: Power and African National Congress (ANC) Masculinities” Raymond Suttner writes that “how rape is investigated, prosecuted, and adjudicated signifies whether or not certain individuals are more or less vulnerable to prosecution and conviction due to possession of power of one or other kind” (Suttner: 223 – 224).

The charges against Jacob Zuma ended in his being acquitted, which is not an unexpected disclosure in view of the generalised assumptions that went unquestioned by

¹⁶ Jacob Zuma was able to resort to language inscribed in a “traditional” linguistic frame where women are supposed to resort to a code of politeness known as *hlonipha*. “The sociocultural constraints on language use”, Thetela suggests, “[is] one of the major contributor factors to Basotho’s women failure to win rape cases” (Thetela: 186).

the judge and, regrettably, by the legal representations of the complainant as well. This recent example seems to illustrate that when sexual violence against women is taken to court, the legal system continues to let them down. It also suggests that careful assessment in the fields of law, political science, psychology and even Literature are required. The choice to include the rape of Motlatsi Kakang in *The Screaming of the Innocent* is a way of assessing and questioning forms of sexual violence against women in an activist approach. Motlatsi is raped by a traditional doctor, whom she had trusted to point at ways she could have of securing her relationship with the father of her children. The child that resulted from this violent meeting, Neo Kakang, is also killed in circumstances with ritualised and sexual contours for the men involved, which suggests that it may be regarded as a sexual homicide. In the article “Differentiating sexual violence: A comparison of sexual homicide and rape” C. Gabrielle Salfati and Paul Taylor also highlight the necessity “to extend beyond a research perspective shaped by legal classifications and instead identify the actual psychological variations in crime scene actions that will differentiate between sexually violent offenses” (Salfati and Taylor: 108). The article presents their findings regarding differential behaviours between rape and sexual homicide:

Sexual homicide and rape offenses are predominantly associated with distinct groups of behaviours. The behaviours most associated with sexual homicide offenses reflect a violent physical attack, involving multiple wounding of the victim and the use of non-controlled violence. (...) A contrasting emphasis is evident for rape offenders, who typically use binding or blindfolding to the degree, and often use the attack as an opportunity to steal property. The rape offenders’ actions are often not focused on harming the victim, but reflect a non-impulsive attempt to control the victim’s reactions to the personal intrusion (Salfati and Taylor: 119).

These findings that differentiate rape and sexual homicide as distinct groups of behaviours will be used as a framework in the analysis of the rape of Motlatsi Kakang and the ritual killing of Neo Kakang.

The Rape of Motlatsi Kakang

In *The Screaming of the Innocent* Motlatsi Kakang, then thirty-five, seeks the help of a traditional doctor hoping he will help her marry her eight-year-partner and father of her five children. The encounter dictates a turning point in her life that will leave her alone in her resistance and coping strategies with violence.

However, for five years, Mma-Tebogo – Motlatsi – hadn't been able to get her mind off that fateful day, many years ago, when she'd gone out seeking to improve her life, only to come back changed forever.

(...) The man, she'd been told, specialised in female conditions.

(...)

'To reach nature, we have to be natural: you'll have to take off your clothes.'(...)

Motlatsi had begun to feel she had no option but to comply. She'd been naked many times in front of doctors and nurses.

(...)

'Tell me about it. Before that, drink this.'

Motlatsi had drunk from the offered cup. She'd started being confused about what she was feeling: she'd felt both ensnared and calmed. She'd felt like a baby bird: helpless but not fearful – just blissfully powerless.

(...)

He'd then put more of the ointment on them [her legs] and began rubbing into his own inner thighs. That he was ready for a sexual encounter couldn't possibly have been doubted. (...) She'd wanted to object, but the objections had formed in her head only and gone no further. Her lips had refused to obey her, as had every other part of her body.

'Why did you do that?' she'd demanded.

'Do what?' he'd asked in reply.

She hadn't responded: she'd been too confused to clearly articulate what she wanted to say. She'd also felt ashamed. (...) She'd felt stupid for having allowed herself to be raped by Samesu. (...) she'd been raped. She: a 35-year-old, literate teacher, the head of a neighbouring committee for preventing crime, had walked into a hut, encountered a naked stranger, taken off her clothes and had sexual intercourse with him – who'd possibly call it rape? Still, she'd called it rape. And

she'd also known it was a rape she'd never report – not to anyone. (Dow, 2002: 80 – 84)

Naming the offense as rape is clear for Motlatsi who, however, keeps present that others will most likely not name it as such. This suggests that she is aware of the limited definitions this offense may have on a social and legal basis and of the stereotypes around it, but that it is because of these limitations that she feels compelled to keep it a secret. As suggested by Liz Kelly, a “social definition/name makes clear that others may share this experience, thereby undermining the isolation of feeling you are the only one. A social definition also suggests the possibility of a social cause” (Kelly: 1988, 141). In their article “What If I Woke up as the Other Sex? Batswana Youth Perspectives on Gender” Commeyras and Montsi show that both girls and boys acknowledge personal safety as one difficulty in being female. In fact, girls would not hesitate to use the word “rape” even if the boys’ language was less direct when naming the offense. Emang Basadi!, a non-governmental women’s organisation, published a research on rape in 1994. Their findings show that 72.2% of perpetrators of rape are men in the age group of 15-30 years (Commeyras and Montsi: 338). Other studies show that few cases of rape come before the court and even less result in conviction; rape is “something committed by ‘normal young men who are acquainted with the victims’”; and 20% of sexually active women in Botswana reported that their first experience with sexual intercourse was physically forced (Commeyras and Montsi: 338). Also considering the 56% of participants who referred to violence against women as the primary concern in Botswana¹⁷ (Giddings and Hovorka: 218), it seems fair to state that the possibility of a social cause is not to be ruled out.

In spite of her knowing it was rape, Motlatsi decides she will not tell anyone or report it. Her education, rather than an asset, is seen as another downside, for the stereotype seems to be that an educated woman would not enter a “hut” hoping that a traditional doctor “specialised in female conditions” (Dow, 2002: 80) might lead her to marriage. Consequently, rather than being able to “undermine the isolation”, she feels

¹⁷ A sociologist from the University of Botswana uses the term ‘sexual illiteracy’ to explain that chronic fear of poor sexual performance causes 15-25 year-old-males to prefer females with little or no sexual experience. Commeyras and Montsi add that “It seems evident that encounters with these inexperienced females often occur in a context that can be called rape” (Commeyras and Montsi: 338).

that isolation will be the solution for what happened and literally decides to distance herself from her family and her partner. Motlatsi assesses the situation if she were to tell what happened, but feeling that “the available options are likely to result in further negative consequences” (Kelly, 1988: 145) such as discredit or scorn, she decides to keep the naming of the offense to herself and “flee” (Dow, 2002: 85). Liz Kelly argues that keeping limited definitions of sexual violence is in men’s interests, as language becomes not only a means of women’s inability to name the abuse, but also of men having further control over them. The subsequent implications for feminist research is to define sexual violence as a continuum of possible forms of abusive behaviour in which new terms and definitions can evolve and women’s naming of their experiences can change over time. In view of the findings of S. C. Kalichman, Motlatsi’s apprehensions are not without foundation. In fact, the authors of “Sexual assault, sexual risks and gender attitudes in a community sample of South African men” show in their study that “men who had a history of sexual assault were more likely to endorse rape myths; more than one in five men indicated that women are to blame for sexual assault [and] that men were generally inclined to endorse negative attitudes toward women regardless of whether they had a history of sexual assault” (Kalichman et al: 21). Similarly, in “Gender differences in medical students’ attitudes towards male and female rape victims” I. Anderson and A. Quinn write that men exhibit a significantly more negative attitude towards rape victims than women (Anderson and Quinn: 108), which suggests that assumptions and notions of victim culpability are a cross age, profession and education phenomenon. These findings become more significant when considering their implications when the victim reports rape. Participants in Kalichman’s study, which includes Botswana, stated that violence against women is seen as acceptable when a woman “is disrespectful toward a man” thus illustrating “beliefs about the roles of men in controlling women’s behaviour and beliefs about whether men should discipline women”. The authors argue that these results are based on “the assumption that gender power relations along with gender interdependence create ambivalent beliefs and stereotypes about women (Kalichman et al: 22-23). Amy Rose Grubb and Julie Harrower, who examine the factors that may influence attributions of blame towards rape victims, confirm that “male participants

blamed the victim to a greater extent than did the female participants, with participants consistently attributing most blame to the victim in the seduction rape scenario” (Grubb and Harrower: 63). They add that “This propensity to blame the victims of rape translates worryingly into a tolerance of the crime itself” (Grubb and Harrower: 64). Helen Moffett points to the same conclusions when she writes:

