Contemporary South African Speculative Fiction: A Study of Mohale Mashigo's short story collection *Intruders* (2018)

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Abstract

Globally, speculative fiction is a popular genre, but it has not gained much traction in the contemporary South African literary sphere. In this thesis, I argue that speculative fiction allows for the exploration of social configurations of South African society because of its speculative and experimental nature. I will do so through an analysis of Mohale Mashigo's collection of short stories, *Intruders* (2018), using Sarah Nuttall's concept of entanglement as a rubric. My analysis will focus on Mashigo's use and alteration of tropes from comic books, popular culture, and folktales as well as her representations of a future South Africa and how it relates to global concerns regarding the control of technology. A broader focal point is how Mashigo's writing can be read as social commentary and how she uses folktales to illustrate the relationship between the past, present, and future. I also make the argument that Mashigo's writing can be defined as Africanfuturism and Africanjujuism as described by author Nnedi Okorafor. Through my analysis I will show that Mashigo's use of speculative fiction illustrates the ways in which the genre is equipped to represent South African social realities and the concerns of the post-Apartheid generations.

Declaration

I declare that *Contemporary South African Speculative Fiction: A Study of Mohale Mashigo's short story collection Intruders (2018)* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Name: Marvyn John Ruiter Date: 24 August 2022

Signature:

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Introduction

Speculative fiction refers "to a class of storytelling that takes what we now believe to be true and imaginatively exploring what might be the case, if conditions were different than they are" (Keeley 169). The term was first proposed by Robert Heinlein as a means of describing the specific type of fiction that he wanted to write (Delany 29). The genre is generally understood to be an umbrella term used to refer to several non-realist modes of fiction, including but not limited to science fiction and fantasy. Nalo Hopkinson, a Caribbean Canadian speculative fiction author, describes speculative fiction as "a set of literatures that examine the effects on humans and human societies of the fact that we are toolmakers. . .. [speculative fiction] tells us stories about our lives with our creations" ("Making the impossible" 98). She further states that "[speculative fiction] is a contemporary literature that is performing that act of the imagination – as opposed to the old traditional folk, fairy, and epic allegorical tales, which [she thinks] of as historical literature of the imagination" (Hopkinson, "Making the impossible" 98). This idea that speculative fiction plays a specific role in society is echoed by Charles Saunders as he states that science fiction (the genre most readily associated with speculative fiction) serves as "mythology for our technological culture" (7). We can also describe the genre as one that is not tied to mimetic recreation. Instead, it views any facet of reality as something that can be manipulated and extrapolated in order to create a story. It specialises in "making the impossible possible" (Hopkinson, "Making the impossible" 98).

The term speculative fiction has been used to describe various genres and storytelling styles throughout the past century. According to the Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Literature, it is currently understood as a "fuzzy set super category" encompassing non-mimetic genres (Oziewicz 2). These genres, including fantasy, science fiction, horror, and their variations, deviate from imitating consensus reality. They are characterized by resemblances to prototypical examples and degrees of membership. This concept of a "fuzzy super category" was introduced by Brian Attebery in genre studies (Oziewicz 2). Speculative fiction encompasses a wide range of genres and practices, specific to diverse cultures, thus functioning as a "cultural field" with its own rules, agents, and institutions (Oziewicz 2).

The genre extends beyond literature and permeates other artistic forms such as movies, games, comic books, and music. The understanding of speculative fiction as a cultural field emerged during the multicultural turn of the 1970s. It served as a form of resistance against the Western, post-Enlightenment, and colonialist mindset that had traditionally excluded non-realist stories from being considered as literature (Oziewicz 2-3). Only works that imitated reality were deemed worthy of being labelled literature, a concept referred to as mimetic art. Mimesis, rooted in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, aimed to achieve a direct correspondence to life, assuming an objective and unambiguous reality (Oziewicz 2).

Speculative fiction arose as a response to the Western-centric definition of reality and the dismissal of alternative viewpoints as primitive or unsophisticated. This perspective makes it particularly suitable for countries that have endured colonialism, as it rejects the hegemonic impulses of mandatory realism and allows for resistance against Western cultural imperialism (Burnett, "'Isn't Realist Fiction Enough?'" 121). In countries like South Africa, with diverse cultures and varying conceptions of reality suppressed by a history of colonialism, speculative fiction provides a platform for expressing these cultures in diverse forms.

Speculative fiction's acceptance of all conceptions of reality allows for a more layered and nuanced approach to understanding and representing social reality in fiction. The ability to 'make the impossible possible' allows for a rich variety of storytelling that can explore situations and worlds beyond the reach of current society and technology. It is a genre that hinges upon the imagination's ability to explore and examine. In his essay "Black to the Future," Walter Mosley states that the power of speculative fiction stems from its ability to "tear down the walls and windows, the artifice and laws by changing the logic, empowering the disenfranchised, or simply by asking What if?" (423). The ability to change the logic of reality and society holds a particular appeal for communities that have been oppressed. Joshua Burnett makes this clear in his statement that the genre "in its unfettering from the limits of realistic representationalism, . . . [make] it uniquely well-suited for grappling with neocolonial reality, where simplistic binaries of colonizer vs. colonized are no longer adequate" ("The Great Change" 136-137).

The binaries of colonizer and colonized, and oppressor and oppressed, have been a defining characteristic of South African history and literature for the last century due to the effects of segregation and Apartheid. These binaries are insufficient tools for the exploration of contemporary South Africa as there are "enough configurations in various spheres of contemporary South African life to warrant new kinds of explorations and tools of analysis" (Nuttall 19). I would argue that speculative fiction is well equipped to explore these new configurations. The publishing industry has been rather slow on the uptake of the genre, but it was noted in 2014 by speculative fiction author Nick Wood that "local publishers Jacana, Kwela, and Umizi had all opened up to speculative fiction" (Bryce 2). In the last decade, South African speculative fiction has gained some footing in the publishing industry thanks in part to the success Lauren Beukes' cyberpunk dystopian novel *Moxyland* (2008). The novel drew international acclaim, winning the 2011 Arthur C. Clarke award and showing the potential of speculative fiction in a South African context. The novel is an excellent example of speculative fiction exploring future possibilities and how humans live their lives under different conditions. But, despite Beukes' international success, the genre is still underutilised in the South African literary sphere.

A likely reason for this avoidance of the genre can be ascribed to attitudes such as that of Nigerian filmmaker Tchidi Chikere, who believes that '"We're not ready for pure science fiction . . . only stories that explore . . . everyday realities are considered relevant to us for now'" (qtd. in Bryce 3). Nnedi Okorafor, a Nigerian American speculative fiction author who reported the above quote in her blog post "African Science Fiction is still Alien," responds to the quote with a statement from Zimbabwean writer Ivor Hartmann, who states that "'[m]ost speculative fiction, be it fantasy, sci fi or horror, is firmly rooted in cultural mythologies . . .'" (qtd. in Bryce 3). These genres did not spring to life suddenly in the last few centuries, they are instead continuations of the genres Hopkinson refers to as "historical literature of the imagination" ("Making the impossible" 98). Myths, legends, and folktales – all of which can be found on the African continent – are all ancestors of what we now refer to as speculative fiction. Mohale Mashigo, a recent addition to the list of South African speculative fiction authors, refers to this idea in an interview, stating:

> If anybody should be telling science fiction or speculative fiction stories, it should be Africans. When I listen to some of our folktales, I say to myself, this is definitely [speculative fiction]; if anybody should be thriving in this genre it should be Africans because we're just naturals at all these supernatural stories, all these wild ideas about people flying, that's who we are. ("Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 2)

Mashigo's own writing shows the truth of her statement as she has been lauded as a new talent in the genre of speculative fiction. Her debut novel *The Yearning* (2016) was met with critical acclaim, winning the 2017 University of Johannesburg Prize for South African debut writing, as well as being longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award 2018. The novel draws on South African traditional beliefs surrounding spiritual healers in order to create a uniquely South African story, focusing on the life of a contemporary black woman who must come to terms with the trauma of her past and decide who she wants to be in South Africa as it exists now. As a debut it was striking and poignant as it connected with the experiences of contemporary black South Africans as they navigate the intricacies of traditional cultural beliefs and the influence it has on contemporary life. Mashigo's style of blending South African culture and speculative fiction is important as I believe it is an example of a possible new trajectory for South African writing.

Mohale Mashigo's writing, I will argue, is an example of a novel approach to South African literature that speaks towards the experiences of those who grew up in a post-Apartheid South Africa, particularly the transitional period following 1994. Her style of writing has been influenced by the novels she has read, which are a mixture of international, African, and South African writing. In an interview with the editor of *The Johannesburg Review of Books*, Jessica Malec, Mashigo comments on how reading "*The Colour Purple* and later *Nervous Conditions* and *Ways of Dying* . . . changed . . . [her] perspective on reading" (Mashigo, "'We bury our stories'"). *The Colour Purple* (1985) is a novel by Alice Walker, which depicts the life of Celie, an uneducated woman from the Southern United States in the early 20th century. Mashigo states that before this novel, she "had never read books by and about black people" and that she had always been "a spectator in the literary world" who suddenly "felt like people like . . . her] could also get in on the action" ("'We bury our stories'"). *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga, is a bildungsroman which follows Tambu, the second child in her family, who after her brother's death must take on the responsibilities of the eldest. Tambu is given the chance to 'improve' herself through education and, through her journey, confronts the reality of being a black woman in a patriarchal and racist society. This novel felt to Mashigo "like it could be about people . . . [she] knew" further stating: "Suddenly it occurred to me that I could write about people I knew – that we belonged in stories too" ("'We bury our stories'"). Similarly, the final novel, *Ways of Dying* (1995) by Zakes Mda, follows the wanderings of Toloki, a self-employed professional mourner, across an unnamed South African city during the post-1994 transition period. Through her reading of this novel, Mashigo states that she was given "permission to write about the 'ugly thing' while humanising the people involved in it" ("'We bury our stories'"). In another interview she also mentions this novel, echoing her statements regarding *Nervous Conditions* (1988), stating that when she realised *Ways of Dying* (1995) was “a story about black people I could know” she thought to herself that “‘I think I can do this. I’ll just write for myself” (“‘We bury our stories’”). Her personal understanding of these stories can be seen in much of her writing as she chooses to tell stories about people like her, while never shying away from the ugliness which the world so often throws on the paths of black people.

Mashigo’s style of drawing from various cultural sources and art forms is not only expressed in her writing but also in her ability to express herself in several different formats. She is a radio moderator, songwriter, award-winning singer, self-described storyteller, and she has also co-created *Kwezi*, a comic book that follows the exploits of a South African teenager who has superpowers. Recently she has contributed to a new collection of superhero stories by Marvel comics celebrating Black History Month. Her ability to draw from multiple sources such as folktales and traditional beliefs, her choice of speculative fiction, as well as her comic book writing, are what allows her to create unique stories that show an appreciation for modern tastes while staying true to the South African context. This can be seen working to full effect in her most recent publication, *Intruders* (2018), a collection of short stories. The collection is made up of a range of speculative fiction stories. This collection will be the focus of this study, as I argue that Mashigo’s brand of speculative fiction is an example of a new form of socially conscious South African literature that speaks to the concerns of the post-1994 generation.

Intruders (2018) was “born of . . . [Mashigo’s] desire to tell mystical stories about people who don’t conform to societal standards” (Mashigo, “Mohale Mashigo tells us”). The collection moves between multiple sub-genres of speculative fiction with ease, providing an example of how the genre has the capacity to bring attention to and comment on the social realities of South Africa. A key feature of Mashigo’s writing is her ability to create relatable protagonists who exist on the fringes of society. The protagonists of the collection are described by Mashigo as "anomalies in a world that has no time to truly see them" ("Mohale Mashigo tells us"). She states in an interview that "[a]ll of the people in these stories in *Intruders* are people you might think are leading unremarkable lives, but the situations they are thrust into, sometimes against their will, make them go through something fantastical" (Mashigo, "Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 2). The protagonists are ordinary people going through extraordinary situations. The collection is also concerned with the experience of being an intruder. This concern stems from Mashigo's first-hand experiences as she states that while she "[has] never suffered from a lack of representation," she still lives in a country where her "culture, language and presence were considered a nuisance" ("Afrofuturism" xiii). This experience is especially pertinent to those who have grown up in the 'Rainbow nation' era of South Africa as they were thrust into a multicultural society that no one could prepare them for as it was a fundamentally new experience. Mashigo's goal in her writing is less focused on societal change; rather, what she wants readers to gain from her collection is tied to a more individual struggle. She states: "I hope [the readers] will learn something about the people society considers 'nobodies'" (Mashigo, "Mohale Mashigo tells us"). These 'nobodies' serve as the protagonists for her stories and in this way, she transforms them into 'somebodies,' as her author's note to the collection shows:

> This one is for a girl who always saves a Boy Who Lived; for delicate and invisible boys; lost souls with praying mothers (even a heathen like me has a praying mother); those who raise themselves in a world that doesn't care whether they live or die, the progeny of forgotten legends; those who have lost too much and have nothing but themselves; for young love and old heartbreak; the ones who fall asleep with a man and wake up next to a monster; for monster slayers and makers; for those who were spat out onto the streets; for the weird, the wonderful . . . and us, who never see ourselves

> in the stars but die in seas searching for them. You are everything. (Mashigo, "Afrofuturism" vii)

The collection is a love letter to the flotsam of society; those who bow their heads and continue to live and love despite their circumstances, those passed on the street and forgotten immediately, the people considered to be intruders in a vision of a perfect world.

Intruders (2018) is Mohale Mashigo's second published work, made up of an introduction and twelve stories. The stories cover a few speculative fiction genres including, but not limited to, science fiction, fantasy, and horror. The stories are divided into three sections, titled *The Good*[1], *The Bad*[2] and *The Colourful*[3]. The sections are a reworking of the title for the spaghetti Western *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* (1966) directed by Sergio Leone. The title refers to the three main characters, Blondie, Angel Eyes, and Tuco (played by Clint Eastwood, Lee van Cleef, and Eli Wallach respectively): "The Good is Blondie, a wandering gunman with a strong sense of personal [honour]. The Bad is Angel Eyes, a sadistic hitman who always hits his mark. The Ugly, is Tuco, a Mexican gunman who's always only looking out for himself" (Naughton). The movie is described as "an epic tale of betrayal and greed that paints the American frontier …as a place of unforgiving violence" (Housman). In a similar fashion to the movie, *Intruders* (2018) offers the reader a glimpse at contemporary South African society, through the lens of Mashigo, as she portrays all facets of our society; the good, the bad, and the colourful. Each section is defined by the role the characters play in society and their own lives. *The Good* section contains stories wherein the protagonist is not entirely responsible for the dramatic events in the story and are powerless to stop them. The

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[1] "Manoka," "Ghost Strain N," "The Parlemo," "Untitled i"

[2] "BnB in Bloem," "On the Run," "Little Vultures," "Untitled ii"

[3] "High Heel Killer," "Once Upon a Town," "Untitled iii," "Nthatisi"

protagonists also must deal with the consequences by themselves. *The Bad* contains stories where the characters have power, whether it be physical, intellectual, or another form of power. Despite their power they are unable to alter the course of events, but their power may still allow them to change the lives of others. *The Colourful* section is made up of stories where the characters are fundamentally changed by the actions of others and are forced to adapt to their situations, whether they do so successfully is up to them. Through each section Mashigo tells stories that many South Africans can relate to in numerous ways.

In order to achieve her goal of putting ordinary people in extraordinary situations, Mashigo chose to write speculative fiction as she "didn't want to be stuck in realism" (Mashigo, "Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 3). The genre allowed her to create these extraordinary situations for her protagonists, but it also allowed her to address serious themes, while allowing the reader a healthy distance, as she states: "I wanted people to place a healthy distance between themselves and the issues I was dealing with. The many things that are happening in the stories are like smoke and mirrors . . .. I found that speculative fiction enabled readers to establish a distance . . ." (Mashigo, "Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 3). This is a strategy which suits speculative fiction as "the fantastical, the grotesque, and the other-worldly are the means through which speculative fiction, rather than distancing itself, in fact addresses the social real" (Bryce 9). The distance that Mashigo refers to is what is known as the estrangement- or distancing effect. This effect is a defining characteristic of the genre according to Darko Suvin, who describes the genre of science fiction – and by extension speculative fiction – in his book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979) as the "literature of cognitive estrangement*"* (4). He explains this further, stating that

> [science fiction] is, then, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment. (Suvin 7-8)

The concept of estrangement is not limited to speculative fiction and was first proposed by Berthold Brecht who used it in his plays. Brecht did not create the concept as he adapted it from "the *Russian formalist* concept of 'defamiliarization'" (Abrams and Harpham 7; emphasis in original). Brecht states that a "representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (qtd. in Suvin 6). Estrangement is employed in a narrative "to make familiar aspects of the present social reality seem strange, so as to prevent the emotional identification or involvement of the [reader]" (Abrams and Harpham 7). The effect of this is "to evoke a critical distance and attitude in the [reader] in order to arouse them to take action against, rather than simply to accept, the state of society" (Abrams and Harpham 7). Estrangement therefore allows the reader to view the world from a different point of view as well as to understand it in a more nuanced manner as "the look of estrangement is both cognitive and creative" (Suvin 6). The way estrangement is evoked is dependent on the genre; for Suvin the "attitude of estrangement" in speculative fiction is a result of "factual reporting of fictions" (6). What Suvin means by this is that the speculations of the author are presented as fact in the pages of the novel or story. This is achieved in Mashigo's stories by representing the reality of the character as similar to the reality which we all experience. The speculative elements in the stories are presented as strange to the protagonists and other characters, this heightens the relatability of the protagonists to the reader.

The cognitive element that Suvin refers to in his definition is what sets speculative fiction apart from other genres that utilise estrangement. Cognition, as stated by Suvin, "implies not only a reflecting *of* but also *on* reality. It implies a creative approach tending towards a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author's environment" (10; emphasis in original). The interaction of cognition and estrangement forces the reader to contemplate the reality that they experience as they "are estranged from [their] assumptions about reality and forced to question them" (Nodelman 24). This effect is Mashigo's goal and can be found throughout the collection. An example of this is the story "Ghost Strain N" wherein sufferers of substance abuse disorders are shown to turn into zombie-like creatures that haunt their neighbourhoods. The reader is estranged from reality through the presence of zombies but is also forced to contemplate the real-life situations that have led to the substance abuse problem in our society. The zombies are also an example of another feature that can be found in *Intruders* (2018): tropes.

Tropes, from popular culture and comic books, are a key feature of Mashigo's writing. These tropes serve as a means of estrangement, while simultaneously allowing the reader to recognise certain elements of the story. Mashigo particularly draws from tropes found in American comic books. Comic books have grown from a specifically American artform to a globally recognised artform. The stories and images of different supermen and women have become the inspiration for a billion-dollar enterprise producing movies, books, and a variety of other artforms. A number of stories in *Intruders* (2018) draw on particular comic book tropes popularised in either the pages of popular American comic books or other forms of popular culture such as film and television. "The High Heel Killer" for example employs the trope of the origin story, as well as the imagery and history of Batman, but elegantly redeploys it to describe the experiences of a nameless woman in the city and her violent reaction to the aggressions she experiences. Mashigo also draws from South African folktales for the collection. The final story in the collection, "Nthatisi," uses the popular folktale of Tselane and the giant, as a form of history for the protagonist, as she finds out that she is the descendant of Tselane. The combination of tropes, folktales, and speculative fiction is indicative of Mashigo's varied interests, but it also brings attention to the ways in which South Africa has become enmeshed with the world and other cultures.

Mashigo's tendency to draw from a variety of cultural sources is not something that is unique to her. Nalo Hopkinson, for one, is only known for drawing on cultural sources in this manner. Hopkinson is of Caribbean descent and because of this her work has been analysed using the concept of creolisation, a term "used to describe the intermixing of cultures" because of colonialism and slavery (Gyulay 636). The similarities between Hopkinson and Mashigo's style points towards the possibility of analysing the latter's work using the same concept. I will instead opt for another concept, as creolisation while a useful concept, is a loaded term in South African cultural and literary studies for a number of reasons, two of these being:

> . . . first, the presupposition that 'creolisation' is tantamount to 'colouredness' as a biological and cultural construct and second, the Apartheid state's construction of colouredness as a political buffer between blacks and whites, and the interpellation of 'colouredness' as neither black nor white (according to an ideology of racial purity), a notion that was both racist and suspect. (Nuttall 21)

In my analysis, the dynamic of one culture being dominant over the other, which is inherent in the concept of creolisation, does not provide a beneficial framework. Instead, I will utilise the concept of entanglement as defined by Sarah Nuttall in her book *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (2009). Nuttall's entanglement is based on the work of Eduoard Glissant on Caribbean culture, in which he "used the term entanglement to refer to the 'point of difficulty' of creolised beginnings" (Nuttall 9). Nuttall describes entanglement as

> a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with: it speaks of intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated,

> ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness. It works with difference and sameness but also with their limits, their predicaments, their moments of complication. (1)

Mashigo's selection of speculative fiction, a genre historically regarded as predominantly Western, along with the inclusion of comic book elements, popular culture, and folklore, exemplifies this intricate interweaving. By approaching Mashigo’s work through the notion of entanglement, we can find “a method of reading which is about a set of relations, some of them conscious but many of them unconscious, which occur between people who most of the time try to define themselves as different” (Nuttall 12). The concept enables “an interrogation, imperatively, of the counter-racist and the work of desegregation” (Nuttall 12). Entanglement is also preferable to creolisation, as it discusses the complex overlay of diverse cultural constructs which inform South African culture without having to resort to Manichean binaries such as oppressed versus oppressor. This will allow me to discuss the various cultural sources that Mashigo draws from without placing them in opposition to one another, rather viewing them on equal ground.

