

Crime and punishment Mzansi style: an exploration of the discursive production of
criminality and popular justice in South Africa's *Daily Sun*

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Abstract

The highly popular South African tabloid the *Daily Sun*, established post-apartheid in 2002, is known for its sensationalist and controversial reporting of black township life. Read by over five million black working class readers, much of its reporting concerns the crimes experienced by them and their struggles for justice. The extraordinarily high rate of violent crime in township areas for which South Africa became infamous during the 1980s did not decrease as much as hoped after the political transition in 1994 and crime overshadowed the first decades of the new administration, adding to the frustrations generated by the slow pace of social and economic reform. Part of the *Daily Sun*'s success can be attributed to how, around these linked concerns, it fashions for its readers a particular discursive world, Sunland. It is the phatic relationship that the tabloid maintains between itself and its readers which forms the foundation upon which this textual study rests. In approaching the tabloid's representations of crime I draw on cultural criminological understandings of crime as culture and the formative relationship in this regard between crime and the media. As a preeminent site of cultural production in contemporary society, the media contribute to the ongoing definition of what constitutes crime, who is criminal and what counts as justice. This constructivist approach is congruent with Foucault's notions of discourse and the subject, and I argue that the various competing discourses about crime and justice which appear in the paper establish a set of subjectivities with which its readers may identify. The thesis explores the rhetorical and discursive means by which such subject positions are constructed within the 'grid of intelligibility' created by the *Daily Sun*'s reportage, and using the spatial metaphor of the 'map' I trace the contours of the *Daily Sun*'s domain with regard to crime and popular justice. To this end, the approach taken is a qualitative one which draws eclectically on a variety of interpretive methods, including semiotic, narrative and discourse analysis. Using these, I map the relations between People's Justice, the police, gender relations and witchcraft crimes, four areas chosen from a broad thematic content analysis of the complete set of editions from 2011. I show how these are not discreet but co-constructed areas within the coverage, drawing their meaning mutually from a range of conflictual relationships derived from the conditions of post-apartheid social life.

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List of Abbreviations

AIC: African Initiated Church

ANC: African National Congress

ATM: Automatic Teller Machine

BCCCS: Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

BEE: Black Economic Empowerment

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CONTRALESA: Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa

CPF: Community Policing Forum

ICD: Independent Complaints Directorate

ID: Identity Document

MEC: Member of the Executive Council (in the cabinet of the provincial government)

NAIL: New Africa Investments Limited

RDP house: a house built provided by the state under RDP policy.

RDP: The Reconstruction and Development Programme

RICA: Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act

SAARF: South African Audience Research Foundation

SABC: South African Broadcasting Corporation

SAPS: South African Police Service

SASSA: South African Social Security Agency

TML: Times Media Limited

Glossary of colloquialisms

4-5: penis (township slang)

Abahlali: residents (isiZulu or isiXhosa)

Bakkie: a small truck (Afrikaans)

Ben-10: an older woman's young lover (from the television programme of the same name)

Dagga: marijuana (Afrikaans)

Fong kong: fake or counterfeit (township slang)

Gatvol: a vulgar exclamation denoting boredom, impatience or disgust with something (Afrikaans)

Gogo: grandmother; a term of respect for an elderly person (isiZulu)

Icishamlilo: refers to plants that are used medicinally to treat fevers and inflammations (from isiZulu "put out the fire")

Imbizo: a meeting called by a traditional leader (isiZulu)

Induna: a headman or councillor (isiXhosa and isiZulu)

Ingcabo: protective scars made by a traditional healer by cutting tiny incisions into the skin (isiXhosa)

Inyanga: a traditional healer specialising in the use of muthi (isiZulu)

Isifebe: a loose woman (isiZulu)

Isiwasho: water, sanctified by prayer and other cleansing agents, in particular ash (isiZulu, from the English "wash")

Isoka: a man with many girlfriends; a boyfriend (isiZulu)

Izinyoka: a cable thief (isiZulu from the word for "snake", thus evoking the way that a live cable lying on the ground will 'strike' an unwary passer-by)

Kasi: the township (township slang from the Afrikaans "lokasie", equivalent to the English "location")

Kgotla (pl. makgotla): a traditional court. Originally a courtyard or place of assembly (seSotho and Tswana)

Klap: to hit, slap or strike someone (Afrikaans)

Kota: quarter of a loaf of bread with a filling inside (township slang, from the English "quarter")

Kraal: a livestock pen (Afrikaans)

Kragga: power (Afrikaans)

Lobola: the custom among many southern African peoples of giving cattle, goods, or (now usu.) money to the parents of a woman in order to secure her hand in marriage (isiZulu and isiXhosa)

Madala: an old man (isiZulu)

Mahala: for nothing, for free (isiZulu and seSotho).

Mlungu: a white person; sometimes derogatory in meaning (isiZulu and isiXhosa)

Muthi: traditional medicine commonly derived from plants (from isiZulu for tree)

Mzansi: South Africa (isiXhosa for south)

Nyatsi: a mistress (seSotho)

Panga: a heavy knife with a long, broad blade (Swahili)

Pap: porridge (usually made from maize meal) (Afrikaans)

Poke: to have sex with (township slang, from the English)

Sangoma (pl. **zangoma**): a traditional healer (isiZulu)

Shebeen: a drinking establishment usually in a private home in a township (from the Anglo-Irish “sibin”)

Shweshwe: German print cotton fabric (seSotho)

Sies: a vulgar exclamation of disgust (Afrikaans)

Sjambok: a heavy whip made from animal hide (Afrikaans)

Skelm: a scoundrel (Afrikaans)

Stokvel: an informal savings or investment society (South African English)

Tik: a colloquialism for crystal methamphetamine

Tokoloshe: a witch familiar (isiZulu and isiXhosa)

Tsotsi: a criminal or gangster (originally described a young black gangster who affected a particular style of language and flashy dress. Origin uncertain)

Twasa: to undergo initiation as a diviner (isiZulu and isiXhosa)

Uhuru: freedom (Swahili)

Ukuthwala: in Xhosa society, the abduction of a young girl for the purposes of marriage (isiXhosa)

Vutha: witchcraft fire (isiNdebele)

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Chapter One

Part one: the *Daily Sun*

Our starting point was the assumption that at all times, but especially in periods of rapid social change, the press performs a significant role as a social educator. By its consistent reporting and comment about people and events, the press reflects changing patterns of life and society. More significantly, by its selectivity, emphasis, treatment and presentation, the press interprets that process of social change (Stuart Hall 1975: 11).

Daily Sun is still rocking the industry and is our favourite paper... [I] congratulate *Daily Sun*... for the major role the People's Paper is playing. Day after day, your publication expresses the thoughts and feelings of humanity... To many South Africans a day without the *Daily Sun* is like a day without sunshine (Miyelani Hlungwane 2015).

Introduction

I begin this thesis by making the bold claim that we cannot separate the study of the practicalities of crime and punishment from the manner in which they are represented and circulated in the public arena. Consistent with a critical criminology perspective, I recognise crime as an aspect of culture and argue that we must look to the media, the preeminent space in which contemporary culture is produced and circulated, for richer and more productive understandings of crime and justice. This is the premise upon which I establish this thesis, which examines the constructions of crime and justice by a popular South African tabloid newspaper, the *Daily Sun*.

South Africa's transition to democracy was overshadowed by extraordinarily high rates of crime, and no little effort has gone into trying to uncover its causes. However, not much attention has been paid to the media's potential role in this regard. The *Daily Sun* provides an excellent starting point for such an enquiry. Established post-apartheid, and immediately popular amongst a large black readership, much of its coverage is devoted to the crimes which they experience as residents of urban townships and their struggles for justice.

The *Daily Sun*'s large, working class, urbanised audience was hungry for a medium directed to their own needs. Survivors of a troubled history, they continued to endure severe social and economic hardships post-apartheid which the tabloid, unlike many mainstream titles, took pains to mediate. As township residents, they had borne the worst, not only of the brutal anti-apartheid struggle violence, but also the frightening escalation of crime around the time of the political transition.

Although crime rates had decreased considerably by 2011 (the chosen time of this study), crime levels remained – and remain – far higher than in most other comparable post-colonial countries. Violent crime in particular continues to be a serious concern for township residents, and their consequent feelings of vulnerability are exacerbated by a corresponding lack of faith in the justice system which historically had served the interests of white imperialism. Unsurprisingly, given these factors, some township residents seek other means of achieving justice.

By focusing on the lived experiences of its township audience the *Daily Sun* constantly reports on the problems of crime and the attempts by township residents to control it. It is the link between the *Daily Sun*, its readers and township crime and punishment that forms the focus of this thesis.

Taking crime to be an aspect of the lived culture to which the *Daily Sun* contributes, my research begins with a question, namely, ‘If crime is culture, then how is this culture constituted in this particular instance?’ More specifically, I enquire what meanings pertaining to crime and popular justice does the tabloid construct in this virtual space? In examining the tabloid's texts, I ask these questions with the intention of uncovering the ‘webs of significance’ that connect and make meaningful the paper’s narratives of township crime and justice. By these means I set out to ‘map’ the virtual landscape that the *Daily Sun* constructs through its representations.

By interrogating the meanings given to crime and justice and put into circulation by this newspaper within this specific locale, we secure the grounds on which to speculate about their social resonances and lived consequences. Asking what crime and justice are made to mean for the readers of the *Daily Sun*, what structures of feeling they may help to hold in place and what social arrangements they may participate in shaping, allows us a way to approach the problems of township crime and justice that does justice to their human complexity.

What this thesis distinctively attempts is to derive its meanings from a very close encounter with the newspaper stories themselves, taken over a full year, and carefully compared and contrasted to see what emerges. This concern with detail and its relative location respects the vividness and immediacy of the stories themselves as a basis for analysis and interpretation. In the end what transpires is a unique semantic field, within which alone its component parts may be interpreted. Thus, rather than trying to fit the material to a pre-determined frame, theoretical perspectives are only sought when they seem useful to illuminate the primary discoveries. Such attention to the text using narrative theory and to the data it generates privileges the local experience, and so allows us to take post-colonial critique into account by listening to the distinctive voice of a specific historical situation.

I begin this first chapter by setting out the debates about the South African tabloids, placing these in the context of discussions on the tabloid phenomenon that originated in the Northern¹

¹ In several places within this thesis I refer to research and theory produced in economically privileged states located largely in the Northern hemisphere. While these bodies of literature and the spaces they derive from are often described as ‘Western’, I prefer to use the term ‘Northern’ in order to distinguish between them and the Southern and post-colonial location of this research.

hemisphere. I argue that we should understand the *Daily Sun* as a form of ritual communication which produces a community of belonging: not only does the tabloid construct the idea of community through its presentation, rhetorical forms and narrative style, but research evidence suggests that the audience's sense of belonging to the paper's virtual community may be especially constructed through identification with its crime coverage, and as a response to the proactive stance it takes towards this provocative material. The second half of the chapter briefly outlines the historical relationship between crime and township society as a foundation for understanding the scope of the *Daily Sun*'s crime coverage.

The tabloids arrive

The *Daily Sun*'s success was unprecedented. It quickly became the most popular amongst a number of tabloid newspapers which unexpectedly appeared on the media landscape post-apartheid. After decades of relative political and cultural isolation, South Africans were suddenly presented with a new media format derived from global models which, like other novel cultural importations at that time, transfigured parochial ways of thinking about the world.

Prior to liberation, the news needs of black urban readers had been partially met by the alternative press – publications such as *South*, *Grassroots* and *Saamstaan* (Switzer 1997) – which had addressed the political and social issues of the struggle years. These had closed down, post-apartheid, on the withdrawal of their foreign funders. Their readership was unattractive to advertisers, and they were unable to generate the necessary advertising revenue to be self-sustaining. Nonetheless, the desirability of their readers as a potential market segment, once acknowledged, spurred a flurry of publishing competition. *City Press* (owned by Media24²), and the *Sowetan* (owned at the time by the New African Investments Limited (NAIL) consortium³), both set out to cater for a black, middle class readership.

Soon other niches were identified to meet the supposed needs of the same population segment. With the introduction of the NAIL *Sowetan Sunday World* for working class readers, Media24 replied by publishing – at the suggestion of *City Press* editor Vusi Mona – the first tabloid, the *Sunday Sun*, which targeted a similar black, working class audience (Steenveld and Strelitz 2010: 533). Its price undercut its nearest rivals, the *Sowetan* and the *Sowetan Sunday World*, and its success prompted Media24 to launch the *Daily Sun* itself in 2002⁴.

Deon du Plessis, the *Daily Sun*'s first editor, had first approached the Independent Group with his idea, but had been turned down; Naspers, however, had the foresight to accept his proposal (Wasserman 2010: 52), and within a few years it had risen to become “the jewel in Media24's crown” (Steenveld and Strelitz 2010: 533). Its success was immediate: in its first year alone, the

² Media24 is a print subsidiary of Naspers, a prominent and long-established South African media company owned by Afrikaner capital. *Daily Sun* is a title in the Media24 stable.

³ The media landscape at the time of the political transition was both complex and fluid. Post-apartheid, as a move to transform the racial ownership media, some newspaper titles were ‘unbundled’ from their parent companies and sold to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) groups. New African Investments Limited (NAIL) was the name given to a group of media holdings unbundled from Anglo American, the mining company. Another Anglo-American media subsidiary, *Argus*, was sold to Independent Media, an Irish media conglomerate. See Berger (1999) and Tomaselli (2002).

⁴ For more detail about the various tabloids in English and Afrikaans launched at this time, see Wasserman (2010). Other indigenous language market entrants at this time included Independent Newspapers' *Isolezwe* (The Eye of the Nation) in isiZulu, and Times Media Limited's *Ilizwe* (The Voice of the People) in isiXhosa.

Daily Sun's circulation grew by 228 percent (Wasserman and Du Bois 2006: 178), and by 2011 it had the largest circulation of any South African paper, with about 400 000 copies sold daily (ABC 2011) and a readership of over five million (SAARF 2011), far outstripping its nearest rivals, the *Star* and the *Sowetan*. This commercial imperative remains significant: as Strelitz and Steenveld remark (2005: 267-8), the tabloids' rhetoric of "serving the people'... happily coincides with their drive for profits – gained precisely from those very people who were not regarded as significant enough to constitute a viable 'market segment'" at a former time.

Local responses

Somewhat ungenerously, this unprecedented success was greeted with expressions of outrage, on the part not only of traditional journalists and editors, but also of academics. Their response was inflected by two concerns, the first regarding the professional and commercial impact that tabloids would have on what was a limited media field; and the second a complex mix of anxiety and disapproval at the possible effects that tabloid content would have on the moral and political fibre of its working class black readers.

The traditional media's response reflected the fears generated by their own experience of transition, and its corresponding upheavals: the once secure position of print media had become unstable following the 1994 elections, when a large number of titles owned by Anglo American, the mining company, had been precipitately unbundled and sold to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) consortiums, or to the Independent Group, in the interests of media ownership diversity (Tomaselli 1997; Berger 1999). As one result of these changes, the press had become increasingly vulnerable to the pressures of commercialisation (Wasserman and Du Bois 2006), losing staff to "rationalisations" and the juniorisation of newsrooms (Steyn and de Beer 2004). At the same time, they faced (like so many of their international counterparts) a growing decline in readership and increasing competition for advertising revenue, a situation which the tabloids inevitably exacerbated by poaching readers: the *Sowetan* in particular lost readers to the *Daily Sun* (Wasserman 2010). Thus the popularity of the tabloids, appearing at a time when "respectable" newspapers were facing a fight for survival, exacerbated these tensions: the tabloids became, in many eyes, the "pirate taxis"⁵ (Motale 2005) of the media industry.

Alongside these pragmatic concerns appeared the more sharply-flavoured apprehension of the tabloid's political and cultural consequences. The *Daily Sun*'s astonishing ascendance was axiomatic in this regard: not only did it capture a new market segment, but it did so with enviable ease, inducting an entire social stratum into the pleasures of newspaper reading by means of pithy and sensational story-telling. That this new audience was black, urban and working class was a key component in the unease the phenomenon generated. These were the people who had borne the brunt of the struggle years, its violence, upheavals and deprivations. While not the poorest of the poor, their limited education and employment prospects, in conjunction with the material deficiencies of township spaces, presented the new state with a complex political, social and economic challenge. The question was – as it still is – how to "develop" this urban mass and fulfil the democratic promise of the Constitution; and,

⁵ In local parlance, a pirate taxi is one which usurps the passengers of legitimate (licensed) operators.

correspondingly, the determination of the role the press in particular was supposed to play in these long-looked-for changes. These concerns go some way, perhaps, in explaining the accusations levelled at the tabloids for a suspected lack of ethical practice and poor journalistic standards, and the anger raised at what appeared, from some points of view, to be a betrayal both of the high ideals of the struggle and of the fostering of critical democratic practice that were seen as South African journalism's renewed, self-appointed, normative role (Wasserman 2010⁶).

The tabloids, in other words, like other popular media before them, conjured a spectre that has haunted the progress of modernity on other, Northern stages, a local articulation of the old fear of an urban working class susceptible to the demoralising (or from a different political perspective, depoliticising), content of capitalist mass media (Bennett 1982; Storey 2006; Hall 1982). Given the redoubtable history of the earlier alternative struggle press, whose unexceptionable political aim was to “popularise, educate and organise” (Switzer 1997; Switzer and Adhikari 2000), the *Daily Sun* and other tabloids appeared as a disgraceful substitution of bread and circuses for a more valuable, informed engagement with the social, economic and political issues faced post-apartheid by the majority of South Africans. Deplorably, instead of a robust popular journalism that could rework the political focus of the struggle press to meet the needs of a post-apartheid audience, what black urban residents were given was, in this view, an inferior tabloid journalism that subordinated matters of national importance to depoliticised and sensational, if not outright mendacious, stories drawn from the personal realm (Berger 2005a; 2005b; Rabe 2005a; 2005b). In other words, there was allegedly an abrogation of journalistic duty, leading to “a reduction of broader political and social issues to the micro, individual level without having a real political edge” (Wasserman 2010: 28).

Tabloid journalism

In this regard, local responses have mirrored the global “laments” (Langer 1992) about the tabloidization of journalism, a fear that “the high standards of yesterday are being undermined by sensationalism, prurience, triviality, malice and plain, simple, credulity” (Sparks 2000: 1). The tabloidization of journalism and other media globally is, undoubtedly, a complex phenomenon, driven by a variety of cultural, commercial and technological changes, which need not delay this discussion⁷; suffice it to say that it is apparent in a “shift away from politics towards crime, away from the daily news agenda and towards editorially generated items promoted days in advance, away from information-based treatments of social issues and towards entertaining stories on lifestyles or celebrities, and an overwhelming investment in the power of the visual, in the news as an entertaining spectacle” (Turner 1999: 59). The anxiety about its leaning towards the popular arises from perceptions that, in its use of spectacle, sensation and personalisation, tabloid journalism drastically simplifies complex social and political issues and fails to provide the information needed for informed debate and decision-making. It is a process that supposedly “panders to the lowest common denominator in order to sell copy” and “inexorably erodes serious journalism” (Biressi and Nunn 2008: 10). In short, tabloid journalism “lower[s] the standards of public discourse” (Ornebring and Jonsson 2004: 283) within the public sphere.

⁶ Wasserman (2010: 67-69) describes this professional introspection and renewed sense of duty as an instance of Berkowitz's (2000) notion of “paradigm repair”.

⁷ For an introduction to this topic see Biressi and Nunn (2008).

For some, then, tabloid journalism amounts to the antithesis of ‘real’ journalism, which, in its ideal form, works primarily within a rationalist and abstract frame of reference, oriented to issues deemed to be of public interest within democratic society (Fiske 1991; Habermas 1989).

But, assessing their reaction for what it is worth, suspicions can arise that these critics perhaps ‘protest too much’; that their seeming obsession with maintaining the boundaries between serious and tabloid journalism may be “precisely because the line separating [tabloids] from ‘real’ newspapers is not as clear-cut as they would like to believe” (Bird 1992: 104).

Bird (1992) undermines this rigid binary between the two forms by pointing out the *similarities* between them, and argues that “newspapers and tabloids are unavoidably related along the same storytelling continuum” (Bird 1992: 104), a point of view that is shared, amongst others, by Deuze (2005), and by Sparks (2000), who proposes a “continuum” model of journalism that ranges between the “serious” press and the supermarket tabloid. As Sparks (2000) notes, all forms of journalism contain elements of other forms: “serious” journalism includes some “tabloid” elements, while “tabloids” are not entirely free from “serious” issues. And in the same way, tabloids themselves need to be differentiated from each other: in the *Daily Sun*’s case, its sensationalist mode of presentation and content – the huge headlines and exclamation marks, for example, and the inclusion of empirically unsupportable witchcraft stories – appear at first glance to justify it being regarded as “trash”, that form of tabloid journalism that Gripsrud (2000) distinguishes from its more broadly popularised manifestations.

However, while all these implicating features are visible in the tabloid, there is clearly also a more socially committed motive at work. For example, the *Daily Sun* notably offers a range of directly useful services to the working class reader, under separate columns like “Mr. Fixit” and “Sun Defender” (see below), which, Steenveld and Strelitz (2010) argue, place it at the “service and campaign journalism” end of the popular journalism spectrum offered by Eide’s (1997) schema. Eide’s argument, drawn from the European context, identifies the rise of a “new” form of journalism that operates not simply by presenting topical information, but by cultivating a special alliance with its readers. The result is a form of social contract in which the journalist becomes for his readers a public ‘hero’, a newsprint saviour who, by means of the powers of public exposure he wields, is able to fight on their behalf against villainous bureaucrats and civil servants. This new journalism (no doubt a distant offshoot of the vigilant popular pro-consumer press visible from the 1970s onwards) still largely envisages its readers as consumers, and offers them tips for successful life-management, a “manual for everyday life” (Eide 1997: 177), in which they are given wise and knowing “guidance in conducting the good life” (Eide 1997: 180).

It is precisely this heroic role that the *Daily Sun* self-consciously adopts vis-a-vis its readers, especially where the victims involved are those who suffer from the failures of the state. It also offers a range of advice and direct help that assists its readers in making their various choices as consumers, as well as indicting those who offer bad goods and services. And yet the local context, with its unique political and economic history, substantially alters the meaning of such interventionist policies. Comparison with the overseas models can therefore give the wrong impression, and such public ‘services’ as the newspaper offers locally should not be considered

trivial, argue Steenveld and Strelitz; for in the South African context “where the identity of citizenship is relatively new, the ‘rights-based’ discourse implicit in the consumer address may well aid the construction of a sense of self that speaks to the general sense of self-worth necessary for the specifically political form of citizenship” (Steenveld and Strelitz 2010: 536-537).

Such approaches as the above offer a way of understanding the tabloid with a less partisan bias, though they do so not without some reservations of their own. They are commonly characterised by attempts to contain, through a fine discrimination, the perceived *deficits* of tabloid journalism; to sieve out what remains, as it were, of worth once the dross has been sorted. Others, fairer perhaps, offer arguments on the same basis: that tabloids, in their various formats, rather than evacuating the public sphere, broaden and extend its concerns by including those voices, values and interests that have traditionally been excluded by an elite monopoly (Sparks 2000; Ornebring and Jonsson 2004; Lumbly 1997).

From this broader perspective, the tabloidization of journalism forces us to revalue what things matter as issues of public importance, and to consider whether, in context, tabloids are altogether at fault when they put ‘private’ problems on the public agenda. In fact, by doing so, it has been argued, tabloids offer “a new form of subjectivity and agency for an otherwise silenced section of the community” (Turner 1999: 62). Thus in the South African case, the *Daily Sun* may be seen as offering an alternative forum to those excluded in various ways from the bourgeois public sphere in terms of their inadequate, or ‘different’, economic, social and cultural capital (Fraser 1990), even if this is achieved, as Wasserman allows, “through emotional and sensational narratives” (2010: 91).

A ritual understanding of tabloid newspapers

While the interventions outlined above may frequently be sympathetic to aspects of the work of papers such as the *Daily Sun*, they nevertheless leave much of the field unexamined. In fact, in the *Daily Sun*’s own case, the positive insights concerned may justifiably be extended to other, less appreciated, sections of the paper. On analysis, it will be found that the beneficial motives identified above may be present in more areas of the paper’s activity than supposed; indeed, they may even be discerned in those sensational stories which continue to receive the critics’ condemnation. These I deal with in due course; here, I wish to outline how the idea of “subjectivity and agency” that is raised in the previous paragraph is central to what is, for my purposes, a more interesting and valuable approach to tabloid journalism, which is an understanding of their “ritual” function (Gripsrud 2000; Bird 1992).

Ultimately, the denigration of a highly successful popular medium for its perceived shortcomings seems of very limited value: it is too tied to transitory opinions and prejudices to offer enduring lessons. Surely far more is gained by trying to understand such a remarkable phenomenon in its own terms. To understand the tabloid as a form of ritual sidesteps thinking about the tabloid as a more or less successful means of information transmission. Instead, a ritual view of communication

view[s] reading a newspaper less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed. News reading, and writing, is a ritual act and moreover a dramatic one (Carey 1989: 20).

News, looked at from this perspective, is a means of creating community through an act of the imagination: it “is the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality” (Carey 1989: 18), maintaining society by providing its readers with a set of representations of shared beliefs. As a social text then, the tabloid can be seen as “a presentation of reality that gives life an overall form, order and tone” (Carey 1989: 21). This approach recognisably draws on Durkheim’s (1912/1995) understanding of ritual as a set of commonly shared and experienced practices, emotions and symbols which work together to constitute the community. It is precisely this act of imagination which was central to the establishment of modern European society, as Anderson (1983) argues. Media were a necessary part of this process, most notably as the preeminent space in which the communal symbolic order is both imagined and maintained (Appadurai 1996; Taylor 2004; Billig 1995).

It is a common argument that tabloids fail in the vital task of properly mediating society’s political dimension to the reader, and so providing critical guidance on the public debates of the day. The ritual approach’s usefulness is that it focuses *precisely* on the political dimensions of the paper, which is not a matter of following popular trends, or the views of politicians, in order to serve the abstract goal of being informed on these issues. Rather, it includes these dimensions when they directly affect the daily lives and immediate concerns of typical readers; in other words, it highlights the personal effects of political events. The tabloid’s political strength is not because of the “alternativeness” of the public sphere that it produces, but because first and foremost it intervenes to create the community whose concerns it formulates and articulates on their behalf. In a very real sense, the *Daily Sun* ‘produces’ a community, which, seeing itself represented as such a body in the paper’s pages, has, it appears, rapidly coalesced around this beguiling image of itself; and it frequently stands out as an identifiable body in opposition to state and mainstream ideological structures which tend to overlook or treat negligently its importance, both socially and nationally.

South Africa is not alone in this close identification of a chosen medium with the fortunes of a distinct social group: in both America and Britain, the emergence of the working class as a cultural formation was associated with the rise of the popular press (Raymond Williams 1961; Conboy 2002). However, this close linkage between popular press and audience in each case fuelled its detractors. It may be argued, for instance, that as a commodity that must be bought and sold in the marketplace, the patronage and sympathies of the newspaper are inevitably suspect; its populist pretensions are inseparable from its desire for commercial success.

Admittedly, this consolidation of people and paper cannot take place in a privileged state of divorce from the economic dimension; at the same time it should not simply be reduced to an outcome of capitalist logic. That the *Daily Sun*, “The People’s Paper”, is owned by Naspers, the home of Afrikaner capital, may be an ironic reality; but what must be taken into consideration is how, against all appearances, the tabloid’s rhetoric and its strongly demotic idiom work to

authenticate it as a genuinely popular text which appeals to an audience that identifies with its address, and that, at least at the period of this survey, it demonstrates a marked sense of its responsibility in this role.

Conboy's historical contextualisation of the political role of popular journalism suggests that the appeal that the popular press makes to 'the people' is the result of complex strategies of accommodation and resistance enacted by capitalism in the face of radical demands: "the traditions of popular culture provide a complex but dynamic view of how the content and politics of the popular press play their part in authenticating their appeals to the people" (Conboy 2002: 180). It is true that in Britain the popular press began as radical, a form eventually co-opted by the growth of capitalist interests which continued to project a working class voice 'by imitation' as it were. The order of events was "first, the emergence of an independent popular press, directly related to radical politics in the first decades of the nineteenth century; second, the direct attack on this, and its attempted suppression, in the period up to the 1830s...; and third (and most important as a way of judging our own situation) the indirect attack, by absorption but also by new kinds of commercial promotion, which aimed not at suppressing the independent popular press but at replacing it, in fact by the simulacrum of popular journalism that we still have in such vast quantities today" (Williams 1970/2016: 16).

This pessimistic interpretation assumes a complete subordination of 'the people' to the interests of capitalist media, an interpretation which cannot be transposed to our South African (or perhaps any other) circumstances without qualification. The motives for the establishment of the *Daily Sun* were certainly commercial rather than philanthropic, but two external forces have made themselves felt. First, the immense popularity of the paper; and second, the need to maintain that popularity, day after day, both of which pressures must work to ensure the authenticity of the voice represented. With our fraught history, local ears are likely to be attuned to detect patronisation or insincerities of tone. Capitalist interests may be present, but the strength of the actual ritual involved overcomes and is in the end more determining of the character of the paper. This is the case, I believe, at least as it stood in 2011, the year under analysis here.⁸

The *Daily Sun*, crime and the creation of a community identity

It is by thinking about the *Daily Sun* not simply as a newspaper but as a ritual form of communication, one directed towards producing a community of readers, that its crime coverage can come to be understood as something more than exploitative sensationalism. In this section, I move away from the global debates on tabloids and their local articulations, to consider more specifically the connection between crime, the *Daily Sun*'s particular mode of rhetorical evocation of community, and its very specific narrative form. I begin by briefly describing the typical, but abstract, *Daily Sun* reader. Then, I draw on the exploratory audience study conducted by Wasserman (2010) concerning the connections between reading tabloids and the creation of citizen identity in order to highlight the role that crime plays in this relationship. Next, I present some of the practical and rhetorical strategies used by the *Daily Sun* to create the community of SunLand; and finally, a more specific discussion of the tabloid's idiosyncratic narrative form

⁸ More lately, I feel this popular voice has indeed been somewhat muted by commercial pressures, as critics charge.

with regards to crime. I draw these threads together by suggesting that crime may act catalytically, in the event: that it becomes an unexpected ‘other’ around and against which the sense of community coalesces.

The *Daily Sun*’s readership was from the first envisaged as working class, the typical “man in the blue overalls” (Wasserman 2010: 21). To Deon Du Plessis, the founding editor, the proposed reader was, somewhat sentimentally, an upwardly-aspiring township man who, now that liberation had been achieved, looked to the future: a “blue-collar, skilled, working class guy who generally lived in the townships. This guy was on the move. He now owned his house, he was starting to decorate it, worrying about his kids, rather than manning the barricades. The politics of struggle were over... We started with him, the potential reader and ended with the paper: a paper to suit the skilled working class guy in 21st century South Africa” (du Plessis 2006: 49-50). This early description, with its unmistakable commercial implications, must be understood within the context of the time of the paper’s establishment, just under a decade after political transformation, when memories of the struggle were relatively fresh and a certain optimism about the promises of the new state still remained. Some years later, Media24’s website described its readers more prosaically as “predominantly black, English literate, with a minimum high school education, working class earner – the economic core of South Africa” (quoted in Steenveld and Strelitz 2010: 533). In other words, the average reader was a man who, while having some disposable income and upwardly mobile aspirations (thus his desirability to advertisers), suffered disproportionately from the state’s mismanagement, and had little in the way of a buffer between himself and the vagaries of fate⁹.

What turns the atomised individuals of du Plessis’s imagination into a unified reading public is a conscious identification with the tabloid’s concerns *and with each other*, a common identification which is forged and maintained around their shared reading of the *Daily Sun*. But, “While the act of reading tabloids can itself take the form of collaboration or social interaction, their contribution to social cohesion probably occurs mostly because these papers covers [sic] news that is relevant to readers’ lives. Recognisable news confirms their identities and validates their membership in a community” (Wasserman 2010: 137). Readers see themselves as sharing common problems, values and goals, a similar disposition or orientation towards the world (Smith and Adendorff 2014). This solidarity is built on the tabloid’s content, which reflects the readers’ concerns and interests, and “strikes a chord with people’s lived experiences and interprets the world from a perspective familiar to them” (Wasserman 2010: 135-136). Wasserman’s (2010) exploratory audience study trenchantly opposes any suggestion that South African tabloid readers are gullible dupes of tabloid content. Instead, he emphasises their critical negotiation of tabloid news, and argues that tabloid readers “invest a significant amount of trust” in the information the papers provide (Wasserman 2010: 149-150).

⁹ This profile has changed somewhat since 2011. The readership is now a bit younger, and is more digitally sophisticated. A majority of readers now belong to Living Standards Measurements 5-7. LSMs refer to a ranking given by the South African Audience Research Foundation (SAARF); levels 5-7 indicate an average household income of around R10 000 (US\$1250) per month. Only 23% of *Daily Sun* readers are now in LSM 1-4 (the lowest income bracket). However, employment rates are low, with only 43% formally employed. See Neville (2014).

What is interesting in terms of my own interest in the relationship between the tabloid, its readers and its crime narratives, is that the reason quoted by respondents for trusting the tabloids was *not* the various practical ‘services’ they offered, but rather their *crime coverage*, that aspect of township existence that Wasserman refers to as “the sometimes harsh and precarious conditions of everyday life” (2010: 138). Wasserman uses these examples to discuss the community-building aspect of the tabloid press generally. As one of his interviewees puts it:

We read [in the tabloids] about murders, drugs, baby rapes – things that happen everyday. The other newspapers don’t give enough attention to those problems. Drugs is a big problem here on the Cape Flats. The small newspapers [tabloids] spell it out for you: this is the problem, what is the government doing about it. The big newspapers don’t have many stories about it... These are things that happen to us, man. (These are) people that live our type of lives (Wasserman 2010: 138).

For this reader, the tabloids’ up-to-date information is valuable because it enables him to negotiate problems specific to township life, in particular a high degree of crime. In this regard it also serves a didactic and moral purpose: “*Son*¹⁰ [Sun] warns about what is going on in the world. It warns us to keep our children safe. I see things happening like rape, then I tell my daughter “look, this is what is going to happen if you are on the streets late at night” (Wasserman 2010: 137). So, not only do the tabloids serve as a guide to conduct, they stand as guardians vis-a-vis their readers: one respondent sees the *Daily Sun* as being the resource who would help if he went missing: “If my family saw that I was missing they would tell the *Daily Sun*... so they can find me” (Wasserman 2010: 137). Wasserman likens the *Daily Sun* here to “an extension of the [the man’s] family” – an apt metaphor which is repeatedly evoked by the paper itself, as we shall see further down. In fact the man’s perception is prophetic, for, outside Wasserman’s immediate purview here is the high number of missing person cases, and the frequent coverage the *Daily Sun* gives to these lost people: it is in the light of this service that the man’s comment must be interpreted. The *Daily Sun* becomes like a family in another sense: it is prepared to acknowledge the identity and validity of persons who in other social and media contexts threaten to fall below the radar. What is apparent in this example is the sense of this man and his like *becoming visible to others*: the tabloid offers a promise of *recognition* within a world that is understood as deeply insecure.

The trust placed in the tabloids’ response-ability is one reason why readers claim “they would phone the tabloids with matters concerning crime before they would call the police” (Wasserman 2010: 139); the analysis chapters give ample evidence to support this claim. One respondent in Wasserman’s study remarks how if there was “something that happened in my community, something that I wanted the world to know – something like child molestation – I would phone *Son*” (Wasserman 2010: 139). Even the police are aware of the reach of the tabloids and use it to help their own work: “My boyfriend was kidnapped a while ago”, remarks one respondent in a matter-of-fact way. “The detectives told him to approach the *Son* so that everyone can become

¹⁰ A Cape Town tabloid published in Afrikaans. Not to be confused with the *Daily Sun*.

aware of the danger – they had to be on the lookout for a red car that came from Mitchells Plain. He phoned *Son* and they came to his house personally, they reported on it and took his photo. So he was very happy” (Wasserman 2010: 138). It is the recognition that the tabloid gives the man’s ordeal that counts: the police themselves appear to take a back seat. Commenting on these two examples, Wasserman remarks that “These responses indicate a level of trust in the tabloids that one might expect to be reserved for public institutions like the police, the courts, and the government” (Wasserman 2010: 139).

Indeed, one might go further and add that in a certain respect, the tabloid here *replaces* these state institutions, the readers glean from it a response and recognition that is otherwise lacking. In terms of crime, the tabloids act not only as witnesses but in so doing present a challenge to the state, in particular the police. It is worth quoting here at length the comments made by Andrew Koopman, *Son* editor, in Wasserman’s discussion of the closeness of the tabloids’ relationship with their readers:

People call us often. “Come and look, the city council is evicting us [from our homes]” or “the police are beating us” and then we go out. It’s actually tragic how much pain the people we work with have to go through. And they are the people that are still not in court. And they see *Son* as a way of bringing out their voice, of being heard. Often people phone us and say “we went to the police but the police didn’t help us”. The police are now also anti-*Son* because people come to us, we are their watchdog. Everywhere I go, I hear that people aren’t saying “we are going to take you to the police” anymore, but instead “we are going to take you to *Son*”. So *Son* is used as a threat (Wasserman 2010: 40).

In a context of limited resources, the tabloids become for readers a source of social and political *leverage*: what this quotation reveals is an implicit alliance with the paper, in particular around issues of crime. Connected to this point, given the active hostility of the state to township residents prior to independence and its seeming indifference post-apartheid (Hart 2013), what the tabloids enable, through their surveillance and information, is a sense of civic engagement or citizenship whereby readers “can lay claim to civic privileges and hold officialdom accountable. As such, tabloids have provided... a crucial link between themselves as citizens and a government who still seems absent from their lives” (Wasserman 2010: 139). Through telling the stories of township residents, the tabloids invoke the rights of all citizens, such as access to housing, water and electricity, decent schooling and respectful health care, or the provision of Identity Documents (IDs) from the state Department of Home Affairs.

We can add to this list a right to justice, and a desire to see justice being done. Thus a respondent from Makhado¹¹ tells Wasserman the *Daily Sun* ought to come to his area in order to expose police incompetence: “The police do not do their job properly. There have been muthi¹² killings where nobody has been arrested even if they know who it is. The *Sun* should write about that”. Another respondent’s words indicate a yearning to see an appropriate state justice being

¹¹ A rural town in Limpopo province, formerly known as Louis Trichardt.

¹² Muthi refers to traditional medicine. See page 226 for a discussion. For muthi killings, page 247 *passim*.

administered, one that the tabloid's coverage will enable her to monitor: "I keep the copies of the *Son* in which they cover the Baby Jordan¹³ trial. Because when the trial is finished, and they get sentenced, I want to go back to the story (from the beginning) and see if it is right, if they got the punishment they deserved for all the things they did" (Wasserman 2010: 141). Wasserman argues here that the tabloid content is "interpreted by readers as proof that justice was served... [and] made readers feel that they were participants in the judicial process. This sense of participation reaffirmed the civic rights of the focus group members" (Wasserman 2010: 141).

Using these examples, Wasserman argues that the tabloids' value lies in the way they foster amongst their readers a sense of citizenship. But this citizen identity is also attributed to the tabloids' readiness to expose the crimes of state officials and of the political and economic elite, in particular their corruption and apparent exemption from justice. The irony is that such awareness comes at the expense of disillusionment with and alienation from state structures. One respondent complains that "there is government corruption, they are filling their pockets and do not care whether other people have enough food", while another remarks about President Jacob Zuma's rape trial: "*Son* said he had to be punished. If it was somebody else, not as high up in the ANC, he would've been punished. It's true what they say – if you have a lot of money, you get things done. If you have a little money, you don't get anything done" (Wasserman 2010: 141). The sense of alienation from the state that emerges from such responses is indicative not only of political marginalisation but also of a suspicion of there being a double standard at play: one justice for the rich, another for the poor. It is this sense of being utterly distanced from the sphere of the elite that leads to an estrangement from formal political processes – and to ordinary people turning to tabloids, an argument made by both Sparks (1988) and Fiske (2010): the popularity of sensational tabloids, for Fiske (2010: 94), is an indication of "the extent of dissatisfaction in a society, particularly among those who feel powerless to change their situation". In the past, township residents were excluded from the rights of citizenship on racial grounds; post-apartheid, they are excluded largely on the grounds of class, as the liberation promise of "a better life for all¹⁴" fails to materialise (Hart 2013; Bond 2005).

The rhetorical creation of community

The readers in Wasserman's study refer repeatedly to the tabloids' crime coverage in order to explain their reading habits and their trust in these papers. In other countries, vivid crime reportage might be accurately designated as part of a strategy of sensationalism, largely commercial in its motivation. In South Africa, crime is so prominent a feature of township life that its regular appearance in the tabloid pages is, rather, read as a sign of the authenticity of its representation, its reflection of real matters of concern.

But it is not just the information given, but also the way the reports are structured and mediated stylistically that is at issue here. In the *Daily Sun*'s case the shared identity between newspaper

¹³ A notorious case, in which a (white) woman and the (black) hitmen she hired were tried for the murder of the child her boyfriend had by a previous girlfriend.

¹⁴ "A better life for all" was a slogan of the African National Congress (ANC) during the struggle. As the ruling party, it continues to evoke the slogan's promise. See Ratele (2006).

and recipient that appears to emerge from these anecdotes must be seen as reflected not simply by the stories themselves, but also by the particular rhetorical devices with which the tabloid engages its audience. By means of these devices, redolent of mutuality, the paper “claims a power to legitimate its status as representative of ‘the people’, the majority, as opposed to the powerful, the elite minority within a society” (Conboy 2002: 7).

These rhetorical strategies, in concert with the paper’s specific journalistic motives and practices, serve to produce a particular discursive regime, one that in effect reflects back to the reader a world with its own emphases and elisions. Importantly, one cannot say that this discursive regime simply corresponds to aspects of the external world of contemporary South Africa, whatever that might prove to be, for it is just as much a virtual creation in its own right. Clearly, in its own collective mind, the paper reflexively and internally addresses a community that belongs to it and which is its own imaginative and dynamic creation. It is in effect an entire life-world, SunLand, created along with its various subjects, rules of engagement, roles and responsibilities, values and taboos. We need to look more closely and specifically at typical editions of the tabloid in order to decide what these various identifying features amount to, and I attend to these below.

By 2011, the year of this investigation, the *Daily Sun* was well-established. Then in its ninth year of publication, it had had time to mature, and its distinctive style appears assured and unapologetic. There is no editorial – instead, an opinion piece, “TK’S SLEDGHAMMER” is published each Monday, written by the editor, Themba Khumalo. His style is authoritative and uncompromising, even directly confrontational – his epithet, “Sledgehammer”, is well-suited to the manner in which he takes up matters of serious concern, not shying away from pointedly chastising either government officials, problematic elements within township society, or the police.

The opinion piece is in keeping with the heroic and guardian – even paternal – role adopted by the tabloid *vis a vis* its readership. To this end it publishes a number of columns, which not only serve to generate copy but through daily iterations construct a specific world, SunLand, which is peopled by the *Daily Sun* and the community of SunLanders which it shepherds. “Speak Up”, the letters page (which in 2011 occupied the last double spread at the back of the paper) exhorts its readers to participate as members of its unique community: “Let your voice be heard in the *Daily Sun!*” it encourages. Each day, the “Letter of the Day”, chosen by the letters editor, wins R100¹⁵. In the same way, some articles carry the motto or tag “What do YOU think?” with the mobi-site address where readers can go online to post their comments. The visibility that the paper encourages is also literal: readers can send in their photographs to be published with suitable captions on the “SunPeople” page, images of their weddings, socials, and other ‘cultural’ festivities.

¹⁵ About US\$8 at time of writing.

The *Daily Sun* helps in material ways to meet individual needs. It employs a lawyer, Christopher Mokoena¹⁶ – “He’ll fight for you!” – who compiles the “SunDefender” column in which he investigates complaints from readers concerning their transactions with retailers, banks and employers and outlines the steps he has taken to solve their problems¹⁷. In addition, Mr Fixit is “a free service available to *Daily Sun* readers” who can call on the *Daily Sun*’s handyman to do minor home repairs; each day, there is a small photograph of the happy homeowner whose problem has been solved. The money that the paper gives away as prizes are highly attractive in a cash-strapped society: the daily “SNAParazzi” gives a person caught on camera the chance to win R1000 - R1500 – a fairly substantial sum for a typical township resident; as is the weekly lottery draw of R2500 worth of Shoprite¹⁸ vouchers, which promises “groceries for a month”. “Make a Wish” is another notable competition in 2011 in which the *Daily Sun* makes a chosen reader’s wish come true (see Figure 1, page 19). These material attractions – a “*Daily Sun* ray of hope¹⁹” – are obviously designed to attract and retain reader loyalty; but they should not be seen as simply mercenary ploys. They are an aspect of the “SunPower” that is demonstrated so often in the stories themselves when the paper intervenes to bring resolutions to otherwise intractable-seeming problems. For example, when the “worst road in SA” is repaired the day after a *Daily Sun* expose of its years of neglect, the front page smugly reports how “Municipal workers leapt into action after SunPower flexed its muscles!²⁰” This is indeed a world in which “the *Daily Sun* never sets!” (the back page banner).

But it’s not just the *Daily Sun* which does things for its readers: as members of a community, readers are regularly encouraged to help each other. “Help Find” is a column which asks readers to look out for, identify, and put in contact, people who have gone missing, or who are searching for lost family members. In such cases, the *Daily Sun* acts as a switchboard, connecting the members of its “SunFamily” across South Africa. News articles also directly ask readers to help solve an individual’s specific problem. There are many stories which report on the help that results from these requests; even when no such call is made, interventions may happen. Occasionally, the *Daily Sun* will designate such a helper a “Sun Hero”, someone who goes out of their way to assist others or their community in some tangible way (see Figure 2, page 21 – the small teaser at the top right corner of the page calls attention to a story about such a Sun Hero). It is this fostering of community that drives the “Horror Affairs” column, drawing attention to the plight of those readers who suffer the lack of an ID book due to the negligence or inefficiency of the state Department of Home Affairs. Their sense of exclusion from a wider community is precisely what motivates the *Daily Sun*’s interest. No-one should be excluded from the SunFamily.

It is for this reason that readers will approach the *Daily Sun* rather than the police, municipal officials, or social services, to solve their problems. The tabloid’s interest in readers’ affairs,

¹⁶ Mokoena still occupies this position as I write in 2016.

¹⁷ In 2016, the year in which this is written, such sections have been expanded to include SunAbility for those living with disabilities, SunWellbeing on health, SunEducation which addresses educational topics, including matric subjects, and SunFood for recipes and information about nutrition.

¹⁸ A large South African supermarket chain.

¹⁹ Little boy’s dream of joy *Daily Sun* 1 December 2011: 1. Except for quotations from individual letters used in chapter superscriptions, all *Daily Sun* references are recorded in the footnotes for ease of reference. I do not record the journalists’ names as the emphasis is on the *Daily Sun* as a publication rather than individual voices.

²⁰ Look now! Smooth as a baby’s bum! *Daily Sun* 11 July 2011: 1.

however petty, brings assurance of being heard, and the paper faithfully publishes the steps that it takes to find remedies for their concerns – what Glenn and Knaggs (2008: 107) call “a virtuous circle of reporting and action”. The sensitivity of the *Daily Sun* to its readers’ complaints is well-known to state officials, and the appearance of a story about official negligence will often prompt a response and perhaps extract amends from the accused party. It is this receptiveness and efficacy which prompts one character to ask rhetorically “Why do things start happening when the *Daily Sun* arrives?²¹” a sentiment that appears frequently, throwing into sharp relief the lack, not only of capacity, but more importantly of *interest* on the part of councillors, state department officials and police, as well as highlighting, in happy contrast, the paper’s own heroic action, and its readiness to ensure the inclusion of all within the security of its own powers, especially that of making visible those who would otherwise remain unseen; an act surely undertaken in metaphorical imitation of the widespread impartiality of the real sun’s rays.

Another way that the *Daily Sun* creates a sense of inclusion is by reporting how common township problems affect its own operations, a reflexivity that marks it as a fellow-sufferer from the quotidian slings and arrows of township life. Thus in 2011 it published stories on the huge pothole outside the entrance to the *Daily Sun* premises and the intransigent stance of the local municipality concerning its repair²² (potholes, emblematic of official negligence, feature regularly as a specific problem faced by readers). It too is affected by crimes: “SunMan's detective work rewarded²³” describes how a *Daily Sun* journalist does his own detective work to find the man who broke into his house. Another saga involves a person who is arrested for posing as a doctor at Baragwanath Hospital in order to collect stories, allegedly at the instigation of a *Daily Sun* reporter named Simphiwe Sithole²⁴. By reporting on the struggles it wages with state bureaucracies, the police and common “thugs”, it represents itself as person forced to fight in the same world, with its attendant problems, as its readers: their concerns are its concerns, too. Its successes are then not simply miraculous, for all the talk of heroes and Sunpower: it fights real fights against real obstacles, albeit with its own special weaponry at its command. But it is fully aware that print can be unusually effective in this role; especially so, when opponents well know that there is an important army of readers at its back.

The *Daily Sun*'s self-confident manner is visible in its particular blend of humour and forthright moralism; it does not hesitate to say what is, to it, right or wrong, yet leavens this prescriptive stance with finding occasions for laughter. When its laughter is directed at those who err, the effect is a disciplinary one. But the *Daily Sun* can also laugh at itself: in 2011 it carried a series of advertisements for Nandos, a fast-food restaurant famous for its irreverent and humorous advertising. These advertisements promote Nando's food by amicably satirising well-known *Daily Sun* tropes such as witchcraft stories: for example “Mlungu tokoloshe²⁵ kidnaps man for his kota bun²⁶”.

²¹ Cops escort beer trucks! *Daily Sun* 31 March 2011: 7.

²² It's an obstacle course! *Daily Sun* 15 April 2011: 5

²³ SunMan's detective work rewarded *Daily Sun* 19 July 2011: 3.

²⁴ Who in the hell is Simphiwe Sithole? *Daily Sun* 26 January 2011: 1,2. The *Daily Sun* denies any knowledge of the alleged reporter, and offers a R10 000 reward for information about Simphiwe Sithole.

²⁵ Mlungu is a colloquialism for a white person, while tokoloshe refers to a witch-familiar.

²⁶ Mlungu tokoloshe kidnaps man for his kota bun *Daily Sun* 15 September 2011: 9. A kota in township parlance is a quarter-loaf of bread.

As the words “mlungu” and “tokoloshe” suggest, the colloquialisms and township idioms drawn from indigenous languages, isiZulu in particular, signal the *Daily Sun*'s location and its egalitarian stance towards its readers and their distinctive ability to code-switch (Mesthrie 2002). The use of such familiar colloquialisms is thus another means of creating a sense of belonging to SunLand (Wasserman 2010).

But the word “mlungu” here is telling in another way: as a colloquialism referring to South Africans of European descent, it effectively identifies them as ‘other’. Hardly any white people appear in the *Daily Sun*'s pages to participate in SunLand: the exceptions are the rare stories which tell of mlungu who have chosen to make their home *ekasi*; a few mlungu who have answered an ancestral call to become sangoma²⁷; and white police officers, whose presence is taken for granted and whose race is almost never referred to. Indeed, the *Daily Sun*'s world is almost devoid of white people, a tellingly accurate reflection of township life.

Stylizing the tabloid

In its general presentation, the *Daily Sun* appears to exemplify what is meant by ‘tabloid’. It is instantly recognisable by the red masthead at the top of page one, a style borrowed directly from the British tabloids (Wasserman 2010). The words “**DAILY SUN**” are printed in upper case in white upon the red banner, with the “**SUN**” more prominent: “**DAILY**” is printed vertically in smaller font to the left. Within the banner, beneath the title, runs the tabloid’s slogan – in 2011, “**FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE!**” an unmistakable reference to struggle politics (see Figures 1 and 2 on pages 19 and 21). This banner is echoed by the narrow red strap-line at the bottom of the page which sometimes contains a catchy rhyming jingle to direct the reader to specific content, for example, somewhat mysteriously: “**WITH LUCK HIS DUCK WILL DELIVER A GIVER TO THE RIVER! PAGE 3**”²⁸ Towards the end of the year, this strap-line had begun to promote the tabloid’s Facebook page (see Figure 1, page 19). The first page usually contains two stories, one above the other (see Figure 1, page 19), or side by side; occasionally the entire front page is dominated by a single story and its large accompanying photograph (see Figure 2, page 21). Normally, when two stories appear, they are distinguished by their design: the emotionally evocative ‘colour’ story is printed against a pale yellow background, while the other, more ‘serious’ news story is in black and white, with a bold uppercase headline (see Figure 1, page 19). The colourfulness of the first story and its accompanying photograph may be highlighted by a text-box in the same red used for the banner. However, what constitutes the ‘colour’ and ‘serious’ story is often only a matter of emphasis, or whether or not a suitable photograph is available. This colour scheme together with the bold upper and lower case headlines and the use of text boxes run throughout the news section of the paper and help constitute its vivid and visually appealing aesthetic.

²⁷ Sangoma: a traditional healer. See footnote 387 for a discussion of the sangoma’s role.

²⁸ With luck his duck will deliver a giver to the river! *Daily Sun* 1 June 2011: 1. The article concerns a Zionist bishop: Zionism here refers to a form of African Christianity which incorporates traditional beliefs. The bishop’s ducks represent his ancestral spirits.

But the most idiosyncratic aspect of the *Daily Sun* is its narrative ‘texture’. Important here is that a substantial part of each report consists of quotations of the words of township residents. However, these words and any actions described are framed by the heading and the stylised introductory paragraph (in particular this applies to the front page lead, but also to a lesser extent to the inside pages); all of these work together in a dialogic relation with the photograph. Even where the words of residents are not used – for example, if a police spokesperson is quoted – the report can still be heavily worked to create a story with a distinct narrative character. This “story-like” quality is the essential core of the *Daily Sun*’s style. Each of these aspects deserves some description, for they combine to produce the tabloid’s distinctive character.

Headlines

The headline has two functions: to arrest attention; and to draw the reader into the narrative. Headlines usually point succinctly to the narrative disruption, which draws attention, while their shock value is achieved by the use of large, bold, uppercase text and the liberal use of exclamation marks and “dot-dot-dot”. For example, “**BURNED! SAVED! DUMPED!**”²⁹ (Figure 1, page 19) is a remarkable tri-part structure (a stylistic device used to great effect for a number of stories), each with its own exclamation mark.

Subheadings are artfully constructed to complicate and extend the disruption indicated by the headline; but sometimes the subheading can also be a “pre-heading”, which points to a moment in the narrative prior to that signalled by the heading. Thus the disruption of the pre-heading “The cop thought she was dead when a thug pointed a 9mm pistol at her head...” (the dot-dot-dot enticingly pointing to the expected disruption) is mysteriously contradicted by a second, unexpected, disruption the headline “**SAVED BY THE GUN!**” – a mystery which cleverly serves to draw the reader into the narrative. The subheading can also undermine the headline’s disruption for the sake of humour: thus the imposing drama of “**SHERRIFF RIDES INTO TOWN!**”³⁰ is immediately overturned: “But the angry squatters chase him out”. *Daily Sun* headlines, far from being simple, or simply sensational, are cleverly designed to engage the interest of the reader at a number of levels.

²⁹ Burned! Saved! Dumped! *Daily Sun* 1 December 2011: 1,2.

³⁰ Sherriff rides into town! *Daily Sun* 17 March 2011: 2. The headline in this case is for a page two story and for this reason is not presented in bold. For my purposes in the analysis, only front page headlines are in presented in bold. For inside story headlines, I only use upper and lowercase as given by the paper.

DAILY

SUN

WIN A HOUSE

 Bram Fischerville
 RBA
 NEW CLUE ON BACK PAGE
GET R1 000 ON PAGE 2

PRICE: R2,50 nationwide

FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE!

Thursday 1 December 2011

Little boy's dream of joy!

By LETHABO KHAMBULE
 BROKEN-hearted Sitheni had no idea how she was going to explain to her son Atipaishe that she simply didn't have the money to fulfil his birthday wish...

But then a *Daily Sun* ray of hope lit Sitheni's horizon! Single mother Sitheni Velani (33), an admin clerk at a communications company who lives in Turffontein, south of Joburg, saw the "Make a Wish" competition in the *People's Paper*.

Sitheni didn't waste any time and wished for a bicycle for her son.

Yesterday Atipaishe shared his birthday with the SunTeam and SunBabe Mahlatshe Maabane, who handed over a cake - and a bicycle - at Gummy Bears pre-school in Turffontein.

"I didn't get my hopes up as I know hun-



dreds of people enter. But when I got a call from *Daily Sun* confirming that my wish had come true I was filled with joy.

"I shared the good news with my son, but he didn't understand," Sitheni said.

"And on Tuesday I got another call that my favourite

paper would also take care of the birthday cost. This is the best birthday my son could ever have!" Sitheni said.

Sitheni is our first "Make a Wish" winner. The other competition winners will be published in the *People's Paper* every day until 20 January.

LOOK AT ME NOW: Mum Sitheni Velani with birthday boy Atipaishe Singende on his new bicycle and SunBabe 2011 Mahlatshe Maabane.

Photo by Jerry Mkgwangkwa



BURNED! SAVED! DUMPED!

Terrified gogo is on the run!



NO HELP... Gogo Nomanenge, 60, sits showing the scars from her terrible ordeal, and her granddaughter Otwami, 4.
 Photo by Lulekwa Mkhambule

By TIVISE JERRANI
GOGO Nomanenge and her granddaughter spent weeks in hospital after brave neighbours saved them from a burning house.

But that was only the beginning of her ordeal... now the cops ignore her problems, Home Affairs won't give her a new ID...

AND EVERY DAY THE HOMELESS GOGO AND HER GRANDCHILD GO FROM ONE SHOPPING CENTRE TO THE NEXT, LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO SLEEP!

"We stayed in hospital for three weeks," said Nomanenge, with tears in her eyes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

YOU CAN BE DAILY SUN'S BIGGEST FAN! FIND US ON FACEBOOK 

Figure 1: Burned! Saved! Dumped! Daily Sun 1 December 2011: 1.

Introductory paragraphs

The introductory paragraph of the front page lead works together with the headline to set up the narrative and point to the moral of the story. It is highly stylized, and consists of three interrelated parts which are signalled by contrasting fonts. For example, the first part of “**KILLED ON HIS WEDDING DAY!**”³¹ (Figure 2, page 21) begins: “**They lived in love for 40 years and had seven children**”. The bold, sentence case type establishes an ideal state, which is elaborated in italics in the second part: “*But Nhliziyonhle Ndlovu (60) and his sweetheart Thokozaphi dreamed of the day when they could have a grand wedding... and they finally tied the knot last Sunday among 500 family, neighbours and friends*”. Having set up and then reinforced this ideal scenario, the third part, in bold uppercase, presents the shocking disruption: “**BUT ON THE HAPPIEST DAY OF NHLIZIYONHLE’S LIFE, DRUNKEN GUESTS BEAT HIM TO DEATH!**” The moral is contained in the strong *antithesis* that is created: long-looked-for wedding joy turns to sudden tragedy, guests become murderers. This antithesis is repeated in the underlined subheading, which also presents a highly economical condensation of the narrative: “He waited 40 years to marry his love – then drunks cut him down!” As a recurring feature of the lead paragraphs of front page stories, the antithesis is carefully worked in order to emphasise the narrative disruption and signal the moral of the story.

Photographs

In the story of Nhliziyonhle’s wedding and murder, the story occupies the entire front page. The colourful photograph that accompanies it shows an older man, dressed in his “ceremonial *imvunulo*”³² of plaited animal skins and carrying a painted stick, dancing and singing. He is remarkable for his vigorous appearance and posture and the intent expression on his lined face, which is clearly visible in the bright sun. Behind him stand or sit younger men and women, dressed in a variety of brightly coloured fashionable clothing, who watch his performance. Some older men, squatting on the ground close by, appear to be singing.

The caption emphasises the contrast between the image of him as he “dances at his wedding” and the death that awaits him, for “Within hours he was dead in a pool of blood...” In its juxtaposition and contrast with the headline and text, this picture and its anchoring caption is typical of the *Daily Sun*’s presentation and use of photographs. The first five to eight pages contain a range of stories which include national and local news, with each page having at least one large photograph; some pages will carry one larger and up to four or five smaller images. Thus the pages are colourful, and because the photographs are inclined to be images of township people, either close-up portraits, or engaged in some form of action, they tend to be visually gripping. Occasionally, too, the photograph will be deeply disturbing, depicting scenes of outrageous violence.

³¹ Killed on his wedding day! *Daily Sun* 22 September 2011: 1,2.

³² An isiZulu word referring to festive attire.

DAILY

SUN

SUN HERO
WHO PAVED
HIS OWN
STREET!



SEE PAGE 3

PRICE: R2,30 nationwide

FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE!

Thursday 22 September 2011

He waited
40 years to
marry his
love – then
drunks cut
him down!



IN HIS ceremonial imvunulo and carrying his favourite stick, Nhliziyonhle Ndlovu dances at his wedding on Sunday. Within hours he was dead in a pool of blood . . .

KILLED
ON HIS
WEDDING DAY!

By NTOMBIFUTHI MBHELE
THEY lived in love for 40 years and had seven children.

But Nhliziyonhle Ndlovu (60) and his sweetheart Thokozaphi dreamed of the day when they could have a grand wedding . . . and they finally tied the knot last Sunday among 500 family, neighbours and friends.

BUT ON THE HAPPIEST DAY OF NHLIZIYONHLE'S LIFE, DRUNKEN GUESTS BEAT HIM TO DEATH!

The traditional wedding was held at

the sports ground in Coza, near Mahlabathini, KwaZulu-Natal.

Nhliziyonhle's grieving sister Bertina Shabangu (54) told *Daily Sun* that the attackers were a group from the neighbourhood who wanted more booze and refused to leave.

"It was getting late and they were drinking in one of the bedrooms.

"My brother told them it had been a long day and they should leave as the family were tired and wanted to sleep," cried Bertina.

"They refused and demanded more

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

YOU CAN BE DAILY SUN'S BIGGEST FAN! FIND US ON FACEBOOK 

Figure 2: Killed on his wedding day! Daily Sun 22 September 2011: 1.

Narrative

The *Daily Sun*'s reports are characterised by a conscious narrativisation or storifying, which is strongly noticeable in the first page lead paragraph but is also present in many minor reports. "Cop faces murder charge"³³ begins:

The police constable had been spotted wearing the hat of a man with whose wife he was allegedly having an affair.

And he was allegedly driving the other man's car!

And on the front seat of the car was the other man's wife!

The accumulation of detail, the ironic humour produced by the use of official jargon, the tension created by the relation of the heading to the scenario as it unfolds, are the essential elements of the *Daily Sun*'s narrative mode. This narrativisation, an overt stylistic tactic, is never hidden: rather, the tabloid's own voice is differentiated and made obvious when reports quote sources, such as the police, whose stance contrasts strongly with its own. For example, in the case above the tone changes markedly when the police spokesperson tells the *Daily Sun* that "Mbehle [the police constable]... appeared in the Ntuzuma Magistrates court on a charge of murder" etc. Thus, while strongly framing the narrative, the *Daily Sun*'s style does not attempt to close down the meaning of the report as a whole. Rather, the two juxtaposed styles, instead of being antithetical, work to the advantage of the *Daily Sun*'s intentions of encouraging engagement with the text.

The personal realm, crime and sensationalism

It is clear at once to anyone picking up the *Daily Sun*, that the personal realm is its primary (though by no means its exclusive) focus. This is not to say that issues of national importance are not reported on, for they do appear, but the number of such reports is far smaller than those which deal with the private lives of individuals. The *Daily Sun* deliberately chooses a personal angle whenever it can, because its implicit contract with its reader is faithfully to describe what happens on the ground to ordinary people. In particular, this takes the form of reporting on how crimes of various kinds affect readers, their families and their communities. Once again, this concentration of stories of personal experiences of crime cannot be understood as exhibiting the same connotations, or attracting the same censure, as appears appropriate in countries where crime does not have the same salience as it does locally. Rather, given South Africa's crime statistics, the *Daily Sun*'s fine focus on lived experience reflects in a telling way how crime is an important "ground issue" in the lives of township residents.

By the same standards, the tabloid's sensationalism with respect to crime is hardly gratuitous, in the local context. There is a real difference here between the sensationalism that is discussed in so much of the Northern literature, which draws its examples from the tabloid fare of established democracies, and what appears sensational in this post-colonial context. Rather than it being the case that "sometimes facts *are* sensational" (Ornebring and Jonsson 2004: 294; italics in original) – in the South African context facts are *usually* sensational. For it is hard to exaggerate what is already, for so many, horrific and terrible: the many rapes, murders and assaults that are

³³ Cop faces murder charge *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 12.

experienced on a daily basis by ordinary people. Indeed, sensationalism is perhaps the only valid way to describe them: it is for this reason that Karl Brophy, the former editor of the *Daily Voice*, a Cape Town tabloid, remarks that “One of the criticisms of tabloids is that we sensationalize things; there’s absolutely no necessity to sensationalize any news in Cape Town because it’s sensational anyway” (Glenn and Knaggs: 106).

So we cannot compare the sensationalism of the Norwegian tabloids described by Gripsrud (1992), for example, with that of the *Daily Sun*: the orders to which they speak are incommensurate. In a social context where real-life murders are a rarity, it is open to Gripsrud (1992) to understand the sensationalism of the Scandinavian popular press in terms of its *exaggerations*, and, indeed, he likens these exaggerations to those of nineteenth century melodrama. While I believe his reasons for choosing this mode have a certain validity, they are quite inadequate for application to our purposes locally. No example more than this one highlights the fact that characterisations of tabloids generally, on the one hand, and of the tabloid transferred to our local South African setting, on the other, must, in the end, be quite differently considered. And yet, for our purposes, Gripsrud is at his strongest where he points out that “Today’s popular press also teaches the audience a lesson, everyday. It says that what the world (the news) is really about, is *emotions*, fundamental and strong: love, hate, grief, joy, lust and disgust. Such emotions are shared by all human beings, regardless of social positions, and so is “general morality”: crime does not pay, betrayal is betrayal, doing to others... etc. Sex and death are the two aspects of life that create the most intense emotions, so naturally they are the most heavily focussed themes” (Gripsrud 1992: 87-88). However, his hermeneutic use of melodrama indicates these stories are seen by him to have a mythic and fantastic element: regrettably, the equivalent stories in the *Daily Sun* simply respond to the raw actuality of everyday township life as regularly experienced by its inhabitants.

Discussion

What the above discussion suggests is that readers are presented with a set of ‘rules’ with which they must become familiar in order to interpret the *Daily Sun*’s stories. The story positions itself to be read in a certain way, the real purpose of which is participation in and identification with the *Daily Sun* community. It is a language that the reader has to learn in order to be able to participate as a member of the aesthetic and emotional world of SunLand, a process akin to what Gee (2002) describes as the establishment of an “affinity group”, a semiotic domain with its own “ritualised ways of thinking and acting” (Gee 2002: 28) and whose shared norms and values work to create “insiders” and outsiders” (Gee 2002). The paper’s inclusive reading strategy invites the reader, through the stylised opening paragraph, not only into the report but also into a ritual structure with its own rules and demands. What is interesting is how the “preferred reading position” (Hall 1982) that this constructs is more by means of style, organisation and layout than by polemic or overt commentary, an intervention of a more subtle and implicit nature, a matter of the ‘how’ more than the ‘what’. These features add an extra dimension to Morley’s advice that the assumptions of the text “need to be made visible if we are to understand the implicit messages which a programme/text may transmit over and above what is explicitly said in it” (Morley 1992: 84). Interestingly, the construction of this preferred reading position goes hand-in-hand with those textual strategies mentioned earlier, such as the “What do YOU think?” motto

that regularly appears within the pages, which invites the reader to disagree, or to offer alternative, or additional, interpretations to that provided by the tabloid. It is also indicated by the very obvious difference between the narrativisation provided by the *Daily Sun*, and the way in which it allows the words of authorities, such as police, to ‘speak for themselves’ in typical objective journalistic form.

Fiske’s (1987) idea of the “producerly” text is useful here as a means of understanding the dynamic these seemingly contradictory devices create. By coining the term “producerly”, Fiske is consciously adapting Roland Barthes, but does so in order to differentiate popular television scenarios from those texts Barthes (1975) designates as “writerly” or “readerly”. Barthes makes this distinction between texts, respectively, that are popular, derivative, and hence closed to alternative meanings, or else more textually adventurous, creative and avant-garde – but, for this very reason, open to interpretation, less tied down. A “producerly” text, on the other hand, merges some of these characteristics: it is open, but popular, rather than avant-garde; it treats its readers “as members of a semiotic democracy, already equipped with the discursive competencies to make meanings and motivated by pleasure to want to participate in the process” (Fiske 1987: 95). At the same time, the producerly text “draws attention to its own textuality”, and is “entered by the strategy of reading” (Fiske 1987: 95-96).

In accord with aspects of this critique, the *Daily Sun*’s texts do indeed show a degree of openness which is here compatible with popularity (they are certainly not esoteric); but the solicited participation in the text has a function of its own – it is not what is in the story that is important so much as the *participation itself*. In a sense, this is the underlying, if unarticulated, meaning to every story. As I have reiterated, the readers’ participation functions to mould the readership into a sense of community, a community which *in reading* they imagine they belong to. Whether or not this community corresponds to a sociological reality is a moot point. What matters is the act of imagination which, on reading the tabloid, draws people into, and reaffirms their membership of, its virtual circle of belonging.