Moreover, the complex blend of peer and societal pressures men experience regarding the need to ‘police’ feminine subversion exists against a backdrop that tells them that rape is a ‘safe’ crime to commit (and perhaps not a real crime at all); there are unlikely to be legal consequences; and that any shame attached to the act will adhere to the victim, not themselves. In short, men rape not because they want to or are ‘tempted’, but *because society tells them they can (and in some cases should) do so with impunity* (Moffett: 136) (Italics in the original).

All these conclusions seem to substantiate that the traditional doctor who saw Motlatsi might have had the notion that an accusation of rape would or could not effectively be conducted against him, which positioned him in comfortable impunity. Gabrielle Salfati and Paul Taylor present several behavioural aspects that are common to Motlatsi’s experience, leaving no doubt that it was rape. Samesu knew how to act so that he would not leave physical evidence of a struggle on Motlatsi and used a drug in the drink he gave her to immobilise her, which serves an identical function to the binding mentioned by the authors. Samesu constructed a style of interacting with the victim by asking her to relax and reassuring her of the obvious features of his demands, adopting a controlled approach and goal oriented manner (Salfati and Taylor: 123-124). The doctor’s behaviour fits the exploitative meaning of the sexual behaviour in which most victims are naked and the assault results in vaginal penetration. The weapon the authors suggest as present in most rape situations and that is intended to obtain compliance from the victim might be interpreted as the drugged drink Motlatsi was given. This approach by the traditional doctor contributed to the confusion of the victim and her powerlessness, which he uses against her at the end by shamelessly counter asking “Do what?”. His being naked at the beginning but clothed at the end suggests that his actions were planned and that he had probably done this before.

Five years after Neo's death, Motlatsi realises that her memory often goes to that "fateful day" (Dow, 2002: 80). The death of the child seems to have triggered her memories and caged them in this event, whose consequences have most acutely been felt, as if the violence of the child's origin had been destined to repeat itself in her death. Motlatsi's decision to have the child and raise all her children in another village may be interpreted as her way of coping and surviving, elevating her from "victim" to "survivor".

The *dipheko*

The killing of twelve-year-old Neo Kakang for *dipheko* is the basic topic of *The Screaming of the Innocent*. *Dipheko*, the Setswana word meaning traditional medicine, is generally known in Africa by its Zulu word, *muti* and has had a rather haunting meaning for Africans and non-Africans alike. Historically, *muti* murders¹⁸ were the final stage in dealing with evil on the occasions when animal sacrificing "was not enough and only a human would do" (Turrell: 22). *Muti* caused different and even paradoxical impressions on Europeans and responses from them. Some Europeans regarded *muti* murder as a serious offense to be punished accordingly, while others described the capital punishment that sometimes accompanied the result of a trial on charges involving *muti* murder as "slaughter" (Turrell: 21), rather than the murder itself. Nevertheless, before the arrival of Europeans "the ritual killing of a human was required for the acquisition of extraordinary power. And extraordinary power was required to win competitive advantages in chiefly rivalries over people and land", an exceptional situation "in pre-colonial polities" (Turrell: 22). The arrival of Europeans brought tension and conflict that was replicated in the advancement of *muti* murders from an extreme measure used by chiefs to one used by commoners that would obtain powerful medicine from traditional healers. Gradually, *muti* murders gained a symbolic component associated with traditional power but the changes it underwent were largely missed by Europeans, who focused on the terror and repugnance they felt toward the *muti*. Rob Turrell presents five fundamental elements of *muti* murder; the murderer was a chief in search of power, a

¹⁸ The word "murder" has been juxtaposed with the word "muti" by Europeans and reflects their perception of the killing as a crime and an act of cruelty. The word "muti" does not convey the idea of "murder" or crime or immoral wickedness in its original tongue.

doctor procuring powerful medicine or a businessman in search of a competitive edge over his rivals; the victim was usually someone from the community or even a relative of the murderers; the flesh had to be cut off the victim's body while he or she was still alive, so that the cries of pain could open up that important dialogue between the living and the dead; finally, the victim was never buried and the body had to be hidden for a period of time and then exposed as if death had been accidental (Turrell: 22-23). Over decades, Europeans dealt with people involved in *muti* killings by associating them with local superstition and witchcraft and sometimes ruling that the murderers be hanged, but often insisting on less radical forms of punishment. Records of trials disclose facts regarding the mutilation of the bodies that frequently included the removal of internal organs, genitals, the brain and flesh. The selection of the victims varied from male to female, old and young and could also comprise a woman who had never been pregnant or a boy or girl that had not reached puberty. The trials also elucidate that although the reasons for the killings were common knowledge, it was extremely rare for the court to be able to tie any chief to the murders.

The words "*muti* murder" have for a long time circulated in African newspapers and continue to be associated with ancient practices of empowerment. It is not uncommon to see African and European newspapers describe the occurrences with some degree of sensationalism and representation of "barbaric Africanism", even of "lack of civilisation". The disappearance of children in Africa, and indeed anywhere else, is nonetheless a serious concern that does not always meet with proportional interest, investment and investigation on the part of police officers and politicians. Furthermore, it is well known that the people involved are powerful and that they may use their influence to protect themselves from being properly and thoroughly investigated. This is the fundamental claim of the novel that Unity Dow expressed in an interview, saying that children in Botswana disappear frequently, which is a well known fact, rather than hidden or hushed, as are the reasons for the disappearances (Daymond and Lenta: 53). *The Screaming of the Innocent* seems therefore to be primarily about a missing child, whose body is never found, suggesting that police investigations should be into a homicide, and the endeavours the perpetrators are willing to undertake to ensure the case is not

followed, and those the family and community of the missing girl are willing to take to reverse an old status quo where such occurrences will no longer be dealt with as “mere occurrences”. In this sense, the novel could be said to be politically engaged, making it an “effective instrument of social intervention” and contributing to “liberatory social change” (Gagiano: 39).

The novel begins with Disanka’s assessment of Neo and ends with the disclosure of the particulars of the barbaric killing by Rra-Naso, the village link who had participated in the kidnap that Amantle and her friends had thought to exist. The *muti* of this novel, however, possesses distinctive features in which the element of predatory conduct is significant in numerous respects. The three men principally and directly involved, Disanka, Bokae and Sebaki, are shown in the first chapters as essentially sexual predators, although the element of the killing as a means of obtaining extraordinary power, as the *muti* traditionally was, continues to persist and indeed motivate them. The novel opens with clear references to predatory, even feline like observations on the part of Disanka and elegant impala movements from the child, who unaware of the immediate danger, engages in innocuous activities:

The good man watched – fascinated. Enthralled, absorbed. As the girl skipped, her skirt was caught by the wind and went up, exposing her impala legs: firm, muscular, a dark brown (...). Sleek. She grabbed her skirt and tucked the hem into the legs of her panties. She did so not out of modesty but to make sure she successfully completed the task at hand: the skipping. It was a gesture through which the watching man, the good man, was provided with an interrupted view of the brown legs, right up to her crotch, where her pink area, her undies, was visible. She was bare breasted, naturally (...).