Mashigo’s use of all these sources can best be linked to Nuttall’s discussion of “Y Culture, also known as *loxion kulcha*” (15; emphasis in original). It is a “youth culture in Johannesburg which moves across various media forms and generates a ‘compositional remixing’ that signals an emergent politics of style, shifting the emphasis away from an earlier era’s resistance politics” (15). “Y culture” according to Nuttall

> . . . articulates the clear remaking of the black body; its repositioning by the first post-Apartheid generation. More specifically, it signals the supersession of an earlier era’s resistance politics by an alternative politics of style and accessorisation, while simultaneously gesturing, in various ways, toward the past. (108)

If we apply the idea to *Intruders* (2018), we can see that Mashigo's use of comic book and popular culture tropes is an example of this cultural reworking. It also speaks to an awareness of South Africa as a member of a global community, a community which is increasingly facing issues that are not bound by geographical and cultural limitations. The use of specifically American cultural forms is a marker of this cultural movement as Y culture "is an explicitly local reworking of the American sign" (Nuttall 108). This is also a feature of a form of literature in South Africa known as post-transitional literature, a form "which rebuffs the myth of South Africa's exceptionalism by interacting with global social realities" (Kohler 109). Mashigo's writing can be seen as an indicator of the way South African literature is becoming less bound by the conceptions of the past, particularly the oppositional nature of Apartheid and protest literature, and moving towards a more globally occupied literature that interacts with concerns that affect the nation of South Africa, as well as the global community.

Mashigo's writing, I will argue, functions as a literary expression of Y culture. Her writing in *Intruders* (2018) does this particularly well as the breadth of stories shows her capacity for altering certain forms of writing to fit the South African context. Mashigo's writing is concerned with the current conditions of South African society, which positions her writing, and that of many others, as the successor of the protest writing of the Apartheid era. Protest writing can be simply defined as writing "which is liable to be banned, or to get the author into some sort of trouble, or both" (Cornwell 52). This definition allows for protest writing to be written by any author despite their race, so it could justifiably be written by black or white authors. Despite this, protest literature is most readily associated with black South African writing. It was literature written by the oppressed as a means of illustrating the brutal oppression of the oppressor. Njabulo Ndebele describes the history of black South African literature as "the history of the representation of the spectacle" stating that "[t]he visible symbols of the overwhelmingly oppressive South African social formation appear to have prompted over the years the development of a highly dramatic, highly demonstrative form of literary representation" (143). This description while referring to black South African writing as a whole can justifiably be said to describe the form and intent of Protest literature in South Africa. Mashigo's writing, as a form of Y culture, supersedes this form of writing and instead chooses to represent the reality of contemporary South Africa through speculative fiction. Through the genre she delivers social commentary, not through dramatic and demonstrative representation, but through the transformative ability of speculative fiction. She accessorises these representations by drawing from popular culture, comic books, folklore, and diasporic speculative fiction. This is done in order to create a form of fiction that is relevant and entertaining while still maintaining a thread of social commentary throughout her work.

An important feature of Y culture is its gesturing towards the past. The word gesture is important as it indicates an acknowledgement of the past without wallowing in it or obsessing about it. Mashigo gestures towards the past in *Intruders* (2018) through the use of folktales, folklore, and traditional beliefs. Folktales are able to serve this function since they do not represent a specific section of the past. They can therefore represent the past without being attached to any political or social ideologies. Folktales are still popular in a majority of African cultures and are the "most well-known form of orality in African literature apart from oral performance, legend, myth, and proverbs" (Crous and Usman 1). They are fantastical stories which can contain non-human characters such as animals and gods, who can occupy a story together or be the focus of the story (Crous and Usman 2). While the folktale is predominantly seen as an oral narrative, it includes "all forms of prose narratives, oral or written, which have been handed down through the years" (Sone 145). These tales were performed or told for a variety of reasons such as "moral instructions, socio-cultural commentaries or . . . to emphasise group values and teach against anti-social behaviour" (Crous and Usman 2). Above everything else, these stories were seen as "didactic instruments" (Sone 143). They taught the difference between right and wrong, and through this functioned as forms of social control. As a result of this folktales offer us valuable insights into the values and beliefs of cultures since folktales "draw their material from the realities of society and hence reflect a people's values and worldviews" (Sone 143). This means that folktales, especially those which have been passed down through multiple generations, are historical and cultural artefacts. Mashigo uses these cultural artefacts to represent the relationship between contemporary youth and their past, specifically their heritage and culture. Through this she can represent the interactions between the past and the present and show how they influence the actions of her protagonists.

Y culture can also be related to Mashigo's work through her futuristic writing that is an example of Africanfuturism, which can be described as an "explicitly local reworking of the American sign" of Afrofuturism (Nuttall 108). Afrofuturism was first defined by Mark Dery in his interview with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose, titled "Black to the Future," as:

> Speculative Fiction that addresses African-American themes and addresses AfricanAmerican concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture – and more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future – might, for want of a better term, be called 'Afrofuturism'. (Dery 180)

From this description, it is clear that Afrofuturism is a specifically American phenomenon as it deals with the concerns of African Americans. Mashigo also does not want her work labelled as Afrofuturism as she states in her introduction to *Intruders* (2018), "Afrofuturism: Ayashis' Amateki," that "Afrofuturism is not for Africans living in Africa" (x). A better descriptor for her work is Africanfuturism, which was created by Nigerian author Nnedi Okorafor, in her blog *Nnedi's Wahala Zone Blog.* She outlines a broad strokes definition of Africanfuturism as a genre that is

> . . . concerned with visions of the future, is interested in technology, leaves the earth, skews optimistic, is centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (black people) and it is rooted first and foremost in Africa. It's less concerned with 'what could have been' and more concerned with 'what is and can [or] will be'. It acknowledges, grapples with and carries 'what has been'. (Okorafor)

Mashigo's futuristic fiction has not been defined, but I will argue that her particular brand of futuristic fiction is Africanfuturism and that it in fact reworks American Afrofuturism. This reworking is particularly apparent in the way that she represents how South African concerns with technology overlap with global concerns of the billionaire class who effectively control a substantial portion of technological development.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the ways in which Mashigo's specific use of speculative fiction illustrates the unique ways in which the genre is equipped to represent South African social realities and the concerns of the post-Apartheid generation. This will be done by focusing on the manner in which Mashigo uses the genre's abilities in order to address the social issues of South African society. To do this, I will analyse selected stories from *Intruders* (2018), focusing on the representation of social ills in the present, the use of folktales to address South Africa's relationship with the past, and representations of the future. The first chapter will discuss the representations of social problems facing South Africa through the lens of speculative fiction. A specific focus of chapter one is the way Mashigo uses speculative fiction in order to portray abstract concepts in physical form. I aim to demonstrate how this approach exemplifies the estrangement effect, enabling readers to approach and comprehend the specific social issue in a fresh and novel manner. The stories selected for this chapter are "On the Run," "High Heel Killer," and "Ghost Strain N." These stories have been selected as their content relates to social problems in South Africa such as substance abuse, generational trauma, and the experiences of women in the city space. In short, the chapter will examine how speculative fiction can function as social commentary. Chapter two focuses on stories which draw from elements of South African folklore, specifically “Nthatisi” and “Manoka.” The chapter will explore how the folkloric elements in the stories are representative of cultural heritages. It will also focus on the relationship between modern South African youth and their cultural heritage. The chapter will also analyse the way in which the older generation in the stories project their experiences of the past onto the younger generation, thereby influencing their understanding of the present. In chapter three the focus will shift to representations of the future as found in “Untitled i,” “Untitled ii,” “Untitled iii.” The analysis of these stories will draw on Mashigo’s introduction to *Intruders* (2018), “Afrofuturism: Ayashis’ Amateki,” by examining how the futures represented in the stories are specific to the South African experience. The chapter will also focus on how these stories comment on the current state of technological progress and specifically who owns and controls it, as well as how these concerns interact with South African concerns. Each of these chapters will be discussed in relation to the use of tropes found in older forms of speculative fiction, comic books, popular fiction, and folktales. Through this, I will attempt to show how Mashigo’s approach to South African literature possibly opens new avenues for social literature, as speculative fiction allows for writing that is entertaining and relevant to a younger audience while simultaneously following in the footsteps of the socially conscious literature of South Africa’s past. This novel approach to South African writing could possibly lead to a resurgence in South African writing that moves away from the heavy-handed approaches of protest literature and possibly open new avenues of academic research for South African speculative fiction.

Chapter 1: Speculative Fiction and social commentary

Speculative fiction, according to my experiences as a student of English literature, is not seen by the traditional literary establishment as a socially conscious literary form. This is an error of generalisation since speculative fiction is a vast landscape of literary expression which falls on a spectrum of social consciousness. The genre is actually an effective means of social commentary as has been shown by a number of authors and filmmakers. The speculative element – the part of the story which differs from consensus reality – of the genre allows for the exploration of social, and oftentimes controversial, issues through metaphor, analogy, and symbolism. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), widely seen as the first science fiction novel, speculates on the potential applications of electricity as well as the ethical implications of unbridled scientific research. Another progenitor of the genre, *The Time Machine* (1895) by H.G. Wells, speculated on the future consequences of classism and unequal development, portraying the future of different classes through divergent evolution. The Japanese film *Gojira* (1954), marketed globally as Godzilla, portrays the consequences of nuclear fallout through a gigantic lizard, mutated by radiation, attacking Japan. In contemporary literature, many black authors such as Octavia Butler and Nalo Hopkinson have employed the genre in order to discuss race, the consequences of racism, and the experiences of black people in the African diaspora. The power of the genre to 'make the impossible possible' allows writers to explore social issues in novel ways, offering insights and commentary presented in a way that invites contemplation while entertaining the reader. Mohale Mashigo achieves this in her collection, particularly the stories selected for this chapter, by drawing on tropes found in popular culture and comic books in order to entertain as well as represent the social problems of South African society, through the transformative ability of speculative fiction.

To show how Mohale Mashigo's writing in the selected stories function as social commentary, I will analyse each story by focusing on particular facets of the narrative. I will first outline the definition of tropes and how they function. Then I will analyse the stories individually, starting with "On the Run," then "High Heel Killer," finishing with "Ghost Strain N." In my analysis, I will pay attention to how certain aspects of each story can be connected to a trope found in comic books or popular culture, providing some background information on the trope in order to show how Mashigo alters the trope to serve her purposes. Through this, I will argue that the tropes and speculative elements work in concert as representations of particular social issues. I will also focus on the representation of the protagonists as individuals in society.

Mashigo takes advantage of the recognisability of tropes and alters them in order to utilise them in a South African context. Tropes are used in all narrative art forms since they function as a shorthand for recognisable features. They are defined as a

> [r]ecurring narrative device; it can be a technique, a motif, an archetype or a *clich*[é], used by authors to achieve specific effects that might vary from increasing the interest, surprising, recall familiarity, entertaining, etc, in their creative works, such as books, films, comics or videogames. (García-Ortega et al. 1; emphasis in original)

Tropes are tools used by authors as a shorthand. Readers recognise the trope and immediately understand certain details about the narrative. It is also used in order to enhance the relatability of their stories. They can also become restrictive and discriminatory facets of accepted modes of storytelling as some tropes rely on harmful portrayals of women or discriminatory representations of certain races. Racist tropes include character types such as the Uncle Tom, Mammy, or Jezebel characters. When these tropes are altered to fit a new context, they create new interpretations which undermine the discriminatory or restrictive aspects while still relying on the recognisability of the trope. Through altering the tropes, they are transformed and removed from problematic pasts, creating new possibilities. In the stories selected for this chapter, Mashigo draws on and alters tropes found in comic books and popular culture. These alterations allow her to tell stories relevant to South Africa while simultaneously paying heed to the porous boundaries between South Africa and the rest of the world. Mashigo draws heavily from American entertainment in particular, which forms a significant part of South African and global media. This is an example of what Nuttall refers to as “compositional remixing,” which is a way of creating a specific style that is reflective of modern South African tastes (15). Mashigo’s writing, when read using the rubric of entanglement, shows the entangled nature of the cultural sources that inform our artistic forms and creations.

An example of this is the story “High Heel Killer” which draws from the trope of the superhero origin story, specifically the origin of the DC character Batman. Batman is a well-known comic book hero, who’s secret identity is billionaire Bruce Wayne. As a child Bruce Wayne lost his parents to a mugging gone wrong. This event serves as a catalyst for his transformation into the dark hero Batman who protects the fictional city of Gotham at night by prowling over rooftops and attacking criminals. A key part of the Batman mythos is his connection with the fictional city of Gotham. Mashigo eloquently remixes the story of Batman and applies it to the experience of a nameless woman and her experiences in the city. The character does not mirror Batman but instead alters certain elements of his story to tell a story about gender dynamics, micro-aggressions aimed at women, and the freedom of movement (or lack thereof) in the city. The story relates the experiences of a woman who grows wings after murdering a man in the street because of an inappropriate comment he made. The growth of wings allows her to soar above the city skyline and declare herself a protector of the city. The moment in which she makes this declaration is an eloquent remixing of Batman’s vow to avenge the death of his parents:

> Up here nobody can tell me what I deserve, who I should be or how to be. And I dare those below to open their mouths and tell another tired, underpaid woman that she deserves the cruelty of the city. I'm the enemy of cruelty and they'll have to deal with me. (Mashigo, "The High Heel Killer" 150)

This moment mirrors the vow that Bruce Wayne (Batman) made to his parents after their death, promising that he would bring their killer and all other criminals to justice. These alterations allow Mashigo to connect with the reader through familiarity while also pointing out the underlying bias encoded within these tropes. In the case of "High Heel Killer," she uses the trope of Batman to subtly bring attention to the different experiences of men and women in a city environment. Batman or Bruce Wayne is a privileged white man who uses his considerable resources to exert his own version of justice on the city of Gotham, while the protagonist of "High Heel Killer" is a black woman without any privilege struggling to safely navigate the city. These alterations create an entertaining and engaging narrative while also serving as a form of social commentary. The trope also functions as a form of estrangement in order to mask the more overt social commentary within the narrative. Through this estrangement the reader maintains their distance from the underlying narrative or message. This is a conscious strategy on Mashigo's part as she wants to allow the readers to have a certain level of distance from the social issues she deals with in her writing (Mashigo, "Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 3).

Mashigo also employs the estrangement effect through the situations her protagonists find themselves in. In every story, the protagonist is faced with an abrupt transformation within themselves or their immediate circle, leading to substantial changes in their lives. The plot unfolds as their reactions to these circumstances become the primary driving force. The adherence to a semi-realistic representation of society amplifies the separation of reality and the story, allowing the reader some distance from the story. The way in which the speculative elements are representations of social issues is important. The speculative elements do not serve as analogous representations of the social issue they represent. For example, substance use disorder is not an infectious disease, but it is a disorder which can affect the way someone behaves. Mashigo instead uses the speculative element as an extreme representation of the social issue as a means of drawing attention to certain aspects of the issue. She does this by representing the internal aspects of the issue in a physical form. In "Ghost Strain N," Mashigo utilizes zombies as a representation of individuals grappling with substance use disorder, shedding light on society's dehumanizing perception of them. In each of the stories chosen for analysis in this chapter, Mashigo represents the internal and unseen aspects of the issue in a physical form through the mutability allowed by speculative fiction.

The focus of this chapter will be on the way in which Mashigo uses tropes and speculative fiction’s ability to represent reality in transformed ways to create stories which function as social commentary. Each story represents a particular social issue as a transformation affecting either the protagonist themselves or society at large. Mashigo’s transformations serve to illustrate abstract and internal concepts in a manner that draws attention to, and represents in a physical form, that which can be more readily understood by the reader[4]. “On the Run” details the interview of a supposed terrorist, Nolwazi Botha, who accidentally killed her husband after her body changed as a result of experiments performed on her father during Apartheid. “The High Heel Killer” details the transformation of an unnamed

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[4] The way Mashigo’s writing focuses on exteriority and physicality is reminiscent of the concept of the spectacular as posited by Njabulo Ndebele in his paper “The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa.” The spectacular is a way of representing the brutality and inhumanity of the Apartheid system and the treatment of Black people and was therefore a common trope in Black South African literature. The spectacle is according to Ndebele a feature of protest literature, and he defines it as the “‘emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs, (the) exhaustion of the content by form’” and “the method of displaying the culture of oppression to the utmost in bewilderment” (144).

woman, following her murder of a man in the street in a fit of rage because of the harassment she experiences in the city. “Ghost Strain N” follows the friendship of two young men, Koketso and Steven, as Steven is transformed into a zombie-like creature because of a virus, theorised in the story to be a result of substance addiction. Respectively, they focus on intergenerational trauma, the plight of women feeling unsafe in the city space, and substance abuse disorders. In each case the transformation (which I will refer to as the speculative element) and the consequences thereof, can be read as symbol[5] referring to the consequences of a social ill. Each of these stories is an example of presenting abstract concepts or conditions in an externalised physical form. “Ghost Strain N” for example portrays substance abuse disorders as a zombie virus. Each drug creates a craving for a different body part: “Ghost Strain T in the Western Cape made the Ghost chew the hands and arms off people. T was for Tik” (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 40). Through representing social issues in this way and subtly commenting on the state of society, Mashigo is pushing forward South African social literature. The first story to be analysed, “On the Run” is a nuanced example of this social literature as it portrays the effects of past trauma on the present.

The story “On the Run” focuses on the continuing effects of the Apartheid system on the children of those who were victims of atrocities committed during the Apartheid era, through the tropes of mutants and genetic engineering. The story is presented to the reader in the form of an interview between the journalist, Mokwadi Fela (a pseudonym), and a fugitive, Nolwazi Botha, who is on the run for the murder of her husband. The murder is shown to be the result of her awakening to superhuman powers she inherited as a result of Apartheid-era experiments performed on her father, an uMkhonto we Sizwe operative named Bambatha[6], by her father-in-law, Jan Botha, an Apartheid ‘death’ doctor. She is currently in hiding with a group of people like her who are known as The Alterado.

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[5] A symbol is “a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or suggests a range of reference, beyond itself” (Abrams and Harpham 394).

This story is an example of what Darko Suvin refers to as “factual reporting of fictions” (6). It relays a seemingly impossible story through the format of a journalistic interview thereby presenting the fictional as reality. By doing so, the reader can establish a connection with the story's reality, fostering a feeling of relatability and normalcy. There are two elements in the story that can be read as speculative and as alterations of comic book tropes, the first being Nolwazi herself and the second being the group that aids her, The Alterado. Nolwazi, as a character, embodies a speculative element due to the superhuman powers she possesses. Mashigo represents these powers as the result of a scientific experiment, another example of Suvin’s idea of reporting fiction in a factual manner. This is done by stating that the experiments had led to a change in the “size and shape of [her] hypothalamus” (Mashigo, “On the Run” 106). The hypothalamus is largely responsible for hormone release, particularly adrenaline which is linked to our fight or flight response. Nolwazi’s abilities are a significantly enhanced version of this response. Nolwazi views herself as “essentially broken forever” (“On the Run” 106) as her abilities led to the death of her husband and her current predicament. This biological change is an example of a speculative element being used to display an abstract or internal feeling in a physical form- specifically how actions committed against an individual in the past can affect their children later in the future. The Alterado are also an example of a speculative element, as well as an alteration of a trope found in comic books, mutants. The Alterado do not play a significant role in terms of driving the story forward, but they are the instigators of major

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[6] The name could be a reference to the Bambatha rebellion of 1906: “Chief Bambatha, with the support of other chiefs in the area, refused to accept a new tax that was being implemented by the colonial administration. Together with a small group of supporters, he launched a series of attacks against the colonial forces, using the Nkandla Forest as a base.” (South African History Online)

events in Nolwazi's life as they "are the group who turned Nolwazi Botha into the Most Wanted Woman in South Africa" ("On the Run" 92). Their name is "Portuguese for 'altered,'" since their bodies have been altered due to the experiments performed on them or their parents ("On the Run" 92). They are described by the media in the story as a "Terrorist Group" and are "mentioned as being responsible for the 'kidnapping' of prisoners in Rwanda, Uganda, Egypt and even Eritrea" ("On the Run" 92, 93). The quotes surrounding the word kidnapping relays to the reader that the term does not necessarily apply to the situation, as it refers to the act of forcefully taking someone and holding them captive, whereas the story implies that they have been helping others like themselves escape as they had done for Nolwazi. Their choice of Portuguese as the language for their group name is a possible reference to the War of Liberation, a war fought between the Portuguese and their colonies in Africa.

The Alterado as a collective can be seen as an extension of a popular trope in speculative fiction, particularly in the 1940s, in which human beings with altered physiologies are hunted and persecuted (Trushell 153). These people are an evolutionary off-shoot of homo-sapiens and were referred to as "'homo-superior'" (153). This trend continued into the sphere of comic books, where its most notable iteration 'The X-Men,' created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, were first featured in the 1963 Marvel comic book *The X-Men* #1. The X-Men introduced a new kind of super-powered human, the mutant. Mutants are a breakaway from the idea that superheroes were created from experiments gone wrong or radioactive spiders, as mutants are born with superhuman abilities. Mutants, as they have generally been represented in the earlier comic books by Stan Lee, are a persecuted minority. Several stories focus on attempts to cure the mutant X-gene or wipe out the mutant population in order to 'protect' those considered normal human beings. Their separation and alienation from society, leads to them being read as representations of minority groups (154). Mutants, as a collective, have become seen as representations of certain minority groups, such as, but not limited to, disabled and racial minority groups (Lund). Mutants in Marvel comics generally belong to two groups[7], Professor X's X-Men and Magneto's Brotherhood of Mutants. These groups are respectively read as representations of the civil rights movements of the 1960s (154). The X-Men and Professor Xavier are linked to the movement associated with the ideology of Martin Luther King Jr., and the Brotherhood of Mutants and Magneto are linked to the more radical ideology of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam (154). These interpretations are indicative of the more overtly political leaning of what is known as the Silver Age of Comics (1956 to 1969) in the United States of America (155).

With this reading of the mutants, a connection with The Alterado becomes clear. The Alterado can be read as an altered form of the homo-superior trope as represented through the mutants of Marvel comics. A shared feature between The Alterado and the X-men is that both are the result of an event involving their parents. Mutants in the X-men comics were described by critic Kim Newman as "'children of the atom,' the superfreak offspring of those exposed to radioactivity during the Manhattan Project" (qtd. in Trushell 153). Mutants "were born different, as if the sins of the fathers had been visited on the children" (Trushell 153). The Alterado differ from the mutants as their parents were not active participants in the experiments performed on them, whereas the parents of the mutants were willing and active participants in the Manhattan project. The mutants were the result of the sins their fathers committed *against the world*. The Alterado are instead the result of crimes committed against their parents, they bear the burden of sins committed *against their fathers*. This highlights the fact that their

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[7] It should be stated that in the current run of the *X-Men* comics the mutants have formed a single nation separate from the rest of humanity. This shift in tone is possibly an example of the way in which contemporary ideology has moved away from the peaceful motivations of the Civil Rights Movement and towards the more radical ideologies pertaining to racial separation.

parents were victims of a system and society which persecuted them. They have to now live with the trauma and consequences of what was done to their parents. The burden is passed on to the next generation.