This is the essence of the ritual approach to the media: “media communication [is] primarily... modern society’s communication with itself about itself, in ways that reproduce and instil in all its members a sense of community and identity, of shared conditions, values, understandings, and so on. The media are storytellers, reiterating stories that, like ancient myths, serve as ways of thinking about existential and social matters individuals and groups have to deal with in their everyday lives” (Gripsrud 2000: 295). This generalised European comment does, however, achieve a special resonance in the South African situation, where the grouping concerned is both historically – and even, to a large extent, contemporarily – both economically and geographically separated. Readers themselves recognise this integrative function, as one respondent in Wasserman’s study remarks: “The conversations that viewers and readers have about news stories serve to bind people together, and given [sic] them common topics of conversation in a world in which common ties are getting fewer and fewer” (Wasserman 2010: 136).

The tabloid's solicitation of its readers via its own ritualistic structures and the reading relationship it sets up is an essential dynamic in this regard. In some ways this overt construction of community confirms what Couldry (2003), in his critique of a functionalist application of Durkheim's thesis, argues should be taken into consideration: that the relationship between the media and community, rather than existing naturally, must be specifically produced and constructed. Couldry argues that while modern societies (or any society for that matter) may not have the 'core' or 'nucleus' that is central to Durkheim's thesis, it is nevertheless imperative that we act as though there *is* such a nucleus; what the media do is construct and confirm this belief, alongside their own privileged access to the 'centre'.

The interesting question in our case then becomes how the *Daily Sun* creates and sustains this mythic centre. Crime stories are a central, indeed necessary, element in this regard: crime acts as a catalyst as it sets up a recognisable enemy against which this community of readers can combine, at least in sentiment. Durkheim's insight into the role that crime plays in the symbolic creation of community is thus useful here: the Comaroffs' rendering below undoubtedly has him in mind:

crimes may evoke and intensify a sense of citizenship in communities of identity. Mass mediation is integral to the process, converting extraordinary happenings into a generic intimacy, a shared sensation of fear... Mythic crimes signify by means that go beyond identification or transference. In their suffering and annihilation, the socially marked casualty substitutes for the self and the collectivity for which he or she comes to stand: youth, the elderly, women, gays, property owners, the nation (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b: 235).

Compare this with Katz's (1987: 72) argument that "although people often fear crime and criticise the news as too... disturbing, they apparently find it even more unsettling not to read", and crime news becomes a ritual, "voluntarily taken up by adults in acknowledgement of their personal burden for sustaining faith in an ordered social world". But why do people torment themselves by reading about horrors? And why do the newspapers see crime as its sacred cause to present them before the public? It could be argued that we encounter here the power of *catharsis*, the expurgation of emotions of pity and terror (and hence of personal threat and danger), that is diagnosed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, an idea I will return to towards the end of the thesis. But, more importantly I think, in view of the preceding discussion, we as readers in a joint and virtual partnership confront the exact negative forces that threaten such powers of mutual combination: powers that the newspaper provides. In doing so, we identify in criminality the 'other': that divisive opposite, in the face of which the imagined community of readers draws itself together in self-defence; and so, paradoxically, strengthens the bond that unites it.

Part 2: Crime and the South African township

[South Africans'] concern with crime is neither avoidable nor undesirable. The conversations about crime that happen in the press... and every other place we come together are an inevitable result of the place crime occupies in our social and political lives. More important, such conversations are an important arena of connection and contestation... crime can tell us things about our society that we might otherwise miss or misunderstand (Kriegler and Shaw 2016: 2-3).

Two weeks don't go by without another horror story appearing in the newspapers. We read of murders, kids being kidnapped and killed, and worst of all, mutilated body parts being found in fridges. Laws and punishment have been created to deter people from committing crime, but these days it seems as though the justice that's in place does not scare people from committing terrible deeds (Noko 2015: 18).

In linking crime to the South African tabloid, I start with a very brief comparison between the western literature on crime and the media and those features that characterise our South African local context. The former accounts are summarily presented as a foil against which to describe and emphasise the distinctive particularities of the South African situation. In doing so I am not claiming a South African exceptionalism so much as remaining attentive to the noteworthy elements of our social and cultural scene that inflect the meaning of crime in ways peculiar to local circumstances. As it stands, the literature on media and crime derives almost exclusively from European and North American sources, which interrogate what mediated crime might signify for media-saturated societies within highly developed democracies. Our post-colonial context, in which a majority of citizens live in relatively media-poor environments, is but the first prominent difference in this regard.

Two simple illustrations may help to highlight this intrinsic disparity. First, as part of her exploration of the ritual function of mediated death in Finland, Sumiala (2013) examines what to her are clearly a shocking line of disruptive events in her home country. Amongst a handful of other incidents, she lists the murder, in two separate incidents, of three police officers in the line of duty; two separate school shootings in which 20 people died in total; and a fire at an orphanage which killed 7 children. This tally of events over several decades is described as a "significant numbers of fatalities in the Finnish and Nordic context", and consequently as "major tragedies" (Sumiala 2013: 95). The numbers of murders and tragic accidental deaths mentioned here are so incommensurate with those occurring in South Africa on an annual, or even daily, basis, that the comparison needs no further emphasis apart from than its telling contrast of human estimations in differing socio-cultural spaces.

This observation is in no way meant to detract from the impact of these deaths on the Finnish community, or to the role that Sumiala identifies the media as playing in the ritual experience of communal mourning. However, the far higher number of violent deaths in South Africa, the vast

majority of which cannot be mediatised (for lack of news space), demands that care be taken in an uncritical transferral of this (or any other) theoretical approach to our present context.

The second illustration is one derived from a seminal article in the area of crime and media by Katz (1987), who analysed 1,384 crime stories published in the *New York Press* in the 1980s. His structuralist analysis yields the following four categories: *personal competence and sensibility*, which are accounts of “ingenious, vicious and audacious crimes” (1987: 50); *collective integrity*, which addresses the “moral integrity of the community” (1987: 51); *moralized political conflicts*, which is “crime news that conveys general messages about moral character” (1987:53); and *white-collar crime*, stories which “provide moral instruction about matters of pressing concern for readers quite apart from crime” (1987:54). Part of his argument concerns the repetitive character of the individual stories that accord with such categories. The experience of regularly reading crime news, in spite of much of it being totally redundant, in that the same story types are repeated on a daily basis, is nonetheless useful, he argues, for it “induces the reader into a perspective useful for taking a stand on existential moral dilemmas” (1987: 71).

While the tabulating approach itself is useful, nonetheless, with the exception perhaps of his second example, there is little here that strikes any chord of recognition vis-à-vis crime in South Africa. The types of crimes deemed newsworthy by the papers concerned and the categories of moral and social anxieties the analysis suggests they assuage are far distant from the local concerns of the *Daily Sun* and its readers. This is not because *Daily Sun* readers do not have moral concerns about crime, but because these concerns are culturally inflected in ways that are specific to the local context. The distinctions made provide no real technical investigative assistance, since, quite obviously, the kinds of crimes *Daily Sun* readers experience, and their relationship with the state, are quite different to those experienced by readers of the *New York Times*!

The differences that I allude to in both these cases of course derive directly from the socio-economic and cultural milieu of South African township society. Not only the numbers and types of crimes, but what they come to signify for the inhabitants of these places, are highly localised. It is township society that forms the unspoken backdrop to the crime stories of the *Daily Sun*, and it is in the light of this taken-for-granted understanding of the paper that any analysis must be constructed. By highlighting the township as a social space I do not intend to excise it from the ‘rest’ of South Africa. Rather, townships have always been constructed, and their sociality formed, in relation to those other aspects of South African life from which they have historically been, and in many ways still continue to be, separated. Crime and punishment is and always has been a formative aspect of township society. To some degree this must be true anywhere, but in our case both its special history and prominence render it distinctive.

The particularities of the township case are explained in greater detail in the various analysis chapters, where such specificity will make most sense. For now, what I set out is a general overview of South African townships as social spaces and the ways in which crime has figured as a force in their social construction.

Township origins

The word 'township' is used in English to describe formally planned urban spaces that were previously designated as black residential areas under apartheid, but have remained centres of especially working-class black domicile since that time. A township may also be referred to as '*kasi*', a colloquialism frequently used by the *Daily Sun*, or '*ilokishi*', an isiZulu colloquialism derived from the now less-used English term, 'location'. Townships are as old as the history of the state: the 1923 Urban Areas Act had already restricted the right of black South Africans to live in urban areas – only employed black men could live in town, mostly in single-sex hostels (Ramphela 1993). But many well-known townships that are now part of the South African urban landscape, such as Soweto, were established or formalised in the two decades after the Nationalist party came to power in 1948. They were the outcome of the Group Areas Act of 1950, which also instigated 'forced removals', the compulsory re-settlement of racial groups in racially separate residential areas. The unplanned peri-urban settlements which had developed spontaneously around major trade and administrative centres during the colonial era were a particular target for forced removals. Characterised by racial diversity and a cosmopolitan ethos they were antithetical to, and did not survive, the apartheid vision of racial segregation. Occupying what were now designated as white urban spaces, they were demolished and their occupants summarily removed to centrally-planned townships built for specific racial and ethnic groups. District 6, Cato Manor and Sophia Town have become the iconic examples of such uprooting and re-location, but there were many others. In all these cases, the complete devastation of organic social and kinship ties, the elimination of local forms of subsistence and lack of ready access to amenities and employment led almost inevitably to an upsurge of crime (Glaser 2000; Samara 2011; Bank 2011; Pinnock 2016). In short, township life, forged by the violence of apartheid, was from the start inextricably entangled with crime.

The apartheid township was an artificial construct very much in the European mode of centrist and modernist urban planning (Parnell and Mabin 1995). As an experiment in social engineering, the township was created to meet two quite incompatible needs: on the one hand, as a material sign of apartheid, it was the means by which the policy of racial separate development was put into practice; but simultaneously the township also had to cater to a growing demand for a stable black urban population that could meet the requirements of the (white) economic sector. Townships thus had to be close enough to industrial and administrative centres for black labour to be available for work, but far enough away to avoid contact with white urban or suburban residents. The township also had to keep ethnic groups separate from each other³⁴ – Soweto, for example, home to a wide diversity of people from all over southern Africa, was divided into separate ethnic sections (Chabedi 2003; Ashforth 2005; Mbembe and Nuttall 2008). But in the 1970s, urban township development was halted. Instead, in an attempt to even further entrench racial and ethnic segregation and enforce racial 'separate development', townships were established far away from industrial centres in rural 'Bantustans' or 'homelands'.

The immense effort required to enforce the artificial social geography of racial apartheid is evident in the laws that attempted to control the residence and movement of black South

³⁴ Apartheid was premised on ethnic, as well as racial, segregation, a key divide-and-rule strategy. See Mamdani (1996) for how colonial power was organised in Africa.

Africans. The Black (Natives) Laws Amendment act of 1952 stipulated that, given a number of exceptions, no black person was allowed to remain in an urban area for more than 72 hours. The Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act No. 67 of 1952 simultaneously repealed all former local and industrial passes and instituted the *dompas*, a colloquial term for the passbook designed to regulate ‘influx control’, that is, the movement of black workers into and out of urban areas. The *dompas* kept a record of permission to reside in or visit a township or visit a white urban area. Permanent residence in formal townships was reserved for an elite minority of family men with work permits; single women and work seekers had to have written permission to visit; otherwise they had to remain in their designated rural ‘homeland’. These controls were relaxed in the 1980s and eventually abolished in 1986 due to the intense resentment and violent political unrest they generated. Yet, from the beginning, both township planning and residency laws were undermined by a constant in-migration as men and women moved to urban areas to find work, or join their families, producing an insatiable demand for accommodation. Thus the spontaneous growth of informal settlements accompanied the more formal development of apartheid township infrastructures: the numbers of people demanding accommodation far outstripped capacity (Bank 2011; Hunter 2010).

Townships and crime during apartheid

Indisputably, the apartheid system was criminogenic at levels that extend beyond the foundational human rights violations of the state. Townships during both the colonial and apartheid eras were largely left to their own devices with regards to crime control, and violent crime very early on became an endemic feature of township life. In the first half of the twentieth century, wide-scale urban crime incubated in particular within the mining industry and its associated system of migrant labour, single sex hostels, ethnic segregation and brutal work conditions in which white men controlled black labourers through overt violence (Breckenridge 1998; Moodie 2005). In the hostel compounds, violence was used by miners amongst themselves to assert ethnic and masculine identity and to control job security (Kynock 2008). In addition, the mines and their associated system of migrant labour allowed gangs to flourish, such as the Marashea, Ninevites and the Isitshozi, who drew their members from the migrant worker population and typically organised along ethnic lines. They used the mine hostels as cover to assault, rob and murder miners and township residents (Bonner 1993; Kynoch 2000; 2005; 2008; Breckenridge 1998). The cramped, materially deprived and sexually segregated environment of the densely populated mining compounds also resulted in inter-gang warfare over the control of scarce resources both inside the compounds and outside in adjacent squatter camps and townships, in particular women and living space (Kynoch 2000). There was little effort made to police this violence, unless it impinged on the workings of the mines, or white workers or black functionaries.

Township residents were not only tormented by migrant worker gangs, for the poor recreational, educational and employment opportunities of township life meant that many young people also turned to gang activity as a means of predatory livelihood. In the 1950s it is estimated that “the majority of permanently urbanised black youths in South Africa’s key urban conglomerate, the Witwatersrand, was involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in *tsotsi*³⁵ gangs” (Glaser 2000: 65).

³⁵ Tsotsi: a township colloquialism for gangsters or criminals.

Gangs of *tsotsis* were not only present on the reef: gang activity was recorded in other urban centres such as East London, Durban and Cape Town (Mayer 1961; Bank 2011; La Hausse 1990; Pinnock 1984). Gang membership, urban sociality and resistance politics were to come together in unexpected and contradictory ways during the struggle (Glaser 2000; Morris 2010; Bank 2011). Yet, despite this pervasive criminal element, most policing was directed at the control of political dissent and the enforcement of segregation, pass and liquor laws (Brogden and Shearing 1993; Kynoch 2008). The discrimination in the provision of security along race lines is seen in a very material way in the distribution of police stations: three quarters of all police stations and other policing resources serviced the white minority in suburbs and urban areas; the remaining quarter was distributed amongst the majority of the population in black townships and rural areas (Shaw 2002).

However, the lack of civilian security was only one aspect of the experience of crime in township life. The legal apparatus that sought to create and enforce racial segregation and control the movement of labour resulted in a vast number of black people being routinely criminalised, on the basis not of a common morality but of technical infringements of an alien and illegitimate law. The *dompas* was the means by which thousands were arbitrarily exposed to the criminal justice system: being found without the necessary written permission entailed arrest and incarceration (Sher 1985; Shaw 2002). On the other hand, crime was tolerated, even encouraged, if it aided apartheid 'divide and rule' tactics. During the struggle, state attempts at crime control in township spaces ceased altogether when the resistance movement took over township administration; it has also been argued that during this period state agents themselves carried out criminal activities, and co-opted criminal elements as a destabilising tactic (Ellis 1998; Kynoch 2005).

The combination of forced removals, the migrant labour system and the pass laws, and the violent liberation struggle resulted in what some have termed a 'culture of violence', concentrated and normalised within township spaces (Leggett 2005; Shaw 2002). The results of apartheid for personal security are sobering: between 1959 and 1969 the prison population rose from 49886 to 88078, a 76% increase, pass-law infringements making up about 25% of these detentions (Shaw 2002: 2). Poor, black South Africans had a far higher chance of being victims of crime: Shaw (2002) suggests that in the apartheid period between 1960 and 1977 the homicide rate tripled; in Soweto, in 1971 there were "an estimated 80 murders each month and over 2000 assaults (mostly stabbings) being treated at the township's major hospital" (Shaw 2002: 3). Black township residents were twenty times more likely to become victims of murder than whites. In very material ways, apartheid "contained" crime within townships. It is this extreme and endemic "culture" of township violence that leads Kynoch (2008) to describe South Africa as exceptional, even among other violent African colonies.

Townships and crime post-apartheid

The apartheid legacy of segregation which divided an entire population along the lines of race, class and geography left the new state with a serious developmental problem after 1994. Townships had never been 'developed in the same way that white residential areas had been: not only were they separate in terms of geography, thus keeping the majority of the population from access to employment and making commuting arduous and expensive, they were also under-

funded and lacked the civic infrastructure that white suburbs enjoyed in terms of (*inter alia*) paved roads, organised transport, schools, hospitals, police stations, street lighting, electricity and sewage connections.

In addition, as the apartheid infrastructure started to crack in the 1980s under the strain of enforcing separate development, shacks reappeared. Earlier, informal settlements had been destroyed and residents forcibly removed; in the later years, especially when township administration came under the direction of the Comrades³⁶, and after the political *detente* in the early 1990s, shacks were erected by rural immigrants who sought a better life in town (Mayekiso 1996; Bank 2011). Immigrants built shacks in the backyards of established township homes, or erected squatter camps on unoccupied land: either way, increasingly densely occupied informal settlements placed huge strain on what were already scarce infrastructural resources (Cook 1992; Harber 2011; Bank 2011); many had no amenities at all, leaving the residents of these flimsily constructed dwellings vulnerable to the elements and disease (Hunter 2010).

Thus the most pressing inequalities that the new government sought to address were the structural inequalities of township spaces. These development challenges were initially guided by the national Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), a macro-economic policy which, *inter alia*, made provision for a housing grant for the poor. Under this scheme, between 1994 and 2003 funding was provided for one million new RDP houses, colloquially referred to as “RDPs”, to be built in the place of informal settlements. These provisions struggle to make up for apartheid deficiencies: built on cheap land away from urban centres, post-apartheid housing planning reproduces apartheid social geography, and continues to accommodate black South Africans in areas that lack educational, employment and recreational opportunities (Hunter 2011). In some places, the RDP housing development scheme is itself hijacked by local criminals (Bahre 2001; 2007), and is vulnerable to official ‘corruption’ (Bahre 2001). While some are able to move to the safety and orderliness of previously white suburbs, townships continue for the most part as under-resourced, black working class residential areas, with a smaller number of middle class residents. Thus although RDP houses or state-subsidised dwellings housed 18.9 percent of South African households in 2010, 18.8 percent still lived in shacks (Statistics South Africa 2010), and new squatter camps, such as Diepsloot, or Khayelitsha, which sprang up during the transition to democracy, continue to grow as migrants, landless and homeless people search for security. They outstrip the state’s capacity to provide basic infrastructure including, importantly, police and police stations (Bank 2011; Harber 2011; Cook 1992).

The struggle over housing is symptomatic of the extreme inequality that has become the infamous mark of South Africa’s post-apartheid development. As the incomes of the black middle-class and the elite has increased as a result of access to professional employment and lucrative state contracts, so too has the gap between these strata and the poor, a trend which had begun in the last quarter of the twentieth century: “While the top income of the top 20 per cent of African households (involving about 6 million people) increased by more than 60 percent over this period, that of the bottom 40 per cent (involving about 18 million people) declined by

³⁶ Comrade is a socialist term used by the members of the anti-apartheid movement to describe themselves.

almost 60 per cent” (Terreblanche 2002: 132-133). In 2011, twenty percent of South Africans were reported living in “extreme poverty” (Statistics South Africa 2014: 12).

Post-apartheid township society thus offers stark and dramatic juxtapositions of wealth and poverty, which rub hard against the liberation promise of “a better life for all”. As the ability to consume has become *the* mark of contemporary belonging (Posel 2010), so those “left behind” face harsh choices about how to belong. Hunter, commenting on the many murders, rapes and burglaries that had occurred in a small area during the year of his fieldwork, reflects soberly on the fates of “failed men” without work in the township of Isithebe, who, “left behind in the whirlwind of opportunity... found that their only possible way up was through crime” (2010: 128). It is this stark inequality which Glaser (2009) argues must be taken into account when attempting to explain the persistence of high crime rates post-apartheid; a premise which is also supported by a Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) report which argues that crime is a result of the “systematic exclusion of millions of people from participation in the labour market” and the personal experience of the contradiction between the “implicit and explicit promise of equality, on the one hand, and the reality of deeply entrenched inequality on the other” (CSVr 2008: 49).

Townships continue to play their apartheid role of ‘containing’ crime, away from commercially valuable urban centres and their relatively more well-off inhabitants. The economic imperatives of the global neo-liberal dispensation have prompted the ghettoising of the poor in townships, which are hindered in their quest for development by a host of infrastructural and educational deficits (Hart 2013; Bank 2011; Samara 2011; Jensen 2008). At the time of the political transition, the high level of crime was understood as a direct consequence of apartheid rule and its associated social and economic under-development. Guided by the principles of the 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy (Department of Safety and Security 1996), crime control and community and national security were conceptualised as the mutually beneficial outcomes of the successful implementation of social development interventions (Dixon 2006). This policy was inflected by a universal human-rights and social-development approach to social order. For crime to come under control, a whole range of social, economic and physical insecurities, such as employment, education and health-care, had to be coherently addressed (UNDP 1994): crime would naturally drop, or become manageable, as an outcome of a range of interconnected social and economic transformations.

However, the economic cost of implementing a more democratic, community-oriented and transformative approach to crime control soon became an impediment to the state’s commitment to this course, especially after the state dropped the strongly welfare-oriented RDP in favour of the new Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic policy in 1996. While the RDP had emphasised public sector support as a social buffer for those most at risk, GEAR depends on market mechanisms, privatisation and foreign investment (Bond 2000). The consequence of this more stringent fiscal environment is that the state has returned to a “tough” and aggressive “boots-and-all approach” to crime (Altbeker 2005: 258), especially when crime – or indeed, civil disobedience – is seen to impinge on the prospects of urban economic growth via private and foreign investment.

This is especially evident in places where large townships adjoin important commercial interests, such as mining assets (where the Marikana massacre³⁷ has become the notorious example) or cities such as Cape Town (Samara 2011), which are concerned to project an image of security in order to attract and retain the global capital considered necessary to drive urban renewal and economic growth. Samara argues that “[E]mphasis by the media, police, and city elites on crime, criminality, and gangs and urban renewal is leading to a practical understanding of townships not as areas in need of development but as areas that pose security threats to the successful renewal of the city”. The result is that townships “remain, on the one hand, underdeveloped economically and socially, but, on the other, become overdeveloped as objects of law-enforcement” (Samara 2003: 282). Instead of treating crime and criminal justice as part of a larger process of social development, then, law enforcement appears to *stand in for* such development, and becomes characterised by a reactive and aggressive, apartheid-style “bandit-catching” policing (Brogden and Shearing 1993: 166), which is required to “keep a lid” on exceptional crime in the townships and prevent it breaching the buffer zone between the poor and the affluent. The aggressive stance adopted by the state towards the threat that crime poses to the safety of its citizens, economy and reputation is starkly visible in the notorious “shoot to kill” speech of then Police Commissioner Bheki Cele (Goldstone 2009): as the *Daily Sun* put it, “There’s law... and there’s Cele’s law”³⁸. Cele however, was hardly alone: Steve Tshwete, the Minister for Safety and Security in 1999, referred to criminals as “hyenas” and “scum” and promised that “We [the police] are going to deal with criminals in the same way that a bulldog deals with a bull” (Helen Suzman Foundation 2009); and the Acting Commissioner Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi, who replaced Cele in 2011, similarly boasted that the police would “meet fire with fire”³⁹.

In the state, but not quite of it, township security is elusive, and residents are obliged to live with different rules to those for whom state-provided security and justice is expected and available. This sense of townships being at the margins of state justice, a case apart, is reflected in the words of Adam Ashforth, an anthropologist who spent two and a half years living in Soweto:

[T]wo features of life there struck me as radically different from anything I had known previously. In the first place, I had never encountered a world where violence and the threat of violence were always present, where the vicissitudes of everyday injustice had to be suffered without reference to a meaningful idea of Law standing above all, without the comforting sense of righteous power – a system of institutions embodying real rights for real persons – awaiting the call to set wrongs to right... [T]he everyday sense of justice of the sort that comes from living in security under a legitimate regime was virtually unknown, even after several years of democratic government (Ashforth 2005: xii).

Despite the promise of democracy then, race and geography indisputably continue to be implicated in crime, and black township residents still comprise that sector of South African

³⁷ On 16 August 2012, South African Police Service members killed 34 striking mineworkers at Marikana and injured many others. The case has become the most notorious example of post-apartheid police brutality. See Jika and Ledwaba (2013).

³⁸ There’s law... and there’s Cele’s law. *Daily Sun* 29 June 2011: 2.

³⁹ We will fight fire with fire! *Daily Sun* 28 October 2011: 4.

society most vulnerable to criminal depredation (Shaw and Gastrow 2001; Statistics SA 2012; Samara 2005; Wilson 2000; Buur 2009). Even though crime levels have steadily dropped since 1994 (Kriegler and Shaw 2016), they still experience the highest rates of contact crimes such as murder, rape, and assault, crimes which appear concentrated in large urban townships and informal settlements (Breetzke 2012). Post-apartheid, crime also remains unevenly distributed along the intersecting structural lines of race and gender (Statistics SA 2012; Jewkes et al 2005) and class (Demombynes and Ozler 2005; Shaw and Gastrow 2001; Breetzke and Horn 2006). Indisputably, the distribution and persistence of high rates of crime post-apartheid thus most affect those people who form the core readership of the *Daily Sun*: working-class, black South Africans living in peri-urban, township and informal settlements.

Crime in the *Daily Sun*

For this reason, perhaps, the *Daily Sun* does not mention those crimes that are connected to the elite: there is almost no mention at all of white-collar crime, or the crimes committed by the elite unless they are black entertainment celebrities, or occasionally politicians. There are a few reports of bank and cash-in-transit heists when these involve spectacular police action; likewise some reports of urban business robbery, crimes that have risen dramatically since 1994. There are seldom reports of the terrorism that is so interesting to western nations, although international crime news appears as brief stories in the SunWorld page, often with an African focus⁴⁰. Noticeably, the robberies, assaults and murders of white people almost never appear as news, though they, too, are by no means negligible in the general crime-culture that ultimately touches all reaches of South African life.

What the *Daily Sun* emphasises instead, and which relates very clearly to the issues peculiar to township life described above, are instances of vigilantism, what it calls “People’s Justice”; the ambiguous status of the police, who may on occasions themselves be criminal at the same time they face the possibility of violent death in the course of monitoring the township; the many murders of township residents by close family members, lovers or neighbours, including the assault, murder and rape of women by their partners; witchcraft-related crimes; pastors and others involved in outwardly more conventional religious groupings who criminally abuse their trust; violent inter-personal and community conflict around access to housing and electricity; the criminality that is born of the workings of state-led institutions such as schools and the Department of Home Affairs; and the corruption of state officials. Especially common to many of these stories is the prominent image of the young criminal man, who preys on his fellow residents, singly or in groups. Like Katz, then, we can construct a categorisation of the *Daily Sun*’s coverage of crime, but this time suited to local needs, and the first four of the categories in the paragraph above form the topics chosen by me for analysis. However, in any given case, several of these varied elements may be braided together; and as the analysis progresses it becomes increasingly evident that the light they can cast on each other is at least as important in determining the *meaning* of crime for the paper’s readership, as is any of them considered solely in isolation.

⁴⁰ This page does not form part of my analysis.

In the following chapter, I present the theoretical perspectives that inform my study. In particular, I discuss the usefulness of Northern critical criminological literature for our local context and argue for a return to the concept of representation which, in conjunction with Foucault's notions of power and the subject, forms the theoretical foundation from which I view my material. In Chapter 3 I make a case for the ethnographic approach which I have taken towards this textual study and I set out the basis on which I construct the thematic content analysis by means of which I have organised the material under review. Here I also explain the interpretive methods I employ with respect to the analysis itself. The results of the thematic content analysis are briefly set out in Chapter 4.

The analysis chapters, Chapters 5 to 8, depart somewhat from the format found in the typical "introduction-methods-results-discussion" thesis (Kamler and Thompson 2014: 114), and each analysis chapter is prefaced by its own context and theoretical frame. Given the complexity of the terrain we must cross, a "ritual offering" (Kamler and Thompson 2014: 114) of a single literature review and context chapter is insufficient in my case. The preparatory introductions to each topic of analysis serve to orient the reader to, and support the discussion of, the material under examination, while enriching our understandings of the connections between them. Chapter 5 is about People's Justice; Chapter 6 concerns the police; Chapter 7 is on gender relations; Chapter 8 deals with witchcraft crimes; and the thesis ends in Chapter 9 with the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspectives

To examine a culture, one need only investigate its crimes (Woody Haut 1999: 3).

About 30 years ago there was much talk that Geologists ought only to observe & not theorise; & I well remember some one saying, that at this rate a man might as well go into a gravel-pit & count the pebbles & describe their colours. How odd it is that every one should not see that all observation must be for or against some view, if it is to be of any service (Charles Darwin 1861).

What is happening now? What is this present of ours? How have we become what we are and what are the possibilities of becoming 'other'? (Maria Tamboukou 1999: 215).

The picture the *Daily Sun* draws of crime in South African townships is presented in this chapter in terms of the theoretical perspectives that set it in a broader conceptual framework, and so offer new possibilities of understanding. Here the issues raised are made part of an international dialogue, principally concerned with productive ways of considering their like. This process is necessarily selective: here I present those concepts and theoretical frameworks which I have found helpful as ways to think about the tabloid's representations. Bringing these interpretive lenses to bear upon the *Daily Sun's* material provides a way to consider its broader social and cultural significance, and allows me to make a case for the importance of the tabloid that goes beyond two approaches that are regularly met with: either its premature dismissal or its 'rescue' from obscurity by more considered sociological interest.

In searching for ways to understand the tabloid's crime content, I was initially drawn to work by critical criminologists⁴¹. The common approach taken by this particular division within the broad discipline of criminology is one that is concerned with "meaning, representation and power" (Carlen 2010). Critical criminological research understands crime *as* culture (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008); to this view, the media, as primary participants in and creators of contemporary culture, play an important role in producing and circulating what crime means. Media representations of crime, in other words, have a certain social power, that effects certain ends. One way of understanding how media power works is through the notion of ideology, a concept which has been used extensively in critical criminology (Taylor et al 1973; Chibnall 1977; Hall et al 1978; Sparks 1992). Though the results of such an approach are informative, I opt instead to use a combination of related, and potentially more nuanced, approaches to illuminate the *Daily Sun's* very varied aims towards its clientele. In particular, as a means of approaching the tabloid's content I use Hall's work on representation and Foucault's notion of

⁴¹ Here I collapse under the label 'critical' what some may see as two distinct research areas, namely 'critical' and 'cultural' criminology. I take my cue from Pat Carlen, who criticises what she sees as a "nominalist rebranding" of critical criminology (in the creation of 'cultural' and 'public' criminology), and argues that, "given that the centrality of meaning, representation and power has been a taken-for-granted assumption in academic criminology since at least the 1960s, I find it difficult to understand why a new and distinct label was required at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Carlen 2010: 99). For a claim made for cultural criminology's distinct research vision, see Ferrell et al (2008). For an overview of the different strands of criminology, see Bosworth and Hoyle (2010).

discourse and the subject, together with his metaphor of the ‘map’ or “grid of intelligibility” (Foucault 1980). In order to link together the social terrain (to which the *Daily Sun* speaks and from which it draws its material), the ‘map’ and representation I draw on Denis Woods’ (1993) exposition on what maps teach us about the relationship between the real, representation and meaning. Woven into this discussion are thoughts about how this body of theory that has emerged in Northern industrialised spaces is useful as a means of understanding our local post-colonial context.

Before proceeding to the thinkers and topics mentioned, I begin this part of my study, intended to establish the theoretical point of view from which I work, with a broad statement of the position I have taken, and an account of the steps which lead to it. I also discuss, to the degree that it affects this study, some of the history of the arguments that have been waged around the topics raised, in order to establish and defend the mode in which my own study of the relevant material takes place.

Approaches to thinking about crime

Towards the end of the previous chapter, I mentioned the complex intertwining of the four themes that constitute the heart of the analysis. This idea of the plaiting together of distinct yet inter-connected ideas is not unique (Shome 2016); another metaphor made popular by Geertz (1973) is that of the “web”, in which a range of points are mutually interconnected and dependent. This metaphor appears in Geertz’s famous formulation of culture as “webs of significance” through the social creation of which the world becomes meaningful:

The concept of culture I espouse... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing... that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be these webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973: 5)

Retaining Geertz’s metaphor of culture as “webs of significance” as an apt model for my purposes, I propose that the tabloid, in creating “SunLand” and its denizens, also produces, as an effect of its compelling representations, a virtual “culture” with its own “webs of significance”. I make the object of my inquiry the exploration of this web. My proposition is straightforward: rather than starting, as is more customarily the case, from the premise that the *Daily Sun*’s crime content comprises a range of (mis)representations derived from and referring to some outside ‘reality’, I begin by setting such concerns for accuracy and correspondence on one side and asking instead “what is the nature of this virtual culture that is the paper’s unique creation?” And “what are the ‘webs of significance’ that connect together and make meaningful the stories told about and by the Sunlanders who inhabit this plane of existence”? I argue later that it is only by looking carefully at the interconnections, the braiding together of these different strands of meaning, that the various aspects of the coverage become intelligible, and that they depend on each other in order for their full significance to be realised. If there still remain questions of contact and correspondence with reality to be considered, I largely confine these to the degree to

which, in view of their circumstances, readers may feel willing and able to acquiesce in taking up at least temporary citizenship in this imagined country.

Thus, rather than imposing a 'truth' external to the paper, my working approach has been to begin with close attention to the content, and to work outwards by making internal comparisons; and only later to seek theoretical models that seem especially appropriate to explain what discoveries emerge. This approach is consistent with Foucault's rule of "exteriority", in which he stipulates that "we must ... on the basis of discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, go towards its external conditions of possibility, towards what gives rise to the aleatory series of these events, and fixes its limits" (Foucault 1981: 67). To approach the paper by first trying to correlate the tabloid's content with an external reality will only inevitably lead to the stale and uninformative conclusion that it 'distorts' crime. To avoid this unhelpful cul-de-sac becomes all the more imperative when we realise that any "truth" about crime is itself a moving target. The 'truth' about crime can be derived from a variety of sources: documentary analysis, interviews with offenders, statistical analysis of police and mortuary dockets, surveys, ethnographic observation, etc; but whatever facts are uncovered by such investigations, there is always a necessary residuum to deal with. All facts require interpretation before they can become meaning, and in this space there is inevitably disagreement.

My object in setting out my position thus is that it alerts us to two antithetical positions within the field of criminology which, broadly defined, is "our organized ways of thinking and talking about crime, criminals and crime control" (Garland and Sparks 2000: 192). On the one hand, positivist criminological research seeks to understand crime in terms of cause and effect, as measurable responses to material conditions. It depends on what is quantifiable and attempts to make predictions based on these calculations. On the other hand, the interpretivist approach advocates understanding the social construction of the meaning of crime and its relationship to the distribution of power in society as a necessary constituent of any analysis. Neither, of course, can offer 'the' truth on this or any other social phenomenon; but the former dominates the landscape of scholarly research on the relationship between media and crime (Greer 2010a). However, I feel that the latter has more to offer in terms of providing an approach to understanding the crime material we find in the tabloid. Looking specifically at critical criminological research which takes as its object media representations of crime and the relationship between these and the wider society, I outline how the news-crime relationship has been theorised, before moving on to research about media and crime more broadly.

News and crime

The research conducted in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s on crime news continues to shape enquiries into the relationship between news, crime and society. The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS), the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University (CMCR) and the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) rejected the liberal pluralist approaches popular at the time that assumed news objectively reflected an already-achieved social consensus. Rather, each took a critical position, informed by different interpretations of Marxism, in which news, rather than a neutral conduit of consensual values, is

instead seen as the means by which social control is achieved (Greer 2010b). The work done by the BCCCS under Hall in particular has had a lasting influence, producing a range of texts on news, deviance and subcultures that was to inform the development of both cultural criminology and cultural studies. The BCCCS rejected the economic reductionism of the Marxism employed by the other research groups, and instead used a more flexible synthesis of Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony, Althusser's (1971) model of state institutions and Barthes' (1972) reading of semiotics to show how the media and other social institutions operate autonomously but coherently to maintain power: it is through representations, circulating within popular culture and in the performance of everyday rituals that the dominant ideology contests for legitimacy.

The connection between representation and hegemony was developed by Hall and his colleagues in *Policing the crisis* (1978), an examination of the moral panic that evolved around the idea of "mugging" in the early 1970s in Britain. This panic, they argue, was out of proportion to the real threat posed by mugging. Instead, they demonstrate how politicians together with police and the judiciary constructed an idea of mugging around an expression imported from the USA, "made familiar... not by the coinage of a simple term but by transmitting 'mugging' as part of a whole context of troubling themes and images", predominantly via the media. Their analysis rests on a consideration of media routines and the processes involved in constructing news reports. By habitually relying on official sources, they argued, journalists effectively reproduce the definitions of the powerful:

the media are frequently not the "primary definers" of news events at all... their structured relationship to power has the effect of making them play a crucial but secondary role in reproducing the definitions of those who have privileged access, as of right, to the media as "accredited sources" (Hall et al 1978: 19).

Earlier, Stan Cohen had argued in *Folk devils and moral panics* (1972) that when "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and its interests" (Cohen 1972: 28), this perception generates a "moral panic" in response to a potential threat of social disintegration. Hall and his colleagues argue in *Policing the Crisis* that the moral panic had to be understood within a context of a crisis of hegemony faced by the ruling class. The accumulating structural contradictions of British society, brought about by economic crisis, undermined the political consensus that post-war economic growth had previously supported. Given this context, the official response to the panic over mugging, which focused on the stricter policing of black immigrants – the poor and unemployed in economically depressed urban areas – achieved several aims: it diverted public attention from the escalating crisis; the figure of the black mugger provided a scapegoat for public fear; and at the same time it brought into circulation a public discourse that supported authoritarian interventions. Thus the policing of mugging became synonymous with policing the social crises as a whole.

Crime as culture

Policing the Crisis was one of many pieces of research which saw crime as a creative response to rapid social change. This approach differed substantially from functionalist views prevalent at

the time which understood crime as deviance from accepted social norms. From a functionalist perspective, social norms are consensual and taken for granted, and the criminal is a figure on the margins of society who engages in deviant behaviour antithetical to the group. In a sense, this figure *lacks culture*, that is, the culture of the consensus. For the Birmingham researchers on the other hand, crime (the deviant behaviours of subcultures) *was* culture, in the sense that it was a *meaningful* reaction to social pressures. Rather than deviance simply being a manifestation of a lack of culture, the result of social disintegration or a failure of effective socialisation, deviant subcultures were engaged in active processes of meaning-making; thus their behaviour must be seen in terms of *culture*.

The aim of subcultural theory was to demonstrate how behaviours which were unacceptable to 'normal' people could be seen as meaningful (that is, cultural) solutions to the problems marginalised people faced within the socio-economic and political structures of the time. In order to understand the relationship between social structure and individual and group agency, the BCCCS researchers situated the creation of subcultural meaning within a broader formation of inequality and elite hegemony. This research thus combined an interest in the articulation of deviant youth cultures with the structuring effects of class. Phil Cohen (1972) for example suggested that the tough working class subcultures of London's East End could be seen as a 'magical solution' to the problems of post-war economic turmoil, the breakdown of working class social networks and the concomitant assaults on hard working class masculinities, a conclusion supported by similar work done by Paul Willis in his study of the 'lads' in working class youth culture, *Learning to labour* (1977). In Hall and Jefferson's *Resistance through Ritual* (1975), and Dick Hebdige's *Subcultures: the meaning of style* (1979), both the specificity and creativity of the working class youth cultures and their historical and social location are necessary for the analysis.

The significance of *Policing the Crisis* lay in its bringing into focus for consideration the relationship between a 'moral panic' over crime, the maintenance of state power, and the role of representation in these processes. However, it was criticised for its idealism and determinism and was succeeded by a critical criminology that remained sensitive to the structuring effects of power at the same time that it took crime and its effects on victims seriously (Lea and Young 1984). Currently, critical criminology has the aim of exploring "the centrality of meaning, representation, and power in the contested construction of crime" (Ferrell et al 2008: 2). Not only is crime and violence itself "communicative work" (Ferrell et al 2008: 11) directed at audiences to specific ends, but the meanings it communicates are inextricably entwined with mediated culture. In effect, what critical criminology alerts us to is the importance of considering the wider social response to crime and deviance (including media responses), as such acts are not outside of society but are constitutive of it. Deviant acts and the meanings attributed to them arise within distinct social milieus, the structuring effects of which must be considered. Critical criminology takes into account how relations of power inflect these meanings and their social consequences. It is this "fully social theory of deviance" that Taylor and his radical colleagues advocated that criminology should pursue in *The New Criminology* (Taylor et al 1973), which situated crime and its control within capitalist social relations. The social context and these structural factors are important in terms of what they contribute to the frame of mind which

governs and reflects a particular milieu: “Crime and deviance is (*sic.*) ... part of the “disorder” which mirrors order or, indeed, [are] frequently very much part of that order itself” (Young 2011: 223). Crime can thus be a response to social dimensions and conditions not readily recognised as constitutive *both* of deviance and of order; i.e., as part of the joint *Weltanschauung* in which a society’s understanding of itself is constructed. Crime and the response to it are part of a relational dialectic that incorporates the total society.

Crime, media and late modernity

While earlier criminological enquiry was contextualised by the demise of the welfare state, more recent work undertaken in the west is framed by the idea of contemporary society being one of ‘risk’. This notion draws on Beck’s (1992) argument that the evolution of late modernity has produced a “risk society”, characterised by a generalised and pervasive sense of anxiety and insecurity as known values and social arrangements collapse under the forces of economic and cultural globalisation. The “*crisis of being*” (Ferrell et al 2008: 72; italics in original) this entails is accompanied by a vague but uncontainable sense of risk in which crime looms large, a fear that is mirrored by a demand for greater security. Tapping into these fears of personal and social insecurity, commoditised images of crime and criminals, circulated globally by mass media, are said to encourage a “culture of control” (Garland 2001), manifest in an increasingly intolerant stance towards deviant behaviour, with harsher laws, and the growth of the prison population.

For this reason, understanding the complex interconnections between action and representation in the media-saturated social landscape of late modernity in contemporary western society is now the key focus of Northern critical criminological inquiry. Here, the enactment of crime, the workings of criminal justice, and mediated representations in all their variety are inseparable, and each depends upon the other: thus “no sharp separation is possible between the study of the practical conduct of affairs in crime and punishment and the ways in which these matters are publically represented and perceived” (Sparks 1992: 4-5; see also Hayward and Presdee 2010). Mediated representations of crime become part of our experience of crime ‘on the ground’:

What crime and crime control mean is an ongoing construction in which media indiscriminately sell images of both ‘real’ and ‘fictional’ crime as entertainment, representations which saturate our everyday lived experience, whether as criminals, victims or onlookers. This is Baudrillard’s (1981) post-modern society, in which the real and its representations become interchangeable: “the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street; there is no clearly linear sequence, but rather a shifting interplay between the real and the virtual, the factual and the fictional”, as Ferrell et al put it (2008: 123-124). The result is a “world in which the gritty, on-the-ground reality of crime, violence, and everyday criminal justice is dangerously confounded with its own representation” (Ferrell et al 2008: 130).

However, at this point a certain strain becomes evident between the particularities of the local South African context and theory from northern industrial societies. The densely woven intertextuality so necessary to the post-modern theorising of the crime-media nexus in the west, in which real and fictional crimes become mutually constitutive and indistinguishable as they circulate through a dense and proliferating network of media representations, is not so easily

applied here, in what is for many a relatively media-poor environment compared to wealthier Northern counterparts. This is not to say that local media are not important as producers of meanings about crime, or that South Africa is outside of global flows of representations, but that we must be cautious in applying such theorising of the hyper-reality of crime to our case.

Meaning and crime in South African criminology

South African criminology has indeed been curiously silent on the ‘meaning’ and ‘representation’ dimensions of crime identified as so central to its social construction by critical criminology. Much post-apartheid criminology has certainly been *critical*, following the groundbreaking trend set by Dennis Davis and Mana Slabbert’s *Crime and Power in South Africa* (1985). This small volume of collected articles, published a decade before liberation, was directly influenced by the work of the BCCCS and focussed on how apartheid laws not only produced criminals but also controlled crime in ways which fostered and protected the apartheid state. However, little research is concerned with the *meaning* of crime, or its representation. It is this lack that prompts Dixon (2013: 319) to draw attention to the “aetiological crisis” of post-apartheid South African criminology which, while committed to social justice, seems unable or reluctant to grapple with the problem of understanding what crime *means* for those who perpetrate and endure it: criminologists display instead “a tendency to concentrate on the operation of the criminal justice system, mechanisms of crime control and processes of criminalization at the expense of explaining crime itself and understanding the lives of those accused of committing acts defined in this way” (Dixon 2013: 323).

Dixon argues that what is lacking in research such as that by Zinn (2010), who interviewed imprisoned house-breakers in order to inform readers how to protect their property, is the “criminological imagination” which Young (2011) stresses is so necessary for a more satisfactory rendering of the motivations and consequences of crime. For example, commenting on Breetzke and Horn’s (2006) “spatial-ecological” study of crime in Tshwane, Dixon remarks that while the researchers “provide some evidence of a link between social and economic deprivation and the distribution of certain kinds of offender, the nature of that link, the lives of the offenders and non-offenders who inhabit deprived neighbourhoods remain largely unexplored and unexplained” (Dixon 2013: 327). A solution to the aetiological crisis, and a South African criminology that is better “attuned to the post-colonial condition” will, he argues, be found in accounts of crime where “history and structure are given meaning in the lives and psyches of human beings” (Dixon 2013: 331). In other words, more attention must be paid to the biographical, emotional, sensual and aesthetic dimensions of crime and our experiences of it in specific historical moments: it is these vital (in both senses of the word) details which bring crime “to life”, as it were, and render it comprehensible and available for interpretation⁴².

Similarly, there is little discussion of the media’s role in the production of the meaning of crime. Given the extent of violence, analyses of mediated representations are not seen as particularly useful for the serious work of criminology, as the following exchange about what matters for local criminology demonstrates. Shortly after the political transformation in 1994, there was a prolonged public quarrel about the true extent of crime in South Africa. A feeling that out-of-

⁴² Dixon makes an exception to this criticism of research by Ashforth (2005), Jensen (2008), Glaser (1998), Marks (2001) and Kynoch (2008), all of whose work I use in this research.

control crime had “stolen the show” (Shaw and Gastrow 2001: 235) and eclipsed the triumph of our new and hard-won democratic freedom, led to an anxious tallying of the crime statistics in an effort to arrive at an indisputable truth about the matter: was South Africa really the ‘murder capital’ of world? Could the police commissioner’s reports be trusted? Were the figures being distorted in order to gloss over the real state of affairs – which everyone ‘knew’ was more dreadful than state officials would like them to believe?

Reflecting on the “spectre of illegality” that seems to capture popular imaginations in post-colonial Africa and of which this fetishisation of crime statistics was symptomatic (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a: 273), Comaroff and Comaroff argued that “measurement is always mediated by historical conditions as numbers are made to signify in different ways” (2006b: 212). They suggested that in the post-apartheid context, statistics, both official and vernacular, circulated via the media “not only as information, but as a discourse on the nature and efficacy of governance itself” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b: 229): crime had in effect become the popular barometer by which the public imagination measured the success – or failure – of the new state. Alongside this estimation they reflect on the political work that the mediated statistics were doing in signifying and reifying different social categories: the numbers “render inchoate forces of disorder into concrete, communicable ‘facts,’ conjuring up citizens, moral communities, the nation. Herein lies their ‘politics’ in the lower case: their capacity to contrive or reproduce meaningful social categories” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b: 224). What the Comaroffs are emphasising is that crime statistics *signify*: they speak to, and conjure into being, more than just the numbers, or events themselves. Crime and the combating of crime had become metaphorical gauges for the viability of the new South Africa.

This provocation was irresistible to at least one eminent local critical criminologist, Clive Glaser (2008), who, irritated by this discursive approach, complained that investigations into popular discourses about crime such as that offered by the Comaroffs above are hardly useful in unearthing the causes of persistent violent crime: their approach “is not at all helpful in unravelling the question of causality because it focuses on middle class obsession and fear, the way people talk about crime, the ‘theatricality’ of crime prevention and reportage” (2008: 336). In other words these discourses have, in his mind, no bearing upon the causes of crime, the uncovering of which is the aim of critical criminology. Glaser prefers to work with the kinds of information that “have real potential to answer important sociological questions about crime” (Glaser 2008: 336) and in this regard chooses to look more specifically at two under-researched areas in local criminology, namely South Africa’s extreme and growing inequality levels and the nature of male youth socialisation, as offering more concrete explanatory power. That these are cultural domains redolent of social construction need hardly be emphasised. Nevertheless, their discursive creation is ignored in favour of a critical social scientific understanding that edges towards positivism, most noticeable when Glaser draws attention to genetic factors that may predispose certain groups (for example, Coloureds and women) to avoid, or become embroiled in, crime.

Yet, as my second opening quotation from someone who may be one of Glaser’s models, Charles Darwin, demonstrates, even this eminent figure was occasionally somewhat ambivalent

about his own positivism. Deliberate avoidance of the large questions of the kind Glaser evidences may or may not be able to offer explanations for this or that crime, but says nothing about the meaning of crime itself. His adopted minimalism seems always to leave us much where we started, or invites us to remain at the level of cliché, when, clearly, more is wanting.

Retaining and staying with the primary insights of critical criminology, then – the idea of crime *as* culture, *as* meaning, and the role that the media might play in contributing to the construction and circulation of those meanings and their social consequences – I feel able to take these together as having direct potential for my investigation (Greer 2010: 5). A great deal of research now exists which specifically examines the representations of crime in the mass media and their role in maintaining particular relations of power.⁴³ This research starts from the position returned to several times above, that, given the ubiquity and complexity of today’s mediascape, what ‘real’ crime means is inseparable from its representation: “it has become virtually impossible in contemporary society to separate the real from the mediated, and every ‘true crime’ that comes to public attention becomes inseparable from the media discourses and images which communicate it” (Jewkes 2011: 272).

Much of this research is critical of the role of the media insofar as, guided by a desire for social justice, it aims to demonstrate how media images of crime and criminals produce and circulate understandings of contemporary culture that militate *against* the freedom of social groups from marginalisation and oppression, or, indeed, actively participate in validating such groups’ ongoing subordination. Such a project follows directly from those early studies which sought to connect mediated representations of crime with the thorny issues of race and class. These concerns have been retained (for example Mclaughlin 2005) and expanded to include, *inter alia*, the stereotypical representations of women (Dobash et al 1995; Carter et al 1998; Wykes 2001; Jewkes 2011); youth and children (Kitzinger 2004; Mayr and Machin 2012; Wykes 2001) and the poor (Wykes 2001). Critical media criminology also examines the mediated representations of powerful social groups, state institutions and capitalist organisations, looking, for example, at the character and responsibilities of the police (Reiner 2000; Leishman and Mason 2003; Jewkes 2011; Mayr and Machin 2012); the effectiveness of the prison as a mode of punishment and rehabilitation (Mason 2006; Jewkes 2011; Mayr and Machin 2012); and the equivocal coverage of corporate crime (Cavender and Mulcahy 1998; Mayr and Machin 2012).

All such research is interested in analysing the political, social and cultural underpinnings of crime and its media representations. They reveal how images of crime, patterned over time in particular historical and social contexts, overshadow more nuanced and realistic understandings of law, crime and justice. But, without necessarily accusing the above thinkers of such a position (most of whom would eschew it) we here arrive at an epistemological cross-road. The consistent implication of the above is that the media is capable of representing ‘the truth’ about society. Working from such a position, Greer argues, is not necessarily helpful: “media criminology frequently finds itself in the position where it can do little more than confirm the criminological truism that ‘the media distort crime’... This approach is based upon a positivistic epistemological

⁴³ The following authors provide a good introduction to the main interests of this field of research: Sparks (1992); Wykes (2001); Brown (2003); Carrabine (2008); Mayr and Machin (2012); Jewkes (2011).

realism which insists upon, indeed relies upon, the maintenance of sharp, tangible and largely impermeable boundaries between sign and referent, represented and real” (Greer 2010: 4).

It is the *metaphoric* dimension of crime, criminals, and retribution which is the solution here: it is by paying attention to language – the metaphorical devices by which we frame and authenticate our experiences of crime – that we can grasp crime’s significance, and its political dimensions. The importance of postmodern thought in this regard (with its insistence on the collapse of the distinction between the real and the representation) is that it

allows us to recognize that mediatisation does not distort the “true” nature of crime and criminality, and their distribution. It is never capable of representing them in the first place. Crime and criminality do not have a fixed existence or meaning. They are taxonomic categories, culturally produced and sustained in more or less patterned ways... The centrality of the metaphor is that it constitutes and is constituted by the symbolic articulation of experience, only inadequately gesturing toward an underlying reality. “Crime” is not the reality; “crime” is the metaphor (Brown 2003: 74-75).

If mediated crime is understood as symbolically standing in for wider social failures, vulnerabilities and chauvinisms, the research goal then is to grasp how these representations are indicative of the overt or hidden anxieties, denials, fears, values and desires of contemporary life. Through images of “good and bad, innocent and guilty, heroes and villains, victims and abusers” (Wykes 2001: 1), crime becomes emblematic of wider social ills and tensions. Significant and memorable crimes in particular can be seen as providing society with moral and psychological yardsticks; via mass mediation, such crimes “stay in mass consciousness, subtly contributing to our sense of selves, our perceptions of others, our cultural values, our levels of tolerance and our national identity” (Jewkes 2011: 268). Crime, in other words, signifies more than its measurable content, whether ‘fact’ or ‘fiction’: and so to ‘read’ mediated crime “is neither to measure nor to invent, but to explore the inventions we call crime, their metaphorical resonance, their inherence in structures of feeling and in experience” (Brown 2003: 75). Such an approach helps us to avoid pointless ‘media-bashing’ and encourages us instead to use media representations as a means to grasp the social problems of which they are symptomatic and indicative. It is only by understanding how and what crime *signifies* that we can successfully approach and intervene in its ‘reality’.

This approach also allows us to see that no text should be prioritised: all committed accounts of the world are equally valid *as constructions*. For a positivist criminology to talk about crime as though only its approach has privileged access to reality, or to talk about the media as though criminology exists outside of media discourse – outside of society – indicates a blindness to its own imbrications in the social. Turning this insight towards the case of news, whose self-conscious professional aim is to reflect ‘the truth’ about the world, is perhaps then all the more imperative: news has a natural affinity with positivist criminology, whose empirical interpretations of crime are readily adaptable to its own discursive regime of objectivity (recall the Comaroff’s reflections on the local ferment over mediated crime statistics; and Glaser’s irritable critique of their discussion). It is because representations – whether empirical or

fictional – have material effects and help to organise the social world in particular ways that they deserve attention, and news, which purports to tell ‘the truth’ about society perhaps even more so.

Early on in the ferment of debates over crime and the news, Chibnall (1977) examined how crime news was socially constructed, from the cultivation of professional journalistic identities, through newsroom practices and the application of news values to the selection and rendering of copy. He argued on the basis of this construction that we should be wary of thinking that crime news tells ‘the truth’ about crime. At the same time, newspapers are

our central repositories and disseminators of knowledge and, as such, exert a considerable influence over our perceptions of groups and life-styles of which we have little first-hand experience. They have the power to create issues and define the boundaries of debates and, while they may not manipulate our opinions in any direct sense... they can organize opinion and develop world views by providing structures of understandings into which isolated and unarticulated attitudes and beliefs may be fitted (Chibnall 1977: 226).

Because of this power to define reality, crime news needs to be subjected to “close, systematic and critical analysis” (Chibnall 1977: 226) of the language it employs. But Chibnall cautions that this is important not so much because of the *manifest content* of news as its implicit *meaning*: readers are not dupes, and know that they must take news content “with a pinch of salt”; for this reason it is “easier for most readers to reject the open, substantive (factual) content of newspaper accounts than the more latent and implicit interpretive schema in which that content is embedded. These schema are easily absorbed into the common stock of knowledge in a largely subliminal fashion” (Chibnall 1977: 45).

Representation

Chibnall’s comments point to the invisible but potent work of representation. In *Policing the Crisis* (1978), Hall and his colleagues had argued that the media do not simply reflect an already achieved consensus about crime, but actively participate in constructing that consensus. Hall went on to develop and refine this idea in his later work on representation and discourse, concepts which are now central to cultural studies. But considering how important media representations are to the contemporary theorising of the crime-media-society relationship, representation *per se* is surprisingly seldom highlighted in its role as a foundational signifying process by the media criminology literature – a recent and highly praised anthology by Chris Greer (2010), for example, contains no entry in the index for representation. Yvonne Jewkes’ influential book (2011), too, omits any reference to representation (apart from a brief entry in the glossary for representation/misrepresentation) – despite the majority of the chapters being concerned *de facto* with media representations! How representation “works” is taken for granted and its correspondence with our ideas about our cultural and social worlds are assumed, rather than demonstrated.

However, I believe there is real value in exploring and re-iterating the concepts that are fundamental to representation, especially since – as Hall has demonstrated – they provide a link between the media and lived culture. Understanding how representation works not only allows us to comprehend what the *Daily Sun*'s crime reports 'do' in terms of constructing a particular point of view, but allows us to think more broadly about the social and cultural milieu of which they are a product and to which they simultaneously speak.

In the discussion of representation that follows, I review some of the legacy approaches that have largely determined the nature of the debate in modern times. Hence I begin with Hall's use of structuralist accounts of meaning and representation, before moving on to a more detailed engagement with Foucault's particular formulation of the relationship between representation and discourse. A particular reason for passing on beyond the analytic tools provided by structuralism to engage with what Foucault offers, is that he provides the means to move the discussion of the media-crime relationship away from the central focus of the various pioneering British schools: their engagement with texts as carriers of ideology (which I have already argued to be fairly limited for my present purposes); as well as from the (somewhat more satisfying) interpretations of crime as the metaphorical gauge of those lived social ills of which it is emblematic.

Instead, Foucault's mode of research provides an intrinsically more flexible model; one that unites a broader field of complex interrelationships between several seemingly independent categories of action as they appear in the *Daily Sun*. More especially, it permits me to ask what domain they jointly constitute, what relations of power inhere therein; what ostensible 'truths' about crime they offer; and what kinds of subjects they propose. Central here are Foucault's notions of discourse, power and the subject which I outline below. I go on to pick out his metaphor of a 'grid of intelligibility' which suggests for me a possible method of analysis of the texts and a way of showing the relationships between the various points that emerge: in other words, a map of the textual content. Finally, by way of returning to the idea of representation and its relationship to reality I close with observations by Denis Wood (1993) on maps and mapping.

Representation may be taken broadly to include all the characteristic ways a culture uses language to produce meaning. In Hall's view these are no longer to be seen as various transparent reflections of reality but as a set of unique and even idiosyncratic ways of picturing the world. Indeed, such a situation raises the possibility of a new field of study, since the distinctive features concerned may actually act as inadvertent clues telling us of the implicit ideas and assumptions of those who use such tropes. In theorising how representation works, Hall (2013) begins by drawing on structuralist accounts of language, in particular Saussure's (1960) theory of linguistics and Barthes' (1972) work on semiotics, to propose a constructivist understanding of representation in which the world, our mental concepts and language are complexly interrelated.

Saussure had conceptualised language as consisting of two aspects, *langue* (the rule-governed system of language), and *parole* (the unique individual speech-acts). Saussure defined *langue* as

made of elemental signs which consists of two parts: mental concepts, which he calls the signifieds; and their signifiers (the arbitrarily chosen symbols by which we designate our mental concepts). The signifier and the signified are linked by culturally-constructed and shared *codes* which organise and delimit the sign's meaning. This is very much a social view of language, insofar as individual members of a society are obliged to use its implicit rules if they wish to be understood: the rules precede the users.

Drawing on this model, Hall argues that culture can be thought of as the “shared conceptual maps, shared language systems and the *codes which govern the relationships of translation between them*” (Hall 2013: 7; italics in original). Members of a culture must share the same language system and conventions: internalised codes allow them to express themselves in language, whether written, spoken, etc, and to be understood in return. However, because the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary and socially constructed and is built on *concepts*, rather than inhering in the thing itself (whatever material or abstract object the sign supposedly refers to), meaning can never be fixed. Nor is meaning a property of the sign alone. Rather, meaning depends on the sign's symbolic function in relation to others in the same system: signifieds, argue Saussure “are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is being what others are not” (Saussure 1959: 117 in Harland 1987:15). It is this “system of differences” which signifies. Hall stresses the radical way in which this mutability of the sign “unfixes” meaning and opens representation and interpretation “to history and change” (Hall 2013: 17).

Saussure's insights were adopted by others in a variety of fields, and Barthes adapted his linguistics for a cultural semiotics by means of which he aimed to establish a science of culture. To this end he examined cultural practices rather than language – images, gestures, objects or whole performances, such as a wrestling match or a magazine cover (Barthes 1972), or an advertisement (Barthes 1977). His premise is that as all cultural objects are meaningful, they can be seen as *languages* or *texts* which are open to an analysis such as suggested by Saussure. Barthes' semiotic analysis relates the meaning of the cultural sign to “the wider realms of social ideology – the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society” (Hall 2013: 24), what Barthes (1972) terms society's “myths”. Signs work at the level of myth via two linked processes: any given sign (such as the famous *Paris Match* magazine cover of the black soldier saluting the French flag) can become the signifier in a second sign (in the *Paris Match* case, what is signified is a “message” about French colonialism and her faithful Negro soldier-sons” (Hall 2013: 24)). This completed second sign is symptomatic of the “myth” of which the magazine cover is an iteration and from which it draws its meaning). As Hall explains: “The first completed meaning functions as a signifier in the second stage of the representation process, and, when linked with a wider theme by a reader, yields a second, more elaborate and ideologically framed message or meaning” (Hall 2013: 24). Hall is interested in Barthes' application because he shows how to extend Saussure's understanding of language to include other cultural practices and the ways in which these are made to mean.

These structuralist accounts of representation remain useful as a means of examining individual texts, and I do indeed employ their methods in the analyses of the *Daily Sun*'s material. But it is how these elements of representation relate to power and subjectivity which is ultimately of more significance for my investigation. As I explain below, Foucault's theory of representation, in which discursive power and subjective identity are interlinked, offers a way to understand not only how the representations in the *Daily Sun* become meaningful, but how they offer the reader discursively-produced subject positions to occupy in relation to this meaning. It is how such subject positions are also positioned within a social matrix of power-relations that is especially significant for our purposes here. The Foucauldian view of power is subtle. While I discuss discursive power below in more detail, here I must distinguish it briefly from that of ideology, specifically that definition offered by Thompson (1990), and thereby make the final decisive break from accounts of media representations of crime as serving ideological functions.

From Thompson's (1990: 59) perspective, forms of social domination are the result of "systematically asymmetrical" relations of power. Here, media are ideological to the extent that the representations they circulate serve to support or create such relations of domination (Thompson 1990: 56). Discursive power, by contrast, is not so much imposed from some central authority or organised belief-system, or bound up with forces that ensure criteria of inclusion and exclusion, but is rather expressive of the total of collective ideas about themselves implicit in the everyday lives of individuals of a certain social order and historical moment. As embodied in a particular discourse, power thus incorporates "a multitude of institutions... and practices in which knowledge is produced" (Prinsloo 2009: 207). Noticeably, there are multiple sites of power, not one (as Thompson's understanding of ideology suggests):

Circumstances in the 21st century are marked by uncertainty and strongly contesting positions and ideas. Significant historical shifts have resulted in previously widely held views being challenged and, as a result, different sets of ideas, beliefs and attitudes jostle and contest with each other. The understanding of ideology as presented here does not adequately allow for complex social contexts that are characterised by a high degree of inconsistency of ideas and values and where it is difficult to be clear which position is dominant. It also does not address situations where formerly dominant ideas and practices have been partially or largely usurped but continue to operate (Prinsloo 2009: 210).

As Prinsloo decisively affirms, the concept of discourse is better suited to take on this taxing task. The relevance of Prinsloo's description above to the popular cultural situation faced by the tabloid is clearly apparent.

Discourse, power and the subject

The structuralism of Saussure and Barthes gave way to post-structuralist developments which questioned our ability to arrive at a science of meaning. Foucault (1980) explicitly refutes such structuralist aims and offers instead a way to analyse power based on a theory of discourse, which, while connected to socially shared meanings was more attuned to how these are produced in specific historical and social conjunctures. Discourse here does not refer to language *per se* but to the construction of knowledge – his interest lay in the historically-contextualised rules which determine what statements about the world are true, or false. If language makes an infinite number of speech-acts possible (the potentially infinite creativity of *parole*) why is it that so many statements about the world are similar? And why are some considered meaningless, or false? Foucault's broad argument is that it is the rules of discourse that create what is meaningful (Foucault 1972). Discourse “constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” (Hall 2013: 29). By the same token, discourse rules out what is forbidden, and limits what can be thought, said and done in relation to the topic (Foucault 1980).

Thus the meanings that we give to our material and social world are made within discourse; indeed, nothing exists outside of discourse, in the sense that only things and actions within discourse can be meaningful. This is because discourse produces the knowledge necessary for meaning to be made: material objects, the natural world or an aspect of human society, have meaning only when brought within discourse. To think of something as a natural object, for example, does not place it outside of discourse: “natural facts are also discursive facts... to call something a natural object is a way of conceiving it that depends upon a classificatory system... a way of classifying objects that is historical and contingent” (Laclau and Mouffe 1990: 103). A subject like madness, the focus of Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973), is similarly made within discourse. Madness is not the same for all cultures at all times: it is only within a specific discursive formation that madness becomes meaningful as a category or topic. In this case, a specific discursive subject – the madman who displays the attributes of madness – comes into being as an object of knowledge by the authoritative discourse of psychiatry at a particular moment in western history. The discourse, a combination of knowledge and practice, produces a historically contingent truth about madness.

What arises at this juncture is a question of power: discursive knowledge is linked to power by means of the authority it gains from the truth it proposes. Indeed, discursive knowledge is powerful because it *makes itself true*: “knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects and, in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’” (Hall 2013: 33). For this reason it is pointless to ask if something is really true: the question to ask is how truth effects are created within discourse. In the same way, power produces knowledge: “power and knowledge directly imply one another; ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault 1977: 27).

It is the body which is at the centre of the struggle for power by various discursive formations of power/knowledge: bodies are “directly involved in a political field” (1977: 25).

Power relations have an immediate hold upon [the body]; they invest it, mask it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs (Foucault 1977: 25).

Discursive power ultimately operates at the level of the body because it is “capillary” in action: “in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals” (Foucault 1980: 39). Foucault reiterates this point: capillary power is “deployed and exercised through a net-like organisation” (1980: 98); the relations it entails “go right down into the depths of society” (Foucault 1977: 27). Significant here is that power is not a repressive force monopolised by one authority. Rather, it is a productive “strategy” (Foucault 1977: 26), which operates through and upon the body via the diffuse “micro-power” (Foucault 1977: 27) of capillary action in order to make individual bodies collectively useful and productive. Thus power does not “weigh on us as a force that says no, but... traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault 1980: 119).

Correlatively, freedom is indispensable to the exercise of discursive power: “Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” (Foucault 1982: 221). In other words, for power relations to be present there must be an element of freedom present, the chance to make a choice. Physical coercion is not power as Foucault envisages it; power only operates when subjects, individually or collectively, “are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized” (Foucault 1982: 221). Power, in other words, rather than being simply repressive, refers to those practices which modify the behaviour of the actors involved: it is a “mode of action upon actions” (Foucault 1982: 222), as it were. Foucault calls this “government”, or the “conduct of conduct”: “To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault 1982: 221).

Discipline and Punish

Foucault developed the idea of power/knowledge most expressly in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), in which he describes how different forms of crime and punishment emerged at various points in French history, along with their associated discursive subjects. *Discipline and Punish* does not have as its primary aim a discussion of the emergence of prison: rather, for Foucault the prison is indicative of a wider social transformation in which the “science” of penality “[gave] birth to man as an object of knowledge” (Foucault 1977: 24). Foucault directs us to the way in which a particular discourse, while seemingly about punishment, was actually concerned with the much larger project of the regulation and production of ‘docile’ bodies. In other words, what we have come to know about crime, criminals and punishment is inextricably connected to how power circulates within and regulates contemporary society.

He opens his argument by pointing to an historical break between two quite different forms of punishment in France. The first is the public spectacle of the punitive torture and death of Damiens the regicide, in 1757. His body, carefully tortured over many hours, served as a sign of the authority of the sovereign: the execution was a performance, a meticulously choreographed “theatre of hell” (Foucault 1977: 46) in which the various actors – the judges, executioners, the public and the condemned – participated in the drama of the production of guilt and its punishment, and the re-establishment of the absolute right of the monarch to rule.

The second, appearing eighty years later, is the list of “rules” compiled for the “House of young prisoners in Paris” (Foucault 1977: 6). The list divides up the day into distinct periods, each with its own meticulously ordained activity signalled by drum-rolls: for example “At the first drum roll, the prisoners must rise and dress in silence” (Foucault 1977: 6). No moment of the prisoners’ day is left unsupervised or without direction: this is a “political technology of the body”, a regimen which is simultaneously directed at the prisoners “soul” (Foucault 1977: 30).