‘God, she’s perfect,’ he whispered to himself. The body was just right. She was no bulbous protrusions yet – he could barely make out the two nodes, just ready for his purposes. And what a tight little butt she had. He was sure that when she was skipping, under her flailing arms was exposed fine fur, not yet hair. Although he was too far way to see it, he was sure it was there. He was sure no one had been near this one yet (...). She was just right for harvesting (Dow, 2002: 5).

The leader of the group selects the participants in the hunt and marks the girl to be killed; he acts in a calculated, cool manner, his past killing experience is also a source of empowerment and leadership; his gratification ranges from the careful planning of the killing to the watching and marking of the girl. As he drives to the village to assess Neo, he takes his overweight daughter with him and his own sexual gratification takes place in between the ordinary daily events of picking one daughter up and waiting till it is time to pick up an elder one at school. His patience and observation, unnoticed by the child and the villagers, permit him to get pleasure from the hunt and inflate his confidence to do it in broad daylight and among everyday activities. In fact, he seems to be involved in such a mundane activity that his daughter next to him is neither a cause of alarm nor of sexual restraint, which adds to the horrifying effect in the construction of the character. Disanka's image of Neo is impersonal and the child is a mere objectification of the realisation of his immediate gratification. But his choice goes beyond the socio-economic differences and extends to someone who is overwhelmingly at a disadvantage: Neo is only twelve, she is still a child engaged in child activities, a "lamb", "a hairless lamb" (Dow, 2002: 21) suggesting the Christian symbol of sacrifice and innocence who will have no chance against a group of four men. In view of this, obtaining power is guaranteed, even though the unbalanced and unequal sides do not present themselves in any way as diminishing to the men who seek it. Timothy Brown quotes Foucault: "The impression that power weakens and vacillates...is in fact [a] mistak[e]; power can retreat...re-organise its forces, invest itself elsewhere...and so the battle continues" (Brown: 184). And so, it is because Disanka has already experienced a *muti* and the perception of power it gave him that he can now thoroughly enjoy it again. He enjoys the hunt, the game, the watching and selecting of a prey in a concoction of power and sexual pleasure:

As he watched and his mind went back to the previous harvesting, memory crushed into anticipation, and a pool of pleasure spread through his body. He was heady and dizzy, and could barely wait. His body trembled so much he couldn't hide the sight of it from his beloved daughter sitting next to him (...). He needed the little, skipping girl so he could continue to love the little girl inside the Hilux. (...) Sweat gushed out of his pores, as if a million tiny bridges had collapsed all at once, and a cyclone of emotions began erupting, out of control. For a second he

even thought he'd wet himself: a warm moisture had spread between his legs and under his armpits (Dow, 2002: 6).

Disanka's sexual gratification is a private one. At this stage he does share the hunt or the gratification derived from it with his associates. When he does invite associates he chooses men he will be able to control. At all stages of their lives the three men seek to enhance or reassure forms of power. The team gathered are as hierarchical in their participation as they are in the social sphere and their private/personal and public frustrations, fears and gratifications cover a large range of behaviour that fits the criminal. Disanka is the planner, Sebaki the ambitious but spineless headmaster and Bokae, who is unquestionably a rapist, is attracted to the *muti* by his sense of overwhelming power over someone in a killing that will function as a compensatory mechanism for his many daily frustrations.

Bokae, the second man to be chosen, desperately needs to ascertain a guaranteed form of asserting the power that will mitigate his sense of inferiority in a changing society where women have begun to have jobs they did not have in the past, a society of women, men and lawyers whose functions or recognised merits are no longer a naturally accepted fact granted by birth and gender. Bokae's birth and gender, not personal merit, are the reasons why he holds the social and professional position of Chief in his community. Bokae is known to have outbursts of violence directed against anyone he feels is in a position socially or professionally inferior to his and although he seeks to gratify his wounded ego through violent acts at work and is a known rapist, *muti* being the "ultimate thing" (Dow, 2002: 21) offers itself as undeniably attractive for a man with such frustrations. The choice of a poor girl from a poor village, which made Disanka choose Neo, was not an unfamiliar reason for Bokae's personal choices when striving for compensation that would alleviate his frustrations and humiliation:

The could-have-been chief was fuming, and needed something to calm him down. He headed for the nearest secondary school: the surest way to get a woman – a girl, really – without facing too many hassles. Also he'd calculated that if he wanted to use his cramped, little, 'head-man salary' vehicle, he couldn't go and fetch his regular, rather large, sexual partner. And even a should-be chief couldn't always persuade a mature woman to agree to engaging in a mid-morning,

cramped-car bush escapade. This morning, a student was an appropriate candidate for his purpose (...).

The head man huffed past Mosika without uttering a word. The girl had been too experienced, and the whole thing had felt more like a match than a taking. He regretted not having instead taken the fourteen-year-old girl, the younger of the two (Dow, 2002: 13-14).

The origins of Bokae's frustrations are well known to the people who, although conscious of their resulting in extreme violent acts against girls, indulge his arrogance:

Many people understood that Head Man Bokae's swaggering walk, bullish voice, and near – and actual rapes of young girls were simply the result of having been born almost a chief – or rather of having been born not a chief but a should-be chief. Although 'should-be chief' didn't have the same power as 'chief', people allowed the man who should have been chief to display a large measure of arrogance (Dow, 2002: 9-10).

As leader, Disanka describes *muti* as "the ultimate thing" as it had actually been in the past (Dow, 2002: 21), that is, a last resource when others had failed, but expected to be the source of the greatest power. Traditional *muti* power, however, may be more of a pretext than true medicine the men believe in, although Sebaki resorts frequently to his traditional doctor. For Disanka the local perceptions surrounding this kind of killing, which they know to involve a particularly barbaric infliction of pain, are used to persuade the third element, to some extent a weak-willed Sebaki, that this is done only by the bravest:

Disanka finally broke the silence. 'What kind of man are you?' (...) The deputy headmaster wanted to glance at the sub-chief but couldn't disengage from the businessman's eyeballing. 'What's the nature of your heart?' came the second question (...).

He delivered his response in a whisper. 'A hard heart.'

(...)

'We're looking for a man with a hard heart, a heart of stone, a heart of a real man.' The selection criterion.

'We're hunting a lamb.' Mr. Disanka paused and watched his captive's eyes. 'What kind of lamb are we hunting?'

'A hairless lamb,' came the whispered answer.

(...)

He'd just been offered the opportunity of a lifetime (...). And he, Sebaki, had just been invited into this special, super-secret circle. He felt privileged.

(...)

He conjured up a mental picture of the perfect candidate: no face, just tiny breasts – the type that hurt if you held them too tightly; a small, delicate chest on which the ribs were clearly marked out through the skin; a perfect V shape where the legs met the fat tummy (Dow, 2002: 21-22).

Sebaki clearly did not take much persuasion, feeling honoured by the invitation that he feels to be a privilege. He is aware of his professional smallness and insignificance, but like Bokae, rather than endeavouring to improve by means of personal work and effort, he chooses to participate in the *muti* hoping to raise his position in the professional hierarchy in the local secondary school. Sebaki's whispering suggests his lower position in the *muti*, his fear and insecurity, but like the others he soon begins his own sexual predatory fantasies:

An anticipation came to replace his fear, the frustrations of his day lifted. Soon he'd be sharing in an experience he could never make public but though which he would acquire strength and power beyond belief. He conjured up a mental picture of the perfect candidate: no face, just tiny breasts – the type that hurt if you held them too tightly; a small, delicate chest on which the ribs were clearly marked out through the skin: a perfect V shape where the legs met the flat tummy. (...) He shook his member to let go of the leftover pee, put his friend away, zipped up his pants and walked purposefully to the two waiting men (Dow, 2002: 22).