Nolwazi and the rest of The Alterado's abilities can be read as representations of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma is defined as trauma that gets passed down

> from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations. Intergenerational trauma may begin with a traumatic event affecting an individual, traumatic events affecting multiple family members, or collective trauma affecting larger community, cultural, racial, ethnic, or other groups [or] populations (historical trauma). (Franco)

Instead of focusing only on the exterior features of the issue, the speculative element allows the internal feature, intergenerational trauma, to be presented in an exterior fashion. The experiments that Jan performed were traumatic experiences for his subjects. These experiences, in turn, affected his own child, Eugene, and the child of Bambatha, Nolwazi. While Nolwazi and The Alterado are the most clearly affected, Eugene's death shows that this kind of trauma does not discriminate. Trauma affects anyone and everyone who is connected to the traumatic event. The genetic component of Nolwazi's abilities can also be linked to intergenerational trauma as "[r]ecent studies demonstrate that traumatic events can induce genetic changes in the parents, which may then be transmitted to their children with adverse effects" (Franco). Nolwazi's abilities are a result of trauma experienced by the generation preceding her, specifically her father. These abilities are intrinsically linked to feelings of anger and fear, consequences of intergenerational trauma. We are shown the effects of this trauma through the protagonist Nolwazi Botha, and the relationships she shares with other characters.

Nolwazi Botha's relationships with others can be read as an example of the entangled relationships between the people that make up South African society. The child of two uMkhonto we Sizwe operatives, Bambatha and an unnamed woman, she was given up by her parents in order to protect her and was then adopted by a liberal white couple. She would eventually fall in love with her neighbour, Eugene[8] Botha. It is revealed that is his father, Jan Botha, that had experimented on Nolwazi's father. The nature of her predicament illustrates the ways in which the past and present are entangled without people being aware of it. Mashigo makes it clear in the story that while Nolwazi grew up well taken care of and loved, the best intentions of her adopted parents could not shield her from the racialised society around her. Nolwazi states that she "didn't know why people had such strong reactions to her presence" and that her "parents also didn't know what to do" (Mashigo, "On the Run" 95). The reactions are based upon her inhabiting a space that was not associated with people like her: she was an intruder. Nolwazi, as a child, was therefore never allowed to feel like she was a welcome addition to her family. She could not find solace in her identity as a black woman as she states that as a child, she "still spoke a little bit of isiZulu" ("On the Run" 99), indicating that she had since lost the language and connection to her heritage as she grew up. She could not define her identity on her own terms as she was immersed in a culture not her own and she was unable to connect to her heritage.

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[8] The name Eugene could be a reference to the controversial founder of the "Afrikaner Weerstands Beweging," Eugene Terre'Blanche. Terre'Blanche was "[a] notorious white supremacist who once threatened to wage war rather than allow black rule in South Africa . . ." (Smith). The name could also be a reference to the science of eugenics, which is "is the scientifically erroneous and immoral theory of 'racial improvement' and 'planned breeding,' which gained popularity during the early 20th century. Eugenicists worldwide believed that they could perfect human beings and eliminate so-called social ills through genetics and heredity" (National Human Genome Research Institute). Jan Botha's goal of human improvement is arguably a form of eugenics.

This loss of heritage and cultural identity resulted in Nolwazi being defined by those around her for most of her life – a fact which is illustrated in the story through the way that her supporters define her with the moniker "Sister Alterado" (Mashigo, "On the Run" 92). Mokwadi, as the narrator, states that

> Nolwazi Botha didn't ask for fame but she is certainly one of the most recognisable women in the world. You know you're famous when your face is spray-painted all over downtown Johannesburg. The cool kids wear T-shirts with her face and nickname plastered across the front. Gqom and other hip-hop artists name-check her in their songs and she is fondly described as Sister Alterado by her fans and supporters. ("On the Run" 92)

The image of Sister Alterado is completely removed from the reality that is Nolwazi. The description calls to mind the Argentinian Marxist revolutionary, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, another person whose representation in popular culture is far removed from who he was in reality. Originally a symbol of counterculture, his image as a symbol has lost much of its meaning since it has been co-opted in the service of capitalism. It is now a symbol of capitalism's power to turn anything into a profitable endeavour. Nolwazi is shown, through these links, to be someone whose representation in the popular imagination is dissonant from her actual message or intent, in a similar fashion to Guevara. This dissonance is amplified by the description which followed, stating that she is "a woman who was accused of murder," a fugitive ("On the Run" 92). There is nothing about Nolwazi that indicates that she should be famous. She is described by the journalist as "a normal-looking woman; she is not the dangerous creature that most people would expect" and yet "Twitter users have transformed her into a meme (standard practice) and a verb" ("On the Run" 94). Nolwazi's infamy has led to the phrase "'To Botha'", becoming the "colloquial term for killing a man" ("On the Run" 94). The narrator connects this to the term "Tsafenda," which refers to the act of stabbing someone (“On the Run” 94). It entered the vernacular lexicon after Dmitri Tsafendas assassinated Hendrik Verwoerd. Its presence in the text illustrates how Nolwazi’s act has reached the level of political assassination in the minds of the populace, indicating the symbolic importance of the murder. The narrator brings up “To Botha” in reference to a tweet where a woman threatens to kill the next man who asks her to smile, shows that the woman connects Nolwazi to a feminist agenda (“On the Run” 90). Nolwazi’s murder of Eugene is not in any way connected to any feminist agenda, indicating that people interpret her actions through their own lens without considering the reality of the situation. This further illustrates the disconnection between the image of Nolwazi in the popular imagination, and the reality of who she is and her situation. Nolwazi is not famous for who she is or what she later fights against. She has, instead, simply become a meme, an idea of someone. The attention she receives is a result of what others perceive her to be. She is to her fans a representation of the anger they feel towards the men in their lives. Her fame is because she did what they sometimes wish they could do; she killed a man who had made her angry.

The story makes a point of showing that Nolwazi did not kill her husband as a result of her anger towards some form of toxic masculinity. While she was angry, his death is instead shown to be a consequence of her abilities awakening. Her husband, Eugene, had been her neighbour and best friend while growing up. He had grown up without a mother and as a result, Nolwazi’s adoptive mother took a liking to him and made him feel part of the family (Mashigo, “On the Run” 99). His father, it seems, was fine with this arrangement as Nolwazi states: “Oom Jan, his dad, was used to sharing him with us . . .” (“On the Run” 99). Contrary to what was believed in the media regarding their relationship, they never had marital problems, as Nolwazi states: “Eugene and I didn’t have problems. He was never cruel to me” (“On the Run” 95). She later confirms this love by stating that she “never felt ‘othered’ by him” (“On the Run” 98). Her reference to Eugene not making her feel “‘othered’” when viewed in combination with her previous statement regarding how people reacted to her, serves to illustrate their relationship as an important part of her life: he was where she felt most comfortable.

This relationship stands in sharp contrast to the violent nature of Eugene's death and the fact that it was at the hands of Nolwazi. The night of the incident Nolwazi had been late for a date night, and combined with their attempts at conceiving a child, led to an argument (Mashigo, "On the Run" 100). Eugene was arguing with her in Afrikaans, since "[h]e lost his English when angry," which meant that she "sometimes . . . wasn't sure exactly what he was saying" ("On the Run" 100). The code-switching done by Eugene here can be read as a simple language shift, but it can also be read as an indication of unknown problems in their relationship. English is their common ground and the only language she can comfortably use. By switching to Afrikaans, Eugene is exacerbating the differences between them. It is at this point that Nolwazi wants to separate herself from him in a physical sense since he has distanced himself in an abstract sense ("On the Run" 101). She was consumed by anger, stating that

> It was like there was a ringing in my ears, but really loud and sore . . . . I couldn't see properly and it looked like the veins in my arms were bulging. This won't make sense but it felt like there was fire in my veins. That fire was anger. ("On the Run" 101)

The similes of the first three sentences indicate how the moment is a new experience that she can only describe through comparisons. They also serve to create an image for the reader, clearly illustrating the effects of her anger in visual terms. The comparison linking fire and her anger serves to illustrate the lack of control she has over this anger, as it results in the death of her husband. Her anger is similar to a wildfire burning down everything with no discernment. The results of her anger, also call to mind the imagery of a disaster area:

> I don't know what happened but I knew immediately that I had done something terrible. I was covered in blood. People say that, but I was actually covered in blood and vomit.

> I threw up when I saw one of Eugene's legs in the passage. I was crawling towards the door. They say I was hysterical but I don't remember that. ("On the Run" 101)

The description of Nolwazi being covered "blood and vomit" creates an image similar to that of a baby fresh from the womb still covered in vernix caseosa. This coupled with her "crawling" and "hysterical" reaction emphasise the idea that this is a moment of rebirth for her, but unlike an actual birth she is alone, and the death of her husband is the consequence. Her abilities brought unimaginable trauma into her life, and she was irrevocably altered as a result.

"On the Run" draws attention to the continuing and varied effects past traumatic experiences have on the present through the character of Nolwazi. Through the character of Nolwazi, Mashigo provides a deconstruction of the intended and unintended consequences that the Apartheid system has on the victims and the perpetrators. This form of representation allows for a nuanced exploration of the intergenerational trauma experienced by the children of those who suffered under Apartheid while also allowing the reader to access the story on a visceral level through her use of the mutant trope. The use of the mutant trope also allows Mashigo to portray the varied nature of these effects on individuals. One character, who is a member of The Alterado, can heal herself constantly while Nolwazi gains strength from anger and fear, illustrating the varied ways in which trauma affects individuals through showing that trauma can be a source of strength and healing for some while leading to anger and destruction in others. It also partakes in the history of black people being used for experiments by racist governments around the world[9]. By drawing from international sources Mashigo shows that

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[9] One of the most heinous examples of this practice was the "'Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male'" conducted by the United States Public Health Service (McVean). The goal of the study was apparently to "'observe the natural history of untreated syphilis" but the true nature of the study was later revealed since "[r]ather than simply observing and documenting the natural progression of syphilis in the community as had been planned, the researchers intervened: first by telling the participants that they were being treated (a lie), and then again by preventing their participants from seeking treatment that could save their lives. Thus, the original basis for the study--that the people of Macon County would likely not seek treatment and thus could be observed as their syphilis progressed--became a self-fulfilling prophecy" (McVean).

these stories and problems are not limited to one country but are instead part of a global dialogue regarding the continued effects of colonialism which was perpetrated all across the world. The main international source in this story is *The X-Men* comic books which Mashigo uses to inform her representation of The Alterado. The X-men, like most superhero groups, are made up of mostly white people, while The Alterado are presented as a predominantly black group. Through utilising the mutant trope, Mashigo draws attention to the way in which race is usually presented in this trope and implicitly asks the questions: why are there not more black members in the X-men and why are the X-men perceived as heroes while the Alterado are perceived as terrorists? This forces the reader to contemplate on the nature of representation in comic books, as well as the role perception plays in the interpretation of certain groups[10]. This remixing of a well-known comic trope and its application to recent South African history and the present is indicative of the way in which post-transition literature can engage in storytelling that maintains a connection to South Africa while paying heed to the global nature of societal problems in the contemporary age, showing that these are problems which affect not only South Africans but the world at large. This approach allows the narrative to transcend geographical boundaries and resonate with audiences beyond South Africa. In doing so, Mashigo's work serves as a testament to the universal relevance of speculative fiction and its potential to inspire meaningful conversations about social change. The following story "High Heel Killer" follows in this vein by focusing on another global and local issue, the treatment of women in the city space.

"High Heel Killer" follows the experiences of an unnamed woman who grows wings after she kills a man, named Ray-Ban Guy, with her high heel shoe. This murder earns her the moniker of the High Heel Killer. The murder is shown to be the result of constant harassment,

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[10] A group might be terrorists to some while simultaneously being seen as freedom fighters by others.

feeling unsafe, and friends and family who disregard the protagonist's feelings. Her wings are shown to afford her a newfound freedom from the cityscape as she is not confined to the city anymore. The growth of her wings also allows her to take on a protector role as she vows that she will protect and avenge those women who suffer like she did. Her winged silhouette, as shown on the cover of the collection, as well as her vow to protect others are examples of how the story draws on the comic book hero, The Batman. The story follows a similar pattern to "On the Run" as it details a woman's transformation after causing the death of a man, as well as showing that this transformation was not a personal choice but the result of external forces. In the case of the current protagonist, the external forces are the harassment and unsafe conditions she experiences in the city. It is a nuanced representation of the fear and anxiety women experience in a city, revealing the constant aggressions directed towards them and the disregard which men, and sometimes women, show towards those who dare to voice these feelings. The way Mashigo portrays the protagonist's wings, as well as her reliance on others for safety and transport in the city, serve as a subtle commentary on the benefits of being able to transport yourself. This commentary also serves to point out the downfalls of South Africa's public transportation systems. South Africa's public transportation is reliant on taxi-minibus services which are unreliable regarding time as well as being unsafe due to the tendency of drivers to take chances on the road risking the lives of their occupants. At the same time, it is also an origin story for a new hero who seeks to protect the inhabitants of the city from the experiences which gave birth to her current form.

The first trope which Mashigo alters for the purpose of the story has to do with the murder of Ray-Ban Guy. The murder is an alteration of the trope known as 'fridging.' Fridging is a trope where the death of a minor character is used to further the story of the protagonist (TVTrope). A popular example in Marvel comics is the death of Uncle Ben Parker in the

Spiderman comics, which served to strengthen Spiderman's resolve, as well as establish his moral code as a superhero. This example is not a common one as the trope is most used to show the female partners or acquaintances of male superheroes being murdered or brutalised in order to inspire the hero to greater heights[11]. By changing the formula of fridging slightly, the trope serves to empower the female protagonist. She is no longer the victim but the aggressor, by using her high heel shoe, a symbol of femininity, to kill Ray-Ban Guy she is transforming it from a source of pain into a source of strength. In this way Mashigo positions her protagonists as a new kind of superhero, or rather anti-hero. She takes the superhero comparison further by associating the plight of her protagonist with the city she lives in.

The idea of the superhero has for most of its history been tied to the city: "Superman is generally content to operate in and around Metropolis, Batman's name is synonymous with Gotham City" (Bukatman 170). Superheroes are routinely represented as protectors of their specific domicile, but no superhero is more readily associated with his city than Batman. In the popular imagination, the two cannot be separated from each other (Duncan 147). The reason for this is that "Batman himself is spawned from the blood-stained pavement of Crime Alley" (Duncan 150). Driven by the murder of his parents in the city of Gotham, Bruce Wayne vows to protect the citizens of the city so that no one should suffer as he did. Mashigo remixes the story of Batman in order to create an avenger story for the South African context. Instead of a white male billionaire whose parents are murdered, her hero is a black woman living on a measly salary. She takes it further by making her hero the perpetrator of the murder, instead of the helpless witness. These alterations serve to highlight the differences between these characters while simultaneously showing the similarities: both were shaped and created by the city that surrounds them. By drawing on the tropes surrounding Batman and redeploying them, Mashigo creates a story that comments on the unique way that women experience the city in comparison to men, as well as the power that freedom of movement affords women.

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[11] The website WomenInRefrigerators, which was founded in 1999 by a group of feminist comic book fans, was the first to document and point out the disproportionate way in which this trope affected female characters and representation. They provided examples from multiple comic books where female characters were mutilated, killed, or raped as a plot device in the narrative of male protagonist.

The city is an important part of the story as the protagonist details her movements through the city and the specific ways in which she is made to feel unwelcome and unsafe. But the two characters, Batman and the High-Heel Killer, do not inhabit similar spaces in their respective cities. Bruce Wayne is a billionaire who resides in the lofty boardrooms of his city, when not in his mansion outside the city. Chauffeured in limousines and helicopters, he rarely must associate with the common people on the streets. As Batman, he does not elevate himself above the city; instead, his superhero persona allows him to lower himself into the darkness of Gotham. This is in direct contrast to the experiences of the protagonist who has to move through the city streets and suffer the harassment that this brings. The protagonist describes her experience moving through the city as follows:

> Weeks. Months. Years. How long had I been following a map of confusion, fear and anger? Three years. I spent those years walking myself into the concrete and tar of the city. How many steps did I walk trying to get to the taxi rank and back home again? (Mashigo, "The High Heel Killer" 142)

Her experience of the city cannot be reduced to a single event or time; her experiences take place over multiple time frames increasing in size, indicating how these events had steadily become commonplace over time. Her statement that she followed a "map of confusion, fear and anger," points out that her movement through the city is defined by feelings of being unsafe. Each point on her map is defined by negative emotion; the city is not a space of safety for her but rather a place of danger and anxiety. Her description of how she walks herself into "the concrete and tar of the city" alludes to a possible belief that as she moves through the city she becomes a part of it, but she becomes part of that which is stepped on. We also note here that she travels using taxis, meaning that she is reliant on a form of public transportation that is predominantly run by men. The fraught nature of taxis is later shown through her interaction with a taxi driver:

> My feet were complaining. It was the taxi driver's fault; I asked him if I was taking the right taxi. 'Hey, S'dudla, you're making me late. Just get in.'
>
> The road became unfamiliar and I knew for sure that I was headed in the opposite direction to where I needed to be. Asking if this was a different route got me kicked out. 'Voetsek!' is all I heard when a sniggering passenger closed the door.
>
> It was far away from the taxi rank in town and my shoes were threatening me. ("High Heel Killer" 143)

In this instance, the mistreatment she receives from the driver in response to a simple question illustrates the powerlessness of the protagonist in this situation. "S'dudla" is a derogatory term for a fat person. The taxi driver's casual usage of the term can be seen as an indicator of the ease with which women are insulted and made to feel lesser. The treatment she receives from the other passengers, specifically the passenger who is laughing, further serves to illustrate that she is on her own in this space, as no one will come to her aid or defend her. The last sentence focuses on her shoes, as high heel shoes are seen as a requirement for professional women, a sign of feminine grace and a sacrifice for beauty. For the protagonist, they are a burden as they are not meant for walking distances, so they just become another symbol of the way in which the city and the requirements for women in the city environment are not conducive to feelings of comfort and safety. She describes them as "threatening," anthropomorphising the shoes into another part of the city that seeks to harm her. Her shoes are a constant reminder that the city does not accept her. All of these events show how she is fundamentally different from the character of Bruce Wayne (Batman), whose interactions with the city as a privileged white man are built around him exerting his power either through physicality or his wealth. In comparison, the protagonist's interactions with the city are based upon the feelings of danger and powerlessness she experiences as a woman while moving in the city.

The protagonist's interactions with the city and public transport systems eventually lead to the murder of Ray-Ban Guy. He becomes the receptacle for all her anger towards the city. This can be seen in the way that she describes the moment leading to his death:

> I had walked six blocks in new shoes, tripped but didn't fall when I finally got to my destination, and there he was having fun at my expense. I ignored him, and took two more successful steps before I fell flat on my face in a puddle of pavement water. The words were loud. Loud enough for me to hear but not for the whole city to hear; the city that hated me, assaulted me with sound, violence and smells. I'd been so close to getting into the right taxi, so that I could be enveloped in the safety of my tiny room. He didn't have to say what he did, but he did. (Mashigo, "High Heel Killer" 148-149)

Her description of her movement through the city in terms of numbers, 'six blocks' and 'two more successful steps,' highlight that she is constantly measuring the amount of time she needs to spend in the city. The city is a burden that she seeks to escape from. Ray-Ban Guy comments that she deserved to fall ("High Heel Killer" 150). The city had won the battle that day and instead of helping her, he instead chooses to mock her. He becomes a personification of the city; she connects his words to the constant assault of the city and reacts by choosing to defend herself by utterly destroying it by killing its representative. While the city is portrayed as being antagonistic towards the protagonist, Mashigo also shows, through the interactions the protagonist has with her mother, colleague, boyfriend, and two anonymous men, that the people inhabiting the city are also responsible for the protagonist's negative experiences in the city. Mashigo portrays these people as ignorant at best and compliant at worst.

The nameless protagonist is nameless because her story is shared by a number of women. Her anonymity allows her to become a reflection of women who have to live like this on a daily basis. It could also indicate the anonymous nature of women as they move through a city. The protagonist's interactions with various locations within the city have been consistently problematic, beginning from a young age, as evidenced by her mother and an incident that transpired when she was 12:

> ‘Why did you kill that man?’ Doppelgangers of that question confronted me. Mme didn’t even look at me when she asked it. She sighed heavily. Heavily like when I told her that a hand from a sea of bodies in town touched my breast. I was 12. She asked angrily if I recognised the person who did it. We were in the CBD, people were pushing past us and I knew the person who did it was walking away happily unpunished. ‘Did he hurt you?’ I looked at my feet. (Mashigo, “The High Heel Killer” 142-143)

Mashigo represents the protagonist’s mother as someone who is tired and prone to placing the blame on her daughter. The fact that her mother is sighing when she tells her that she had been touched inappropriately indicates a weariness on her part, implying that events such as this are common to the point that she has grown tired of them. Her mother’s angry questioning seems to be directed at her, but it could also indicate her mother’s anger with regard to the assault. Mashigo makes it clear that the mother is placing the blame on the protagonist, by linking the assault with the murder the protagonist committed. The protagonist immediately associates her mother’s inability to face her and her tired sigh with an assault on her body that was not her fault in any way. Her reaction to her mother’s questioning is to look down at her feet, indicating her shame. Her mother’s reaction, and the shame she felt, possibly led the protagonist to internalise the belief that it is the victim who is at fault and not the perpetrator. The protagonist believes at this point that she should not have bothered her mother as she assumes the anger was directed at her. The protagonist as a twelve-year-old girl is taught at this moment that minor aggressions such as this are a part of interactions within the city. Anonymity in the city does not protect her but protects the aggressor. It also subtly suggests that she should accept it and stop complaining. This attitude of placing the blame on the victim is echoed later by her boyfriend when she asks if he feels safe:

> ‘Safe?’
>
> ‘Yes.’
>
> ‘I don’t think I understand what you’re saying.’
>
> ‘Do you feel safe here?’ I asked again slowly. Tshepo handed me a drink and we walked outside to check on our meat. ‘Why wouldn’t I feel safe here?’ He looked around with mock shock. ‘People are buying meat, braaing, having drinks and listening to music.’ ‘Yes but that woman was raped here a few weeks ago,’ I said, eyeing my beer. He signed with no drama. ‘It was by the toilets, not here … Wasn’t she drunk anyway?’ The guy braaing our meat signalled that it was almost ready. ‘I don’t know if she was drunk but I don’t feel …
>
> His laughter cut me off. ‘Nawe uthand’ ukuba [You also like to be] dramatic. You don’t get messy drunk.’ He got up to fetch our meat. ‘Besides, you’re with me, nobody will touch you.’ (“High Heel Killer” 146-147)

The word “safe” is positioned as separate from the rest of the text as an indication of the importance the word carries. The question mark alludes to the multiple meanings that word can possess depending on the context, especially for the protagonist as a woman. The simple question of whether he feels safe confuses her boyfriend, showing how the male perception of the city space is not defined by feelings of insecurity and danger. As a man, he does not need to consider the question of safety when he moves in this space, he does not view the number of people as a danger to himself. He sees security in the mass of people, something which she does not feel given her previous experiences. Her reason for feeling unsafe in this space are amplified by the recent rape of a woman at this location, to which her boyfriend does not respond with sympathy or understanding. He instead chooses to blame the victim by questioning whether she was drunk. The protagonist tries to explain her feelings but is cut off by her boyfriend who quips that she is being dramatic and that she is protected by his presence. This echoes the reaction her mother had when she had been touched inappropriately. Both characters shift the blame to the protagonist instead of responding to her feelings. The fact that he does not allow her to voice her opinion that she does not feel safe shows how she is not allowed to define or determine her own feelings of safety. Instead, it is the up to others to determine whether she is safe or not. The idea that she is protected from other men by the presence of a man, also shows that he is, in fact, aware of the danger women experience, but he views the danger they experience as a consequence of not having a man to protect them. Neither her boyfriend nor her mother blames the aggressor; they instead shift the blame to her.