These two examples, separated by less than a century, characterise two quite different ways of thinking about crime, criminals and appropriate punishment. Foucault’s aim is to demonstrate that what is taken as crime, and what is believed to be suitable punishment, are the result of particular applications of knowledge and power in particular historical moments. Punishment is a socially constructed means of administering power relations towards particular ends: it is a “technology of power” (Foucault 1977: 131) that inflects the balance of power-relations in society.

Especially interesting (and widely quoted) in this regard is his account of the rise of the panopticon in the nineteenth century as symbolic of what was becoming the preeminent means of social control. The panopticon is the foremost example of a “disciplinary” institution (Foucault 1977: 210) whose effects are directed at the body, as before: but the punishment that it carries out does not crush and annihilate. Rather, away from the public eye, it re-trains the body and inculcates new habits through a programme of total and unceasing observation and vigilant exercise. Key here is the “examination”, an “optics of power” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 156) in which hierarchical surveillance enables the normalising judgements on which such discipline depends. The panopticon is the superlative instance of the “disciplinary society” (Foucault 1977: 209) and is symbolic of the broader social transformation in which individuals come under constant surveillance in a variety of ways, the better to accustom them to the self-imposed regulation of their behaviour: it is no co-incidence that society’s primary institutional settings – factories, schools, hospitals, army barracks – resemble the prison in the surveillance they impose and the individualized regulation of habits they demand. Disciplinary society regards the individual as an object to be moulded and transformed: discipline is a “mechanics of power” that “produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies” (Foucault 1977: 138) which not only are both individually and collectively efficient but are amenable to direction (by industry, schools, hospitals, etc.). This disciplinary power is at the same time a normalising one: “The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*” (Foucault 1977: 183; italics in original).

This summary is not included here only for its ancillary historical interest, for there are suggestive individual ideas here that can be transferred from Foucault's setting and applied to the *Daily Sun's* evident purposes in its crime stories. What figures as crime for both the paper and the township would be understood as such anywhere: theft, rape, murder, fraud. And yet there is a distinctive historical colouring to its presentation in the tabloid. Implicit in much of what we shall find in the analysis chapters is that township crime is not presented simply a moral and legal transgression; it is also an insult to the individuals – the subjects – who compose Sunland, in all their human subjectivity. By the same token, it is an insult to the community the paper is intent on bringing together as readers. In a sense, discourse is being used as a weapon in their composite defence here; an *episteme* is in the process of formation.

Even the notion of the panopticon has its analogue, as we shall see, though heavily metamorphosed and perhaps only obliquely recognisable as such. The power of the newspaper is also that of surveillance, of a sort. In its pages it threatens to make visible both the criminal – as a palpable and disempowered human courtroom defendant or, contrastingly, a dehumanised thug – and also his victim, by making plain the weight of the crime itself, in all its human consequence. Hence it does effectually impose itself as a deterrent, like the panopticon itself, which encourages its inmates to police themselves on the grounds that what they do may at any moment be seen by a hidden, centrally placed observer (who may or may not actually be present). The threat of exposure by its vigilant reportage is intended to act, at least in the eyes of loyal readers, much as an extension of the panopticon principle to a wider sphere of influence, and translated into modern terms.

The subject

Here I want to return to the idea of the discursive subject and pay closer attention to what it brings to an understanding of the representations of crime in relation to discourse. For Foucault, as for other constructionists, the classical notion of the sovereign “thinking, knowing, speaking subject” (Foucault 1972: 55) is no longer the privileged and original source of meaning. Following Saussure, Foucault rejected the idea that any individual is the sole author, or subject, of meaning: if for Saussure it is language which speaks us, for Foucault it is discourse, speaking through us, which produces meaning. Indeed, the subject, rather than being free to determine meaning, is “*produced within discourse*” (Hall 2013: 39; italics in original) and must operate within its rules.

How does this happen? Foucault defines the subject in relation to normalizing power:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault 1982: 212).

Subjects, in other words, are produced in two ways: the first is the subjectivity of domination, as when one is subject to another's authority and control. The second is the discursive subject, who is constructed within discourse as a specific kind of person "tied to his own identity" by "a law of truth", as Foucault puts it above. It is with this second definition (which is no less concerned with power) that we are interested. As we have seen, discourse (for example, criminology), by way of producing the truth about a topic, produces a subject (in this case, the individualized criminal) who embodies the specific attributes defined by the discourse (delinquency, etc). Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that the technology of discipline, which defined the operation of the panopticon, was symptomatic of the broader evolution of bio-power, by which the control of individual bodies was linked to the control of populations.

Foucault went on to develop the idea of the subject in the *History of Sexuality*. Here he argues that individual subjectivity, in which the individual *willingly* becomes the subject of discourse, is an effect of the confession, a technology of power linked to yet distinct from the examination which, exercised by the observer, has the power-effects of producing the supposed truth about the individual under scrutiny (Foucault 1978; 1982: 214). It is through the act of confession that the individual is persuaded that the truth about himself is revealed. Thus the individual becomes "an object of knowledge, both to himself and to others, an object who tells the truth about himself in order to know himself and be known" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 174). Through confession, and other "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988: 16), an individual learns how to control and modify his behaviour, attitudes, and appetites of mind and body: to become "docile" and thus able to be "subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault 1977: 136). In other words, the individual learns how to become the subject of discourse. With regards to sex, for example, the discourse of sexuality proposes who the 'normal' sexual subject is, defines who and what is aberrant, and provides techniques of correction and normalization (confession, etc.) (Foucault 1978).

In other words all discourses call forth, bring into being, their subjects. What happens when we apply this insight to communication? Hall argues that discourse, as it appears in representation, constructs a "*place for the subject*" (Hall 2013: 40; italics in original). The reader or viewer who is "subjected to" the discourse contained in the text is offered a place from which the particular knowledge and meaning of the discourse is comprehensible. For, in order to understand the discourse, we must

[locate ourselves] in the *position* from which the discourse makes most sense, and thus become its "subjects" by "subjecting" ourselves to its meanings, power and regulation. All discourses, then, construct **subject positions**, from which alone they make sense. This approach has radical implications for a theory of representation. For it suggests that discourses themselves construct the subject positions from which they become meaningful and have effects. Individuals may differ as to their social class, gender, "racial" and ethnic characteristics (among other factors), but they will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, subjected themselves to its rules, and hence become the *subjects of its power/knowledge*. (Hall 2013: 40; emphases in original)

Representations are only meaningful insofar as we are able to identify as subjects of the discourses that they communicate. Implicitly, then, the *Daily Sun*'s project is to construct a certain kind of ideal reader, a subject-position into which the paper's purchasers must, at least for the duration of their perusal, fit themselves. This is perhaps inevitably true of all publishing to some extent, but one becomes especially aware of a strong motivation towards this end in the tabloid's mode of address, more so, I would argue, than in the case of standard newspapers generally, which typically try for a certain impersonality in this regard. In the case of the *Daily Sun*, such parameters as culture, social and economic position, moral and social expectations, idiom, and general range of beliefs are quite closely specified.

But this is not to say that a subject position must *necessarily* be taken up willy-nilly. On the one hand, power, argues Foucault, always generates resistance: "there is no relationship of power without the means of escape and or possible flight" (1982: 225). And on the other, there is always more than one discourse in circulation to invoke us as subjects simultaneously, and even contradictorily, as Foucault acknowledges (1976: 101-102).

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault gives a compelling example of the abortive attempt by the normalising discourse of the law to convert a working-class individual, previously left to his own devices, into the sober, disciplined and productive subject of the bourgeois social order via the reformatory. The scene is a court room and the character before us is a young man of thirteen, Beasse, who is charged with vagabondage. He comes to a journalist's notice because of the manner in which he amusingly refutes the judge's interpretation of his freedom: he "opposed to the discourse of the law that made him a delinquent... the discourse of an illegality that remained resistant to these coercions and which revealed indiscipline... as the disordered order of society and as the affirmation of inalienable rights" (Foucault 1977: 290). Beasse completely rejects the possible subject position offered to him by the judge – to have a regular home and habits, to learn a trade, to have a master; in other words, to fit himself for servitude within bourgeois social and economic relations. These are interpreted as unbearable constraints on his fundamental liberty. As subjects of diametrically opposed discourses, the judge and Beasse find each other mutually incomprehensible.

Mapping the terrain of crime

Foucault's genealogical history of the prison and its associated complex of disciplinary practices is a what he himself designates a "fiction" (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 204), which seeks, by proposing a counter-intuitive view of history, to emancipate us from the current truth proposed by power, to give an alternative account of the "contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think" (Mahon 1992: 122). It is to this end that Foucault constructs his genealogies: by pointing out the discontinuities and ruptures that characterise the course of history, we become aware of the different possibilities of thinking about ourselves and our social worlds – the genealogy is, in effect, an emancipatory project on the side of freedom.

To this end he demonstrates in *Discipline and Punish* how the way crime and punishment are thought about and acted on in modern western society has actively created an area of knowledge – criminology – complete with its own set of institutions, subjects and practices: the prison, and

the criminal, who must be rehabilitated or re-socialised. Criminology proposes a truth about crime and the ways in which criminals should be understood and managed through the penal system with its prisons, paroles, assessments, rehabilitation and correction, etc. (unsurprisingly, in South Africa, prisons are controlled by the Department of Correctional Services). Indeed, it is now almost impossible to imagine the one without the other – a criminology without prisons, or the penal system without its science of punishment.

How are we to bring the insight that Foucault offers to apply to the topic at hand? The *Daily Sun*'s stories relate to a specific social domain: the personal lives, the mundane disturbances, threats and assaults that complicate the lives of people living precariously at the margins of a developing nation. In exploring this social domain, which in essence is a snapshot of a moment in time in a specific social space, I am not attempting to write a genealogy. My ambition has a rather more modest goal, which is to explore a finely-sliced cross-section of the social milieu as it is represented in the *Daily Sun*, and to map the terrain of power-relations uniting crime and punishment: to pick out and mark the junctures, or nodes, of power as they appear on the virtual social body at a particular moment in time.

I derive the idea of the map from Foucault's self-description: "I am a cartographer", he is said to have remarked of his genealogical work in *Discipline and Punish* (Deleuze 1988: 44). Yet my usage of it shares some of the aims of his genealogical work insofar as it too refuses a final truth about crime and punishment in South Africa. Rather, the endeavour, which is consonant with genealogy, is "to look more closely at the workings of those practices in which moral norms and truths about ourselves have been constructed" (Tamboukou 1999: 208). In so doing, I am not looking for any specific 'answer' to the problem of crime as it is experienced by South Africans. Instead I try to identify the various practices that appear to point to, or constitute the problem as it appears in the *Daily Sun*, and make explicit the links that appear between them.

In so doing I construct a fragment of what Foucault terms a "*dispositif*". The *dispositif* is distinguished from *episteme* because it encompasses the nondiscursive practices as well as the discursive (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 120). The arrangement of power within the *dispositif* is amenable to analysis: Foucault calls it "the grid of intelligibility of the social order" (1978: 93). Foucault does not spell out what is needed to construct such a grid, except to point to its ecumenical attention to wide range of "discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy" (Foucault 1980: 194). Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest that a "grid of intelligibility" is both "the method of the effective historian as well as the structure of the cultural practices he is examining", an interpretive "apparatus" which "brings together power and knowledge into a specific grid of analysis" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 121). Such a "grid of analysis" seems particularly useful for our own analysis of the *Daily Sun*'s representations of crime and punishment. If we can think of the representations as creating a "grid of relations" that ties together the social domain which it describes, then it becomes possible to map them: "if power is a more-or-less coordinated (in the event, no doubt, ill-coordinated) cluster of relations, then the only problem is to provide oneself with a grid of analysis which makes possible an analytic of relations of power" (Foucault 1980: 199).

Working from this definition, I suggest that what I attempt in my analysis is in the way of a fragment of a *dispositif* because it is only part of the far larger grid that constitutes the relations of power at the present time with respect to the problem of crime and punishment; it is also a fragment by virtue of being restricted to a single textual type; but it contributes to this larger picture by seeking to discern in what ways within this elaborated virtual world, power is distributed, resisted, and institutionalised; what practices it refers to; what knowledges and what truths it validates; and what subjects it proposes.

However, having introduced the idea of the map, I must qualify what it means to “map” something. There are two points to make. The first is that a map is a symbolic representation of a certain territory, in which various selected aspects of the natural and social world are represented *in relation to each other* – a single feature cannot make a map; all maps are about relationships. A cartographer brings various aspects of the natural and human world into relation with each other, and thereby makes each meaningful, interpretable, accessible. If we think back to Saussure’s semiotics, the point is clear: a solitary sign cannot signify anything, and signs by themselves are not meaningful. Rather, meaning arises from the divergence that each sign marks between itself and others. Thus, just as any one sign can only be understood in relation to another, so “The map models the world as an interplay of systems” (Woods 1993: 140). When Foucault calls himself a “cartographer”, then, he is saying that by bringing into relation with each other aspects of the social terrain – court documents, newspaper reports, architectural plans, etc – he creates, or evokes, a meaning that was not visible there previously. The significance of the *dispositif* arises when its elements are brought into relation and are “made to mean”.

The second is that all maps are the result of choices: what to include, what to emphasise, what to exclude. For this reason, all maps serve interests: by representing the world via these processes of selection, maps make it intelligible and thereby newly accessible, useable. Yet this newfound ease comes at an inevitable cost: what is left out, what is turned to symbol. And yet a map is only powerful to the extent that it appears natural, sufficiently coterminous with the world it represents – that is, to the extent that it is able to hide its underlying interests.

In making these points, I am drawing on Denis Woods’ (1993) extensive and thoughtful discussion of maps and mapping. Though these figure, for my present purposes, only in their widest, metaphorical sense, I nonetheless find his general conclusions invaluable to that end. Woods describes how even Van Sant’s iconic satellite “portrait map” of the earth (what appears as a single photograph of a cloudless summer day that stretches across the entire globe) achieves its “acme of cartographic perfection”, its effect of effortless realism, by the images of the earth being “smashed to smithereens, shamelessly manipulated” (Woods 1993: 54) and wrung through the machinery of a highly complex, and fraught, human and technological process. Wood’s argument is that the seeming transparency of the impossible image is achieved by masking and denying the process of construction that creates the map’s ‘realistic’ view of the world. In his view there is no map that conforms absolutely to what it intends to represent, no map is a perfect “*analogon*” of the real, as Barthes (1977: 17; emphasis in original) puts it. Rather, “*any* map projection is *always* to choose between competing interests, is *inescapably* to take – that is, to *promote*, to *embody in the map* – a point of view” (Woods 1993: 60; emphasis in original).

Wood's argument does not stop here, however: the point is not that maps necessarily distort reality but that this distortion is so naturalised:

Because it is the cartographer... who has first repressed the magnitude and significance of his intervention in what passes in the map for a transcription of nature, it is in precisely the *cartographer's products* that the repressed experience – the interest represented, the point of the map – must be sought. This is not only because it is essential to understand what this interest *is*, but because it is its *repression* that enables the map to masquerade so effectively as truthful and accurate... Thus the problem never was “*how did this map fool me?*” but “*why was I inclined to wholeheartedly believe in it in the first place?*” (Woods 1993: 77-78; emphasis in original).

In other words, maps have mythic functions in Barthes' (1972) sense of the word: as semiological systems which purport to be fact, they activate larger systems of meaning and values. Indeed, a map is “more mythic precisely to the degree that it succeeds in persuading us that it is a natural consequence of perceiving the world” (Woods 1993: 105). By presenting the information it encodes in a specific way, to a particular audience, the map communicates something beyond what it ostensibly professes to stand for. The colour-coded floor-plan of the shopping mall, for example, “with shops topically and alphabetically organized and numerically keyed... becomes an expression of the fact that ‘We’ve got it all’” (Woods 1993: 141).

To think about maps and mapping then is to realise, first, that what is mapped, however ‘scientifically’, is not reality but a construction of reality; second, that a particular epistemological value resides in tracing back the process of the map's construction to reveal the motives and perceptions that guided the selectivity employed. The analogy enables us to see that the *Daily Sun* itself maps crime in the township, through whatever it brings to its task in the way of professional interests, commercial imperatives or newsroom routines, as well as a distinctive, socially engaged vision of its particular audience and their place in the world. This map is, however, no less essentially ‘true’ than any other map: to demand that it make a more true representation of reality is to misunderstand that representation is necessarily a process of selection and construction.

Nonetheless its truth does, I would argue, commit to certain, admittedly individualistic, rules of evidence; to accuse it of *misrepresentation*, a moralistic charge loosely levelled at tabloids everywhere, is to overlook and miss out on a particular form of knowledge about modern township life which holds its own special interest. Its value derives from two mutually interacting source. In part, the outlook in question accords with how the paper's readers distinctively see themselves and picture their lives, an aspect clearly given close attention throughout. But this outlook is also in part a product of the paper's own direct imaginative intervention in its construction. These two contributions are finally inseparably intertwined and provide an intriguing case study of the role a modern paper can assume as an essential social force, especially where social identity and cohesion are under threat and, in some sense, still in process of fully resolving.

I do not exempt myself from the strictures which I have outlined above. In my own case, to map the nodes of power as they appear in the virtual landscape of the *Daily Sun*'s stories of crime and punishment is not to tell 'the' truth about them – though what is revealed may be 'a' truth. I am satisfactorily convinced that it is so. Yet, in this act of interpretation I am, no doubt, an active partner who must be taken into account. What I decide to exclude is, inescapably, as important as what I choose to draw into focus. So this thesis is also an act of representation of the sort we have been discussing, and is itself alone justified by its commitment to the evidence collected and presented.

On such a basis, this thesis thus contends that the *Daily Sun* is not merely purveying information to its readers. It is both selecting and forming the varied points of view it endorses, and the information it carries, towards rhetorical and social ends. In effect it is constructing its readership at the same time as engaging their interest as readers. I argue that the *Daily Sun* is not merely passing on conventional assumptions or truths about crime, but is creatively constructing its own *episteme* in adaptation to existing South African conditions.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

The goal of media analysis... is to achieve the most comprehensive, interesting and profound reading of a text as possible (Arthur Asa Berger 2014: 199).

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is... The fact is that to commit oneself to a semiotic concept of culture and an interpretive approach to the study of it is to commit oneself to a view of ethnographic assertion as... “essentially contestable” (Clifford Geertz: 1973: 29).

[T]o write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map (Gilles Deleuze 1988: 44).

Introduction

Disrupting the way in which research is usually conceived, Foucault’s approach to research is to problematize the everyday appearance of things and to this end his genealogies “begin with a certain puzzlement or discomfiture about practices or institutions that others take for granted” (Garland 2014: 379). In so doing he poses a puzzle to himself, a reversal or reformulation of the problem which leads to the “uncovering of hidden conflicts and contexts as a means of re-valuing the value of contemporary phenomena” (Garland 2014: 365). Adopting this approach as my model, I do not look at crime itself (the ‘problem’ in this instance) in order to understand it, but rather ask what are the preconditions that allow it to function in the way it does?

Following a cultural criminology approach I take crime to be an aspect of culture and the *Daily Sun* a popular space within which a facet of contemporary South African culture is produced. Its images of crime and justice present us with a provocative place to begin an enquiry, if we understand the *Daily Sun*'s representations as not simply reflecting crime and justice but helping to constitute them in particular ways. Through its representations it constructs a particular culture around crime and punishment which sustains certain types of knowledge and invites certain kinds of subjects to identify with it.

Accepting the premise that crime is culture (Sparks 1992), my research question then is to ask, if crime is culture, then how is this culture constituted in the *Daily Sun*? To use the metaphor of the map, “What are the contours of the map of crime and popular justice in the *Daily Sun*? What does it include, or exclude?” In effect, “What constitutes the grid of intelligibility pertaining to crime and popular justice within the *Daily Sun*?”

In this chapter I describe and provide the rationale of my choice of material and the approach I have taken to the analysis of the data in order to answer the research question. I argue that an ‘ethnographic’ stance towards the tabloid's material is a necessary precondition to fulfil the aims

of the analysis, and I draw support for this chosen standpoint from Geertz (1973). I go on to describe the steps I took in sorting and coding the *Daily Sun*'s crime material, present the methods that I used in my task of interpretation, and end with a reflection on reflexivity and research validity.

I begin this discussion of my research approach and methods by defending my decision to limit this inquiry to a textual study only. This is needful as, from a certain point of view, objections might be raised to the seeming narrowness of my research scope: from a cultural studies perspective, an understanding of the complete "circuit of culture" remains an ideal (du Gay at al 1997). The "circuit of culture" approach demands that we look at the interrelated moments of production, text, audience reception and lived culture, and treat them as a whole: the argument being that none of these is independent of the other. Particularly pertinent to my own study is Bird's ethnography, *For Enquiring Minds: A Cultural Study of Supermarket Tabloids* (1992), in which she gives a reading of the tabloids' content, but also investigates the institutional context in which the American supermarket tabloid news is constructed, alongside an analysis of its public reception. In the South African context, Wasserman's (2010) research on the historical and institutional foundations of South African tabloids, which deals with the nature of their content and the context of their reception, similarly provides a benchmark from which subsequent work must take its cue. In the criminology field, Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987, 1989, 1991) are admired for the rare scope of their research interest (Doyle, Chan and Haggerty 2010; Greer 2010). Greg Philo of the Glasgow University Media Group similarly advocates taking the context of production and audience reception into consideration and rejects textual analysis on its own as theoretically problematic (Philo 2007).

Without denying the merits of such holistic interventions, my research, I argue, is of value precisely because I restrict my analytic focus to the text alone. First, the media text presents "a distinctive discursive moment between encoding and decoding that justifies special scholarly engagement. The narrative character of media content, its potential as a site of ideological negotiation and its impact as mediated "reality" necessities interpretation in its own right" (Fursich 2009: 238). Second, the *Daily Sun* content is of a varied and frequently unusual nature, and to this degree is a distinctive indigenous product which deserves a detailed and nuanced inquiry in its own right. I am convinced that a multifaceted understanding of the *Daily Sun*'s interests among its chosen constituency ought to be of direct service to anyone in search of a more comprehensive sense of our present social situation, for it promises to tell us a good deal about aspects of this country and its newspaper readers that often bypass more standard media notice. Third, a textual study happily satisfies the demand of critical criminology for more humanly complex (and therefore ultimately more informative) accounts of crime in the media. It allows us, in particular, to look for crime's human *meaning*, including, among its many implications, the special dimensions of feeling – those pleasures, pains, fierce joys, insufferable boredoms, insults, angers and anguishes – that mark the experiences of crime, whether for perpetrators or victims (Young 2011). Only if we take this demand seriously in relation to the textual 'moment' of crime (so central to current critical criminological thinking) can we approach the reading of news content in a way that enables an adequate appraisal of these key dimensions.

Reader Positions: Participation or Perspective?

When I began this study, I wished to tackle the text in a way that did justice to the entire package, as it were, which included the tabloid's form, layout, use of images, and narrative style, as well as the actual content. It appeared that this task required me not only to have a thorough grasp of the tabloid's various elements, but, perhaps more importantly, that I become familiar with the tabloid's address: to be able to respond to its distinctive voice and to understand what it feels like to be interpellated by its authority. In other words, the research demanded that I *become a Daily Sun reader* – yet, at the same time, and with no little contradiction, that I retain the necessary perspective that permits of critique.

When I first began reading the *Daily Sun*, I could certainly read it: it is in English, and its brief stories pose no ostensible difficulty. I could look at its lay-out and pictures and be horrified, incredulous and amused in turn; but I did not entirely *understand* it. For this important transition to occur, I first had to become 'a reader'. In other words, regular reading of the paper over the past eight years made me familiar enough with its ethos to feel that I could adequately assume the role intended. While I am not a black, working-class township resident, I could still imagine "*what it might be like*" (Bird 1992: 5; my emphasis) to read the tabloid from this position – in other words, I began to read from the subject position offered by the paper, what Janks (1997) describes as an "engaged" and co-operative reading. This is in contradistinction to critics like Bird, who declares this transposition to be an impossibility. Bird cautions that academics, as the most literate of the literate, *cannot* find their way to enjoy the "orality" of tabloids, the repetitive, circular, recursive nature of their story-telling:

Critics, inescapably mired in the analytic, literate tradition, detest media like tabloids because they are formulaic, sensational and altogether too excessive. Tabloid readers, more comfortable in a concrete, residually oral tradition, love them for the very same reasons... Academics are more steeped in literacy than almost any other cultural group, and we carry that literacy-based mindset almost everywhere we go... We may be part of [a popular culture phenomenon] as fans, but we are also apart as inveterate analysts, and we should not forget that... we can never be ethnographers and "natives" at the same time (Bird 1992: 5).

Yet, to my mind, it is this imaginary identification with the text's implicit reading subject which makes a space for the fostering of the critical sympathy I feel is necessary for any textual analysis of the kind undertaken here. Approaching the text from a preconceived critical position as a *first* move must, I feel, do an injustice to its complexity, and blind one to the nuances of both its implicit and explicit evocation of the social. It is notable that, for their part, anthropologists readily accept the need to immerse themselves entirely in a culture to be studied, to the extent of appropriating its dress, speech and mores. Journeying into Sunland, I see myself somewhat as a 'textual ethnographer', for the text "constitutes, as well as represents, a cultural world which [I] become part of, and alter, through [my] participation in it" (Brown 2003: 103). Brown continues:

In doing this we face all the dilemmas of the anthropologist. We must address questions of difference – the difference between the world we are leaving and the world we are

entering. The language, the customs (genre or conventions), the rituals and practices of the text are not those of our native culture. At the same time, we can never “go native” in the text since we may share its life-world but not be ultimately of it.

One factor makes the required identification easier than might be supposed. I shall argue that the reader position is one that the newspaper itself consciously and extensively constructs, like a suit tailored to be worn by each of its readers. While it remains true that I approach that role from an initial distance, as Brown specifies, this need not automatically disqualify me from the task in hand. Indeed, this “estranged” reading (Janks 1997) is useful because it makes apparent the implicit interest of the text, and thus facilitates my return to critical distance as the ultimate evaluative and discriminative goals of the research demand. But it is the *interplay* of both engaged and estranged readings which lay the basis for the ideal critically sympathetic analysis: “Engagement without estrangement is a form of submission to the power of the text regardless of the reader's own positions. Estrangement without engagement is a refusal to leave the confines of one's own subjectivity, a refusal to allow otherness to enter. Without the entry of the other, can we be said to have read the text at all?” (Janks 1997: 331) With this in mind, my starting point is to draw on Geertz's perceptive assessment of the role of the author in ethnography, which is to “convey in words ‘what it is like’ to be somewhere specific in the lifeline of the world” (Geertz 1988: 143).

There is another equivocation in my position, the effects of which I occasionally acknowledge in what follows. As already examined, though my aim is to illuminate what is there, my own subjectivity inevitably places its limits on how much I can hope to be revealing of ultimate truth. The theorists I have chosen to rely on have all pointed out the dangers inherent in overweening truth-claims, as we have, in any case, already found. This theoretical caveat, which I accept, inevitably affects my choice of method. Hence I shall not be using statistical analysis or the familiar apparatus of purported objectivity to bolster my findings, although I do include some basic data for the benefit of those who wish to make comparisons. It has, I think, to be accepted that textual analysis has an interpretative element, formally at odds with pressures for objective verification. This factor will be offset by my endeavour to lay the primary (textual) evidence under examination extensively before the reader, against which my conclusions can be directly evaluated by him or her. But facts alone are not the central concern in what is to come. To this end I offer my reading of crime in the *Daily Sun*. If it appears as nothing more than my own representation of a representation, a hermeneutic tryst, if you will, I nonetheless hope to make plain in every case how and why my results have been arrived at. Nothing here ought to suggest that the research stakes are not serious; far from it, as we shall soon see. Furthermore, as an ‘ethnographer’ of the *Daily Sun*'s texts, I need (to paraphrase Geertz 1988: 16) “to convince you not merely that I myself have truly ‘been there,’ but that had you been there you should have seen what I saw, felt what I felt, concluded what I concluded”.

I have already had occasion to draw on Geertz's definition of culture. I reiterate that quotation here, for the research approach that he suggests with regard to culture is ideally suited to how I see my own position vis-a-vis the interpretation of the *Daily Sun*'s texts:

The concept of culture I espouse... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing... that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be these webs, *and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.* (Geertz 1973: 5; my emphasis)

“It is explication I am after”, he continues, “construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical”. This famous position-statement substantiates his insistence on the necessity of “thick description” for any approach to understanding. Its opposite, “thin description” misses the point entirely: it is as different to thick description as mistaking a wink for a blink, he says. A blink and a wink, Geertz argues playfully, involve the same muscles, even the same facial expression. But only thick description (which explicates the cultural semiotic codes that turn a blink into a wink) can convince us that what we see is a wink, rather than a blink. This perfectly specifies the difference between a mere description of a fact, and the penetrative understanding of that fact. It is this latter “thick description” that I intend to harness where I can.

This research stance, what Lindlof (1995: 20) dubs the “epistemic posture of the researcher”, is of course a qualitative one. The strength of qualitative inquiry is its flexibility towards and suitability for addressing “certain questions about culture, interpretation and power” (Lindlof 1995: 10). Students working within the qualitative paradigm are commonly exhorted to ‘immerse’ themselves in the texts that are the object of analysis in order to familiarise themselves with the content: Hall (1975: 15) for example advocates a “long preliminary soak” in the text to lay the foundation of a convincing analysis – but this in turn raises the question of what it means to be thus immersed, and what such a close analysis entails. What is immersion if it is not to understand, intimately, the text’s address, to “[gain] access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them?” (Geertz 1973: 24) Mere counting will not do (though numbers may help to crystallise out from the data otherwise invisible issues which need attention, a point I return to further down).

Immersion is not just access to words, at however finely drawn a level: reflecting somewhat despondently on the state of current text-based media criminology research, Greer (2010: 2) observes that quantitative research, which relies on online data-bases and search engines, may be able to summon “years of coverage across scores of publications... at the push of a button”. But this proficiency comes at a cost. It creates a distance between the researcher and the text which robs it of its particular, situated interest: “online newspaper databases strip news content of its colour, style, formatting, visual imagery and surrounding context. Crime and media research is thus increasingly based upon a ‘news residue’ – standardised, decontextualised words on a computer screen, light years away from the brilliantly colourful and highly textured product consumed by millions every day” (Greer 2010: 3). Attention only to words, however cleverly categorised, sifted, collated, separates us from the culture of the text. We find ourselves in the flatlands of thin data, counting blinks, rather than recognising winks.

Choosing the sample

From my extensive archive of the *Daily Sun* I chose a single year, 2011, as my sample. Since it is essential to generate sufficient data to show a representative variety, this has to be a large

selection – for a qualitative study, especially so. In addition, my familiarity with the paper demonstrated that the nature of the coverage varied to such an extent over the course of any one year that only a comprehensive spread would do justice to its varying concerns. For example, in the winter months there are many stories about circumcision rites⁴⁴; at Easter and Christmas, a great number of reports about bad driving and road carnage; also in winter, a predominance of reports of deaths by fire in informal settlements; at the start of the year, a focus on schools as the new academic term begins, etc. Even the years differ in concerns and emphasis, for there always arise those events which tend to inflect the interest of the coverage over fairly long periods of time: 2009 had seen a general election; the news in 2010 was dominated by South Africa's hosting of the soccer world cup; 2012 was marred by the Marikana massacre. Comparisons with other years undoubtedly informed my impressions of what was both typical and distinctive about the paper, even if, of necessity, these are only occasionally alluded to here. Another factor to take into consideration was the need to work with ongoing stories. How a crime story develops over time is a necessary part of the analysis: any of the standard sampling procedures, designed to reduce the data volume and extract a representative sample, would disrupt such a goal.

In view of these concerns I chose to analyse 2011 in its entirety. But, like any of the years mentioned above, it was not a 'normal' year (if any year in this diverse country can be said to be 'normal'). In 2011, the municipal elections were held, a national ritual which tends to bring to the fore within public debate those material and social issues which affect the ordinary citizen. Although this was not in itself a topic I selected for analysis, it was not antithetical to my focus, since the consequent atmosphere of unrest and confrontation pervaded other areas, and brought unexpected features of interest to light. As it happens, the year in which I completed this study was another such occasion, with similar results. A second reason for my choice was that it was the final year of Themba Khumalo's editorial leadership: he resigned at the end of 2011 after editing the paper for six years; coincidentally, Deon du Plessis, the founding editor, also died in 2011, helping to mark this symbolically as a watershed moment. Given the very noticeable changes in the paper's style and content that have occurred over the various editorships since, I felt that to capture something of those formal and thematic aspects which made the tabloid so popular in its initial years under these editors would be of plain historical value, as well as helping to define for us some of its formative character and structural features, elements of which do persist to this day.

Starting to read

Having chosen the sample, my subsequent approach to the research process is in keeping with Foucault's advice on method, in which he outlines four "notions" which "serve as the regulating principle of the analysis" (1981: 67). First is the "event", in my case the single article; then the "series", which are the year's editions; then to discern the "regularity" of the discourses that appear within it; and only finally turning outwards to the material and discursive "condition[s] of possibility" which account for the emergence of the archive and its internal relations. He emphasises here the "principle of discontinuity" by which he cautions against seeking for a single, unified discourse: "Discourse must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross

⁴⁴ A traditional rite of passage from boyhood to manhood observed by some South African ethnic groups, in which youths are ritually secluded for a period of weeks, circumcised and supervised by traditional male surgeons.

each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other” (1980: 67). In other words, the researcher must pay attention to the texts methodically, alert to both the regularities and disruptions of the discourses that emerge and then to work from these outwards (his principle of “exteriority”) to lived social conditions.

In terms of method itself, my initial rationale was, first and foremost, to let the material suggest its own lines of analysis, but the analytic methods that subsequently developed share significant parallels with Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA), as proposed and developed in the late 1980s and 1990s by David Altheide, Regius Professor of Justice at Arizona State University. Altheide argued for an “ethnographic approach to document analysis” based on “qualitative data collection and analysis” (Altheide 1987: 65). He contrasts ECA against “conventional modes of quantitative analysis”, preferring to numerical methods “the usefulness of constant comparison for discovering emergent patterns, emphases and themes”. This approach he visualises as an ethnography in which “document analysis is conceptualised as fieldwork”.

He points out that ethnography is an example of a research method that “embraces reflexivity”, by which he means the creative mutual interaction of subject and critical observer in contrast to other modes that overtly “disavow it” (Altheide 1987: 65). In ECA, like other ethnographies, “the subject matter – human beings engaged in meaningful behaviour – guide (*sic*) the mode of inquiry and orientation of the investigator” (Altheide 1987: 66). In arriving at these modes, “the meaning of an action remains paramount”, and its uncovering is managed by “looking at one feature in the context of what is understood about other features” (Altheide 1987: 66).

Significantly, he includes prominently among these the formal features of the communication: “Like all ethnographic research, the meaning of a message is assumed to be reflected in various modes of information exchange, format rhythm and style, e.g., aural and visual style, as well as in the context of the report itself, and other nuances” (Altheide 1987: 68).

In a later paper, Altheide applies these goals specifically in the context of analysis of newspapers and magazines:

Qualitative document analysis is similar to all qualitative methodology in that the main emphasis is on discovery and description, including search for underlying meanings, patterns, and processes, rather than mere quantity or numerical relationships... Like all research, it is interpretive, but it remains empirical, meaning that instances of certain meanings and emphases can be identified and held up for demonstration (Altheide 2000: 290).

Outlining a series of steps that a novice researcher might take in service of such goals, Altheide includes the advice to “Become familiar with the process and context of the information source”, singling out newspapers in particular as an example, along with television stations, etcetera. Next, “Become familiar with several... examples of relevant documents, noting particularly the format. Select a unit of analysis, e.g., each article”, and then “List several items or categories (variables) to guide data collection and draft a protocol (data collection sheet)” (Altheide 2000: 292).

It must by now be clear that, in ways already discussed, my own methodological decisions about the *Daily Sun* quite closely reflect the proposals that Altheide advances in a more general media context. In particular, the interactivity of observer and observed, the need for identifiable evidence despite this inherent reflexivity, the stress on formal presentational strategies, and the recovery of patterns from a wide range of material, are supported by his conclusions. As will be seen below, the stages by which I tackled the material in hand are anticipated by his model also, having proceeded by steps more or less equivalent to those set out above.

I began by simply reading, in sequence, the entire 2011 set of editions, story by story, week by week, month by month. This was quite easy to undertake, as I have them at hand, carefully archived in monthly sets. I looked at every image and read every report, editorial, and letter. In addition, I looked at advertisements and notices. I excluded the sports pages, Sunworld and the SunSnaps which appear on the back page together with the weather report and various small advertisements. These tiny snippets, usually between 50-60 words, were discontinued after Friday 11 March. I made a strategic decision not to include these articles, as the format of the paper changed to exclude them. Slowly and cumulatively, I familiarized myself with the scope of the paper's concerns, and as I read I made brief notes on what struck me about the coverage, what seemed to be important, what appeared consistently, or what appeared unique (the exceptional content, of course, only appeared as the "usual" became more clearly defined). At this stage I was not interested in categorising content but was rather open to letting the content 'speak for itself', as it were.

It is impossible to stress the importance for my own understanding of the paper of this inductive approach to the beginning of the research process. So far, I had "embark[ed] on a voyage of discovery rather than one of verification" (Bryman 1984: 84); I had resolved to do without preconceptions as far as feasible. Ideas which formed as I went along became either provisionally confirmed, or had to be abandoned or modified by the facts. The advantage of an inductive process is that pre-conceived ideas can be challenged, and so it proved. I was frequently surprised by the ways in which the content contradicted what expectations I still retained. This was both alarming and encouraging: alarming because what I had expected to find was not necessarily there, or was there in unexpected ways; and encouraging because what I did find was so much more exciting and diverse than I had hoped. At any rate, this initial read-through allowed me to orient myself to the broad shape and scope of the terrain, and hammer out a first approximation of a design.

There is a disconcerting factor which makes itself felt, subtly alerting one to the relative but necessary artificiality of this procedure, so different to the 'normal' way of reading a newspaper. The tabloid is a daily paper, designed to be consumed and thrown away, not read again. Daily reading over the course of a year is quite different to a continuous and concentrated read-through of a year within a brief period of weeks. Reading through the year in this way, one day, one week, one month after the next, evolves almost unbidden into a new kind of understanding through the connections that present themselves. Successive events which are usually spread out over an extended passage of time, are now compacted together, creating a new appreciation of their consequence: like a tree on stop-motion film, blooming within seconds. This effect became reified by the final translation into a computerised document: when I came later to collate the

data on a spread-sheet, the result of this tabulation was similarly to encapsulate, in a single document, the entire year's stories, creating a bird's-eye view of the whole – a kind of time-travel, in which the beginning, middle and end of the year were equally accessible. This, too, a crucial stage among Altheide's recommendations, was essential in allowing me to link together related issues that surfaced over even widely-separated moments in time. Each report was often related by several different internal issues with a wide range of other events, from which sprang new sets of connections in turn.

Re-reading the sample

My second read-through of the entire year took further preparatory steps towards this end. I used markers to indicate each article that was identified as pertaining to crime and justice, paying specific attention to types of content, and to broader headings under which reports could be sorted. At this stage I tried to start categorising what kind of article it was – a report, an editorial, a profile, etc., and also what kind of crime the article covered: was it a story about a murder, or a rape and so on? I wrote a brief note of the crime category/ies and my initial perception of the central theme or themes on a coloured post-it, and stuck this onto the page where the article appeared.

Despite my previous familiarity with the paper, and in the face of my own expectations, I found a far wider range of crime types than at first I had assumed: the violation of graves and cemeteries, for example, was unexpectedly and frequently covered as a crime. These understandings emerged gradually from the reading, as my mental map of the content began to take shape and the landscape filled in with finer detail.

In this second read-through, then, I began to pick up and establish patterns within the reporting. Some of these patterns emerged quite quickly, but others only surfaced later as my insights into the coverage matured. I began actively to pursue certain of them. The patterns I was looking for were further guided by my desire to know not only what kinds of crime coverage there were, but also how subjects and subjectivities are constructed by the coverage. For this purpose, drawing on formalist and structuralist narrative theory (I return to these theories below), I started to take note of what kind of characters acted as villains, who had the role of hero, and who were the victims. I also paid close attention to the language and presentation used.

Coding the data

As the developing analysis would require me to be able to retrieve a report quickly, and link it to others like it, or to others with similar concerns, I had to devise a way of capturing the essential elements of each article. My unit of analysis, or 'item' was the individual article, the photographs accompanying these, and the letters (including Facebook messages and SMSs). Within these items certain features were selected for the purpose of tracking further. The details of each item, explained below, were captured on an Excel spreadsheet under a series of headings, starting with the date, page number, article type, heading and any images present. Also captured were the roles of villain, victim and hero, the stage of resolution reached by the narrative, the headline topic and whatever themes were present in the report.

Towards this end, I read through the all the papers for a third time using my notes and the post-it annotations to set up the coding frame on the excel spreadsheet. First, I captured the date, page number and article type as the *basic information* about the article in question. These give information about the placement of the stories within the paper as a whole, the numbers of such articles, and the article types. Alongside this information I also captured whether or not there is a *photograph* accompanying the article. Drawing on narrative theory, I then captured *characters*: who acts as villain, victim and hero. Here I wanted to know not just if it was a man or a woman who committed a crime, for example, but how they were termed, and what social role each played. Thus I captured how the recurring characters are identified by the paper (“thug” for example), and the characteristic language that accompanies them.

Next, drawing on Todorov’s (1981) model I captured the *stage of resolution* at which the narrative is left. The stage of resolution is an indicator of the valence of the article. Is the arrested criminal actually charged with a crime, for example, or sentenced? Or is the narrative left *in media res*, unresolved?

The headline topics were captured next, as headlines frame the story as a whole. The *Daily Sun* headlines are fascinating in their own right, and, like those of other newspapers, are important indicators of the paper’s stance towards the incidents to which they point (Richardson 2007; Bell 1991). For example, “Corrupt cops bust” indicates a story about bad cops. But it is also about justice catching up with bad cops: these corrupt cops are “bust”, an emotive word revealing an editorial attitude that is far from neutral. In this case the emphasis is on the *arrest* and the headline consequently foregrounds the resolution of the crime, and the possibility of justice: the weight is on the story’s ending. Hence, a considerable amount of information can be gleaned from the formula of a compact heading. This story is also likely to offer a degree of resolution, but this is not always the case. Importantly, the headline topic and the stage of resolution within the story as a whole are not necessarily the same, thus the separate coding for these two items.

I then captured the *themes*, which I resolved from my two prior readings. ‘Theme’ here refers loosely to those aspects of the coverage which came to my attention in the course of reading, either because of their frequency, or the impact of their appearance. The themes included the crime types – murder, rape, kidnapping, etc; whether an arrest, or charges, or a court proceeding is recorded; whether an intimate relationship featured in the report; if a cellphone was connected to a crime; the appearance of a cemetery, etc. An estimation of their full significance was left to later.

However, in addition, alongside these themes, I made notes on the spreadsheet on many (but not all) of the articles which appeared to be important. Reports which stood out, or provoked a response, I highlighted in yellow and made a short synopsis of the narrative in a separate column, occasionally adding a short analysis. I used this column also for making links to other stories, characters, or follow-ups.

“Analysis starts as the data begins to indicate the necessary categories and codes to use”, observes Berg (2007: 319); this is valid as far as it goes, but seems to me to posit too passive a

role for the researcher: it misses what is both intuitive and creative in arriving at conclusions about the subject-matter. Berg's cool assessment is unable to capture the visceral and intuitive connections, sudden insights and instinctive and spontaneous associations that characterised my engagement with the data. A sense of what the material is "about" may arrive first in the form of a vague hunch, rather than a cold deduction. It follows that the advice that "the development of categories... must derive from inductive reference... concerning patterns that emerge from the data" (Berg 2007: 315) only half captures the process. The subjectivity of the close reading is an essential part of the method: what appears meaningful is the product of the engaged encounter between the researcher and the text. Choices such as categories, inferences and associations may be at once both valid and revealing perspectives on the subject-matter, and yet also a manifestation of that "reflexivity" we encountered earlier – not simply a property of the text alone.

It is not that numerical methods have nothing to contribute. As Deacon et al (2007: 140) rightly suggest, "when quantitative and qualitative approaches are used methodically in combination with each other, the resulting analysis is invariably stronger". It might well on occasions be advantageous to find and enumerate statistical relationships between categories (such as correlate all instances of murder with those where men rather than women are perpetrators); but exclusive or predominant use of such an approach would have curtailed and inhibited my broader concern with *meaning*. For instance, those pre-formed, but as yet empty, categories which I looked to fill – for example, who plays the role of villain – made me alert to the various ways in which aspects of the presentation played a role in constructing villain-hood, as a specific locally-conceived kind of antagonist, with certain necessary defining attributes. In assuming that there are villains and victims in stories of crime I am merely drawing on shared social knowledge. But it is not only *who* wielded the knife but how this act is made to *mean* in the moral economy of the narrative itself and within the broader social idea of murder as a whole that is important. For this reason the ultimate aim was not simply to count the numbers and types of villains, but to develop ideas about how the meaning of villainy is constructed in the *Daily Sun*'s moral universe: "Focusing on aspects of content that can easily be counted (the obvious *manifest features*) tells us something of *what* a document is about, but it does not delve below the surface to explore implicit meanings; nor does it ask *how* the various levels of meaning are organised or conveyed" (Deacon et al 2007: 20; italics in original; Richardson 2007).

Thematic content analysis

My approach to the collection of data is thus quite different to that famously advocated by Berelson (1952: 147 in Deacon et al 2007: 118), which recommends it as a means to achieve "objectivity": "A research technique for the objective and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Nor am I particularly interested, as mentioned before, of using this method as a means to uncovering "bias" in the tabloid's coverage, as Winston (1990: 62 in Deacon et al 2007: 119) suggests concerning television programs: "Content analysis remains the only available tool for establishing maps, however, faulty, of television output... Without 'the map', no case can be sustained as to any kind of cultural skewedness except on the basis of one-off examples of misrepresentation". While I likewise espouse the idea of the "map" here, for me it is the very map itself that is the focus of my attention, not value judgments upon

the skewedness of its 'fit' to an external reality. Departure from uniformity is, in any case, the very thing that gives a value to the act of marking out a unique topology, which means that such maps are themselves the ultimate 'message' to be arrived at. In the case of the newspaper, they are what demonstrate its world-view as distinctive and hence worth the trouble of attending to.

However, Berg's more simple definition, which accords better with my purposes, is that thematic content analysis is a "careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material" (Berg 2007: 303). Here, the "'counts' of textual elements merely provide a means for identifying, organizing, indexing and retrieving data" (Berg 2007: 307). The intention is to move beyond this surface information, which I present briefly in Chapter 4 following, to develop the map of crime and justice through interpretive analysis: to extend the metaphor, to see where its roads lead and what zones they connect together, what territories are highly populated and which regions lie unoccupied. We can ask what the map's scale is, and investigate where the ground it represents is shown in much detail, or find areas which are seen at such a large scale that only bare outlines are made visible. Again, we can ask: At what point are boundaries drawn and borders demarcated? Who are the denizens of these regions and who is excluded?

Thus the aim is ultimately to understand the "deep structural meaning conveyed by the message" (Berg 2007: 308), the 'latent meaning' of the *Daily Sun's* constructions of crime and justice.

Models of Analysis: the Meaning of Meaning

The models of media analysis I have so far favoured all at some point emphasise the primacy of meaning. And yet, few of these go on to offer a workable schema for the investigation of meaning as such; on the whole this stage of the process is taken as self-evident. This seems to me insufficient as a guide, since awareness of the nature and conditions of signification will determine where in the signifying interface the investigator will most profitably direct her or his attention.

Naturally, it is to linguistic studies that we should turn first for support, not least because newspapers are themselves verbal communications. They are constructed mostly in the medium of words, and set out to convey meaning in a certain precise context and under special conditions of literary engagement. And since we are seeking a fundamental schematic to work from, it is appropriate that we look back to the fertile foundational era of linguistics and language-based aesthetics, belonging to the early years of the twentieth-century, and to some of the seminal developments that followed from it.

I have drawn eclectically, then, on a range of contributors to this tradition, indeed wherever help seems most forthcoming. I have already dealt with the elements of semiotic analyses in my discussion of Saussure's notion of the sign, in the context of the connection between representation and culture. I continue on from this point by incorporating Roman Jakobson's (1960) influential model of communicative functions. His outline is particularly useful as a means of conceptualising the paper's mode of address and the relationship that the paper sets up with its readers. Thereafter I supplement this with items from both formalist and later

structuralist schools, in particular, Propp (1968) and Todorov (1981), while Levi-Strauss's (1969) seminal work on narrative and myth continues to be useful.

Finally in this group, I venture to bring the discussion up to date by outlining what may be taken from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for my purpose here. The analytic methods provided by all the above models are, I argue, broadly compatible with Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA is useful both as "a theory and a method of analysing the way that individuals and institutions *use* language" (Richardson 2007: 1). I end by briefly justifying the selection of methods used in CDA which I have especially drawn upon.

Sign functions

I begin by drawing on Jakobson's well-known model of "sign functions" (Jakobson 1960). As indicated, his model provides a useful starting point for thinking about the relationship that the tabloid sets up with its readers; this is particularly the case since, from the first, Jakobson treats communication as a joint interaction, in which all participant bodies – including the demands of the social milieu – contribute to its form. As the analysis is interested in the way that the paper constructs both itself and its reading subjects, I take this implied relationship as a starting point; indeed, all the methods described below are ultimately employed to elucidate this primary relationship.

Jakobson begins by distinguishing between the six elements of communication: "The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADRESSEE. To be operative the message requires a CONTEXT referred to... seizable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a CODE fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words to the encoder and decoder of the message); and, finally, a CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication" (Jakobson 1960: 353; emphases in original).

Jakobson argues that each of these elements is associated with a particular function. There is no communication which does not use all these functions, although some functions may predominate: "The verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function" (Jakobson 1960: 353). In particular I am interested in the "so-called EMOTIVE or "expressive" function, focussed on the ADDRESSER, [which] aims at a direct expression of the speaker's attitude towards what he is speaking about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion whether true or feigned" (Jakobson 1960: 354; emphases in original). I am also interested in identifying the "orientation toward the ADRESSEE, the CONATIVE function", (Jakobson 1960: 355), which "constructs" the person addressed in the process of addressing her or him, and is visible in the modes employed; and third, the PHATIC function of the contact, which is the "endeavour to start and sustain communication" (Jakobson 1960: 355; emphases in original). The functions work together closely, or may overlap. We can imagine, for example, that the emotive function of a love-letter constructs the addresser as caring, solicitous and fond; the letter's conative function is to construct the addressee as deserving of love and affection; its phatic function is to establish and maintain contact between the lovers by use of endearments and other reminders of relationship.

The usefulness of Jakobson's model is that it starts and ends with what happens in the text: it does not speak of the text's *actual* sender or receiver who may, or may not, align with the addresser and addressee. Rather it speaks to how "texts set up and construct certain roles or positions within the text, available for both the sender and receiver to occupy" (Thwaites et al 2002: 17). Applying this model to the tabloid, then, the Contact is the physical newspaper, the joint medium which the reader signs into by purchasing and initiating this contact, a "contact" which is also a kind of contract between the parties, one that calls for the fulfilment of certain obligations on both sides. The Addresser is again the newspaper, but here anthropomorphised as a collective personality – which in reality means the reporter in his adopted role as spokesman for the paper *and*, ostensibly, for the reader – and the Addressee is the reader, a reader who is warmly imagined, but whom, at the same time, the reporter will never meet. The mutual Codes spring from the Context and reflect a shared familiarity with the background urban and township social setting, including its persistent needs and concerns, its history and its traditional beliefs, all of which are assumed by both parties. Codes merge also with the phatic function, in that the English used is characteristically peppered with a repetitive vocabulary of colloquial and dialect words from African, English and Afrikaans origins, such as "gogo" (grandmother), "nyatsi" (a married man's lover, a mistress), "4-5" (penis), "Ben-10" (toyboy), "moer" (beat) and "kak" (shit), intended to intensify the sense of abbreviated distance between the medium and its peruser. However, all these functions depend finally for their effectiveness on the context in which the sign is communicated, and in terms of our central interest we can understand the context as both the material and discursive conditions within which crime is perpetrated, experienced and understood.

What is required, then, is that all these different aspects receive their due in the estimation of the meaning. Although neither the terms nor Jakobson himself will be regularly referenced in what follows, his example will continue to serve as a *modus operandi* in the analyses that are to come.

Narrative

Narrative, as an elemental and universal aspect of human culture, is "simply there, like life itself" (Barthes 1977: 79), providing a "basic way of making sense of our experience of the real" (Fiske 1987: 128). As such, it is not surprising that media texts are fundamentally narrative in form and the *Daily Sun's* texts are intentionally, noticeably, so. Because of the volume of data, I make use quite extensively of Todorov and Propp's syntagmatic narrative models, for they allow me to speak about the narrativity of the texts at a broad level. Used in conjunction with Levi-Strauss's paradigmatic scheme they offer an effective approach to the tabloid's texts which works both at a surface level as well as offering critical insight into their latent structures of meaning.

Narrative has been described as a "chain of events linked by cause and effect and occurring in time and space" (Bordwell and Thompson 2010: 79) – in other words, a narrative is not a random group of happenings, but is made up of events occurring over time, which are selected and composed in such a way that each element contributes to the plot. The sequential nature of its actions is implied, but need not be reflected in the actual order of the telling, which may be varied for reasons of emphasis or dramatic disclosure. The idea of a manipulated "chain of events" provides a ready link to those narrative models which concern themselves with the

syntagmatic arrangement of narrative elements. Todorov (1981: 51) sets out a narrative model in which narrative consists of a “complete sequence... composed – always and only – of five propositions. An ideal narrative begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb. From which results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is quite similar to the first, but the two are not identical”. Lacey (2000: 29) usefully parses this five-stage model to emphasise the moment of the recognition of the disruption, so that the five stages move from the initial equilibrium to the disruption, followed by the recognition of the disruption, the attempts to repair it and finally the establishment of a new equilibrium. Todorov’s (1981) model depends on the elements of causality and transformation, in which the narrative events are linked through cause and effect and change takes place over time as equilibrium is restored.

Todorov’s schema is useful as a starting point for any analysis of news, as it exemplifies the struggle between the forces of social order and disorder (Fiske 1987). Newsworthy events are usually those that cause disruption or restore equilibrium. While news typically glosses over the initial equilibrium (whose taken-for-granted status reinforces the given social norms), the disruption and the actions that restore order are typically dealt with in detail. A text’s ideological position is therefore visible “in the selection of *which* events are considered to disrupt or restore *which* equilibrium” (Fiske 1987: 137; italics in original), but different choices in any of the five aspects of the model could result in different narrative outcomes and meanings.

In contrast to the relative simplicity and widespread grasp of Todorov’s schema, Propp (1968) offers a more complex and archetypal model of the structural elements of narrative form. He argues that there are two kinds of narratives, one centred on a quest by a seeker hero in the course of which he must overcome a villain; the second in which the hero leaves home to transform his or her circumstances. Propp (1968) breaks down the narrative into thirty one essential functions arranged and occurring in sequence in six stages, broadly compatible with, or at least translatable into, Todorov’s five-stage model (Prinsloo 2009). Central to the narrative functions are the seven “*dramatis personae*” namely villain, donor, helper, princess/father, dispatcher, hero/victim and false hero. These constitute the “stable constant elements” of narrative, and are “understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action” (Propp 1968: 21). Thus, in order to identify the character function one must recognise what sphere of action a character occupies: if the character sets off on a quest, or engages with the villain, he performs the hero function; if the character gives the hero a magical agent, he acts as the donor, etc.

These character functions are clearly visible in many of the *Daily Sun* stories, which confirms their status as narratives in a traditional sense. Additionally, the choice of roles – no longer princes or ogres – and the selection of who, in a modern context, is fit to occupy them, serve as important indicators of the social values that the texts participate in constructing.

While both Todorov and Propp’s models are syntagmatic, dealing with change over time, Levi-Strauss’s concept of binary oppositions allows us to look at a narrative’s paradigmatic choices. This emphasis moves the analysis from “what happened?” to “what is the meaning of the event?” (Prinsloo 2009: 236). For Levi-Strauss, the “deep structure” of the universal cultural

process of narrative is captured in the analysis of myth. Myth is an “anxiety-reducing mechanism that deals with unresolvable contradictions in a culture and provides imaginative ways of living with them” (Fiske 1987: 131-132). These cultural tensions are revealed in myth by the presence of binary oppositions at an abstract level: good and evil; nature and culture; gods and humans, etc. While myths do not resolve the contradiction, they provide “an imaginative structure by which the contradictions can be thought through: the structure makes the contradictions conceptually and culturally capable of being handled and thus not dysfunctional” (Fiske 1987: 132-133). This happens by means of what Levi-Strauss calls the “logic of the concrete” whereby characters within individual narratives metaphorically embody the mythic binary: thus, culture and nature is embodied by man and woman; or good and evil is embodied by hero and villain. Where the opposition is so stark as to seem unbridgeable, myth will produce a hero endowed with aspects of both sides of the binary, who mediates the opposing and irreconcilable concepts.

The concept of the binary remains useful as a way of evaluating a text’s values and social orientation, as the binary “does not merely present neutral opposites, but is linked to a social context and history that is marked by contestation” (Prinsloo 2009: 237). Which individuals and which social groups or forces embody which aspects of the binary are indicative of the text’s ideological orientation as, in most cases, one side of the binary is always superior and the other devalued. Identifying the binaries that organise the social imagination of the tabloid and its readers is a key aspect of the analysis.

Argumentation

The *Daily Sun* clearly sets out to persuade readers to adopt a particular stance towards crime, and in my analysis I pay attention to the rhetorical devices, or argumentation, employed by the tabloid to this end. Here I draw on Richardson’s (2007) discussion of Aristotle’s rhetoric in which he starts by observing that argumentation is the way language is used in a particular context to persuade the listener to *do* things: “all argumentation aims somehow at modifying an existing state of affairs” (Perelman 1979: 11 in Richardson 2007: 155). There are three kinds of rhetorical argumentation: forensic, epideictic and deliberative. Forensic rhetoric is concerned with appraising the justice or injustice of past actions or events; epideictic rhetoric is concerned with the present, and either applauds or castigates the behaviour of the person or institution under scrutiny; and deliberative rhetoric, concerned with the future, looks to the desirability or undesirability of a course of action.

However, for the purposes of analysis, I am specifically interested in the various *modes* of persuasion, which are the “only true constituents of the art: everything else is merely accessory” (Aristotle 1354a 13-14 in Richardson 2007: 159). There are three modes of persuasion: “The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or the apparent proof, provided by the speech itself” (Aristotle 1356a 2-5 in Richardson 2007: 159). An *ethotic* argument is made by a speaker who makes an argument on the basis of his good reputation or acknowledged expertise. *Pathos*, or an appeal to the emotions, seeks to move the audience to the frame of mind that will make them most receptive to the argument’s claims. The third form of persuasion is *logos*, or the persuasive logic or proof of the argument itself, which is achieved either through inductive or

deductive reasoning. Ethotic and pathotic forms of persuasion appear frequently in the tabloid, and I pay attention to the way that appeals to character and emotion are employed as persuasive devices.

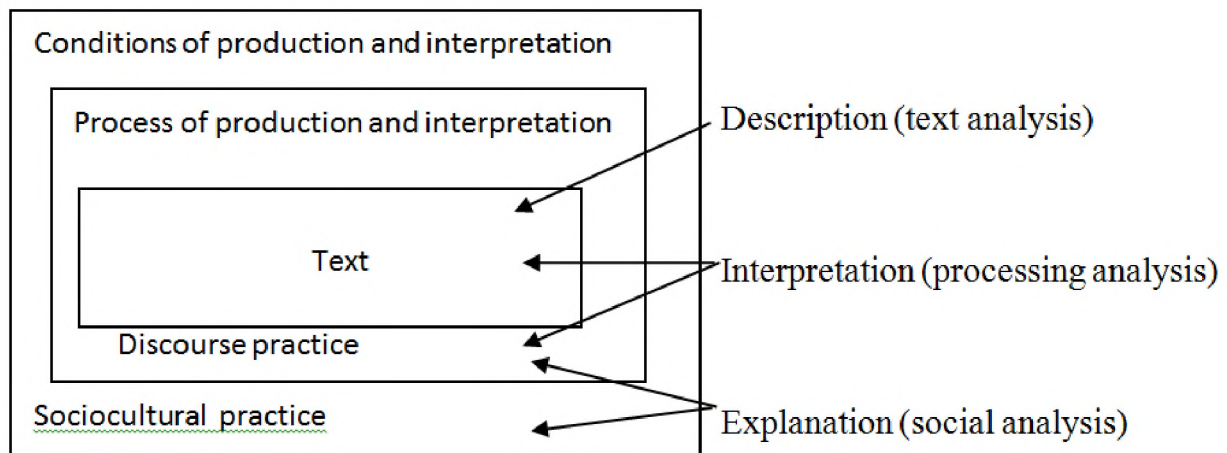
Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is, as I have indicated, both a “theory and a method of analysing the way that individuals and institutions *use* language” (Richardson 2007: 1; also van Dijk 1988), which by itself suggests it might prove an important resource. However, its stance is also a politically-engaged one that focuses on the “role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse and domination” (Richardson 2007: 1) in specific social and historical contexts (Fairclough 2013; van Dijk 2001).

My reluctance to adopt this second feature of CDA does not lie in any pusillanimous desire to shrink away from controversy or from moral engagement. However, as I have already noted in the discussion on content analysis, I have avoided taking an overt *a priori* stance on the subject in the way advocated by Richardson (who situates his critique within capitalism). This is not because of an indifference to the issue of power inequality, which presents us with undeniable social problems, but because I feel that the interplay of power relations within discourse is more complex than one can at first anticipate (and as my immersion in the tabloid’s content suggests), and my first task is to draw out that complexity for what it is before leaping to judgment. In addition, I am convinced that a discourse analysis, in revealing the dimensions of the range of discourses in the tabloid’s texts – the ‘map’, if you will, of discourse – will in and of itself *unavoidably* show the arrangements of power at play.

I find support for this approach in Janks (1998). Janks begins her discussion of Critical Discourse Analysis by arguing that in order to understand how power works within language, we must simultaneously seek to understand the context of communication. She draws on Volosinov (1973) to argue (in a manner that recalls Jakobson), first, that all language is dialogic in nature and presumes an addresser and addressee; and second, that the form and meaning of any utterance is contingent on the socio-cultural and historical context of its production and consumption. In other words, the power-relations that inhere within the specific context imbricate language, the form it takes and the meanings that arise from it. If there is no separation between the meaning of language and its social context, “there are as many meanings of a word as there are contexts of utterance” (Volosinov 1973: 79 in Janks 1998: 196). But because these contexts “do not stand side by side in a row as if unaware of one another, but are in a state of constant tension, or incessant interaction and conflict” (Volosinov 1973: 80 in Janks 1998: 196), words also become “both a site and stake in domination and struggle” (Janks 1998: 196). It is for this reason that “[a]ny analysis of discourse is therefore necessarily an analysis of [the struggle for] power” (Janks 1998: 196; my addition).

Both Richardson and Janks use Fairclough’s (1995) model of discourse, which consists of three interdependent dimensions, each of which requires its own form of analysis, as presented in the model below:



Dimensions of discourse

Dimensions of discourse analysis

Figure 3: Fairclough's (1995) dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis.

The embedded boxes model the way in which a text “is embedded within sociocultural practice at a number of levels: in the immediate situation, in the wider institution or organisation, and at a societal level” (Fairclough 2013: 132). This “three-dimensional conception of discourse” (Fairclough 2013: 132), which ultimately links the text with the socio-cultural context within which it is created and consumed, includes the *description* of the text under scrutiny (text analysis), the *interpretation* of the text within its processes of production and interpretation (discourse practice), and *explaining* this interpretation by linking it to the larger historical, social and cultural context (sociocultural practice). In the case of the *Daily Sun*, the wider context is the history and current state of crime in post-apartheid South African townships; the institutional and interpretive context is the tabloid and its township audience. The text is the *Daily Sun* in 2011, a particular historical moment post-apartheid.

At the level of the text CDA uses an array of interpretive methods. However, because of the amount of data, I do not conduct a detailed linguistic and semiotic analysis, which is more common with a smaller number of texts. I outline here those methods from Richardson (2007) which I have found most useful at a broad level of analysis

Lexical analysis

The choice of words and their connotative and denotative meanings are important signposts, indicative of particular social values: “Words convey the imprint of society and of value judgements in particular” (Richardson 2007: 47). In particular, I examine the choice of nouns and adjectives, and verbs and adverbs in the context of the narratives and draw out their connotative meanings where appropriate.

Naming

The words that are chosen to *describe* or *name* characters are an important aspect of how they are framed and thus viewed. I could use a range of words to describe myself which may be accurate, but do not convey the same meaning: for example, “mom” and “scholar” both describe me accurately, but have quite different valences. In each case, the word has an indexical connotation, which situates me in a certain social context with its attendant social status. By choosing one category, the other is elided or downplayed, and these referential strategies participate in forwarding the overall aims of the text.

Transitivity

This aspect of analysis focuses on the use of *verbs*, which bring into relationship the participants and the process in which they are involved: Richardson argues strongly that “Given that transitivity forms the very basis of representation, transitive choice cannot be overlooked in any linguistic analysis of journalism” (2007: 57). Transitivity includes various possible processes: verbal (such as shouting, talking, laughing, etc.), mental (thinking, imagining, believing, feeling, etc.), relational (that is, an attribute: I *have* X; or I *am* Y; or you *seem* Z), and material (transitive verbs such as kick, hit, run, etc.; and their passivised forms). The choices made between these verbal processes have direct consequences at the level of connotation. Thus “Councillor X embezzled R1 million from the municipality”, in which agency is attributed to a known actor, is quite different to the agentless “R1 million was embezzled from the municipality”. Or again, “The municipality is corrupt” transforms a transitive action into a relational one, and by thus eliding agency occludes the uncomfortable political implications of the overt material process (Fairclough 2000).

Rhetorical tropes

Rhetorical tropes are textual strategies chosen to persuade the addressee to accept the addresser’s point of view, and to this end attract attention by mobilising unexpected denotative or connotative meanings. The ones encountered most frequently in the *Daily Sun* are hyperbole (exaggeration: “VIOLENT SA!⁴⁵”), metaphor (describing one thing in terms of another: “House tastes Peoples Justice⁴⁶”), personification (converting an abstract idea or inanimate object into a living agent: “Tree of life talks to us⁴⁷”) and metonymy (in which a part of something is taken for, or substituted for, the whole: “Cruel Justice⁴⁸” for example standing in for the heartless actions of the police).

Analysing images

This chapter has mainly foregrounded issues connected with language. But this far from accounts for all of the *Daily Sun*’s regular contents: its crime coverage is inseparable from its visual presentation. Images contribute substantially to the meaning of the reports, and describing and interpreting the layout of the articles, and the photographs that accompany them, play a significant part in the analysis. This multi-modal approach to the news photograph was first advocated by Barthes (1977), and is taken up more recently by Greer (2010), and by Machin and

⁴⁵ Violent SA! *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 1,2.

⁴⁶ House tastes People’s Justice *Daily Sun* 9 February 2011: 5.

⁴⁷ Tree of life talks to us *Daily Sun* 16 August 2011: 3.

⁴⁸ Cruel justice *Daily Sun* 1 September 2011: 4.

Mayr (2012: 11) who argue that it is “important to focus on the interplay between word and image (and other visual features, such as headline size, font and colour)” in order to understand the “ideological” work they perform. In the case of the photograph, this is achieved by its seeming ability to transmit, unmediated, “the scene itself, the literal reality”, by means of what is popularly accepted as its “purely denotative status... the perfection and plenitude of its analogy” (Barthes 1977: 17-19). As iconic signs which share some of the traits of the real,

News photos have a specific way of passing themselves off as aspects of “nature”. They repress their ideological dimensions by offering themselves as literal visual-transcriptions of the “real world”. News photos witness to the actuality of the event they represent... [carrying] within them a meta-message: “this event really happened and this photo is the proof of it” (Hall 1973: 131).

In other words, visual images appear “objective”, and without connotative dimensions (that is, outside of ideology; what Barthes (1977) refers to as the photograph’s “mythic” function, its overt transparency). But all signs have socially-established connotative meanings, and it is these which are the true object of analysis. The image’s connotative meanings can be grasped by examining, *inter alia*, the following aspects: the type of shot (how far away the camera is from the object); composition (the picture’s vertical, horizontal and diagonal ‘lines’); colour; and lighting (use of light and shadow).

The *shot-type* establishes the “distance” of the reader from the object: a “full shot”, which reveals the whole body, has quite different connotation to a close up head-and-shoulders shot, the former connoting a social relationship, the latter personal intimacy (Berger 2014). The extreme close up of the “mug-shot” is indicative of criminality (Lashmar 2014). The angle at which the image is taken has similar connotations: a shot from below connotes authority and power; from above, subjection. In terms of *composition*, images with strong vertical and horizontal lines appear static and authoritative; diagonal lines which appear to stretch outside the frame connote spontaneity and dynamic movement. Colours are indicative of moods or values: for example, the use of red for passion, danger, anger, or subversion (the *Daily Sun*’s logo is picked out in red). The lighting of an image may contribute to this meaning, whether taken in bright directionless (low-key) light that casts no shadow, or with a strongly directed key light that accentuates shadows. The former indicates openness and objectivity; the latter a mood of uncertainty, risk and danger. However, as a presentational modality, a “gritty” appearance may also connote authenticity at the level of the street (Fiske 1987).