The predatory references of the first chapters continue throughout the novel with allusions to consumption and ingestion. As Disanka assesses Neo, he refers to her as an "antelope" (Dow, 2002: 4) and the image of Neo's selection having been the result of an act of predation is also used by her mother who imagines her to have been a "chicken" that was killed with the same indifference one kills a "goat" (Dow, 2002: 79). Disanka's invitation to Sebaki revolves around the metaphor of hunt. He pauses and watches before looking in his "captive's eyes" (Dow, 2002: 21) and describing what they are to hunt. Sebaki is referred to as a "captive" as well, suggesting his lower place in the predators' hierarchy and perhaps his being captivated by his extraordinary attraction to *muti*

murder. The prey that are girls is referred to as “lambs” or “a hairless lamb”, an indication of one specific requirement *muti* murders had in the past of being directed at a girl who had not yet reached puberty.

As Rra-Naso discloses the gruesome killing at the end, ingestion, carving and hounding are recurrent images. Rra-Naso chews what he is given to be under their power; the three men become involved in a frantic frenzy of carving the young girl while trying to keep her alive for as long as possible:

Rra-Naso asked that he be allowed to say his piece without interruption. (...) 'He promised me five goats if I found him a hairless lamb, a child with no sins yet. (...) I'm a poor man, a weak man (...). They really tricked me (...). They said: “Come, a man must finish what he starts. You can't point and then go to sleep.” They gave me something and told me to chew on it: 'It'll take away the fear.' (...) I chewed but the fear remained. It brought on more fear (...). I started to cry – to cry just like a baby. He said “Keep quiet and be a man”. They took her and lay her down. We all took off our clothes (...). She begged me with her eyes to help her (...). Then they removed the mouth gag. They said she had to see and cream to release the power of the *dipheko* (...). After that, I did everything with them: I was powerless; I was under their control. When they wanted to carve out the armpit, I pulled the arm with all my might. When they went for the left breast, I held her head down (...). And when they spread her little legs to cut out her private parts, I was still holding the head (...). The anus was the tricky part – but I was a madman by that time. I don't know at what point she finally died; they wanted her to stay alive when they removed the parts – so they had to work fast (...). When they were all done, they licked their knives clean, and told me to lick my fingers. I did. I saw their white teeth with streaks of blood running down them (...). I saw those teeth and I saw their glee (...). The little body was lying there, all bloody (...). We went into the river to wash off the blood. I was afraid of crocodiles, but they said, “Come: you have the power now. The crocodiles won't touch you: they're our friends. We'll give them the rest of the body.” They threw the body into the river and we washed. Then, then another car arrived... (...). A man got out. A big man (...). The pieces of flesh were in a wooden bowl. The four men looked into the bowl (...). They were choosing a piece for the newly arrived man. It was too dark,

so the leader, the man who'd first come to me, switched on a torch. He reached into the bowl and selected a piece (Dow: 209 - 212).

The description of the *dipheko* is suffused with words of consumption that simultaneously proffer sexual allusions. These men's choice of a human being for *dipheko* did not necessarily have to implicate the killing of a young girl. News in African newspapers report mutilations of people of both sexes and all ages. These men, however, particularly choose a girl and the choice of an older or stronger victim is never suggested as an alternative option. In view of the sexual significance the opening chapters are imbued with, their choice is not arbitrary, but it is the means by which their sexual gratification will be consumed, thus making them primarily sexual predators, and secondly murderers and traffickers, since pieces of the girl will be sold. The girl is undressed and when the clothes are found her shirt and skirt are intact but her underwear is not, alluding to the sexual connotation the killing also includes. They themselves naked, carve up the child, ensuring she is alive for as long as possible, and lick the phallic knife. Rra-Naso, clearly in an inferior position, is not given the knife but is told to lick his equally sexually meaningful fingers. The girl's blood mingles with the whiteness of their teeth as they reach their sexual climatic ending that resembles the eating frenzy of predators in the wild. Afterwards, they bathe in the carthatic river, in a ritual resembling cleansing and purification, the final stage of their elevation to something and somewhere greater. The river that empowers them will also hide the body of torture forever, once again because the remains of the body will be eaten by crocodiles. When the minister comes the men have ended their personal gratification and offer him a bowl with pieces of the recently attained flesh for him to assess, indicating that a man in a socially high position is involved, which would also secure protection.

The men go to Disanka's home, their bloody clothes still on. There, he continues his leadership by chopping and selecting the pieces of meat and then wrapping them. Disanka's line of business - he owns a butcher's shop- meaningfully points to the place where violent killing gives way to the work of preparing meat to be sold. His line of business also provides Disanka with a convenient and above suspicion camouflage for the trafficking of human flesh. Disanka, like most men who commit sexual crimes, is involved in other crimes in parallel with being a sexual predator. His shop, however, does not offer

him endless sanctuary, for the night he and his associates engage in the butchery his elder daughter looks through a window and realises the meaning of the whispering, the changing of clothes and the distribution of some of the pieces for traditional medicine among them that, together with the word “anus”, leave her in no doubt of the men’s activities. The next day Lesego sees her father burning the bloody clothes and the father-daughter enchantment is broken forever. When he was watching Neo he had persuaded himself that the killing was necessary for his own and his family’s stability, but his pretext has corroded the life of his family irreconcilably even if never outwardly. As Lesego follows the next day events and tries to assess her father’s behaviour, perhaps looking for some indication of his murdering nature, consumption continues to be the image of the family over breakfast: Lesego “spills out in yellow and green streaks into the toilet bowl” (Dow, 2002: 186) and “finds him [her father] in the kitchen, enjoying a breakfast of eggs and liver. He likes his liver rare. As she sees the blood on the plate, she freezes. She sees the plate filling with blood” and “A fat hand is extended to her.” A few weeks after Neo’s murder Disanka “looks anything but afraid: he looks strong and towering” (Dow, 2002: 187). Traditional medicine has not really made him more powerful, but the specific characteristics of the killing associated with *dipheko*, its being generally recognised as an abhorrent crime in which the pain inflicted is supposed to last as long as possible, suggesting that mercilessness is a requirement, show that he has dared go where only a few have. This recognition gives him a sense of unquestionably accomplished power that is also spoken of in rumour. Elaine Scarry, quoted by Timothy Brown in *The Black Male: Ritual Violence and Redemption*, writes that “[torture] is in part the obsessive display of agency that permits one person’s body to be translated into another person’s voice, that allows real human pain to be converted into a regime’s fiction of power” (Brown: 186).

Neo is carved in “violence [that] vacillates between sexual vigour and impotency, pleasure and pain, desire and fear” (Brown: 189). Her clothes are “fiction of power” (Brown: 190) for although found they will not lead the family any closer to identifying or prosecuting her murderers. In fact, the novel ends with the knowledge that the minister, ironically Minister of Security and Safety, is involved and that the clothes, retrieved with such difficulty, have once again been given to those who were involved in her death and

in its cover up. The realisation of the monstrosity of the killing and the torture it involves is always present for Rra-Naso, who is an unwilling participant. His weakness, if weakness it is, derives from the realisation that it is this level of inhumanity that renders them dangerous. He knows he lacks Amantle's power but from the beginning he evidences attempts of bravery in trying to act in a manner that will cast some light onto the murder by taking the clothes without being seen and leaving them in a place where they could easily be found the next day. He knows how important they would be and explains that "I think God wanted the clothes to cause trouble" (Dow, 2002: 212), "I think God wanted all this to come out, because their power didn't stop me from taking the clothes. And their power isn't stopping me from talking to you now" (Dow: 2002: 214). Rra-Naso is aware that, by revealing who the people involved in the killing are, he may empower Amantle with information she may use later. Unable to write himself, he asks that his revelation be written so that it may constitute a record of his words. Rra-Naso's final account indicates that remorse over his participation in Neo's assassination has shown itself in her imagined screaming in his head, that her screaming accompanied him as he joined the search party and that it is the urge for her screaming to end that ultimately leads him to suicide.