Another example of the protagonist being let down by a person close to her is her interaction with a female co-worker. The protagonist complains about the way a male co-worker is making her feel uncomfortable, to which her female co-worker responds:

> ‘A joke?’
> ‘Yeah, he was probably joking.’ That was the last time I accepted a lift from my colleague Phillipa. She was distracted and took the wrong turn two blocks away from the taxi rank. ‘He says things like that all the time to women at the office. He means nothing by it. You’ll get used to it – I did. He’s married anyway.’ (Mashigo, “The High Heel Killer” 144)

The response of her colleague to her complaint is indicative of an internalised acceptance of the mistreatment women experience, similar to the attitude her mother showed. In each case the blame is not placed on the infringing aggressor, instead, the protagonist is told to accept it and to control her reactions. She is supposed to take it in stride and see it as a funny occurrence, an example of ‘locker room talk.’ The rhetoric of classifying harassment as a joke is brought up more than once in the story. Another example of it takes place when she is walking home and overhears the two men behind her planning to rape her. When they notice that she has heard them they employ a similar rhetoric and tell her that they were only joking:

> Witness the city turn against us! There were many potential witnesses: Ray-Ban guy, Aus' Maneo … school kids … Why then did I feel so frightened when I realised the conversation was about me? The two male voices slapped city sounds away from my ears like a mother does when her child reaches for the pots before supper is ready. It wasn't menacing at all; their voices were casual: 'Those thighs … I'm going first … Let's see how far she goes … Ha, probably walking to her car … Two for one.' Why did I turn around and look? They both smiled, laughed and then crossed the road. The tall one turned back: 'Ne re dlala [we were playing], sester'. A joke… ("High Heel Killer" 144)

In this instance, she is out in a public space where she knows some of the people and should in fact feel safe. This interaction and the discussion with her boyfriend can be linked to the idea that the "new South African city is still a space where nightmarish divisions may be witnessed and where the fear of crime delimits dreams of truly public space" (Nuttall 36). The divisions, in this case between men and women, illustrate the differences in how men and women experience public space. These men feel comfortable enough to discuss raping her and she is left to feel unsafe as a result of this. The fact that these men feel safe talking in this manner in a public space is indicative of the safety they feel, they do not need to hide their devious nature because as men they are always in control of these situations. Like her co-worker, they tell her that they were just joking, and the fault lies with her for overreacting to a joke. What we see is her constantly being told that her feelings are overreactions to what is considered normal in the city space; she is told to disregard her feelings and to stop overreacting. This serves to emphasise the powerlessness she experiences as a woman reliant on public transport who has to walk through these spaces. All of these disparate events lead to the events surrounding the murder of Ray-Ban Guy.

A key feature of all these moments is that the safety of the protagonist is always dependent on others. As a child she relied on her mother. As an adult she has to rely on the acceptance of taxi drivers, colleagues who can give her a lift, and finally her boyfriend. The city does not allow her to determine her own level of safety as an individual. Her colleague has a car, and she therefore has control over her own movement without relying on others or exposing herself to danger. Her boyfriend as a man does not have to worry about the same safety concerns that she has. The city to her is a prison which constantly threatens her and traps her within its boundaries. Mashigo describes the character as being stuck ("Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 7). Stuck within relationships that seemingly offered protection while also blaming her for not feeling safe. Stuck within a city that constantly harasses her and trapped her. The act of murdering Ray-Ban Guy allowed her to remove these bounds from herself as Mashigo described the event as a therapeutic experience for the protagonist that "is like a rebirth" ("Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 7). The murder allowed her to be free and Mashigo represents this freedom through the wings that the protagonist grows.

The wings that sprout from the protagonist's back symbolize the newfound freedom she attains through the expression of her anger. Throughout the narrative, she faces numerous instances where her feelings are suppressed and dismissed. Her mother becomes annoyed by her complaints, her colleague disregards her concerns about sexual harassment from a male colleague, and her boyfriend undermines her emotions regarding a recent rape incident. Owing to her dependence on these individuals, she remains silent and acquiesces to their opinions. However, everything changes when she takes the life of Ray-Ban Guy and her wings start to grow. As her wings develop, her attachment to others' judgments wanes, and she ascends above the city, liberated.

In addition to symbolizing her newfound independence, the wings grant her the freedom of movement. Previously, the protagonist had been confined by systems that demeaned and restricted her, unable to determine her own path through the city. However, with her wings, she experiences the city with fresh eyes, unbound by the limitations imposed upon her. Moreover, the wings allow her to extend protection to others, becoming a beacon of support amidst a society plagued by oppression and violence. Her freedom from others as well as her newfound freedom of movement is encapsulated in her description of her flying through the city:

> It is beautiful from up here, the cruel city and all the people walking its streets at night. Why did I never look up at these beautiful old rotting buildings? I was so busy counting my steps and craving invisibility. The wings are strong although I almost fell to my death a few times (who's going to give me flying lessons?). I birthed myself; it was bloody and painful but now I'm standing on the roof of a city as something new. (Mashigo, "The High Heel Killer" 150)

Her experience as a pedestrian did not allow her to see the city as beautiful. Her statement that she birthed herself, implies that gaining independence is a painful experience that requires separation from that which makes you feel safe.

Mashigo uses the protagonist's transformation to subtly comment on the relationship between women and the city when their movement is restricted. As a pedestrian, the protagonist is forced to seek protection from the city through means that make her feel unsafe. She has to rely on others to transport her and keep her safe. This means that she has to keep them happy and cannot voice her opinions. Mashigo portrays the moment that she reveals this anger as extremely violent as a way to communicate the depth of the anger that women experience as a result of the city. It changes her and she becomes something new and powerful. This freedom and power do not only allow her to protect herself but also others, as she states:

> Up here nobody can tell me what I deserve, who I should be or how to be. And I dare those down below to open their mouths and tell another tired, underpaid woman that she deserves the cruelty of the city. I'm the enemy of cruelty and they'll have to deal with me. (Mashigo, "The High Heel Killer" 150-151)

The wings allow her to protect not only herself but also others like her. Mashigo seems to be implying that women who have made it to a point of independence also have the power to help those who do not have the same privilege. The ability to determine your own movement is incredibly important. The protagonist can now self-determine how she moves throughout the city, and this gives her an incredible amount of power. This power allows her to self-determine other things about herself as indicated by the strong statement of intent she delivers regarding who she is.

"High Heel Killer" is an example of how speculative fiction can elevate even the simplest of issues into entertaining and revealing literature. Mashigo uses the transformative power of speculative fiction to create a story that entertains while also delivering a powerful social commentary regarding how women experience the city when they do not have their own transport. The way she frames these assaults as not only the result of men, but also through the acceptance of these behaviours by women, shows the very real way in which these problems are a result of everyone in society and not just a certain subset. By drawing on the familiarity of the Batman, a hero known for his ability to move freely throughout his city, Mashigo strengthens the impact of the story without the need for exposition and character development. Her adept use of the tropes surrounding Batman indicates a knowledge of the character that allows her to use it in service of the story without copying it. This knowledge of pop culture is also present in "Ghost Strain N" as Mashigo uses the zombie and its history to create a story that deals with substance addiction and society's reaction to it.

"Ghost Strain N" is one of the more tragic stories in the collection as it details the breakdown of society during a public health crisis, as well as the impact it has on the lives of ordinary people. While the story was published before the current pandemic it does offer some insight into how society tends to deal with problems of this scale. The story is relayed to the reader by a third-person narrator who provides commentary and insight into the mind of the protagonist Koketso. Koketso's relationship with his best friend Steven is a crucial factor in the plot of the story as their experience prior to the virus and during it shows the benefits of friendship but also the dangers of attaching yourself to someone else. Steven is a victim of the virus as he is addicted to Nyaope, a South African variant of heroine. The virus is presented as the result of various substance abuse problems, with each substance (alcohol, tik, heroine or nyaope) giving rise to specific symptoms. Those afflicted are called Ghosts as they are the unseen and now unfeeling members of society. The virus is dubbed the Ghost Strain, with each of the variants given a letter designation identifying the specific substance which gave rise to the variant i.e., N for nyaope. The story focuses on the personal effects of the problem, while also offering a bird's eye view of the failure of society through the commentary of the narrator as they remark upon the decisions and reactions of the society in question. The virus can be read as a symbolic interpretation of substance addiction as a disease or medical affliction rather than a problem of self-control. Through reading the virus in this fashion, the story as a whole can be read as social commentary on how society treats those who are addicted and the consequences thereof.

The Ghosts as they are portrayed in the story can clearly be linked to zombies. A popular trope in speculative fiction, zombies are commonly recognised as corpses who have risen from the grave with a hunger for human flesh. Because the zombie myth or construct as it appears in a number of media forms (games, movies, series, and comic books) "resonate[s] with large swaths of consumers and result[s] from complex social relations involving producers, receivers, and the social world, they constitute a significant culture object" (Platts 548). Their representations in media provide insight into societal fears as "zombies address fears that are both inherent to the human condition and specific to the time of their resurrection" (547). The desolate nature of the narratives, and the removal of all societal institutions and mores, allows those who consume dystopic zombie content to consider the darker aspects of humanity and civilisation (548). Zombies are a powerful symbol as they have, for the better part of a century, maintained their position as "representations of cultural anxiety" (548). This position can be argued to stretch even further back, as zombies served a similar role for the Haitian slaves who are credited with introducing zombies to the Western world.

Haitian slaves saw zombies as a personification of their fear that even in death they would still be made to serve on the plantations. It can therefore be understood as a representation of the cultural anxiety regarding a lifetime of servitude. The zombie myth was first documented in the country of Haiti in the 17th and 18th centuries among the enslaved who had been brought to the island from Africa (Mariani). Slavery on the island was particularly brutal; half of the enslaved were worked to death within the first few years (Mariani). Zombies and slavery were entwined in the lives of the enslaved. The enslaved "believed that dying would release them back to *lan guinée*, literally Guinea, or Africa in general, a kind of afterlife where they could be free" (Mariani; emphasis in original). Those who sought release by their own hands would be "condemned to skulk the … plantations for eternity" as zombies (Mariani). After the Haitian Revolution, zombies became a part of Haitian folklore, as well as the Voodoo religion. The myth evolved, and zombies were later seen as the result of Voodoo priests and shamans reanimating a corpse and using them as free labour to carry out their wishes (Mariani). These malevolent practitioners of voodoo would gain control of their victims by either raising them from the grave or by stealing their "*tibon ange"* (Niehaus 192; emphasis in original). The "tibon ange" was the part of the soul that contained all that made a person unique, such as their personality, character, and willpower (192). The shackle was moved from the plantation master to the shaman or voodoo priest. A core feature was that the zombie was a being controlled by something outside of itself. Slavery and the idea of eternal servitude led to an interpretation of the zombie as the victim. The Haitian zombie was the new Sisyphus, condemned to complete the same task for eternity under the yoke of their master.

Zombies in popular culture share little with their folkloric ancestors as they were the result of "US misappropriations of Haitian spiritual ontologies" (Platts 549). The zombie is one of the few folkloric artefacts which made the transition to cinema without first building a literary heritage (549). This meant that those who presented the concept to Western audiences took extreme liberties. They ignored the history behind it and simply took the most basic component, the stumbling dead body brought to life, and focused on that. These interpretations led to the zombie narratives that we are familiar with today. Zombies, as we know them today, were popularized by George A. Romero, the director of the *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). Romero's creation spawned the most well-known zombie interpretation. His zombies were representative of the consumerist culture that had become a defining characteristic of American society at the time. Stumbling, brain-dead creatures whose only goal was to consume living human flesh, were facsimiles of the masses flocking to malls to buy the latest must have item (Hinkelman). While a far removal from its roots, this zombie was still a representation of a social ill experienced in a specific society.

The Ghosts in Mashigo's work serve as a speculative element, symbolizing society's dehumanizing view of individuals grappling with substance abuse disorders. Rather than dehumanizing those who suffer, Mashigo portrays their affliction as a consequence of society's mistreatment and neglect of the marginalized. The narrative squarely points a finger at society, indicting their ignorance of the problem until it becomes too late. By reimagining the cravings of these individuals as a hunger for flesh, Mashigo vividly portrays their suffering and the deep-seated anger they must harbour towards a society that has abandoned them.

In Mashigo's storytelling, the figure of the Ghosts draws inspiration from multiple traditions in distinct ways. Similar to the Haitian and Voodoo zombies, the Ghosts are depicted as slaves to a substance, while also sharing the characteristic hunger for flesh seen in Romero's modern zombies. This interpretation is evident in the description of the specific drug affecting Koketso's neighborhood, referred to as "Nyaope" (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 39). Koketso describes the drug in the following way: “Nyaope was just another name for opportunist. Where society left a gap, this opportunist took over. It was an opportunist that slipped into your hand, lied to your heart and ate your brain” (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 39). The drug is personified as an opportunist that exploits society's gaps and preys on individuals at their most vulnerable moments. Through the repetition of the term "opportunist," the insidious nature of the drug is emphasized, reinforcing its relentless pursuit of enslaving its victims.

Mashigo employs a free indirect style, using Koketso's voice as the narrator to convey his emotions regarding the drug Nyaope. By anthropomorphizing the drug, it is portrayed as a cunning entity that deceives and manipulates its victims. The phrase "lied to your heart" suggests that what these individuals truly crave is something their heart needs, such as acceptance, love, or belief (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 39). The transient pleasure provided by the drug becomes a substitute for the deeper, more profound human needs that have been forsaken due to societal abandonment. The phrase “ate your brain” shows that instead, the Ghosts have had their brains devoured by the drug, echoing the imagery of modern zombies' craving for brains (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 39).

The effect that the substance has on the Ghost is described as follows: “Saliva dripped from their mouth as their muscles relaxed, eyes half shut, some bent over in the kind of ecstasy and agony oblivion brings” (“Ghost Strain N” 30). It induces a state of relaxation, with saliva dripping from their mouths and their bodies surrendering control. By consuming drugs, the Ghosts relinquish control and submit to servitude, evident in the imagery of being "bent over" which connotes subservience. Paradoxically, the Ghosts are presented as seemingly enjoying their servitude, challenging the conventional South African imagination. The word "oblivion" is significant as it signifies the substance's ability to provide an escape from their surroundings. While seeking an escape, they choose the substance over the physical world, leading to both ecstasy and self-destruction. Oblivion, representing a state of unconsciousness, highlights their detachment from their surroundings and the consequential destruction of a part of themselves.

The Ghosts are enticed by the “opportunist” because it provides them an escape from that which surrounds them and frees them from having to care about themselves. Their uncaring nature when it comes to themselves is shown in a description as viewed through Koketso’s perspective:

> The Ghost was wearing a brown jersey, jeans that needed a wash and tattered shoes (Ghost sometimes sell their expensive takkies in exchange for oblivion). His right arm was hooked around a pole, holding up the rest of the body. The Ghost was not slumped over or falling, but graciously suspended in a moment of sliding down the pole, except that his knees had locked and he looked like a life-sized photograph frozen in that position. (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 31)

The dishevelled attire comprising a brown jersey, dirty jeans, and tattered shoes signifies either a lack of self-care or a complete indifference. This image blends seamlessly into the surrounding miasma, implying a person who goes unnoticed. The repeated reference to oblivion further underscores the Ghosts' pursuit of an unaware state. The Ghost's pose, with one arm draped around a pole, illustrates a feeble and solitary connection to their surroundings. They become akin to a lifeless statue or "a life-sized photograph," frozen in a singular moment—immobile, unconcerned, detached, and devoid of vitality.

The description of the Ghost's face reveals that while their body remains trapped in this position and place, faintly tethered to reality, their mind is absent: “There was nothing in his eyes, nothing but oblivion. Drool fell from his mouth, just missing the tattered shoes that he had probably stolen from another Ghost. People were flying, oblivious, past the Ghost suspended in time” (“Ghost Strain N” 31). The recurrence of oblivion emphasizes their visual detachment from their surroundings. Furthermore, the depiction of drooling signifies their lack of bodily control, akin to someone asleep, unaffected by their environment. The portrayal of people "flying" while the Ghost remains "suspended in time" positions the Ghost as an immobilized observer, unable to engage in life's experiences. This subtly alludes to the distinctions among different drugs. Mashigo deliberately excludes drugs like marijuana or certain psychedelics, which have been associated with potential medical benefits or enhanced perception [12]. Instead, she portrays the drugs mentioned in the story—alcohol, tik (methamphetamine), and nyaope (heroin)—as having no redeeming qualities. The sensation of "flying" is ascribed to those unaffected by substances, while those under the influence remain frozen in time. In a notable reversal, the other individuals are characterized as "oblivious" rather than the Ghost. This connection underscores the shared desire to forget or remain unaware. The Ghosts seek oblivion through substances, while the rest of society is consumed by their own obliviousness. The obliviousness of those passing by the Ghost further symbolizes the neglect with which homeless and destitute members of society are treated in South Africa. Through this depiction, Mashigo illustrates that the need to forget is a universal longing experienced by

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[12] “Small studies have shown the benefits of psilocybin on treatment-resistant depression; anxiety and depression associated with cancer; obsessive compulsive disorder; and smoking cessation. A meta-analysis of randomized control trials concluded that a single dose of lysergic acid diethylamide, aka LSD, in the context of an alcoholism treatment program may decrease alcohol use” (Rosenberg). Other drugs such as “[m]arijuana, classic hallucinogens, MDMA, and ketamine have all shown some evidence for therapeutic applications in a wide variety of psychiatric and neurological conditions . . .” (Rosenberg).

all individuals. The Ghosts are distinct only in their pursuit of oblivion through substances, highlighting the commonality of this desire among society at large.

The key perpetrator in the story is society. This indictment of society is made clear by Mashigo through the specific hungers which each variant of the virus causes, linking their cravings to the injustices perpetrated against them:

> Ghost Strain T in the Western Cape made the Ghost chew the hands and arms off people. T was for Tik. Ghost Strain W hit farms workers on Wine farms where Ghosts ripped the throats out of people and ate them. Koketso thought a lot about the different strains and what drove Ghosts to attack certain body parts and not others. He finally decided that Strain W made Ghosts rip out the oesophagus from people because they had wine poured down their throats instead of being compensated and invested in by those who profited from their labour. (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 40)

Each substance leads to a hunger for a specific body part. Koketso points out that the hunger is indicative of how society treated the Ghosts. Koketso's description of 'Strain W' can be read as a parody of the dop system. The dop system was a payment convention used predominantly in the Western Cape where wine farm workers were paid with cheap wine (Larkin). This mistreatment made them hungry for the throats of others because their own throats had been destroyed by alcohol. Ghost Strain N made its victims eat the hearts of other people, and if we follow the same logic as Koketso, we can assume that it is because their own hearts and dreams were left for dead, so now they hunger for the hearts of others. This sentiment is echoed in the narrative as the Ghosts "never attacked each other . . . Their appetite was for those who were not lost" ("Ghost Strain N" 37). The Ghosts exclusively targeted individuals who were not undergoing the same struggles as they were. Instead, they sought out those who had encountered what they themselves could not experience, endeavouring to seize it from them in order to fulfil their own needs. Koketso's logic also shows his awareness of the injustices in his society, which once again shows his observant nature coupled with his inability to enact change. The real villain of the story is the society they live in, a society that was willing to ignore the problem until it was too late.

Mashigo skilfully portrays society in the story as deliberately ignorant and emotionally detached from the suffering of others. The initial observers of the Ghosts responded with a dry sense of humour: "If nothing else, people who are harassed by life have a wry sense of humour, because they would eventually call these vacant young people 'Ghosts.' Nothing happened as these Ghosts were overtaking corners of the townships" (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 30). (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 30). This act of naming created a separation, allowing them to distance themselves from the issue and perceive those afflicted as outsiders. Although they recognized that something was amiss, they chose to disengage and take no action. The opening sentence also reveals a touch of empathy towards these individuals, acknowledging that they too are victims of life's hardships.