But, of course, like the analysis of dreams, visual interpretation is not merely looking up an index or consulting a dictionary of symbols. The sort of symbolic *mise en scene* listed above has to take second place to the situational context in which the forms do actually appear.

Discourse analysis, reflexivity and research validity

It might be suggested that the wide range of names and models appealed to in this chapter dissipates its focus and overall direction. I venture to claim rather that the variety of influences arrayed here is entirely complementary with my essential approach and outlook. As is actually the case in the intellectual lives of most readers and scholars, it is at least accurately reflective of

the multitude of sources that have stimulated my thinking, directed my reading, and come together to form my conception of my ultimate goal. I hope that the manner in which those figures selected here have variously contributed to the growth of my argument, shows that the elements they each bring are sufficient compatible to add up to a single coherent and valid overall methodology, a practice that may be genuinely implemented.

A central motive I have frequently stressed is my desire to avoid the imposition on the material of a single pre-established critical ideology, on the grounds that this inevitably dictates the kind of results to be arrived at. Hence, in order not to limit the possibility of discovery or to deny in advance access to some as yet unimagined truth, I have disavowed the customary adherence to any one school alone, but have rather erected my own personalised assemblage from what they all offer. My view is that this better accords with the inevitable individuality I must bring to my own particular reflexive interaction with the texts, hopefully an outlook of sufficient openness to allow them too to play their part in this mutual convergence.

My aim is after all not to establish an immutable truth but to confirm the validity of a perspective. Correspondingly, as already stated, my analysis does not attempt to find how the *Daily Sun* has misrepresented crime, as measured against some other external truth. Instead, it is discourse itself that is the object of my enquiry, what is actually said and pictured in the paper, how these representations are made to mean, and what their social consequences might be. But in taking this stance I must simultaneously acknowledge that my own study is similarly a verbal construction, and could be subject to the same inquiry (Burr 1995). All I can do is affirm Brown's conclusion: "Our memories, experiences, selves immersed in the text, act as a prism on the text, and at the same time, we are altered by our experience within it" (Brown 2003: 103).

But while the contingency and relativism this entails cannot be avoided, it does not mean that all constructions of the world are equally useful as a means of understanding the problems we face (Jorgensen and Philips 2002: 197). How persuasive my thesis is must ultimately rest upon its evaluation *as discourse* alongside other, competing discourses – an ongoing joint trial in which all discourse is necessarily implicated. As it happens, even supposed external truths are themselves tested in similar competition, where one can supersede another: "one always argues within a discursive space in which there is already a set of criteria for what is accepted as a true statement" (Jorgensen and Philips 2002: 197). Ultimately, the validity of my study must rest on its *coherence* (does the research present a coherent discourse?) and *fruitfulness* (what is the explanatory potential of the analysis? How much is it capable of including?) (Jorgensen and Philips 2002: 125).

To repeat the quotation from Geertz (1988: 16), I ought supposedly to be able to "convince you not merely that I myself have truly 'been there,' but that had you been there you should have seen what I saw, felt what I felt, concluded what I concluded". However, I do not *insist* that "you should have seen what I saw" had you been there (except perhaps imaginatively); you would no doubt have had your own take on things. But I do hope to convince you that my take on them is grounded on justifiable methods of inquiry, and hence can continue to maintain its validity against other rivals with different approaches, and more importantly, that its findings will have their own intrinsic value for yourself and others based on what they reveal.

In Chapter 4, I briefly present the numerical data from the content analysis. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the analyses of four thematic areas which impressed me as significant in the course of reading the material: People's Justice; the police; gender; and witchcraft. In order to orient the reader to the particular significance of each of these topics in relation to the local township context, I preface each analysis chapter with its own historical and theoretical frame. Read together, these frames deepen and expand the complexity of the terrain of crime and justice and bring what are otherwise discrete topics into relation with each other, and a broad synthesis of these links concludes the thesis in chapter 9.

Chapter 4: Findings

Numerical data

Here I present the main findings from the thematic content analysis, drawn from the Microsoft Excel worksheet I composed. It represents the data numerically and quantitatively for the purposes of comparison between certain items within the data. Because the thesis is a qualitative study, I present this quantitative data by allowing that it is a useful means to present the broad brush-strokes of the themes within the data. However, it is unable to probe the issues of the culture that emerges from the interpretation of the texts themselves, and must be regarded as supplementary to the analysis. I begin by setting out some of the data concerning the distribution of the various items both within the paper and over the course of the year, followed by what the table can tell us about the villains, victims and heroes who appear in the narratives. Two graphs indicate the range of resolutions found in the texts and a comparison between disruptions and resolutions in the headlines and within the narrative themes. I end by presenting the range of themes that emerge from the thematic analysis.

The corpus consists of 242 editions of the newspaper, starting with the first edition of the year on January 3 and ending December 30, 2011. A total of 5270 items, including articles, letters, editorials and adverts were identified as pertaining to crime. These are seen to peak in June, July and August: this may be due to the number of violent protests and strikes that happen during the winter months. March and May perhaps have fewer items because of several public holidays occurring during this period when the paper was not printed.

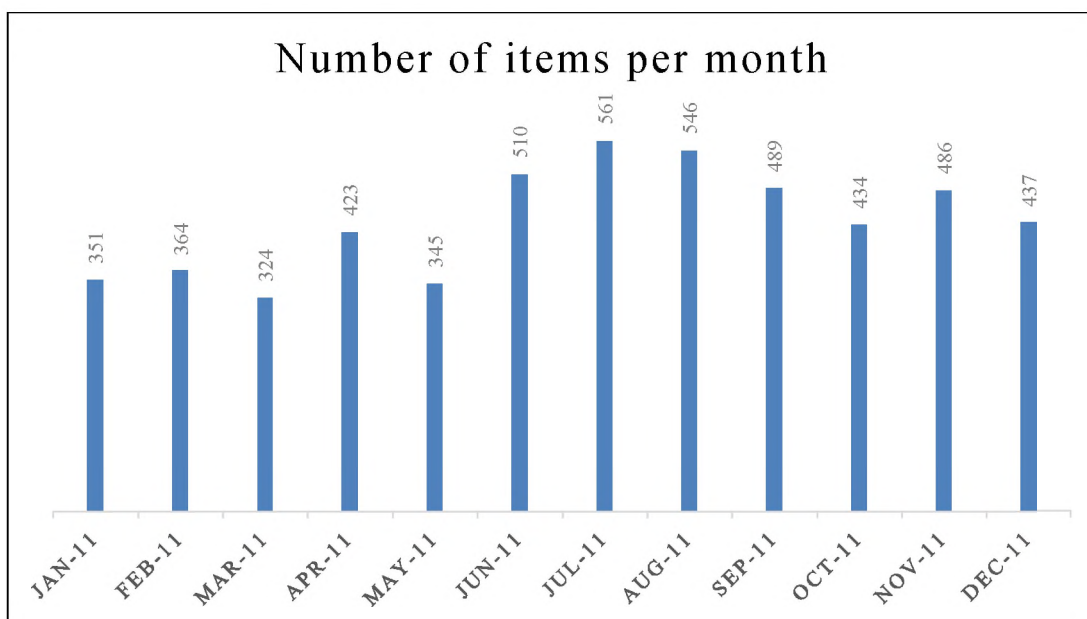


Figure 4: Number of items per month pertaining to crime in the Daily Sun, 2011.

Of these items, 3312 are reports, which together with 467 “Sunspots” make a total of 3779 reports. There are 18 editorials; 19 are “teasers”, which consist of headlines and photographs that lead to inside page articles. There are 709 letters, 522 sms messages and 172 Facebook postings. 39 are advertisements that pertain to crime.

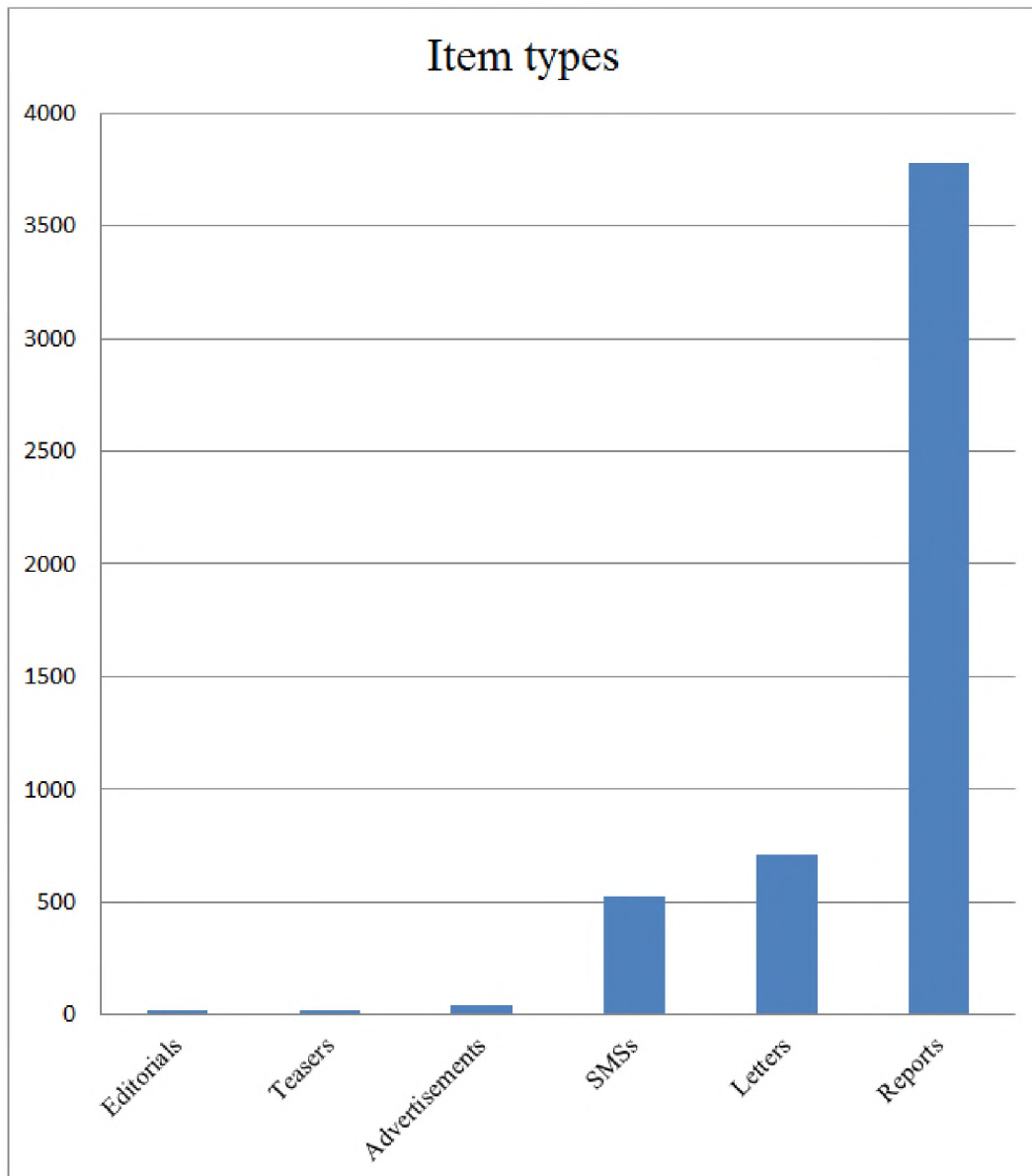


Figure 5: A comparison of total item types pertaining to crime in the Daily Sun, 2011.

Within each edition in 2011, the vast majority of significant articles are inserted in the first five pages, as indicated in the graph below (see page 82). The letters, Facebook and sms messages appear, by contrast, exclusively on the final two pages of the paper. Due to the paper’s style, the front page only has one, or at most two stories, and these often extend to pages 2 and twice to page 3. Over the course of 2011, 246 crime reports appear on the front page. While each of the first ten pages contains crime reports, most cases appear on page 4, followed by pages 5, 2 and 8.

Page 2 consistently contains at least one or two crime reports amongst news of national interest; page 3 frequently contains celebrity news; while pages four and five are at devoted exclusively to crime articles. Beyond page 10, crime reporting is scattered unevenly throughout the rest of the paper: for example on 7 July, crime reports and letters appear spread over pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 29 and 36, interspersed with other news.

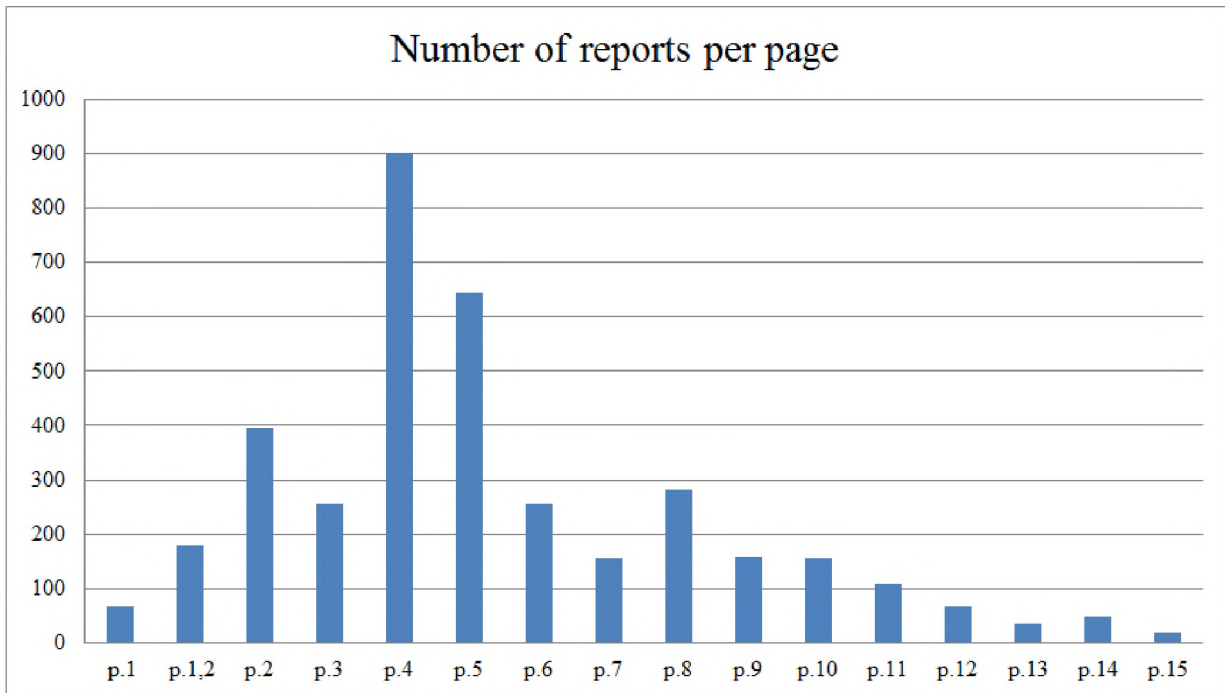


Figure 6: Comparison of the position of crime reports over the first fifteen pages of the Daily Sun, 2011.

Most editions of the *Daily Sun* during 2011 are 32 pages long, although some can reach 50 pages and a few are shorter at 22 or 24 pages. If the sections devoted to sport and entertainment are removed, plus the special sections like SunHealth, SunMoney, or SunShopper, and the many pages devoted to government and commercial advertising, crime reporting makes up a significant proportion of the total reportage. For example, in the 50 page edition of 15 December which contains 23 news reports, 15 of these pertain to crime; if one adds the letters, sms and Facebook messages, the total number of instances reaches 30. A similar number (15 out of 30 reports and a total of 30 instances including letters and smses) is found in 6 December, a 32 page edition. While each edition varies to some extent, from 34 items on 28 April 2011, to 8 items on 6 May 2011, crime features in every one without exception. Most issues contain between 15 and 23 items.

2011 reports are accompanied by photographs, illustrations (such as cartoons), or “cut-aways”, which appear in follow-up articles as a small cut-out image of the previous report, often including the headline, to remind readers about the story. 760 stories are follow-up reports, excluding the letters and smses that may comment on a particular case. Some narratives, for

example the Jub Jub trial⁴⁹, have frequent follow-ups and extend over the entire corpus. The Jub Jub saga, which began before the study starts in January, is not yet concluded by December 2011. Follow-ups then are an important feature of the *Daily Sun*'s style, inviting readers to remember and continue to take an interest in the stories told.

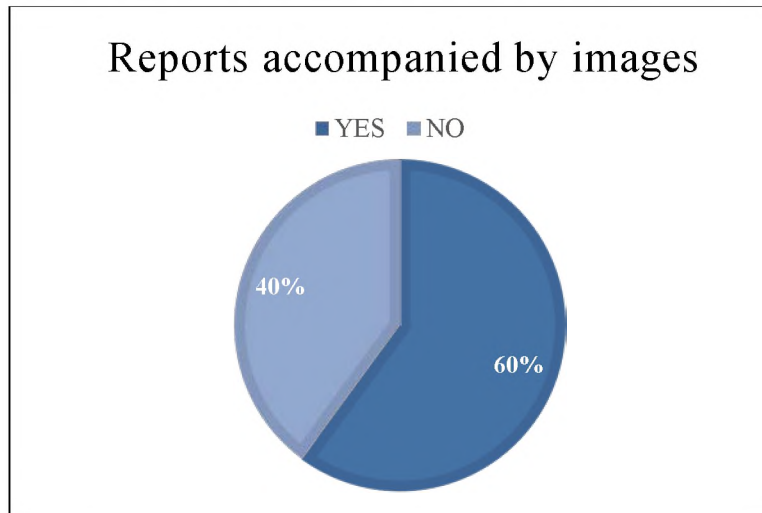


Figure 7: Percentage of reports accompanied by images in Daily Sun, 2011.

Villains, victims and heroes

2042 men appear as villains in the reports of crime and of these 303 are cops.

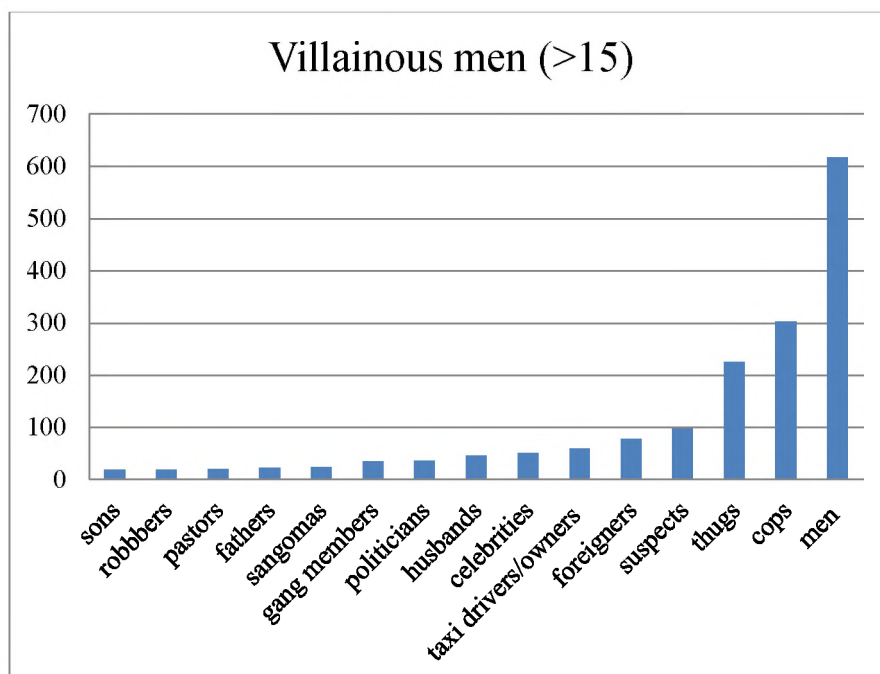


Figure 8: Social roles given to men appearing as villains in Daily Sun, 2011.

⁴⁹ Jub Jub is the stage-name of hip-hop singer Molemo Maarohanye, who in 2011 was on trial for the murder of four school children whom he killed in a drag-racing incident.

225 male villains are denominated “thugs” who are otherwise anonymous and are given no other social status, while 98 are named as equally anonymous “suspects” or simply “men” in 617 cases. Other villains occupy a wide range of social roles, from 37 villainous male politicians to 60 villainous male taxi-drivers or owners. 47 are referred to as husbands and 23 as fathers, while 19 are sons.

In contrast, 318 villains are women, and of these 62 are designated as mothers, 34 as wives, and 7 as daughters or granddaughters. 112 villains are referred to anonymously as “woman” or “women”.

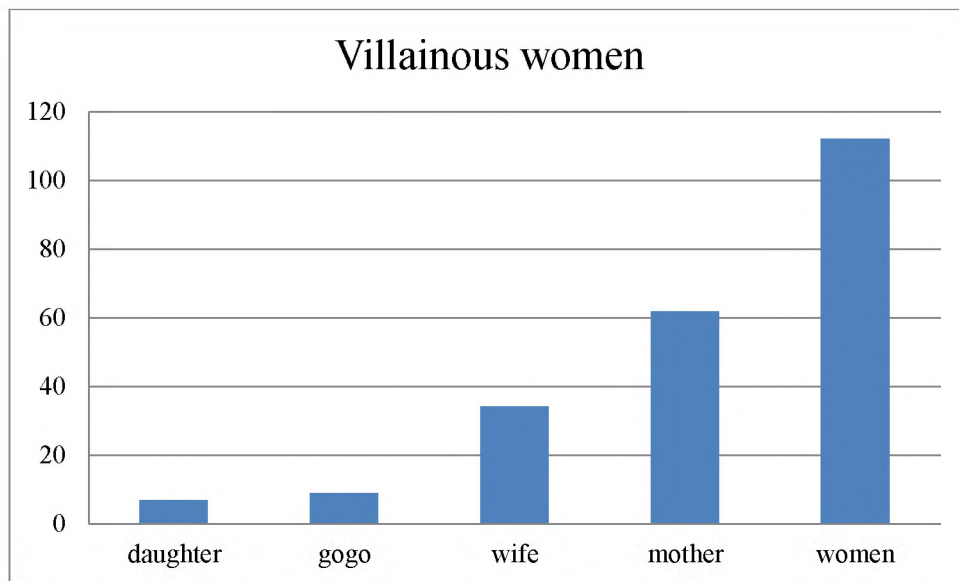


Figure 9: Social roles of women appearing as villains in Daily Sun, 2011.

However, far more women are victims than villains, as the chart below indicates: of 749 female victims, 386 characters are identified simply as “women”. While 38 are elderly women or “gogos”, 137 victims are girls and young women, which suggests that these feature disproportionately as targets of crime. The graph below includes 157 victims who are babies and small children: while the sex of these is sometimes not given, what is remarkable is the relatively high vulnerability of the very young.

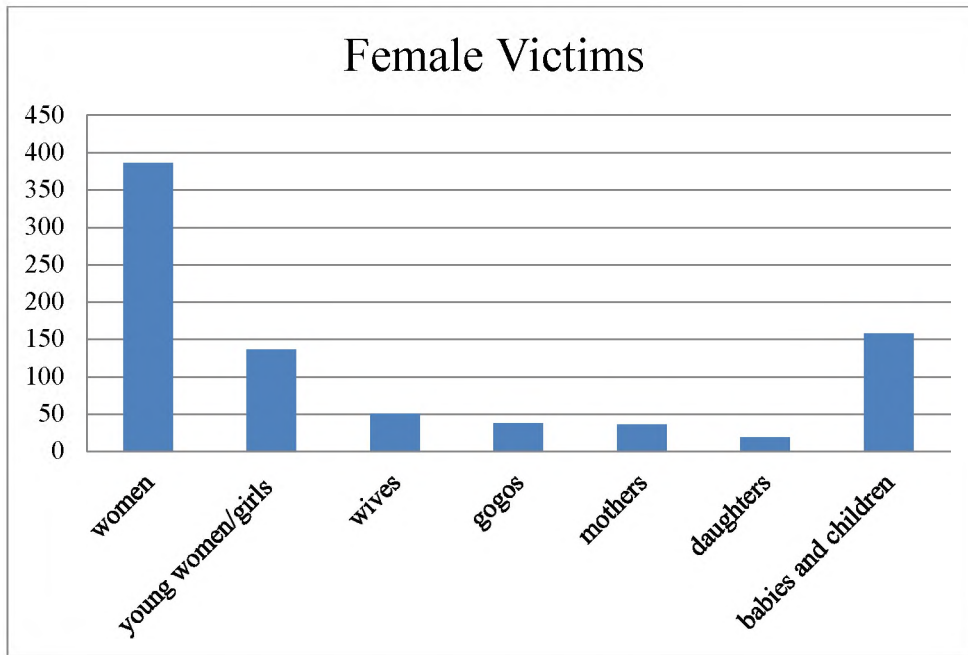


Figure 10: Social roles of female victims in Daily Sun, 2011.

Yet, if we compare male, female and anonymous victims (where the victims are simply referred to as “people”, “residents”, etc.), we see that men are more likely to appear as victims overall, a finding consistent with claims that in South Africa men are more likely to be victims of violence (Ratele 2010).

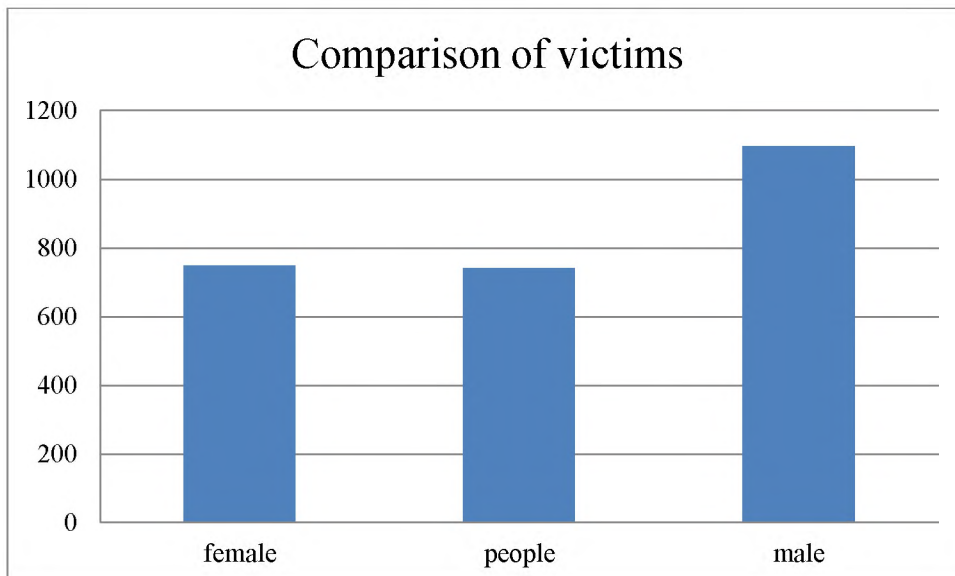


Figure 11: Comparison of female, male and unidentified victims in Daily Sun, 2011.

Heroes

There are far fewer heroes compared to villains and victims. This may be simply an artefact, due to the large number of unresolved cases involved, but it partly occurs also because I only recorded a hero when this role was unambiguously signalled by the report. One might think that a sentence, for example, which is a form of resolution, may denote heroic action on the part of the law (as might be suggested by a heading): but the sentence may be loudly rejected by residents in the body of the report as signalling a further disruption rather than a concluding resolution, and the law denied unambiguous heroic status. This suggests that in Sunland there are far fewer unambiguous heroes than villains in evidence.

The most prominent hero is the cop, who appears 555 times in this role (compared to 303 times as villains). Men appear 190 times as heroes, almost twice as often as women, who are heroes in 103 cases. But considering how much more often men take the role of villain relative to their appearance as heroes, the fact that women should act relatively often as heroes in comparison to their overall frequency of appearance suggests they have a prominent role to play in this regard. Other noticeable heroes are organisations (such as the residents' associations, or churches) which appear 63 times; and the *Daily Sun* itself, which is represented heroically in 34 cases.

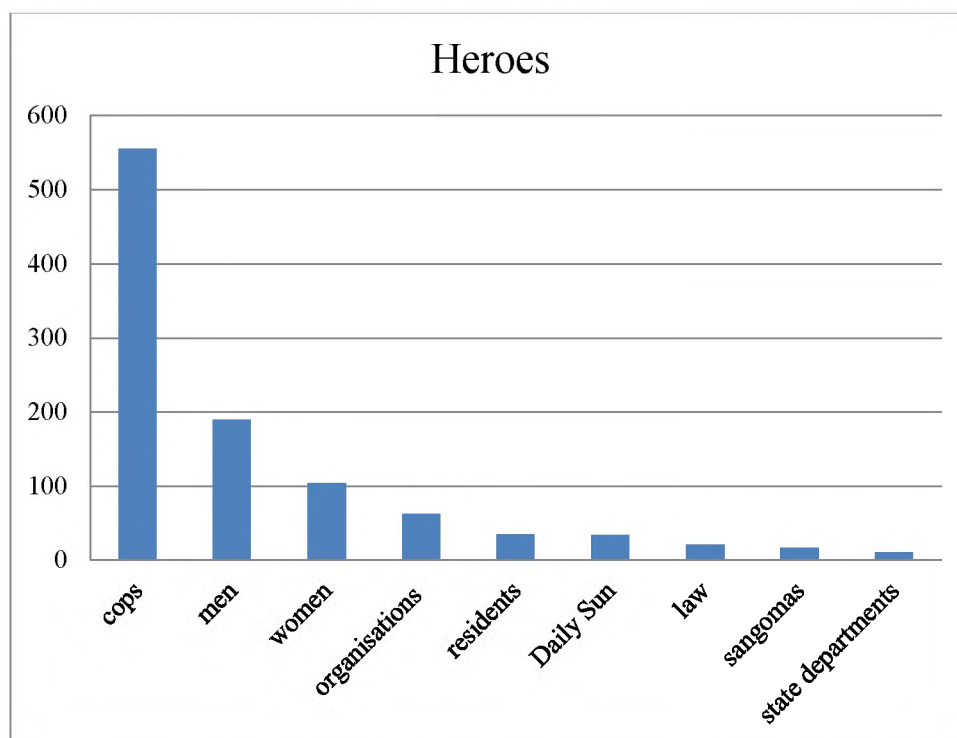


Figure 12: A comparison of characters in the role of hero in the Daily Sun, 2011.

Resolution

Justice forms the second leg of the research dyad: it is not crime alone but also forms of justice which is of concern to us. Justice is implicit in every crime story – it is the necessary counterpart of every crime, implicated at the crime's commission. It is notable is that in 1097 of 3313 reports, no form of resolution is found and the crime remains unresolved. This figure does not

include 295 cases in which an investigation is still taking place (including forensic procedures such as post-mortems), or 168 instances where a case has merely been opened: while these also leave the story *in media res*, stories in which an investigation is proceeding, or in which a case has been opened, indicate that a formal attempt is being made to resolve the crime. However, they still unfortunately lack the definite character of the arrest. Actual arrests conclude the narrative 248 times; however we can add here 854 instances which end in charges being laid: situations where prior arrests are consequently implicit. Also occurring after the arrest is custody of the suspect in 56 reports. In 176 reports, resolution is marked by a court trial. However, in only 65 reports is justice recorded as attained via a formal court sentence (another 17 verdicts refer to informal sentences given by the community).

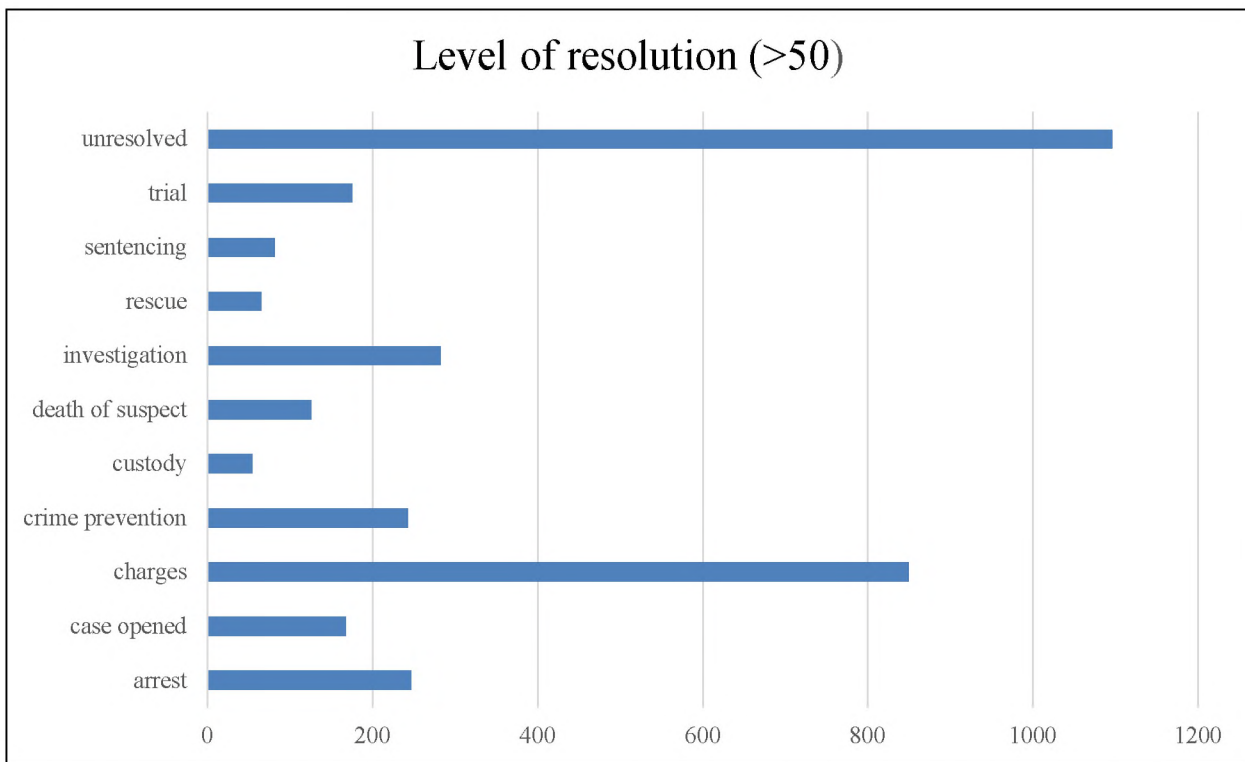


Figure 13: A comparison of levels of resolution achieved within Daily Sun narratives, 2011.

Most of these are, then, stages within the formal justice system; but it is also noteworthy that the further the case is taken within the formal justice process, the less it is reported on. The most frequently recorded resolution reached is a promise of formal charges before a magistrate (charges, as I've said, imply the prior arrest of the suspect; on the other hand not all arrests lead to charges). Apart from popular forms of punishment, resolution – and thus ultimately justice – seems by and large tied to formal processes: there are only a few examples of mediation or forgiveness, for instance. Also in a very few cases are there reports of institutional procedures outside of, or parallel to, the formal justice system. For example, in 11 cases, the resolution is

reached by the wrongdoer's suspension; in another 5, the narrative is concluded by their dismissal. 126 stories end with the death of the suspect, and in 66 cases the resolution is achieved by the rescue of victims from a crime. Least frequently shown are extra-judicial and negotiated forms of justice; for example in 35 cases resolution is achieved through restitution; while in 15 cases, reconciliation and forgiveness bring the story to a close. 244 stories concern crime prevention.

Headlines

As abstracts of what is to come in the report, headlines direct us to what the paper considers newsworthy (Bell 1991), and are the "first indicator[s] of the content and perspective of the story which follows" (Conboy 2007: 17). To capture the main idea of the headline I chose to record where possible the valence of the main verb. This usually indicates the action emphasised by the headline. I found that the headline topic is often constituted either by a level of resolution, such as arrest, or the commission of a crime, such as rape. In reports like "Cop bust four in hijacked car", the headline topic is the arrest. In "Angry man butchers boss" the murder constitutes the topic. Some headlines are complete narratives in themselves. "Two rob shop, guards bust one" for example is a complete mini-narrative which has two villains (robbers) and some heroes (guards), a disruption (a business robbery) and a resolution (arrest). In this particular instance the level of resolution is "charges"; the headline topic is the "arrest"; and the themes are those of "robbery", "recovery of stolen goods", "cops in action", etc.

Headline topics: comparing resolutions and disruptions

Looking then at the graph on the next page, we can see where headline topics cluster. First, where the story involves a potential resolution (which may or may not correspond to the ultimate level of resolution reached in the narrative), this is more likely to appear upfront as a headline rather than only subsequently within the body of the report (and thus captured as a theme). Thus, if an arrest is part of the story, it almost invariably appears foregrounded within the headline. Arrests lead the headline topics a form of resolution, appearing 486 times. Although judicial sentencing occurs far less frequently than arrests, in 65 instances, it always occupies the headline. Court proceedings, where charge hearings or a trial is in process, appear 198 times as a headline topic, compared to 48 times as a theme in the body of the report. Informal (non-judicial) punishment – come-uppance and retribution – similarly appear as topics in 50 headlines and only 5 times as a theme (but see figures for People's Justice below).

Where a disruption is recognised, the recognition is also more likely to appear as a headline than to be confined to the body of the report. Thus warnings occur 152 times as headline topics, and only 8 times as a theme; disputes, which point to the recognition of a disruption, appear 146 times in the headlines compared to 43 times as a theme. The unexpected discovery of a crime appears 62 times as a headline topic only.

Some crimes are more likely than others to appear as a headline topic. Murder leads the list of crimes: as the headline topic in 425 instances, it is almost as frequent as arrest, and is the most common theme, appearing 660 times. However, rape only appears 57 times as a headline,

Comparison between disruptions and resolutions in headlines and themes

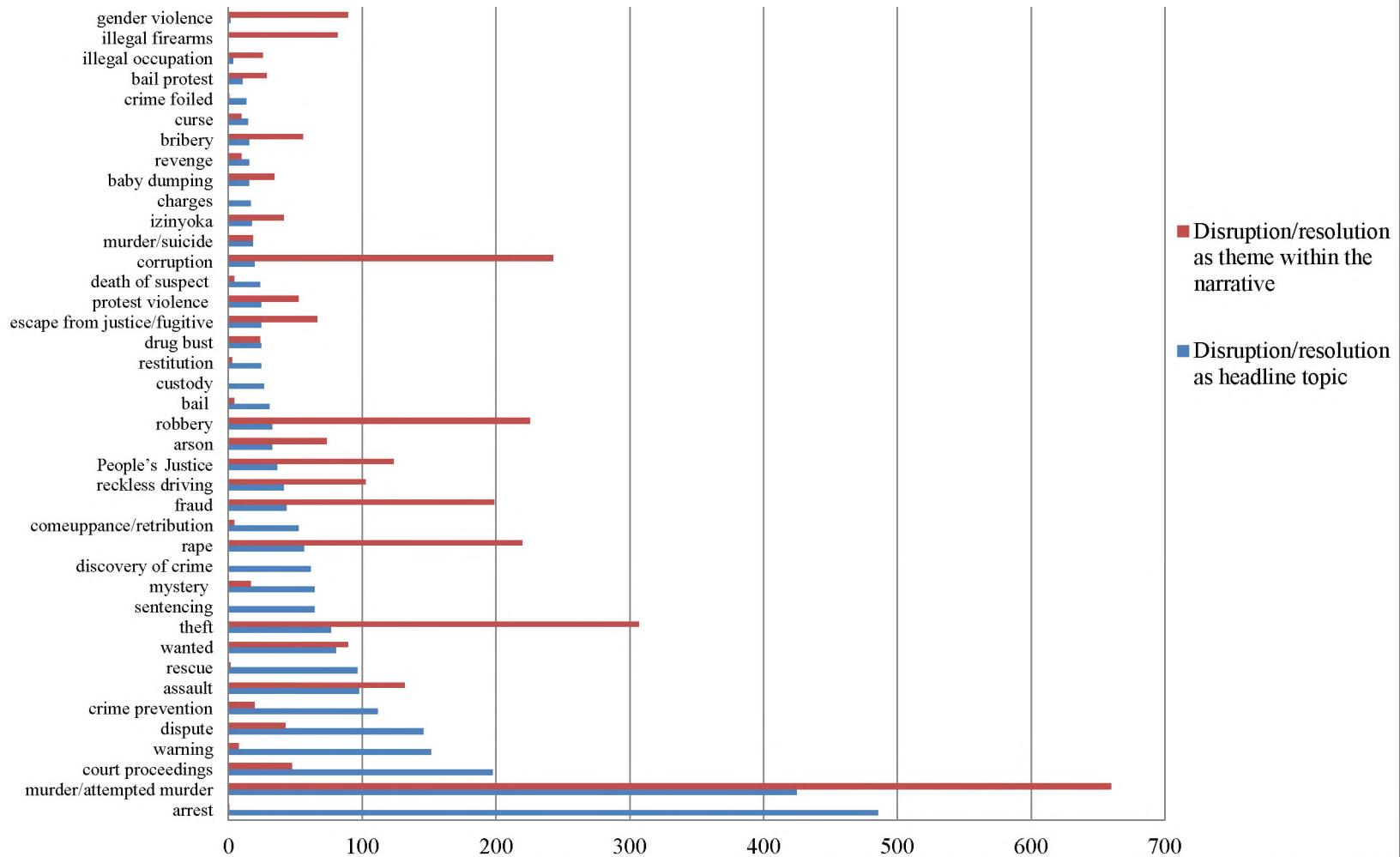


Figure 14: A comparison between disruptions and resolutions in headline topics and narrative themes in Daily Sun, 2011.

compared with 220 times as a theme; corruption similarly appears far more frequently as a theme in 243 instances, compared with its use as a headline topic in only 20 cases. Theft is another case where the crime appears 77 times as a headline topic, but 307 times as a theme. Some crimes do not appear in headlines: illegal firearms, for example, appear as a theme 82 times but do not appear as a headline topic. Thus the themes which may be considered significant within the report are not always reflected in the headline.

Using Todorov's (1981) model as a guide we can see that the clustering of the headline topics around the moments of the recognition of the disruption (with its suggestion of surprise), and the formal resolution of the disruption (with all it implies of reassurance), indicates that these narrative moments are considered most news-worthy. While disruptions in the form of a crime do appear as headline topics, they are more likely to appear in the body of the story. Theft, for example, only occurs 77 times as a headline topic, but 307 times as a theme. People's Justice appears 37 times as a headline topic, but 124 times as a theme. The exception is murder, which appears almost as frequently as a headline as it does in the stories themselves. Overall, what our graph dramatically demonstrates is that, contrary to the paper's and the public's best hopes, there are far more crimes committed than there are resolutions achieved.

Themes

I now set out in broad terms the themes that emerged from my examination of the coverage (I shall highlight each of these in bold on first appearance for separate discussion below). While I isolate these here for convenience into discrete groupings, they are not necessarily so discrete or separable in the actual reports.

The themes are organised in four sections. I begin with forms of crime and justice characterised by their **public** nature – public in the sense of being associated with modern institutions such as the police, the courts, schools, transport, and public figures such as politicians and media personalities (entertainment and sports celebrities). This category also includes the professional criminal gang or career criminal whose activities take place in commercial and urban spaces. In the second section I move on to crimes that I understand to be more closely associated with the physical environment of South African townships and the material conditions – such as lack of housing – under which typical *Daily Sun* readers and subjects live their lives. Emerging from this material base are the **social relations** of the township. Social relations are the organising principle of the third section. Here I set out the various social spaces in which relationships – and the crimes that characterise them – are forged. Crimes associated with **customary practice**, those forms of social relations which derive from traditional belief systems, form the fourth category.

Again I emphasise that these categories are not discrete but are made for the sake of the analysis and for convenience. Take for example the **road** which appears as a theme. Clearly all roads are not the same, and certainly the township road is a different social and physical space to the national highway. However, as public spaces nominally under public jurisdiction I have included them in the first category rather than the second.

The public domain

Heroic vs bad cops

The most visible public institution in the *Daily Sun* is that of the South African Police Service, which provides the tabloid with a primary source for their reportage: the voices of ‘cops’ are frequently heard. As heroes in 555 reports, they appear 298 times in the **cops in action** story, which is a narrative from the police perspective of the investigation of crime and the apprehension of a variety of criminals. Cops in action stories featuring heroic police invariably involve some or all of the following elements: a **tip off**, a high speed **chase**, a **shoot-out**, the deaths or the arrest of the suspects, and sometimes the deaths or injury of the police (and bystanders). Photographs of dead suspects in situ at the scene of the shootout often accompany such reports (but not in the Sunspots articles which are never illustrated). Dead policemen are not shown except in two cases, and then from a distance. The deaths of heroic police in action are frequently remarked upon and constitute a significant aspect of the valence of such stories. **Cop deaths** are a noticeable category, and are the subject of 72 reports including official voices, editorial diatribes and some letters.

The dangerous criminal is the typical heroic cop’s adversary, in particular the professional criminal group or gang. 1998 men appear as villains: of these, 225 are denoted simply as **thugs**. They are the subject of intense scrutiny, and visible in the data are a small number of highly evocative portraits of the professional **thug**. These men are associated with armed robbery, bank, cash-in-transit and ATM heists and bombings, hijackings, housebreaking, murder, rape, kidnapping, assault, possession of stolen goods and unlicensed firearms and ammunition. The serious crimes they perpetrate, together with the means taken by police to bring them to justice, constitute a noticeable domain within the reportage. Reports of clashes between cops and thugs often take place in major urban centres and are drawn from police sources. Articles of this kind invariably quote police spokespeople, either at the scene of a crime or at the station. A less theatrical, but frequently told, heroic cops-in-action story is the **drug-bust** (48 cases). These also involve **tip-offs** (which occur 126 times), but are more sedate, and take place in private homes in upmarket suburban or urban areas. There are similar stories about and pictures of the discovery and seizure of large arms caches and of recovered livestock.

In contrast to these heroic cops, **bad cops** appear in 302 stories as villains and the perpetrators of a range of crimes and injustices. They form the subject of editorial tirades and **official voices** are quoted in reports of ministerial and bureaucratic speeches in attempts to define, delimit and direct what counts as the ‘good’ versus the ‘bad’ cop. The notorious killing of **Andries Tatane** by police in the Ficksburg demonstrations just prior to the 2011 municipal elections is the prime exemplar of the notion of the ‘bad cop’ and Tatane’s case appear 64 times in the data. However, bad cops appear in many stories throughout the data and their appearance is associated with bribery, assault, torture or death in custody, or simple indifference and incompetence in their dealings with *kasi* residents.

On the road

Bad cops often appear for the solicitation of bribes. In a few significant cases these are in reports about traffic police. However, these bad cops are not alone, for **the road** is the setting for a range of crimes. Un-roadworthy taxis, taxi drivers or taxi owners in particular are noticeable as villains in 60 articles, and the internecine murder of taxi ‘bosses’, taxi violence, and the safety of taxi passengers and pedestrians are the subjects of 63 reports. These include the struggles between police and taxi owners over the regulation of licences and the criminal un-roadworthiness of the taxis. *Kasi* and urban roads are badly potholed, a condition that is linked to criminal activity in a small number of curious instances, for example, situations in which potholes are used to conceal stolen goods. However, particularly noticeable in the data are 43 cases of **drunk driving** and 188 cases **reckless driving** that occasionally lead to death, especially of children.

In the public eye

Jub Jub, the (in)famous hip-hop artist, is the first of a small number of cases in which public figures are held up for repeated examination. His extended trial for the murder of four boys whom he killed in the course of a drag-racing competition is reported in 31 articles and letters. Julius Malema, in 2011 the leader of the ANC Youth League and the ANC’s *bête noire*, is the second case: in 2011 he was tried for hate speech; and he also became the subject of a SARS investigation for tax evasion. He appears in connection with these trials in 130 articles, letters, sms and Facebook comments⁵⁰. The third figure is that of the police commissioner, **Bheki Cele**. During 2011 he is investigated by the Public Protector for corruption in the leasing of the police headquarters in Tshwane and is dismissed from his post. As the ‘top cop’ he had become notorious for his “shoot to kill” speech, which is reiterated in the course of 2011: “**CELE: SHOOT FIRST!**”⁵¹ He appears in 68 reports and letters. **Jackie Selebi**, the fifth case, is also a ‘top cop’ whose corruption trial is followed in 32 articles and letters. His saga is interesting as it follows the (interrupted) start of his prison sentence. **Sheryl Cwele**, the wife of Siyabonga Cewele, the Minister of State Security, is the sixth public figure to appear for criminal reasons: in 2011 she is convicted of international dealing in drugs and dismissed from her job, a story which is followed over 13 reports.

I also place in this category the cases of two individuals who became notorious because of the international dimension to their crimes. The first is Janice Linden, a South African woman who was arrested for drug smuggling in China and put to death there in December 2011. Her execution gives rise to a flurry of letters and sms and Facebook comments, 47 in all. The second is **Shrien Dewani**, a British citizen whose extradition hearing for the murder of his wife (which occurred in South Africa in November 2010) takes place in the course of 2011: his case comes up 24 times.

⁵⁰ Malema was also the favourite subject of many non-crime-related reports, editorials and letters during 2011, as this was also the year in which he went before a party disciplinary hearing which eventually led to his expulsion from the ANC in April 2012. He is easily the most reported individual in 2011.

⁵¹ Cele: Shoot first! *Daily Sun* 7 October 2011: 1,2.

Media and entertainment **celebrities** feature regularly on the third page and they appear 57 times in stories which scrutinise their criminal antics, 32 of which pertain to the Jub Jub trial.

Sportsmen are scrutinised in 24 articles for criminal behaviour, in particular drunk and reckless driving, as well as assault and murder. **Celebrities** feature 59 times as victims and occasional heroes in an extended debate about music piracy and the attempts by musicians to combat it.

The fake

Pirated or 'fake' CDs are not the only fakes: **fake** is a noticeable category that appears repeatedly throughout the data, and in 105 articles a range of fakes associated with crime populate the pages of the *Daily Sun*. Fake cops and fake doctors are of particular concern and 21 articles depict the crimes of these impersonators. Fake documents and documents in general are mentioned in association with crimes in 364 cases, in particular fake South African Identity Documents (IDs), which are not only criminal *per se* but are the means of perpetrating crimes. However, the ID is also noticeable for its absence, a crime for which many people are not responsible yet are punished by the lack of status and loss of social efficacy associated with its possession. **Home Affairs**, the state department responsible for these documents, is itself noted 32 times in reports for the crime of corruption.

Formal justice: the justice system and justice processes

An important category in the public domain is the **court report**, and 197 articles deal with the reading of charges and bail applications, or which capture trial proceedings. Bail applications, which occur 77 times, are sometimes associated with **bail protests** which occur in 41 reports: these recount how people gather outside the court to demand that arrested suspects be denied bail, that is, be held in custody until and throughout the trial. These protests are a significant means for marginalised people to voice their opinion about the justice process. The court report also records judgements and sentencing. 65 reports include **sentencing**, a highly interesting category, as we've seen, due to its role in pronouncing what officially counts as suitable justice. Sentencing, which marks the beginning of punishment, in effect ends all stories that reach this point. 49 stories and letters focus on prison conditions, and **rehabilitated** (male) prisoners only feature as heroes in a scant 7 stories.

The township as public space

The kasi environment

An organising principle in all the reports that deal with *kasi* life is that of the **environment**. By this I refer to the physical stage on which crimes are perpetrated and responded to, and I have noted this theme 180 times. Township spaces are characterised by a range of serious material deficits, and aspects of this physical environment enter into the reports to inflect the kinds of crimes that take place and their manner of representation. For instance, reports of intimate partner murders, which can be understood as responses to the social life of the township and the gender relations that inhere there, are also products of the physical environment: these murders are narrated by the *Daily Sun* as taking place within particular (unsafe) environments, that of the

RDP house or squatter camp shack, or on the roads or cemeteries of the township, or in veld surrounding these settlements.

Housing

The most basic physical need after food is shelter, and a great many stories in the *Daily Sun* deal with the provision of, and access to, the low cost, state-provided housing popularly known as “RDPs” (see Chapter 1, page 31). **RDP fraud** is associated in 50 reports with the construction and allocation of this accommodation and this theme runs consistently through the data. The fraud can take the form of corrupt contractors who abscond, leaving RDPs unfinished; it is the subtext of a number of front page reports about unfinished toilets, with which the *Daily Sun* makes much humorous mileage in the run-up to the municipal elections. More seriously, and frequently, municipality officials (94 cases) or ward councillors (29 cases) are presented as villains, accused (*inter alia*) of fraudulently selling, to their own benefit, low-cost housing to people who do not appear on official lists.

Energy

Linked to the provision of basic housing is the availability of affordable power. A frequent category linked to the conditions of the township is that of **izinyoka**⁵² (60 instances; 80 if one adds 20 instances of cable theft). These “snakes” are people living within a township or squatter camp who make illegal electricity connections, or steal cables to sell to scrap dealers. Most reports about izinyoka deal with disputes between the power thieves and legally connected residents whose cables or electricity boxes they bridge. But it also involves disputes at municipal level or with Eskom, the state-controlled power provider. Such stories relate the effects of lack of, damage to, or poor maintenance of, power infrastructures, and also the social, physical and environmental consequences of cable and power theft for the residents who feature in the reports.

Corrupt officials

RDP fraud is associated with **official corruption**, an unexpected category. Together with fraud and bribery, 578 items mention corruption, which after murder and rape is the most regularly mentioned crime both in reports and within the letters pages. 50 of these relate to RDP fraud. Accusations of and laments about corrupt public officials thus form a highly noticeable trend in the paper: it is a crime rarely followed-up, however, for only a handful of reports deal with specific cases of corruption or the apprehension or prosecution of corrupt officials (corruption is the topic for only 21 headlines). Corruption is mostly present in the form of allegations and allusions by township residents, the self-identified victims of the crime.

School

State-regulated schools are the setting for a range of crimes and punishments and 113 articles deal with **schools** as the sites or objects of crime. As pupils, township children and young adults

⁵² Izinyoka refers to cable thieves. The word means “snake” in isiZulu.

are represented as vulnerable to the school environment, in particular the lack of reliable school transport that exposes them to risk on public roads, and 72 articles represent pupils as victims. They are also vulnerable to abuses of discipline, in particular corporal punishment, which features in many school stories, and teachers are villains in 32 cases. However, pupils are also the perpetrators of crime, both at school and elsewhere, and are villains in 31 stories.

Wild youth forms a small but visible category in 29 articles. Such stories sometimes take the form of reports on raids and arrests by police on school premises, accompanied by photographs of delinquent young people and/or evidence of their purported crimes. **Wild youth** also operate outside the school in the form of gangs, and narratives about these young gangsters, usually young men, deal with the **effects** of their criminal behaviour on their families and resident communities. A recurrent concern is their association with drugs and the petty crime that accompanies the maintenance of drug habits.

Public protests

Anger at failures in service delivery (such as the provision of housing and electricity) is frequently associated with crime and civil disobedience directed at the state. Reports of **Protest violence** (140 instances) intensify over the period preceding the municipal elections in May of 2011, and also over the winter ‘strike season’, when unions take to the streets. Whether related to elections or wage negotiations, this activity takes the form of intimidation, strewing rubbish, burning tyres, barricading streets, obstructing traffic, confronting police, and burning and looting homes, shops and public buildings, and even murder. They always involve police action of some kind (recall the Tatane case earlier).

Technology

Technology, particularly in the form of cell phones, is an important theme in the data. 150 reports feature cell phones, which appear in a range of roles in many crime stories, but technology *per se* is a notable category in 98 reports, sometimes associated with cops-in-action stories and attempts at crime prevention.

Township social life

Gender violence

Murder and attempted murder is the most frequently reported crime, appearing in almost every edition with 1085 reports in total. While this is not surprising given South Africa’s murder statistics, what is interesting is to observe what kinds of murders are reported. Representations of murder are noticeable for their gender dimension: in *kasi* stories, murder within the context of the family and intimate relationships when lovers, spouses and children are killed by parents and intimate partners are stories the paper find particularly provocative. In 19 reports about family murders, the perpetrators are husbands. These may overlap with, but are generally distinguishable from, a second kind of intimate partner and family murder, attempted murder, or assault in 54 reports, almost all of which involve **jealousy** of a sexual partner. In 38 cases, the

murder is followed by **suicide**, and 9 of these cases involve police officers. Intimate partner and family murders typically involve stabbings and shootings, but also occasionally **arson**; and sometimes poison in the case of children.

A third kind of intimate partner murder that can be identified in the data in 31 articles is the calculated killing of husbands by wives. These mostly consist of follow up articles that follow three separate cases. **Gender violence** is the topic of 90 letters, sms or Facebook messages. Many of these appear during the 16 Days of Activism campaign⁵³. Gender relations include **rape**, which appears 270 times, a surprisingly low number given the high number of official statistics.

Informal justice: “People’s Justice”

People’s Justice appears 161 times in the Daily Sun, and most of these reports involve the communal assault or killing of young men – “thugs” – accused of rape or theft by residents (sometimes called “community members”). Amongst these reports, of particular note are ten stories of People’s Justice which involve the use of **necklacing**,⁵⁴ in which the accused is killed by having a burning tyre placed around the neck or shoulders. These cases are exemplary because they bring under the spotlight contested notions of justice within township settings. People’s Justice stories also provide a setting in which **cop/community relations** are foregrounded (76 reports), that is, the interface and co-operation between police and local residents is noticeable in the process of the story. The police frequently ask the tabloid readers for help in solving cases, and 81 **wanted** articles appear, typically including images of the suspect and a list of his or her crimes.

Vulnerable children

Children appear frequently as victims, and the **vulnerable child**, appearing 148 times, is a key theme to emerge from the data. Boys and girls occupy the role of victim about equally, with 95 and 101 instances respectively. Interestingly, when all cases of male and female victims are taken into account, these figures shift: overall, victims are more likely to be male (1097 male victims) than female (749 female victims). The overall figures for child victims rises if we include generic **pupils** as victims in 72 reports, and also 24 cases in which children are murdered together with their mothers; however, as these are undifferentiated it is not possible to tell if male or female. There are several ways in which children appear to be vulnerable. Children are reported murdered in parental disputes, or murdered and raped by people known to them, but they are also abducted. Indeed, many adults are also vulnerable to kidnapping and abduction, which is reported in 82 cases, while another 35 articles deal with reported “missing persons”.

Another form of child vulnerability is susceptibility to being **dumped**, most often by the mother, who abandons the child in a public place or leaves the baby with relatives and absconds. This

⁵³ 16 Days of Activism marks an annual two week period in which campaigns against gender violence and child abuse are promoted by many media outlets.

⁵⁴ This practice derives from the township struggle tactics in the apartheid era, in which informers were publicly executed by having a burning tyre placed about the neck.

‘dumping’, which occurs 51 times, also refers to the murder or attempted murder of newborn babies or late-term abortion of foetuses, while **illegal abortions** form the focus of 20 stories. Indeed, bad mothers are held up for special scrutiny in the paper, appearing as villains in 62 reports, while fathers are villains in only 20 cases. This is in sharp contrast to the overall figures for villains, where men are villains in 2042 reports, while women are villains in 318 cases in all. However, men are twice as likely to act as heroes, and appear 190 times in this role, in contrast to women who appear as heroes in 103 cases (this number decreases if we remove the 24 times that Thuli Madonsela, the then Public Protector, acts as hero).

Meeting places

Outside the home, a popular space for socialising is **the tavern**, which in 65 reports is the scene for crimes such as assault and murder, and the target of crimes such as armed robbery. Taverns come under the paper’s spotlight when police enforce liquor trading laws; but alcohol is present in some crime stories, not necessarily in the context of the tavern (50 reports). Alcohol is publicly blamed in several articles by official voices for causing criminal behaviour, and is also a topic for the letters page. A more sober social space is the church, but these social organisations come in for their fair share of crime, often in the form of disputes and theft, but more often in the person of the **bad pastor** or bishop, a character who appears as villain in 23 cases, accused of theft, rape and murder.

The **spaza**⁵⁵ is another township space whose owners are almost always foreigners living in the township: foreigners are victims in 75 stories. Foreigners and their shops are vulnerable to armed robbery and the murder by thugs, and sometimes to extortion by police. Foreigners also come under scrutiny in a handful of stories about RDP fraud and for a range of other crimes.

Xenophobia forms a noticeable category with 143 instances.

Social relations do not only refer to the living: the dead, referred to as “ancestors”, are also important characters with whom township residents maintain ongoing relationships. Thus the **cemetery** makes an appearance in 60 reports, when these spaces occupied by the dead become sites for the commission of, or are the objects of, a variety of crimes, such as robbery and murder; but they include missing bodies and stolen caskets. Because of the frequent reference to ancestral spirits, this theme is closely connected to customary practice.

A more private institution characteristic of township life is the **stokvel**⁵⁶. That the *Daily Sun* dedicates an entire page to stokvel stories each week is an indication of their social importance. However, reports of crime connected with stokvels do not appear in this dedicated space, but rather in the main pages. 6 such stories appear close to the Christmas season and are associated with theft.

⁵⁵ A spaza is a small, informal township store often run from the home.

⁵⁶ Stokvel refers to an informal savings or mutual benefit society popular amongst township residents.

Animals

An unexpected finding within the data is 156 reports about **animals**. Animals appear as victims in 77 cases, and as villains in 66. They are the objects of crime, for example in stock theft and poaching stories. Crimes can take the form of simple disputes between neighbours about livestock; or more seriously, charges of animal abuse, and bestiality. Animals are also occasionally constructed as guilty of committing crimes of assault on humans, in particular rats and dogs, and in one notable and extended case, a rooikat⁵⁷: these in turn become the objects of revenge.

Customary practice

Much of what is detailed above involves interaction with modern public institutions, such as the school, the police service, government and municipal departments and structures, technology, etc; or with the social relations that inhere in township spaces. However, there also appears an important range of social institutions, linked with customary practice, which stand in direct contrast to the former, but which are closely linked to the latter. Many aspects of township society are intertwined with customary beliefs and practices, and the distinction made here is artificial and only for analytic purposes.

Traditional healing

The most visible category associated with customary practice is that of the sangoma or traditional healer, occasionally also called inyanga (though these have different associations). These traditional healers appear 17 times as heroes and 19 times as victims, but more frequently in 31 stories as villains: they are not only associated with fraud, abortion, and rape, but also with the crime of witchcraft, which they are accused of practicing. **Witchcraft**, which appears 31 times, takes a range of forms: it is visible in stories of ‘demons’ or ‘spirits’ which need exorcising; or it becomes visible in what is obliquely referred in 25 other reports as a **curse**, for example when a person reports finding **muthi** in their yard, or is attacked by **vutha**⁵⁸, in which the curse take the appearance of uncontrollable occult fire.

Muthi

Muthi appears in the context of crime 93 times. This includes the **muthi murder** in which people – sometimes children – are abducted in order to take body parts for occult. Muthi murders are the subject of several high profile police investigations and trials in the 2011 reports – 57 cases in all. Closely connected to these reports of muthi murder are stories of **People’s Justice** when township residents, or members of a village, exact punishment on those accused of witchcraft. These confrontations between residents and the people they accuse often end in the death of the suspect, an event which in turn becomes the subject of police investigation.

⁵⁷ Rooikat is an Afrikaans word for the caracal, a large feline predator.

⁵⁸ Vutha is witchcraft fire, from isiNdebele “to burn”.

Initiation

Finally, in the winter season and also at the end of the year in the summer, 46 reports appear on **initiation**⁵⁹. Initiation and the young men who are its subjects are associated with a range of criminal activity: the initiation schools may be illegal, contravene customary regulation, and be involved in the kidnapping, murders or assault of the initiates; but stories also focus on the criminal activity of the initiates themselves.

Conclusion

The above quantitative analysis, while offered in broad brush strokes, starts bringing into focus a complex picture of the landscape we are about to enter. Far from being a simple publication, the themes that emerge from the *Daily Sun*'s crime reports construct and bring into focus a deeply intricate and multi-faceted picture of township society. There are several conclusions to draw from it. First, it alerts us to the centrality of crime reporting to the publication. Crime is a key area of the *Daily Sun*'s reporting in 2011, occupying much of the space devoted to news on the first few pages of the tabloid. This is supported by the consistent quoting of police spokespeople, the role of cops as heroes, and the regular court reporting noticeable during this period. Then, as with many tabloids, a vital aspect of the paper's style of presentation is the frequent use of dramatic photographs, for which crime reports provide excellent opportunities. It is not surprising that such a high percentage of the articles are illustrated. Furthermore, the range of characters captured in the stories indicates a world sharply distinguished along gender lines. Men are overwhelmingly represented as villains, and women and children are usually their victims, but particular kinds of villainous women and young people are held up for scrutiny. Villainous men appear to occupy particular social roles, such as the bad cop, bad pastor or sangoma, and the thug; on the other hand, while heroes are almost always men, they are also more likely to appear as victims.

Despite the large number of unresolved narratives, the *Daily Sun* crime reports are concerned with the achievement of justice, which favours, but does not necessarily coincide with, the process of law. The majority of reports record the stage of resolution reached in the justice process from investigation to sentencing and these are captured in headlines. Justice is generally seen to be achieved within the formal justice system, but it can also be sought through communal action. There are few alternatives.

However, while the quantitative data is interesting and thought-provoking, it is not able to reveal the true complexity of the virtual world to which it points. In the following four chapters I present my interpretive analysis of the texts, where deeper and richer readings emerge from the data. I do not analyse the areas which are most frequently represented, but rather choose for discussion those which most forcefully present what are to me the most vital aspects of this virtual world. I begin with People's Justice, that aspect of township sociality whose representations dramatically bring into view the struggle over who, and what, defines justice, and the implications this has for state-led identity. Connected to People's Justice, but forming a

⁵⁹ This customary practice involves the seclusion of boys from everyday society and their circumcision as a rite of passage to manhood.

separate domain in the reportage, are the many complex representations of the police, whom the *Daily Sun* scrutinises intently both as individuals and as state representatives. Gender relations form the subject of the third analysis chapter, while the fourth and final analysis chapter examines the tabloid's approach to customary practices by looking at its coverage of witchcraft-related crimes.

Chapter 5: People's Justice

A witness said: "We had several meetings [in which we] planned on how to avenge the deaths of the seven. On Sunday we found out where he was hiding and brought him back here. He was doused with petrol and burnt alive in front of joyful residents. Everybody was happy. They chanted, "We have found the dog".⁶⁰

Here, with People's Justice, I begin my exploration of the map of SunLand. Starting at this point I take the first steps of a journey that will lead us through a troubled and complex landscape. However, while I make my decision to commence my journey at this point, we will find that, far from being isolated, the various stopping places which we encounter *en route* to our destination become scarred with each other's tracks and traces. I will signal these occasionally as we progress through SunLand, keeping in mind their interconnections.

Reports of People's Justice are a staple news item in the *Daily Sun*. It is not surprising that these stories of summary justice are newsworthy as they constitute moments of high drama, often accompanied by eye-witness photographs taken by participants or reporters who are called to the scene. The reports dramatise for the reader a well-rehearsed narrative of the actions taken by a recognisable cast of characters: a victim, whose property or person has come under attack; a villain, usually a young man or men; a heroic group of community members who, in the absence or indifference of the police take it upon themselves to quickly find and punish the accused; a punishment, which commonly takes the form of a beating, sometimes to death; and the police, who may rescue (or retrieve the body of) the accused and may or may not arrest members of the community who have carried out the retribution.

These tales of violent reprisal are highly charged, and not only because of the vivid representations of guilt and retributive suffering that they construct for the reader. They also reify such moments, in which contestations between the state and the community around issues of crime and justice are made fully visible. The paper's effort of focussing and reification works both on behalf of the community members who participate in the events themselves and also for the readers, who participate vicariously in the accusation, sentencing and punishment of the culprits as well as contributing their own judgement of the merit of the action taken. It is the element of violence especially that captures attention and demands response.

The violence that characterises these encounters between criminals and the community that condemns them is a matter of concern for both the state and the township residents, though for different reasons. For the police, the illegitimate use of force signals a breach of the civil contract between state and citizen, an abrogation of the state's monopoly on the use of violence; for the moral community the violence is a sign of its authority marked on the bodies of those who have broken the unwritten, but nonetheless powerful, social contract between its members. I argue here that a careful examination of the *Daily Sun's* representations of these raw and shocking events, with their outcomes of justice violently achieved, affords a window into the

⁶⁰An eye for an eye! *Daily Sun* 25 August 2015: 4

struggle for ascendancy between the state and the people, between constitutional rights and popular ideas of justice in a context in which State-led security is unevenly available for those most often in need of it. What is of particular interest is the stance of the paper towards such issues.

Sovereign struggles: People's Justice versus the state

Forms of non-state justice have long held a place in the social fabric of South African life (Burman 1989; Seekings 2001). However, the South African state's history of uneasy and uneven co-existence with, and reliance on, these extra-judicial means of social ordering has assumed a particular prominence at this time when, owing to the high levels witnessed, there is a demand that the state act decisively against those who flout the law. This uneasiness comes to a head especially when the relationship these non-state justice institutions have to judicial authority reveals the limits of the state's power. The question of 'who defines who or what is criminal?', 'who can punish?', and 'what form the punishment might take?' are battles over legitimate authority which measure the limits of the power of the state. And the implications go further: not only the limits of state power, but the form of the state itself is effectively in dispute.