Neo is an empowering figure that goes beyond Rra-Naso's delusion. At the end of Chapter Three the narrator lets out that:

None of the three had any way of knowing that in five years' time, a box would be opened and out of it would spill a scream that couldn't be ignored. They had no way of knowing that darkness isn't always courageous enough to keep evil to himself (Dow, 2002: 23).

Neo may be referred to as a victim in the sense that she does not survive the attack, but she nonetheless exhales power. Her mother recollects her strength and Rra-Naso points her to Disanka because, having no brothers, she used to guard cattle, a traditional task given to boys that she boldly performs. Her power is also released through her screaming and struggling after being abducted. She significantly bites the hands of Rra-Naso and Disanka, the planner of her death, leaving a permanent recollection on the first and a visible indication of crime on the second. Disanka's power, however, seems more fictitious as Rra-Naso tells of his inability to contain expressions of

pain and “hopp[ed] around swearing just because a little girl had bitten him” (Dow, 2002: 212).

Salfati and Taylor’s study on violent sexual offenses presents data that show that rape offenses are predominantly associated with instrumental behaviours in which control of the victim’s reaction is a notable factor. Contrastingly, sexual homicide offenses are more often associated with expressive and hostile acts of violence that end in an overtly sexual and violent action (Salfati and Taylor: 121). Considering the violence involved in Neo’s murder that culminated with the men’s gratification and considering the opportunistic attitude on the part of the traditional healer, the offenses communicate different styles of interacting with the victim. Furthermore, this study shows the importance of the variable “weapon brought to scene” and “weapon from scene” in rape and sexual homicide offenses respectively. Whereas offenders who rape take their weapon to the crime scene intending to control the victim’s response against the attack, sexual homicide offenders are more likely to use a weapon from the crime scene suggesting that these behaviours have different psychological implications. Similarly, the traditional healer had the drink that would immobilise and confuse Motlatsi, hence the “weapon brought to scene”, prepared for the intended victim before her coming, a strategy that he accompanied with soothing talking. The three men who killed Neo immobilised their victim by tying her while driving her next to the pond where they used a knife to carve her. Their carving involved organisation that derived from their wanting to preserve the more valuable pieces of flesh rather than an intended refraining from a more frantic killing. Hence, their organisation aims at giving continuum to the crime of trafficking human parts and does not diminish the frenetic violence that leaves their bodies covered in blood. The pieces of flesh they wanted are saved but they dispose of the unwanted remains in a less organised manner by throwing them in the crocodile pond.

Salfati and Taylor demonstrate already existing ideas obtained from narrative-based research that the discrimination between sexual homicide and rape can be evidenced by the degree of violent behaviour in the attack. They also show that crime scene behaviour in both sexual homicide and rape offenses can be effectively

characterised using a single three-fold thematic framework: Control, Exploit and Violent¹⁹ (Salfati and Taylor: 122). This framework can be used to describe the traditional healer's behaviour as predominantly exploitive and Disanka, Bokae and Sebaki's as predominantly violent. The variables used by Salfati and Taylor associated with Exploit that apply to the doctor are sexual activity that includes vaginal penetration and profit (he asks to be paid for his medical appointment). The variables associated with Violent that are valid for the three murderers are multiple wounding to the victim and non-controlled violence. The findings by Salfati and Taylor also indicate that sexual homicide offenders demonstrate a significant higher level of forensic awareness in comparison to rape offenders (Salfati and Taylor: 115), which describes the behaviour of the three men, who purposefully seek to get hold of the clothes that might identify them and Disanka, who burns his own clothes the next day. The traditional doctor, however, has unprotected sex with his victim. Although he is certainly aware that a forensic analysis would easily identify him, his behaviour shows that he is an offender less concerned with concealing evidence of his crime.

Salfati and Taylor's research, like other research, is based on the premise that "to fully understand sexual violent crime, it is (...) necessary to extend beyond a research perspective shaped by legal classifications and instead identify the actual psychological variations in crime scene actions that will differentiate between sexually violent offenses (Salfati and Taylor: 107). Their findings confirm that legal classifications fail to cover the wide range of motivations of violent crime offenders and that police and forensic investigation is unsatisfactory to assure the victim sufficient evidence in a court of law. Furthermore, this legal lapse in classifying sexual violent crimes also has implications in the way police officers, lawyers, and judges view and decide to act. In view of Salfati and Taylor's research Motlatsi *was* unquestionably raped, even if one should follow this line of investigation in the first place because this was the victim's assessment of the assault. Similarly, Neo's death falls into a classification of sexual homicide. Both examples of

¹⁹ Salfati and Taylor use offense type (sexual homicide or rape) as an external variable. They examine each behavioural variable in terms of its frequency of occurrence and present the respective Smallest Space Analysis of crime scene actions under the Exploit, Violent, Control framework (Salfati and Taylor: 118 – 119). "Smallest Space Analysis is a non-metric multidimensional scaling procedure based on the assumption that any underlying structure or common theme in behaviour will be most readily appreciated by examining the relationship each variable has with every other variable" (Salfati and Taylor: 115).

violent sexual crime in the novel were given the following comment by Unity Dow in an interview:

That's another very common offence [rape]. I saw that when I was practising as an attorney, and when I had cases on appeal, where exactly that had happened. It's the power of the traditional doctor.

Of course everyone knows that it [disappearance of children] happens, as everyone knows that traffic offenses happen. It happens. Kids disappear all the time (Daymond and Lenta: 53).

Unity Dow argues that her profession as a lawyer and judge has allowed her to realise that rape by a traditional doctor is a “common offense” suggesting that Motlatsi's rape in the novel may be a representation of this offense in a work of fiction. *The Screaming of the Innocent* has also been seen by reviewers in Botswana as a “wake-up call” (Daymond and Lenta: 53) suggesting that Unity Dow's literary approach may contribute to change and debate in the way violent sexual crimes are perceived and investigated.

Chapter Four

Complicity and Compliance

We know what is responsible for the scourge of gender based violence, and we need to confront violent masculinities. We need to confront and reject violent men and the patriarchal men and women who protect and enable them (...). Our silence, says bell hooks, is complicity. There is no fence-sitting on this one, no convenient grey areas (Gqola: 118).

There is no doubt that ritual murder is committed by powerful men but it is also clear that their impunity relies on the compliance and/or the complicity of other people who know of their activities. As Sebaki is invited to participate in this particular crime he realises that the rumours he has heard about Disanka are true, suggesting that, perhaps involved in mystery and storytelling, people do nonetheless relate him with criminal activity. At the meeting in the Ministry of Safety and Security Police Chief Selepe openly states that these people have influenced police investigations even if only “in the past” (Dow, 2002: 146), something he must surely not believe himself. The police are said to have been “in a hurry to close the case out of fear of the men behind the murder” or “afraid of dying or going mad” (Dow, 2002: 146). Disanka and Mading, who certainly had not expected any items of clothing to be handed to the police, surely played a part in making them disappear. But compliance and complicity extend beyond the police force and play a vital role within the family circle, especially in the Disanka family. Wife and mother not only decide to wilfully pretend not to be aware of it, they also decide to engage in playing their family and social roles, suggesting in Pumla Gqola’s words, that their position does not even enter the domain of fence-sitting or grey areas.