As the problem persisted and expanded, it could no longer be ignored: "Whispers about hearts being torn out of people continued and they got louder. In churches, shebeens, kitchens and bedrooms, that is what people were talking about. Ghosts colonised the street corners and the fences of corner houses" ("Ghost Strain N" 34). The Ghosts became fixtures, their presence akin to colonization. This choice of language highlights the Ghosts' firm establishment in these spaces, signifying an irreversible transformation that alters the fabric of society. When people started to take notice, it was already too late:

> It happened so fast; in less than two weeks whole neighbourhoods were emptied, many hearts extracted and countless Ghosts burned, because mob justice knows no sentimentality. The burning of Ghosts began in townships because the illness was

> euphemised in the suburbs. Even those with fancy houses, money and gentle words like ‘euthanasia’ couldn’t escape the Ghosts. (“Ghost Strain N” 35)

The societal response reveals the deep divisions among people, particularly between those living in close proximity and experiencing poverty. Their reaction was driven by desperation, as they lacked alternative means to address the issue. Fuelled by fear, they transformed into a violent mob, seeking self-protection through aggression. The phrase "euphemised in the suburbs" implies that those living in comfort employ different tactics, using more refined language to mask their actions. Despite the differing words, both groups ultimately chose a destructive approach instead of exploring alternative avenues for treatment. This realization underscores that the problem transcends class divisions, impacting everyone in a similar manner.

Mashigo offers a counterpoint to society’s indifference and violent reactions through the protagonist Koketso. Koketso is presented as an observer to the actions of society, who is drawn into the disaster through his best friend Steven, a sufferer of substance use disorder. Where society seeks to ignore and hide, Koketso is shown to be a character who is observant and empathetic as he is one of the first to notice the Ghosts (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 29). Koketso and Steven serve as representations of the South African youth. Each inhabits a specific role in terms of this representation. Koketso is the intelligent observer who is aware of the problem but unable to do anything as a result of his youth and society’s disdain of it, and Steven is shown to be a victim of society’s apathy towards the struggles of the youth. The differences between, Koketso and Steven, and their role as representations of the certain sections of the youth in South Africa is made clear in the description of their life trajectories after high school:

> High school did nothing to prepare them for a life burdened with complications.

> Koketso's complication was that he couldn't afford to study further, so he started working at a funeral home. A quiet young man with big, sympathetic eyes, he found the perfect use for his kind face. When grieving families saw him walking around the funeral home, they relaxed a little. They mistook his silence for respect and his disinterest for awareness of how difficult the loved one's death was for them. ("Ghost Strain N" 29)

Mashigo uses the institution of the high school in order to show that their failure is not the result of their own inadequacies but rather the result of societal institutions failing to adequately prepare them. Koketso's shift from being unable to pursue further studies to working at the funeral home can be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the demise of his education. He could not afford to go to university and was then forced to surround himself with the dead. Koketso is shown in this instance to be someone who simply does what needs to be done despite his own feelings about the task. This is not a job that he enjoys as is implied by his silence and disinterest, but thanks to his personality and demeanour he fits into his surroundings. Koketso could find other avenues of employment due to his quiet nature, but this was not the case for Steven:

> Steven found himself dealing with a complication that had become common in his neighbourhood: dreams deferred and idle days. He had once told his uncle that he had dreams of being a chef. The callous laughter that followed informed him that his dreams should become unvoiced. Koketso tiptoed around the dead while his best friend walked loudly among those who wanted to die. ("Ghost Strain N" 30)

Steven's uncle's "callous laughter" is another representation of the callous nature of society. His uncle is unable to be empathetic towards his own nephew and instead chooses to deride him for having dreams. This shows a darker side to the "wry humour" of those beaten down by society, as it shows an inability to sympathise. The narrator's statement that Steven's predicament is "common in his neighbourhood" highlights the systemic nature of his experience as it affects the neighbourhood as a collective. The death of his dreams and the unsympathetic response of his uncle is partially responsible for Steven's future drug use. This is contrasted by Koketso's relationship with his mother as I will argue in the next section that this relationship is a major part of the reason he manages to keep going through these tumultuous situations. Koketso and Steven are represented as lost and directionless, and society is shown to be unable to provide them with guidance. Koketso manages to keep going as he is content to keep his head down and just shuffle through. Steven instead parties every weekend, wasting his uncle's disability grant on alcohol and trying to impress women (32-33). Mashigo focuses on the ordinary experiences of the protagonist and his friend in order to represent the plight of South African youth as they are left to fend for themselves in a society that did not prepare them appropriately for independence[13].

These two characters are examples of Mashigo's intruders. Through their relationship and their individual personalities Mashigo portrays the effect that society – specifically South African society – has on the youth. Koketso, as the protagonist, is a more detailed character as the reader is shown the world through his eyes. He is shown to be observant and sensitive as he is one of the first to notice the spread of the virus:

> Koketso may have been the first to notice and it hurt him physically. His stomach ached for days when the size and shape of the problem became evident. How could the neighbourhood not realise what was happening? If people who lived close enough to smell each other's dinners couldn't see it, what about those who didn't know the names

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[13] Mashigo's focus on the specifics of ordinary life is an example of what Njabulo Ndebele defines as the literature of the ordinary. This literature differed from the literature of the spectacular, by focusing on the everyday lives of ordinary people. The ordinary is Ndebele's proposed answer to the problem of the spectacular and he defines it as "sobering rationality; it is the forcing of attention on necessary detail" (Ndebele 152).

> of their neighbours? Being a young person whose observations and opinions were not valued, Koketso knew nobody would believe him. (Mashigo, “Ghost Strain N” 29)

This segment reveals Koketso to be a sensitive and observant young man. The two rhetorical questions in the middle are examples of free indirect speech as the narrator is speaking from Koketso’s point of view. Free indirect speech allows us to venture into the mind of the protagonist while still maintaining the bird’s eye view of the third-person narrator. This allows the reader to inhabit the perspective of Koketso and in doing so become empathetic towards the character. The second question also reveals that Koketso’s society is extremely divided as one half live extremely close to each other, while others live with space enough to maintain a level of privacy. The specific reference to Koketso as a “young person” suggests that it is because of his youth specifically that his opinion would be ignored. This bears some similarity to South African society, which places a premium on the position of elders. Koketso’s reluctance to even try, also suggests that he has been ignored in the past. Through this Mashigo seems to imply that Koketso’s youth is what makes him an intruder, since it is his youth that prohibits him from making suggestions to others. The narrator further sheds light on the character known as "the invisible boy," highlighting how others habitually overlook his existence (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 29). This description establishes a compelling connection between the "invisible boy" and the Ghosts themselves. Both are rendered invisible or disregarded by society, with their presence unrecognized or dismissed. While the Ghosts represent the physical manifestation of substance abuse and its consequences, the "invisible boy" symbolizes the marginalized individuals who are unseen and unheard, their struggles disregarded in a society preoccupied with its own concerns. Mashigo skilfully weaves these threads together, drawing attention to the interconnectedness of societal indifference and the plight of those who suffer in silence. Koketso’s tendency to fall into the background is part of the reason his relationship with Steven is shown to be important.

The relationship between Steven and Koketso, is represented as symbiotic since they both add something necessary to the other's life. They are shown to be dependent on each other, a fact which later leads to Koketso risking his own life to save Steven when he is infected. The dependent nature of their relationship is illustrated to the reader when their friendship is described:

> Steven was the Colour, ever since they were kids; Koketso drew the lines and saw the bigger picture but Steven always added the colour and purpose. Girls were the bright Saffron of their afternoons but also the Grey of their rejection. Weekends with Steven were Purple – either Royal or a messy Mulberry stain. They both added something to each other's lives. Before he met Koketso, Steven was just floating and rarely feeling; as soon as they became friends, he started to like the warmth of the feelings he sometimes caught. . . . Because they attended different schools, Koketso found that his hours at school remained anaemic, and Steven found that he was followed by a relentless emptiness to every class. (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 27)

The capitalization of the word "colour" signifies Steven's assigned role as a source of vibrancy and purpose in Koketso's life. Their division of labour reveals their distinct personalities and emphasizes their sense of incompleteness as individuals. Together, they find fulfilment. Koketso, the one who draws the lines, shapes, and limits their interactions, giving meaning to Steven's otherwise aimless existence, as indicated by his tendency to "float and rarely feel" (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 27). Steven, in turn, infuses Koketso's life with purpose and vitality, adding the necessary flavour and interest. The recurring references to colour in their encounters with others underscore the significance of Steven in Koketso's perception of these events; without Steven, Koketso's life becomes mundane and uninspiring. This is exemplified in the final sentence that describes their experiences when they are apart. Koketso is metaphorically depicted as "anaemic" without Steven, indicating his lifelessness in isolation.

Similarly, the mention of Steven being followed by a "relentless emptiness" further emphasizes their mutual reliance and the essential void each experiences without the other (Mashigo, "Ghost Strain N" 27).

Their interdependence also signifies that if separated, they would need alternative sources of sustenance. Koketso may find solace in his family, job, or ritual fasting, whereas Steven lacks these support systems, as evident through his strained relationship with his uncle, joblessness, and his empty and emotionally detached state without Koketso. Mashigo uses these portrayals to comment on the diverse ways in which youth react to societal conditions. Koketso represents those who make the best of their circumstances, finding comfort in their family and rituals, while Steven symbolizes those abandoned by society and their families. Left without such support systems, individuals like Steven seek solace through substances. Their enduring relationship, however, proves detrimental to Koketso when he tries to protect the already infected Steven, resulting in his own potential infection ("Ghost Strain N" 38). This portrayal underscores the harmful effects of dependent relationships like theirs. While a cynical interpretation might label it as co-dependency, I believe Mashigo instead depicts a profound love between two young men that challenges societal norms. Their relationship serves as a representation of the positive, supportive bonds needed by those grappling with substance use disorders, in stark contrast to society's apathy. This hopeful sentiment is poignantly conveyed in the story's final line, as Koketso, feeling the effects of the infection, gazes at Steven and perceives a crooked, tired smile on his grey, sunken face ("Ghost Strain N" 46). Mashigo employs the relationship between these two characters to highlight the solace and support that loving and caring relationships can offer to those abandoned by society. Koketso's enduring hope that his friend remains with him until the end showcases the resilience and strength found in such connections.

"Ghost Strain N" shows us the far-reaching effects of ignorance and the abandonment of the most vulnerable members of society. Mashigo portrays the callous nature of society through the apathy of Steven's uncle and the reaction of society towards the Ghosts. The tragedy of Koketso and Steven plays out every day in a variety of places in South Africa, as they are not unique and therein lies the tragedy. Mashigo uses their relationship to illustrate the value of friendship and companionship in the direst of circumstances. Their individual experiences also serve to highlight the way in which the youth are treated in a society like South Africa, where the opinion of the young is ignored in favour of the older generations. Showing the story through Koketso's interpretation, the disappointment and powerlessness of the younger generation is shown in full effect. Koketso's caring and observant nature also shows the value of youth, in comparison to the callousness of Steven's uncle for example. The story is an apt social commentary on the self-destruction that society partakes in when it ignores these problems and assigns them to the realm of individual responsibility. On another level, the story shows the value that the zombie narrative holds for addressing social anxieties in any context. The events of the Ghost virus taking over society serves to shear away the veneer of society and reveals the value of those society ignores. The zombie narrative allows for a focus on the true nature of humanity when all our social conventions are torn away, highlighting that which makes us human in the most fundamental sense. Through portraying those who suffer from substance use disorder as zombies, Mashigo highlights the inhumane way that society views them. This representation is made clear through the narrator's admonishment of society's apathy and disregard for these people. The society in the story only acts when it starts to affect the normal functioning of society as a system. Mashigo's blending of different representations of zombies allows her to tap into all that the zombie narrative can offer: by showing the zombies to be victims of their substance of choice, while also showing the damage that they can bring to society when they are ignored and not treated in a humane fashion. Instead of making this a bleak tale of loss and destruction, she chooses to frame it through the perspective of a sensitive young man, who only wants to save his best friend. Thereby showing that substance abuse disorders are something which can be held at bay through the love and affection of those closest to those who suffer. Mashigo deftly combines relevant social issues with a bleak narrative tool to show that, in the end, it is society which is at fault.

Mashigo's skilful use of speculative fiction effectively demonstrates the value it holds for South African literature, as it tackles the concerns of contemporary society in an engaging and informative manner. The incorporation of tropes from popular culture and comic books is particularly significant, as it allows Mashigo to connect with the tastes of South African youth who have grown up in a media-saturated environment. By modifying these tropes to suit the South African context, Mashigo not only offers a sense of familiarity but also utilizes them as powerful tools for social commentary. This approach reflects a form of literature that actively engages with the current state of entertainment media in South Africa.

By associating these tropes with specific social issues, Mashigo transcends their mere entertainment value and transforms them into thought-provoking representations. This challenges readers to contemplate the ways in which these tropes symbolize and reflect social realities. Furthermore, Mashigo's adept use of estrangement as a narrative technique allows her to present complex societal issues in a more accessible and digestible manner. This showcases the educational potential of speculative fiction, enabling readers to engage in discussions about intricate topics. Despite employing various literary techniques, Mashigo maintains a strong focus on the lives of her protagonists, effectively representing the experiences of ordinary people in South Africa. This emphasis enhances the reader's connection to the stories and further deepens their engagement with the narratives. Mashigo's approach to social commentary and her portrayal of everyday individuals highlight the multifaceted nature of speculative fiction, which can simultaneously entertain, provide social commentary, and offer relatable perspectives.

In conclusion, Mashigo's adept use of speculative fiction demonstrates its capacity to fulfil multiple roles, serving as a powerful tool for social commentary while remaining entertaining and relatable. The genre's ability to address pressing issues and represent the lives of ordinary people exemplifies its significance in contemporary South African literature.

Chapter 2: Relationships with the past

Folktales serve as inspiration for many of Africa's most successful authors such as "Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Kofi Awoonor, Ama Ata Aidoo" and many others (Crous and Usman 12). Mohale Mashigo draws from folktales in *Intruders* (2018) as a means of representing the past in her stories. Folktales, as mentioned in the introduction, can be seen as living cultural artefacts. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which Mohale Mashigo draws on folktales and folklore for a number of stories in the collection, using the stories "Manoka" and "Nthatisi" as key examples. "Manoka" details the experience of the eponymous protagonist who, while on a Christmas trip with her church youth group and her grandmother, discovers that her family has a hidden history and strange transformative abilities. "Nthatisi" details a single moment in the life of the also eponymous protagonist as she reads a letter from her mother revealing that she is the descendant of a folk heroine and that her life is in danger. Both stories present these folklore elements as very real. Mashigo states in her introduction to the collection that she had to "draw from South African folklore and urban legends" in order to "as Miriam Tlali says, 'expose what we feel inside'" ("Afrofuturism" xii). The folktales in these stories are therefore specifically employed to explore the internal lives and feelings of the protagonists. Mashigo does this by focusing on the singular experiences of two young black women faced with dangerous situations as a result of choices made by their parents or guardians. This singular focus allows the stories to explore the relationships within family structures, as well as the experience of young black women living in South Africa.

As with *Intruders* (2018)*,* Mashigo's debut novel, *The Yearning* (2016), draws on traditional beliefs and folklore in order to explore the history and experiences of her protagonist. "Manoka" and "Nthatisi" share a thematic link with *The Yearning* (2016), given that they deal with the consequences of parents not sharing information with their children. *The*

Yearning (2016) follows Marubini, as she deals with the sudden onset of hallucinations and seizures that derail her life in Cape Town. She finds out that she was raped as a child and that her father, a traditional healer, had removed these memories from her mind in order to protect her. This ceremony had been hidden from her by all the adult members of her family in order to protect her. She is healed when she remembers the event and undergoes training as a traditional healer. The two stories discussed in this chapter follow a similar theme as the protagonists need to return to a place that is important to their heritage, in order to protect themselves and others from the effects of their history. My reading of these stories is that Mashigo is implying that a 'modern' life is only safe, complete, and fulfilled if the past is accepted and integrated into an understanding of the present. Disaster stems from the act of trying to hide or ignore the past. The past in these stories is represented through the folktales in the texts. Folktales, as well as myths, legends, epics, and proverbs, are a part of the longstanding oral tradition in Africa of "transmitting and communicating messages through word of mouth from one generation to the next" (Essop 2). They embody a form of history. The parents or grandparents in the stories choose to hide or refrain from sharing this knowledge with their children or grandchildren, resulting in dangerous and life-threatening consequences.

These stories can be analysed as examples of the entangled nature of time in contemporary South Africa. Mashigo is particularly adept at problematising linear causality as she shows in "Manoka" that the events in the story are the result of events spread throughout the past. She does this in "Manoka" by using flashbacks in between the narration of the present to illustrate how a number of seemingly unrelated events led to Manoka's current predicament. The addition of folktales or folklore as artefacts which function outside of time – as they represent both a time before recorded history, the recent past, and the present – problematise the idea of a linear causality. This means that the narratives side-step the binary of past versus present, or traditional versus modern, as espoused by the parental figures within the narratives

- and instead view the present situations of the protagonists as the result of entangled temporalities converging at a singular point. The problems of the protagonists can be read as the result of the protagonists being unaware of their personal or cultural history and therefore being excluded from a complete or well-informed understanding of the past. This also sidesteps the temporal narrative that history in South Africa starts with the landing of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 and since then has been defined by opposition between European and African peoples. This theme of a deeper history is present in Mashigo's novel *The Yearning* (2016). In the novel, the protagonist's grandmother laments the loss of identity and history experienced by South African people stating, '"We've been here so long and stopped telling our stories so far back that we have forgotten our real home.' . . . 'In the schools they teach children history according to when white men arrived here. Then we walk around believing that we did not exist intelligently before that stupid man from the spice company came'" ("The Yearning" 179-180). This loss of history is important for Mashigo as she chooses to revisit the topic through the stories of "Manoka" and "Nthatisi." Mashigo portrays the loss and alienation from history through the presence of folktales or folklore elements in the stories that the protagonists are unaware of.

Mashigo's use of folklore and her specific portrayal of them as real events or histories can be linked to the genre of Africanjujuism[14]. The term was coined by Nnedi Okorafor, along with Africanfuturism, in her blog, *Nnedi's Wahala Zone Blog,* where she defines it as a "subcategory of fantasy[15] that respectfully acknowledges the seamless blend of true existing

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[14] This form of writing could also be defined as magical realism, which is "a mode of narration that naturalises or normalises the supernatural; that is to say, a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of equivalence. On the level of the text neither has greater claim to truth or referentiality" (Warnes 3). But I have chosen to define it as Africanjujuism due to the specifically African connotations of the term.

[15] As a sub-category of fantasy, Africanjujuism is a part of speculative fiction.

African spiritualities and cosmologies with the imaginative" (Okorafor). A more complete definition of the term is that

> Africanjujuism attempts to name a kind of fantasy that captures the complexities of African life, histories, and cosmology. African worlds have traditionally been inclusive of various aspects of life that are often kept separate in other parts of the world. Where for instance, in the west, people see the past, present, and future as very distinct categories of time, in many African cosmologies, time is believed to be more fluid. The figure of the ancestor, for instance, implies the idea of someone who is dead but is able to still be our contemporary. (Edoro)

As folktales are a part of South African cultural history, Mashigo's blending of this form of history with speculative fiction, classifies the stories of "Manoka" and "Nthatisi" as Africanjujuism. The representation of entangled time in "Manoka" is also representative of the fluid view of time in African cultures. Mashigo's stories therefore represent African cultural history in a way that is uniquely African and uses them to represent the differences between how two different generations relate to their history.

I endeavour to show how both stories can be understood as a clash between the incompatible temporalities of an older generation, as represented by the parental figures, and the temporalities of the younger generation, as represented by Manoka and Nthatisi. This relies on an understanding of temporalities as "the way we experience and imagine the relation between past, present, and future" (Frenkel 72). I will argue that the stories are driven by the tensions between the temporalities of the older and younger generation. This tension stems from the decisions made by the parents or guardians to not share information about the past with the children in their care. This choice means that the younger generation, Manoka and Nthatisi, have built their understanding of their lives on incomplete temporalities that lead to situations that they do not completely understand and react to appropriately. I will also show how the choices of the parental figures are a result of them projecting their own past experiences onto Manoka and Nthatisi and thereby not allowing them to construct their own understanding of the past. The texts also highlight the benefits of having a connection to the past by portraying others with such a connection as gaining something from it whether it be supernatural powers or self-acceptance.

"Nthatisi" focuses on a singular moment in the life of the protagonist, Nthatisi, as she hides from her pursuers. She is introduced briefly at the start of the story, where the reader learns that she is a teenager whose parents are divorced, and her father is currently living in Dubai. Nthatisi reads a letter from her mother, which reveals that their family are the descendants of Tselane, a character from a well-known folktale. Tselane had been captured by a giant cannibal, called Ledimo, who was killed when she escaped. Ledimo's descendants are now hunting for Nthatisi in order to consume her heart. They believe that this act will bring back Ledimo. Since they need a descendant who is younger than 16, Nthatisi is told to find a way to her uncle in Lesotho where she will be safe until her 16th birthday. The story has no plot or character development, and the majority of the narrative is presented in the form of a letter from Nthatisi's mother. The exposition takes the form of a folktale being relayed to Nthatisi.

Nthatisi's story and the folktale it draws from highlight the importance of personal forms of communication related to heritage. Tselane's story highlights this through the song that her mother sings as a way to recognise her when she returns home (Mashigo, "Nthatisi" 174). The story makes a point that the song is not special by nature but that its power is drawn from the fact that it is something shared between Tselane and her mother: "A loathsome giant was passing by and he heard the song so the next day he sang it. Tselane was too smart for him and told him that he didn't sound like her mother" ("Nthatisi" 174). The giant, Ledimo, then decides to alter his voice through magical means in order to trick Tselane:

> Ledimo (the giant) went home and swallowed a hot iron rod (don’t question this, just keep reading) and it transformed his voice – he sounded exactly like Tselane’s mother. He went back, sang the song; Tselane was fooled, so she opened the door and Ledimo kidnapped her, threw her in a sack and made his way home. (“Nthatisi” 174)

The character, Ledimo, is a ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’ archetype as he tricks Tselane by mimicking her mother. The story demonstrates that the song, akin to a shared language, holds significance exclusively for those within the group. However, when shared with outsiders, it can have detrimental effects, enabling them to mimic and deceive those belonging to the group. The song, like a language, is special because it represents a shared connection between people, and this shared connection is a form of protection. Mashigo links the story of Tselane and Nthatisi by projecting the former onto the latter through their predicaments. In a similar fashion to Tselane, Nthatisi is given passwords by her mother which will allow her access to places where she can be safe:

> There are names and addresses of people who will help you get to Lesotho safely. The password is ‘Ba re ene ere’[16] – that is what you say at the beginning of ditshomo[17]. I honestly can’t believe I’m writing this but if this really happens I want you to know what to do. When you finally get to Lesotho you have to say these words to Mohau: ‘E aba ke tshomo ka ma thetho.[18]’ This is what the storyteller says when he or she is done telling ditshomo. (“Nthatisi” 177)

Both passwords are related to folktales (or ditshomos), a form of knowledge closely related to Nthatisi’s heritage, and therefore only known to a select number of people. This knowledge allows her access to a safe haven and the protection afforded by those like her. Those chasing her are "masters of disguise" ("Nthatisi" 176) and can trick her in a number of ways but thanks to these passwords she can protect herself and her family from their trickery. The abilities of her pursuers can also be seen as a representation of the symbolic power that is afforded to those who maintain a secure connection to their past. Her pursuers have abilities because they remained true to their heritage. By presenting language as a way to access places of safety, Mashigo is commenting on the value of African languages in a society that uses English as a means of cross-cultural communication. Knowing your own culture's language is represented as a form of access, which you and only those like you can utilise. This is valuable in a world where loss of identity and history is extremely prevalent. Through this subtle commentary, the story also acts in a similar fashion to the folktale.