The power of the modern state is premised on its monopoly over legitimate violence, but, as contemporary research shows, it is indeed quite characteristic in the post-colonial state for the subaltern to continue to wield their own forms of symbolic and physical violence, and for non-state forms of ordering to provide contesting and potentially destabilising alternatives to the state's authority (von Holdt 2012). Importantly, it appears that neither can be understood without the other: the relationship between the two is a dynamic and mutually constitutive one, as they respond to each other and inflect the form each takes. From this perspective, then, popular or non-state justice should not be considered an aberration or excrescence upon the state, but rather a manifestation of its particular character at a distinctive time. If we understand that the state is not something that is only created top-down, but also formed from the bottom up through "practices and processes that enable the deployment of power" (Mathis 2013: 423; see also Holdt 2012), then it is by such microcosms in which punitive power is created, exercised and contested that the post-colonial state is additionally given shape. What emerges in the *Daily Sun's* photographic images and its narratives of the exercise of violence in the pursuit of popular justice are complex pictures of competing powers at the extremities of the state contending over its definitions of crime and justice. What this 'other' law means to those who use it, and how the present state responds to it, paints a compelling picture of a state in the process of becoming. Such fluidity is not, of course, how any government prefers to appear to itself or to others, choosing instead, understandably, to project unity, stability and assurance. However, even a parliament's prime function of continually framing new legislation shows that states are not as static as governments sometimes pretend but are activities in progress, and certain regions of them may even be rather more in flux than those in power would like.

Sovereignty

Foucault's account of such contestation appears particularly apposite, for though his concerns are drawn from European history and society they are taken to be widely applicable within modern spaces and may be usefully adapted to provide a frame for understanding equivalent issues in a South African context. South Africa is not apart here, for as a node of European

empire it was inserted by the process of colonisation into modernity. I shall provide some relevant background to this approach below, mentioning also the work on related topics by Georges Agamben, as well as referring to relevant scholarship where appropriate.

Traditionally, this contestation has been understood as one over *sovereignty*, that is, as the will and the ability to decide on life or death, who will live and who will die. In the Western tradition, such power is the preserve of the state: Hobbes describes this as the original Social Covenant, in which subjects give up their natural right to rule themselves (albeit in a state of chaos and violence) in exchange for the peace and protection afforded by the monarch. Sovereignty – and the violence it derives from – becomes, historically speaking, the sole prerogative of the king, manifest in his absolute right to use excessive and lethal violence: war, incarceration, torture, execution (Foucault 1977). This excess, or surplus of power, is made particularly visible in the ritual of public execution, intended to emphasise “the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength... the punishment is carried out in such a way as to give a spectacle not of measure, but of imbalance and excess” (Foucault 1977: 49). But the tortured body of the condemned could, simply by stubbornly refusing to die, pose a challenge to the king’s sovereignty and indeed render it impotent.

It is at the level of the body, then that we must look for the source of sovereignty: “the ‘secret’ of sovereignty seems... to be defined in the tension between the will to arbitrary violence and the existence of bodies that can be killed but also can resist sovereign power, if nothing else by the mere fact of the simple life force they contain” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 13). Given the body’s capacity for intransigence, sovereignty is not something that is achieved simply once and for all, but is an ideal condition which has always to be re-imagined and re-accomplished.

For Foucault, it is the political instability created by this inchoate resistance to the excessive expenditure of violence that leads to the more measured economy of biopolitics. Here, a dispersed system of power is exercised upon the individual body: correctional and formative disciplines, unlike the outward and brutal marks of public torture which act to subject society *in toto*, rather produce from within the individual person, via their secret operation upon the soul, new habits and modes of behaviour by which the individual governs himself (Foucault 1977: 131).

Thus for Foucault the excesses of sovereign power is incommensurate with the dispersed operation of biopolitics. However, for Agamben, sovereignty did not disappear with the emergence of the liberal state and its disciplinary bio-political technologies. Rather, “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (Agamben 1998:6). In his discussion of the operation of sovereign power, Agamben (1998) begins by referring to the *polis* of the ancient world, when the city belonged to citizens and free men: women and slaves, on whom the social and economic life the city depended, were nevertheless excluded from the community of citizens. This “inclusive exclusion” of living bodies, simple biological life, what he terms “bare life”, is necessary to the existence of the state: it “has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men” (Agamben 1998:7). The notion of “bare life” is epitomised in the figure of the outlaw, or *homo sacer*, the man who is banished from the

community of citizens and lives outside the protection of the law: without status, merely alive, he may be killed with impunity. By creating such a “state of exception”, a space in which the laws that usually apply are nullified, sovereign power simultaneously produces ‘normal’ citizenship, confirming the laws that pertain to the support and reproduction of the political community and its legitimate inhabitants.

As in antiquity, the state of exception, whose inhabitants are reduced to “bare life”, is integral to the functioning – is indeed constitutive – of the modern state, which decides on who can or cannot be included in the body politic, who will or will not ‘live’. These modern states of exception Agamben (2000) names “the camp”, after the Nazi concentration camps. If the essential operation of fascism was “to reduce the population to pliable bodies that could be improved, shaped and regimented, but also exterminated if deemed unnecessary or dangerous” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 16), the modern state also works to produce the desirable political community by virtue of excluding those forms of life which it finds dangerous and/or superfluous. Indeed, for Agamben (2005), the camp has become the constitutive metaphor for our times, working through various forms of exclusion (of the refugee, the sick, the poor, the disenfranchised, the criminal) to produce ‘normal’ citizenship and ‘normal’ political life.

Alternative sovereignty in the townships: some themes

Sovereignty was not only essential to the establishment of the African colony (Mbembe 2001; Fanon 1967), but continues to be constitutive of the post-colony, where the fiction of absolute rule remains the case for many states (Jackson 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006c). These may have formal and legal, but not effective, sovereignty. Instead, sovereignty, dispersed and fragmented, belongs informally to others: warlords, gangsters and ‘big men’, rebel armies, ethnic groups, multinational corporations and religious organisations which variously control territories, resources and peoples (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 26-31).

Drawing on this wide-ranging and informative analysis, we are able usefully to apply aspects of it to our present set of issues. Indeed, on this reading, one such form of extra-state sovereignty in South Africa is just that constituted by the People’s Justice of the townships and informal settlements, whose inhabitants live in spaces where the state’s authority is not absolute. The inhabitants of such settlements constitute – in the terms of our theorists – a state of exception, the people who are “still not in count” (Wasserman 2010: 93). Here, given the weak presence and the contested nature of the state, “the community” (re)claims sovereignty for itself and in so doing decides on who lives and who dies (Buur 2009).

This extra-state sovereignty is exercised via ‘people’s courts’ whether formal ‘traditional’ structures such as customary *kgotla*, street-committee courts, or ad hoc vigilante groups. As mentioned, forms of social ordering have long existed in township and rural spaces in response, pre-1994, to the absence or hostility of the state, to inadequate policing and a chronic lack of security. In the past they filled the vacuum left by the state and in effect performed its role of providing a measure of security (Brogden and Shearing 1993). Post apartheid, People’s Justice continues to find adherents, whose recourse to violent forms of justice provokes debates about the new state’s capacity to meet the challenge of security posed by high rates of crime (Scharf and Nina 2001; Seekings 2001).

Popular justice formations are a focus of research interest in sociological, anthropological and historical research literature, where they are represented as recognisable social institutions which endure over time and which work to structure and order the experience of township life in particular ways. That is, extra-state justice is represented *not* as aberrant, inchoate or chaotic, but as ordered, locally legitimate and rational responses to the need for security within the specific dynamics of the township context (Mayer 1961). Thus they tend to offer a case for the merits of local popular forms of justice within the post-colonial context (Nina and Scharf 2001; Scharf 2001; Mangokwana 2001).

Here we have a case where comparisons with the academic discourse as outlined above serve to point out interesting and informative parallels and contrasts with the approaches to People's Justice that characterise the *Daily Sun*, at least as things stood under its editorship in 2011. For a start, the *Daily Sun* almost never mentions 'traditional' established township institutions such as *kgotla*; even South African Police Service (SAPS)-aligned Community Policing Forums⁶¹ appear less frequently than they do in the literature above. The tabloid's main interest is in the seemingly spontaneous community reactions against thieves, rapists, abusers and other miscreants, who are dealt out summary reprisals in the heat of the moment, actions which are directed towards the policing of everyday life that could be labelled "vigilantism" (Buur and Jensen 2004).

For the paper, it is the essentially 'popular' (rather than organised and concerted) character of such outbursts that seem to appeal to it most, perhaps in accord with its self-styled claims to be first and foremost a people's paper. Unlike the academic writers above, it neither overtly commends nor condemns the actions of such gatherings. But it would, on the other hand, not be correct to say that it maintains strict objective neutrality in its reporting in the style of idealised Western journalistic models. Rather, its stance seems deliberately to maintain a precarious ambiguity into which may equally be read, as the reader wills it, shock at the violence dealt out and yet considerable sympathy with those who take the law into their own hands under unusual and intolerable pressures.

As we shall see, the personal viewpoints offered, including that of the narrator/reporter who acts as an engaged observer and listener, tend to sway our impressions. They suggest an implicit involvement in the plight of the community members who have banded together to rid themselves of a criminal menace that the police are seemingly unable to control. A formal reprimand by a police official or other representative of state authority at the conclusion, however, acts as (what can seem in this light) a conventional gesture towards a balanced presentation.

⁶¹ Community Policing Forums are an initiative of the state Department of Safety and Security which aims to regulate the relationship between the public and the police and foster a sense of communal ownership of State law and constitutional rights. The establishment of CPFs is provided for by the South African Police Service Act, No. 68 of 1995. Ideally, residents within municipal wards elect members to serve on the local CPF; their job is to 'fight crime' by working together with the local police and the communities they represent, patrolling streets, identifying trouble-makers and handing over to police those they arrest while maintaining the Constitutional rights of those they accuse. Similar attempts have been made to integrate young members of the Self Defence Units (SDUs) and Self Protection Units (SPUs), armed community organisations that emerged during the struggle years to combat crime. See Rakgoadi (1995); Gear (2002); Kynoch (2005).

Clearly then, the paper has an interest in presenting events of Peoples' Justice as impulsive community outbursts carried on a wave of immediate retributive anger. This is undoubtedly the most dramatic mode of presentation and drama is undeniably a part of the *Daily Sun*'s stock in trade. It is nonetheless possible to discern between the lines a community organisation or at least a mutual community will on the part of those who meet out this brand of justice. It will be one of the claims of this thesis that the *Daily Sun* is well aware, in a variety of different social contexts, that an alternative sovereignty different from conventional norms exists, and that part of its brief is to chart the character of that distinctive community and give it voice.

We shall see more of all this in detail when we come to analysis of particular stories. For now I present for attention several themes as a starting point for the reading I offer of the representations of People's Justice in the *Daily Sun*. The aim is not to give a set of rules by which we can judge whether or not the *Daily Sun* has got these reports of Peoples' Justice 'right', but rather to sketch a preliminary context against which these representations of crime and punishment and the meanings they offer to their readers can be understood. It is one of the assumptions of this study that in this context there is no absolute 'right' to be found, as I argued in Chapter 2, and that the academic sociological, anthropological and historical investigations create their object of study no less than does the *Daily Sun* itself in the conscious act of reporting it. Finding the special modes of combined creation/reportage will be the main goal of my research.

However, while pursuit of this alternative sovereignty as mediated by the *Daily Sun* is my objective, at this point it is useful to bear in mind what the academic literature variously suggests for the historical origins and characteristics of this distinctive polity, particularly as regards its People's Justice traditions. While individual community organisations are unique in character depending on the particular township's history of settlement and political alignment⁶², forms of social ordering share several characteristics, which the reader will recognise within the individual narratives. 1: the invisible but structuring effects of the dual legal system inherited from the colonial and apartheid past⁶³ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004; Alexander and Kynoch 2011); 2: the ambivalence with which the Constitution is regarded at the same time that it is strategically mobilised to particular ends (Wilson 2000; Buur 2008); 3: the symbolic and practical significance of custom and the complex ways in which it articulates with notions and practices of "modernity" (Banks 2001); 4: the highly patriarchal nature of local justice institutions and the subordination of women and youths (Mayer 1961; Bank 2011); 5: the ambivalent political and social status of young men who are regarded as "generic criminals" and the violent masculinities associated with them (Seekings 1993, 1995; Glaser 2000; Buur 2003; Posel 2004; Jensen 2005; Morris 2010); 6: the perceived necessity for corporal punishment as a mode of "discipline" (Buur 2003; Wilson 2000); 7: the connection between physical violence and the creation of community (Bank 2011; Wilson 2000; von Holdt 2012; Buur 2009); and 8: the ongoing relationship – variably and unpredictably opportunistic or antagonistic – between the

⁶² See for example, Wilson and Mafeje (1963).

⁶³ The Black Administration Act, No. 38 of 1927 passed by the Union government served to create the dual legal system which systematically codified customary law for rural blacks. This legislation has not been repealed post-apartheid. See Section 211(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. See also Section 1 of the Law of Evidence Amendment Act 45 of 1988.

state and local justice formations (Goodhew 1993; Fourchard 2011, 2012; Atkinson 1991; Buur 2005, 2009; Nina 2001).

What is obvious by omission in much of this research is any in-depth discussion of the media and its representations. Journalistic reports are sometimes drawn on to ascertain dates and facts; or to act as a springboard and foil, through their perceived omissions and biases, for the researcher's more nuanced accounts and interpretations of these complex social process and institutions (eg: Nina 2001; Buur 2003; Buur 2009; Wilson 2000). An exception is Seeking's work on media representations of youth (Seekings 1995). My approach here is not to read the *Daily Sun*'s accounts in order to ascertain what they omit or misrepresent according to the literature, but rather to understand them as part of a recurring, re-iterative process of sense-making – that is, as the products of and contributors to a culture that is constructed as characterising township crime and justice.

The moral terrain of crime and punishment

In the analyses below, I present a selection from the People's Justice stories in 2011. What becomes evident from the material is that not all such stories are the same, nor are they treated by the paper in exactly the same fashion. Here I have ordered the material considered into different categories, according to the treatment provided, and also according to the nature of the justice delivered.

The humorous side of penance

A thug's comeuppance can provide the occasion for amusement, and humour becomes the point of the story at the same time that it conveys a moral lesson. While all People's Justice stories involve the apprehension and punishment of the thug, the humorous story involves the reader in the retribution in a direct way, inviting the audience's complicity. In "Thief feels the pain...TWICE!⁶⁴" the reader is presented with a front page photo story, in which two photographs are anchored by the bright red, underlined headline. The first photograph is a three-quarter image of two men standing in the middle of an empty dirt road (we later learn that this is in Serope township in Mabopane). The man to the right, dressed in a faded blue tee-shirt and a blue cap, is depicted raising up to his chest a set of weightlifting dumbbells. Facing him is another man in a blue and white striped shirt and blue cap, caught as he gestures emphatically at the man holding the dumbbells – with his left arm and forefinger he motions towards the sky, and with his right he forcefully points at the ground. The caption reads: "FIRST PAIN... It's in his arms as he's forced to pump the weight!" In other words, the man, who we realise is the "thief" of the headline, feels the first pain of punishment in his arms as he is forced to lift the weights up and down as instructed.

The eye then moves to the second and larger picture on the right, in which we see the same man, partly in shadow (perhaps on a verandah) falling against and clutching a wooden pole. He looks over his left shoulder, as his body shies violently away, towards a second man (different to the one giving weightlifting instructions in the first image) who leans forward aggressively to point

⁶⁴ Thief feels the pain – twice! *Daily Sun* 15 February 2011: 1-2.

a sjambok directly at his ribs. Behind the two men, some witnesses stand in the road: three women with umbrellas and bags going about their domestic business carrying babies on their backs, accompanied by two children. Deep shadows do not allow us to see their expressions, but their posture is relaxed and interested. Only the children standing in the sun appear bemused. The caption, superimposed on the bottom left of the photograph, makes clear what any shadows might make indistinct. It reads: “SECOND PAIN... Now it’s in his bum as he’s lashed with a sjambok!”

The white and red information box to the bottom right of the image directs us to turn the page: “Full story on P2”. There the story appears under two headlines: “THE BIG P1 PICTURE” is in white against an eye-catching jagged-edged red background; beneath this the front page headline is repeated in black: “Thief feels the pain twice”. The story begins unequivocally and reiterates the narrative implicit in the photographs: “This guy stole bodybuilding dumbbells from a yard ekasi”. His guilt is represented as certain – we learn that he was caught red-handed as he was “about to exchange them for cash at a scrap yard”.

In a democratic spirit the residents decide to allow him to choose his punishment and give him two options: the first is corporal punishment: “We whip you”. The second is poetic justice: “... OR we give you tough exercises to do with the very same dumbbells you have stolen!” The man chooses to do “the exercises”. “But”, we are told, contrary to appearances, the “tough guy was not THAT tough!” His “legs wobbled” and his waning strength is likened to “a boxer who is about to hit the floor”, an image of the humiliation of superior strength brought low. The SunTeam arrives to find him at the end of his resources, “panting for breath”; he soon “dropped the heavy weights” because he was unable to “take the pain” (the implicit comparison being that a more tough and determined man – a more ‘manly’ man – would be able to so endure). However, he is not to be let off so lightly: despite having carried out the chosen penalty, and to complement his humiliating display of unimpressive manliness, “he was whipped with a sjambok anyway!” The punishment demands a sufficiency of pain to be considered a satisfactory penalty. And indeed it is sufficient, for we are told in the final, throw-away line that the “guy was later freed without being handed to the cops” with the implication that further state-administered justice was not deemed necessary. Justice has been served by this public comeuppance in a more satisfactory way than the formality of charges.

Three points are remarkable here: first, the use of poetic justice in which the form of the punishment corresponds with the nature of the wrongdoing; second, the impression that immediate and spontaneous punishment is the most satisfying penalty; and third, that a portion of shame is a necessary component of discipline.

Poetic justice

The satisfaction of poetic justice lies partly in the occasion it affords for laughter, but more particularly in the moral lesson that such a sentence affords both the accused and those who are witnesses. A particularly memorable example in which all three elements are present is “How sheep thief was forced to carry out his sentence!”⁶⁵ Again this is a front page photo-story, with the red sentence case headline set to the right of a large half-page photograph. The image depicts

⁶⁵ How sheep thief was forced to carry out his sentence! *Daily Sun* 7 July 2011: 1,2.

a man in a blue windbreaker and grey shorts walking down the side of a tarred road. On his shoulders he is carrying a large white sheep with curved horns. In small black print the caption to the left of the man's image reads: "THE BURDEN of his guilt...a sheep thief must carry the animal on a walk of shame as punishment!" The irony of the word-play moves between the image, the headline and the caption, mutually reinforcing both the humour and the lesson. The man must "carry out" his sentence, quite literally; the sheep, the object of his illicit desire is transformed into "the burden of his guilt", a literal "weight upon his shoulders": the metaphor, whose original reference is to an inner state of mind, is now materialised, manifest in embodied action.

A sub heading directs us to "see page 5" for the actual article where the humour continues. The opening sentence reiterates that the man, here "an alleged sheep thief", had to walk with the animal, now the "woolly one", sitting "safely on his shoulders and ba-a-a-ck!" The metonymy and onomatopoeia physically link the guilty man and sheep, which we learn is no ordinary beast but a "mighty ram" stolen from the sanctity of a local farmer's "kraal"⁶⁶. The article then moves on to the story of the punishment. When the man was caught – "bust" – in a nearby location, the farmer stopped his sons from "beating him" in revenge. This intervention allows for a more satisfactory punishment to be devised. Together they decide instead "to give him a shameful sentence", in which the disgrace of the punishment will "teach him a lesson", a memorable one "he won't forget". Not only must he "carry the ram to town" thereby physically signifying his guilt, but he must also "move around telling people what he had done", that is publically confess his crime. Thus is an economy of punishment devised in which the crime and retribution are neatly articulated in a set of inter-linked signs. The *Daily Sun* dramatises for the reader the reforming shame of his sentence: followed by the farmer and his sons who drive behind him slowly to "make sure he was carrying out his sentence" (and also so he could not try to escape and "run with the ram"), the man goes about the town "yelling: ... 'I am a ram thief! I am sorry for what I did!'" The farmer testifies to the effectiveness of the penalty: not only has the man suffered physically, but he has learnt repentance: "He was covered in sweat and was very ashamed".

The possibility of state-led justice is not mentioned as an alternative and plays no part in the recounting of the tale. We are told in the course of the article that the man makes no objection to his sentence, for he knows that he has no other recourse: that is, *he understands the nature of township justice*, an implicit knowledge that all the actors within this drama share. Having been saved from a beating, "he knew deep in his heart" that he "had no other option". Indeed, as one of the sons tells the *Daily Sun* "if it was not for his father, the thief would have died right there".

Swift justice

The satisfaction of township justice lies in its economical execution – time is of the essence, and often the humour relies on the township thug not getting away with the crime but instead meeting unexpectedly with swift retribution. In "TAKE THAT, THUGS!"⁶⁷ we are told of the quick resolution of two separate robbery incidents. The first describes amusingly how a man and

⁶⁶ Kraal refers to a livestock pen.

⁶⁷ Take that, thugs! *Daily Sun* 30 May 2011: 1,2.

his female accomplice rob a client of her money at an ATM⁶⁸; the female robber “grabbed the cash” and quickly escaped: she “ran to a waiting car, jumped in and sped away”. Abandoned thus to fend for himself and trying to evade detection, the man escapes into a nearby salon where he coolly pretends he is a hair salon customer: he “took off his jacket, and threw a towel over his shoulders”. Nonchalantly, he “walked outside as if to see what the commotion was about”; but his subterfuge is in vain – locals recognise him, and they “promptly set about him and beat him up”.

A photograph to the right of the headline and above the text depicts him abjectly defeated on the tar road. His back is to the viewer as he lies on his left side, his head on a black and white jacket. He is looking towards what the reader would recognise as the black boots and blue trouser legs of two cops – their bodies and faces are cropped out of the image. Depicted thus he literally lies at the feet of the law. The caption tells us that “An alleged ATM fraudster tries to explain himself to cops after angry shoppers beat him”. The law’s formal recognition of his presumed innocence until trial, signalled by the word “alleged”, is subtly contradicted by “tries to explain himself”, a phrase which connotes disobedient and mischievous school boys who try to find a way of excusing their obvious guiltiness. The story is almost over with only one loose end to tie up: laconically, we are told that “so far, there has been no trace of the young woman”.

In the second case, shoppers chase a “suspected pickpocket”, who had tried to steal from “an old man”. The “alleged thug” tries to escape by running into the taxi rank – and thus runs to his swift and unavoidable fate. Taximen immediately catch him and “handed out a beating”. This beating is sure to be painful for it is carried out with a “big stick”, a punishment that endures for “15 minutes”. The photograph shows a scene in which a solid middle aged man dressed in a grey coat and trousers raises a long and knotty wooden stick above his head. He is caught as he steps towards another younger man, dressed in jeans and a beanie, who is lying sprawled on the pavement between a cluster of crates and boxes. His right arm and leg are raised as he wards off the imminent blow, his face grimacing with anticipated pain. In the background of this frozen tableau stand a variety of pedestrians who stop to observe the action with intent and interested faces. The headline’s “Take That!” refers then to the blows we see being delivered summarily upon the bodies of the suspects. In effect, the action photographs capture the veracity of the story about the suspect’s guilt. Indeed, as in many of these reports, the beating performs the function not only of punishment but is simultaneously the *confirmation of guilt*: if the men were not guilty (that is, “thugs”), they would not be undergoing such a beating. The image of the beating thus not only confirms for the viewer the validity of the accusation but the guilty status of the accused. Along with other bystanders we as readers are invited to witness their comeuppance and participate in the moral adjudication in which the report leads us.

Shame

Shame is an aspect of all the above punishments serving a supportive role in the moral lessons taught by these staged public dramas. The consequences of an act that was meant to happen in secret is put into the public arena for all to see; and then this fate is further amplified by the *Sun* by being set before millions. Sometimes, indeed, the violent aspect of punishment is partially

⁶⁸ ATM, or Automatic Teller Machine.

waived, and consists almost solely of shame alone, which lends the humour the sharper flavour of contempt and ridicule, as in the story of a conman “who was found out⁶⁹” by a canny resident. His crime is to hand out to unsuspecting victims his “fancy business card” on which is printed the impressive-sounding title of “One Africa Symposium Media”. The seeming authority of this document persuades people that he can indeed “get them a job” for the reasonable price of “R25⁷⁰”. However, his sneaky “trick” does not fool one suspicious woman in Diepkloof⁷¹ who is “too clever” for him. She had heard about his subterfuge and when the man, described as a no-good “skelm⁷²”, approaches her “early on Sunday morning” she alerts her neighbours. The “people in her area” quickly arrive before the hapless man can escape. Swiftly they capture him (“Gotcha!”), strip him naked and “klap⁷³” him; his humiliation is completed by having a chain “put on his leg”.

In the large photograph above the story the reader is presented with an image of abject shame. Sitting on a black South African Breweries beer crate with his back against a brick wall in an empty and dusty back yard, the man, naked, protects his genitals with crossed hands. His face looks down and slightly away from the viewer. Before him stands a strong-looking woman in a white t-shirt and black leggings, and it is obvious from the contrast between her powerful stance and his abject cowering that he is completely at her mercy. Her face is angry and disdainful, and her brows are creased as she glares down at the captive. The photograph has captured her in a dynamic posture just after she has hit him across the face with an open hand – the “klap” or slap signifies contempt.

Why such outrage and scorn? One resident explains how the man “took my money” some two months previously with the promise of a job; but the payment has been in vain for “nothing has come so far”. Her complaint is backed up by “about 10 other people” who similarly claim to have been “robbed” by him. The scam is felt more severely for the fact that they are “unemployed”. Thus their financial loss is compounded by the embarrassment of being taken in by him, and they humiliate him in turn. His shame however, is represented as absolute: later, after the chain “was loosened”, the “humiliated man sneaked away”.

Humour and ridicule then not only form part of the *Daily Sun*'s presentational techniques, but the form of presentation is harnessed to the disciplinary intentions of the representations. The humour is linked to the comeuppance of the common “thug” and his rapid retribution – the reader is invited to take satisfaction from the neatness and aptness of the punishments administered and to laugh at the arrogant assumption of men who think that they can “get away with it” but who instead find themselves at the mercy of those who they have tried to rob or defraud.

⁶⁹ Gotcha! *Daily Sun* 4 August 2011: 5.

⁷⁰ About US\$3.

⁷¹ A large township and associated squatter camps on the outskirts of Johannesburg, notorious for its high rate of crime.

⁷² Skelm: a colloquialism for a scoundrel, a no-good character.

⁷³ Klap: to hit or slap a person.

Defending the gender order

Women vs men

The angry woman who is the protagonist in the story above is not alone in dealing out punishment to men. Indeed, what comes across powerfully is the central role that women play in many of these dramas. Because the punishments and warnings they dispense are not confined to men but include women too, there is a strong sense in which the aim is one of collectively establishing or righting a communal moral compass. In particular, what comes to the fore is the regulation of gender roles and it is to this end that the same tropes of poetic justice, the swiftness of resolution, and the role of shame, appear as mechanisms for the ordering of aberrant social relationships.

The adjudication of gender relations makes visible a slightly wider spectrum of crimes and punishment which begins with a process of negotiation and ends with death. A story at the negotiation end of the continuum features a group of township women who decide to respond as a group to the domestic violence experienced by a neighbour. The front page report is set on the bottom half of the page. “**MY EVIL WAYS!**”⁷⁴ is in large white capitals against a black background, as is the text and the head and shoulders photograph of the abused wife, a sad but respectable Bulelwa Mbinda, set to the right of the page. The subheading, in sentence case, also in white and underlined for emphasis, reads: “I’ll never do it again, vows wife-beater bust by angry women...”

The report opens in the *Daily Sun*’s customary tri-part style. The first two sentences in bold type present the reader with the salient facts and establish the foundation for the subsequent action: “**Neighbours say Tyopho Mbinda beat his wife whenever he got drunk**”. In the most recent assault her leg was hurt, and “**Right now she is limping**”. The following sentence then gives the surprising antithesis, emphasised by the use of italics: the neighbourhood women decide to interrupt this ritual abuse for, unlike the wife, they “*wouldn’t take it any more*”. The communal outrage is so strong that “*Fifty of them visited Tyopho*”. Their object is not to assault him, although the threat of violence is implicit in their visit: instead, they simply “*warned him: Stop your nonsense – or else!*” The third section of the opening paragraph presents the humorous denouement of the penalty they impose in lieu of a beating: “**AND THEY FINED HIM ONE LIVE SHEEP!**”

The women, then, have decided to “discipline” the husband through the fine of an animal, a customary penalty⁷⁵ that draws attention to the crux of the story: a social relationship gone awry, a husband who, instead of caring for his family, beats his wife and children. Although he has “promised to pay the fine”, Tyopho complains self-pityingly about its severity, for it’s “too much” for him who is “self-employed” and “not earning much”. Indeed, although he does not say so outright, he feels the cost is unfair, for the “community members know that” about his financial circumstances.

⁷⁴ My evil ways!” *Daily Sun* 17 February 2011: 1,2.

⁷⁵ In customary law, punishment is traditionally by way of a fine of livestock (though money is now commonly used), which is levied by the chief or headman on behalf of the plaintiff.

The women, however, are unsympathetic, for “he is making his wife a punch-bag”, a situation which is “painful watching”. It is for this reason that considered communal action is taken: a “Residents’ committee” member from Tshepe Tshepe squatter camp in Khayelitsha tells the *Daily Sun* that after hearing of the latest abuse they decided to “call every woman in this area”, and together they “marched to his house”. The next words speak implicitly to the threat of violence they would like to carry out: “luckily” for the husband, he “was not drunk” when they arrived. That is, his sobriety wins for himself the opportunity to accede to the sentence of a customary fine, rather than being physically assaulted.

The *Daily Sun* suggests that this combined remedy of public support for his spouse, the fine and the threat of more violent retribution in the future appears to have been effective: “Now Tyopho says he’s learned the lesson and promises he won’t beat his wife, Bulelwa, any more...” Thoroughly chastised, he vows, “I will NEVER abuse my family again, I promise”. His wife is more cautious, for the abuse “has been happening for 12 years”. She can only “hope he changes now”.

Marking the novel way in which the street committee has decided to solve the problem of one of its members, the article ends on a humorous note which returns to the women’s customary levy on the now abject husband: “And the sheep?” it asks. It will not, we are told ironically, “survive this drama”, for when it is “[paid]” the women will “eat it”. The sheep, which repairs the wrong done to the relationship, is to be awarded to the group of township women, of which the wife is a member: they stand proxy for the family to which the sheep would be given in a customary setting. The humour lies in these urban women usurping and exercising the customary authority belonging to men, and the husband’s risible incapacity to resist their so wielding it.

While this article uses the women’s deviation from customary norms as a resource for the story’s humorous presentation, what emerges is the collective authority that women exercise in the regulation of the gender order. Their aim is not to destroy the husband – which could easily enough be done, as we will see – but to restore the relationship between the couple and thereby the proper functioning of the marriage. Thus the punishment, while revenging the married woman’s outrage, acts also to help the husband reform and also re-integrate him into the moral community.

A similar enterprise is seen in “Angry women bust sex cheat⁷⁶”. This story, again set in the large township of Khayelitsha in the Western Cape, opens with the warning “Men who cheat on their wives should beware!”

The respectable wife, we are told, catches her husband cheating when she answers his phone – only to hear the “sexy voice” of his mistress. To add insult to injury, when she confronts her husband, he “beat her!” Outraged, she summons a group of her friends and a “gang of about 20 women” march to the house. There they confront the husband, whom they order to immediately renounce his mistress before them, or “face their fury”. Outnumbered, he surrenders and meekly “does as he was told”: he phones the woman “then and there” and “[dumps] her”. The

⁷⁶ Angry women bust sex cheat. *Daily Sun* 11 April: 3.

satisfaction of the justice comes from the swiftness of his downfall and the irony of his having to reject his mistress using the same phone by which his “evil ways” became known.

The rest of the article is reserved for the moral lesson that this confrontation affords. The women, we learn, are members of the local residents’ committee who are “tired of men cheating on us”. Theirs is not only a moral mission, for while it is “painful” to see women in unhappy marriages, cheating men and complicit women also pose a danger to respectable wives: “Last year a married woman was stabbed to death by another woman because of a cheating man”. Thus their anger is not directed solely at the husband but also at the mistress, and both receive warnings about a repeat offence: if the husband cheats, the women will beat him; but the woman they will “run... out of the township”. The ultimate goal is the preservation of the marriage and the restoration of the pre-eminent status of the married couple. It just might work, too: “At least he comes home early these days,” remarks the wife.

Fearsome women, fearful men

Respectability is the scale implicitly used in the measurement of wrongs done and suffered, and there is no person more respectable – and to whom more respect is owed – than an elderly woman or “gogo”; and none so undeserving of respect as a young thug. One such older woman wakes in the middle of the night to find someone trying to get into bed with her “under [her] blanket].⁷⁷” Bravely ignoring the threats of the thug, she screams and alerts her neighbours who come immediately to her aid. The man understands the rules: he “knew he was in line for some People’s Justice”, and indeed they “[start] beating” him. To avoid prolonging the assault, he “played dead”: but when police arrive the *Daily Sun* sarcastically tells us the “‘dead man’ woke up!”

The humour at the thug’s expense continues: the article is positioned beneath two photos taken with a flash, the first, captioned “Playing dead...”, shows a man lying unconscious on a white tile floor streaked and pooled with blood; the second, “Turns out he was alive...” depicts him being led away by police into the night as he covers his bloodied face with his right hand. In this picture he has lost his red t-shirt and his torso is naked.

In these plays of power, men who intend some harm, but then find themselves at the receiving end of violence, are made risible. Women in groups are to be feared: a dramatic photograph on one front page⁷⁸ shows a group of women singing and brandishing long sticks. The central subject is a middle-aged woman, captured in a dynamic pose in the centre of the image: her face glows with an expression of fierce triumph as she flourishes her weapon. She is surrounded by other women of various ages, all smiling and singing energetically. Situated below the drama of the picture, the headline announces: “Men flee angry women!” Above it, the small caption reads “Women armed with sticks went hunting for abusive men in a rape protest yesterday”.

In the accompanying article on page 3⁷⁹ we learn that the men, who were “so brave when they found one woman alone” are “terrified” when hunted by a large crowd of “100 women”. The women are certainly to be feared, as they “[approach] with anger in their hearts and eyes”;

⁷⁷ Thug wakes from the dead! *Daily Sun* 8 February 2011: 4.

⁷⁸ Men flee angry women! *Daily Sun* 11 August 2011: 1.

⁷⁹ Men hide as angry women march! *Daily Sun* 11 August 2011: 3.

cravenly, the men “turned chicken” and “locked themselves in their houses”. To show their contempt the women “sang songs of freedom” and “lifted their skirts”, defiantly shouting that “no one will rape us”. The drama is a public one staged for the eyes of the entire community, for the women “went from house to house” of the men they had identified: “We will deal with you”, they warn.

Although non-one is hurt in this particular story, we now near the other end of the spectrum in which violence is used together with shame and poetic justice as punishment for men who commit crimes against women. At this side of the continuum the violence used is intended to be lethal: what is issued are death sentences.

Shame and poetic justice are the ambiguous features of the front page story “**TAKE THIS YOU MONSTER!**”⁸⁰ The dramatic headline in large white capitals is set to the left of the page against a black background; above is the underlined subheading “Girl’s rapist gets a taste of women’s justice”. The two headlines frame the large photograph in which a woman stands over a man lying on the ground and urinates on him. With her left hand she lifts her skirt as she bends over to make sure the stream is falling accurately on his shoulder. The man is half naked – he wears no pants and his buttocks are bare and covered in dust; his dirty wet shirt is drawn up about his shoulders. He lies passively in the dirt, curled up on his left side; we cannot see his face.

The article serves as a comment on the nature of the justice that is served, that is, “women’s justice”, as the subheading construes it. That the man deserves punishment is not in question: his guilt is presented as certain. The caption states that he was “caught red-handed” in the act of raping a school girl. However, the means used to accomplish justice are presented ambiguously, which opens a space for debate. The punishment’s justifiability is contested not by the measure of constitutional rights, but in terms of the codes of the township in which harsh physical penalties are expected. In this context it is the *form* the women give the punishment that is the issue at hand. It is initially condemned as repulsive: “SIES!”⁸¹ declares the caption, a word that captures the instinctive recoil of disgust at the idea of a person being urinated upon. At the same time it serves as a rebuke directed at the women who would do such a thing – they too are soiled by their deed.

Despite this ambiguity, the vivid narrative of the opening paragraph presents the drama of the crime and the justice that meets it, and establishes the moral terrain over which this battle for restitution takes place. First, the man’s guilt is reiterated as certain: “**He raped... and was prepared to murder**”. Dreadfully, ironically – the more dreadful because ironic – he is repaid in the same coin with which he commits his crime: “*And in the last terrible hours of his life, that which he took by force, he was given for free...*” However, what he receives for free is not what he sought: it is “**NOT IN THE WAY HE WAS AFTER**, that is, it was not sex he is given. Rather, it is *shame* that the women serve him, by urinating on his humiliated body: “‘You want it? Here it is! Take it all!’ the women screamed at him as they pissed in his face, stripping him of his dignity – just as he had stripped a young girl of hers”.

⁸⁰ Take this you monster! *Daily Sun* 10 November 2011: 1.

⁸¹ Sies: an exclamation of disgust.

The report, continuing overleaf under the headline “Stripped, shamed and killed⁸²”, tells how the man – indeed, no man now but an “evil monster” – catches the young woman as she walks to her sister’s home. He drags her off the path into a nearby “ditch” and thus concealed attempts to subdue her. His viciousness is contrasted with her innocence: he chokes her with “her school tie”, hits her head with a stone and then tears off her “panties⁸³” and rapes her. Regardless, the girl resists and her courage is posed against his brutality: she is “strong and brave” and she “[fights] the rapist” for her life. A shepherd hears her screaming and summons other shepherds who chase him to a shack and capture him.

The punishment begins. First, as a symbol of the wrong done, the man is taken back to the place where he carried out the rape. It is here at the scene of his crime that the residents start to torture him, a punishment that endures for “three hours”. As he lies naked “in the hot Free State sun”, women “take turns to pee on him”; they are joined by men who “beat him with belts, sticks and rocks”. His humiliation does not stop here, but is further compounded by an assault upon the organ with which he carries out the rape: they “even squeezed his 4-5⁸⁴ by tying a piece of wool very tightly around it”. This is represented as particularly satisfying a punishment, for the report records that the residents “laughed at his agony”. While he is eventually rescued by police after some three hours of torment, he dies later in hospital.

How are we to understand this prolonged and lethal drama? A glimpse of the inchoate reasoning that directs this act of revenge comes via the words of the shepherd who rescued the girl. His comments, quoted at some length, express the general contempt felt for the man by both the female and male residents. Rhetorically, he poses the question: “Why would he rape?” In his own answer to his question he condemns the man as stupid for putting his life in peril, for “he could get a woman for the price of two beers”. That is, if he had wanted sex, he could have paid the small cost of “R20⁸⁵” to a sex-worker and thus avoided committing a crime. The cheapness of the rapist’s life is thus unconsciously but ironically juxtaposed with the virtual worthlessness of a sex-worker’s body. No longer a human but a “monster”, his body becomes the stage for the dramatic re-establishment of the ideal gender order within township patriarchy: to this end his symbolic annihilation casts him utterly from a moral community in which a ‘real man’ does not rape and shame and innocent schoolgirl but rather takes care of his sexual needs by means of the legitimised violence of prostitution.

A final reflection is needed on the role played by the *Daily Sun* in this drama. Possibly alerted to the event by one of the residents, the reporters make a long journey of “55km” to the scene to find the punishment in progress. There they phone the police, who “said they only had two vans and one would be dispatched soon”. Thus the reporters are compelled to witness the revenge for the three hours it takes for the police to arrive. While the paper does not hesitate to use aspects of the punishment for its own purposes, which are to titillate and shock, its response is ambivalent as it does not condemn the deed outright. It prefers to present the events baldly, as they occur, but this has the effect of implicitly siding with the punishment and retribution. While the

⁸² Stripped, shamed and killed. *Daily Sun* 10 November 2011: 2.

⁸³ Underwear. The diminutive form suggests girlish innocence.

⁸⁴ 4-5: a township colloquialism for penis.

⁸⁵ About US\$3.00.

journalists' act of repeatedly calling the police indicates they cannot afford to be directly complicit, nevertheless, the fact that the residents want the *Daily Sun* to witness their revenge is itself indicative of the role of the paper in the eyes of the township residents. The residents see the punishment as licit; by thus publicising it, the penalty's justification is established by being witnessed by "the people" and hence made more real. From this point of view, indeed, the newspaper is held as a more acceptable public institution than the justice institutions of the state: the function of the paper here, as elsewhere, is to mediate between the township institution of popular justice and the wider world of public judgement, whose affirmation for their actions the residents implicitly seek.

The state and community in conflict

Power struggles: justice on whose terms?

The state plays little role in the stories recounted above: they are essentially "private" dramas, in the sense that they are presented as endogenous to the specific culture of the township, and thus while of South Africa and therefore of interest to readers, it is assumed (through their presentation in terms of humour, colour, etc) that they are hardly of significance *politically*. However, as People's Justice moves from the infliction of shame and corporal punishment to more serious forms of assault and death, the state begins to play a bigger role, for these actions impinge on territory the state considers its own domain. That is, as public spectacles in which state sovereignty is contested, they become the very stuff of politics. While the state's role may be restricted at first, perhaps to "rescuing" suspects from the hands of residents, once upon the stage it begins to demand a more important part in these dramas, and a battle ensues over which actor will play the lead: the people or the state.

What emerges from this ongoing contest is that People's Justice, far from being an aberration, is implicitly a norm which, through repeated iterations, constantly seeks to establish itself against the discredited authority of state justice institutions. The state, represented by the police and the courts, and "the community" – that is, "the people", collectively self-identified – compete to define what constitutes legitimate authority and what counts as justice. At times the state is able to impose its definition by persuasion. At other times the authority that belongs to the state is bolstered by the co-operation of allies such as Community Policing Forums. But this authority cannot be assumed, for the state may be abandoned or attacked by its collaborators, and "the people" defiantly impose their own definition of justice. In these instances the state either is forced to capitulate; or more spectacularly, and more powerfully because spectacularly, it imposes its definition by force. Thus there is present in these stories a spectrum of action and reaction as power oscillates between the various groups: at the one end state hegemony is won through persuasion or through the assistance of its collaborators; at the other end the state uses violence to impress its authority on those who would abandon or resist it. In between is a range of actions in which power is taken and refused, usurped and activated.

The gentle art of persuasion

Attempts to persuade township residents to accept the law of the state is a precarious exercise, for it has the unintended effect of highlighting the failures and weaknesses of the state's institutions of justice, weaknesses that the *Daily Sun* is quick to highlight. In one article on a

police campaign to curb People's Justice⁸⁶, the *Daily Sun* explicitly juxtaposes the efforts of the police to persuade residents to co-operate with the state with complaints of township residents about the police. However, while both sides voice their opinions, and indeed the police views are given more space, the net result is, surprisingly, to cast doubt on the campaign's efficacy.

The juxtaposition starts with the layout of the heading and subheading: The heading, in white capital letters against a black background, declares: "CAMPAIGN AGAINST PEOPLE'S JUSTICE!" Thus is the state's position foregrounded. But it is immediately countered by the subheading directly beneath: "But residents say thugs do as they like" in black sentence case against a white background. The photograph, set to the right of the heading, has captured a couple of policemen as they engage with a group of arguing residents amongst some shacks. The campaign takes place in Nyanga in Cape Town, where the police are described as going "door to door", distributing "about 5000" pamphlets which explain "how residents can work together with cops".

The pamphlets are intended to curb deaths brought about by People's Justice, described by police Captain Sitshitshi as "vigilante murders". The report's opening sentence however, avoids this emotive language, but rather comments on the *frequency* of such deaths: it exclaims that "SEVENTEEN people have been killed in incidents of People's Justice in Nyanga... – in just one month!" This alarming death toll has forced the police to "[ask] residents for their cooperation". Indeed, they depend on the co-operation of the residents, for the police are unable to cope unaided: "it is impossible for the police to fight crime alone". For this reason, they wish to alert township residents that "community and residents also have a vital role to play in ending crime".

However, the residents are not convinced. From their point of view, the police repeatedly fail them and are unable to address their needs: "cops don't make themselves visible in crime hot spots", and they "arrive late when they are called". In addition their procedure is questionable, for "loud police sirens give thugs warning" and they have "plenty of time to get away". Unafraid, thugs brazenly "[do] as they please": they "terrorise residents on their way to and from work" and easily "[disappear] between the shacks". For these reasons "people end up taking the law into their own hands..."

Captain Sitshitshi does her best to counter the accusations. As usual, the police are given the last word, but the argument must struggle against the force of the complaints which set the parameters of the debate. She denies that police are not available, but are "visible at all times", and that it is the residents' duty to "assist [police] with information about crime hotspots". Criminals might get away, but police use sirens deliberately to "abort crimes in progress" and thus prevent potential deaths and robberies. In addition, residents must be patient and wait, for the police van "cannot respond immediately" if it is "busy" with other crime scenes.

In effect, the police have a double case load, for not only do they have to respond to ordinary crime, but also to the crimes committed in response to the original incidents. It is with no sense of irony that she ends by telling the *Daily Sun* that "eight suspects were bust" recently in connection with two incidents of People's Justice. Recalling the seventeen incidents recorded at

⁸⁶ Campaign against People's Justice! *Daily Sun* 10 June 2011: 2.

the start of the article, this can only be a poor result. However, as elsewhere, the original crimes which precipitated the act of People's Justice fall out of sight: rather, the emphasis turns to the arrest and prosecution of those who seek their own form of justice.

State hegemony under construction

“Saved from people's anger⁸⁷” is also at the end of the spectrum in which state hegemony is won through urging participants in a struggle for justice to accept the necessity for and the supremacy of the law of the state. Important in this regard is that the report is told from the perspective of the police who act as the story's protagonists and whose spokesperson, Captain Modise, is quoted at length. The report recounts how a man steals a microwave oven from a house in Galeshewe township in Kimberly, a theft which proves almost fatal, for it is “nearly his last act on earth”. He is caught by the owner who chains him to a fence, buries him in sand, and beats him with a spade about the head. The neighbours hear the cries of the “bleeding suspect” and in the words of the police spokesperson, heroically “came rushing to his rescue”.

However, the case turns out not to be so clear cut, for it appears that not all residents agreed about what to do: indeed, “it was confusion”, says Captain Modise, as “some of the neighbours joined in trying to save him, while others assaulted him some more”. The police are summoned to the scene, where their job ironically becomes not the arrest of the housebreaker but the pacification of the warring parties, “who were fighting each other over whether to do things the legal way or apply People's Justice”. The police presence cools the conflict, and after the residents had “calmed down” both the housebreaker and the homeowner are arrested. They are both now rational and open to persuasion, and Captain Modise explains how, in an even-handed application of the law, the homeowner was directed by the police to lay a charge of housebreaking, while the “victim” laid a charge of assault against the man whose house he burgled. In addition, some residents are also arrested and charged with “public violence”. However, while the homeowner may be charged, the housebreaker is rescued only to face the law of the state: in effect he is punished twice.

Thus the law of the state prevails in this case, which is presented entirely from the privileged viewpoint of the police who are the heroes of their own story. Nevertheless it is clear that while the police persuade the residents to accept the ‘proper’ procedure, they must struggle to impose their definition of the situation: the law, while it ultimately triumphs, is forced to participate in a contest in which its role as ultimate arbiter of justice is challenged by a false hero in the form of vengeful residents. In keeping with the official tenor of the report, the final paragraph ends with a quote from another, elite state official, the “North West Safety MEC⁸⁸” Patrick Mabilo. While designed to re-establish the supremacy of the law, ironically, his words serve to further draw attention to the patchy hegemony of state authority and the fragility of the equilibrium brought about by this victory: first, he castigates the homeowner who attacked the suspect: his is an example of “unacceptable and irresponsible” behaviour. He is described as a “member of the public”, a phrase that connotes an anonymous (and relatively powerless) element within the broader mass of citizens. As such he has behaved with intolerable audacity: he has “dared to take the law into his own hands” in a search for justice, that is, he has pitted himself against the state

⁸⁷ Saved from people's anger! *Daily Sun* 11 February 2011: 4.

⁸⁸ Member of the Executive Council (in the cabinet of the provincial government).

to which the power of the law properly belongs. It is not only an attack on the alleged housebreaker, then, that is at issue, but the injury done to the state's sovereignty in so doing.

Whose law in whose hands?

As now apparent, the phrase, "take the law into one's own hands" occurs frequently. It is used by police as a reprimand and a caution, as a warning and as a rebuke. However, the phrase is a two-edged sword, for it is also employed ritualistically by residents as leverage in demands for better protection from the state. The idea of the "taking" of the law "into our own hands" is indicative of a sense of the law *not* belonging to the people who behave in this way. It is not an intrinsic part of society but rather belongs elsewhere, and to another: it has to be "taken", and the "hands" is the sense of agency that comes with this act of taking. They do not belong to the law, and the law does not belong to them. The effort of the police is to inscribe this sense of belonging and ownership.

In a report that begins with a description of the rape and murder of a young woman in KwaNobuhle in Uitenhage, a large group of "over 300⁸⁹" women march on the local police station where they are photographed, cordoned behind police tape. Here, the stock phrase takes on the valence of a direct challenge to the state: they threaten they will "take the law into their own hands" if police cannot protect them – "Protect us... or else!" as the headline declares. The complaint is that when the station commander disbanded the community street patrols the police simultaneously abandoned the residents to "become the victims of thugs". Here, the local Community Policing Forum (CPF⁹⁰) is construed by the women as necessary – not because it is potentially a legitimate intermediary between the state and the community (a legitimacy it has obviously forfeited in some way to be disbanded by the police), but because as members of the community it has access to the township in a way the state does not. "We know the criminals who killed this woman", says one such female "community leader", "and we want the cops to arrest them". No statement is taken from the police and the report is told entirely from the point of view of the women whose stance the *Daily Sun* explicitly supports by placing a large white 16 Days of Activism emblem prominently over the photograph to the right. That the women trust the *Daily Sun* to convey this message is obvious in the women's pose as they smile and wave hands at the photographer, lit up by the flash as they stand behind the police tape.

Punishment and protest

The activity of 'marching' to a police station or a magistrate's court features often in stories of People's Justice (as well as other crimes). As physical representations of the state these institutions become the visible locus of the struggle over the definition of criminality and what

⁸⁹ Protect us... or else! *Daily Sun* 30 November 2011: 2.

⁹⁰ As part of its attempt to redeem and control the illicit activities and status of the community courts, the state has attempted to subvert their potential for the autonomous exercise of sovereignty either by developing a supervisory and collaborative relationship (Nina 2001), or by formally incorporating them into the state security structures as "Community Policing Forums". These are an initiative of the state Department of Safety and Security which aims to regulate the relationship between the public and the police and foster a sense of communal ownership of the (state) law and constitutional rights. The establishment of CPFs is provided for by the South African Police Service Act, No. 68 of 1995. Ideally, residents within municipal wards elect members to serve on the local CPF; their job is to 'fight crime' by working together with the local police and the communities they represent, patrolling streets, identifying trouble-makers and handing over to police those they arrest while maintaining the constitutional rights of those they accuse. Similar attempts have been made to integrate young members of the Self Defence Units (SDUs) and Self Protection Units (SPUs) which were active during the struggle. See Scharf (1997).

counts as justice. “BUST US ALL!”⁹¹ heads a half-page photograph which vividly depicts a very large crowd of people, predominantly women, gathered attentively and solemnly in early morning sun in an open space between township shacks. They stand in a dense circle around several women, one of whom is talking. In the caption they are identified as “angry” Khayelitsha residents preparing to march on the township police station which holds nine fellow residents arrested for stoning to death a man whom they had accused of killing one child and attempting to murder another.

However, their unique demand – and thus the interest of the story – is not that the police *release* the nine (a predictable occurrence in other such reports) but that the police *arrest all of two hundred* of them: they all claim equal responsibility for the suspect’s death and therefore the “cops should... lock them **ALL** up because they are **ALL** guilty!” A “big demand” indeed, as the paper ironically remarks, given the known incapacity of the police and judicial system generally, but a demand that also radically questions the accepted notion of individual responsibility. The residents’ reasoning as reported in the article is not to contest the police charges, but to have the law applied justly and reasonably: for it is “not fair” that only nine were arrested when “[we] all” killed the suspect *as a community*. This point of joint responsibility is reinforced by the *Daily Sun* in its presentation of the communal search for and death of the suspect: “angry residents got him”, he was “killed by a crowd”, “hundreds of residents cornered him” and “dragged him outside” and “they all stoned [him] to death”. The core interest here is that it presents a direct confrontation between the two views of justice involved: that of the state, and that of the community.

The report is followed up the next day under the heading “We are free!”⁹² The article is set above a cut-away photograph which depicts women singing and dancing joyfully. One woman holds up a piece of cardboard on which the words WE WANT THEM OUT!!! are written in red ink. The report reiterates how the residents marched on the Khayelitsha police station to demand to be arrested. In the meantime, street committees collect donations from community members and gather enough money to pay a lawyer to represent their fellow residents when they appear on their bail hearing. At the court they stage another protest where they reiterate their demand: “We went to the court to prove to the magistrate that we were all guilty and demanded to be arrested”. The protest is also to demand bail for those who are now within the justice process. The words “We would have caused chaos if we were denied bail” point to the charges as a communal burden, for it is “we”, not “they”, who might be denied bail. In a similar way then, when the magistrate withdraws the charges it is not only those arrested who are set free, but the entire community: thus the headline, “We are free!”

The magistrate’s withdrawal of the charges is unexpected and met with “surprise”. The decision is interpreted as “justice in our favour”; that is, as a victory for their form of justice, in so far as the state is construed to capitulate, or at least accede, to the demand that the community be seen as the responsible party, rather than just a few individuals. This interpretation is made dominant, for the *Daily Sun* omits any official explanation. It is a triumph, which stands as a “lesson to other thugs” – what they must learn is that they will have no recourse but to face People’s

⁹¹ Bust us all! *Daily Sun* 17 August 2011: 1.

⁹² We are free! *Daily Sun* 18 August 2011: 8.

Justice, for, contrary to their beliefs, “the law will [not] always be on their side”. The assumption is that the formal legal system is source of protection not for vulnerable township residents but for the criminals who prey on them.

What appears in this case is how the law finds itself hamstrung on the ground that it has no mechanism for dealing with whole communities. Its assumption is that it will be individuals who will compromise the system, not large groups. The episode as a whole is a confrontation between two concepts of community: that abstract community which constitutes, and which is protected by, the state; and “the people” as a self-conscious entity. It is certainly true that the *Daily Sun* supports and encourages such a composite self-identification; but its situation is ambiguous, for it also wants to see the state fulfil its functions.

Magistrate’s courts and police stations come to symbolise the contested status of state justice in more ways than one. They might, for instance, hold in custody people who are considered heroes by community members. In this case the community might then demand that they be released from the (in)justice system (or, as in the surprising case above, demand to join them in their martyrdom). On the other hand, they may retain suspects who residents fear the justice system will “let off” lightly; in this case they might demand that no bail be granted, for bail is not only read as tantamount to a pardon but it frees the suspect to continue preying on the community in which he or she lives. Conversely, residents may demand that a suspect be released so that they can satisfy their desire to punish him or her, a desire thwarted by the intervention of the justice process. In these cases, state infrastructure such as police station or magistrates courts literally provides protection for suspects from angry residents. “NO BAIL OR GIVE US THAT ANIMAL PLZ PLZ PLZ!” begins one such article⁹³: the report here captures the words on a placard held by one protestor who demands that a man they suspect of killing a community member (a young man, himself accused of the theft of a car sound system) be kept in custody. The threat, repeated in the follow-up article reporting on the bail hearing⁹⁴, is that if he is released, they will kill him. The article reports that the suspect, fearing for his life, handed himself over to the police by “negotiating his surrender... through a lawyer”. He and his fellow suspects are denied bail. Although it is not recorded, it may be that the large gathering of “about 500” residents outside the court influences the decision to keep the suspects in custody where they will be safe. A similar decision, for example, is recorded in “No bail for cop accused⁹⁵” in which a policeman is refused bail on the grounds that he would “be in danger from the community”.

Allies: CPF as an arm of the state

The state does not act alone to impose its definition of justice. In particular, it may have the support (not altogether reliable as we shall see) of local organisations such as the Community Policing Forums which act to intervene in instances of People’s Justice. One Community Policing Forum features in “NO ESCAPE!⁹⁶” a story set in Mabopane, north of Tshwane. But, the report emphasises, the events it recounts “could have been ANYWHERE ekasi...

⁹³ No bail for murder suspect... or else *Daily Sun* 6 October 2011: 4.

⁹⁴ Angry residents bay for ‘animal’s’ blood *Daily Sun* 7 October 2011: 4.

⁹⁵ No Bail for cop accused *Daily Sun* 16 May 2011: 6.

⁹⁶ No escape! *Daily Sun* 25 May 2011: 1,2.

ANYWHERE in Mzansi”. The story is thus universalised and the relevance of the narrative to all residents of South African townships is assumed. In this story a woman reports an attempted rape and theft of her cellphone not to the police, but to the local CPF, which uses information from the suspect’s brother to trace him. His fate is inevitable – there is “no escape” from the intimate knowledge the CPF has of the community in which it operates: laughably, he is found hiding “under his mother’s bed”. The chastened man, who has “learned the hard way”, is no longer a “swaggering thug”. He is depicted on the front page photograph standing with his back to the camera and being handcuffed by a CPF member, one of a surrounding group described as “big, tough men and women”. The CPF members hand him over to the local police station, which confirms that the suspect will appear before the local magistrate “soon”.

Thus, while the police have the final word, the article’s focus remains the activity of the local organisation which effectively carries out the role of the state in the detection and apprehension of the suspect. Not only are they a formidable force, “big” and “tough” and “determined”, but they are to be feared *because they are effective*. There is “no escape” from them, for they “bust” the suspect: they “find” him, and “pull him out” from under the bed before they “arrest” him. The photo shows them in the act of determinedly gripping and handcuffing him. As the headline declares: “you don’t mess with the CPF!”

The knowledge that counts

The face-to-face character of social life within the township is central to the play of power that shifts constantly between the state and the local community. In the case where criminals are known to the people upon whom they prey (as in the case above) it is this intimate knowledge which makes any police activity which does occur appear tardy, compounding the suspect’s vulnerability to popular justice. Indeed, people can finally “[run] out of patience⁹⁷”, as happened in Mohapeng Village in Limpopo where residents collectively kill a man they accused of a series of robberies. The community response is unrepentant. They had fulfilled what they see as their responsibility: they had pointed the man out to the police and had “asked the cops to help them many times before”. Moreover, they inform the *Daily Sun* that they had “warned” the police that this might be the outcome as they would “do whatever it takes” to protect themselves.

The villagers’ account is essentially confirmed by the police spokesperson, who defends the police handling of the case. What is interesting here is the glimpse we get of the forensic process and the kinds of knowledge that this depends upon. The officer complains that police had been investigating “four cases” of robbery that “might have been committed by this man”. It was not that the police had been idle – in fact “we were trying very hard to catch him”. However, their efforts had been in vain, for the canny suspect “was always one step ahead” of their investigations. Indeed, the spokesperson reports that he himself had gone to the suspect’s home early that morning, only to find him having fled. Finding him is not a problem for the residents, however, who – finally out of patience at this apparent ineffectiveness – promptly “searched for the man and killed him”. The police spokesperson is given the last word. Through the paper, he (somewhat mildly) “[warns]” the residents “not to do this again”. Rather, they should be more forbearing and “give us a chance to do our work”, that is, to follow due process and collate the

⁹⁷ It’s our law now! *Daily Sun* 29 September 2011: 5.

kinds of information that would lead to a successful prosecution. There is a sense here of the state's defeat, corroborated by the headline, "It's our law now!"

Recouping state sovereignty and the law of force

*A cop shop for Diepsloot*⁹⁸

The state's struggle to assert its authority, and reclaim its sovereignty from 'the people' who appropriate it, can literally turn into a battle. In effect, the contestation over in whose hands the law properly belongs evolves into a type of civil war. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the story of a case of People's Justice in the township of Diepsloot⁹⁹, near Tshwane, a place notorious for its ruthless violence, the "Town that takes no prisoners"¹⁰⁰ as one article puts it. The story which runs over four articles begins before the actual incident of collective murder begins on 12 January 2011 in an article towards the back of the paper titled "A cop shop for Diepsloot". The news is that Diepsloot at last has its own police station, and locals no longer have to travel the not inconsiderable distance of "30km" to Erasmia to report cases.

The report then elaborates on the ideal relationship between the police and the community in relation to People's Justice from the state's point of view. The definition of this ideal relationship is given by the station commander, Colonel Amosi Balatse, whose head and shoulders photograph appears to the left side of the article. The approachable yet authoritative impression he wishes to give is reinforced by his presentation in the image as he looks directly but not confrontationally at the camera, wearing a short-sleeved white shirt on which we can clearly see his insignia: three-star blue epaulettes and the blue and gold SAPS badge. As the new station commander, he "aims to make Diepsloot a safer place", and to this end describes how residents ought to "work with police". The barriers to this effective working relationship are twofold. First, there is physical distance, now compensated for by the new police station, but second, and more important perhaps, is the psychological remove of a lack of trust. His primary aim is to reduce this distance by "building trust" between the police and the community members. This is the principal reason given for community members not being "willing" to "work with the police".

However, the onus for the establishment of trust shifts over the course of the recorded speech. At first, the obligation is placed on the police, who need to encourage residents to "start trusting us" as, if they do, it will obviate their desire to "take the law into their own hands". That is, there will be no more need for "People's Justice and kangaroo courts" led by "dissatisfied" residents (i.e. dissatisfied with the police). But then the responsibility accorded shifts to the community, who are charged with the requirement to devise proper "strategies to deal with crime", that is, strategies other than People's Justice. Residents are supposed responsible because criminals are members of the communities in which they operate: "perpetrators come from the communities we live in". Moreover, they are intimately known, and ultimately, they are "someone's brother, sister or friend". The focus then returns to the police, who will be successful insofar as they have

⁹⁸ A cop shop for Diepsloot *Daily Sun* 2011: 24.

⁹⁹ For a gripping first-hand account of vigilantism, the work of the Diepsloot Community Policing Forum and its troubled relationship with the local police in a context of lawlessness and violence, see Harber (2011).

¹⁰⁰ Fiery justice! *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 1,2.

access to this intimate knowledge, and this depends on a relationship of trust in which residents share information with state representatives: “If we want solutions, we have to engage the community”.

How this relationship of trust might be established is hinted at in the final paragraph, which quotes from an interview with the local chairman of the Diepsloot Community Police Forum, William Legodi. Legodi tells the *Daily Sun* that since the police station was set up in December of 2010 “there have been many changes”. The change is in the nature of the CPF: the *Daily Sun* reminds its readers that the Diepsloot CPF was once infamous for “instigating mob justice”, but now, in an about-face, it has become an ally of the state and is “working hand-in-hand with the police”. Implicit in Legodi’s words is that the station commander, Colonel Balatse, has begun a course of close supervision of the CPF, for he “has been in touch with us on a daily basis, encouraging us to work with police to fight crime”. Thus while the overall presentation of article is one of support for the efforts of the police, who are the primary source for and focus of the article, the story cannot but reflect the underlying tensions between state and community. It is apparent that the plan to replace the exercise of People’s Justice by co-operation is indeed a delicate one where residents dissatisfied with state protection are implicated.

*Fiery Justice*¹⁰¹

As it happens, despite the fine words of the station commander, the fragility of the truce between the state and the community is soon exposed. Twelve days later, on 24 January 2011, the front page carries a story of an incident of People’s Justice in Diepsloot. The page is dominated by a deeply disturbing image of the prone body of a bloodied, burned and dying man, attended by two male paramedics. This is the “FIERY JUSTICE!” of the headline. The first lines vividly set up the dreadful premise of the story: “Thugs” broke into a married couple’s home and brutally murdered them: they “**shot the husband dead**” and “**fired a bullet into the wife’s chest**”. The residents to go to the police station (featured in the first story) where they “*plead for action*”, but their desperate application is in vain, for “*they got no help*”. And thus follows the antithesis: “**SO THE PEOPLE HELPED THEMSELVES**”.

We learn in the body of the report from an eyewitness that the two men mentioned there belong to a grouping of seventeen who have broken into the home of the couple to rob and murder them. The gang is ruthless, greedy and without mercy: they kill the couple after accusing the wife of hiding money, which accusation leads the husband to attack a gang member with an “iron bar” – with fatal results.

The story then shifts to the police’s callous indifference and dereliction of duty. At the police station, the community members are told that they cannot get help. The reasons given are not convincing: not only was the “station commander... on leave” but there “were only two police vans on patrol...” And, in addition, “one had broken down!” This lack of response provokes the indignation of the residents, and fearing that nothing will be done to arrest the murderers they “decided to take the law into their own hands”.

¹⁰¹ Fiery justice! *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 1,2.

They catch two of the men who “said they were part of the criminal gang” and burn them both to death. The residents’ pitiless resolve is emphasised by enumerating the two arrests in order: “**FIRST**...the angry crowd caught Zonke... **THEN** they hunted down Sithole...” The first man is necklaced and the other, in a form of poetic justice, is “thrown into his own burning shack” after being stoned and beaten. Their end is horrendous for they “died in screaming pain”. The community which carries out the attacks accuse the men of other unpardonable crimes, “breaking into their homes”, and “raping women in front of their husbands”.

The presentation of the incident emphasises the relentless horror and the gruesome deaths of the suspects, whose own alleged brutality is the catalyst for the revenge. The report ends with ritual retorts by the station commander, Colonel Balatse, who “condemned the killings” and reiterates that “people should not take the law into their own hands”. Nothing is said about the alleged lack of response by the police to the original precipitating incident of the murder of the couple. Instead, the spotlight is on the murder of the two men, whose killers now form the focus of a police investigation and Balatse vows that police will “bring [them] to book”.

*Leave it to us!*¹⁰²

However, two days later, on Wednesday 26 January, the front page returns to the Diepsloot issue. It is dominated by a large half-page photograph in which a cluster of fifteen heavily armed policemen look directly and intently at the camera. Their fierce and confrontational gaze is heightened by the fact that they are attired as combat troops. Along with the regulation blue uniform and black boots they carry heavy automatic rifles, which they hold close up against their chests in a dramatic and intimidating pose. Their army-style berets bear the SAPS badge and they also wear thick black bullet proof vests and black hand-weapons holstered to their thighs. They have been caught by the *Daily Sun* photographer as they go about the township, “on patrol”. The power implicit in their posture and weaponry is reinforced by the words used to describe them, for they are “tough” and “specially trained”. “**LEAVE IT TO US!**” commands the headline authoritatively. For they are here to “restore order” and are “ready for anything”. The irony, as the report is quick to note, is that in contrast to the situation a few days ago when the station commander was absent and there was only one available patrol van, “Now cops are everywhere in angry Diepsloot!”

It appears that “angry Diepsloot” has not calmed down since the murders that precipitated the incidents of People’s Justice reported two days previously. Indeed, it has “been in an uproar for more than a week”. On the day that the report about People’s Justice appeared, the police arrested seven suspects for the murder, as Balatse had promised above. Ironically, these suspects are members of the very Community Policing Forum with whom Balatse communicated previously. In protest, a very large gathering of more than “1000” township residents “crowded in front of the police station” to demand their release. The police retaliate: they “chase away” the “angry” crowd with rubber bullets and pepper spray and don’t give in to demands for the release of the suspects, for the “CPF members remained behind bars”. But the groundswell of outrage is such that the heavily armed “Special Response Unit” from Tshwane is deployed “until calm returns to the dusty streets”.

¹⁰² Leave it to us! *Daily Sun* 26 January 2011: 1,2.

The rest of the article debates the merits of the police action and the role of the Community Policing Forum. The views are sharply divided: Colonel Balatse, who is given the last word, expands on the by now ritualistic phrases: “taking the law into their own hands” only compounds people’s problems for it “makes the matter worse”. In addition, the law applies to everyone and “no one is above the law”. His position is backed up by the Community Policing Forum leader (not the same person interviewed in the previous article) who explains that “we” [that is, CPF members like him] have tried to educate residents about proper procedure: they have “established a group” which teaches community members “not to take such action [that is, seek retribution through People’s Justice]”, but rather to assist the state and “support patrollers and work with the police”.

We want blood for blood!¹⁰³

However, a different set of sentiments and logics is voiced by residents in another article in the same edition on page 10. The title of this *vox pop* report, “We want blood for blood!” runs above a series of head and shoulders photographs of four Diepsloot residents whose opinions on the arrest of the CPF members the *Daily Sun* quotes. These opinions appear under a red SunTalk logo, an image of a man in a red t-shirt shouting through a loudhailer – formed from a rolled up *Daily Sun* newspaper! Evidently, the *Daily Sun*’s object is to start a debate on the merits of the arrest of the CPF members who led the People’s Justice. The first line of the introductory paragraph establishes the premise of the debate about People’s Justice, which construes crime in Diepsloot as “out of control” and in the second presents residents as “gatvol¹⁰⁴”. The rest of the introduction briefly rehearses the elements of the deaths, arrests and protest.

The actual opinions given by the residents interviewed are presented without comment on the part of the *Daily Sun*. Together they set up a forensic argument in which People’s Justice is construed as necessary in a context where the state acts in ways contrary to the interests of residents.