Lesego, however, adopts a defying attitude from the moment she discovers her father’s activities and does not lack the courage to confront him, placing her in the privileged position of being able to challenge the status quo. Age, education and a sense of righteousness could empower her to act in a manner that would break the silence of the family. There seem to be no grey areas for her as far as the wrong doing of her father’s activities, but she decides to play her own pretence by attending boarding school. If it can be argued that she was too young to be able to stand up against her father when

she first learned of the crime, but her grey areas can no more be consoled five years later.

The Disanka Family

‘What’s with this child?’ Mma-Disanka asks the other four family members who are present, including Lesego. ‘You’ve been acting very strangely lately. You’re either angry or scared. What are you afraid of? You think someone will come and hurt you like they did that little girl? No one would dare Segoo. You father’s too powerful for anyone to hurt any of you. These poor children always come from a poor family...(Dow, 2002: 190 – 191).

The conversation in which Disanka’s mother acknowledges the mechanisms at work that will ensure Lesego’s safety takes place at breakfast the morning after Neo was killed. Lesego has just learned that her father is a ruthless murderer and all her approval and veneration seem to dissolve. Her grandmother accurately determines her feelings of anger and fear but Lesego’s decision to attend boarding school places her in as much a position of complicity with her father’s secret alter ego as indeed her mother and grandmother. Margaret Lenta writes that “Her [Lesego’s] grandmother’s behaviour, equally with her mother’s, shows the mixture of understanding and wilful ignorance which most people use to distance themselves from painful facts” (Lenta: 44). Unlike her mother and grandfather, Lesego is adamant that her father should know that she knows about his secret and attempts to confront him by directing her question at him:

‘These stupid police!’ Mma-Disanka interjects. ‘Of course the child’s been killed for *dipheko* – you don’t have to be a genius to know that!’ She snorts with disgust at what she considers to be the stupidity of the police.

Lesego glares at her father. ‘What do *you* think, dad?’ she asks.

Mma-Disanka answers for him. ‘Of course your father agrees with me – don’t you Rra-Lesego? A child of twelve doesn’t just disappear like an over-ripe mushroom!’

‘I agree,’ Disanka concurs weakly.

‘Agree with what?’ Lesego asks, snarling at him (Dow, 2002: 190) (Italics in the original).

Disanka’s unwillingness to directly confront his daughter’s question and his elusive weakness in agreeing with something while not knowing exactly what it is, place him in a very different position from the one he had expected to gain from the *dipheko*.

Lesego is clearly aggressive in her quest for a response from her father, although she probably knows she is unlikely to get it. Her grandmother's conversation resembling a monologue continues as she reminds Disanka of his duty in the pursuit for the whereabouts of the child while at the same time reassuring him that nothing will come from this effort but that he needs to keep up appearances and not raise suspicion. She then advises him that "those poor villagers will need people like you to make sure the police move. You'll see: nothing will happen – *nothing!*" (Dow, 2002: 191) (Italics in the original).

It seems possible to infer from this conversation that Disanka's mother was not entirely unaware of the origin of Lesego's defiant questions and tone of voice and to suppose that her advice to her son that he should participate in helping the police search for the child, but concluding reassuringly that the outcome would be "nothing", had the double implication that "nothing" referred to the police investigation as much as to the unjustified fear of Lesego's further noncompliance. She might have wished to calm her son by letting him know that this insubordination on the part of the teenager would never leave the family circle, as indeed it did not. Still, the father seeks his daughter hoping to secure what in so short a time had been lost, his daughter's steadfast confidence in him:

'Sego, Sego, will you talk to me?' a trembling voice asks, a voice that should be strong but isn't (...).

'Sego, you were still awake when I came in on Sunday night, weren't you?' There's fear in the question.

'Monday morning,' comes a whisper from the bed.

'I was coming from the cattle post – that's why I was so late.' Is it an invitation to be complicit, or an attempt to persuade her?

(...)

'You think something else,' he offers. 'Please don't think something else.'

(...)

'Daddy, please find me a place in a boarding school – *please*.

'Sego, I don't want you to go away.'

(...)

'Dad, I need to go away. You know it's best for everyone. I need to leave this place.'

The clean torch is sitting on the window sill. Father and daughter glance at it. Both look away.

(...)

'Dad, please don't touch me – *ever!*' (Dow, 2002: 191 – 192) (Italics in the original).

Disanka's humbleness might have been aimed at securing his daughter's love as well as her complicity. His participation in the *muti* involving Neo is now incontestable for his daughter and Disanka himself might have mentioned the unspeakable word, had Lesego endorsed this line of discussion. Disanka seems to ask his daughter for complicity that he expects to expand beyond the disguised pretence of family relationships. However, he is disappointed in his wish by his daughter as she adamantly requests to be sent to boarding school. The cleaned torch might evidence that cleanness is only apparent not only because both know that it was used in a murder and returned bloody to its rightful owner, Lesego, but also because the family's outward representation of harmony will be simulated. The arrangement that her leaving is the best solution for family harmony seems to be accepted by Disanka. For Lesego, Disanka has become repulsive and she cannot bear being touched by the man she knows to be a merciless murderer. Her emphasis on the word "ever" might be interpreted as an allusion to the fact that her trust is beyond repair. The family agrees that she is to attend boarding school in another district and although it can be argued that this distance represents the adolescent's own dissociation from her father's actions and her family's complicity, it is nonetheless the family's wealth that finances her stay and life there. Moreover, the 600 kilometre distance may also be seen as insufficient defiance of the status quo with respect to powerful men who kill, and apart from having some palliative effect on Lesego, it does not alter the overall unsolvable crime situation. In this sense, Lesego's silence contributes to the general compliant and complicit attitude, perhaps more forcefully than the "wilful ignorance" (Lenta: 44) of others, for she could be a material witness in acknowledging what her mother and grandmother might only have inferred, in providing the torch for forensic tests and reporting what she saw and heard. Lesego's decision comprises change only within the family circle that loses its patina of innocence. Rosinah knows her husband to be ultimately responsible for this family fragmentation and openly holds him accountable for it, even if knowingly or unknowingly she believes such a radical distance

to have no relation with any proportionally serious motivation. Family bliss has subsided to a sadness that is never overcome by the attempt to make up.

Five years later Lesego, now twenty-one years old, attends the *kgotla* meeting and takes her symbolic and forensically usable torch with her. Now older and more conscious of her part in the compliance and complicity surrounding Neo's death, she might be expected to use this opportunity to break the silence and distance she has chosen to put between herself and the family's secret, but she determinedly continues to act in a manner that will ensure her father's complete impunity. Lesego inquisitively glares at the people at the *kgotla* meeting and wonders who they are and what their relationship with the murdered child might be. She does not know of Rra-Naso and the minister's participation, but she is aware of that of Disanka and Bokae, whom she observes from a distance. Not surprisingly, her "father had a solemn look on his face: to any onlooker, there could have been no doubt that he, too, was a man seeking the truth, guidance, and punishment for the people responsible for the death of an innocent child" (Dow, 2002: 197). She recognises that Motlatsi and Rra-Naso look "drawn, frail, and defeated" (Dow, 2002: 202) as if already anticipating the pointlessness of the meeting. Perhaps Lesego's tears are motivated by their visible frailty and her sense of their powerlessness in obtaining an end that would indicate who the murderers are. Lesego's clothing indicates that she is not one of the villagers, something first seen by Nancy and then directly acknowledged by Naledi, who introduces herself to Lesego hoping to ascertain her interest in the case. Lesego's complicity and compliance are offered a different ending that she chooses to dismiss entirely. At no stage of her past and present life does she seem to have envisaged the fact that she holds the solution to the case and she cowardly "ducked deeper into the crowd" (Dow, 2002: 202) to avoid Naledi's questions. Considering that she does not intend to move from a peripheral position with respect to the case, her grandmother had been accurate in dismissing the possibility of threat to the family five years before. In a rather egotistic manner she manages to divert attention from the false exhibition of the pursuit of truth and the implicit significance of corruption at such a high level to her own personal loss. Unlike Naledi, who has lost her

job in the process, Lesego is not going to lose her comfortable life, although she says she has lost everything:

I've decided that my friends, that is Boitumelo and Amatile, are on the side of the truth (...). So, what's your interest?