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[16] “They say it happened that . . .”

[17] “Folktales”

[18] “It is a myth”

The story itself acts as a folktale in spirit as it subtly emphasises the importance of having access to forms of cultural knowledge such as language. This point is further shown in the postscript her mother adds to the letter:

> There is a book in there that will give you the answers when you're lost. You are not to show this book to anyone. It is written in Sesotho – I don't feel so silly for making you learn to read and write it now. (Mashigo, "Nthatisi" 179)

The book is written in her home language, protecting it from being interpreted by the uninitiated. The personal nature of the book is driven home by her mother's statement that she is not to show the book to anyone. This, and the language barrier, limits the number of people who have access to the knowledge contained in the book and adds an extra layer of protection for Nthatisi. These points show the importance of having access to traditional and protected forms of knowledge related to your cultural background, but that is only one half of the message. The danger lies in her mother's reluctance to teach her these forms of knowledge.

The phrase "I don't feel so silly for making you learn to read and write it now" shows that her mother has, up until this point, viewed these things as unnecessary knowledges and not a valuable thing to teach her daughter. This is also evidence of the way that Nthatisi's mother's understanding of the past influences her decisions regarding her daughter. Due to her perception that the past and its associated knowledge are futile, she chooses not to impart it to her daughter. This is made clear through her statement at the start of the letter: "This was not supposed to happen – I didn't believe the stories myself. It was just a silly story ... tshomo. You wouldn't know any because I never told them to you" ("Nthatisi" 173). The repetition of disbelief and disregard in the first two sentences, shown by the phrases "not supposed to," "didn't believe" and "just a silly story," indicates her view that these things have no bearing on reality and are just forms of entertainment to her with no value outside of that. This goes against what she knows as she says that her own mother told her these stories every night and each had a different lesson ("Nthatisi" 174). While not stated explicitly, it is implied that Nthatisi's mother grew up during the pinnacle of Apartheid rule or shortly thereafter, thus her attitude can be viewed as a consequence of Apartheid society: the Apartheid government viewed African heritage as a form of savagery and primitivism and therefore not useful for their conception of society. They projected this attitude onto black people through education and propaganda, coercing some black people into believing that their heritage has no place in modern society. This could be why Nthatisi's mother views these stories and teaching her child their language as being silly.

This attitude has an effect on Nthatisi as she has no personal cultural sources to draw from in order to understand her predicament. Nthatisi instead has to look towards Western sources such as psychology and true crime documentaries: "Surely this can't be real? Am I having a dissociative episode? Is that what it's even called? I should have paid attention when

Mpumi was watching that documentary on serial killers" (Mashigo, "Nthatisi" 172). The problem is that these sources are not particularly suited to the situation she currently finds herself in, so Nthatisi is trying to make sense of what she is experiencing with tools that are not suited to the task. This is the result of Nthatisi's mother projecting her own understanding of her past onto her child. Her understanding of the past as "silly" leads her to not teach Nthatisi about their past ("Nthatisi" 173). This in turn affects Nthatisi's understanding of her past, as she has nothing to draw on from the past to inform her understanding of the present. The story does show that Nthatisi is not entirely defenceless as her mother had taught her Sesotho. Her understanding of her native language is what will protect her on her journey to find her uncle and find a safe haven. The way in which Mashigo represents the value of language in this instance is through the way in which it allows Nthatisi to communicate with those who will protect her on her journey.

Language is shown to be a password, which allows you access to those you share a history with. While language is the tool which saves her, the other tool which would have proved most vital in this moment would have been prior knowledge of her family's connection to a folkloric heroine. This knowledge would have prepared her for this moment. Instead, her mother only reveals this information when she realises it to be true. This reveals that her mother views this kind of knowledge as useless due to its fictional nature. She values only that which can be verified. This highlights a possibly empiricist way of thinking, a point-of-view which values that can be observed and interacted with on a physical level, in comparison to Africa which has "traditionally been inclusive of various aspects of life that are often kept separate in other parts of the world" (Edoro). This shows the incompatibility between Western and African thought when it pertains to traditional beliefs and practices. Mashigo also makes a point to highlight the similarities between traditional Western and African thought through the postscript Nthatisi's mother adds to the letter. In it she states that their family is in possession of the Red Cloak worn by Red Riding Hood, as she was friends with Tselane (Mashigo, "Nthatisi" 178). This might seem inconsequential, but it points towards a shared history between different cultures.

Mashigo uses Nthatisi and Tselane's story in order to focus on a phenomenon specific to the transitional period of South Africa. The phenomenon is the relationship young people have with their own heritage, as a result of their parent's experiences with their heritage during Apartheid. Nthatisi's mother projects her own experiences with her heritage onto Nthatisi by indicating that she felt "silly" for teaching her Sesotho and by not sharing the fables of her childhood, even though they are a part of their family history (Mashigo, "Nthatisi" 173). This attitude could be a remnant of growing up during a period when her heritage was viewed as unnecessary and not valuable for navigating the world. Her own understanding of the past is that it has no valuable bearing on the present and is not worth being shared. But this ignores the fact that language and traditional forms of knowledge allow us to connect to the past and view our lives as a continuation of a collective endeavour stretching across centuries. Mashigo uses folklore to reveal the plight and alienation of a child unaware of her own history and heritage. She chooses to place Nthatisi in a life-threatening situation in order to convey the importance of what she is experiencing. Illustrating what is felt by those who have to experience this alienation from their past on a daily basis. Mashigo also uses Nthatisi's mother as a way of placing the blame for this alienation on the parent's and not the children. A theme which is also found in the story "Manoka."

"Manoka" follows the eponymous protagonist's discovery of her maternal family's supernatural connection with water and the horrific consequences of this discovery. Manoka is introduced to the reader as a young woman, raised by her grandmother and already a mother herself. The story describes Manoka's experience on a church trip to Durban with her grandmother, Koko. Two events are of particular importance to Manoka: her first contact with the ocean and a night-time rendezvous with her friend, Ndumiso. Manoka's contact with the ocean transforms her into her 'true' form, with her legs transforming into powerful octopus' appendages. Unable to control her body in this form she accidentally kills Ndumiso. Ndumiso's death leads Koko to reveal Manoka's heritage, which is that all of the women in their family "were believed to be cursed" (Mashigo, "Manoka" 21). Their "cursed" nature manifested in two ways. First, they only give birth to one daughter and no other children. Second, they transform when in contact with water during infancy, when breastfeeding, and when they are near death ("Manoka" 24). The story ends with Manoka and her baby Nkaiseng going into the ocean where she finds Ndumiso's lifeless body, and she drags it deeper into the waters where, according to Koko, he may come back to life. Manoka's predicament is largely a consequence of her grandmother, Koko, projecting her own experiences with the "cursed" nature of their family onto Manoka. The story also portrays the transformative abilities of their family in such a way that it acts as a metaphor for female sexuality. I will show how Manoka's sexual experiences are linked to water and transformation, as moments of import during her growth as a sexually active woman are distinctly tied to contact with ocean water. Through positioning ocean water as a representation of female sexuality, Mashigo shows the depth of female experience, as well as the power contained within the female body as the creator of life. Through this metaphor, Mashigo represents female sexuality, as well as the experiences during and after birth as something powerful that does not allow for control by outside forces. This is done also through presenting the protagonist, Manoka, as someone who does not conform to societal standards regarding sex and sexual experience. I will also examine how Koko's understanding of the past affects Manoka, as well as her decision to not tell Manoka about their abilities.

The transformative abilities of Manoka's family, as well as their connection to water can be linked to a variety of traditional beliefs and folklore from South Africa, as well as Africa in general. Water plays a significant role in most South African cultures. The Nguni tribes in particular believe that one possible method of the ancestors selecting traditional healers is by taking someone underwater in order to receive training (Bernard 139). Some claim that during the underwater training experience they encounter "a fecund woman suckling infants" who is described as having a fishtail (141). She is seen by Zulu speakers as the "ultimate symbol of fertility, the origin of life on earth, and as the female aspect of God's manifestation" (141-142). The Cape Nguni see her as "a representation of a group of fishtailed beings known as the *abantu bomlambo*, or literally, the 'people of the river'" (142; emphasis in original). One of the "tutelary spirits for Sotho diviners, healers, and mediums" is "*mamolapo*" who is "envisioned as a 'very beautiful and attractive' mermaid who lures over-confident young men to their deaths" (Siegel 309; emphasis in original). For the Nguni tribes, the water spirit is tied to fertility and the creation of life, aspects that can be tied to Manoka's family's ability to transform during periods tied to fertility and nourishment. Water spirits can be found in Africa and the African diaspora as well, the most famous of these being Mami Wata (Drewal 60).

Mami Wata is often shown to have a woman's upper body and a fishtail (Drewal 62). She can aid humans in a variety of ways such as bestowing "good fortune and status through monetary wealth" or aiding them "in concerns related to procreation – infertility, impotence, or infant mortality" (61). She also represents danger as an encounter with her "often requires a substantial sacrifice" (61). She plays a special role for women as she

> Provides a spiritual and professional avenue for women to become powerful priestesses and healers of both psycho-spiritual and physical ailments and to assert female agency in generally male-dominated societies. (62)

Mami Wata is similar in nature to the South African water spirits who also share connections with fertility, womanhood, and the act of creation. The story draws from these beliefs in order to represent feminine power and sexuality. Manoka and her female relatives can take on different shapes of animals who live in, and always stay close to, water (Mashigo, "Manoka" 22). But instead of portraying them in a comparable way to the water spirits found in folklore, Mashigo chooses to present them as women who are viewed as being cursed. In doing this, she chooses to show how people react to women who are different from the norm, particularly those who have power. They are not celebrated but feared, and because of this, they hide who they are. The nature of their transformation, tied as it is to infancy, breastfeeding and death, suggests that the transformation is tied to events that are specific to the female experience.

A key feature of the story is its portrayal of the connection between female sexuality and water, particularly the connection between sea water and Manoka's sexual experiences. The link to female sexuality is shown in the text through Manoka's interactions with water, the feelings that this contact evokes in her, as well as the sexual nature of these moments. Her first contact with seawater occurs during a keyboard lesson with Tendai. Tendai is her first sexual partner, an event that is linked to the moment when Tendai pours seawater in her hand from a bottle they keep in their kitchen:

> Tendai shrugged. His mother wasn't home; he was always much more relaxed away from her. The cap was stubborn. When it finally gave, a little bit of sea splashed on my hands. The contact made me dizzy. Tendai saw that and took the bottle from me. Anxiety rose up into my throat. 'Please, pour some onto my hands,' I said, half shouting. I wanted more of that dizzying feeling. We walked over to the sink and he allowed me to hold the ocean above soapy water. Very quickly it slipped through my hands. … Tendai kissed me on the cheek tenderly. He did the same thing when we had sex for the first time a few months later. And every time after that. Tendai was my first. (Mashigo, "Manoka" 15-16)

The moment between Manoka and Tendai overflows with sexual tension. The "stubborn cap," followed by the splashing of water and the dizzying contact, all mirror a sexual encounter. This reading is further informed by Manoka's "anxiety" and desire for more of "that dizzying feeling," ("Manoka" 16) indicating the nervousness and desire associated with a teenager's first sexual experience. The feelings of desire and anxiety are heightened in her first contact with water from the ocean. Add to this that she is alone with a young man close in age to her and the experience becomes one that is overtly sexual. The text makes this connection to sex clear by Manoka stating that the tender kiss on the cheek is something that Tendai would repeat in their first sexual encounter and "every time after that" ("Manoka" 16). Her first contact with sea water, something that is connected to the ocean, elicits feelings inside of her that she has never felt, and she immediately desires more. The moment is not to be read as an indicator of uncontrollable sexual hunger, but rather as the moment that Manoka encounters something larger than herself that awakens new and intense feelings within her that she had never been told about.

This moment awakens her desires as a young woman. The story presents her as a woman who enjoys sex as she states that she had multiple partners and that she held no shame about it (Mashigo, "Manoka" 14). The moment between her and Tendai was tender and beautiful as it introduced her to sex in a comfortable and safe manner, but she was still left misinformed about her true nature. This lack of awareness would in fact be what led to the fatal encounter between herself and Ndumiso. Her dalliance with Ndumiso is presented as more intense than sex with Tendai, as the encounter with Ndumiso happens by the ocean while her first kiss with Tendai is accompanied by only a splash of sea water. The amount of water serves as a metaphor for the different emotional states she finds herself in. The level of emotion is made clear in her description of her dalliance with Ndumiso:

> Ndumiso looked shocked. His eyes moved down to my waist and his right hand moved away from between my legs. Fear. His and mine. It was his idea for us to sneak out and take a walk on the beach. … The answer was always going to be yes. I say 'no' a lot

> but for him 'yes' tumbled out of my mouth before I even understood what he was asking for. … He placed his hand on my left thigh, exposed through my khanga. Water touched our ankles as I tasted the inside of Ndumiso's mouth: cigarettes and breath mints. All those mornings in church, wondering what it would be like to feel his body pressed against mine. Butterflies and nausea. The lead tenor of the choir with an angelic voice. Erect and eager. ("Manoka" 3-4)

The moment between the two of them is heightened by the constant juxtapositions: "Fear. His and mine," "'no'" and "'yes,'" "cigarettes and breath mints," "butterflies and nausea." These juxtapositions serve to heighten the tension of the scene to show how this moment is a combination of danger and desire, each feeding the other in a perpetual cycle. The connection between seawater and female sexual arousal is also hinted at by the fact that his hand on her thigh is followed by the water touching her ankles, the fluid moving up her legs instead of flowing down. The reversed flow can also be read as foreshadowing, indicating that what follows would be a reversal of a desirous moment. Manoka's continued narration of this moment later in the text makes these connections between water and sexuality even clearer:

> I had expected the water to be cold but it wasn't. Like the rest of Durban, it was foreign to me, warm and what I wanted for myself. . . . The water kept inching closer to embrace our legs. The higher up it came, the closer I felt to tears. Was it the moon, humidity or Ndumiso's hand going up my inner thigh? Falling pregnant had made me never want to have sex again. . . . The choice was not mine; my body simply rejected any kind of sexual activity. . . . Eventually, I became numb when it came to sex. My body only existed as a vessel for my baby. Lying on the beach with half of Ndumiso's body over mine, his hand gently stroking me wet, I was almost on the verge of tears. Eyes closed,

> I savoured the taste of Ndumiso's mouth, his neck then his thumb in my mouth. He pulled himself on top of me and moaned. At least that's what it sounded like. I opened my eyes. His face was caught between confusion and fear. ("Manoka" 14-15)

Manoka's initial description of the water as "foreign," "warm" and "what I wanted for myself" can be seen as her desire for the all-embracing love of a mother, similar to the experience of being in the womb while submerged in amniotic fluid. A crucial point is that she welcomes the warm feeling of the water.

The relationship between Manoka's connection with water and her own sexuality is made clear in the text as moments of heightened sexual emotions are consistently placed in relation to contact with water. The splash of water that Tendai introduces her to leads inevitably to the ocean where she sits with Ndumiso, a man who reawakens her sexuality after a trying pregnancy. Her sexuality and her transformation are powerful and linked to water. Sex is connected with the wetness of her arousal and her transformation with the life-giving water of the ocean. But Manoka is like many young people, uninformed about her own body in many ways and this has unforeseen and possibly dangerous consequences. Mashigo does not try and tell a simple story about the dangers of sex and unplanned pregnancy as she paints Manoka to be a self-assured woman who enjoys sex and has a support system that allows her to raise her child. Instead, Mashigo emphasises the idea of not knowing your own body through Manoka's transformation. The story does not blame Manoka but instead places the blame partially on the shoulders of her mother and grandmother who should have guided and educated her. The consequence of this is that she accidentally kills Ndumiso and has to deal with the consequences.

Mirroring Nthatisi's predicament, Manoka's actions in the moment of her transformation or even the transformation itself could have been avoided if she had been told about it by her grandmother, who is her sole caretaker. The reason for this is Koko's experience of the past, as she projects her own past experiences with their family's ability and her daughter onto Manoka. Her understanding of the past as something that hurt her, now affects her present as she fails to teach Manoka about their heritage. Koko's feelings are made clear when she explains things to Manoka:

> 'I didn't believe it myself until I had Lipuo. The other things that happened, when I was a teenager, scared me. I was always a girl with no friends. It was easier to convince myself that I had imagined or dreamed the things that had happened to me. A secret becomes harder to keep when there are other people involved.' (Mashigo, "Manoka" 22)

In this moment, there is a glimpse of how Koko views her own past. The short sentences are excuses for her not telling Manoka, as she tries to convey the fear and anxiety she felt as a young woman when it was revealed to her. Koko is presented as someone who chooses to avoid, instead of confronting the trauma of her past - a strategy she adopts for dealing with Manoka since she failed to inform her about their family's transformative abilities. Evidence of this transference to Manoka can be seen when she tries to explain to Manoka why she never told her:

> 'I've left it too late.' Koko looked annoyed and sad. 'There was never a right time, Manoka.' I had just killed a man; Koko wasn't surprised. Did she always know that I would inexplicably snap and kill someone? Was it because I didn't make friends easily? 'Your mother left because she wanted to be herself.' My mother? Wiping my nose with the back of my hand, I looked up at my grandmother. She was crying. 'There are certain times in your life when your true nature reveals itself. If I had prepared you, none of this would have happened.' ("Manoka" 19)

Manoka's reactions to this declaration point out the dangers of not informing children or young people about their own bodies. Manoka immediately thinks that something is wrong with her personally and looks for inadequacies within herself. This can be seen in the repetition of questions referring to "I," indicating that the blame is only directed at herself. Manoka's question regarding her mother shows how little she knows about her mother, something else that Koko never talked to Manoka about. Manoka views her mother in a particularly negative light, as can be seen in her description of her mother:

> Nobody knows who my father is, though not for any lack of trying. I just had one of those mothers who was hard-headed, sharp-tongued and not interested in explaining herself. They must have asked her the question of my paternity until they grew tired of being insulted very personally. My mother walked out one day after declaring that I had 'had enough breast milk to be strong'. She pulled her breast out of my mouth and walked out of my life. Never came back. ("Manoka" 4)

"Hard-headed" and "sharp-tongued" are both phrases with negative connotations. These views are shaped by the little information she has and the fact that she hears about it from secondary sources. Koko discloses that her mother departed because she "desired to be true to herself," an explanation that, if presented in a suitable manner, could have potentially painted a more forgiving portrait of her mother in the eyes of a younger Manoka ("Manoka" 19). If framed in this fashion, it could be shown that Lipuo was waiting for Manoka to come to their world instead of simply abandoning her. It is never shown if Koko ever tried to dissuade Manoka from these negative views of her mother, but she might have had her own issues with Lipuo as she believes that mothers should not abandon their children: "'When I gave birth to Lipuo, my mother never left my side. But that's what mothers do. They stay with their daughters and help them become mothers.'" ("Manoka" 22). Koko is presented here as a woman who believes that mothers should protect and instruct their daughters which could explain why she allowed

Manoka to hold negative views of Lipuo. Koko's understanding of her own past is shown to be the result of trauma as a teenager and Lipuo abandoning Manoka. This understanding of the past is why she chooses to shield Manoka from the knowledge of their family. Mashigo uses this to indicate that Koko did not act out of malice or ignorance, but as a result of her own experiences and the desire to protect Manoka. The deeper past as represented by their family history is something negative for Koko and influenced her understanding of her own past since it influenced how she understood the present and Manoka. Manoka's own understanding of her past was incomplete as she could not fully understand the present as she did not know about their family's past. Mashigo uses the relationship between Koko and Manoka, as well as the tragedy of Ndumiso's death to illustrate the consequences and complexity of a hidden family history. Manoka's tragedy stems from an inability to understand herself as a mother, daughter, and woman due to Koko's decision to not share their shared past with her.

"Manoka" and "Nthatisi" both deal with the idea of parents or guardians keeping information from children because of their own preconceptions regarding their history. Nthatisi's mother believed her heritage to be unnecessary and silly, so she chose to not share it with her child which led to a dangerous situation for Nthatisi. Koko kept their family history and abilities from Manoka. This resulted in two specific outcomes, first it led to Manoka's negative perception of her mother, and secondly her lack of knowledge regarding her transformations led to the death of Ndumiso. In both instances the elder figures viewed the past as something that should not influence the present and futures of their children. Their own interpretations of their past affected the decisions they made regarding their children. Mashigo uses these folklore elements as a representation of the past to reveal the internal struggles parents have as a result of problematic histories. Knowledge should not be hidden; it should be shared and the context around it should be explained. Through this inspired use of folklore, Mashigo reveals ‘what we feel inside’ about our own histories and the dangerous effects that alienation from heritage and history can have.

Through these two stories Mashigo joins a number of African authors who are bringing African histories and cultures into the literary sphere in a manner that is respectful of the cultures they draw inspiration from. Her choice to use folktales also highlights the potential of South African traditional literatures in bringing new meaning into the present. In order for South African society to create a truly unique speculative fiction it needs to be able to utilise its cultural sources. Mashigo does this in “Manoka” and “Nthatisi” by positioning folkloric knowledge as history, similarly to how folklore or stories are treated in African cultures as records of history. Mashigo uses these representations to create a narrative which highlights the importance of this type of knowledge, while also showing the ways in which histories of this kind are ignored or denigrated in favour of living a life more congruent to Western standards and ways of thinking. These stories could possibly be a new way to introduce traditional literature to a new generation of readers as it treats the sources with respect while still creating stories that have a modern sensibility.