First, criminals themselves are brutal and ruthless predators who are “merciless and don’t care about the well-being of their victims”: they “invade [people’s] privacy, [kill] their children and [steal] their hard-earned cash”. However, the police are no help in this regard, for when “serious crime is committed no action is taken [by police]”. In addition, residents feel betrayed because they “hand [suspects] to police only to find out they’ve been released” on bail.

Given this lack of reliable police response and as the safety of the community is paramount (“Our safety comes first”), community members “can’t be blamed for taking revenge” and are “not wrong to take the law into their own hands”. Indeed, “thugs deserve to be killed in a brutal manner”, in the same way that criminals kill innocent members of the community. The irony is that the police then “hunt” those who have tried to defend themselves, and “instead of looking for the suspects terrorising the community, they’re busy looking for community members who are fed up with crime”. Indeed, the police reaction to such incidents is doubly ironic, for they are “quick” to arrest residents, while appearing unconcerned about actual criminals, “perpetrators of crime [who] are still at large”.

¹⁰³ We want blood for blood! *Daily Sun* 26 January 2011: 10.

¹⁰⁴ Gatvol: A vulgar expression of discontent.

As for the Community Policing Forum, “our community members”, they are heroes in the eyes of the residents who are “totally against” their arrest. They are the ones “making us feel safe here” in contrast to the police who “have failed us many times”. Indeed, the entire range of police action with regard to the CPF is read with scepticism: their arrest is seen as an attempt to “silence” them from protesting against the lack of police response to the perpetration of serious crime. Further evidence for this view comes from the exaggerated force deemed necessary to control innocent residents voicing a legitimate grievance at their arrest: “heavily armed cops” quickly react and “come running with dogs to scare us off”. However, although the CPF are now “behind bars” like criminals, it will not stop the residents – people like “us” – from “taking the law into our own hands” and killing “thugs” brutally. These violent deaths are necessary as a deterrent, for they send a “strong message” to other people thinking about committing crime, “wannabe thugs” who should beware of the justice in store for them and “not even try it [to commit crime]”. The appropriate justice sought is one of reciprocal vengeance, “an eye for an eye, blood for blood”.

Diepsloot killers on video!¹⁰⁵

A surprise twist in the narrative is the focus of the final report in this saga, for the wife of one of the three men killed has important evidence: she “took a video” of her husband’s death on her cellphone, and she goes to the police with this “information”. The video is crucial as it “clearly shows” the men who killed him, and the police are able to use the footage in the prosecution of two of the seven arrested Community Policing Forum members. The evidence has consequences for the meaning of the events reported thus far: in this article, the Community Policing Forum members are now no longer heroes but “killers”. They are not community members any longer either, but a “mob”, and the People’s Justice is now “murder”. No mention is made of the housebreaking and murder of the couple which precipitated the saga: the victims of the mob are now simply accused of the far less serious crime of being “thieves”.

The marked shift in tone and orientation towards the Community Policing Forum and the incident of People’s Justice is not simply a sign of fickleness on the part of the *Daily Sun*, but a consequence of the nature of the source used, for it is told from the perspective of, and using many of words attributed to, the investigating officer Captain David Ndlovu. Overall, the language of the report draws heavily on formal legal and police discourses regarding the justice process. The police “presented [the video] as evidence” and when they realised that they “had a strong case against” two of the men they “released the remaining five”. There is also a third man visible in the footage who “has yet to be arrested”. The men “appeared in the Atteridgeville Magistrate’s court”, were “not asked to plead”, and were to be “kept in custody until their next appearance”. As the Community Policing Forum suspects are drawn within the ambit of the state justice process and reporters are forced to rely on state authority for the news the *Daily Sun* loses the ability to define the meaning of the events which it records, and the State comes to define it for that moment.

However, what is constructed as a surprise victory for police-led justice is also proof of the state’s desperate dependency on the co-operation of township residents in solving crimes. The

¹⁰⁵ Diepsloot killers on video!” *Daily Sun* 27 January 2011: 5.

police probably had no real case against the arrested suspects until the evidence brought to them by the murdered man's wife; cutting their losses, they release the five for whose guilt they have no reliable proof. But in the heroic narrative presented here, the wife is a helper and donor and the footage is the magical agent which will help the police bring about the defeat of these particular villains. That the paper would like to circulate this footage is revealed in the final sentence which informs readers that the "*Daily Sun* may not publish the video pictures as they are being presented as evidence in court".

Death sentences

Making sense of People's Justice

In its presentations of People's Justice the *Daily Sun*'s position thus appears ambiguous, as is clear in the above set of reports, which wavers between the voices of residents and the voices of the police. While it cannot be seen to be explicitly complicit with such outlawed actions¹⁰⁶, the paper uses them to draw attention to the failings of the state. The state by contrast is positioned defensively within a narrative framework that is sympathetic to the struggles of the poor.

However, none of this complexity absolves the paper of the duty to make sense of such deaths for its readers, for the very residents who carry out such justice are potentially the township audience to whom the paper is addressed. As I shall argue there are several implicitly acknowledged 'duties' involved. To begin with, the paper cannot afford to alienate its potential audience through outright condemnation which might appear to ignore the conditions within which these acts take place. But the paper sets itself the more esoteric and yet essential task, as it goes about creating SunLand, of *explaining the people to themselves* as it were (Boshoff 2013). It is, I think, creditable that it seeks to do so in large part through the selective medium of their own voices, opinions, and experiences. The result is to reveal a present-day situation where conflicting truths, and conflicting drives, hold equal sway. In such a context where no clear resolution of opposite forces presents itself, to fairly represent the perceived truth of township life is also, I believe, inevitably to reflect a condition of entrenched ambiguity and ambivalence. Since this seems, in many ways, a just representation of the modern pressures of township life, it is surely commendable that, at least until 2011, the *Daily Sun* appears to build this ambivalence into even the core of its formal presentation. I shall have more to say on this in due course. For the moment, I wish to dwell only on the dramatic opportunities for paradox and irony that such a many-sided situation invites, and also to show how the paper's obligation to "make public sense" of its complex material sometimes leads it into finding an 'artistic' resolution, where a factual one is inherently unavailable.

For example, what is noticeable in its absence in these last stories analysed is humour, for the paper avoids making light of these instances of death. Yet irony can be strongly present, for these fatal occasions afford irresistible opportunities for moral set-pieces which starkly set up the rights and wrongs that monitor the boundaries of the moral community.

¹⁰⁶ Only one article in the 2011 corpus explicitly condemns an act of People's Justice: This is not justice... *Daily Sun* 12 October 2011: 5.

In particular, the irony of poetic justice in which the nature of a suspect's punishment appears connected to their crime, is foregrounded. "Axe Justice for thug!¹⁰⁷", for example, presents a narrative in which the weapon that is used to "terrorise" innocent villagers becomes the very means by which the villainous gang leader meets his comeuppance: "in the end, one of the angry residents ripped the axe from the thug's hands and dealt him the blow he had wanted to give them". Thus is "axe justice" brought to the man who once wielded it. This story illustrates how the use of a narrative framework brings otherwise chaotic and random events together to provide a moral framework within which they make sense. The irony of the man's death – killed, with his own weapon, by the very people he threatened – enables the *Daily Sun* to construct a moral lesson about his life and death: an outlaw "who stayed true to his nature till the very end". In providing this evaluative narrative structure for events that in real life may not otherwise have this quality of sense and meaningfulness, the *Daily Sun* suggests that life is not simply chaotic but ultimately can seem or appear meaningful, most significantly within moments of intense disorder. It provides this meaning in retrospect for those involved, but more importantly for the readers, for the events themselves have no intrinsic meaning: rather, their meaning is achieved through the 'poetic' presentation of the events within the story.

This painstaking construction of meaning is neatly illustrated in a first page report in June 2011¹⁰⁸ which recaps a story the paper published a year and a half before, in December 2009¹⁰⁹ (see Figure 15, page 133). The story then was of a "thug", made to do a "walk of shame" through the township streets, carrying on his head the clothes he had stolen. The clipping reproduced from the original front page report shows an image of a man walking along a road under the subheading: "Thief made to carry his loot as public watch!" This act of public penance is a 'script' in two ways. First, the performance of the walk is an enactment of a spontaneous script written by the community. Second, it is a script in that the crime is inscribed on the suspect's body (the posture, the carrying of the clothes, the walk, its public enactment, its attributes – "a walk of shame"), which altogether becomes a 'text' to be read by both the suspect and the residents. Returning to the present, the report remarks that the residents had "hoped that would teach him a lesson" and that he would "read" this script and be deterred from further crime. "*But it didn't*", observes the *Daily Sun*, ominously. While the italicisation comments on the failure of the original punishment, it anticipates and alerts the reader to the dreadful event it is about to relate. For the punishment has failed in its intended effect and the "serial thief", rather than reforming, has "continued with his evil ways". He is caught stealing once again by "very angry" residents. They have "had enough", and they kill him brutally: they "hacked him to death with pangas" while "others came with big rocks to flatten his head".

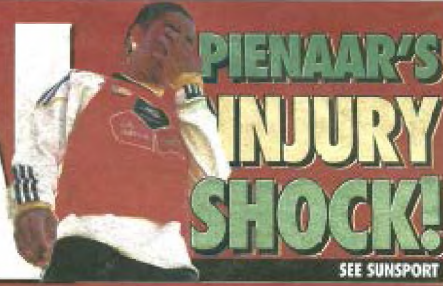
¹⁰⁷ Axe justice for thug! *Daily Sun* 11 October 2011: 4.

¹⁰⁸ Thief's long walk to death! *Daily Sun* 3 June 2011: 1.

¹⁰⁹ Thug's walk of shame! *Daily Sun* 3 December 2009: 1,2.

DAILY

SUN



PIENAAR'S INJURY SHOCK!

SEE SUNSPORT

PRICE: R2,30 nationwide

FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE!

Friday 3 June 2011

Thief's long walk to DEATH!

By NTOMBOXOLO MAKOKA
IN DECEMBER 2009 *Daily Sun* published the picture and story of a thug's walk of shame. He was forced to carry stolen clothes down the kasi street where he had stolen them!

People hoped that would teach him a lesson.

But it didn't.
The guy - known only as Xolani and who was thought to be about 36 - continued with his evil ways.

So on Wednesday night angry people had had enough. They hacked him to death with pangas!

It happened in Woodbaai squatter camp near Cape Town.

Simon Mokone (34) saw it all. He said he heard people had caught a housebreaker - and went to look.

He said residents came out

with pangas and knives to "teach the thug a lesson" - and others used bricks and sand to finish him off!

"The people were very angry. Some stabbed him and others came with big rocks to flatten his head!"
"It was a terrible thing to see," said Mokone.

Captain Ntomboxolo Sitshishi of the local police said they had arrested two residents in connection with Xolani's killing and charged them with murder.

She said investigations would continue.



THE END OF THE ROAD . . . serial thief Xolani, caught stealing yet again, lies dead in the street. INSET: *Daily Sun* of 3 December 2009. Photo by Lulekwa Mbadamane

8 MILLION CELLPHONES FACE BIG SWITCH-OFF!



By MZI GUMEDE
THIS month will see the Great Cellphone Switch-Off!
Unless people register their phones properly in terms of the Rica regulations, 30 June is the last day they will be able to use them.
WITH LESS THAN 27 DAYS TO GO, AT LEAST EIGHT MILLION CELLPHONES ARE STILL UNREGISTERED!
The government's excuse for Rica is that many phones are being used by thugs to plan their crimes. Registration means the authorities will have the personal details of every SIM card and phone owner . . . whether they are pre-paid or contract customers. But as things stand today about ONE-FIFTH of SA's cellphones are still unregistered.
Before the Great Silence falls, networks are
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE SUNBABE IN SUNDAY SUN!

Figure 15: Thief's long walk to death! *Daily Sun* 3 June 2011: 1.

The title, in bright red sentence case, is partially capitalised in order to draw attention to this shocking end: “Thief’s long walk to DEATH!” Its phrasing alludes consciously and ironically to Nelson Mandela’s popular memoir, *Long walk to freedom*. In the same way that Mandela’s irreproachable character leads to his ultimate vindication, so this man’s villainy leads irrevocably to his punishment and demise. For him, the story does not end with freedom but terminates in his execution, at the “end of the road”, as the caption ironically puts it.

In a deliberate juxtaposition, the clipping from the original article is partially superimposed over the photograph of the man’s body, pictured lying on the street, reduced to a bundle of clothing. Incongruously, his naked feet stick out. His “long walk” is of course the metaphorical extension into the present of the original “walk of shame” which has failed, as previously intended, to “teach the thug a lesson” and instead leads to his paying the ultimate penalty. The use of irony and metaphor, far from trivialising the narrative, instead heightens it, lending zest to its moral lesson. While the paper has an interest in drawing attention to the more titillating and shocking aspects of the story it also deliberately brings into relief the implicit moral contained within the two episodes which it carefully connects. By thus narrativising these otherwise separate events it is able to ascribe an ultimate and formative meaning to the violence, in which righteous residents vigilantly police their community and bad housebreakers, who are given chances to reform but do not take them, are inevitably and severely punished.

It is also worth noting here the overall setting and presentation of this front page which serves to frame the report of People’s Justice in specific ways. The red top has the usual title *DAILY SUN* in white upon a red background. To the right of the word “SUN” is a cut-out image of a sportsman covering his face with his hands. The words “PIENAAR’S INJURY SHOCK!” are printed to the right of this image in green and yellow capitals, below which are the directions “SEE SUNSPORT” in small white capital letters on a black tag. At the bottom centre of the banner the slogan “FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE” appears in small white capitals. The remainder of the page is divided equally between two stories placed one beneath the other. First, directly below the banner, is the story of People’s Justice recounted here. It is made noticeable by its bright red headline – the colour links it to the banner above – and by having the images and text printed over a pale yellow background. The second front page story is made more noticeable and attention-grabbing by having the report headlines and text-box printed in white over a black background. The stark contrast with the colour piece above is emphasised by the headline “**8 MILLION**¹¹⁰” in enormous capital letters and the subheading “CELLPHONES FACE BIG SWITCH-OFF!” in smaller underlined capitals. This second story is concerned with the RICA¹¹¹ regulations which required all cellphones to be registered with the Department of Justice. Below this article at the very bottom of the page is the red and orange strap-line which carries the words “VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE SUNBABE IN SUNDAY SUN!”

Thus the valence of the report of People’s Justice derives partly from its position and presentation relative to other news. While it occupies the more noticeable top half of the page below the banner, it is literally made a colour-piece, a *kasi* story. The smaller headlines in red

¹¹⁰ 8 Million *Daily Sun* 3 June 2011: 1,2.

¹¹¹ The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act, No.70 of 2002, (known as RICA), requires all cellphone numbers to be registered.

sentence case and the use of the yellow background draw attention to its concern with the intimate emotional and moral universe within the township. It is quite different to the tone produced by the layout and colour used in the RICA story. Here, the stark black background and white headlines, while certainly sensationalist, produce an idea of “news” in a more traditional sense of the word, information of public importance of concern to the majority of readers. Thus the story of popular justice, with its vengeful residents and dreadful death is arguably not the most important news, but rather occupies a middle ground in which its drama is localised and rendered not so much exceptional as matter-of-fact, not only by means of its layout and presentation but through its position within a news hierarchy of cellphones, sport and sex. We see here, I think, how the situational ambivalences mentioned earlier are balanced out and formalised even in the typography and layout of the text. As with much of what it reports, the newspaper constantly reminds us to put what we read in a wider, general context.

Necklacing: the “ultimate tool” of People’s Justice

At other times however, the paper seems to grope for a way to contain the horror of People’s Justice within a narrative that can render it meaningful. One such story is “Return of the necklace!”¹¹² which reports on the death by necklacing of two men whom neighbours accuse of murdering a fellow resident in Port Elizabeth. The half-page report starts on page one, which it shares with an article and photograph of the visit of United States First Lady Michelle Obama with Nelson Mandela. Juxtaposed with this colourful piece is the stark headline in huge characters: “**RETURN OF THE NECKLACE!**” “**NECKLACE**” is dramatised by its larger font size than the first three words. The subheading, in sentence case, reads: “2 killers latest to die in tyre horror!” The report, however, does not start with an account of the murders mentioned by the subheading, but by exclaiming that the “**dreaded weapon of the liberation struggle**”, rather than remaining a terrible part of a terrible history, has returned: it is “**back!**” Its “dread” is inspired by the method of execution, which is dramatically evoked in the opening sentences: suspects have “*their arms pinned to their sides by old car tyres which are dropped over their shoulders and heads...*” Finally, the horrifying denouement: “**THEN THEY’RE SET ON FIRE!**”

The second paragraph continues by orienting the reader to the provenance of this ritual mode of execution, in which it is further framed as something that belongs to a particular chapter of history: “It happened often during struggle times” as a means of “[getting] rid of informers for the old government”. But that was in the past, and “SA has not seen many deaths by necklacing since the early 1990s”, (a dubious hiatus, if we recall the Diepsloot case and the campaign by the Cape Town police).

This historical sketch frames the present as a time when “communities have lost faith that the police or justice systems will protect them!” That the “ultimate tool” of People’s Justice should re-appear in this context is not surprising, and the *Daily Sun* makes an implicit connection between the two periods: that is, in the same way that informers were dealt with during the state of emergency in the 1980s so will criminals be dealt with now. The “ultimate tool” is needed for both traitors and criminals as both betray the community from within.

¹¹² Return of the necklace! *Daily Sun* 22 June 2011; 1,2.

This opinion is elaborated on by a man who argues that “Residents have lost their confidence in cops”. The reason for this lack of confidence is that a criminal might kill a community member, but then, incongruously, the “justice system lets him live a free man”. He suggests that the necklacing is a “way that could put pressure on the cops and courts”. The implication is that the justice system is at fault: criminals should be kept in prison, not only so they can be seen to be punished (rather than being let “free”), but also so they cannot return to carry out the same crimes again.

One police officer is allowed to voice an opinion on the case. He is described as emphatically “**NOT** happy” about the comment made by the resident above. Instead, he describes people who fight “fight crime by killing people” as “also criminals” who surely “will be arrested!” But, unusually for the *Daily Sun*, the matter is not allowed to rest with these ritual positions. Instead, a third opinion is sought in the form of an interview with the Director of the Centre for the study of Violence and Reconciliation, Nomfundo Mohapi. The words she is quoted as speaking essentially support the residents’ reasoning, that People’s Justice is *a form of communication*: “Communities feel the only way they can be heard is through violence”. In other words, these events should be recognised as a request for a dialogue with the state. In fact, they will “use any means possible”, including necklacing, to get their message across. However, while acknowledging the residents’ concerns as “genuine” she qualifies her understanding by noting that “actions” such as necklacing have “long term negative impact”. Undoubtedly, this emphasis on communication and its centrality will have additional resonance for workers on the newspaper itself.

Following on this article, three editions report two separate attempted necklace killings which the *Daily Sun* links together. The first, “Cops save thugs from necklacing¹¹³” begins “The day after *Daily Sun* reported that the necklace was back, an angry crown tried it again!” The second report, “Pig thief rescued¹¹⁴” is connected to the first through repeating a clip of the “Return of the necklace!” headline. While not a necklacing, a third article “‘Rapist’ stoned to death¹¹⁵” is similarly connected to the others by the *Daily Sun*.

The device of the headline clipping is used to connect all three incidents to a report on the visit to New Brighton (the Port Elizabeth township where the first reported necklacing incident took place) of the Eastern Cape MEC for Human Settlement, Safety and Security, Helen Sauls-August¹¹⁶. The report is headed by a small photograph of her marching determinedly out of a house in New Brighton, in the company of what appears to be a group of journalists. This report opens with her remark that “Our communities have become the killers”. Rather than simply protecting themselves, the people who carry out the necklacings are “vigilantes” and the deaths are due to “vigilantism”. The *Daily Sun* report echoes these sentiments by telling the reader that the “hunt for the vigilantes continues”, a negative construction confirmed by the police spokesperson who tells the *Daily Sun* that a “special task team” of “detectives and crime intelligence” has been set up to investigate “these mob cases”. Thus the valence of this article is

¹¹³ Cops save thug from necklacing *Daily Sun* 23 June 2011: 2.

¹¹⁴ Pig thief rescued *Daily Sun* 24 June 2011: 6.

¹¹⁵ ‘Rapist’ stoned to death! *Daily Sun* 27 June 2011: 4.

¹¹⁶ Necklacing must end *Daily Sun* 29 June 2011: 2.

inflected by the official primary sources who unambiguously define the People's Justice as senseless, criminal and outside the law.

The truth about People's Justice

A month later, we find in the *Daily Sun* an unusual article which uses the voices of authorities *other* than community members or police to interpret for its readers the meanings and consequences of necklacing. In this way readers are not addressed as people who implicitly understand the nature and consequences of community-led justice in township settings (which is assumed in almost every other story discussed so far), but as an audience in need of 'real' information about it. "The truth about People's Justice" begins by describing and foregrounding the horror of the method of execution in which "a victim has a car tyre forced around their body" and is then "covered in petrol and a match is struck..." Contextualising this fearful ritual, it reminds readers of the political circumstances of the first necklacing incident in the 1980s, when "a councillor was set alight after being accused of betraying citizens to the police". On behalf of the reader it then asks: "What is it that makes an individual or group of people want to burn another person to death?"

The answer is collated from the opinions of two psychologists, one an academic at Wits University and the other in private clinical practice. The academic, quoted first, acknowledges the historical precedents of necklacing, and states that "it can still happen when people feel they have no security and that they are not protected by the police". However, the relief gained by their actions is temporary, for "When they get to their homes, they see images of that dead person haunting them". This opinion is elaborated by the clinical psychologist who warns that people who are "encouraged" to take part in such executions (implying that they do not do so entirely voluntarily, and would not otherwise) "have mental problems later in life". These mental problems consist of "visuals of the scene" which "play back repeatedly" – the "haunting" alluded to by the first source. However, the psychologist assures that readers that those who necklace others are still human: they "have not lost their sense of caring". Rather, believing the police to have "failed", they are "desperate": in the face of state malfunction, necklacing becomes a "common solution" for otherwise "[unstoppable]" crime.

Discussion

If the *Daily Sun* is the self-styled "People's Paper", then the justice depicted in these dramatic narratives is depicted as the justice of these same People – People's Justice. It is not truly described by words like 'popular' or 'extra-state' or 'alternative' or even 'vigilante' (only academics, officials and police employ these terms, which are in essence exclusionary). Drawing on the idiom of the struggle, the 'People' that the *Daily Sun* refers to are presented rather as the primary members of the state, the "People as a whole and as an integral body politic" (Agamben 2000: 30). Theirs is thus a justice that belongs to and derives authority from the traditions of the inhabitants of the townships, the inheritors of the struggle, whose 'People's Courts' once established an alternative sovereignty to the apartheid state of the 1980s. This alternative sovereignty is construed in the academic literature as speaking to local moral orders and by the work that it does to police the boundaries of the community. As such it is an "internal cleansing machine that... divides residents into the worthy and unworthy, the trusted and untrusted, beings and non-beings" (Buur 2009: 28). In Agamben's formulation, they produce the "inclusive

exclusion”, the point at which what needs to be excluded is at the same time constitutive of the included (1998: 11).

That the *Daily Sun* not only reflects but participates in the construction of this community is clear. Its terrible images and gripping narratives offer the reader compelling moral lessons. Those who flout the social contract – of living respectably, honestly and co-operatively with fellow township residents – will surely be ‘dealt with’. The lesson to be absorbed is that cheats, thieves, rapists and murderers must know that, while they might get away with their ‘evil deeds’ a few times, justice will inevitably catch up with them. Peoples’ Justice, that is. For state justice may, in the eyes of many, actually ‘protect’ criminals, and, ironically their escape from retribution will only last as long as they are shielded by the law.

It certainly seems at times that the characters within these narratives would prefer the state to do its duty: they characterise the police as at best lacking effectiveness, at worst being indifferent or hostile. Constitutional rights that ideally protect the innocent and guilty alike are construed as failing those most in need of security. Thus due process, including bail and the right to be treated as innocent until found guilty, is regarded with suspicion and anger by the various characters of these stories. Despite its appeals to reason and its spectacular shows of force, the monolithic face of the state, with its abstract definitions of crime and punishment, appears unequal to the task of containing the multifarious contexts in which it is not crime *per se* which is at issue but the moral fabric of township society.

On the plus side, what the reports reveal is a far more interesting, complex and varied set of actions and circumstances – a more intrinsically interesting world – than the monolithic image that the state, through its agents, presents of itself and its own role therein. If, as our theorists suggest, there are effectively two sovereignties in conflict in these reports, then that one which forms the foreground in the *Daily Sun*’s reports has the merit, at least, of displaying a more vivid variety, energy, and vitality, qualities which automatically serve to provide the narrative appeal the newspaper craves.

Without too much overstatement, one may characterise this sovereignty as implicitly envisioned in these pages as a latent power that lies quiescent yet close beneath the surface of everyday life, ready to emerge with great potency when summoned. We do not usually meet the organised, consistent and structured (albeit violent) action of the community courts described in the anthropological literature; nor is there, precisely, the apparently chaotic and mindless violence of vigilantism or the “mob” (Buur and Jensen 2004), in the way state officialdom, too, would like to paint things. While certainly violent, what the narratives construct for the reader is a middle ground, in which a certain contingency of action is made visible and explicable. The actions of all the characters – the residents, the criminals and the police – are contained by the narrative within the moral and social dynamics of township life.

Here, people are understood as known to one another and as implicitly sharing a moral code. Families, neighbours, residents and larger communities are seen to respond spontaneously yet cohesively to threats and to exercise their collective will. It is at this moment that the alternative sovereignty emerges to pass judgement and thereby perform the (always incomplete and thus

reiterative) task of social ordering. Some punishments serve to recompense injury, to chastise the wrong-doer and to re-incorporate him (mostly him, but sometimes her) into the community. But habitual criminals have no place in this domain, and, placed by the sovereign will outside the social order, as non-beings they can be killed with impunity. At such times the police appear only able to react rather than lead. Their ritualistic responses further highlight their incapacity to contain or eliminate such eruptions. One cannot escape the feeling that many of their members are themselves hamstrung by being required to operate between two worlds. One presumes they often know this so-called 'other' world and its imperatives at least as well as the one they are called upon to defend. Those imperatives the *Daily Sun* can frequently condense into a telling slogan. As one headline succinctly puts it: "It's our law now"¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁷ It's our law now *Daily Sun* 29 Sept 2011: 5.

Chapter 6: The Police

The policing of wonderland requires both a return through the looking glass of apartheid as well as a conception of policing that challenges the conventional wisdom that has for so long guided police reform (Brogden and Shearing 1993:11).

Not every cop in the country's bad (Christopher Mazibuko 2015: 10).

Whether serving as the principal or secondary characters of a report, or simply as routine sources of information, the police form a key feature of the map of crime and justice drawn for us by the tabloid. In the multiple stories we looked at concerning People's Justice, the police came gradually into view as the embodiment of the state's authority. Yet, what becomes apparent in these reports is that theirs is an authority shot through with ambiguities. At times they appear able to enforce the law, but in many other cases we see them ignored or blatantly flouted by the public they ostensibly serve, or simply considered unnecessary for the establishment and maintenance of a particular moral and social order.

Yet, while such stories might serve to challenge normative notions of the police's role in the maintenance of law and order this is far from all there is to say about them, for as we move away from People's Justice stories to consider crime and the pursuit of justice generally a deeply complex picture of the police emerges. In this chapter I explore the contours of how the police, or 'cops', as they are regularly and colloquially named by the *Daily Sun*, are represented in the tabloid's ongoing saga of SunLand, truly a 'wonderland', as Brogden and Shearing so evocatively put it, above. Again, my task is not so much to enquire whether the *Daily Sun* gets their picture of the police right or wrong, but rather to understand how representations of the police participate in creating the texture of township crime and justice – at least as it appears in the pages of the paper.

Policing in South Africa

There has been no shortage of academic attention paid to the South African police, past and present. They have been the subject of a wide range of critical research within criminology, history and anthropology. In this regard, South Africa is no different to many other countries in which the police are the object of intense scrutiny, due especially to their licence to wield power on behalf of the state in the form of physical coercion. However, in the local case, it is the legitimacy of the police that forms a primary concern.

The earlier colonial and apartheid police had arguably enjoyed some trust (Brogden 1989; Nasson 1991; Kynoch 2003). However, during the later apartheid period police lost all legitimacy within the townships (Shaw 2002) for township policing was not primarily concerned with the prevention and solution of crime. Instead, police were largely deployed to enforce apartheid legislation, including pass (Kynoch 2008) and liquor laws (Scharf 1985a, 1985b). Later, as the struggle for liberation intensified in the townships, their task was to maintain state security through containing political unrest (Brogden and Shearing 1993).

It is not surprising then that the police, whether black or white, have historically been regarded by most township residents as untrustworthy and hostile to their interests, for they were the agents of a racist system that sought to control black subjects in terms of their physical settlement, employment, social behaviours and above all their political activities. Such odium would not be easy under any circumstances to slough off. Observers point to the living remnants of this history, including the enduring institutional ‘culture’ of the police and the lingering animosity between the police and black citizens, as contributory obstructions to the attainment of an ideal post-apartheid police service. But there are other factors that inhibit a decisive change of image. As the agents of the post-apartheid state the police still remain enmeshed in the establishment and maintenance of inequalities inscribed along the lines of race, class, geography and gender (Jensen 2008; Samara 2003). Linked to this is a broader concern about the ability of the SAPS to participate in and support the evolution of a democratic society premised on human rights (Hornberger 2011; Shaw 2002; Alexander and Kynoch 2011; Brogden and Shearing 1993).

In this new situation the police are quite clearly faced with contradictory demands and opposing expectations. Most important perhaps for this research is that despite attempts to foreground the community-building and development role envisaged by reformers the police are regarded, somewhat unrealistically and in contradiction to earlier policy aims, as the primary means of reducing the high levels of post-independence crime through ‘tough’ policing. As the ability to control crime became a public test for the legitimacy of the new government (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Shaw and Gastrow 2001), it was the state’s capacity for action in the shape of aggressive policing (Gould 2009; Marks 2005) that was invoked, rather than the discourses of participation and development which characterised approaches to crime reduction in the transition period (Brogden and Shearing 1993; Samara 2011).

While this history serves to orient us to the police as an institution, it is less useful as a guide for an actual analysis of the paper’s own brand of presentation. For the purpose of this research I have found more illuminating several books whose ethnographic approach towards their topic brings the practices of post-apartheid policing strongly into focus: Steinberg’s *Thin blue* (2008), Faull’s *Behind the badge* (2010), Altbeker’s *The dirty work of democracy* (2005) and Hornberger’s *Policing and human rights* (2011). What is most striking is their tendency to present evidence from the personal point of view of involved individuals. In all these accounts, what emerges most significantly is the violence both inflicted and endured by police. That this violence is perpetrated mainly by men is starkly apparent (Faull 2014). Another strong impression they convey that is useful for my analysis is of the essential ungovernability and inaccessibility to the police of the crowded township and squatter camp terrain, both physical and social. In these spaces it is clear that residents have not fully consented to being policed and police, low in the social and economic hierarchy, must find unorthodox ways to both please their superiors, enforce their authority, and at the same time earn respect from those they regulate. Unsurprisingly as we shall see, the unpredictability of this social milieu provides a fertile ground for police corruption (Faull 2011) in which the appropriation and privatisation of state authority becomes a tradable commodity.

Representations

Given their enormous importance to the state both before and after independence, it is surprising that so little in-depth work has been done on the media representations of South African police. The research above occasionally mentions media representations, but as historical evidence concerning police action, rather than for the purpose of critiquing the representations themselves.

The symbiotic relationship between news organisations and the police, who agree to provide the beat journalist with a ready stream of newsworthy events and authoritative sources in exchange for (mostly) favourable coverage, was identified by Chibnall in 1977. However, the nature of their appearances in the newspapers extends far beyond initiating this service. The main trend in discussions of such representations of the police in news media was set by researchers at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and their allies in critical criminology, whose work was concerned to unpick the relationship between media institutions, the police as key sources and primary definers of the status quo, and the control of raced and classed 'deviance'. This literature is well-rehearsed (see Wykes 2001; Kidd-Hewitt and Osborne 1995 for overviews) and I do not intend to discuss it here, for the alliance between the state and the ideological work of 'law-and-order news' is not what concerns me: in the South African situation, it is not the state that is allowed to define the terms in which these matters are set forth (however much it evidently might like to). Nor is more contemporary British work such as that presented by Mayr and Machin (2012) of help in this local regard. As critical scholars they are primarily interested in the "extent that the media present an accurate, coherent and fair view of what actually constitutes policing and crime detection" (Mayr and Machin 2012: 137), a task that is also at odds with this project. My view is that such accuracy is an unattainable ideal. More interesting to me are the social meanings to be uncovered in the representations as they occur in the written reports themselves, as these provide a genuine datum directly to hand which is amenable to immediate analysis.

Instead, I take my cue from Richard Sparks' study of televised cop shows in which he explores the "emotive, metaphorical and figurative dimensions of crime and punishment, their position in everyday life and their resulting cultural salience and ideological weight" (Sparks 1992: 5). From this point of view the hard social 'facts' of crime, law and punishment, police stations, law-courts and prisons derive their power and bearing from the language within which they are already anchored. For Sparks it is the cop show, viewed on television within the private realm at home, which provides the language and emotional orientation with which to understand the 'real' public world of crime and punishment.

The cop show's unique appeal to the audience lies, he argues, in the "dialectical play" between "anxiety and reassurance" (Sparks 1992: 120) which it constantly rehearses and resolves. Satisfaction derives in part from the "fabular" (Eco 1979) or "mythological" (Silverstone 1988) structure of the genre, which he analyses in terms of its characters, in particular the nature of the heroism displayed by the (usually male) police officer protagonist. In contrast, the role of the villains they overcome is "to have been disposed of in quite a final sense, by death or capture, by the end of the story. Indeed", continues Sparks (1992: 147), "the resolution towards which the narrative tends is usually identical with that death or capture". Finally, there is the role played by

the (usually female) victims, who “tend to be socially proximate to both villains and heroes... [and] constitute the connection between the two” (Sparks 1992: 145).

As such, cop shows are moral tales which share a set of narrative choices that seem closely to follow the model by Todorov (1981) which we met in Chapter 3: an initial equilibrium, interrupted by one or more disruptions, with their accompanying responses of pursuit, danger and the overcoming of the villain, and closed by a return to a second equilibrium. A close reading of the *Daily Sun* texts reveals the extent to which its narratives involving heroic police draw on such an archetypal scheme, which I shall present in more detail below. Its heroic stories certainly do tend towards a strong narrative closure of the type suggested above, a form which accords with the tabloid’s rhetorical aim of reassuring its readers of the possibility of an ideal world in which security is won through the heroic action of the police. However, what is surprising, and must be noted in advance, is that in the *Daily Sun* narratives, unlike their fictive cousins, the police do not only occupy the role of hero but *also of villain and victim*. In doing so the *Daily Sun* presents to the reader what appears to be a far more complex and contradictory narrative domain than the average cop show.

Whether even this expansion of the roles played by the police is enough to encompass urban and township reality remains an open question. An aspect of this creative approach I find particularly interesting is those moments when the narrative aim and the underlying material quite clearly come under strain. In my analysis I argue that the inherent complexity in both the material itself and in the range of representations that the tabloid offers its readers may overwhelm the tabloid’s ‘fictive’ aims. To be prepared to offer such ‘mythical’ versions of a complex reality – whatever value we place upon the motives concerned – can sometimes put one at the mercy of one’s material: there are moments when reality ‘bites back’.

This caveat evokes certain post-structuralist strictures against defining master-narratives, the claim being that language itself is incapable of relating an exact truth. The supposition here is that there will always be something left over from any absolute claim about reality, a certain remainder that will in the end serve to undermine the main statement. This discursive equivalent to the Freudian ‘return of the repressed’ appears to underlie aspects of Derrida’s (1998) concept of “the supplement” for example. Derrida has in mind metaphysical claims about reality in particular, but what he says could as well be applied to the process of myth-making as outlined above. He speaks of this flaw in thought itself and in the nature of concepts that “gives rise to a structure of replacements such that all presences will be supplements substituted for the absent origin” (Derrida 1998: 446). He defines “the graphics of supplementarity” as supplying “for the lack of a full unity, another unit that comes to relieve it, being enough the same and enough other so that it can replace by addition” (Derrida 1998: 447). By this Derrida is saying that any truth statement is never complete, for truth as presence must always “come to terms with relation, non-presence and thus non-truth” (Derrida 1998: 445). Always then, “a supplement to the supplement, a surrogate for the surrogate, is possible and necessary” (Derrida 1998: 439).

The logic here illuminates an anomaly in the tabloid’s valorisation of the cop, juxtaposed but not integrated with his appearance as both villain and victim. This very contradiction threatens to betray the mythologizing character of the paper’s representations of heroes and villains, to serve

– as I shall try to demonstrate – a deliberate social aim. This issue aside, it is still undeniable that the heroes, villains and victims presented by the paper show that a fictionalisation has taken place. These character-types employed are, indeed, identical those that figure in Propp’s (1968) analysis of the folktale (see Chapter 3). Thus it is appropriate, I believe, that, drawing on Propp’s (1968) schema of *dramatis personae*, I explore the ways in which the police are represented: as heroes, or as villains, or as victims. Alongside all these we also find the ‘family members’, those who belong to the community within which the heroic or villainous cops carry out their actions. They have an interesting role to play, not only as helpers or victims, but as providing the moral and social context within which the actions of the police make sense.

Our Heroes

I begin my discussion of the representations of the police with an examination of their role as heroes. In Todorov’s narrative model, a story ends with the resolution of the disruption and the establishment of a new equilibrium. It is the role of the hero (in Propp’s schema) to bring about this resolution. The role is an important one, as its iteration is indicative of who is privileged with the task of ordering and restoring social norms. In crime narratives (as in much criminology), it is normally the police who expect (and are for the most part expected) to take the role of the hero. My task here is to delineate the constituent elements of this heroism as it appears in the pages of the tabloid.

Heroic by nature

Some cops are presented as simply heroic by nature and, as such, they are held up as role models. These innate characteristics consist of a certain attitude or stance towards policing and crime, as showcased in the profile of, uniquely, a heroic “mlungu cop¹¹⁸” in Port Elizabeth, Deon Muller, “mlungu” signifying his whiteness. We are told he is “tough” and that he is “one of the best crime fighters” in the province. This toughness, both mental and physical, is evident in the fighting stance we see him adopt in the portrait photograph that accompanies the article. Dressed in police uniform and beret and wearing two pistols in thigh holsters, he brandishes a heavy stick and looks fiercely out of the frame at the viewer. He was, we learn, given this knobkerrie¹¹⁹, the “Big Stick” which he takes on patrol with him “ekasi”, by township residents who also gave him his nick-name, “Kragga” (“power”). He tells the reader that residents – whom he refers to colloquially in isiXhosa as “abahlali¹²⁰” – have told him that he has “a power to fight crime in their community”. This assessment is corroborated by the provincial police spokesperson who commends him as an “asset” to the service. Indeed, he remarks, “we are very proud of him” as he is “one of our best members”. He is just the kind of person “who we want to work with our communities”.

While not all police officers have “kragga”, they may have other heroic qualities, such as a knack or skill that gifts its possessor with a special facility towards his calling – like that of Sergeant Lindani Mhlongo from the Pinetown crime prevention unit¹²¹. He is reported to have stopped a car at a road block as it travelled home from a funeral simply because he “had a gut

¹¹⁸ Kragga’s ‘Big Stick’ is this kasi’s law... *Daily Sun* 28 July 2011: 3. He is one of four white officers who appear by name in the research set.

¹¹⁹ Knobkerrie is an Afrikaans word for a wooden stick with a bulbous head.

¹²⁰ Abahlali: an isiZulu or isiXhosa word referring to “residents”.

¹²¹ Funeral joyride ends up in court *Daily Sun* 10 January 2011: 5.

feeling” that it was stolen. His working instinct proves correct. We learn that his colleagues describe him as a “sniffer dog” because of his talent for “uncovering stolen cars”.

Or, other officers may simply be indomitable, such as Investigating Officer Alfred Modise¹²², who was responsible for bringing to justice the young man who raped and murdered a 60 year old “gogo” in Aliwal North: the police spokesperson proudly describes how, although it was “very hard for cops to crack this case”, Modise “*did a great job and never gave up until he found the killer and gathered all the evidence*”. All these examples refer to heroic personal characteristics or attitudes: physical strength, authority, determination and innate skill.

Cops in action: the bust

However, such individualism is fairly rare, as the police more frequently are referred to collectively as “cops” who are distinguished by their heroic *action*. The first type of heroic action story is the “bust”, a colloquialism that refers to the discovery of, *inter alia*, drugs, unlicensed weapons, smuggled goods, counterfeit money, or stolen livestock (a far from definitive list). These stories are usually told using the words of the police spokesperson, who recounts to the *Daily Sun* journalist the police actions of intercepting and confiscating these illicit goods and arresting and charging the suspects involved. For example, “Massive drug bust¹²³” gives details of the arrest of a “28-year old man” after he was found at his home in Gugulethu with “3937” Mandrax tablets. The specificity of this “massive” number is the result of the careful counting of the drugs: in the photograph that appears above the story are pictured two police officers in blue uniforms sitting behind a table. In front of them, arranged in neat rows, are stacks of Mandrax tablets. The angle of the photograph, taken straight on, foregrounds and emphasises the lengths of the ranks of drugs, beside which, to the left of the image, are big transparent plastic bags filled with yet more tablets waiting to be counted. The two policemen (who are not named) are captured with serious and intent faces as they manually tally the stacks. The enormous street-value of the drugs is given – “R200 000” – and we are told that the “suspect” is now “facing a charge of possession of drugs”. The report goes on to give accounts of two further, and even more lucrative, drug busts in other parts of the country. These triumphs prompt a commendation from a senior official, the “KZN police commissioner” Lieutenant General Mamonye Ngobeni, who “hailed” one of these busts as a “major breakthrough in [the police’s] fight against drugs”. The operation’s success is constructed as *a form of communication*: it “sends a loud and clear message” about the implacable determination of the police. It signifies to “drug lords” that “we” – that is, the police – have “declared war on drug dealers”. The report ends with an appeal to the public to report crime, and gives the toll-free telephone numbers of CrimeStop.

While the drug bust or firearms bust appears frequently, as offering excellent opportunities for a display of evidence – both of the crime and of police action – the “busting” of criminals (i.e, their arrest) also recurs. “BIG WIG UP FOR DIAMOND DEAL!¹²⁴” tells how several men are arrested by police at a Pretoria hotel in connection with diamond dealing. This story is the lead article on page 2, separated out from the other crime articles on the page by a thick black border.

¹²² Gogo’s killer to ‘rot in jail’ *Daily Sun* 1 June 2011: 8.

¹²³ Massive drug bust *Daily Sun* 6 January 2011: 4.

¹²⁴ Big wig up for diamond deal! *Daily Sun* 25 July 2011: 2.

The headline is in white capital letters upon a black background, a style frequently used for the more serious page one articles. It is accompanied by two photographs. The first, positioned directly below the headline, depicts the arrest of the seven suspects mentioned in the report. Smartly dressed in suits, or more casually in jackets and jeans, they stand with their backs to the viewer and lean with their upraised hands on the side of a large white van. There are three police officers in the image: one policewoman stands to the right of the photograph and looks towards the camera while two policemen at either end of the van also look towards the camera as they actively frisk the suspects. The three officers look happy and confident.

The second image to the right of the headline and above the article is taken at the police station. The shot is composed to include a table, on which is displayed an array of confiscated items, and behind which four policemen pose in a tight cluster. Three of the four men stand and look at the viewer with serious and intent expressions, while the third, sitting, solemnly surveys the stash. Three of the four are wearing blue uniforms, caps and bullet proof vests, while one of the men standing is in civilian clothing. The items include at least nine cellphones, which have been positioned on pieces of white paper, and five weapons, three of which are enclosed in transparent plastic bags and two larger pieces which lie uncovered. Shotgun shells for one of the larger weapons are also visible in a clear plastic bag.

The story opens by describing how the “big wig”, a former mayor from KZN, his son and five bodyguards travelled to Pretoria to “do a diamond deal”. They arrive in the city “heavily armed” and driving expensive cars. Having thus set them up, they are now ready for a fall, which the paper gleefully recounts: “They thought they had the perfect plan...” mocks the third sentence. The dot, dot, dot suggests that there is more to say, and we are not made to wait for the denouement: “But somebody had told the cops!” So it is that the police “stormed the Maxima Hotel” and the “gang” of seven were arrested and now are “behind bars”. The police spokesperson enumerates the confiscated items. First, weapons: “a Lee Enfield 303 rifle” and a “CBC 12-gauge shotgun”, “Tokarev 9mm pistol” and a “Luger 9mm”, along with “a large amount of ammunition”. Then, the evidence of the diamond deal: a “diamond tester”, a “scale”, and a “bottle of nitric acid for cleaning jewellery”. Then the evidence of their ostentatious self-display: “a ML Mercedes-Benz, a Q7 Audi and an Isuzu double-cab bakkie”.

This compendium of items is indicative of illicit activity related to the “buying and selling” of diamonds. But despite all the damning evidence, it is obvious that the police have little proof to go on, for the charges refer only to the relatively minor offence of “possession of unlicensed firearms”. However, the fact that the police “reveal” to the *Daily Sun* the fact that one of the suspects is also to be charged with “offering a police officer a R30 000 bribe!” helps to confirm the suspect’s guilt. Indeed, the “top cop” himself, Brigadier Fred Kekana, constructs the episode as a success for the police and remarks that he is “glad that the police officers managed to spoil their plans”.

The complexities of the above examples of “the bust” are hidden from the reader – what form the investigations take, the various stages of their unfolding, the individuals and various departments involved – including perhaps informants – are invisible. Instead, for both the police spokesperson and the journalist, all the attention is focussed on the final successful outcome of

the investigation, which is the arrest and charging of the suspects, the exposure of their illegal activity, and the confiscation of the illicit goods. Thus, while not particularly dramatic, the “bust” nonetheless satisfies the reader *as well as the police*: the submissive line of arrestees, the serried ranks of drugs and weapons and cellphones, the lists and descriptions of confiscated goods, the earnest faces and proud words of the officers, not only attest to their victory but assure us of the undoubted guilt and the inevitability of the punishment of the culprits. A “normal” society, without the nefarious activities of “druglords” or “big wig” diamond dealers has, for now at least, been re-established.

That both the police and the *Daily Sun* intend such stories and their accompanying images to serve as object lessons is clear: in one such “bust” story¹²⁵ the KZN “top cop” Lieutenant-General Ngobeni comments that she was “pleased” that “thugs” who had planned on robbing a supermarket were “bust before they could strike”, for in this way the police managed to prevent the horror of a “bloodbath” (i.e. the shooting of the supermarket staff). She ends her commendation by constructing this successful intervention as *a sign of the determination and readiness of the police*, which must be understood by other criminals as a warning and example: “We hope criminals get the message: Don’t tata ma chance in KZN¹²⁶”.

Cops in action: Police operations

In a comparable way, frequent compendiums of police action, or “operations”, provide evidence of police prowess and success in “crime-busting”. In November, a story about the Eastern Cape Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant Celiwe Binta¹²⁷ describes how she is “cleaning house”, that is, making the Eastern Cape a safer place. The magnitude of this task is set up by the opening lines which describes the province as a “tough place” where “more murders are committed than anywhere else in Mzansi”. In order to accomplish her goal she approaches her work thoroughly and “leaves no stone unturned”. Following her demanding example, “her team” of police “hit hard and fast” over the weekend, in a variety of “operations”. They succeed in confiscating “20 firearms” and “dagga¹²⁸ worth more than R1 million” and also “bust 108 suspects!” The commissioner describes the police under her command as “[working] hard” with an “enthusiasm and determination” that “amazed her”.

“Standing firm on crime!¹²⁹” follows three weeks on from this article, and gives an example of one of the weekend operations Lieutenant-General Binta initiated. In the photograph above the article, three police women dressed in blue uniforms and bullet-proof vests work at the side of a busy highway setting up equipment for a roadblock. “Police power”, reads the caption: “Cops get crime under control on a Nelson Mandela Bay road”. The lead story of this report, which occupies the first short column, concerns the arrest of a hijacker; but this is followed by two further columns in which a detailed list of offenses, arrests and confiscations is set out. Some of these take place during the “stop and search operations” which are alluded to by the image, in

¹²⁵ Quick cops outsmart robbers *Daily Sun* 12 December 2011: 5.

¹²⁶ “Tata ma chance” refers to the highly popular advertising slogan slogan of the South African lottery, initiated post-apartheid, in which participants were encouraged to “Tata ma chance, tata ma millions”: “Take a chance, take millions”.

¹²⁷ Hard work is top cop’s pride *Daily Sun* 10 November 2011: 24. This is the edition that features on the front page the story of People’s Justice in which women urinate on, and ultimately kill, a rapist.

¹²⁸ Dagga is a colloquialism for marijuana.

¹²⁹ Standing firm on crime! *Daily Sun* 30 November 2011: 28.

which the police “picked up nine people on outstanding arrest warrants” and arrest another eight for “possession of dagga”. At the same time, “cops from Motherwell [a township in Nelson Mandela Bay municipality] were out in full force” on the weekend: vigorously, they “bust” the satisfying number of “79 people” for a range of crimes, from “being drunk and disorderly to rape, armed robbery and assault”. Charges include: “theft... domestic violence... malicious damage to property... business robbery and shoplifting”. And as if that is not enough, the final sentence concludes this litany of crime with a startling catalogue of confiscated items: “24 knives, a panga, one pickaxe handle, one identity document, four dagga plants, 65 fake CDs and a bicycle”.

Magical agents

It is the lively cop, then, the cop who is seen to be actively and diligently pursuing crime, who is heroic, especially when supported by the evidence of arrests of suspects, the laying of charges, and the confiscation and tallying of illicit goods. But heroes do not accomplish all this alone. Following Propp’s (1968) schema, as heroes they are equipped with magical agents which aid them in their task of overcoming the villains they encounter. In the *Daily Sun*, a noteworthy magical agent is the *new cop car*¹³⁰.

It is likely that the new cop car enters into the pages of the *Daily Sun* as a result of police exercises in self-promotion, for the reports that appear on new cars follow public handing-over ceremonies in almost all of the cases. Such scheduled events are able to provide a ready source of news and thus easily enter the news stream; thus they are inevitably also a little routine. But they acquire additional interest here nonetheless due to the manner of their presentation, which provides an opportunity for the tabloid to construct the ideal policeman – and, as it happens, the exemplars are, usually, men. Here I take four similar articles that appear over the course of the year and draw out their salient features in order to examine the characteristics of the “magical agent”: in what ways these are meant to contribute to the vanquishing of villains, and what transformative effects such magical agents are intended to have on the hypothetical average policeman¹³¹.

First, as magical agents, the new cars are special. The tabloid emphasises the desirability of the new cars, which are described as “swanky vehicles,¹³² “hot wheels¹³³” like “Beemers¹³⁴”, “top of the range Golf 6 GTIs, BMW 3 series¹³⁵” and “flashy 4x4[s]¹³⁶”. One article shows an image of one of the National Traffic Police’s new four by fours: it is a large and imposing white vehicle, decorated with blue and yellow swooshes along the sides, a dark gold sheriff’s star on the front left passenger door, and the words “Traffic Police” boldly printed across the bottom

¹³⁰ The other noteworthy magical agents are guns, cellphones and CCTV cameras.

¹³¹ The interest that these stories might have for the reader may also be related to the public’s tacit knowledge of the notoriously unavailable or out-of-order cop car.

¹³² Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹³³ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹³⁴ Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹³⁵ Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹³⁶ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

edge of the body. In their newness, striking appearance and implied speed and performance, these cars come to symbolise the authority of the police: they are “display[s] of cop power¹³⁷”.

Not surprisingly perhaps, these magical agents have the ability to turn the average policeman or woman into a super-hero: they become “supercops^{138, 139}” and “top cops¹⁴⁰”. As extra-ordinary cops, they are not only “physically and mentally fit¹⁴¹” but, imbued with the characteristic speed and power of their magical agents, are “all revved up¹⁴²”, ready to “hit the road¹⁴³” and “get in the fast lane¹⁴⁴”. Indeed, they become the personification of cops-in-action: for, thus “kitted out¹⁴⁵” they are “taking charge¹⁴⁶” and are “ready for action¹⁴⁷”. Armed with their magical agents, and “determined to crack down¹⁴⁸” on a variety of criminals, these supercops will “catch bad drivers¹⁴⁹”, “save lives¹⁵⁰” and even “bust” corrupt fellow officers^{151, 152}. Indefatigably, unlike other officers, they will “work around the clock¹⁵³”. Indeed, they are obliged to be heroic now, for they can no longer complain that they “have no cars to go out and fight crime!¹⁵⁴” As for villains, they had better “get their act together¹⁵⁵”, “watch out^{156, 157}” and “beware¹⁵⁸” as cops and their magical agents make the country “get smaller¹⁵⁹” for them.

Cops in action: The chase

As magical agents, then, the new cop car is seen as almost indispensable, turning officers into supercops and giving them the edge over the villains they pursue. But while the new cop car is highly visible, the ordinary cop car disappears from view, except insofar as it is present in heroic cop-in-action stories as an invisible – or at least, taken for granted – aspect of “the chase”. In “Cops seize 46 bags of dagga¹⁶⁰”, for example, the police spokesperson describes how cops chased a “suspicious bakkie” through the town of Aliwal North after it failed to stop. “It was Warrant Officer Ndoiyisile Maseyimane who gave the chase”, says the spokesperson, who goes on to enumerate the weight (345,45kg) and street value (R643 900) of the haul, the ages of the suspects, and their expected date of appearance in court, each item in the list another piece of evidence that validates the officer’s energetic motorised pursuit of the suspect. What kind of car the officer drove is not mentioned, instead the emphasis is on his action and its results.

¹³⁷ Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹³⁸ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹³⁹ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁴⁰ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁴¹ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁴² Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹⁴³ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹⁴⁴ Criminals watch out! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 9.

¹⁴⁵ Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹⁴⁶ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹⁴⁷ Criminals watch out! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 9.

¹⁴⁸ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹⁴⁹ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁵⁰ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁵¹ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁵² New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹⁵³ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹⁵⁴ Criminals watch out! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 9.

¹⁵⁵ New supercops hit the road! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

¹⁵⁶ Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹⁵⁷ Criminals watch out! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 9.

¹⁵⁸ Beware of new top cops *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 7.

¹⁵⁹ Cops all revved up *Daily Sun* 20 January 2011: 10.

¹⁶⁰ Cops seize 46 bags of dagga *Daily Sun* 7 June 2011: 11.

Indeed, “the chase” is such an intrinsic part of the image of the cop-in-action, that even when leading to the injury or death of passers-by it is still constructed by the paper as heroic. This is starkly apparent in “**GANG CHASE CHAOS!**”¹⁶¹ a page 4 lead article, which together with its photographs is given three quarters of the page. Two photographs are positioned directly beneath the headline, while a third, larger photograph is positioned below these to the right of the subheading which is printed in red sentence case: “Student killed in shoot-out with cops and robbers”. The first photograph is a long shot which shows a road filled with haphazardly parked cars. In the foreground we see a white Mercedes-Benz with its doors and boot open. The caption tells us that this is the car that “thugs used to flee the crime scene”. Three policemen are captured as they cordon off the vehicle with yellow police tape. Behind the Mercedes-Benz in the middle distance are parked several police vehicles, and further away a group of onlookers lean against their cars and watch the scene. There is a haze of yellow dust in the air. The feeling produced by the image is one of disorder, the “chaos” referred to in the headline.

The second image shows a sloping roadside and pavement on which we can see a silver sheet draped over a long but irregular shape – the caption informs us that this is the body of the student. Two older civilians sit beside the body at the far left of the image while a police van occupies the background. In the third, largest image, a policeman in a blue uniform takes two male suspects towards the back of a police van. Another officer in a bulletproof vest and carrying a clipboard accompanies them to the right. We see them from the back as the arresting officer propels the suspects forward, gripping each securely by the upper arms. The angle of this three-quarter shot allows us to see that the suspects’ hands are secured behind their backs with handcuffs; it also gives us a view of the weapons that the two policemen wear in holsters hanging from their hips. There is no doubt that this is an arrest in process. The four men are tightly cropped and the overall impact is one of police authority. This brief picture-story thus tells the reader in a form of visual shorthand the essentials implied by the two headlines, a scene of chaos linked to a “chase”, and an unfortunate casualty. But it also exceeds them by showing the arrest of the “gang” by victorious police.

In keeping with these three dramatic images the story opens with an evocative description of the disruption, the source of the “chaos” of the heading. A scene of quotidian routine is rudely interrupted as “[p]eople on their way to work and school” are forced to run for cover when police chase and exchange shots with a gang of suspects. Indeed, so surprising and shocking is this disruption to the norm that the only way for the paper to make sense of it is by means of allegory. Straight from the realm of story, a “wild cops and robbers chase” suddenly takes place “in front of their eyes”. Both the subheading and the first sentence use this phrase, which is not simply word-play, but states what appears to be a matter of fact: the fictional world, with its fantasies of “cops and robbers” becomes a living reality, at least for these few moments when it is witnessed and its impact literally felt.

Having established this abrupt inversion of reality for those who witness the chase (an un-reality which for a moment becomes that of the reader, too, as she enters this narrative), we are then told that a “26-year-old student” was killed and another three pedestrians “caught in the

¹⁶¹ Gang chase chaos *Daily Sun* 2 September 2011: 4.

crossfire”. These shocking events are then contextualised – they are a result of a “rampage of terror” which starts with a “gang of five thugs” who, we are told, “allegedly robbed” a house in Randfontien, Gauteng, of R25 000. They then “fled” some way, with “cops, ambulances and a cop chopper in hot pursuit”. Thus, by the end of this third sentence, we have been given the most important facts of the story: the robbery; the long chase; and the death or injury of bystanders to the drama. These elements are the “gang chase chaos” of the headline.

However, the report then goes on to repeat the details of the case twice more, both times drawing on the words of the police spokesperson (so, in effect, we get the same story told three times, each from a slightly different perspective and each time introducing a few new facts or details). “Cops say the day unfolded this way”, declares the introductory sentence to the second section, which is told by means of bullet points that rapidly set out the chronological chain of events. Taken together, they read like “takes” from a thriller: first the gang “held up a domestic worker”. Then, they “stole R25 000 and a Mercedes-Benz”. Without pause, the “cops arrived”, and “took off at high speed” after the thugs, who fled “in two cars”. Next, a cop van “screeched around a corner and overturned”. The cops call for help, and “radio in for reinforcements and an ambulance”. A “cop helicopter” appears and “swooped low” over the “getaway cars”. The fatal shoot out starts: a student was “shot dead” and “two pedestrians¹⁶²” were injured. Finally, two of the “thugs” were “cornered and arrested”.

The third section is narrated in the form of a long, direct quotation from the police spokesperson. The language used is more formal, and employs the forensic vocabulary of the police statement. The spokesperson includes himself in the story using the collective pronouns “our” and “we”: “Our officers responded” to the situation; and “we have opened various cases”. The reader learns that the stolen car was “fitted with a tracking system”, which led to the two men who drove it being “cornered”. In addition, the police found three pistols, one at the scene of the robbery and another at the scene of the shoot-out. In the very last sentence, we are told that the three other suspects have escaped, for there is now a “manhunt” for them. As the article enters its second and third iterations we lose sight of the dead student: his or her death becomes simply one event amongst others in the larger and implicitly more important story of the police victory over the “thugs”.

Cops in action, cops in danger

The chase, then, epitomises the heroic cop because a cop who “gives chase” is the embodiment of the active officer: quick to respond, determined to succeed, relentless in pursuit. Clearly, this activity brings the police into physical danger, which gives occasion for a demonstration of physical and mental courage that enhances the prestige of the victory. One riveting front page story tells how Mdantsane Flying Squad Captain Yolande Gqodi chases and arrests two young cellphone thieves¹⁶³. “**SAVED BY THE GUN!**” reads the huge bold headline, a mysterious exclamation which is enhanced by the dramatic subheading (typography retained): “The cop thought she was dead when a thug pointed a 9mm pistol at her head...” For a while, the reader is kept in suspense as the opening sentence reiterates: “**For a terrible moment the cop**

¹⁶² Here, two rather than three – I suspect the first citation of “three” is a typographical error, referring to all three casualties.

¹⁶³ Saved by the gun! *Daily Sun* 25 October 2011: 1,2. Sharing the front page of this edition is the report of the suspension of Bheki Cele, the Police Commissioner, on a charge of misconduct brought by the Public Protector.

commander knew she was staring death in the face". The second sentence racks up the suspense by describing how she "*watched helplessly as a young thug pointed a gun at her forehead... and pulled the trigger*". Then the denouement: "BUT IT WASN'T HER TIME TO DIE!" and the gun "didn't fire". The miracle is this: that when the gun was "tested, it fired perfectly!"

Here, the heroism of the "brave cop" lies in her coolly proceeding to arrest the "merciless" young "thug" despite the recently bypassed threat of imminent death – in addition to her swift and decisive response to the original complaint.

This incident ends happily. Yet as the above scenario effectively reveals, "bloodbaths" and deaths are all too frequent before the law can take its course. We now arrive at those stories in which violence is no longer merely intended or implied (as in the above example of a malfunctioning weapon) but is seen to be carried out – not only by the suspects but also by the police. If the villain is violent, then an equal capacity for violence is a necessary attribute of heroic cop.

The *Daily Sun*'s goes about such stories with gusto. "Two minute reaction!"¹⁶⁴ segues between satisfaction at a violent gang's comeuppance, admiration for the heroic cop and homilies on how to avoid dying on duty. The report, told in the words of the police spokesperson Sergeant Sedibe, gleefully narrates how a gang of ATM robbers detonated an ATM bomb – and then "got the fright of their lives" when police unexpectedly arrived at the scene of the crime in the unbelievably short time of "TWO MINUTES!" The "alert" off-duty policemen had heard the bomb explode as they were driving past the shopping mall. Immediately, these intrepid "crime-busters" rushed to the spot: they "slammed into high gear" and "screeched over the pavement" into the shopping centre. "Shocked" at their arrival, the robbers fired at them, and retaliating, the "cops shot back". Support for the daring police arrives in the form of "back-up teams" and together they shoot two of the suspects, who satisfyingly "dropped to the pavement" and "died on the spot". The others manage to escape in a car that is later found abandoned: "inside was a pool of blood", a sign, remarks the spokesman phlegmatically, that "one or more of the thugs was bleeding badly". There is now a "manhunt" for the missing men. The spokesman goes on to enumerate what is recovered at the scene of the bombing: "an AK47 with one ammo clip... a revolver with cartridges... explosives and detonating wires", sobering signs of potential violence. Indeed, actual violence: for the police car "was riddled with bullet holes", clear "proof" that "the thugs shot to kill". Perhaps fortunately, only one policeman has been injured and is in hospital. The final comment is allotted to the Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant-General Thulani Ntobela, who praises the actions of the police and gives a list of recommendations about how to survive such encounters: "alertness, wearing bullet-proof vests, and calling for back-up". Together these "reduce the likelihood of police killings".

So, once more it is the alert cop who is the heroic cop, who reacts quickly, who does not hesitate to encounter danger and *who is able to use force*. In the above encounter, the police shoot to save their lives when they interrupt a crime that is in process and come under attack by the perpetrators. The use of violence in the interests of self-defence goes unquestioned, and is

¹⁶⁴ Two minute reaction! *Daily Sun* 27 June 2011: 12.

justified in this way. However, in other stories it is simply *the capacity for violent action equal to and exceeding that of the criminal* that is the mark of the heroic cop. A stark example of such a report appears on the front page on 9 September 2011¹⁶⁵. The main headline in large white capital letters against a black background reads “CRIME: WE’RE WINNING!” This is positioned in the lower left half of the page; to the right, above the report, are three subheadings marked by red bullet points: “Police killings DOWN; Murders are DOWN; Robberies are DOWN”. These headlines anchor a report on the release by Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa of the 2011 national crime figures, which begins “**Cheer up this morning – Mzansi is winning the war on big, violent crime!**” An extraordinary statement, which the article supports with a digest from the police statistics.

But it is not necessary to read the numbers in order to understand just exactly how “we” are going about achieving this victory. “Our” method is graphically illustrated in the second story, positioned near the top of the same front page above the large main headline and article. Here, the layout is especially indicative, for the lead headline and its bullet points overlap and extend into the second report with its large accompanying photograph, thus visually connecting the two articles: in this way the additional image and its linked colour story serve, simply by their proximity, to underline and illustrate the report on the 2011 crime statistics¹⁶⁶.

The second story’s headline (also in white and thereby visually connected to the lead story below), positioned over the photograph at the top of the page, reads: “Four more thugs pay the price!”¹⁶⁷ The photograph shows the back of a dark-coloured bakkie with a white canopy. It is parked in the middle of an upmarket suburban road fringed with palms and lush green foliage. Behind the bakkie to the right we can make out the high brick wall, white steel gates and electrical fencing of a wealthy home. The back window of the canopy is shot out, and the tail gate of the bakkie lies open. Along it is sprawled, face up, the body of a man amongst a tangle of clothing. Clearly visible in the bright sunshine, he lies across the legs and boots of another man whose body is hidden within the van’s dark interior. Blood smears his head, runs down over the tailgate and splashes onto the road below in a bright red puddle. Walking tiredly to the right of the bakkie near the pavement is a policeman in a blue uniform, accompanied by a policewoman in civilian clothing covered by a police vest. Furthest away from the viewer are two more police officers, who stand in a patient attitude near a traffic cone placed in the middle of the road.

“This”, we are told, “was the end of the road for four violent thugs!” The story goes that they were pretending to be “painting contractors”. With studied irony the *Daily Sun* remarks: “but they were not looking for work”. Instead, they had planned to rob the “family of a businessman”. However, contrary to their expectations the subterfuge “didn’t work!” Acting on information received from SAPS Crime Intelligence, a “squad of tough detectives” from the National Intervention Unit “ambushed” the “bad guys” and shot them “stone dead”. *It was their own fault*: “Instead of putting up their hands as they peered down the black gun barrels” of the police, they opened fire.

¹⁶⁵ Crime: We’re winning! *Daily Sun* 9 September 2011:1,2.

¹⁶⁶ This stylistic convention of a main story, set at the bottom of the front page with large headlines in white capitals on a black background, occurs frequently – but the main story is usually carefully separated from the second colour story by the black background which effectively cuts the page in two. See the discussion of this presentational style in Chapter 5, page 127.

¹⁶⁷ Four more thugs pay the price! *Daily Sun* 9 September 2011: 1,2.

*“Cops shot back.
Four gangsters died.
One managed to escape”.*

The italics and staccato sentences personify the rapidity and intensity of the lethal exchange. Laconically the list concludes: “And two cops were shot in the legs”.

The deaths of the suspects, who are described as “violent”, “merciless” and who “would definitely have hurt their victims”, is referred to by the *Daily Sun* as “the latest victory in the battle against crime”. Its utter lack of sympathy for their fate and the unalloyed sense of the justice of their end, are juxtaposed with a declaration of the timeliness and rightness of the police intervention. In the words of Major-General Johan Booysen, the police had “prevented ANOTHER family from becoming victims”. It’s not just the police who feel that this lethal violence was necessary – the homeowner does too. Arriving at the scene after his wife calls him to tell him about the gun battle she witnesses from a window of their home, he tells the *Daily Sun*: “I am so grateful to the cops. They did a brilliant job”.

The sacrificial hero: death in action

Of course, such violent exchanges are potentially fatal not only for suspects but for police. Death in the line of duty is the culminating act of heroism, the ultimate signifier of selfless action. “Hero cop killed in action¹⁶⁸” tells in the words of a police spokesperson how a loyal police reservist, “Mark Ishlove”, who had “served” with the SAPS for “more than 30 years”, is killed as he chases down a gang of five suspects in Northcliff, Johannesburg. Drawing on an anonymous source, the report describes the qualities of this heroism: he was the “most dedicated and daring law enforcer”. This heroism is apparent in his final actions, which the report describes for us. Although off-duty, Ishlove had responded to a “call”, and together with a number of other police officers had “tried to stop” a white Mercedes-Benz. When the car “drove off”, the officers followed and “gave chase” until the Mercedes was “involved in an accident”. The suspects ran for cover behind a house, the police pursued them, and a “shoot-out” took place during which Ishlove was “hit” and killed. Two of the suspects also died¹⁶⁹. The article ends with the spokesperson informing the reader of the final outcome of this encounter, the reward, as it were, of his bravery: “Three of the suspects were arrested and five revolvers and a pistol were recovered”.

Death in action: from heroes to victims

So far, it might easily be supposed from its showing above that the *Daily Sun* is complicit with the state in promoting that body’s public law-and-order agenda, on much the lines explored by the British newspaper analysts mentioned earlier. However, I argue that this view would be in large part a misapprehension, for it ignores the particular character of South African township circumstances. The *Daily Sun* is, I believe, acting above in conformity with the police

¹⁶⁸ Hero cop killed in action *Daily Sun* 17 June 2011: 10.

¹⁶⁹ The article does not say so, but one of these men turned his weapon on himself when he was cornered.

department's wishes, in the first instance, no doubt, to preserve the goodwill of a regular supplier of news items, but it does so also because the police's goal accords readily with another of the newspaper's primary allegiances. Its real and main concern is with its township readership, with its own desperate need for solace and optimism concerning the threat posed to itself by the continuing crime epidemic. This need the paper seems determined to satisfy, as far as it can, with its own discursive and 'myth-making' powers. But it works under other imperatives also. Its readership would balk at once at any suspicion of lack of credibility. The force of facts compels an increasingly more complex effort to maintain the above relationships intact, since its primary loyalty must always take priority. There are, indeed, subtle though increasingly noticeable signs of deviation from the precise alignment we have seen so far, in certain other aspects of its reporting, as following examples do, I think, cumulatively show.