Lesego clasped then unclasped her hands. 'So, you might lose your job. But you can get another one: you can go to work for your friend Boitumelo Kukama – isn't that right?'

'I guess so,' Naledi had to admit.

Lesego wasn't in the mood to disclose her interest in the case. 'I've nothing to lose by telling you why I'm here: I've already lost it all. So, Ms. Lawyer, go searching some place else. I've nothing to tell you.

(...)

'Aren't you going to tell me your name at least?' Naledi ventured, as a parting shot.

In response, Lesego picked up the torch that had been lying in her lap, stood up, and walked away. (Dow, 2002: 204)

Lesego is not interested in disclosing her interest in the case, which in view of her determined unwillingness to say anything about Disanka, makes her presence at the *kgotla* meeting quite redundant, and she claims to have "lost it all". She hangs on to her torch as if wishing to hold on to the family peace and her own child's innocence that she continues to regret having lost. When Naledi argues that she herself has lost her job in the common endeavour to re-instate a case many wished to forget, Lesego dismisses Naledi's personal losses with the argument that the lawyer can find another job working for her human rights friend. The conversation ends with Lesego's standing up and walking away from the meeting symbolically suggesting that she is determined to keep silent about the murderers behind Neo's death. In this sense, Lesego's complicity and compliance consign the case to oblivion and irresolution and make her as much a "phallic woman" (Gqola: 120) as her mother and grandmother. By choosing to be wilfully silent despite being neither ignorant nor uneducated, her compliance seems all the more reproachable.

The Police

The police in Gaphala are a deeply stratified and masculine organisation with its elements obeying a chain of command that is not to be questioned. Police officers appear to be insufficiently prepared to deal with *dipheko*, especially considering that it is common knowledge in Gaphala (and Botswana) that this crime is committed by powerful people and that any serious attempt to pursue murderers involved in it might collide with efforts to cover up or manipulate the investigation. Hence, it is not surprising to realise that the police efforts in finding Neo's murderers are unsuccessful. Unity Dow addresses the general impunity of this crime in Botswana in an interview:

Ritual killings, in Botswana at least, are not committed by poor people. It's just not a poor man's offence. It's about gaining more power, so you have to have some power already. By the nature of the offence, you are already in power (Daymond and Lenta: 53).

Considering that people who kill for *dipheko* already have power and wish to gain more, Neo's murder seems to be doomed to fall into oblivion from the beginning. The family report her missing and searches are conducted but had it not been for Rra-Naso, who took the clothes and left them to be easily found, not even this piece of evidence would have been retrieved. The discovery of the clothes five years later sets in motion another attempt at a thorough investigation as well as stirring up Amantle's childhood memories of missing children. In a blurry mixture of imagination and actual facts, Amantle remembers the ghost stories and stories about men who kill and rape, suggesting the vulnerability of village people. "As Amantle grew older, she'd started to doubt these accounts" (Dow, 2002: 59) but she still knows that children occasionally disappear and that ritual murders may not be a myth after all. Now that the clothes have been retrieved, she knows that a forensic analysis may identify Rra-Naso's blood and hopefully someone else's, even if the villagers prefer to give them to a diviner. The binary "traditional" and "modern" are at play, although the villagers' decision to consult a diviner may ultimately result from their discouraged realisation that the police will not investigate the case satisfactorily.

When Motlatsi Kakang and her family go to the police station they are met with the arrogance of the police officers that soon, however, turns into fear as they realise the

whereabouts of the box to be unknown. Fear induces them to lie to the family rather than tell them the truth. Their silence becomes compliance as they are aware that this disappearance must be linked with the exercise of power by people who wish the case to remain unsolved. Detective Sergeant Bosilo, in charge of the investigation, decides to leave Gaphala fearing repercussions and Constable Monaana, unable to do the same, is torn between telling the family the clothes were indeed handed over to the police but lost, and self-preservation. A new Detective Sergeant, Senai, takes over the case and is at the end of the *kgotla* meeting exhibited as one of the people held responsible for the cover up. Senai, who did not refrain from displaying his arrogance towards the villagers and junior officers, and who expected that respect for him should be inherent to his gender and social position, is however, not accountable for police inefficiency in this particular case. But his being arrested suggests that, when necessary, power is set in motion in a demonstration of results that aims at protecting the real criminals. In the novel police inefficiency derives strongly from complicity and compliance imposed through a chain of power that may reach politically influential people. When a threat to the people who wish to keep inefficiency as a means of personal protection is felt, other people of lower social status are sacrificed in a spectacle aimed at appeasing the social contestants involved. Tactics to secure control over the situation range from open force to subtle seduction, depending on that which will provide the best results. Mading, the Safety and Security Minister who is known to use force, even violence, to contain any act he perceives as insurgency, smoothly asks for the need to negotiate with the villagers at the meeting in Gaborone:

Health Minister Gape decided to throw his hat into the ring (...). ‘Why can’t we just storm the place?’ (...)

Minister Mading gave the response. ‘We can’t do that for various reasons. To start with, the village is so remote they can hear vehicles coming from kilometres away (...). Second, we need to get the clothes (...)’

Health Minister Gape had a frown on his face as he posed the next question to the group. ‘What’s the relevance of the clothes anyway – they won’t tell us who killed her, will they?’ (Dow, 2002: 145 - 146).

As the clothes might indeed tell who the killers are, Mading knows he has to be resourceful in obtaining them and adopts the seductive tactic of conversing with the villagers. In his introduction at the *kogtla* Mading is once again associated with food and ingestion:

As men of his status tended to be, the minister was a large man: clearly someone who ate well and often. Except for a prominent mole that marred the shape of his nose, he was actually very good looking.

The meeting, Minister Mading declared, had been called to address certain developments in the case of the disappearance of Neo Kakang, in 1994 (...).

‘Five years ago, in 1994, a young girl, Neo Kakang, disappeared from this village (...). She was never found. Some people believed – and I’m one of them – that she was killed for ritual purposes. Others in the police force believed she’d been killed by wild animals (...). I agree that that view wasn’t a very intelligent one. But we all know that fear of ritual murderers often makes the police afraid to find out the truth (...).

‘Are you confident this murder can be solved?’

The Safety and Security Minister shook his head in regret and by way of apologising. ‘All I can say is that we’ll do our best’ (...) (Dow, 2002: 198 – 2002).

Being large and well fed may refer to the Minister’s predatory features put to use at this meeting as he assesses the crowd and people’s reactions. Subterfuge and discursive shifting power from him to the villagers are used to reach his goal. He makes no attempt at denying the obvious nature of Neo’s death and rather than exercising topic control of the conversation, as he had done in the meeting in Gaborone, he allows the villagers to have their say. Subterfuge is also employed in his self-recognition as someone who, like the villagers, never believed the police’s excuses. He resorts to an apologetic almost humble response to Boitumelo’s question that in other circumstances would be discarded as simple impertinence. Gender, age and social status are obliterated by the Minister in a conscious tactic of persuasion. He clearly lacks the ethics the villagers and the group of young people trust him to have, and he may be, as he well knows, incompetent for the job for reasons covering his corrupt past and moral smallness, but he is nonetheless cleverly furtive enough to acquire what he wants. Power descends from its habitual podium to the villagers in a planned and conscious tactic aimed at securing the

power held by Mading as his associates. In this line of thought, the discursive power the villagers are given is temporary and fictitious and it is only a means for those at the top of the political and social chain of regaining complete control.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Silence can hide power, but *to be silenced* is an imposition that takes away power and agency (Nnaemeka: 145) (Italics in the original).