Chapter 3: The future is now – Representations of a future South Africa

The stories I have selected for the previous chapters have all been focused on present conditions and situations, but no collection of speculative fiction would be complete without stories which deal with futuristic scenarios. *Intruders* (2018) contains three stories that can be described as future orientated, namely "Untitled i," "Untitled ii," and "Untitled iii." These stories together form what I will refer to as the "Untitled" series as they form a cohesive three-part narrative following the experiences of two South African sisters, Bonolo and Kamo, during and after an apocalyptic event. The stories take place in a near future time and describe the onset and consequences of an apocalyptic event. The first story, "Untitled i," introduces us to the sisters and describes the apocalyptic event:

> The sun had dimmed; quite suddenly the daylight turned from grey to the colour of the hour before children are called in because the streetlights are on. The sun was definitely still in the sky, but angry clouds that looked like a frustrated artist's splashes of paint blocked it. (Mashigo, "Untitled i" 59).

We are first introduced to Bonolo, who is the eldest and sole breadwinner of their two-person household. It is revealed that their parents died in a car accident. The plot of the story is focused on the actions of Kamo as she tries to save Bonolo, with the help of the family who employed their mother as a domestic worker. The family made up of mother and father, Annie and Jonty, and their daughter, Melanie, who is also Kamo's best friend, have gained access to one of the spaceships fleeing earth after the apocalypse. It is implied that they offered an extra seat to Kamo, who then sacrifices her own chance at safety by forcing Bonolo to take the seat on a spaceship. It is implied that the family offered Kamo the seat, but she chose to give it to her sister. The story ends with Bonolo being drugged and forced onto the ship as she realises what her sister has done.

"Untitled ii" takes place twenty-five years after the events of the first story with Bonolo waking up from hibernation. After awakening she is withdrawn and depressed, finding any opportunity to get lost in the ship and forget about her situation. The story details the governing system of the ship, with those who funded the ship being referred to as "Founders" and functioning as the ruling class (Mashigo, "Untitled ii" 128). Bonolo is eventually forced to partake in the community by "volunteering." During this time, she surreptitiously gathers information about the escape pods and decides to leave the ship in search of something else in the depths of space. Her attempt is successful, but she failed to consider fuel and is forced to land on an unknown planet. Her story ends with her waking up after landing where she finds herself surrounded by alien lifeforms who all share her face.

The final story in the series, "Untitled iii," takes place after the events of the first story revealing the fate of Kamo on earth. An unknown amount of time has passed since the departure of the spaceships and Kamo is living together with two other people, Millicent, and Yaaseen. Millicent is a secretive character who apparently saved the lives of Kamo and Yaaseen, and has renamed Kamo, referring to her as Hailee. Kamo was injured – as her eye is bandaged – following the events of the first story and Millicent states that she fell out of the sky. Kamo is traumatised after the event and rarely speaks. She eventually finds out that Yaaseen does not trust Millicent and that something has been done to her eye. Together with Yaaseen, she removes the bandage from her eye, and they find out that her eye has been replaced with a cybernetic implant. Millicent returns home and sees what they have done. As she starts reacting to the situation, Yaaseen closes the door and asks Kamo if her eye can help them escape at which point the story ends.

The futuristic setting, black protagonists, and concerns with technology in these stories are all seemingly features of Afrofuturism, but there is more too. Afrofuturism was and is still in many ways a reactionary phenomenon. It was a way for black artists in America to create narratives where they reclaimed mastery over their own history and their future. Mashigo is aware of this, as she states in her introduction that Afrofuturism is “an escape for those who find themselves in the minority and divorced or violently removed from their African roots, so they imagine a ‘black future’ where they aren’t the minority and are able to marry their culture with technology” (“Afrofuturism” xiii). There have been attempts at interpreting Afrofuturism from a Pan-African point of view. Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones, for example, in their introduction, “The Rise of Astro-Blackness,” to *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness* (2016) respond to critic Tegan Bristow’s statement “Afrofuturism has nothing to do with Africa, and everything to do with cyber-culture in the West” (qtd. in Anderson & Jones ix) by stating that:

> This assertion is misplaced due to the fact that 1) Africa and its diaspora are connected via cyber-culture and have exchanged ideas, art, politics and more recently remittances since the nineteenth century; and 2) the African diaspora has been institutionally designated the sixth zone of the African Union and similar to early developments of Pan-Africanism starting in the African diaspora, Afrofuturism is now a Pan-African project. (ix)

Ingrid LaFleur, an art curator and Afrofuturist, defines Afrofuturism as a “way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens” (qtd. in “Mohale Mashigo interviewed” 1). This attitude is also shared by Ytasha L. Womack. Her book *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (2013) includes African and African American artists (Samatar 176). This acceptance does align with Afrofuturism’s focus on “blackness rather than nationhood,” but it also risks obscuring “possibilities for rich discussion” (176). The fundamental concern with these attempts at a Pan-African view of Afrofuturism is that they do not consider the specific context within which Afrofuturism was formed. Afrofuturism has always been concerned “with recovering lost African sensibilities for African Americans” whereas

"Africanfuturism is selfreferential, having access to African culture and traditions that continue to inform the way Africans live in and see the world" (Hodapp 607).

Mohale Mashigo also makes a specific argument against the term, Afrofuturism, being applied to her work in the introduction to *Intruders* (2018), titled "Afrofuturism: Ayashis' Amateki," stating that "Afrofuturism is not for Africans living in Africa" ("Afrofuturism" x). She believes that "[o]ur needs, when it comes to imagining futures, or even reimagining a fantasy present, are different from elsewhere on the globe; we actually live on this continent, as opposed to using it as a costume or a stage to play out our ideas" (Mashigo, "Afrofuturism" xi). Mashigo's argument is concerned with the idea that Afrofuturism is essentially a diasporic project, aimed at serving a purpose for those who find themselves removed from Africa but who need to forge a sense of connection with the continent. As Africans living on the continent, we already have a connection with the land, cultures, and various belief systems. As a result of these connections, the futuristic literature created in Africa by Africans would lead to representations of the future which would differ from Afrofuturist texts written from the diaspora. Thus, a more fitting descriptor for Mashigo's futuristic writing would be Africanfuturism, a term created by Nnedi Okorafor in her blog, *Nnedi's Wahala Zone Blog,* to describe futuristic writing by Africans in Africa.

A focus on African concerns is important to Mashigo as she states in her introduction to *Intruders* (2018) that the goal of her futuristic writing is to pose certain question such as:

> Is the future still filled with (generational) inequality? Are there any smart cities or has corruption stolen the opportunities for young people to influence the direction of technology? If resources and education currently benefit one group, what does that mean for the use of technology in the future? How does who we are right now affect an imagined future? ("Afrofuturism" xii-xiii)

These questions are focused on concerns that matter specifically to Africa and they are addressed in the last two stories of the "Untitled" series as the stories explore control of technology for the future, as well as the consequences of our hyper-capitalist society. It also connects to Okorafor's description of Africanfuturism as she is concerned with the future consequences of current African societies. Okorafor makes clear in her blog that Africanfuturism and Afrofuturism do share a connection, but they are different because "Africanfuturism is specifically and more directly rooted in African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view" (Okorafor). She illustrates the fundamental difference between Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism with reference to the fictional setting of Wakanda, the fictional home of the *Black Panther* made famous by the Marvel superhero movies:

> **Afrofuturism:** Wakanda builds its first outpost in Oakland, CA, USA.
>
> **Africanfuturism:** Wakanda builds its first outpost in a neighbouring African country. (Okarofor; emphasis in original)

The key differential between these two descriptors is the location. Those in the diaspora struggle to maintain a connection to Africa as a means of identity construction, but those in Africa have different concerns and struggles. Mashigo is aware of this relationship between people and place, as she states in an interview when questioned about her aversion towards Afrofuturism that that "we Africans, we're rooted in our cultures, we are affected by colonialism, but it's all happening where we're from, that means that even ideas of being fantastical are rooted in something that is a part of us already" ("Mohale Mashigo interviewed" 2). This is why the term Africanfuturism is a better descriptor for Mashigo's work since she is writing as an African about Africa. This does not mean that her work does not interact with Afrofuturist concerns, a point which I will show in my analysis of the "Untitled" stories. Mashigo does not avoid global concerns, she instead reworks them to illustrate the entangled nature of the world.

In a roundtable discussion hosted by Isaiah Lavender III and Lisa Yaszek for the collection *Literary Afrofuturism in the Twenty-First Century* (2020), Nalo Hopkinson states that Afrofuturism "as a notion is way useful, but it doesn't cover the landscape" and instead suggests that "[a]s an analytical tool, you can choose to use [Afrofuturism] selectively, or to combine it with other filters. It all depends upon the light you want to cast on a particular work" (38). This statement also falls in line with the perspective of Isaiah Lavender III in his book *Afrofuturism Rising: The Literary Prehistory of a Movement* (2019) where he describes Afrofuturism as "a set of race-inflected reading protocols designed to investigate the optimisms and anxieties framing the future imaginings of black people" (2). In a similar fashion to Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism can also be used as a reading protocol, and I will therefore be using it in this way. This will allow me to focus on the specifically South African concerns as shown, particularly through the relationship between the two sisters, Bonolo and Kamo.

The relationship between the two protagonists, Bonolo and Kamo, as well as their personalities, is an interesting portrayal of the differences that arise between the generations who grew up during separate phases of the post-1994 transitional period of South African. This distinction between the two sisters is a South African phenomenon which distinguishes these stories from being labelled as Afrofuturism. Bonolo, as the younger sibling, is technically a member of the born-free generation as she never experienced the legal racism and segregation of the Apartheid system, but her experiences as a child and later young adult are still marked by discrimination. Kamo's experiences were quite different as she grew up in the 2000s, a time when schools and other social institutions had started becoming more racially integrated. Kamo's relationship with Melanie, the daughter of the family their mother worked for, is an important indicator of the different ways in which she and Bonolo experience South African society.

Mashigo's focus on the intricacies of the relationship between the two sisters, as well as their interactions with others particularly pertaining to race relations, positions the story as fundamentally South African in nature. This Afrocentric focus is a good example of why Africanfuturism is a preferred descriptor for this kind of writing. The relationship between Kamo and Melanie, between a black and a white girl, is particularly important as it shows the ways in which racial difference can be accepted in the South African context but never ignored. The intricacy of their connection is discussed in "Untitled iii" by Kamo as she describes their relationship: "Melanie was my half-sister; sister because we were inseparable as kids and half because my mother cleaned her father's house, so perhaps they considered me a part of their family" (Mashigo, "Untitled iii" 163). Kamo's choice to describe her relationship with Melanie with the prefix "half-" shows an acute awareness of the divide between the two of them. It should be noted that this is still tempered by her choice to view her as a "sister." Melanie is her oldest friend, but their relationship is still the result of the employer-employee relationship between their parents which is fundamentally unequal. These types of relationships are normally further complicated by the reality of racial difference in South Africa, with the majority of all domestic workers being black women. This awareness is also shown by her use of "perhaps" indicating that she is wary of the way Melanie's family views her. Despite this she still chooses the descriptor "sister" meaning that she is willing to overlook this difference as it pertains to her friend. She views the relationship between them as important since she described Melanie as a "sister." But she is still very aware of the unassailable differences between them as a result of the relationship between their families, which is why she qualifies the description with the prefix "half-". This shows that Kamo has a nuanced understanding of her society while still being willing to interact and accept those who are different.

Bonolo's relationship with Melanie's family is different as it is entirely defined by her mother's position as their domestic worker. As a child during the transition period, Bonolo was subject to a society in which different races had been forced to interact with each other after decades of segregation and conflict. This is most clearly illustrated in the way that Bonolo is treated by Melanie's family, specifically her mother Annie. This relationship is described by Bonolo in "Untitled ii" as she describes their living arrangements on the spaceship:

> . . . Melanie and I share a room and she's begun to treat me the way her parents did when she was a baby: 'Bonnie, could you make the baby a bottle? Bonnie, won't you be a love and load the washing machine?' I wasn't even 11 and Annie had found a way to make me Ma's cleaning assistant. (Mashigo, "Untitled ii" 130-131)

They do not treat Bonolo as her own person but as an extension of her mother, whose role was that of a servant. The way in which their relationship with Bonolo is presented alludes to the fraught relationship between white and black people in South African society during the initial transition period following 1994. Firstly, the use of an infantilising nickname by Annie, instead of her full name shows a need to frame Bonolo's identity in their own terms instead of allowing her to define herself. The nickname ending with the suffix -ie is an English convention, which means that they anglicised her name ignoring her own culture. It is also a diminutive manner of addressing her. The use of requests instead of instructions indicates an awareness that they cannot instruct, or order, her to do anything. Despite this they would still like her to fulfil some function in their household. The use of the phrase "be a love" is almost a manipulation of Bonolo as a child since they are implying that she would be worthy of affection if she fulfilled a request. All of this taken together indicates their inability to separate Bonolo from the racial stereotypes left over from Apartheid. To them Bonolo is simply a black woman who should obviously assist them. This relationship is carried over to the spaceship where Melanie treats Bonolo as her live-in maid. It is also further complicated by the fact that Bonolo is indebted to them for access to the ship. The relationship between Bonolo and Melanie's family is doomed in many ways to repeat the systemic injustices of planet Earth and South Africa. The nature of both Kamo and Bonolo's relationship with Melanie and her family can be read as a microcosm of the diverse ways in which people experienced race relations in the early years of the transition period compared to the later years. Particularly in the way that Mashigo portrays the relationship between domestic worker and employer, as it highlights the separation that economic power has in determining equality. This continues today despite the growth of black middle class in South African society. Where Kamo and Melanie enjoy a different relationship because they share a connection outside of the economic relationship of their parents, allowing them to be closer despite their economic differences. The differences do not stop there as the two sisters have different personalities that have been formed as a result of their different experiences.

Bonolo is shown to be an anxious person, someone who is deeply affected by her surroundings. Kamo is the opposite as she is someone who makes her presence known and influences her surroundings instead of being influenced or affected by it. These differences are made clear later in the story when the narrator describes Kamo's first day of school:

> On her first day of school, [Kamo] clutched the straps of her oversized bag, got out of the taxi and ran to the school gates without looking back. Bonolo cried all the way to her school because she worried about her little sister and her mind played out all the worst first-school-day possibilities. ("Untitled i" 60-61)

The image of the small child with the big bag running to the gate with no need to look back shows Kamo to be a very brave child who is willing to face danger without doubting her decision; a strength that is shown in the story through her decision to give up her seat on the spaceship in favour of Bonolo. The comparison is interesting here because while it shows Bonolo to be more apprehensive than Kamo, it does not ascribe it to a weakness in Bonolo but rather shows it to be a result of her caring nature and her intelligence. The ability to go through different scenarios and determine the results of each differentiation is the mark of an intelligent mind albeit an anxious one. Bonolo's suffering in life is hinted at this point as being tied to her intelligence. This point is later made clear by Kamo, stating that Bonolo was a "child genius" who went to university early to become an engineer (Mashigo, "Untitled iii" 164). After graduation she could not find a job and had to accept a job as secretary for a doctor, as a result of these rejections Kamo observes that Bonolo "decided that being smart was a disadvantage and unremarkable until she started to believe it" ("Untitled iii" 164). This observation is important as it alludes to Kamo's power of observation and a mature interpretation of her sister's personality. Kamo is shown through this observation to be intelligent in terms of emotional awareness and understanding. Continuing the interpretation of them being representations of different experiences of the transition period over time, it seems that Mashigo is commenting on the specific characteristics of these generations. Bonolo's intelligence and hyper-awareness is a representation of those born in the immediate aftermath of 1994, as everyone was still very aware of the recent past and everything was still new and unformed, leading to heightened anxieties regarding the future of the country. Kamo's emotional intelligence and observational abilities are representative of those who grew up in a more blended South Africa with a more prominent black middle-class, as integration between the different races had somewhat progressed by this point in time especially for those in urban environments.

Through these two sisters and the way they represent South African societal change, Mashigo firmly entrenches this story in the South African context. Their personalities, experiences and relationships are constructed in a way that could only result of the specific realities of South African society in the transition period following 1994. The particular relationship that each of them shares with Melanie and her family is used to illustrate the shifting nature of South African society during this period, as well as the detrimental effects that the period had on the youth. These elements show how these stories could not be comfortably defined as Afrofuturism as they are told from a uniquely South African perspective, placing them within the purview of Africanfuturism. However, there are still certain features of the "Untitled" series which can be better understood using concepts from Afrofuturism. The most important of these being the way in which Bonolo and Kamo interact with advanced technology throughout the series.

The birth of the personal computer, the internet, and affordable global travel since the late 1900s has meant that the division between people of different races is now not only based on ownership of land or money but also the control of information and technology, known as the digital divide. Writers of Afrofuturism are concerned with these developments and share an interest in how these changes related to African Americans and their history (Yaszek 44). Afrofuturism is concerned with the power dynamics surrounding technology and its development, particularly the fact that technology is almost solely in the hand of Western cultures. During the mid to late twentieth century, the power of Western cultures was directed at constructing specific kinds of futures (Eshun 289). Power over society was now not only invested in controlling the past but also "through the envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures" (289). Entire industries focused on the production of specific kinds of futures and the technology which would populate these futures. The dominating power of these industries meant that there was no space for anyone else, especially the disenfranchised, to create their future.

This lack of control over future technology is most clearly illustrated in the "Untitled" series through Bonolo's interaction with technology as she is forced onto the spaceship leaving earth. This is shown first by the comparison to a fish: "Her mouth was moving open and like a fish while Annie dressed her in a grey and blue jumpsuit: her least favourite colours." (Mashigo, "Untitled i" 67). She is portrayed as a fish out of water. The image of being trapped is further heightened later:

> A man-shaped blur approached and stood over her. The blur put what looked like a misshapen fishbowl over her head. She felt like she was floating as the blur placed her in an egg-shaped compartment. Her arms, legs and torso were strapped in.
>
> The egg-shaped compartment felt like a fridge. (“Untitled i” 68)

The words “fishbowl,” “egg-shaped,” and “fridge” all add to the trapped imagery, enhancing the feeling of her being trapped in a situation with no power. Mashigo draws on this imagery to fully portray the intensity and powerlessness that Bonolo feels in this situation. This also serves to illustrate the lack of control she has over this technology as the people around her act on her behalf. The imagery also foreshadows the nature of her new existence on the spaceship, since Bonolo will essentially be trapped in a situation that she did not choose.

Bonolo is trapped under the rule of the “Founders (people who financed this hell)” (Mashigo, “Untitled ii” 129). The Founders are “mainly people over the age of 60” who are “uber wealthy” (“Untitled ii” 129). The founders can be best understood through what Kodwo Eshun described as the “futures industry” which he defined as “the intersecting industries of technoscience, fictional media, technological projection, and market prediction” (290). In the past, the futures industries were understood to be spread across a number of industries, but this is not the case today as the richest men in the world today control a number of industries directly. They therefore directly control the entire futures industry as individuals. The most powerful and influential among them are Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, and Richard Branson. Three of them own and manage spacefaring companies, with Bezos and Branson already having used their companies to take personal trips into orbit. Zuckerberg is currently spearheading the development of the Metaverse, his company’s version of a virtual reality landscape. Musk and Bezos in particular have been vocal about their love of science fiction and how it has influenced their goals in space (Liptak). Zuckerberg’s Metaverse is also based on William Gibson’s representation of virtual reality in his seminal novel *Neuromancer*

(1984). Instead of being spread out, the futures industries – in particular market prediction, technoscience, and technological projection – are now completely controlled by these men who control more money than most countries do. The most influential among them is undoubtedly Elon Musk. Musk has created an image of himself as a futurist concerned with the survival of the human race through his acquisition and creation of companies that focus on technological paradigm shifts, the most well-known of these being his electric vehicle company Tesla and his space technology company SpaceX. He has been particularly vocal regarding his ultimate goal of colonising Mars in order to avoid all of humanity perishing in a future doomsday event (Liptak). Musk has been such an influential character that his personal brand of capitalism has become known as Muskism. Harvard University historian, Jill Lepore, in an interview with the NPR podcast *All Things Considered*, describes Muskism as:

> . . . an extreme, extravagant form of capitalism, really extraterrestrial capitalism. I think [extreme capitalism] is a kind of unchecked capitalism that insists that government really has no role in the regulation of economic activity, at the practical level. At the cultural level, it really is engaged with selling the public the idea of futurism as a way to impose economic conditions that come from the very deep past. (Estrin et al.)

Musk's stated goal of spearheading humanity's colonisation of our solar system makes him and other billionaires like him prominent figures to consider in any literature aimed at speculating about our collective future. Musk and those like him are represented in the "Untitled" series by The Founders; the people who had funded the spaceships.