Ishlove, in the story above, is far from the only policeman to die on duty. The many killings of police become a scandal over the course of the year and the mutual violence of heroes and villains a focus of national concern rather than celebration. However, while this serves to emphasise the sheer evil of the villains, the hero status of dead police itself becomes ambiguous. This instability involves a shift in the status of the victim: while still retaining a heroic role, these heroes are not able to defeat the villains they encounter, but are vanquished and killed. As members and representatives of a larger organisation, attacks on and deaths of individual police are perceived as threats to the parent body, as incidents in the ongoing 'war' or 'battle' with crime which the police as a unit wages on behalf of society.

The tabloid gives a great deal of space to these hero victims. One reason might be that these deaths are inherently newsworthy, in that they fulfil the criteria of "bad news". But we might speculate on other motivations that the *Daily Sun* might have in publishing these stories, editorials and letters about "our" vulnerable policemen and women. One reason might be that it wishes to pay tribute to those police who retain their integrity in a context generally acknowledged as one characterised by violence and corruption. Such stories might also serve to assure readers that a moral order, while under siege, remains intact, safeguarded not only by the SAPS but also by the *Daily Sun*, who fights alongside the forces of good, as it were, on behalf of its readers. That is, at the symbolic level, the *Daily Sun* uses the deaths of dutiful policemen to re-assert the necessity of the police for the attainment of an ideal, a crime-free society. If the SAPS is the guarantor of such a society, then the deaths of its members constitute disruptions in the quest to achieve this desirable equilibrium. But there is no escaping that these stories are far from "upbeat" if they are meant to post relative stages of success in the ongoing battle.

An outstanding example of the victim hero appears in "**DEATH TRAP!**"¹⁷⁰ a story which occupies the lower two thirds of the front page. The headline, in white upon a black background, is positioned to the left of an image of a policeman, in a blue uniform with a beret and epaulettes, actively pinning a male suspect to the road. The suspect, dressed in a black jacket, blue jeans and wearing a beige cap, lies on his stomach towards the viewer, his hands stretched out in front of him. He is looking up to the left of the image, with an alert yet cautious expression on his face. Behind this tight image appear the legs and feet of bystanders. The

¹⁷⁰ Death trap! *Daily Sun* 23 May 2011: 1,2.

caption, in white, reads: “A suspect is pinned down by cops in the street yesterday after two policemen were shot dead by thugs who lured them into a trap”.

The subheading, below the main headline and to the left of the article, alerts us to the substance of the story: “Cops gunned down after screaming woman lures them into a shack...” The narrative begins with a state of equilibrium in which two policemen carry out their responsibility of protecting ordinary people when they are least able to protect themselves: “**Two cops were doing their duty patrolling the streets in the early hours of yesterday morning...**” The bold type of the lead sentence (typical of the first page style) emphasises the cops’ conscientious action. But a disruption occurs. The second sentence continues in italics, drawing attention to this interruption of the norm: “*Then a screaming woman called them to a shack where, she said, there were boys threatening to rape her*”. The horror of the denouement is accentuated by the use of capital letters in third sentence: “**BUT IT WAS DEATH THAT WAS WAITING FOR THE TWO COPS IN THE SHACK!**” Responding to her call for help, the two policemen had bravely and unsuspectingly “charged in” to the shack, where they were “gunned down in cold blood” and “robbed of their weapons”. After being told the officers’ names, ranks and ages, we learn the shocking fact that “*They became the 31st and 32nd cop murdered in Mzansi since the start of the year*”.

The report then moves on to reiterate the known facts twice, once in the emotive words of an eye-witness, and again in the statement of the police spokesperson. The eye-witness account (of a neighbour who asks not to be named) is prioritised. She “confirmed” to the *Daily Sun* reporter that a young woman had indeed “lured” the patrolling policemen into the shack: “It was the middle of the night when I heard a woman screaming for help”. She describes how the woman took the police to the shack, claiming that there were “boys” who wanted rape her. But all too soon there is an unforeseen outcome: “The next thing, I heard gunshots and when we went out the cops were dead”. The residents are “horrified”: galvanised by the deaths of the policemen (in stark contrast to their passivity at the time of the ostensible rape), they “reacted quickly” and soon found two suspects whom they “handed to police for questioning”. The *Daily Sun* states that the woman who called for help, and a third man, were also “detained”. As these suspects are led away, the report records that the residents “shouted” that they “want the truth to come out.¹⁷¹” The substance of the eye-witness’s story is confirmed by the police spokesperson, Lieutenant-Colonel Andre Traut, in the forensic language of the police report: the men were killed by “a number of unknown suspects” while “responding to a complaint”.

The final part of the report is given over to the words of two high-ranking officers. First, national police commissioner, General Bheki Cele, refers to the deaths of the two policemen as “indeed a crisis”. As the head of the SAPS, he speaks of the victims as “our officers”, who are “being gunned down” at a rate that is “alarming”. His concern is also a personal one: he has attended the funerals of “my police officers” over and over again, “every weekend for the past four weeks”. The second officer, the Western Cape provincial commissioner, asks the public for help and “urges” people with information to “come forward”. The *Daily Sun* closes the report by similarly calling on its audience to participate in solving the crime: “SunReaders can call the

¹⁷¹ The following day, 24 May 2011, the *Daily Sun* ran a follow up article on page 2, “Hunt still on for cop killers!” Here we learn that all the suspects are released as having nothing to do with the murders.

investigating officer”. It gives his names and contact details, as well as the number for CrimeStop, the national toll-free crime-reporting centre.

What this story foregrounds is the vulnerability of policemen who do their duty, for by responding to calls for help from residents they jeopardise their lives. The shock and outrage of both the police and the residents (and indeed the tabloid which speaks for them and represents its views to us as readers) is understandable: individuals within “the community” have forsaken their role as compliant “members of the family” and have villainously turned on the heroes who are meant to save the victims amongst them. It is no wonder that the “residents” quickly search for and find some suspects. We can speculate that their aim is to try to repair the relationship with the police that they might otherwise forfeit by harbouring such enemies¹⁷². The photograph serves this purpose, too: by showing a moment in the accomplishment of justice, it acts to restore confidence in a police who would otherwise appear too vulnerable to carry out their task of defending society. While initially drawing attention to the horror of the disruption, the task of all the actors – the residents, the SAPS and the paper – soon becomes that of restoring a sense of order as quickly as possible.

After a spate of police murders reported in July, and following an SAPS summit on “cop killings¹⁷³”, the *Daily Sun* editor, “Sledgehammer” Themba Khumalo, writes an editorial in which he condemns police deaths in the strongest possible terms. In doing so, he sets up a distinction between police and the “thugs” who kill them, at the same time as he outlines what he considers to be the responsibilities of ordinary people regarding these deaths. “It’s time to stop the cop killers!¹⁷⁴” reads the headline.

First, Khumalo totally expurgates the murderers as mad, acting outside the norms of human behaviour: they are “cop killers”, “demented bastards”, “lunatics” and “sick bastards”, who “terrorise” communities and “get high” from obstructing the police. At the same time, they are not “strange creatures from outer space” but members of communities, known to others.

The character of the police, on the other hand, is contradictory and ambiguous. They “do the best they can” to dutifully serve the community. They “respond” to calls for help and “allow you and I to sleep peacefully at night”. But they have become “targets” for thugs and their work of policing is “impossible”. The mental toll of “walking into death” every day means they are now “vengeful”, “ugly” and “on the edge”. Some even break “trust” between police and the community by “informing thugs about community members” a betrayal that “[puts] the lives of honest citizens at risk”.

The relationship between the public and the police is also out of kilter, because while “citizens” depend on the police when they are “desperate” and “need help”, they do not uphold their own responsibilities. For individual members of the public know who the murderers are – “somebody somewhere knows a cop killer” – yet they “withhold” this information because they are

¹⁷² This notion is given some substance in the follow up article mentioned above, in which a police spokesperson argues “we cannot go on protecting the identities of these cowards who go out brazenly killing our men”.

¹⁷³ Time to say ‘hands off our cops!’ *Daily Sun* 29 July 2011: 1.

¹⁷⁴ It’s time to stop the cop killers! *Daily Sun* 1 August 2011: 8.

cowardly and “too damn scared”. On the other hand, they may cynically “not give a damn” and can’t “be bothered”.

Finally, the fate of South Africa itself depends on stopping this “madness” and “carnage”. For Khumalo, the many murders of police constitute an inversion of the natural order in which it is “difficult to allow the stars to smile” and which makes him want to “roll up the sky” and “drive to another planet” (where such things do not happen). Due to this perversion, no less than the “future of the country” is “at stake”, for South Africa is perceived as “very unsafe”. The unstated premise is that police deaths contribute to the country’s reputation as dangerous, while the implied conclusion is that if the country is not seen by “others” as safe, we will all suffer (from the pressure put on the economy by lack of foreign investment, tourism, etc.).

In his mode of address, Khumalo speaks to the reader in a familiar yet authoritative tone. He talks of himself in the first person, describing his thoughts and feelings, and by referring to “our neighbourhoods” terrorised by “thugs” he aligns himself with the average township reader’s security predicament. With phrases such as “you and I know”, he takes as given the reader’s agreement with his position. He includes the reader in his question “How do we stop [police deaths]?” and thus implicitly also in his answers to the problem. Finally, he addresses scared and disinterested readers and citizens directly as “you”: “you should be bothered” and “the death of a cop must worry you” he castigates, for it is the cowardly and reluctant reader who contributes to the problem.

Khumalo’s rhetorical aim then is to make clear distinctions between these categories of actors and their various roles. The police are constructed in opposition to the criminals who kill them. These might be knowable members of communities, but simultaneously they are expurgated as universally mad and dangerous. For ordinary citizens, if you are not being a victim (an acceptable role which we all potentially occupy) you must be a helper. Members of society need to take the situation and its potential consequences seriously. The fact that people guilty of killing police are still living amongst us is due to the irresponsibility of members of the public who ought to do their duty and inform on them. Most police act in the best interests of society, but we must also understand why some of their actions might appear “ugly”. Police on the other hand must ensure they do not behave in ways that cause people to lose trust in them. Primarily, as the paper’s response to the police as victims, the editorial identifies with their predicament at the same time as it distances itself from their possible weaknesses.

Cops behaving badly¹⁷⁵: the cop as villain

We now arrive at the villainous cop, whose presence is obliquely referred to by Khumalo in his editorial above. That cops should be villainous must come as no surprise, for their leadership is decidedly un-heroic: as mentioned earlier, three senior officers who appear in the pages of the paper during 2011 were under criminal investigation, including Bheki Cele, Police Commissioner in 2011 who was also under investigation by the Public Protector for corruption. While their criminal actions form a backdrop to these stories, I do not analyse them here, but simply note that the villainy of “ordinary” cops must be understood within the wider context of

¹⁷⁵ Cops behaving badly! *Daily Sun* 3 May 2011: 1,2.

the *Daily Sun*'s ongoing sagas of their senior officers' trials, investigations and frequent allegations of corruption, fraud and murder.

We have seen that the heroic cop appears to be of one ideal type, that is, an individual or a collective of officers who are distinguished by their courage, alertness, speed, knowingness, determination, and capacity for violence in carrying out their mandated tasks. But there are different forms of villainy, and each type acquires a unique valence through the manner of its representation by the tabloid. While the role of the villain in Propp's schema is to be the agent of disruption and the character against which the hero struggles, the presence of the villainous cop in the pages of the tabloid serves the additional symbolic purpose of providing its readers with negative examples against which it continues to construct the good cop *in absentia* as it were. In this analysis I am not concerned to catalogue the varieties of crimes for which police are convicted – which are legion, and which are listed in several articles which quote concerned official voices. Mpumalanga provincial police commissioner Thulani Ntobela for example complains about 200 local officers arrested on charges of “corruption, theft, stock theft, burglary, drug dealing and attempted murder¹⁷⁶”. Instead I identify how the *Daily Sun* constructs this villainous behaviour and distinguish between its treatments of categories of villainy. I also pay attention to the role that the *Daily Sun* constructs for itself in these dramas.

Jekyll and Hyde: the criminal cop

The authority given to the police in order to carry out their duties necessarily places them in a position of power vis-a-vis the ordinary citizen, and some employ the privileges of this status for illegal activity, such as bribery, or defeating the ends of justice: cops who are simultaneously and opportunistically criminal. These characters only come into view once they are arrested, and the police themselves must provide the information about their criminal brethren. For this reason, perhaps, photographs of the suspects almost never appear (unlike the many images of ordinary “thugs”), and the lack of a photograph places such stories lower down in the news hierarchy. Stories for the inside pages, they are nevertheless irresistible object lessons, and careful attention is paid to the (re)construction of the police spokesperson's words to create a vivid narrative by setting the scene, introducing the characters, then the illicit activity, and finally the exposure (with its implications for a new equilibrium).

In “Suspect was cops' ATM!¹⁷⁷” the story opens with the enigma: a description of a rape suspect, who “thought he could make a deal” with the cops to “make his rape charge disappear”. In one economical sentence, we have the characters, the setting, and the conundrum. “So”, the story continues, drawing us rapidly along, the suspect, “still in his leg irons”, (a delicious detail) went with the cops to an ATM to withdraw the large amount of “R10 000” from his account, stopping at his house *en route* to collect his ID and ATM card for the purpose! The next sentence provides the shock: for the police “cheated on him...” (the dot dot dot symbolically making us anticipate the denouement): having received their bribe, instead of removing the charges “they took him straight back to the cells”.

¹⁷⁶ Bad cops a big problem *Daily Sun* 12 August 2011: 2.

¹⁷⁷ Suspect was cops' ATM! *Daily Sun* 25 November 2011: 5.

The story rapidly concludes – the indignant rape suspect complains to his lawyer and the treacherous officers are arrested and charged. The enjoyment comes from the cops’ comeuppance when their criminal victim retaliates and “busts” them, using the very law they represent. But now the style shifts, and using a forensic vocabulary the report goes on to detail the charges, bail conditions and the presence of the Independent Complaints Directorate, the ICD¹⁷⁸. Employing this formal tone, which draws on the words of a police spokesperson, the report further informs the reader that six officers from the same police station, including the captain, had only the week before been arrested on charges of defeating the ends of justice and murder. The movement of the report from the telling of the first story to recounting this second set of information highlights the stylistic work that is done to draw out the lesson of the first tale. The second part of the report, while certainly shocking, does not have the ironic narrative cache as the first (or, if it does, the necessary work to draw it out is not done and it remains hidden). As it is, the more journalistically conventional manner of its reporting has the effect of compounding the criminality of the police station as a whole.

Petty venality of this kind appears frequently, such as stealing or personally consuming the evidence of ‘busts’ (drugs, cigarettes, watches, alcohol), or using state vehicles to transport drugs or alcohol for private use. But the most common offence is bribery. “It costs a lot to make a criminal docket go away¹⁷⁹”, exclaims one article, which then lists in bullet form what a thief paid three officers: “A Hyundai Atos”; “R19 000”; “A plasma TV”; “Another TV set”; “A fridge”. In return for this generous outlay, “one warrant officer had pretended to be the robbery victim and acted as if he did not want to continue with the case”. “But”, the report gleefully continues, “the three crooked cops were nabbed by the honest ones!” – after they are shopped by the thief. The outrageous list indicates the “crooked cops”’ illimitable appetite: such greed well deserves its just deserts.

The amounts that police can demand or are offered as bribes are thus moments of drama, for they are symbolic simultaneously of the power of the police and of such power’s exchange value. The more important the officer, the more he can stipulate; the more serious the offense, the more it costs to hire the officer’s influence. Thus when Major-General Johan Booyesen is offered a bribe, it is enormous. Even more astonishing, *it is rejected*: “TOP COP REJECTS R1,4m BRIBE!¹⁸⁰” declares the white-on-black headline. The photograph accompanying this page 2 item depicts a tough-looking Booyesen in earnest conversation with General Bheki Cele on a downtown Durban road. “**For about 40 seconds one of South Africa’s top cops knew what it felt like to be a ‘millionaire’**” begins the report, dangling this mouth-watering vision before its readers’ eyes. A corrupt police colonel, Navin Madhoe, had put this amount of money “in the boot of [Booyesen’s] car” in exchange for a “very sensitive docket” which contained evidence of his involvement in tender fraud. Contrary to his expectations he is arrested “at the scene”, for Booyesen had cleverly set up a “sting operation” which the report, with an insider air, tells us was later that day “a big talking point at police headquarters”. In the same confidential tone, it describes how Booyesen’s colleagues agreed that trying to bribe him was “the height of

¹⁷⁸ The Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD), whose Constitutional mandate is to investigate reports of police misconduct, appears repeatedly in stories of bad cops.

¹⁷⁹ Cops bust for bribes *Daily Sun* 31 January 2011: 5.

¹⁸⁰ Top cop rejects R1,4m bribe! *Daily Sun* 12 September 2011: 2.

stupidity”, for he is “beyond reproach”. In contrast, a “source” describes the “speechless” colonel, who “hung his head in shame” when he was bust “red-handed” with the incriminating evidence by his colleagues. Abjectly, the guilty officer “cried when he realised the game was over”.

The corruption of state officials is a recurring *bête noire*, so when the tabloid discovers a week later that the incorruptible Booyesen has been put on a hit-list as a result of the arrest of his fellow officer, the story makes the front page: “Hitmen target Hawks boss!¹⁸¹” declares the headline, in red against a yellow background. The story runs in a single column, in bold, down the right hand side of the front page, and continues on page 2. The new villains, the corrupt colonel’s criminal connections, are variously described as “angry crooks”, fraudsters” and “a syndicate”, which has hired “hitmen” to “take out” Booyesen. Booyesen, on the other hand, now protected by “heavily armed elite Task Force officers” is a “top cop”, a “tough-guy” who, true to this heroic status, closes the report with the declaration that, despite these threats on his life, “nothing will stop me bringing those guilty of fraud and corruption to justice”. Unmoved by the danger he is in, he fearlessly asserts: “It’s never stopped me before and it won’t stop me now”.

But what if potential murderers are your fellow officers? “**WHERE THUGS GET BULLETS!**¹⁸²” shouts a front page headline in white font on a black background, the familiar style given to serious news. “Now two cops bust for selling ammunition!” continues the subheading. The horror of this crime is encapsulated in the opening sentence: “**Cops allegedly sold criminals the bullets that killed a police constable!**” Thus the murder of a policeman is directly attributable to the criminal activities of his own colleagues. The price of this blood money is “*R11 000 each*”. This inversion of the natural order, in which the police who are supposed to protect society enable and abet criminals and indirectly murder their fellow officer, essentially threatens to nullify any claims that the police might make about their ability to provide security for the average citizen. However, having set up the drama of this disruption in the opening sentences, the rest of the article is at pains to re-affirm an ideal state: for “**POLICE HAVE NOW BUST THE SUSPECTED BULLET SELLERS**” as well as the suspect who killed the constable.

The rest of the article is indicative of a struggle on the part of the police to re-assert their heroic role in the face of this betrayal from within. On page 2, there is a cut-out from the original story of the death of the constable at the scene of an ATM bombing, which ran on July 7¹⁸³. It serves to anchor the words of the Gauteng police spokesperson Brigadier Neville Malila who tells the *Daily Sun* of the arrest of the suspect who murdered the policeman using the bullets supplied by his fellow-officers. Quoting his words, the report draws attention to the actions of the investigating police who “found the clothing [the suspect] wore during the killing... at his house!” and also to the cops’ magical agent, the CCTV cameras which “got photos” of some of the suspects. These forensic details restore a sense of direction and confidence, this despite the spokesperson confirming the alarming consequences of the corruption: for the arrested officers

¹⁸¹ Hitmen target Hawks boss! *Daily Sun* 19 September 2011: 1,2.

¹⁸² Where thugs get bullets! *Daily Sun* 25 July 2011: 1,2. On page 2 of this edition is the heroic cop story “Big wig up for diamond deal!”

¹⁸³ Thugs blast garage and kill cop *Daily Sun* 7 July 2011. There is no page number. This story ran in a different edition and does not appear in my corpus.

have been “linked to a gang of at least 15 people” responsible for a spate of ATM bombings “around the country”.

Thus infused with *frissons* of amusement, amazement or horror, the stories of criminal police are told with a zest which surreptitiously invites the reader to marvel at the corrupt cop’s ingenuity and brazen self-interest in deploying the authority and resources of the state to his own advantage. The charge officer who puts the “thug” behind bars can also make his charge-sheet disappear; the cop dutifully on his way to court might cannily realise you have a bakkie-load of illegal cigarettes and confiscate them only to sell them himself¹⁸⁴; and the officers who heroically bust a stash of “fake” watches might sneakily decide to keep some for themselves when they turn in the evidence¹⁸⁵. Rather than expurgating these officers, the narratives have the peculiar effect of rendering such criminal behaviour *a fundamental aspect of police identity*. That this is so is made apparent in the way the paper chooses to reiterate a cop’s heroic status *regardless of his criminal activities*. “TOP COP GUNNED DOWN!”¹⁸⁶ brings together the ideas of the good cop, the bad cop, and a heroic cop death. Emphasised by a thick black border and occupying two thirds of page 4, the opening sentences set up a strong antithesis that accentuates the pathos of the murdered police officer: “He was going to be a key witness in a cash-in-transit armed robbery trial. But instead, he is lying in a government mortuary”. We see him in the large photograph to the right of the article, crouching beside his alert-looking patrol dog in front of a police van, the epitome of the heroic cop poised for action.

The report rapidly goes on to describe his murder, shot as he returned home by “two gunmen with pistols” who “sprayed his car with bullets”. We are then told about his long service record, in the dog unit “for 15 years and in the police force for 22 years”. Only then, after his heroic pedigree and dreadful death have been described, do we learn that two years ago, together with two police colleagues and three other men, he had gone over to the dark side and been “arrested for a cash heist on a G4S security van”. But he turned state witness, and thus exonerated, returns to the fold and goes back to work. The trial is now in process and his criminal associates (including a former police colleague, who is not named) have him murdered before he can testify against them. The article ends with a long quote from the provincial commissioner, Lieutenant-General Mamunye Ngobeni, who is described as “distraught”. Her words reflect the anger felt for a valued fellow officer, rather than a man who had betrayed his institution: “I want those cowards caught. We will get them and that is my promise to Ngcobo’s family and his colleagues”. Thus the heroic cop and the criminal cop live side-by-side, the good with the bad; Janus-faced, they are the same person.

The overzealous cop

Not all villainous cops are criminals. A quite different category of villainy is the overzealous cop who carries out his or her duties too energetically, with consequences for the public he is otherwise supposed to protect. 2011 was, as mentioned in the introduction, a year in which the municipal elections were held. The overzealous cop becomes prominent in the context of unruly pre-election service delivery protests, in which the police attempt to uphold public order. That is,

¹⁸⁴ Cops up for stealing *Daily Sun* 2 June 2011: 8.

¹⁸⁵ Cops bust for stealing evidence *Daily Sun* 1 June 2011: 8.

¹⁸⁶ Top cop gunned down! *Daily Sun* 11 August 2011: 4.

the police, while acting within their mandate to maintain a minimum of security, exceed the bounds of duty and cause injury or death to a member of the public. The most outstanding example of this kind of villainy is the death of Andries Tatane, a man who took part in a service delivery protest in the town of Ficksburg and who was shot and beaten by police and died “on TV” (the protest was covered by the SABC and his death witnessed by many viewers). His death and funeral, and the subsequent arrest and trial of the police responsible for killing him, is the subject of 67 articles, letters and sms messages. I do not analyse all these, but selectively draw from the early coverage of the saga in order to highlight the *Daily Sun*’s stance towards the police when their actions become a matter of public concern.

Tatane’s fate, while it became highly publicised, was certainly not unusual: prior to his death, the tabloid had carried many reports of overzealous police in the context of protests related to service delivery and the selection of ANC party candidates. For example, two months earlier, “Bullets for People Power!¹⁸⁷” is a front page story which deals with pre-election protests in Ermelo, Mpumalanga. It emphasises the dramatic confrontation between the police and large groups of violent protestors. Initially, at least, the narrative is constructed around the words of the police spokesperson. That is, the police are able, to some extent, to frame the perspective from which their actions can be given a positive interpretation. Their questionable decisions – the use of live ammunition to dispel the crowds (which “ALSO [used] live bullets!”) for example – are represented as necessary for survival: the “situation” is described as “volatile” and as being so bad that “you can’t actually contain it”. The spokesperson explains: “That’s why we need to apply whatever method we can”. The front page image shows a chaotic scene as a policeman armed with a rifle takes aim at a crowd. The blurry photograph, probably taken with a cell-phone, gives the impression of frenzied movement. Above this image and to the right of the subheading is a smaller photograph of an officer in a bullet-proof vest taking aim with a handgun. We see him from the back, silhouetted against the sky. His arm appears muscular, strong and steady, and his stance is one of implacable and lethal focus. This image contrasts with another small photograph placed diagonally to it at the bottom left of the main image, which depicts close up the angry, snarling face of a male protester as he “confronted a TV cameraman”. These contradictory images, together with the declaration of outrage in the headline – “Bullets for people power!” – highlight the explosive nature and the ambiguities of the interaction between the crowd and the police in a context in which people have found it necessary to literally fight for what they see to be their democratic rights.

However, such ambiguities disappear in Tatane’s case. On Friday 15 April¹⁸⁸ the tabloid ran a full front page photograph of the dying Tatane. Such use of a photograph is unique in the 2011 set¹⁸⁹ (see Figure 16, page 165). He lies, propped up against the left leg of a “bystander”, who kneels to support him as he cradles his head and chest. Tatane’s eyes are closed and his face is calm. His torso is naked, and blood covers his chest and stomach, while a noticeably darker patch of blood runs down to the right of his breast-bone. The man holding him is caught as he

¹⁸⁷ Bullets for People Power! *Daily Sun* 16 February 2011: 1,2.

¹⁸⁸ Tatane died on Wednesday 13 April, two days before this photograph was published on Friday 15 April 2011. The SABC coverage appeared on the night of the riots on 13 April.

¹⁸⁹ It is also unusual in that the photo-credits acknowledge the *Daily Sun*’s use of another publication’s photograph – this image was taken by Willem van der Berg of *Volksblad* newspaper. The tabloid hardly ever uses images from other sources for its local coverage.

screams, his face contorted with despair. The strong composition renders this image powerfully reminiscent of a “pieta” pose, in which Mary cradles the dead Jesus: however, rather than a sense of transcendent sorrow, the emotion we meet with here is one of horror and anguish. “The picture that shames SA” declares the headline above the image. At the bottom right in a red box are the words “Anger over the man who died on TV! See pages 2 and 3”.

Tatane is indeed in this construction “a new South African martyr¹⁹⁰”. While page 2 carries a follow-up on the Ficksburg riots, which continued unabated¹⁹¹, page 3 is devoted to an interview with his bereaved sister, whose descriptions of how she “watched in horror” as “cops assaulted” her brother on the SABC news, maintain the construction of Tatane as martyr. “Cop batons rained down on him”, already bleeding “from being shot at close range” with rubber bullets. Alongside this report, the *Daily Sun* quotes from a variety of sources to present a range of opinion about the police action, for political parties have not hesitated to use the incident to their own advantage. It is variously described as “unbelievable, shocking and disgusting”, similar to the actions of “the apartheid police force who had no regard for the rights of civilians”. The article also quotes from Facebook: “*We are turning into a police state!*” declares one commentator. The same opinion appears in the letters page of this edition, where police are “barbaric” and “brutal”, and use “tactics that were applied by the apartheid regime.¹⁹²” The Facebook and sms comments¹⁹³ echo these sentiments: the police are “trigger-happy” men and women, who “do not belong in our proud SAPS”. They should “serve and protect” citizens, not “maim and murder” them.

Interestingly, one sms in this edition reminds us that “a brother” was shot “while we are starving in our shacks”. The writer’s point is that police oppression compounds and extends a lack of enfranchisement keenly felt by those who regard each other as united by their common suffering. It is clear from this first day of reporting that the question of the death of Tatane, to which so many demand “answers”, is one that concerns the broader relationship between the state and its citizens. That is why the front page image of the dying Tatane is one that “Shames SA”. The ignominy lies in that instead of protecting its citizens, the state, in the form of the police, viciously turns on them.

¹⁹⁰ I saw cops bash my brother! *Daily Sun* 15 April 2011: 3.

¹⁹¹ The flames of fury! *Daily Sun* 15 April 2011: 2.

¹⁹² Cops’ action was barbaric *Daily Sun* 15 April 2011: 38.

¹⁹³ Facebook and sms comments *Daily Sun* 15 April 2011: 39.

DAILY

SUN

**STILL TIME
TO GET
RICH!**

SEE BACK PAGE

PRICE: R2,30 nationwide ●●● FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE!

Friday 15 April 2011

The picture that shames SA



A DISTRESSED bystander tries to comfort a bloodied Andrië Tatane as he lies dying in the street after being beaten and allegedly shot by cops during a protest in Ficksburg, Free State, on Wednesday.

Photo by Willem van der Berg/Volksblad

**ANGER
OVER THE
MAN WHO
DIED ON
TV! SEE
PAGES 2
AND 3**

Figure 16. The picture that shames SA Daily Sun 15 April 2011: 1.

That this overzealous police action must be understood as contributing to a wider context in which the state reneges on other of its responsibilities is vividly illustrated three weeks later in a report on the bail hearing of the police officers who are accused of the murder¹⁹⁴. The photograph shows a man holding up a large white placard. The image is tightly cropped in order for the reader to clearly see the following words written in black ink: “ANC, IN POWER FOR 17 YEARS. WE R STILL ROOFLESS, POOR, POLARISED! LIVING IN SHACKS! NO WATER, TOILETS & JOBS! POLICE THUGS KILL. NOT YET UHURU¹⁹⁵. FREEDOM OH FREEDOM. WE WILL FIGHT TILL DEATH”. Here, criminal police (police who join the ranks of the “thugs” who prey on ordinary township residents) belong to the same semantic universe as a lack of housing, amenities and employment.

Similarly, TK “Sledgehammer” Khumalo runs a blistering editorial, titled “How does Shiceka feel about Tatane?”¹⁹⁶ in the first part of which he lambastes the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Sicelo Shiceka, who at the time of writing was involved in a public scandal involving his misuse of state funds¹⁹⁷. Khumalo’s argument is firmly on the side of “the people who have been short-changed by government”. “People are enraged” says Khumalo, when they hear that there is money “available for abuse” (such as Shiceka’s) but none “for fulfilling government promises!” For Khumalo, Tatane’s death at the hands of the police condenses in a single dramatic moment the state’s ongoing arrogance when faced with legitimate grievances such as those made by the Ficksburg protestors. In the same way that state servants act with impunity, the police who, out of their depth and rather than cool and self-possessed, are “high on adrenalin and bravado”, fail to carry out their responsibilities: they couldn’t “control a protestor – instead they killed him!”

This same edition uses the front page to excoriate the police further. The headline, enormous even by *Daily Sun* standards, reads “**The charge is MURDER!**”¹⁹⁸ The opening sentence sets up the position of the police in the aftermath of Tatane’s public death. Needing to “**fix the damage**” this has caused, the police have “**moved with lightning speed**”. Caustically, it contrasts this speed with its customary pace in which “*investigations take months, even years*”. Within the unbelievably short space of five days, “TWO POLICE OFFICERS NOW FACE MURDER CHARGES” and another four are charged with “ASSAULT”. Using the words of Francois Beukman, the director of the Independent Complaints Directorate, the report emphatically defines the limits of police action: because we are a constitutional democracy, “police brutality cannot be tolerated”. Further, police are also obliged to “obey the rule of law” and should not “be the ones accused of breaking it”. The final words of the article are given to Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa: readers are left with an official assurance that “our” justice system is able to deal with the problem, and that anyone who has “done wrong”, including police officers, will be punished.

¹⁹⁴ Shops looted! *Daily Sun* 3 May 2011: 2.

¹⁹⁵ Uhuru: freedom, in Swahili. Used as a struggle slogan.

¹⁹⁶ How does Shiceka feel about Tatane? *Daily Sun* 18 April 2011: 8.

¹⁹⁷ Shiceka was accused in a Sunday Times article of spending R367 000 on a visit to a girlfriend who was spending time in a Swiss jail for drugs, and R280000 in luxury hotel bills, amongst other enormous personal expenses. See: Shiceka: The one and only spending spree started as soon as he took up his cabinet post. Sunday Times 10 April 2011: 1.

¹⁹⁸ The charge is murder! *Daily Sun* 18 April 2011: 1,2.

That the *Daily Sun* takes part in this punishment is clear – the out-sized headlines, the verbal stripping down, and the official voices deployed to reiterate police responsibilities all contribute to a sense of the police being ‘put in their place,’ and the correct relationship between the police and citizens being re-established. Now on shaky ground, as representatives of the state they *must* be seen to be punished in order to restore the broken confidence in “our justice system”. And not only the justice system, but the general “system”, of which they are representatives, and about which so many are so unhappy. Nor does the tabloid’s surveillance of the police let up. For some time it runs stories which repeatedly call attention to their irresponsible and vicious behaviour. For instance, two days after the report of the officers’ arrest, on 20 April, the front page reads: “**COPS SHOOT AGAIN: MAN DIES!**¹⁹⁹” It tells how an innocent bystander “got a bullet through his head” when police attempt to arrest an armed hostel resident, the “**AGAIN**” semantically linking this story to the Tatane case. In approach this contrasts dramatically with the representation of the dead student in the “Gang Chase Chaos” story earlier: the victimhood of this casualty is fore-grounded and highlighted, and the violence is not between “cops and robbers” but between “cops and the public they are paid to protect and serve”. In this way the actions of the police, no longer heroic, become obtuse and brutal.

Policing with impunity

Certainly, the public outrage at Tatane’s death was a consequence of its being broadcast nationally by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the public broadcaster, at a politically sensitive moment. But there are many instances of police action leading to the death or injury of civilians which are covered by the *Daily Sun*, perhaps with less drama but with a common aim of telling the victims’ stories in order to point out police wrongdoing. In all these cases, the lack of visibility of police behaviour joins together with a sense of the impenetrability and remoteness of the justice system as a whole. Three weeks after the Ficksburg protests, the enormous front page headlines read: “**COPS BEHAVING BADLY! Two cases of men in blue getting it wrong**²⁰⁰”. The first paragraph is fascinating, for the *Daily Sun* uses this occasion to reiterate its recent criticism of the police. It begins in typical style in bold: “**Some men and women in blue have become a law unto themselves...**” Thus removed from the law of society, they “*shoot and beat people up at random*”. Dramatically, the third sentences exclaims: “**THEY HAVE BECOME THE MOST FEARED... THEY ARE THE POLICE!**”

In essence, what this paragraph constructs for the reader is an inversion of the ‘natural order’ in which, ideally, police embody and uphold the laws of society, protect its citizens and save them from what they fear. Instead, exempting themselves from the law they represent, they become the very thing that is to be dreaded. To support paper’s position, the report describes in detail the “latest of a long line of atrocities”, in which police “beat, kicked, and punched two teenage girls”. Without question, all the actions of the police are constructed as damnable: they “forced their way” into the girls’ home in the course of a search; “turned the house upside down”; “called [their aunt] a whore”; hurled all three... into a police van” and took them to the Mbombela police station. Here, they “slapped around” the 13 year old sister, “beat” and “kicked” the older sister and their aunt “for five long hours”, and then “locked” them in a cell.

¹⁹⁹ Cops shoot again: man dies! *Daily Sun* 20 April 2011: 1,2.

²⁰⁰ Cops behaving badly! *Daily Sun* 3 May 2011: 1,2.

The 13 year old is released “at midnight” (!) and the other two are released the next day without charges. However, the “torture session” causes the older sister to suffer a collapsed lung. Now she can “only breathe with the help of an oxygen tank”. To add insult to injury, when they return home the next day all their clothes and a large amount of money have been stolen (the implication is, by the police). This story ends with a single sentence from the police spokesperson who confirms that the women had laid charges and that “the matter was being investigated”.

The reader is left with a sense of the hopelessness of the case presented here. The secrecy of the attack – in the isolation of a police cell, at night – combined with the banal and ritualistic responses of the officials are indicative of a justice that is remote and inaccessible. In effect, the credence that the *Daily Sun* gives the women’s story, and the report’s vilification of the police, stands in for the justice they should otherwise receive. Clearly, the *Daily Sun* sees its role in these cases as one of bearing public testimony to the suffering inflicted on ordinary citizens by the police as they carry out their duties.

The good, the bad – and the indifferent

But it is the cop who is neither heroic nor criminal for whom the bitterest scorn is reserved. Indifferent police are a particular focus of attention – police who do their work, but in a lacklustre way. Their brand of villainy lies in their apathetic action and their callous disregard for its effect on the people who call on them for help. These reports are told from the perspectives of those individuals, families and communities who consider the police to have failed in doing their job properly – that is, without the speed, alertness, diligence and perhaps even violence of the heroic cop. Thus we read with some amusement how one outspoken woman, at a public meeting about inefficient rural policing, complains that when she committed a crime, “police came running”, but when she asks for assistance, “police were not so helpful²⁰¹”. “So”, continues the report with some glee, “she publically called them ‘dogs’, to the people’s excitement”. This remark draws forth a rebuke from Vusi Shongwe, the Mpumalanga Safety, Security and Liaison MEC, who quickly rescues them from this de-humanised status: police “are human beings, just like all of us”, have “blood just like all of us” and they “feel the pain in their bodies too”.

But the *Daily Sun* is not interested in the blood and pain of the all-too-human officer: its attention in these cases is given solely to the blood and pain of people whom it considers wronged and betrayed by the police. In “Mum forces cops into action!²⁰²” the paper presents the insufferable lethargy and negligence of the Mabopane police and contrasts it with the brave yet fruitless action of the mother of an eight-year-old girl who was abducted and murdered by a resident. Her sad but dignified face, tears streaming down her cheeks, is pictured to the right of the front page. A smaller photograph of her dead daughter is superimposed to the left of this image. The report begins with the arrest of the murderer – usually the culminating point of an heroic police investigation. But in a dramatic inversion of this norm, this arrest is *represented as a failure*, for the mother “BELIEVES HER LITTLE GIRL WOULD BE SAFELY AT HOME – IF ONLY COPS HAD CARED WHETHER HER DAUGHTER LIVED OR DIED!”

²⁰¹ MEC: respect cops as people *Daily Sun* 11 May 2011: 7

²⁰² Mum forces cops into action! *Daily Sun* 23 November 2011: 1,2.

The report contrasts for the reader the mother's terrible suspense and frantic searching with the tardiness of the police. She is described as "panic-stricken", and her actions are both frenetic and hopeless: she "went to all the places" her daughter might be, she "continued her search", and "kept on calling the cops". At last, after "waiting for two days" for them to respond, she went in person to the station and reported her daughter missing. The police, on the other hand, are utterly indifferent. They "promised to come... but never came", and "kept promising to call [her] back, but never did". The police "finally arrived" some days later, and she took them to the suspect's shack (his nieces had fetched her daughter away on the day she went missing) where they found evidence: "blood in the yard", and "knives with blood on them". The police take a sample of the blood "to investigate whether it was animal or human".

Unsatisfied with this, the mother returned to the suspect's house on Sunday, a week after her daughter disappeared. Again her actions contrast with those of the police. While she intrepidly finds "another knife with blood on it under a tree", which "careless" police have left undiscovered, the investigators' indifference is emphasised: they "just looked at the knife", and told the suspect's mother "to put it in a safe place". Indeed, they "didn't even search the house". It is the "angry residents" who eventually turn the tables. In support of the mother, they "gathered outside the suspect's home and threatened to burn it down with him inside"²⁰³. Fearing for his life, he surrenders to the police and shows them where he has burned the child's body.

The article ends with the police spokesperson suggesting that "if Baloyi was not happy with the police's handling of the case, she should lay a complaint with the police involved, either at Mabopane or Ga-Rankuwa cop shop". While the evidence of the intransigence of the police and the suffering of the mother renders this ritualistic statement inadequate if not laughable (we could imagine in what way the police who had originally betrayed her by their lack of interest would respond to filing a case against themselves), we must take it as a sign of the *Daily Sun's* real concern that people aggrieved by police (in)action should take steps towards claiming some form of reparation. What is interesting about this story (and many others like it) is the tight focus on the grievances of the mother wronged by the careless and off-hand actions of the police. In solidarity with her suffering, the events as experienced by her are presented as *the truth* about the case, while the police, condemned *a priori* by the personal narrative that recounts their wrongdoing, do not defend their actions, but are only quoted insofar as the spokesperson attests to the arrest and charging of the suspect.

Policing in the township context: a fantasy of social control

Whether heroes or villains, police provide the *Daily Sun* with ample material for its symbolic attacks on, and defences against, social disorder. As heroes of their own stories, the paper constructs the police as shoring up a moral universe in which they put "thugs" to rout and restore order. Or they are as vulnerable to thugs as, if indeed not more so than, the public they seek to protect; and, at the same time, they are exposed as being the ones responsible for disorder, of being the very criminals against whom society struggles to defend itself. In any one edition,

²⁰³ And indeed they do eventually burn down the shacks belonging to the suspect, his mother and sister in "Flames of revenge!" *Daily Sun* 25 November 2011: 3.

without irony or contradiction, heroic, victimised and villainous police appear side by side, fulfilling all roles simultaneously.

For example, 24 January 2011 carries the following stories: police appear unable to respond either to the original murders or the revenge killings in Diepsloot²⁰⁴; heroic police investigate the murders of Mpumalanga politicians²⁰⁵; three villainous officers are arrested for extortion, theft and assault²⁰⁶; Uitenhage police charitably donate school uniforms to poor pupils²⁰⁷; the police heroically search for and retrieve of the body of a drowned man²⁰⁸; police heroically intervene in a supermarket robbery²⁰⁹; General Bheki Cele urges residents to report “bad cops²¹⁰”; a mother blames the decomposed condition of her murdered children’s bodies on negligent police²¹¹; police search fruitlessly for, and appeal to the public for information about, the mother of a dumped foetus²¹²; school pupils help police to search for and arrest a rapist²¹³; a father accuses the police of intimidation²¹⁴; a man who attempted to murder an officer goes to trial²¹⁵; and, finally, a constable is charged with murder²¹⁶.

These stories appear to lie in parallel, a consistent separation of categories that begs an explanation. Their careful separation suggests a schizophrenia, an approach to, or mode of, meaning-making which I return to further down. At the same time, however, reading through the texts I strongly sensed that these categories, rather than being fixed, were constantly disturbed by other meanings created by the tabloid. In my attempts to understand this phenomenon, I found useful an argument made by Fiske in his examination of television news. He suggested that we understand the distinct categories that news imposes on “the real” as “evidence of a desire of the dominant ideology to impose and naturalise itself” (Fiske 1987: 302).

While Fiske was speaking of broadcast news in the 1980s, the principle can be usefully applied in the case of the *Daily Sun* today. If we understand the tabloid’s position as one that desires – demands, even – the restoration of an ideal social and moral order, for the establishment of which the police are deemed necessary, then the fulminations against negligent police, the castigation of the public which hides cop-killers, and the condemnation of overzealous cops can all be read as moments in the struggle to realise this ideal, embodied by the heroic cop-in-action.

But Fiske’s argument does not stop here: he goes on to suggest that while categories are useful as a means of constructing the real in certain ways to the advantage of the speaker/producer, they are also porous and unstable. They are vulnerable to “forces of disruption”, what Fiske otherwise names the “unruliness of the real”, ungovernable irruptions into the text from a reality that “is too multifaceted, too contradictory, to submit easily to the control of news conventions” (1987:

²⁰⁴ Fiery justice! *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 1,2.

²⁰⁵ It’s killing month! *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 2.

²⁰⁶ Cameras bust Cape cops! *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 2.

²⁰⁷ Cops bring uniform joy *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 2.

²⁰⁸ Man’s body found in river *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 4.

²⁰⁹ Cops spoil evil thugs’ plans *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 4.

²¹⁰ Cele: please report bad cops *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 5.

²¹¹ Cops let my kids’ bodies rot *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 5.

²¹² Foetus found on rubbish dump *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 5.

²¹³ Kids help catch alleged rapist *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 5.

²¹⁴ I just want my kids! *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 8.

²¹⁵ Knife suspect on trial *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 8.

²¹⁶ Cop faces murder charge *Daily Sun* 24 January 2011: 12.

302). Alternative readings, enabled by these irruptions of the real, threaten or destabilise the dominant narrative of the news.

While Fiske was referring to the tension between the news producer's desire for narrative control and the reader's experience of the unavoidable polysemy of the text, I would like to say more about the irruption of "the real" in the case of the tabloid and what this might suggest concerning the meanings it attempts to construct in its representations of the police. I argue that its countless images of township life in words and photographs, and its foregrounding of the multifarious experiences of ordinary township residents, provide many opportunities for such irruptions to occur, and that these have the effect, ultimately, of destabilising the categories it so carefully constructs. I have already noted one such moment of destabilisation, in the case of the heroic cop who is also opportunistically criminal. But a far greater force of destabilisation, which has been hinted at here and in the previous chapter, and which I wish now to make more explicit, is *the complexity of the township context*. In this space the police, whether good or bad, vie with what appears in the paper as a fluid and unpredictable social formation which remains ultimately outside their power – and *ultimately also outside the power of the tabloid* – to direct. By engaging with it, both the police and the tabloid are shown ultimately to enact what I call a *fantasy of social control*.

In the examples I give below my purpose is to draw the reader's attention to some of the "forces of disruption" which emerge from the tabloid's engagement with township society and which act to destabilise its readings of the police as either heroic or villainous.

Example 1

My first example returns to the 'supercops' in the Diepsloot People's Justice case. In that report, they had been represented as heavily armed combat troops who are ready for anything: "Leave it to us!"²¹⁷ declared the headline. Two and a half weeks later, they are still in Diepsloot – but no longer quite so heroic. Indeed, they have sunk to decidedly human proportions in an article that tells of their escapades with Diepsloot sex-workers. Provocatively titled "No money – no sex!"²¹⁸ the subheading elaborates: "Kasi magoshas²¹⁹ warn elite cops: it's not for free!" Unable to resist the titillation of this accusation, the story repeats it in the first two sentences. The first sets the scene: "**They are kasi magoshas. They sell their bodies to men...**" the dot dot dot the symbolic anticipation of the about-to-be-revealed conundrum. At once the hook: "Now they claim that some tough policemen who are in their kasi to keep the peace are demanding sex – for mahala²²⁰!"

The report immediately recaps the original story and reminds the reader of their previously heroic status – how a "special squad" of policemen had moved into Diepsloot "to bring an end to the fierce riots in the kasi". Another reminder is a small image of the original front page report set to the right of the article. The women are asked how they know it is these same cops who demand sex for free. Gleefully, the *Daily Sun* records their answer: that "they recognised them from the picture on the front page of the People's Paper!"

²¹⁷ Leave it to us! *Daily Sun* 26 January 2011: 1,2.

²¹⁸ No money – no sex! *Daily Sun* 11 February 2011: 3.

²¹⁹ A colloquial term for a sex worker.

²²⁰ A colloquial term for "free".

The report then sets up the struggle between the sex-workers and the cops, giving most space to the words of the angry women. They first make a case for their position: they are not prostitutes “for fun” but because they need the money to “support our children”. On this basis, they assert that the policemen “are no exception” and “must pay too!” They also complain that their usual clients no longer patronise them, for they are afraid that “while we are busy, cops with guns will come and disturb us”. Then the *Daily Sun* reports that the “local police chief” has “invited the ladies to open a criminal case”. The sarcasm, hinted at in “ladies”, continues: “No one is above the law”, he remarks. “Once the sex-workers have opened a case, proper investigations will be carried out and justice will take its course”.

But while the station commander mocks the women, it is they who are given the last words: “This is rape” says one of the women “or is it not a crime when it’s cops?” This is indeed the question. For all the mockery, the women’s complaint is taken seriously by the *Daily Sun*. The *kasi* prostitutes might be presented as figures of fun, but through the recounting of this clash of interests the elite cops become no better than villainous opportunists who not only consort with but take criminal advantage of these despised members of the community.

It is also worth noting the *Daily Sun*’s role in this episode. Unstated, but obvious, is the fact that the women have approached the tabloid with their complaint, a tactical move that pays off, for it is through the paper’s interest in these officers that their un-heroic action comes to light – for what could be more agreeably scandalous than the antithesis between the elite cops as heroes and elite cops as predatory sexual punters?

Example 2

This township context, taken for granted by the reader and the tabloid alike, constitutes the omnipresent yet invisible background to policing. Its essential ungovernability is perhaps best seen symbolically in an amusing front page photo-story, drolly titled “The one that got away!”²²¹ (see Figure 17, page 173). In the first photograph on the left, two police officers struggle fiercely to force a male protestor – described in the caption as a “stone-thrower” – into the back of a police van. But in the second image, the arrestee is seen triumphantly running off with a group of fellow protestors, who have “attacked [the] cops and forced them to let the man go!” One of the policemen, looking flustered, stands helplessly by the back of the van as the men dash towards the zinc shacks of Chiawelo, to “continue protesting...” The main part of this story, which appears on page 2 under a different title²²², concerns violent protests over the provision of electricity, but the humorous drama of this piece of *kasi* “colour” – in which protestors trounce the cops and expose the false hero beneath the facade of heroic action – makes the front page.

²²¹ The one that got away! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 1.

²²² Green meter anger boils over! *Daily Sun* 6 July: 2.



Figure 17: *The one that got away!* Daily Sun 6 July 2011: 1.

Example 3

In the first example, good cops are revealed by sex-workers to be villainous; in the second, the tabloid sardonically reveals the moment when a cop's attempted heroism is given the lie; in this third example, the attempt by police to represent themselves as agents of crime control is undermined by public opinion. The story concerns a cooperative effort between police and taxi owners to reduce crime at a notorious taxi rank²²³, an intervention which involves a new CCTV system. The report at first appears to present the supposed benefits of its installation: in the photograph above the article we see a police officer, the "Buffalo City law enforcement commander" in the "Taxi Rank control room", busy typing as he "checks" a computer terminal on which we can see a black-and-white image of the taxi-rank crowded with mini-bus taxis.

This ideal image of diligent policing with the help of a sophisticated technology (which the reader is told cost "R2.8 million", an astonishing amount that must surely result in crime reduction!) is very quickly dispelled, however, once the reporter talks to the people on the ground. The fruit and vegetable hawkers dismiss the cameras, for although in operation for a month already, nothing has changed: "thugs continue to steal the stuff we're selling". The complaint goes on: brazenly, "thugs also mug commuters in front of us", and the police are incapable of solving the problem, for "victims report cases to the cops but most of the time they don't go anywhere". The police defend their expensive equipment, and "assured residents that the cameras would help fight crime", for "cops and vehicles" are "on standby" and can "respond

²²³ Thugs rule our rank! *Daily Sun* 17 May 2011: 9

immediately”. But the chaotic and unruly social space that is the taxi rank remains, in this story at least, outside the control of the police. As the title declares, “**Thugs rule our rank!**”

Example 4

In a truly Foucauldian fashion, the implied surveillance of CCTV is cleverly manipulated to act upon the imagination of the accused in the next story: but perhaps not quite in the way anticipated by those police heroes who customarily wield this magical agent as in the example above. A couple of police officers stop at a township petrol station and, allowed on the strength of their reputation into the shop, which is usually kept locked against theft, one of them steals the cellphone of James Gqadu, a petrol station attendant. The report admirably narrates how the young man cleverly “made a plan...” He went to the Heidedal police station nearby, and “told the cops at the station the face of the cop who stole his cellphone was on CCTV cameras”. It is not long before the guilty officer reappears at the petrol station, apologising for taking the phone “by mistake”. After the policeman tries to further cheat James (he handed the phone back without the sim card, and James threatened to “open a case of theft”), they “spoke in private”, a euphemism, no doubt, for a bribe changing hands – a deliciously ironic inversion of the usual “natural order”, in which in which the cop becomes the accused and James *the representative of the law who can demand a bribe*. As the large headline exclaims: “**James busts a cop!**”²²⁴ For James, at any rate, justice has been served as he has now “decided to forget the incident”. The large portrait photograph shows James holding up his evidence, a “brand-new Nokia X3”, with a bemused expression on his face.

Example 5

Fantasies of social control when put into action are also seen to backfire disastrously if people decide to resist the authority police seek to impose, as did high-school pupils in Kuruman in the Northern Cape. “**It started as a search for a pupil’s missing R3...**”²²⁵ the report opens ominously. The escalating events of an ordinary Tuesday morning are then dramatised for the reader, complete with characters and dialogue – the victimised pupil and the R3 “lost in his schoolbag”, the recalcitrant class who “said nothing”, and the out-of-her-depth teacher who threatened that “all hell will break loose” if the money was not returned. The money does not reappear, so “the cops were called”. Frightened, the boys “pleaded with [the police] that we would give the pupil the missing R3”. Instead, they are taken to the Bathlaros station, where it is alleged that they were “assaulted by the investigating police”.

A case of assault is registered the following day (Wednesday), but what happens next (on Thursday) the *Daily Sun* consciously constructs as a re-run of the iconic Soweto riots. “Visions of 1976”, reads the caption of the photograph to the right of the article: it shows a young woman, her face covered with blood and her arms stretched above her head, lying cradled by five men as they carry her along a township road²²⁶ (see Figure 18, page 175). She has been hit in the eye by a rubber bullet, shot by police after outraged pupils from three schools “marched to the police station”, “[closed]off roads with rocks”, “demanded the arrest” of the investigating officer, and finally “set the cop shop on fire with petrol bombs”.

²²⁴ James busts a cop! *Daily Sun* 17 May 2011: 5.

²²⁵ Cop shop burnt over R3! *Daily Sun* 22 March 2011: 4.

²²⁶ The photograph is reminiscent of the iconic image of Hector Pietersen taken by Sam Nzima in 1976.

COP SHOP BURNT OVER R3!

Search at kasi school ends in chaos

By BECKER SEMELA

IT STARTED AS a search for a pupil's missing R3...

And it ended up as a near-riot that looks like something from 1976, with schoolkids being arrested, allegedly assaulted – and a cop shop in flames!

At Gamohana Middle School in Kuruman, Northern Cape, a pupil allegedly lost R3 in his schoolbag last Tuesday. He reported the loss to the teacher...

"Whoever took the R3 must bring it back," she told the class.

"If it isn't back," she allegedly added, "all hell will break loose!"

The pupils said nothing and the cops were called.

A pupil, Kamogolo Diradingwe (16) said: "We pleaded with them that we would give the pupil the missing R3, but it didn't help."

The boys were allegedly assaulted and then taken to Bathlaros Police Station where it's alleged they were again assaulted by the investigating police. On Wednesday, a case of assault was registered against the police.

Pupils from Remmogo, Lesedi and

Makgolokwe Middle School marched to the police station, closing off roads with rocks.

The cops told them to leave, the pupils demanded the arrest of Constable Reginald Mosinki (35) – and after two minutes the stoning of the school started. Then pupils set the cop shop on fire with petrol bombs.

After that, cops started shooting at them with rubber bullets.

Seventeen pupils were injured and taken to hospital – one girl was seriously injured after being shot in the eye.

Northern Cape SAPS's Colonel Hendrik Swart said: "The constable was arrested on Thursday after the riots and a case of assault were opened."

"Thirty-two people, mostly pupils, were arrested for public violence."

Twenty-nine members of the community were treated in hospital for injuries. Two are still in hospital and another three were transferred to another hospital for treatment.

The arrested pupils and members of the public appeared in the Kuruman Magistrates Court.

VISIONS OF 1976... Protesters carry a girl shot by cops during the riots in Kuruman on Thursday.

Photo by Becker Semela



Charges against minors were withdrawn.

Swart said Constable Mosinki ap-

peared in the Kuruman Magistrates Court on 35 charges of serious assault. He was released on bail of R500.

Figure 18: Cop shop burnt over R3! Daily Sun 22 March 2011: 4.

The rest of the article is given over to the police spokesperson who tallies the results of this hostile retaliation: the numbers of arrests for public violence, injuries and hospitalisations, and the appearance of those charged in court. But the pupils have in effect won their case, for the charges against minors are withdrawn while the accused constable, who has at last been arrested, is facing "35 charges of serious assault".

Example 6

We have seen in many of the cases presented in this and the previous chapter a divergence between police and residents about what constitutes appropriate action to bring about justice. Discordant understandings appear to be driven by two kinds of knowledge about the township as a social space: the forensic knowledge of the police, and the intimate social knowledge of the residents. These compete for ascendancy, with residents on the one hand demanding to see their own, intimate knowledge taken seriously by the police, while on the other the police are obliged to act through processes with which they insist residents comply, but which bypasses (and thus devalues) the intimate knowledge so prized by the people.

But, ironically, it is this same intimate social knowledge that appears essential for heroic police action to take place. Frequently, this comes in the form of a "tip-off" in which police receive information that leads to the "bust". How these tip-offs are received, the nature of the information and who the informer is, are mostly undisclosed (a necessary precaution). But in one story we are shown how this intimate knowledge leads the police to an astonishingly speedy victory: "Thieves caught before crime is reported!"²²⁷ exclaims the headline. Excitedly, the first

²²⁷ Thieves caught before crime is reported! *Daily Sun* 10 August 2011: 5.

sentence reiterates: “Cops solved crime so quickly that they had already caught the culprits when the victim phoned the cop shop!”

The swiftness of this solution to the crime originates with the stupidity of the thieves²²⁸: for no sooner had they “sacked a farmhouse” than they went to the nearest tavern and “started a drinking spree”. But a customer noticed how they “flashed a large amount of cash”, buying drinks for everyone with the “bundle of R100 notes they had stolen”. Suspecting they had committed a crime, he left the tavern and alerted the cops, who soon raided the premises and found the incriminating evidence on the culprits. The registration number of a recovered weapon leads them to the farm, at which they arrive just as the farmer calls the police to report the break-in. The article, emphasised by a yellow background and red headline, is accompanied by the usual photograph of the “bust”, with all the evidence arranged and displayed for accounting. Although this story decidedly constructs the police as heroic – the speed and efficiency of their response, the capturing of the suspects and the recovery of the stolen goods – this triumph is ultimately due to a local person observing people act out of character.

What must be mentioned briefly in this regard is the connection between the *Daily Sun*, the police, and the reader/informer. The paper exhorts its readers, as people who know, to adopt the role of heroes’ helpers, and on behalf of the police publishes frequent “wanted” articles in which it shows images of suspects who are sought for questioning, along with details of the cases in which they are said to be involved, and the names and numbers of the investigating officers. “Help cops catch this clever conman thief²²⁹”, “Do you know this man?²³⁰ “Police need your help to nab them²³¹” and “Sunlanders, help find these Christmas thugs²³²” are typical headlines which construct the *Daily Sun* readers as potential actors and participants in the heroic dramas of the police.

Discussion

In this dramatic and fractured universe, supercops bust drugs or weapons, chase down stolen cars, and arrest thugs – or just kill them. The fantastical hero, indomitable, courageous, ready and eager to respond, pitting force against force, is thrillingly represented as *the* agent for the subjugation of the criminal. But parallel to this world is another in which these heroes are the very villains against whom society must defend itself. And yet another in which the same heroes fall, defeated. Heroes, villains or victims, these stories of the police, rather than forming a composite picture, remain largely immune from each other.

This careful separation of the various roles police occupy resembles a psychology in which a person intrinsic to one’s survival – such as one’s mother – is divided in dreams into two separate beings, an angel and a witch. The dreamer refuses to see the mother as bad, and the negative emotions aroused by her are separated off into a character – the witch – who can be condemned,

²²⁸ See the discussion of the “Dumb thug”.

²²⁹ Help cops catch this clever conman thief *Daily Sun* 7 January 2011: 13.

²³⁰ Do you know this man? *Daily Sun* 25 March: 2.

²³¹ Police need your help to nab them *Daily Sun* 1 April: 12.

²³² Sunlanders, help find these Christmas thugs *Daily Sun* 11 January: 11.

without injuring the vital bond with the good. In the case of the *Daily Sun* we observe a similar split in its response to the police. Police are primarily desired to be good. They are the archetypal knights in shining armour whose presence brings assurance that wrongs of all kinds will be righted. But clearly they are also bad – so they are divided into two. The ideal officer is preserved by being disassociated from the criminal, or overzealous, or inefficient or hapless cop, and the paper exaggerates both extremes to keep them separate from each other. This is why the victimised cop provokes such anguish, for as heroes their death at the hands of thugs threatens the viability of the ideal.

Deleuze and Guattari (1983) refer to Western society as being post-modern insofar as its general outlook is one of unresolved extremes, that is, of entertaining opposed possibilities without the need to resolve them effectively. In such a society, they argue, the idea of resolution is abandoned: the impossibility of resolution is *the* contemporary state of mind. This line of thinking leads us, in the present context, to a remarkable conclusion. If the dialectic of postmodernity doesn't have a synthesising moment, then the township seems more post-modern than we realise: applying such a frame to present-day South Africa, the future is now, at least as it appears in the *Daily Sun*. For within its pages, in like fashion, various possibilities exist alongside each other without cancelling each other out or being resolved. Its mode of reporting allows the reader to continue to live with both extremes – neither need be abandoned, and both are true. An argument might be waged, I think, that in taking this ambivalent position the newspaper is doing no more than presenting a state of mind and circumstance in which township residents in modern South Africa continually find themselves, faced with conflicting pressures of modernity: of state affluence and township poverty; the demands of government and the grassroots rules of community; the consumerist ideal and the reality of unemployment or low wages; world religion or ideology and the compelling heritage of local tradition.

Correspondingly, what we see in the landscape of our paper is a range of narrative contours, none of which have the power to obliterate the other, and which are presented side by side with equal conviction: we can hope for the heroism of the valorised good cops at the same time that we continue to deplore the villainy of the condemned bad and indifferent. What comes to mind here is Foucault's contention that discourses run in "tactical blocks" in which "different and even contradictory discourses" co-exist (Foucault 1978: 101). This arrangement is surely different to those instances of mediated hegemonic narratives, of the kind that Sparks (1992) talks about, which appear more powerful and which essentially obscure competing discourses.

However, while this narrative of good versus evil at the macro level might remain open and unresolved, at the level of the individual text the *Daily Sun* provides the satisfaction of resolution for its readers. To what extent this might be illusory is not important: for the reader at least there has been, on reading, a moment of closure. We can consider the symbolic importance of these moments of resolution by comparing the narratives to the classic detective novel, in which the crime is solved by the detective whose skill re-establishes the status quo. In the *Daily Sun* stories there is no norm to return to, and what we see are isolated instances of contention in which police are pitted against their adversaries. I suggest this might be why such lengths are taken to provide a narrative framework in which the resolutions are integral to the individual report.

These at least symbolically restore order in one instance within a wider context where no such resolution is possible. The newspaper's role here is important, as it is within its pages that this resolution is at least symbolically attainable.

It is in this regard that that the examples in the final section are so interesting. For what these narratives reveal is that ultimately it is not villains against whom the police pit themselves, but the public. It is under their eye that their actions are seen for what they are. Not heroes, but lascivious men; their magical agents scornfully dismissed by the victims they seek to protect; their predatory actions craftily subverted by prey who trump their deviousness; their imposition of authority suddenly and horrifyingly amplified by the ones they seek to control; their heroic triumphs dependent on information they otherwise dismiss.

Prompted by this reflection, I suggest we name this sombre conclusion 'the pathos of the minor resolution'. In a divided society it should not be considered insufficient; it may represent the only resolution there is available.

Chapter 7: Gender disorders

In the stories that feature the police and People's Justice, it is taken for granted that the thugs who terrorise 'our' *kasis* are, without exception, men. Generic villains, they appear as the anonymous agents of disruption, for whether dead or alive they are largely nameless. They are distinguished only by their violence, their boldness, their opportunism and heartlessness – and of course their arrests and deaths. Only those thugs whose notoriety differentiates them from the common kind are granted the distinction of individualisation, and these men come under particularly intense scrutiny.

Importantly, the *Daily Sun* also grants the gift of visibility to the ordinary township person. The crimes these men and women endure and perpetrate, their anger and violence, their murderous rage, their greed and lust, their trials and tribulations, their courage, their victimisation and their pain and suffering provide the meat of these reports. These emotions are not incidental or gratuitous: the dramatic appeal to the emotional realm is a vital and constitutive aspect of the presentation and the meaning of the coverage. Their evocation orients the reader to the significance of the story and provides the means with which to evaluate its characters. What crime is made to mean in SunLand is inalienable from the emotional consequences that it has for those who endure and witness it, which includes the reader who is asked to feel and judge alongside its primary victims.

As the paper's lens draws closer to a specific character, the picture also captures that person's family and other close relationships. Rather than lone individuals, they are presented as husbands and wives, as lovers, as sons and daughters, as mothers and fathers, as friends and neighbours. It is these social roles and relationships and the ways in which they are defended or betrayed that provide both the context for crime and the scaffold upon which the paper structures its interpretation of the events and its presentation of the story. The tabloid's scrutiny of the social ties within which characters act means that people are examined *as men*, *as women*: that is, the way in which they conduct themselves in relation to each other is often explicitly read as signs of gender conformity or not. These relationships are organised in particular ways, as we shall see, and I use Connell's (1995) idea of the "gender order" as a means of making sense of the inherent structure that emerges from the analysis.

Connell's contribution is useful, for if we are to understand these men and women and their actions, in particular the high degree of violence inflicted by men both on other men and on women, we need a schema that is able to relate men and women to each other, to themselves, and to the social context in which they are situated. That is, rather than understanding these crimes as driven solely by individual motives in individual stories, we must understand them as instances within the broader contours of behaviour that characterise the coverage as a whole, and reflects both common cultural expectations, and the paper's collusion with or rejection of these norms.

In constructivist approaches to gender, masculinity and femininity are understood as being created discursively – in our case, the discourses articulated and constructed in the words, images and layout of the *Daily Sun*'s reports. This approach is in keeping with the Foucauldian frame that informs the thesis: to reiterate briefly here, a discourse proposes what counts as truth, and hence also as 'normal'. In effect, a discourse creates a moral order in which its truths make sense, at the same time that it produces and validates the subjectivities that are consistent with it.

Working within such an understanding, Butler (1990) proposes that we come into being as gendered subjects through "doing" or "performing" gender: that is, we become masculine and feminine subjects through reiterated performances and significations within specific discursive regimes. Yet, as Connell argues, this "production" of gendered subjectivity is not pre-determined: "Part of the mystery of gender is how a pattern that on the surface appears so stark and rigid, on close examination turns out so complex and uncertain" (2009:6).

The gender order

The value of Connell's contribution lies in a flexible yet structured understanding of gender which accounts for change and consciously takes into account differences in Southern spaces (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In developing her approach, Connell built on the earlier advances in theorising gender in feminist and queer studies, and rejected earlier attempts to understand masculinity and femininity in terms of sex-roles (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Connell 2009). Sex-role theory, she argues, blurs the distinction between behaviour and norm, ignores the "the homogenizing effect of the role concept" and also has "difficulties in accounting for power" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 831). In other words, Connell sought to develop a model which avoided the essentialism and reification of role theory, was concerned with social power relations, and accounted for historical, social and geographical variation.

Earlier, Connell (1987) had argued that there is not just one form of masculinity and femininity but a range of these which are hierarchically organised. Connell (1987) names this hierarchy the "gender order", in which all forms of masculinity and femininity at play within a particular time and place are arranged in relation to what she terms "hegemonic" or ruling masculinity. "Hegemonic" masculinity, she argues, is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities, as well as in relation to women: "The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works" (Connell 1987: 183). That is, the first consideration of the patriarchal gender order involves understanding the *relations that are established between men*. This includes the ongoing subordination of alternative forms of masculinity – homosexuals, for example.

However, this ascendancy is not achieved simply through force, but through the winning of hegemony, a Gramscian understanding of power relations in which domination is achieved "within a balance of forces... a state of play" (Connell 1987: 184). Here then, hegemonic masculinity does not mean the elimination of competing forms of masculinity but rather the winning of compliance: for "most men benefit from the subordination of women, and hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of this ascendancy" (Connell 1987: 185). Nevertheless, she qualifies this notion of compliance by arguing that "though 'hegemony' does not refer to

ascendency based on force, it is not incompatible” with it (Connell 1987: 184) – a point to which I will return further down in this discussion.

Connell completes her model of the gender order by locating women in relation to this hierarchy of masculinity: first, “There is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men”. Rather, all forms of femininity are subordinated to hegemonic masculinity. However, one form is defined “around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men”. This Connell names “emphasised femininity”, while other forms are “defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance... [or] by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation” (Connell 1987: 183-184).

In returning to the idea of hegemonic masculinity almost twenty years later, Connell (2005) reaffirms the usefulness of the idea of a fluid, contingent and multiple array of dominant, subordinated and complicit masculinities (Connell 2005), constructed in different historical and geographical spaces and in relation to a range of femininities which are variously complicit with or resistant to their subordination. From this perspective, the gender order refers to a dense network of socially-produced, institutionally situated and hierarchically arranged *relations and practices* which maintain the continued ascendency of men over women *as groups*, regardless of the greater or lesser extent of power exercised by individual men and women. Connell’s emphasis on historical and social contingency allows for variation of individual experience and also alerts us to the necessity to pay attention to the social context of the production of gendered social identities.