When Amantle begins working at the Gaphala clinic she chooses to remain silent when the nurses abuse her and, at the request of the villagers who fear their retaliation, refrains from calling them to work, but her initial silence hides power and it is a choice rather than an imposition. The moment the box containing the clothes is found and the villagers' past anger is stoked again, Amantle's silence breaks free. She refuses to be silenced by the police officers and a system that has endeavoured to silence the screaming of the innocent. Neo's screaming in Rra-Naso's mind echoes beyond the old man and reaches Amantle who is determined to make a difference by not allowing Neo's death to be forgotten. Her determination not to be silenced permits her to use the power she has gained through education and enables her to demonstrate sufficient agency to act in a manner that will ensure the murder will not be silenced a second time. Other women in the novel show their agency through language and action. Motlatsi battles against being silenced by questioning the police officers who expect their position in the system to be enough of an attribute to be shown respect. Boitumelo, Naledi, Nancy and even Daniel engage in activities that sometimes include unlawfulness to secure that neither will they accept being silenced, nor will they accept the silencing of a crime again. Mrs. Molapo's adamant rejection of any kind of intimidation concur to her being a powerful figure whose professionalism and righteousness place her in a level superior to the one evidenced by the men at the meeting in the capital and even the police.

Unity Dow's choice of young women as agents of change in the novel seems to be itself an act of agency and transition on her part. African writers, as writers anywhere else, have for a long time been overwhelmingly men who have tended not to see or to feel the injuries of gender and their complicity in the asymmetrical power relations of the society they live in. Some dismiss the importance of Literature written by women and about women as Ama Ata Aidoo sadly reports (Aidoo: 24). Unity Dow is aware of the changes Botswana is undergoing and of the potential agency of young people and women

in particular but she is, also sadly, confronted with questions regarding Amantle's "impossible" existence (Daymond and Lenta: 51):

Some people at home have said she's an impossible character. She's too strong for a young Motswana girl when she defies the police officers, for example. Others have said, it could never happen. I said, well we can dream, can't we? I hope that will happen (Daymond and Lenta: 51).

It seems logical to argue that Literature cannot be analysed solely through the possibility or impossibility of its characters' existence, or their female characters dismissed as unrealistic because of assumptions of what realistic female behaviour is, but more interestingly one may wonder whether arguments such as those used with respect to Amantle's defiance would ever apply were the protagonist of the novel a man. Unity Dow does not use this line of reasoning to reject the arguments against Amantle's "unrealism" but draws on her experience as a lawyer to exemplify that female defiance does exist in Botswana:

I think they feel that they [members of Tirelo Sechaba] could be her – or that they would like to be her. In fact, a few years ago, before I wrote this book, a particular young woman was allegedly involved in burning down a school (...).

People said Amantle was impossible, but she is possible – it actually happened. Sometimes she is too strong; sometimes she is not particularly wise, and to me those are the pitfalls of youth – you think that you understand everything; you can handle it: but you can't (Daymond and Lenta: 51).

Unity Dow herself points to some aspects of Amantle's character as "realistic", such as her sense that she will bring Neo's murders to justice, an assumption one might attribute to the naivety of youth. Although this commitment to a cause proves unsuccessful at the end of the novel, one may visualise Amantle telling the villagers that they have been deceived once again as much as Amantle becoming wiser through her experiences, which will in turn add further empowerment to her causes. In Botswana ritual killing is a common occurrence but "it's something that just is not talked about", which is a reason why the novel is seen as a "wake-up call" (Daymond and Lenta: 53). In view of this, Ama Ata Aidoo's words on the characteristics that in her opinion apply to feminist writing seem to be in order:

Any writer's feminism comes out in her writing only when she deals with women's issues with concern and commitment in ways that go beyond what would be of general interest to the author herself, as well as her potential readership (Aidoo: 21) (Italics in the original).

By addressing the common but not openly discussed ritual killing involving children in her novel, *Unity Dow* seems to go beyond “what would be of general interest to her” on a professional level, for example, and discusses in a novel something common in Botswana but that “just is not talked about” (Daymond and Lenta: 53). She has therefore broken the cycle of silence and significantly entitled this novel *The Screaming of the Innocent*. The novel also deals with situations in which a woman's confidence is violently shattered by men who abuse their position of power and pose as traditional healers to swindle people who are believers or naive. The legal complexity these situations would arise in a court of law, should these women decide to report them, also raises questions of how the law can strive to gain the confidence of women who are reluctant to report crimes, rape in particular. Literature on the subject systematically points to the reluctance women feel in pressing charges against alleged rapists which, considering attrition²⁰ levels only adds to their disbelief in the legal system. The United Nations has proposed some legislation aimed at minimising long felt gaps in legal systems but its work seems to continue to try to successfully thrive between the so-called inalienable rights of women and young girls and the respect for cultural characteristics with consequences in the protection of the rights of women. The United Nations has over time considered changes in the formulation of some of its texts and will, hopefully, completely stop addressing crimes against women such as female genital mutilation as “female circumcision” and might even consider definitely addressing this crime in its Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment²¹. Women's rights will not be protected or re-enforced unless people in all stances of society decide there cannot be any “grey areas” (Gqola: 118), including the

²⁰ Attrition in this context means the number and proportion of cases that fail to reach court and result in a guilty verdict (Kelly, 2003: 4).

²¹ In the *Mejla v. Perú* the State was assigned responsibility for torture in a rape case in which The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was used in legal argumentation that goes beyond the suggested definition of its article 1. It was argued that rape did in fact fulfil three of the elements of torture (Sellers: 31-32).

United Nations. In fact, although the United Nations online service documentation offers readers a wide range of Literature regarding sexual violence against women, it also takes care in stating that the point of view of the authors of the articles does not have to be the point of view of the United Nations. Understandable as this caution may be, it may become an obstacle when interpreted as a “grey area” attitude, which must not facilitate the effective implementation of United Nations legislation.

In this line of thought Neo’s death cannot but be referred to as murder and, as argued, as a sexual homicide as the traditional doctor was indeed a rapist but to follow these arguments and prove them in a court of law might be difficult. Questions ranging from social constructions of male and female behaviour to the education of law related officials would have to be raised. Nonetheless, to argue that *muti* murder continues to be difficult to prosecute can no longer be a form of excuse to avoid prosecuting it nor should this crime be hushed or be “something that is just not talked about” (Daymond and Lenta: 53) as if one were powerless and therefore efforts towards change somewhat pointless, because to be silent on it means to be complicit with it and with those who commit it. Moreover, the more ineffective the law is, the more complicit people continue to be.

Compliance and complicity have been interpreted in this dissertation as issues raised by Unity Dow in *The Screaming of the Innocent*. The author said in an interview that writing is a pleasurable activity (Daymond and Lenta: 55), but she has nonetheless chosen to write about particularly violent crimes against women - even describing the gruesome details of Neo’s death - in a way suggesting that political and social commitment are present. Her work and her words in the above mentioned interview seem to suggest that her experience as a woman, a lawyer and a judge have had some influence in her decision to write about the afflictions and victories of women in today’s Botswana. Her writing poses some questions regarding the process of transition between traditional and modern, older and younger in her country and the importance of law in the implementation and protection of the rights of women. As claimed by Annie Gagiano, Unity Dow’s work makes her an effective instrument of social intervention (Gagiano: 39) placing the writer in a defiant and non-complicit position in Botswana and elsewhere.

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