The Founders do not serve any function outside of preserving and maintaining the status quo of the planet they left behind. Bonolo serves as the voice of the youth in the context of the second story. Through her sarcastic tone and rhetorical questions Mashigo positions Bonolo as a snide commentator who points out the flaws of trying to emulate the social systems of Earth on a physical system far removed from the planet. The clearest example of this occurs when

Bonolo leaves the ship using a pod: "How on earth can we still be relying on fuel even this far away from Earth?" (Mashigo, "Untitled ii" 136). The irony of the phrase "how on earth" conveys the dark comedy of the rest of the statement and the incredulity of the speaker, Bonolo. The preference for Earth-systems does not stop with the choice of energy source but also extend to the social systems of the ship. The specific social systems that Bonolo has a problem with can be identified throughout the story by her sarcastic tone. Through Bonolo, Mashigo points out the dangers inherent in systems which are created to serve the beliefs of the futures industry as represented through the billionaire space race. There are two instances in the second story that reveal the nonsensical nature of deploying planet bound social systems on a system that is much smaller in terms of population and resources. The first instance is the division of space in the ship as it does not place a premium on skill or utility for the ship, but instead favours celebrity and money, both things which serve no purpose on a spaceship:

> There were the X cabins, which were really luxury apartments on Level 5 of the ship, X cabins were for people who had made it into lists of magazines I'd never heard of – for being successful and wealthy, obviously. There was X-Annex meant for the 'support staff' of these families.
>
> Annie and Jonty are not Cabin X people, nor are they X2 types. We live on Level 3 in Cabin X3. ("Untitled ii" 130)

Bonolo's sarcastic tone points out the irrationality of this system, as she herself cannot seem to fathom why these things are important on a spaceship 25 years away from earth. The naming of the luxury cabins as the "X" cabins points towards the rampant egoism of the ruling class, as they are named after the creator of the ships, "Mr. X" ("Untitled ii" 131). This egoism is present in the rest of the ruling class as they refer to themselves as "The Founders," placing themselves above the rest of the ship purely based on the idea that they provided the capital for the creation of the ship. The "X" could possibly also be a reference to Elon Musk's company

SpaceX. The Founders adherence to capitalist principles only seems to apply to themselves as they maintain the capital they had on earth, while the rest of the ship does not have this privilege as they are coerced into a system where they exchange their labour for access to ship facilities:

> Support staff and those who don't have upper-level cabins are already being encouraged to 'volunteer' in the food gardens, sewing stations, entertainment ensembles, catering crews and playschools. Seems they had not anticipated how much work it actually takes to keep a ship of this size running smoothly. ("Untitled ii" 133)

Bonolo is once again sarcastic in her tone, specifically in the final sentence. This tone seems to show that she is apprehensive of the fact that these problems were never foreseen. The implication seems to be that these problems had to have been foreseen but were kept from those who did not need to know. This is proven to be correct as she later reveals that there are consequences for those who do not conform:

> 'Volunteering' is not really what it says as some of the people who opted to stay in their cabins and not volunteer have found that their access to certain areas has been revoked.
>
> Security informed them that the Founding Cluster (another delightful new addition to our daily lives) felt it was unfair to those who were working to share privileges with those who didn't want to 'pull together for the greater good'. ("Untitled ii" 134)

Limiting of volunteering to those beneath the X cabins indicates that this is not an egalitarian system as the 'ruling' class are exempted from menial labour. The specific tasks that Bonolo lists indicate that much of the work is aimed at keeping the upper cabins comfortable and entertained. The volunteering system is similar to the system of indentured servitude, as the lower class has to trade their labour for the right of access to all areas of the ship. This adherence to older social systems of control is similar to the description of Muskism as a system that seeks to apply older social systems to space exploration and colonisation. Musk has already made clear that those who wish to travel to Mars using SpaceX ships will be able to take out a loan and will then have to work off their loan on Mars, a system which is arguably just indentured servitude in space (McKay). Bonolo's sarcasm continues in this section as shown by the parenthetical addition indicating her attitude towards those who are in charge. The presence of security on the ship and the fact that they relay the orders of the Founding Cluster further indicates that the ruling system of the ship is a copy of all the systems that serve those who control capital. Bonolo's sarcasm is also used to indicate the hypocrisy of the ruling class as they believe others should serve the greater good while they personally do nothing. Another way in which the Founders systems seem to go against the logic of the spaceship is through favouring the lives of the elderly over the young. This is pointed out by Bonolo after she has awoken from hibernation:

> After a year, the engineers and crew were unlocked and they started getting the ship ready and working out the logistics. We were unlocked next. Who is we? The 'young people'. I guess the plan was that we would acquire some useful skills and training so when the Founders (people who financed this hell) were unlocked, we would be useful. (Mashigo, "Untitled ii" 128-129)

The use of the rhetorical question and the single quotes highlights Bonolo's disbelief at this system. The reason for this is simple, as a ship dedicated to preserving human life away from earth, a premium should be placed on the young as they are representative of the future of the human race. Instead, the Founders choose to follow another system from earth relating to protecting and respecting the elderly. This benefits them only and places a strain on the rest of the ship who have to now service the members of the ship who represent the least utility for the functioning of the ship. All of these systems serve to show Bonolo that the ship is, in fact, not the place where her second life could be fruitful as it is just a carbon copy of the systems that disenfranchised her on earth. She doubts whether she could live properly on the ship: "As much as I appreciate being alive, I don't think I can do it here on this ship, with all the baggage from my previous life. There is nothing on this ship for me" ("Untitled ii" 133). The "baggage" she refers to has two levels of signification. First, it refers to her issues with Melanie's family and her own problems. The second signification points toward the systems that had followed humanity onto the spaceship. These systems focus on wealth and influence instead of skill and utility. These systems are also reliant on the use of the youth as a workforce, in order to serve an aging population that controls the majority of capital. This is what eventually leads to her choice to leave the ship as she does not see it as a place that embodies her sister's hope for her to get a second chance at life: ". . . I wonder if this is what Kamo wanted for me. Maybe I don't deserve to be here but my sister believed that I deserved a second chance at life. Who am I to dissapoint her?" ("Untitled ii" 135). In this instance, we once again see Bonolo's habit of viewing her life in terms of what others want, specifically Kamo. The only way to escape the old systems is to remove herself from them and through that fulfil her sister's wish for her. Mashigo shows through Bonolo the way in which these systems harm the youth in particular and shows a possible response towards such systems through Bonolo's decision to leave the ship. The social systems of the ship are an example of how the stories interact with global concerns regarding capitalism and the influence that the West has on determining a post-Earth future as a result of capitalism. Mashigo is not only concerned with how this plays out on the spaceship but also on the post-apocalyptic earth as experienced by Kamo.

The third story in the series follows the experiences of Kamo following an indeterminate amount of time after the apocalyptic event. The second story details Bonolo's experience and provides information on the way in which the Founders maintain the social

systems of earth on the spaceship. "Untitled iii" shows a different conception of technology and those who control it through the relationship between Kamo and Millicent. The story focuses primarily on Kamo and her 'adoptive' family, but it also makes a point of emphasising the death of certain societal institutions and norms. The story also shows how control over technology and information is a powerful form of control, even in a broken form of society. The story makes a point of showing how certain social institutions disappear and how people still try and maintain a sense of normalcy in the worst conditions. This is made clear in Kamo's discussion of their living
conditions:

> We joke a lot about not having a surname. Surnames are Old World things. So is giving birth. Sente found me and cared for me until I could walk again, so she is my mother. We live in a penthouse at the abandoned (even before fire fell from the sky) Carlton Hotel on the 30th floor. The top of the building was probably blown away in the last days. We don't talk about the last days. There isn't much to say. Too much lost and so many blank spaces. (Mashigo, "Untitled iii" 163)

The phrase "We joke" implies a close relationship since they can find humour in their current situation. It can also be read as a coping mechanism in order to deal with the trauma related to the destruction of the "Old World." The traumatic nature of their loss is shown in the last three sentences as there is focus on the emptiness that they experience. Each of the phrases refers to a specific form of emptiness, silence, loss, and finally forgetting, or simply empty space. The sense of loss and emptiness is made abundantly clear in order to illustrate the magnitude of what was lost during the final days. The penthouse they live in also serves to emphasise the death of social hierarchies as it was a reserved space for the elite. Kamo makes a point, through her parenthetical addition, that South Africa had already been falling apart before the apocalypse. This can be seen as a bit of sarcastic social commentary on the current state of

South African society as the hotel had been an abandoned landmark since 1998. Their designation of the preapocalypse world as the “Old World” shows that they have separated their current existence from the world as they knew it. It can almost be seen as a different historical period. This is similar to how we view ourselves as fundamentally different from people who lived during the Middle Ages, as they view themselves as part of a new period of humanity. This is emphasised by their abandonment of certain social institutions such as “surnames” which serve no purpose anymore since traditional family structures no longer exist. Instead of the traditional family bound by blood, new families like theirs are built around caring for each other. Kamo, as the narrator, makes it clear that traditional birth does not occur anymore and has been replaced by a new form of kinship, one formed by necessity. The sentence in which she declares Millicent to be her mother can be equated to a mathematical equation and shows the simple emotional mathematics that are needed to form bonds in this new world: “found me” + “cared for me” = “she is my mother.” This above else makes clear that the very nature of society has changed since the requirements for familial bonds are far more complex than what is shown to be required in this instance. This paragraph illustrates to the reader that society has been destroyed.

The destruction of society has sheared away many of the accepted forms of connection and left, in its place, a world of trauma in which connection are formed based on need and simple association. By presenting Kamo’s current environment and associates as familial, Mashigo wants the reader to believe that Kamo is safe and protected. This is a misdirection as she is in a dangerous situation. Another way in which Mashigo misdirects the reader is through the manner in which their family is described as a normal family doing normal things:

“We sat together at the dinner table; they went ‘shopping’ for clothes they thought I would like, taught me how to walk again and cleaned the wound where my left eye used to be.” (Untitled iii” 165). By separating the first clause from the rest with a semi-colon, it is shows that this event is the one thing they did together, while the other events were done for Kamo or done to her. This sentence makes clear the position of Kamo as the child in their little family, the actions of shopping, teaching, and cleaning are all done for her since she is the one who is being taken care of. Kamo is incapable of looking after herself at this point and she is in an incredibly vulnerable position. This vulnerability is a mirror of Bonolo's experiences on the spaceship which serves to highlight the bond they share as sisters, despite the abandonment of "Old World" bonds. Kamo describes herself walking around the hotel and getting lost in the same way that Bonolo did (or rather would) on the ship: "I avoided my own reflection and walked the dark, damp rooms of the abandoned hotel when the penthouse got too small for three people." ("Untitled iii" 165). Her avoidance of her own reflection could possibly be because of her eye being gone, but it could also be interpreted as an unwillingness to confirm at this time. This avoidance paired, with her choice of wandering the "dark, damp rooms," points towards a search for death, as darkness and dampness are related to decay and destruction. Her search for darkness and decay further emphasises her desire to not exist in her current predicament. Mashigo makes a point of illustrating Kamo's rebirth into this new family in order to create the impression that Kamo is safe. She might be injured and depressed, but she is shown to be protected and cared for by these people that found her. This is all an illusion meant to heighten the impact of the story's conclusion where the reader finds out that everything is not what it seems.

The rest of the story reveals that Kamo is not safe in the care of these people, particularly Millicent. Mashigo once again positions an elderly figure as the villain, in a similar fashion to the Founders who lord over Bonolo. Millicent has control over Kamo, through positioning herself as the caretaker while also withholding information from her. The first hint that everything is not what it seems is provided by Kamo's description of Millicent (also referred to as Sente):

> Sente looked like an old woman, a little soft in the belly and skin that was beginning to sag. Although she seemed to be in her 60s, she behaved a lot like a child. Sometimes when she was making supper, she would stop. Throw the food out the window and start making a brand-new meal. (Mashigo, "Untitled iii" 166)

The description of Millicent's appearance creates an image of an elderly woman who is no danger to anyone. The aim here is to show Millicent as someone who is not dangerous to Kamo and Yaaseen, since it is implied that she could not do anything to physically harm anyone. This soft exterior is problematised by the descriptions of her personality and actions, which show her to be a strange and untenable figure who does not conform to the standards we expect of the elderly. Specifically, the reference to her behaving "a lot like a child" and her erratic behaviour pertaining to cooking, both of which are antithetical to what South Africans expect from the elderly. Mashigo shows Millicent to be someone who disarms both through her appearance and her child-like behaviour. She exhibits the weaknesses of the elderly, while also exuding the innocence of a child – both of whom are groups which require protection. This is all misdirection as Millicent is shown to be someone who is hiding a lot of information from both Yaaseen and Kamo. Millicent's hidden nature is revealed through Yaaseen who first brings up these inconsistencies to Kamo when she asks why he does not trust Millicent, to which he responds: "'How many women over 60 do you think can walk up and down the stairs of this old skyscraper once a week? Why did I wind up here?'" ("Untitled iii" 167). The first question problematises the image of Millicent as a tottering old woman by revealing that she is unnaturally fit for someone in her age group. The second question reveals that Yaaseen is unaware of how he came to be in Millicent's company in Johannesburg, further problematising the image that Millicent puts forth. It is revealed that Yaaseen's last memory before finding himself with Millicent was being in Kimberley performing surgery ("Untitled iii" 167). Millicent had simply explained this away by stating she had found him while looking for survivors ("Untitled iii" 167). These questions reveal to the reader that Millicent is hiding a lot from her two companions and that she is not someone who should be trusted. Mashigo shows that true danger does not stem from physical ability but from the ability to control the flow of information. Millicent is a dangerous figure because she is hiding essential information about herself and about Kamo and Yaaseen.

Millicent's deceit of Kamo specifically proves to be the most dangerous as she has replaced her eye with a technologically advanced prosthetic eye without her knowledge (Mashigo, "Untitled iii" 168). The betrayal is meant to show that while the destruction of social institutions like traditional family structures might lead to positive outcomes, the loss of all social protections is to the detriment of all. Black bodies have been misused and abused for supposed scientific purposes for a large swathe of human history. Mashigo uses the character of Millicent to highlight that the black experience in an apocalyptic scenario will still be influenced by those who control access to technological knowledge and can therefore abuse it. "Untitled iii" does not offer much in terms of closure as it does not have a conclusive ending, rather opting for an open-ended conclusion where Yaaseen and Kamo attempt to escape from the Millicent. Despite this, the story offers a unique interpretation of the types of abuse which could possibly still take place in an apocalyptic South Africa.

The "Untitled" series of stories is a good example of why Africanfuturism is a better descriptor of Mashigo's work than Afrofuturism. There are specific societal contexts which are unique, not only to Africa, but to South Africa in particular. These stories in particular draw on the generational differences, which could have come about as a result of the transitional period post-1994, as well as the relationship between the elderly generation and the youth of South Africa. The relationship between the two sisters, while only described through their flashbacks, is a good portrayal of no-parent households in South Africa, where the elder sibling has to sacrifice in order for the younger siblings to prosper. Mashigo once again shows her ability to flip a narrative on its head, by showing the younger sibling sacrificing for the elder. Through this, she portrays the way in which these relationships influence all of those involved. Furthermore, she uses this relationship to portray the generational difference between those born in different parts of the transitional period. Mashigo does this by showing how the two sisters interact with race in different ways. The interactions the characters have with technology and those who control it are particularly important. These stories highlight that the Founders represent the current status that the uber-wealthy enjoy and might still possibly enjoy if humanity moved away from the earth. Mashigo adeptly portrays the Founders in a manner that serves as a poignant commentary on individuals who advocate for transformation while relying on a conservative status quo to preserve their personal wealth and social standing. This is important today as the richest man in the world, Elon Musk, is South African by birth but is currently a representative of American venture capitalism. This means that South Africans, those not privileged by their father's mining wealth, might one day influence the global stage in a meaningful way. As a result, South African literature should be engaging with these concerns in a meaningful way such as Mashigo has done with these stories. Lastly, the character of Millicent portrays a horror version of what could happen if someone holds all the information and hoards it. In short, South African texts regarding the future should be classified as Africanfuturism instead of Afrofuturism, but the latter does offer valuable insight into how Africa and South Africa interact with technology and global social structures in particular.

Conclusion

In his article "'Isn't Realist Fiction Enough?': On African Speculative Fiction," Joshua Burnett argues that "speculative fiction has been, is, and will continue to be central to the project of advancing and promoting African literatures and cultures" ("'Isn't Realist Fiction Enough?'" 119). The article is a response to a question posed by Uppinder Mehan to Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Mehan asks Adichie whether "she could tell [him] about the state of Nigerian science-fiction writing or at least writing that blurs the distinction between realism and fantasy as in the works of Ben Okri and before him Amos Toutola" (Mehan 3). Adichie's responds to this by stating that she was not aware of any writing like this, and she asks, "'Isn't realist fiction enough?'" (Mehan 3). Mehan's response to this is that he "assume[s] she is simply stating her preference for a certain kind of writing that she finds sufficient for her needs" and that "[r]ealist fiction certainly isn't enough to capture the multifariousness of lived and imagined reality – it hadn't been enough for centuries before prose, and it certainly has not been enough since" (3). He expands on this further by stating that

> [o]ver the last few years . . . a largely unremarked explosion has taken place in the worlds of science fiction and fantasy writing. Nalo Hopkinson, Archie Weller, Tobias Buckell, Andrea Hairston, Celu Amberstone, Anuradha Marwah, Sheree R. Thomas, Vandana Singh, Steven Barnes, Nnedi Okorafor, Karin Lowachee are just a few of the writers who have started to explore possible futures, experiment with generic conventions, expand the boundaries of "acceptable" literature produced by the subjects of colonial processes. (3)

Over the course of this thesis, I have attempted to show that Mohale Mashigo is one of those authors that has pushed the boundaries of what is 'acceptable' literature in the South African context. A substantial portion of South African writing over the last century has been focused on producing realist fiction, which offers a mimetic representation of South African society. But authors like Mashigo have started to change this trend by representing South African society through the lens of speculative fiction. A standout feature of Mashigo's writing is her ability to blend inspirations from diverse cultures into a narrative that gestures towards the entangled nature of South African society. Her use of tropes and folktales speak to this ability, as she is able to utilise the strengths of both to elevate her narratives. By employing tropes, Mashigo engages with global media culture, signifying South Africa's affiliation with American entertainment media and the pervasive influence of popular culture worldwide. Her use of folktales allows her to illustrate how South Africans relate to the past and how they interact with it on a daily basis. *Intruders* (2018), I have argued, shows the value that speculative fiction holds for representing South African social realities and the concerns of the posttransition generations, as it allows for representation that does. Through an analysis of *Intruders* (2018), I have attempted to show how the genre of speculative fiction is valuable to South African literature in three ways.

Chapter one focused on the way Mashigo utilised tropes from popular culture, as well as the transformative ability of speculative fiction to create stories which serve as social commentary. My analysis of the three stories chosen for chapter one ("On the Run," "High Heel Killer," "Ghost Strain N") argues that Mashigo's use of speculative fiction creates literature that provides social commentary in a manner that is relatable to the reader. Her use of the estrangement effect in order to sublimate difficult topics such as substance use disorder, intergenerational trauma, and the female experience in the city, allows for engagement with her readers without overwhelming them with complex social discussions. As a result of this, her literature can be viewed as a continuation of South African literature which focused on social commentary such as Protest literature. But Mashigo's use of tropes to heighten the relatability of the stories is representative of the entangled nature of our world, as it allows her to interact with American popular culture without allowing South African or American culture to be viewed as the dominant culture. Her understanding of the tropes, as well their history, allows her to adapt these tropes to the South African context, thereby drawing on the best qualities of the tropes while still authoring stories that are relevant to our society. In short, Mashigo's grasp of speculative fiction, popular culture tropes, and the estrangement effect allows her to formulate narratives which deliver relevant social commentary while still being entertaining. Her use of speculative fiction in this regard is particularly valuable in South Africa where the populace is bombarded with American entertainment that does not speak towards their specific concerns.

The second chapter deals with how Mashigo uses speculative fiction to represent the relationship that contemporary South Africans have with the past. Mashigo does this by drawing from folktales and traditional beliefs and positioning these elements as history, and as a way of connecting and interacting with the past. Through this, Mashigo highlights the need for healthy discussion regarding cultural history and the effect alienation from history can have on young people. In "Manoka" female sexuality is represented through the relationship that their family has with water. "Nthatisi" provides a brief insight into the value of sharing a language and the benefits that it holds for the character of Nthatisi. The main argument in this chapter focuses on how Mashigo represents the conflicting temporalities of the parent or guardian with the child in their care. Mashigo represents the decisions of the parental figures as well-intentioned but shows that these decisions were not made in consideration of the younger generation. Instead, she shows that these decisions were made as a result of the parental figure's own experiences with their culture, which they then projected onto the younger generation. Through utilising the folkloric elements as real in the texts and treating them with a level of respect, Mashigo's writing in these stories can be classified as Africanjujuism, which is a relatively new term for a specific kind of African fantasy literature. Mashigo's writing in the genre is an example of the varied forms that it can take, as well as the potential it holds for South African literature.

The last chapter focuses on the manner in which Mashigo represents a near future South Africa. Her writing in the “Untitled” story series maintain a resolute focus on how an apocalyptic scenario would affect South African individuals, while still paying heed to global influences. Due to this, her writing in these stories can justifiably be defined as Africanfuturism. The author's portrayal of billionaires and ultra-wealthy individuals in global society, embodied by the "Founders" and the enigmatic "Mr. X," is tongue-in-cheek, yet it effectively illustrates the profound impact these individuals wield over our society. A vital component of these stories is the relationship between the sisters, Bonolo and Kamo, who serve as protagonists. I argue that their age difference and different personalities are representative of the shifts in South African society during the transition period and the effect it had on those growing up during that time. Through this representation, Mashigo eloquently shows the varied effects that this tumultuous period had on the lives of children. The representation of the Founders also shows how South African society can still be influenced by global concerns, especially the billionaire class who effectively hold a monopoly on technological development and innovation. These stories reveal the potential Africanfuturism has for providing future oriented social commentary on the current state of South African society.

The overlay of American comic book tropes, popular culture, folktales, speculative fiction, and a focus on South African protagonists and concerns is the most important feature of Mashigo’s writing in *Intruders* (2018) as it represents the experiences of those who grew up during and after the transition period. Prior to 1994, South Africa had existed in a vacuum due to sanctions against the Apartheid government. Following the first democratic election, South Africa opened up to the world and became more entangled with the global economy and political sphere. The result of this new global entanglement for South Africa, was a new culture for young South Africans. They watch American television programs, listen to Kwaito and Hip-Hop simultaneously, read comic books, and literature from across the world. This culminated in what Sarah Nuttall described as ‘Y-culture,’ a culture originally concentrated in the more affluent black middle-class areas of Johannesburg, which has since come to make up a significant part of South African youth culture in general. Mashigo’s writing in *Intruders* (2018) is representative of this culture and is specifically aimed at those who grew up during this period and were exposed to a new globalised form of entertainment coming from America. The problems of the decades following 1994 have also become far more complex and nuanced than at any time before in South Africa’s history. Mashigo’s ability to draw from multiple influences allows her to write narratives which allow her readers to understand the complex nature of the world they find themselves in. Between increased global tensions, climate change, constant economic problems, youth unemployment, and a myriad of other issues, the youth of South Africa require a literature that moves within the entanglements of their lives. The world as we know it is not becoming simpler but more entangled. *Intruders* (2018) as a collection provides readers with an entertaining and empathetic view of the society they live in, no matter who they are.

Mashigo’s writing shows the value that speculative fiction holds for the South African literary sphere. In a country that is becoming more entangled with the rest of the world, we require a literary form that engages with both local and global issues in a manner that represents this entangled nature. Particularly, the youth will look for literature that engages with the world as they experience it; as a blend of cultures, worldviews and art that does not necessarily conform to a singular perspective. Speculative fiction is one of the best ways of achieving this and it can no longer be ignored.

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