The gender order, rights and crime in South Africa

Although political independence has been won for South Africans and an age of rights ushered in, specifically including rights for women, these political changes in themselves have not been able to dislodge historical forms of gender relations. The *de jure* challenges to the old patriarchal orders established by colonialism, tribalism and apartheid, rather than spelling their demise have seen them re-worked for new times in complex ways (Ratele 1998; Morrell 2001; Posel 2004; Ouzgane and Morrell 2005; Reid and Walker 2005; Shefer et al 2007). This complexity has encouraged scholarly interest in Connell’s model, which, although developed for western and industrialised societies in the Northern hemisphere, is usefully applied as a lens to our post-colonial context, in particular to understand contested and changing notions of masculinity (Morrell et al 2013; Connell 2011; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The model’s attraction lies in its explanatory power in relation to the high degree of gender-based violence in which hegemonic masculinity appears to be implicated (Morrell et al 2012; Jewkes et al 2011; Sanger 2010; Ratele 2008).

However, given South Africa’s complex history and rapidly evolving post-apartheid social milieu, there is no one single hegemonic masculinity but a diversity of what Ratele (2006; 2008) calls “ruling” masculinities within specific economic, social and political spaces which are themselves hierarchically arranged. Following Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), what may be dominant in one context may be subordinated in another. However, these ruling ideas share a number of constitutive characteristics which include (but are not limited to): assertive

heterosexuality and the control of women; support for male promiscuity and sexual entitlement; the need for respect both from women and other men; and physical toughness, bravery and risk-taking.

All these characteristics are implicated to greater or lesser degrees in the perpetration of violence, in particular rape, which currently dominates the public imagination and academia alike – to use Gqola’s phrase (2007), South African women are “under siege” by violent men. The statistics are notoriously high: one study suggests that one in four men rape, with perhaps 15% of men having raped more than once (Jewkes et al 2011). Over 40,000 women are raped each year (the 2014 figures stand at 43,195 (ISS 2014/2015); but also see SAPS 2014²³³), reports which constitute perhaps only one ninth of the actual incidence (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002).

But the extent of the violence men impose upon each other is far less noticeable in public debates. This point is taken up by a number of authors who indicate the appallingly high number of deaths and injuries which men inflict on other men (Ratele 2010; Seedat et al 2009; Vetten and Ratele 2013; Clowes 2013). Indeed, of all social groups, it is urban, young, black men between the ages of 15-40 years who are most at risk of killing or being killed by another man: they are seven times more likely to be murdered than black women of the same age (Altbeker 2008²³⁴). In order to bring this “mammoth in the room” into focus, Ratele (2008: 20) describes a township version of manhood based on fearlessness. Here, “successfully masculine males” embody a particular set of practices in which “a fearsome look and drinking hard, a gangster pose and weapons under the clothes” are expressive of “what it means to be a man”.

However, if Ratele’s work foregrounds the contingency of masculinity, the same applies to femininity. A range of research reveals how women in particular employ the opportunities opened up by constitutional rights to negotiate (or defend) their gender and sexual identities and to use these to their own personal and material advantage (Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Walker 2013; Bank 2011; Hunter 2010). While what “rights” mean for women is not self-evident but contingent on the social context in which the discourse is received (Manicom 2005), rights have nonetheless “created the spaces for moral and cultural alternatives in the midst of – rather than by displacing – the taboos of old” (Posel 2004: 60). Neither of these discourses, Posel argues, is able to unseat the other: If black women had been silent in the past, “their growing knowledge of sexual issues and recognition of new rights to sexual assertiveness, sexual pleasure and the right to resist male sexual advances, are seen to undermine established norms of sexual authority, and destabilise the very bedrock of masculinity” (Posel 2004: 61).

Hunter (2010) explores this point in his ethnographic study of sexual relationships in Mandeni, KwaZulu-Natal, in which he examines the *interplay* and co-construction of variously validated and subordinated masculinities and compliant and resistant femininities in a social context constrained by high unemployment. Noting that constitutional rights are a “focal point for violence” (2010: 172) amongst his informants, he argues that there is a “connection between men’s violence and women’s questioning of gendered hierarchies”, part of a long history of

²³³ The April to March 2011/2012 SAPS statistics record that 64,514 sexual offences were reported nationally, a ratio of 127.5 per 100 000. However, the number of rapes is unobtainable, as the data on the SAPS data is not disaggregated.

²³⁴ The figures Altbeker works with here refer to homicide data from 2001-2002, and derive from SAPS statistics. The absolute figures are uncertain and figures vary in relation to the method of data collection. For the latest figures, see Donson (2009).

“men trying to ‘straighten’ women” (2010: 171). The ruling masculinity in the contemporary context refers to tradition to justify men’s entitlement to respect and multiple partners, but its performance depends on a man’s access to money and the status that accrues from the number of sexual relationships he is able to sustain. It jostles with the new freedoms and identities implicitly available to the female rights-bearing subject of the Constitution. Among the rights women claim is the right to play the sexual field like their *isoka* lovers²³⁵. This overturning of established hierarchies Hunter links directly to violence: although it is common for women to take more than one partner, they run the risk of being labelled *isifebe* – a loose woman who betrays her “duty to be chaste and respectful” (Hunter 2010: 173). Such women can become the targets of men who “discipline” or “straighten” (Hunter 2010: 173) them with rape (see also Wood et al 2008).

It is the contradictions and tensions of the contemporary gender order then that contribute to the conditions in which violence emerges. At the same time, the broad discourse of rights in which violence arises ensures its censure: if sex has become an arena of contest and “been unveiled as a site of painful, hidden abuses and violations, particularly on the part of men”, male heterosexuality – “threatening, predatory and tainted” – is now “under scrutiny, called to account, newly vulnerable” (Posel 2004: 62).

Gender and violence in the *Daily Sun*

Given the above contested scenario, South African research on the media representations of men and women has largely centred on how they contribute to both the production and maintenance of the local, unequal but evolving, gendered status quo and militate against the achievement of gender justice (Viljoen 2008; Sanger 2009; Luyt 2012). Amongst these and pertinent to my study are three articles concerning the depictions of violent men in the *Daily Sun*. This research, conducted from a critical perspective, uniformly finds the tabloid’s representations of men unhelpful for achieving gender justice. A discourse analysis of the *Daily Sun*’s “Charter for a Man²³⁶” campaign leads Dewa and Prinsloo (2012) to conclude that, while the constructions of the modern man advocated by the tabloid were “chivalrous”, the coverage effectively “failed to represent the interests of women in a manner that is transformative” (2012: 33), for it constructs women as dependent and in need of men’s protection. Another study that looks at narratives of masculinity in the *Daily Sun* (drawing on a one-week long 2007 data-set), argues that the reportage of violence between men “becomes symbolic of the South African condition and *Violence* becomes a narrative which men come to understand or expect in the world” (Gibbs and Jobson 2011: 180).

A third study examines the *Daily Sun*’s representations of masculinity in an article that deals with the rape of a young mentally-retarded woman (Boshoff and Prinsloo 2015). Drawing on Hunter’s (2010) work on the materiality of intimate relationships, the textual analysis relates the specific details of this rape case to the masculinities prevailing in a social context characterised

²³⁵ Hunter (2010) argues that with fewer men now able to marry, a modified form of ‘traditional’ hegemonic masculinity has evolved: instead of supporting conjugal households men become “isoka”, in colloquial parlance “playas”, who play the sexual field in exchange for more limited material support, gathering status for the number of such relationships he is able to sustain (although the idea of a man able to pay *lobola* and support a household remains ideal).

²³⁶ The *Daily Sun*’s “Charter for a Man” campaign ran from 7 November to 7 December 2007, to coincide with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, an annual national event.

by poverty and sexual entitlement. Notably, the perpetrators were young men who in the larger scheme of township society were relatively powerless in relation to other men. What was seen as important about the coverage was the punitive stance taken by the paper and the readers alike in response to these young men whose violent actions, it is argued, bring to a logical conclusion, and are symptomatic expressions of, the gender relations that inhere in the township context.

However, what my immersion in the *Daily Sun* has made visible, and what I hope the analysis will reveal to the reader, is the nuance of gender relations when read globally: that is, taking the gender order as a whole, and in relation to the paper's stance on crime and justice. In accordance with my approach in other areas, my aim here is not to uncover the deficits of these representations so much as to understand how the representations of men and women work together to produce a picture of the ideal contemporary township gender order – at least as it appears to the *Daily Sun*. As a modern institution, the tabloid presents to its readers modern ways of being, including ways of being modern men and women, an identity suggested overtly through what it valorises or condemns with regards to their behaviour, values and attitudes. At the same time, however, it does not completely condemn more 'traditional' ways of being; rather, it sets up both modern and traditional gendered identities for perusal and through its presentational strategies enjoins the reader to grapple with their tensions and contradictions. What is fascinating is how the trope of crime becomes a gauge of gendered subjectivity.

I begin the analysis by discussing those men whose overweening idea of their masculinity and personal entitlement contribute to the reasons why the *Daily Sun* places them firmly beyond the pale of society. The violent excesses of 'supervillains' and more ordinary men are both censured, but in ways that, especially in the second case, are complex and contradictory. As the analysis moves on to rape and rapists and the murder of intimate partners, we are again presented with the idea of unreformed masculinity, but in situations where the deficits of the masculinity of violent men in relationships with women are foregrounded. The second half of the analysis examines the representations of women, both as victims and perpetrators of crime, bringing into focus those women who defy – or succumb to – the roles given to them by society.

Monsters in the dock

While the crimes of the ordinary thug are routinely condemned as 'evil', the appearance on stage of super-villains gives the paper an opportunity to expand its repertoire of censure. These men come into view as individuals when they are caught or put on trial, and are noticeable for the epithets attached to them which signify the extent to which their deeds have placed them outside the human realm: thus Sibongiseni 'Papale' Ncikazi appears on the front page as "**PRIME EVIL**"²³⁷, a name given him by the police and repeated by the paper, which tells the reader that "Cops accuse this man of 20 murders and 50 robberies!" For this reason he is "**the most wanted man in SA today**". We see him on the front page in what seems to be an enlarged digital head-and-shoulders image – its blurry pixels makes the face of the accused man appear veiled, as if slightly obscured by a fine mist. At the same time his face looks directly out of the frame at the viewer, his eyes slightly heavy. It is a discomfiting image, as it is hard to read: both wary and

²³⁷ Prime Evil *Daily Sun* 7 September 2011: 1,2. Ironically, the soubriquet "Prime Evil" was also given to Eugene de Kock, a former apartheid-era South African Police colonel, infamous for his torture and assassination of political opponents.

self-contained, perhaps calculating, an uncertainty that is heightened by the photograph's blurred quality.

With great zest, the paper describes in detail the fortuitous circumstances attending the unexpected capture and comeuppance of this wanted man, the details for which come via the police. But the court appearances of super-villains give the *Daily Sun* reporter first-hand access to their words and comportment, which provide the paper with material for their condemnation. Alfred Phalane is a "MONSTER²³⁸" who raped and murdered five women; and Brian Mangwale, who is convicted of the mutilation and murder of a girl whose body parts he sold and who infamously "built a mansion with his devilish trade²³⁹", is the "'Son of Satan'²⁴⁰". In both these examples, which are court reports, attention is given to the demeanour of the accused: Mangwale "showed no shame and no emotion" as the judge read out the verdict, a lack of contrition that compounds his guilt and confirms his demonic status. He "did not deserve to be in society", said the judge; instead, his "denials and unremorseful behaviour showed that prison is the only place for him". The *Daily Sun* agrees: he will justly "rot in jail".

On the other hand, Phalane is represented as, perhaps, contrite. The tabloid writes that he "claimed he was haunted for years by his evil deeds" and it quotes the public apology that he gives to the bereaved families of the women he killed: "I want to apologise to the victims' families and their communities". It may be that this confession is given some support by his image, which appears very ordinary. His body leans forward on his right arm which supports him on the wooden form, and his eyes are closed. His forehead is creased and his face is tired. Here, at least, his monstrosity is invisible, and must be inferred from the headline and the caption, which tells us that this is the "Monster in the dock". While the report does not refute the apology, his contrition wins him no favours either: for the *Daily Sun* carefully notes the fourteen life sentences given him by the judge, and announces with great satisfaction that he has been "JAILED FOREVER!" This sentence however is resigned to by the convict, who remarkably, as he is led away, is heard to say: "Don't worry, people. These are nothing – just years".

The number of years to which any accused is sentenced for rape, armed robbery or murder is held up as indicative of the legitimacy of the justice system. Thus when Thozamile Taki, the "Sugarcane Killer" who robbed and murdered thirteen women, is given thirteen life sentences without parole – "meaning the killer should die in jail" – the headline gloats: "BYE BYE, TAKI!" His victims' relieved relatives "clapped" when they hear the sentence, which amounts to "533 years in jail", and declare themselves "satisfied that justice was done". The very large image accompanying the report shows Taki's face in extreme close-up, the visual code of the villain: he is pictured slightly from below right, which accentuates the backward tilt of his head. His eyes and lips are closed. He looks proud and resigned, but not defeated. The drama of the image derives from his face being directly juxtaposed with the headline, which he faces and to which he appears impervious.

²³⁸ Monster jailed for ever *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 4.

²³⁹ Son of Satan jailed for life *Daily Sun* 29 November 2011: 4.

²⁴⁰ 'Son of Satan' is found guilty! *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 4.

In contrast, Sikhosiphi Gwala²⁴¹, a hitman who was contracted to murder a female deputy mayor, is utterly anathematised by the tabloid, not so much because he killed but because at his trial *he shows no remorse*; and to compound his lack of shame, he “gets only 10 years in jail for murder!” Unhesitatingly, the paper makes up for this insufficient punishment – a puny “slap on the wrist” – by displaying on the front page “**THE FACE OF A KILLER!**” The “not so repentant” convict is photographed in three-quarter profile as he turns to the camera. He is caught by surprise: his lips are parted slightly and he looks obliquely at the viewer from the corners of his half-closed eyes. This disconcerting image is compounded by the four long scars running along his cheek, which serve as the entry to the story: “**This guy with the clan scars – ingcabo – running down his face is a killer with a heart as cold as stone**”. The reporter makes explicit his personal disgust at the lack of remorse expressed by the convict who, on hearing the judge sentence him to ten years in prison, “broke into a victory dance” while the family of the dead woman “watched in horror”.

The tabloid’s interest in these murderous men focuses on the personal dramas that they present. That they are all “monsters” is clear. Their brutal and ruthless actions, their repeated murders, rapes, kidnappings and robberies, and the dreadful suffering of their victims, are deeds that place them beyond the pale of human society. Yet, unmade as humans, we are confronted contradictorily with their very humanity in the images that are presented to us in word and picture. The *Daily Sun* attempts to find within each man traces of emotion as he faces the judgements passed upon him by himself, by the law and by society. As readers we are invited also to scrutinise and see their remorse or lack of contrition, their shame or proud repudiation of the sanctions passed. What ultimately appears is ambiguous because it seeks signs of the culprit’s inner life at the same time that it condemns and examines the justice of the punishment. While we shudder at the horror, we also are drawn to feel with the prisoner and measure our responses against his.

The men amongst us

Supervillains, identifiable from their damning soubriquets, perhaps differ from other more common criminals in name and reputation only, for there appears to be no shortage of men who repeatedly rape, murder and rob. Among many such examples is an unidentified suspect connected to three victims who have variously been burnt to death, beaten to death, and strangled and raped within a month²⁴².

A notch or so along this measure of criminality are men who capture the attention of the tabloid due to their extraordinary *modus operandi*. In two cases, this interest leads to an extended coverage which tracks the sagas of the suspects’ crimes, their identification and arrests, and the court proceedings that follow. These extended sagas differ from routine stories of thugs due to the paper’s interest in the suspects’ unfolding personal dramas, and its close-up examinations of their characters over time. The first saga is that of the “Axe Man”, and the second the “Facebook Killer”. I concentrate on the treatment of the suspects in each case, for as very different stories,

²⁴¹ The face of a killer! *Daily Sun* July 4 2011: 1,2.

²⁴² He charms... then kills! *Daily Sun* 8 November 2011: 4.

they reveal something of the way in which different forms of villainous masculinity are interpreted.

The Axe Man

The Axe Man comes to the paper's attention in March of 2011 when he went on a "blood-drenched, three-day killing spree"²⁴³ in which he "[hacked] three men to death" and attempted to murder a fourth. The paper follows his murders, his fortuitous arrest, and his initial court appearances over 8 articles. His trial only takes place in 2014 and thus lies outside this discussion²⁴⁴. Initially, the paper emphasises his weapon and the horror of the murders: "**REVENGE OF THE AXE!**"²⁴⁵ reads the first headline, with the subheading "Crazy dad kills three men in bloody attacks!" Intersecting the subheading is a stylised image of a long-handled axe, with blood dripping from the blade. This headline and attendant image is reproduced several times in the follow-up articles in typical style. The axe represents the instrument with which the man is said to have carried out the murders: a "*deadly weapon*" with a yellow handle and a "**shiny, sharp blade...**" So sharp indeed, that "*one victim's head was cut clean off his body!*" Shockingly, the "killer" picked up the head, "still dripping with blood" and took it two kilometres down the road and threw it in a "roadside rubbish bin". Another victim's head was "just held together by a nerve" to the body from which it had been severed. One of his victims, who hears him demand "Why did you rape my daughter?"²⁴⁶ survived the axe blade which "bit into his flesh". Clearly, to the *Daily Sun* he is mad, a "lunatic" who "needs to be caught quickly". Thus are we presented immediately and effectively with what the paper considers the salient elements of the suspect: he is first a father; then, his strength; and his madness, derived from the choice of weapon and method of attack which later earns him his epithet.

In the second article²⁴⁷ he has mysteriously vanished, in much the same way that he appeared: "He came... he hacked off a man's head... and now he's disappeared!" But we are warned by the KZN co-ordinator for Psychologically Motivated Crimes, Lieutenant-Colonel Anton Booysen, that "it isn't the end of the attacks". He has only disappeared "For now..." His hidden yet potential and ubiquitous threat is conveyed to the reader in stylised form: "the feared axe man... is still out there... somewhere on the streets". Notably, he is no longer first a vengeful father who is suspected of taking revenge for the supposed rape of his daughter (though this supposition is repeated in the second, third and fourth articles) but is now primarily associated with his weapon: "Cops ask axe man's family to help stop the killing!"

However, the public is spared further fear, for the next day we learn he has been arrested following a tip-off: "Axe man gets the chop!"²⁴⁸ The ironic headline associates his arrest with how he literally "chopped" the necks of his victims and in this way he is brought to a form of poetic justice by the paper. His unusual strength is emphasised: he is "a strong man, about two meters tall", who "put up a fierce battle", with an entire "team" of cops, who "finally restrained"

²⁴³ Cops ask axe man's family to help stop the killing! *Daily Sun* 29 March 2011: 3.

²⁴⁴ The time taken to sentencing was over two and a half years. He was found guilty of murder, attempted murder, assault, rape and kidnapping.

²⁴⁵ Revenge of the axe! *Daily Sun* 28 March 2011: 1,2.

²⁴⁶ Axe man gets the chop! *Daily Sun* 30 March 2011: 3.

²⁴⁷ Cops ask axe man's family to help stop the killing! *Daily Sun* 29 March 2011: 3.

²⁴⁸ Axe man gets the chop! *Daily Sun* 30 March 2011: 3.

him. This extraordinary physical power is repeated in the fourth report²⁴⁹ where a police spokesperson describes him as “very big and strong”, and as having “put up a massive fight”. Amazingly, his hands are so big that “the cops only managed to get one clip of the handcuff around his wrist”.

However, having been arrested and taken within the ambit of the law, a profound difference appears in the style of the reporting. Whether he is in court for charges, or imagined within the police cells, the last reports cannot resist referring to his legendary strength – a “muscular 34-year-old man²⁵⁰” – but he is contrastingly also “sad and tired”. We learn that there is no daughter who could have been raped to give a reason for his otherwise unfathomable violence. In addition, the “badly decomposed body” of a fifth victim has been discovered. Under custody as he waits for his next court appearance, he becomes “SILENT AS THE GRAVE!²⁵¹” and spends his time praying as he “clutches his bible”. His withdrawn and hopeless demeanour is made sinister by its association with death (“the grave”) and his piety desperate and even deranged by further charges added to the list, for he is now also accused of kidnapping and rape. It is only in this fifth report that we learn his name – Joseph Ntshongwana. But by the time of the sixth report²⁵², while still extraordinarily strong – it takes “four cops to drag him into court” for his bail application – he is become utterly abject: he “refused to sit on the accused’s bench”, stood “mumbling and clutching his bible” and “soiled himself” and “wet his pants”. He is sent back to the cells. No longer simply a source of terror but also an object of ghastly pity, he appears for the final time in a third court report in which an application is made to send him for “mental observation²⁵³”.

The contradictory nature of the masculinity constructed over time here is noteworthy. Beginning with the representations of Ntshongwana’s frightening super-human physical strength and violence, the saga ends with his descent into a more normal, but wretched – the more miserable because subdued – humanness. While the paper still seeks out his latent capacity for violence, the confinement and subjection of his person to the strictures of the judicial process, and his reaction to capture, render Ntshongwana a repellent object of fascination.

The Facebook Rapist

The story of Thabo Bester, dubbed the Facebook Rapist, is recorded in thirteen articles from 26 September to 28 November 2011. As a criminal he is quite different to the Axe Man above, and the treatment he receives from the paper differs accordingly. The story begins with a front page article “**HUNT FOR FACEBOOK RAPIST!**²⁵⁴” in which the paper describes how the suspect, a “smooth-talking conman”, uses a number of Facebook accounts under different aliases to “[prey] on pretty young women” who desire to become models. Here, he is identified from one Facebook account as “Thomas Bester”. Posing as a talent scout, over the past five years he had contacted women through Facebook, and after winning their confidence with promises of jobs

²⁴⁹ Car put the brakes on Axe Man! *Daily Sun* 31 March 2011: 3.

²⁵⁰ Tired-looking ‘Axe Man’ in court *Daily Sun* 1 April 2011: 2.

²⁵¹ Silent as the grave! *Daily Sun* 5 April 2011: 1,2.

²⁵² Axe case accused dragged into court! *Daily Sun* 8 April 2011: 3.

²⁵³ Ntshongwana’s plea of mental illness was dismissed in sentencing in December 2014. He was sentenced to life for four murders, rape and kidnapping.

²⁵⁴ Hunt for Facebook Rapist *Daily Sun* 26 September 2011: 1,2.

had “lured” them to hotels where he robbed them of their valuables. However, no longer content with robbery he has now “RAPED ONE!” and also “slashed her face”. He places a message on Facebook for the police that taunts: “*Catch me if you can!*” Police are exhorted to “**Catch this man before he becomes more violent!**” – a warning given by the same Lieutenant-Colonel Anton Booysen who appears in the Axe man case as head of the Psychologically Motivated Crimes Unit.

This prophetic warning is fulfilled two days later: “**RAPIST TURNS INTO A KILLER!**”²⁵⁵ The front page headline is juxtaposed with a photograph of the woman, smiling and posing in front of what appears to be a marina, and an identikit drawing of the suspect, here again named Thomas Bester. This discovery prompts two more front page articles over the following days in which young women come forward and tell readers the stories of their encounters with Bester. “**ESCAPED FACEBOOK KILLER!**”²⁵⁶ and “**HELP US BUST HIM!**” both recount what are constructed as narrow escapes from the “**conman, fraudster, rapist and KILLER!**” Now not only the “Facebook Killer” but also the “**Facebook Fiend**”, Bester’s plausibility, duplicity, cunning and potential violence are contrasted with the youth and beauty – a potent blend of nubile sexuality and vulnerability – of these “would be” models, who are only saved from danger by their “suspicious and stubborn” parents. Staging her desire for a modern consumer identity that is consciously linked to a sexualised femininity, one 16-year-old would-be model poses awkwardly for the camera. Dressed in designer jeans and high-heeled shoes, she reclines on a living-room couch pin-up style, her crossed legs on display and her face hidden by her long and fashionable hair extensions.

Bester has now become “South Africa’s most wanted killer”²⁵⁷ who continues “hunting”, updating his Facebook status and “trying to connect with attractive young women”. But he is also “not stupid” and still “one step ahead of the cops”. Despite his cleverness, two days later, he is connected with another unsolved rape case which had occurred in August²⁵⁸; and then, unexpectedly, he is found – astonishingly, *in jail* – having been arrested for holding a woman captive in a B&B²⁵⁹. The arresting police do not know who he is, and Bester calls Booysen from the holding cell and gives himself up. The image is a mugshot (see Figure 20, page 190) the police profile photograph, remarkable for being the only such case in the data: unsmiling, he looks straight at the camera with a crude height measure visible behind him. Here he is identified as Thabo Bester and we learn new and damning details about him. As a youngster he was “always in trouble” and he had earlier in 2011 been released on parole for fraud. He “loved the high life”, but was “constantly on the move” with no “fixed address”. Shiftless, aspiring to a status he does not earn, untrustworthy and already criminal, the model of a man gone wrong.

²⁵⁵ Rapist turns into a killer! *Daily Sun* 28 September 2011: 1,2.

²⁵⁶ I escaped Facebook killer! *Daily Sun* 29 September 2011: 1,2.

²⁵⁷ He’s still hunting *Daily Sun* 3 October 2011: 4.

²⁵⁸ Another Facebook rape! *Daily Sun* 5 October 2011: 4.

²⁵⁹ Cops’ hunt ends in jail! *Daily Sun* 10 October 2011: 4. This article references the expose published the day before in *Sunday Sun*: You’ll find me in jail! *Sunday Sun* 9 October 2011: 1,2.

COPS' HUNT ENDS IN JAIL!

Alleged Facebook Killer tracked down

By ANIL SINGH

THE hunt for the man who has become known as the Facebook Killer is over...

But he may well have slipped through the cracks if he had not revealed himself one final time to the cops!

Sunday Sun yesterday reported on the extraordinary phone call to Lieutenant-Colonel Anton Booysen on Friday that gave the suspect away.

"If you are still looking for me... come and fetch me from jail," he said!

Thabo Bester, who used many different names like Thomas Bester Masagula and Kelly Young, was busted last week with a gun in his possession – an indication

that he had become more confident and daring, cops said.

The man who allegedly used Facebook to tempt attractive young women with bogus modelling deals was arrested in his hometown of Alberton, south of Joburg.

He had allegedly taken another young woman to a bed and breakfast and was holding her captive.

While details of his arrest are not yet known, it is believed that the woman managed to call someone from a phone. Cops arrived and arrested Bester, not knowing that he was the alleged Facebook Killer!

On Thursday, he appeared in court and was remained in custody.

No cannot deny... and...
HUNT FOR FACEBOOK RAPIST!
Daily Sun on 26 September.

Daily Sun's source said: "None of the cops or the prison officials had any idea who Bester was."

"He was raised by his gogo, who was a domestic worker. From a young age, he was always in trouble."

"He never had a fixed address. He was released on parole in March this year after serving a year in jail for fraud," the source said.

Captain Neville Eva, lead investigator, together with Warrant Officer Jeremy Martens, who headed the hunt for Bester, compiled three thick files of papers about the case.

Often they didn't go home as they followed leads and spoke to many of his victims. A truck driver gave Bester a lift from Joburg to the Free State. Only later did he realise



Murder and rape suspect Thabo Bester was busted by the police late last week.

who his passenger was and immediately phoned Captain Eva. Bester never stayed in the same place for more than one night. He was constantly on the move and loved the high life.

But he apparently couldn't drive and relied on lifts, public transport and aeroplanes. Where Bester will stand trial is uncertain. Cops throughout the country have cases against him.

Figure 20: Cops' hunt ends in jail. Daily Sun 10 October 2011: 4.

From here the reports deal with his charges and trial for the two rapes and their accompanying robberies, which unusually goes rapidly through the court. His character continues to be closely examined. "WHY I DID IT!"²⁶⁰ records his court-room confession: "I saw her lying on the bed. My lust overtook me and I raped her!" exclaims the front page subheading. This conflation of sex and rape is placed alongside a photograph of a sombre Bester in handcuffs being led to the court by a single officer. The photograph is taken through bars which give the impression of his being already in jail. His sentence is severe – fifty years. This effective life term he finds intolerable, and he threatens to commit suicide: "I'll kill myself!"²⁶¹ he warns, "I won't last until the end of the year". Observing him distraught, with "tears streaming down his cheeks", Captain Eva, the officer who has led the case, coolly explains to the *Daily Sun* that Bester "didn't expect such a harsh sentence". Unmoved, the report closes with Eva's unsympathetic comment: "He deserves every bit of it".

What we have encountered in these extended sagas are two types of criminal men, the first an immediate threat due to his extraordinary physical strength and unpredictable and lethal attacks upon other men with a fearful weapon, the second an encroaching menace due to the cunning and duplicity with which he lures unsuspecting women within his ambit and the escalating violence to which he subjects them once in his power. While the first is an object of fascination, horror and dread, if anything it is the second who is more vilified due to the heightened contrast

²⁶⁰ Why I did it! *Daily Sun* 13 October 2011: 1,2.

²⁶¹ Facebook rapist: I'll kill myself! *Daily Sun* 17 October 2011: 1,2.

between his calculating and manipulative blandishments and the youth and naivety of the women upon whom he preys.

In both these cases, in the initial stages of the reporting the villain can only be ‘read’, as it were, through the signs he leaves, his weapons, his deeds, his words overheard, the reported encounters, a photograph or sketch. In the absence of his physical presence an imaginary form is created by the tabloid, an aesthetic construction that stands in for the man himself. Onto this image is projected a host of fears and suppositions which coalesce around it and give it shape. Interestingly, but not surprisingly perhaps given the nature of this imaginary construction, in both cases the coverage of the man’s villainy shifts markedly once he is in custody and present physically. No longer the porous and continuously inflating receptacles of heated denunciation, speculation and outrage, or the subjects of thrilling capture, having been returned to the ambit of the law they now are revealed as mere men, subdued, abject, and forlorn. Their cases heard, their moment of brief notoriety is over and they disappear from view.

Both these men represent what might, in other circumstances, count as ideal masculinities: the first a man notable amongst other men for his superior physical stature and power; the second distinguished by his smooth urbanity and his ability to attract numbers of young women. Ironically, it is these very traits, so admirable in other contexts, which in excess lead to their downfall. It is this contrast that renders them so interesting to the paper, which dwells at length on their inability to maintain what is ultimately revealed as a façade. Their shame lies in being unable to maintain the ideal masculinities they potentially represent.

Dumb thugs

If the men in the stories above inspire horror and dread for their irredeemable criminality, other less proficient thugs are scorned. Neither the paper nor the victims of luckless thugs feel much for their comeuppance. One thug, whose “job” is sardonically described as being “to wake up very early and rob people²⁶²”, on running away from the scene of his crime is abruptly and ironically “chopped in two” by a passing train “in view of the woman he had robbed!” On witnessing this swift and fatal retribution, the young woman whose bag he had snatched coolly “just shook her head and took a taxi”. The image shows his body in two pieces on either side of a railway track.

The bad luck of these “dumb thugs” and their hapless forays into crime are mercilessly mocked, and the tabloid does not hesitate to teach them their trade. So, in “THUGS RUN ON EMPTY!²⁶³” we learn with amusement how five robbers “thought they had planned their robbery well. They had guns – and they had a bakkie in which to get away from the crime scene”. “But”, continues the report, deadpan, they “forgot to put petrol in their blue Mazda!” The security guard at the supermarket that they rob at gunpoint describes himself as “surprised” when the bakkie in which the “dumb thieves” fled “only went for a short distance and then stopped”. The article is illustrated with a lively cartoon in which we see two armed police officers pointing their weapons at three balaclavaed robbers in a car and asking “Petrol and oil Sir? Or straight to jail?”

²⁶² Train chops thug! *Daily Sun* 6 January 2011: 2.

²⁶³ Thugs run on empty! *Daily Sun* 23 May 2011: 7.

In a similar vein we learn of other hapless thugs who need to be taught their criminal ABC: the Bethal Post Office robbers who thought they had “staged the perfect robbery²⁶⁴”, but who “forgot the two most important robbery rules” which the tabloid then spells out for the reader’s edification: “don’t leave your fingerprints at the crime scene”, and “lie low till the dust settles”. In contravention of this elementary lesson in criminal enterprise, the robbers “forgot to wipe off their fingerprints” from their abandoned getaway vehicle, and greedily “bought luxury BMWs”. Unsurprisingly, they are “bust”.

Such stupidity the *Daily Sun* considers fair game for ridicule. That it is only men who are thus shamed is notable, and the gendered dimension of this form of discipline becomes apparent when sexual crimes are involved. So, in “ASK NICELY FOR POKE²⁶⁵” we learn how a “stupid thug” broke into a shack where two women were sleeping in bed together, and tries to rape one. The story is told from the point of view of the assaulted woman who, feeling someone on top of her, at first “thought it was her friend having a nightmare”. Then she realises it is a man – and that he’s trying to rape her. But to her shock, she further realises that he only “thought he was doing it”, for, “disoriented in the dark”, he was misguidedly “poking the back of my knee”. In the photograph to the right of the report we see the two women sitting close together on a bed; they are embarrassed, and hiding their faces. The one on the right demonstrates how her right leg was bent at the knee at the time of the assault. The caption states that this is the “bent leg that was poked by the horny intruder”. As the subheading has it, “Stupid thug ‘rapes’ back of woman’s leg”.

The “would-be rapist” is further mocked for his lack of performance by the women, who declare that if he had “been more polite”, and had “approached them properly”, they might have acceded to his request for sex. In fact, “he could have had us both”. In this way rape and sex are conflated (as we have witnessed in the story of the Facebook Rapist); indeed, the potentially dangerous situation (the woman had been “worried that he had a weapon”, and her friend remarks “how much worse it could have been”), rather than providing a cause of anxiety and outrage, becomes instead an opportunity for both the women and the paper to deride the hapless man and his manner of going about getting sex. The corollary to this story of course is that if he had succeeded in his quest for sex/rape his manhood would have remained unchallenged – for then he would have been a real, rather than a “would-be” rapist, not pathetically “horny” but demonstrably dangerous. Ironically, given the popular campaign slogan²⁶⁶, the latent (if unintended) message here is: “Only real men rape”.

Rape and rapists

Stories of the sexual incontinence of “horny and stupid²⁶⁷” men must be seen as one aspect of a range of representations within the *Daily Sun* which variously admire or mock men’s sexual prowess. At the same time they also form part of the spectrum of stories which report on the rape of women. The reader will no doubt have become aware how rape features in many of the stories recounted thus far, which reflects its regular presence in the paper. Rape reports appear in almost

²⁶⁴ Thugs nabbed after big hit *Daily Sun* 14 April 2011: 9.

²⁶⁵ Ask nicely for poke *Daily Sun* 17 August 2011: 7. Poke is a colloquialism for sex, to have sex with someone.

²⁶⁶ “Real men don’t rape” is commonly used as an anti-rape slogan.

²⁶⁷ Horny and stupid! *Daily Sun* 15 March 2011: 5.

every edition. But if rape reports are routine news, the tabloid is faced with a dilemma, for the regular occurrence of this crime, and its mundane although shocking nature, is hardly “news” in the sense of being an unusual phenomenon. What becomes interesting then is the question of which stories are able to enter the news stream, and once there, of the treatment given to them by the paper.

This regular coverage, while far short of the actual incidence of rape, keeps it before the reader on a daily basis. The paper seems to play a monitoring role in some of its reportage, which on the one hand via frequent court reports notes the bail conditions or sentencing of suspects, thus applauding the achievement of justice, while it simultaneously decries the lack of timely justice for rape survivors via the formal justice system – “JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED²⁶⁸” – and takes up cases in which the police or courts are accused of inefficiency or corruption: “NO HELP FOR RAPE VICTIM!²⁶⁹”

However, what is more interesting for our purposes is how strongly there emerges in these stories a sense of how rape unequivocally divides those who belong to the community from those who place themselves outside it: to rape is to draw a line between yourself and society, a line which the *Daily Sun* firmly re-inscribes. In this regard it is the motivation for action in many People’s Justice stories – the report of the women urinating on a rape suspect that we met in the People’s Justice section is far from the only such incident²⁷⁰, and the following typical headlines demonstrate the fierce intolerance with which it is generally viewed: “Crowd tries to burn alleged rapist²⁷¹”; “RESIDENTS’ REVENGE!²⁷²”; “Child rapist’s cap cost him his life...²⁷³”; “‘RAPIST’ STONED TO DEATH!²⁷⁴”

Losing no opportunity to heap odium upon men who rape, the paper graphically recounts the violence and cruelty of these “pathetic excuses for men²⁷⁵” and delights in their retribution. At the same time it acknowledges the suffering of the women involved and their plight both during and after such sexual assault and invites the reader to sympathise with the traumas they endure, as well as applaud any bravery on their part.

Here I will deal with one story and its follow-up which demonstrate the paper’s approach to specific incidents, noting that as far as the general coverage goes the events described are far from unique in their shocking violence – that is, we are not dealing here with an exceptional case, among those that reach print. Rather, this is routine reportage as far as the tabloid is concerned. A common critique is that news tends to highlight the extraordinary and unique rape example, thus masking the quotidian and normalised violence of “everyday” rape of women by men who are known to them (Meyers 1997). In the world of the *Daily Sun* there are no “everyday” rapes. The extraordinary rapes that appear are quite numerous enough to represent the breed, for they all appear equally dreadful, and demonstrate clearly enough the inhumanity of

²⁶⁸ Justice delayed is justice denied *Daily Sun* 15 April 2011: 15.

²⁶⁹ No help for rape victim! *Daily Sun* 3 March 2011: 5

²⁷⁰ Take this you monster! *Daily Sun* 10 November 2011: 1.

²⁷¹ Crowd tries to burn alleged rapist *Daily Sun* 31 March 2011: 2.

²⁷² Residents’ revenge! *Daily Sun* 7 March 2011: 5.

²⁷³ Child rapist’s cap cost him his life... *Daily Sun* 14 February 2011: 4.

²⁷⁴ ‘Rapist’ stoned to death! *Daily Sun* 27 June 2011: 4.

²⁷⁵ Gogos’ horror night of rape *Daily Sun* 28 April 2011: 4.

the basic act. The specific events are chosen for their ability to convey a moral lesson rather than simply the degree of violence they contain.

Quite apart from their role in castigating these despicable and immoral assaults, which repeatedly are made to appear to spring solely from an unbridled quest for sexual domination, the reports also serve the newspaper's broader program of defending community solidarity. Their usefulness for us here lies partly in creating scaffolds upon which to construe the tabloid's wider vision of community.

To begin, the headline in the case concerned bears some interpretation, for while seemingly straightforward it signals a complex moral stance: "MUM PRAYS FOR HELP DURING RAPE HORROR!²⁷⁶" First, it is a mother who is raped. We will see further down in this chapter in what light such an attack might be held; suffice it to say here that the juxtaposition of motherhood with rape is deeply provocative. Then, it is not *just* a rape: it is a "rape horror" against which brutality the mother resists with prayer. This invocation of a higher power and what it says both about the woman and the man is to become the point of the story, as we learn that the rapist, hearing her pray during her ordeal (for on screaming for help he had threatened to kill her in the same way he had attempted to murder her husband), scoffs at her. "That made her rapist laugh at her. He mocked her, asking where her good God was and told her that God could not help her". This vignette, no doubt deeply shocking to the paper's religiously-inclined readership, seals the man's character as beyond redemption and compounds what is already indisputably a series of cruel and violent action. Not only had he attempted to murder her husband ("bashing in [his] head with a huge brick"), he had made the mother choose between being raped or having him rape her two-year-old daughter. We are told baldly and shockingly how he had said to the woman that "her toddler's thighs were "much fresher" than hers".

Against the odds, he is arrested. She sees him waiting for her a few days later, intending, we are told, to kill her. She escapes to the home of her pastor and the police promptly come and arrest him "on the spot". But the story is not over! For the man, who is now wanted for the rapes of six women in the last four days, manages to escape from police custody "even though he was handcuffed!" – a "very disappointing" outcome, according to the stoical police spokesperson who ends this report. But the story is *still* not over! Five days later, the tabloid relates with glee how "rough justice" catches up with the "laughing" rapist, for he "wasn't only bust again – he was also hit by a car!" Residents find him trying to rape another woman, and as he tries to escape their vengeance he is knocked down by a passing vehicle: "Rape suspect on the run is flattened!²⁷⁷" He lives to be arrested and charged – not only for six rapes but now also for murder, as the woman's husband has since died.

This story, with its contrasting characters, its narrative of justice lost and won, presents to the reader not only the horror of the rape but the moral economy in which it is perpetrated and prosecuted. The woman's trauma is recognised and her piety vindicated. The man's villainy and the justness of his comeuppance in which fate conspires to play a part is roundly established.

²⁷⁶ Mum prays for help during rape horror! *Daily Sun* 2 December 2011: 4.

²⁷⁷ Rape suspect on the run is flattened! *Daily Sun* 7 December 2011: 4.

The police too play their role – perhaps negligently at first, but ultimately satisfactorily insofar as a possibility of justice is implicit in his second arrest and charges.

Unreformed masculinities

Before leaving this story, however, I wish to return to that chilling comment made by the man about the “freshness” of the toddler’s thighs. What is remarkable here is not the possibility of child rape (for this often-enough appears), but the man’s explicit reference to rape as sex. This equivalence appears frequently: above, in Bester’s rape of the young models, he describes himself as being “overtaken” by lust; rape fulfils his sexual desire. In “NO ESCAPE!²⁷⁸” we are told that the thug after subduing the woman “started to undress her – for sex!” It is readily visible in the adjective “horny”, that disparaging term for uncontrolled sexual appetite which appears at times, as in “Horny madalas bust for rape²⁷⁹” – the word here gathering a further layer of opprobrium by its association with older men who should know – and behave – better. It also becomes visible in a case where a landlord rapes his female tenant “in lieu of her rent for the next month²⁸⁰”, evoking a social economy in which, for the man at least, sex is a coin to be traded for material benefits.

I draw attention to this conflation in order to examine two reports that stand out from ‘ordinary’ rape/sex stories in that they are located in rural, rather than urban areas. Their interest lies in the way they reveal the attitude of the *Daily Sun* towards ‘unreformed’ gender and sexual subjectivities in which rape is conflated with sex. The location of the reports in rural communities imparts a distance by means of which ‘traditional’ masculinities and femininities are brought strongly into focus and made open to critique.

Both reports have as their hero a female “top cop”, General Mamunye Ngobeni, whom we have met previously in Chapter 6. The first report, “A VILLAGE OF SHAME²⁸¹” reminds the reader of the details of a story published two months prior concerning women in a “remote village” who had become “victims of a local sex maniac”. One woman “claimed she had actually been raped” while others had “narrowly escaped the sex attacker’s clutches”. After complaining about the man at an imbizo²⁸², the local induna²⁸³ had fined him “one goat”. But he also “advised” the women “not to embarrass the village” and to “keep the peace...” The women do not report the sexual assault to the police. This point – which is the point of the story – is emphasised by the subheading: “Headman tells women to stay silent”. Ambiguously the “shame” of the title addresses both the shame inflicted on the women and also the shame that is feared might accrue to the village by injudicious talk of things best kept secret.

The story is taken up again by the *Daily Sun*, which goes to Ngobeni and reveals the women’s plight. She (Ngobeni) reacts strongly to the news of the traditional levy on the accused, and the women’s silence – “NOT happy” – and the tabloid sets out her reasons. First: “if a person attempts to rape a woman it is a very serious crime”. Then, “No one must interfere [with the

²⁷⁸ No Escape! *Daily Sun* 25 May 2011: 1,2.

²⁷⁹ Horny madalas bust for rape *Daily Sun* 28 February 2011: 3.

²⁸⁰ Two bust for rape *Daily Sun* 15 November 2011: 8.

²⁸¹ A village of shame *Daily Sun* 3 February 2011: 8.

²⁸² Imbizo: a traditional hearing or meeting.

²⁸³ Induna: an isiZulu word for headman.

work of the police]”. It isn’t for the induna to mete justice but the law: “It is up to the courts to decide”. Finally, she decries customary law altogether: “I don’t want bush justice!” She sends a delegation to the village “to find out what was really going on...” but the “squad of cops” goes in vain, for the women concerned refuse to interact with the law: they “would not speak to the investigators and none was willing to lay a criminal charge!”

The report then turns to the local police, and a different interpretation is given by the Port Shepstone area commander, Major-General Frank Holloway (judging by his name possibly a white male) who states unequivocally that there had been no rape, but that the man had “exposed himself” at the home of one of the women. He had been ordered to “give a goat for a cleansing ceremony... ukugeza”. His reference to customary practice accedes legitimacy to the authority of customary law. But the final paragraph reverts to constitutional rights in the words of Ngobeni, who again states that “We” – the police – take “any crime against women seriously”. (An ambiguous statement whose meanings can be read twice: seriously, as in *unlike customary practice*; and also as a re-assertion of confidence in the law whose efficacy and pertinence for social ordering has been silently refuted by the women.) Given this serious attitude, she chides the women who need to “realise” that the law is on their side: “They can come to the police and we will investigate”. Here, the meaning of the headline acquires further nuance: a village of shame, shameful in that its (female) inhabitants do not act like modern subjects with reference to the law.

This conflict between custom and the Constitution is explicitly set up by the second article: “CULTURE VS THE LAW²⁸⁴” declares the headline. The first sentences continue this idea, but with a warning attached which points to the supremacy of the Constitution in this case: “**Culture is clashing with the law...** And it can land those who think culture is above the law in jail”. The report concerns “the traditional African practice of ukuthwala²⁸⁵” which the “top cop”, here “Lieutenant-General Ngobeni”, “intends to end”. The reader is implicitly expected to understand the meaning of the term above and the practice it refers to, for at first it is not explained, other than indirectly: in descriptions of recent events that have taken place in Bergville, a remote area of KZN. The report describes how the “issue” of ukuthwala “surfaced” when a school principal discovered that a number of his pupils had “dropped out”: in fact, “dozens of young girls” (elsewhere, “young women”, “child”, and “underage” girls) have been “abducted” or “kidnapped”, and “forced into marriage”. The school, a site for the production of modern subjectivities, precipitates the confrontation between customary and modern practice.

Two thirds into the story the report describes the practice for its readers, partly through a police spokesperson, and in so doing condemns it entirely. All the actions involved are damned and women are understood as completely victimised and at the mercy of cultural forces beyond their control. It begins when “a man wants an underage girl”. Implicitly, we are to understand that he “wants” her for sex, and “underage” refers to the young woman’s sexual immaturity. He then “abducts” her and “[takes] her to his home” where she is “held captive” and “raped”. The man

²⁸⁴ Culture vs the law *Daily Sun* 31 August 2011: 6.

²⁸⁵ Ukuthwala refers to a customary practice in which a young woman is abducted from her parent’s home by a man who, having had sexual intercourse with her, approaches the woman’s family for lobola (marriage) negotiations.

then “sends a delegation to the girl’s home to negotiate lobola²⁸⁶”, that is, he attempts to ritually transform what is illicit (rape within captivity) into a socially sanctioned union (consensual sex within marriage).

The words then shift to a direct quotation from the spokesperson who describes how some women’s families “are so poor and desperate that they accept the lobola” – that is, instead of (more rightly) demanding her release, they conspire, out of need, with the daughter’s abductor. An additional explanation for inaction refers to a further order of violence within the parental relationship: “Often the child’s mother is also scared of her husband and has no say in the matter”, implying that while the mother might object, she is unable to, out of fear of the husband whose decisions prevail (implicitly, to the detriment of his child).

However, a remedy is at hand in the person of Ngobeni, who “does not approve” and has “lashed out” at the practice. Some “abductors” have been arrested and cases are “pending in court”. She defends her position: while she “respect[s] people’s culture”, there are limits, for it “may be culture, but it clashes with the country’s law”, and she “must uphold the law of the land”. Clearly, she is not only a representative of the state, but also self-identifies as a Constitutional subject who demands that all recognise the primacy of rights over custom. This reformist stance is apparent in the words which she noticeably (again) directs towards *women*, rather than men: first, as the modern subjects they ought to be, “young girls should be at school”, rather than being “forced to be someone’s wife”. Additionally, while the “community needs to be educated”, it is, perhaps, women who need education more: “I want women to speak out”, she exhorts. Women must learn to trust the law: they must “know” that the police “are there to help them”. Men, in contrast, rather than being addressed as educable subjects (except as unspecified members of “the community”) appear only as villains or their accomplices.

As far as the paper is concerned, however, it is not ‘traditional’ masculinity per se that is condemned, but a predatory sexuality associated with it. Indeed, masculine potency as such can be celebrated outright, albeit with a humorous touch. This is aptly demonstrated in one of several stories that appear over the year about men who are esteemed for their sexual prowess due to the fact that they eat bush meat. “**SUPER 4-5!**²⁸⁷” for example is an admiring portrait of Sithembele Maswana, a security guard in Port Elizabeth, who regularly hunts wild animals whose meat he claims boosts his sexual performance – he asserts that the value of the animals derives from the “muthi” (plants with innate power, which we will meet again in the next chapter) of the plants they eat. This potent meat makes him “very strong in the bedroom”, he boasts. So – and this is the point of this digression – far from having to coerce women, *they* come flocking to *him*. His phone “rings non-stop” with women calling him up to request sex, and he takes pride in satisfying them sexually: “When a woman sleeps over at my place she doesn’t want to leave in the morning”. The fact that he has three children by different partners, and many sexual encounters with women who “just wanted to have fun with me”, is not condemned: rather the number of his liaisons only serves to valorise his assertive, and enviable, sexuality. The photograph shows him striding boldly down the road, smiling broadly, dressed in cap, red

²⁸⁶ Lobola refers to the livestock, or now more commonly money, paid by the family of the man to that of the woman to secure the marriage alliance.

²⁸⁷ Super 4-5! *Daily Sun* 14 September 2011: 5.

sweater and gumboots, carrying a knobkerrie over his shoulder and leading his alert dog. His appearance is virile and confident – the picture of a happy man!

Unhappy lovers

Virility as such is not condemned, then: it can be accommodated within the community framework, so long as it is consensually directed, as can sexual enjoyment itself. Given this ideal, the *Daily Sun* despises rapists and their libidinous brutality. Rape is sex gone wrong, a predatory sexuality that belongs to an unreformed masculinity. This ‘unreconstructed’ form of masculinity comes noticeably to the fore in rural settings where ‘traditions’ clash with modern subjectivities – young women should be at school rather than being child wives, for example, as above. But it also appears in the urban township, in the form of men who rape their female partners, such as one “abusive man” who abducts and rapes his ex-girlfriend: “They were no longer lovers... But that didn’t stop her boyfriend from carrying on as if he owned her²⁸⁸”.

However, rape is not all there is to say about intimate violence, and the murder of female partners is also used to scrutinise unreformed men. Many reports deal with the murder of women by their boyfriends, and wives by their husbands, who may also murder their children, their rival lovers and themselves to boot. The number of stories of murder and assault within intimate and marriage relationships recorded by the tabloid is perhaps indicative of the incidence of such violence within South Africa, which, as the introduction to this section indicates, is appallingly high.

The most notable characteristic of these stories is the particular attention they pay to the criminal partner’s psychological state, how he carries out his crimes, and the weapons he uses. It is the intensity of the uncontrollable emotions felt by the man and the horror of his method of attack which are emphasised. Thus “REVENGE BY CAR!²⁸⁹” describes how the boyfriend of Nhlanhla Mathebula attempts to murder her after a “wild argument”. He “drove right over her” in his car, which the paper dubs the “Toyota of Rage”. In this way the unusual weapon that he chooses becomes the outward expression of the extremity of his inner temper. The “**KIRIVA OF DEATH!**²⁹⁰” – a bizarre and macabre juxtaposition of ideas – is similarly shocking for the dreadful use to which the murderer puts this everyday object, carting the “butchered body” of his wife, which he had “packed... in a refuse bag”. On being discovered with this grisly “cargo”, he commits suicide.

Apart from the guns that feature in so many of these stories, of all forms of revenge arson is perhaps most chilling, a horror which the *Daily Sun* accentuates. The dread which the tabloid associates with fire is perhaps indicative of a keenly-felt social condition, for of all the calamities that can beset informal settlement and back-yard residents, shack fires – an all-too-frequent disaster where paraffin is a primary source of fuel – bring about the most complete and devastating losses of life and property²⁹¹. What is remarkable in cases of thwarted love is how fire, in its ability to consume and erase life, both symbolises and reifies the rejected and

²⁸⁸ Three rapists brought to book *Daily Sun* 28 November 2011: 4.

²⁸⁹ Revenge by car! *Daily Sun* 11 May 2011: 3.

²⁹⁰ Kiriva of death! *Daily Sun* 3 January 2011: 1,2. Kiriva is an Afrikaans colloquialism for a wheelbarrow.

²⁹¹ Bank (2011) describes the ways in which the ongoing threat of fire constrains the lives of shack dwellers in East London townships.

possessive lover's fury and despair, or the all-consuming rage of the violent father. Fire becomes a weapon, wielded by angry men who stoke "flames of revenge"²⁹² and the "evil flames of jealousy"²⁹³. One such "horror incident" describes how a cop "First... set his house alight...²⁹⁴" killing his children, "then he slit his own throat!" In the same way a "ditched lover"²⁹⁵ attempts to retrieve the relationship he had destroyed by "sleeping with [his girlfriend's] best friend". Abjectly, he "went all the way" to Diepsloot to find her. He was "desperate", and he "begged". Ominously the report tells how she foolishly allowed him to "spend one last night" with her in her shack, for it turned out it would be "the last night they would ever share together". The man, no longer a wretched lover but an "evil boyfriend", waited till she was asleep and then "set the shack alight". The fire kills them both.

Motives for murder

Jealousy and rage are the primary emotions which are understood to drive murderous men to kill their partners – and themselves, as the case above indicates. Indeed, jealousy and death, if not automatically inter-implicated, are closely linked in these reports. Thus we are told how "**Jealousy drove a boyfriend into a fit of rage... and then to death!**"²⁹⁶ Here, the boyfriend (an "ex") abducts and murders the back yard tenant whom he suspects is his ex-girlfriend's new lover (he sets him alight), and then he commits suicide in a "field of death" where he summarily "shot himself in the head – and died". In another case, a "jealous" police reservist "goes crazy"²⁹⁷: he "turned a cop shop into a Hollywood film scene"²⁹⁸ when he "shot dead" his girlfriend and then "committed suicide inside the blood-smeared police station". And in yet another case, "JEALOUS and DEAD!"²⁹⁹ (see Figure 19, page 200) ties together these extreme mental and physical conditions, so that the rejected lover's death follows inevitably from his jealousy.

It describes a married woman's ex-boyfriend as "jealous" and "crazy": propelled by this "jealous attack" he furtively "lay in wait" for the married couple and their child to come by in their car, and attempted to shoot them. Failing to kill them, he forthwith "shot himself in the head" and "fell dead on the tarred road". In this report, the dramatic and harrowing image shows the man's blood-soaked body lying on the roadway: a red circle draws the reader's attention to the pistol which lies on the tarmac at his side. The justness of his end, in which he turns his weapon upon himself, is bluntly given to us in the words of the woman's brother who remarks that the man "ended up rewarding himself for what he did".

²⁹² Saved from the flames of revenge *Daily Sun* 8 November 2011: 6.

²⁹³ Was she eaten by evil flames of jealousy? *Daily Sun* 15 November 2011: 7.

²⁹⁴ Horror of cop's threats! *Daily Sun* 1 August 2011: 1,2.

²⁹⁵ Man dies for love of his life *Daily Sun* 20 December 2011: 6.

²⁹⁶ Rage ends in field of death *Daily Sun* 1 June 2011: 5.

²⁹⁷ Notably, of thirty-eight murder/suicides within the data set, eleven involve policemen.

²⁹⁸ Bullets fly and lovers die! *Daily Sun* 3 March 2011: 3.

²⁹⁹ Jealous and dead! *Daily Sun* 8 February 2011: 1,2.



Figure 19: Jealous and dead! Daily Sun 8 February 2011: 1,2.

If jealousy is not the motive, then it must be madness, or one inspired by the other, as the last scene above suggests. So, an “ARMY DAD GOES MAD!³⁰⁰”, and a “DIVORCED DAD GOES MAD!³⁰¹” and yet “Another cop goes mad!³⁰²”, while a “Crazy cop goes on [a] shooting rampage³⁰³”, similar to another “MAD COP’S GUN SPREE!³⁰⁴” Driven by this madness, they all kill their wives and other family members, for they seem unable to keep their tempers. They are “aggressive and violent³⁰⁵” towards their partners, and kill them in a “fit of total rage³⁰⁶”, as did Constable Sthembiso Mazibuko from the Tactical Response Unit after an argument with his girlfriend, which “pushed him over the edge³⁰⁷” of reason into alleged insanity. He “went crazy” and fatally “shot his lover with his R5 assault rifle” before going on a gun spree, a “trail of terror and destruction” that turned quiet Ladysmith into a “scene... in a Rambo movie”. Run to ground by his colleagues, he finally “put the barrel of the weapon under his own chin and pulled the trigger”.

At times these men kill their partners in front of the children who witness the deaths, so that a “Teenager sees [her] mad dad shoot her mum³⁰⁸” and another takes his son with him especially for that purpose so that the child is obliged to see his father “shoot his gogo, her sister, then

³⁰⁰ Army dad goes mad! *Daily Sun* 17 January 2011: 5.
³⁰¹ Divorced dad goes mad! *Daily Sun* 27 January 2011: 4.
³⁰² Another cop goes mad! *Daily Sun* 29 April 2011: 5.
³⁰³ Crazy cop goes on shooting rampage *Daily Sun* 3 March 2011: 10.
³⁰⁴ Mad cop’s gun spree *Daily Sun* 29 September 2011: 4.
³⁰⁵ Horror family murder *Daily Sun* 18 April 2011: 2.
³⁰⁶ Crazy cop goes on shooting rampage *Daily Sun* 10 June 2011: 6.
³⁰⁷ Mad cop’s gun spree! *Daily Sun* 29 September 2011: 4.
³⁰⁸ Easter ends in murder! *Daily Sun* 26 April 2011: 1,2.

himself³⁰⁹ – this, amazingly, after tenderly hugging him and telling him to “be strong”. Other children are not so privileged and die along with their mothers, such as when a “Cop kills [his] girlfriend and her kids³¹⁰”, or they are killed by the father to punish the mother, as a “young dad” did after an argument, to “do something terrible that would hurt his wife forever³¹¹”. The fathers kill themselves, too, of course, usually with a “bullet to the head³¹²” if they are policemen, or with poison³¹³, or by hanging³¹⁴, or by knife³¹⁵: the final and solipsistic victims of their rage.

These family murders are strongly associated (though by no means exclusively so) with policemen, the self-same cops whose heroism, villainy and victimisation the tabloid represents so forcefully. To these qualities we must now add their homicidal madness as husbands and fathers and lovers. This attribution of sudden madness must be understood, I believe, as an attempt by the *Daily Sun* to make sense of the horror, and to place the otherwise inexplicable outburst within a narrative framework that helps to account for its extraordinary violence. It provides a ready lens through which to view the spectacle, for at times the “madness” seems all there is to relate, a litany of unfathomable and terrifying events whose dramatic unfolding, beginning with the partner’s murder and ending with the suicide, constitutes the story *in toto*, as in the report of a “berserk” constable who unaccountably “went on a killing spree” and murdered his girlfriend as well as two others before attempting to kill himself³¹⁶. We are left with the “mystery” of the homicidal rage, which becomes the point of the story.

However, more satisfying motivations are always sought to add nuance to the tragedies, and for this reason we can assume that the *Daily Sun* is not only interested in the violence per se but rather in its significance within the couple’s relationship and what it says about the man. Sometimes the couple’s fierce arguments are cited as a possible reason: “we sometimes heard them screaming and fighting for hours³¹⁷”, comments a sombre neighbour of Warrant Officer Thulani Makhanya, who burnt his family alive. He had had his service pistol confiscated when, six weeks before the murders, he had threatened to “**wipe out his entire family as well as himself!**³¹⁸” Or their jealousy: “The constable couldn’t bear to see his ex-lover going to meet a friend...³¹⁹”

But ultimately even these reasons are not satisfying, and what appears repeatedly is the helplessness felt by survivors at the obscurity of the origins of such outrages – and the closer the tabloid comes to the social interface at which these murders are experienced, the more it also struggles to contain the disruption within a narrative that makes sense of it. This is evident in an article that draws heavily on the words of a father whose daughters have both been murdered by

³⁰⁹ Army dad goes mad! *Daily Sun* 17 January 2011: 5.

³¹⁰ Horror family murder *Daily Sun* 18 April 2011: 2.

³¹¹ Argument led to deaths *Daily Sun* 9 September 2011: 12.

³¹² Crazy cop goes on shooting rampage *Daily Sun* 10 June 2011: 6.

³¹³ Argument led to deaths *Daily Sun* 9 September 2011: 12.

³¹⁴ Father and son found hanged *Daily Sun* 14 February 2011: 4.

³¹⁵ Horror of cop’s threats! *Daily Sun* 1 August 2011: 1,2.

³¹⁶ Happy New Year – now die! *Daily Sun* 3 January 2011: 3.

³¹⁷ We are not shocked by family tragedy *Daily Sun* 2 August 2011: 4.

³¹⁸ Cop snaps and his family pays dearly! *Daily Sun* 1 August 2011: 2.

³¹⁹ Crazy cop goes on shooting rampage *Daily Sun* 10 June 2011: 6.

their husbands³²⁰. Moving between sympathy and outrage, a stark description of the murder and suicide, the parents' statements of loss and powerlessness, and ending with a police spokesperson's ritual advice to officers who "need help", the report is a montage of grief, horror, deep vulnerability and banal institutional prescriptives.

The title points to the fatal difference between the love experienced by the older couple and that of their children: while "**DEADLY LOVE TOOK MY DAUGHTERS!**" the father and mother only have mutual respect and love for each other – "she even calls me Mr Selemela". Given this positive experience of patriarchal conjugal happiness, the father reflects that he had "expected the men in my daughters' lives to do the same". That they do not is all too clear: his second daughter, whose marriage had "always been troubled", has just been murdered by her husband, a police officer, who killed her in front of their sixteen-year-old daughter and then committed suicide in front of his eleven-year-old son. Astonishingly, with stoic fatalism, he announces "There is no one who we can blame. All we can do is put our trust in God", a sentiment echoed by his wife, who tells the *Daily Sun* that she "has to accept what happened" for there is "nothing else that we can do".

Occasionally the paper introduces other voices which offer alternative views concerning the origins and prevention of this form of attack. Ritualistic comments by police officers can end the story, such as "There are structures in place for people to get help if they find their problems are too much for them". One article unusually enquires "What drives a dedicated cop to kill his wife and then commit suicide?³²¹" In its desire to find a plausible explanation, the reporter interviews a senior officer, a Colonel from "Bheki Cele's office", who drily responds that all members of the service "must pass a psychometric test" which is able to "measure" their aptitude for the position, including their "personality" and "how well they handle stress" (along with the job's "intellectual demands"). The opaque nature of this answer, which relies for its authority on its formal language and evocation of a scientific intervention, contrasts interestingly with that of a pastor who comments on two separate murder and murder-suicide incidents involving policemen and their partners³²². He stoutly blames the ANC government, which he accuses of having "killed religion" in favour of politics. Before they "took over", he laments, there fewer such incidents "because priests used to hold prayer sessions to help them". However, these attempts to understand and account for the horror of family murder are muted by the overwhelming force of meaning constructed within the stories generally, of men who regularly "[lose] their cool³²³" and go mad.

However, murders by policemen of their families was, as it happens, a feature of apartheid days, likewise; so that this peculiar local phenomenon, which transcends race barriers, cannot be laid at the door of the ANC. Perhaps, both before and after liberation, it has something to do with that 'schizophrenia' that South African conditions seem always to demand: the necessity perpetually to live, then as now, within palpable contradictions, from which, for those inured to

³²⁰ Deadly love took my daughters! *Daily Sun* 31 October 2011: 1,2.

³²¹ Cop kills wife then himself! *Daily Sun* 13 May 2011: 8.

³²² Another cop goes mad! *Daily Sun* 29 April 2011: 5.

³²³ Another cop loses his cool! *Daily Sun* 13 May 2011: 10.

violent solutions, extreme outbursts of violence and even self-violence can appear to offer the only relief, the only ‘semiotic’ answer.

Emotional communities

In the absence of first-hand information, stories about the murder of girlfriends by lovers or the deaths of families at the hands of husbands are narrated in the third person which imparts a certain distance, often further filtered through the words of an intermediary such as the police or a neighbour. As readers we are onlookers to the drama. But a marked difference in tone and approach is visible where first-person narratives are employed. This occurs when victims are interviewed, in particular the bereaved families of the deceased women. Here, the *Daily Sun* highlights their shock and grief and bears witness to the pain of the traumatised survivors. It is clear that the tabloid sees its mission as testifying to the cruelty of these unnatural deaths and the pain and loss they cause to loved ones, most often parents or siblings. As readers we are invited to mourn alongside the families as they grieve for their dead daughters and sisters. While the presentation is designed to emphasise their grief and trauma, this portrayal is deeply sympathetic rather than voyeuristic. The reports, which foreground first-person narratives, aim to arouse the reader’s own emotions, so that we too feel anguish at the death, horror at how it is brought about. Nor is this strategy simply about individual responses to private pains. Rather, the emotions thus evoked, here as elsewhere, are central to the production of the community envisaged by the *Daily Sun*. The emotions that texts conjure are a necessary dimension of belonging to SunLand. Emotional evocation by texts that address communities of belonging, Ahmed (2004) argues, is never neutral but tied to the production of identity:

In such affective economies, emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective (Ahmed 2004: 119).

It is participation in the emotional field structured by narratives of loss and suffering which signifies who belongs and who is excluded from the *Daily Sun*’s community. One story aptly illustrates this aspect of such coverage. On the surface it is a typical story of an unhappy lover: the man, a police officer, was “so jealous” of his beautiful young partner Matjama that “he often accused her of cheating on him”. He lures her to a taxi rank where he “pulled out a knife” and “ended Matjama’s young life there and then”. Her youth and beauty and the pathos of her death are referred to repeatedly: she was a “gorgeous”, “happy” and “lovely young girl”, who was “full of life” and who “[faced] the future with confidence”. Moreover, his jealousy was unreasonable as the “beautiful Matjama” was “loyal” to her lover. At the scene of her death she “tried to flee”, and she “[pleaded] for her life” in vain as she was “butchered”.

However cruel this scene is, it is the mother’s trauma which is emphasised in the headlines, a trauma that also serves to compound the villainy of the man. For he phones “Mother Mapalo” and tells her that he has murdered her daughter, but that it is “**NO BIG DEAL!**” This headline is

supported by the subheading “The cruel words of a killer to the mother of the girl he had stabbed to death!” His callous sentiment is repeated verbatim for the reader in the Sotho in which it was originally spoken, which is then translated for the reader: “**Sorry, but it’s not a big deal!**”³²⁴ We see the mother in a small head and shoulders photograph to the bottom left of the report. Her head is bowed and her face is grief-stricken. This image of the mother is juxtaposed by a larger photograph of her daughter taken after her matric: “The way she was...” Dressed in a school uniform, with her hands on her hips, she looks clearly at the camera with a happy and confident smile. The pathos of this captivating picture of a self-assured young woman derives from the contrast with her mother’s words: “I nearly died of shock when I saw my darling girl’s body lying there in a pool of blood... I am so heartbroken”.

Strong and Sassy women

In this way, violence against women is condemned by the tabloid, which is unambiguously on the side of the victimised partner. At the same time, it provokes pity for the innocent young woman’s untimely and brutal death, and bears witness to the suffering and grief of the bereaved mother. By these means the man and his jealous rage are emphasised and he is placed outside the pale of society. But not all women “lie down for a beating” or collude with their subordination. That this is their default role, however, is revealed by the humour with which the paper clothes its reports of women who stubbornly refuse this compartmentalisation.

“**BRUISED! BLEEDING! AND SO IN LOVE!**”³²⁵ presents the reader with a front page photograph of a couple walking resolutely down a rural road “on their way to hospital” after a public and “bloody” fight. The man, Sindisile, is covered with blood, which runs thickly over his neck, chest and arms. His partner, Ntombekhaya, appears dishevelled. We are told in a humorous tone how they quarrelled at a taxi rank when “horny” Sindisile, who “felt a stirring in his pants”, asked to return home because he needed “some sex” but Ntombekhaya, on her way to visit her child, refused.

The fight intensifies and the paper gives Ntombekhaya, a “strong woman”, a great deal of space to make her case for what follows: first, he “hit me on the head” then “dragged me through a pool of muddy water” and made a “dirty mess of my clothes” and finally “tore my clothes off in full view of the villagers”. “So”, she continues indignantly, “I took off my shoe and beat him up!” She feels entirely justified: “He has no right to abuse me like that”. The tabloid agrees with her and quotes eyewitnesses who are outraged at the sight – of *his* violence: “I was shocked to see a man beating up a woman like that”, remarks one, and another agrees that it is “a disgrace”, for “no-one can justify violence against women”. What’s more, women “shouldn’t allow their men to think they can have sex anywhere, anytime”, and Ntombekhaya was “right to fight back”. Having thus resolutely defended herself, the “fighting lovebirds kiss and make up” and she helps him to hospital. The final words are given to Ntombekhaya, who states “I love him – but I will never allow him to abuse me”.

³²⁴ No big deal! *Daily Sun* 1 June 2011; 1,2.

³²⁵ Bruised! Bleeding! And so in love! *Daily Sun* 13 December 2011: 1,2.

Also not lying down for defeat is Osie Vos, who has laid charges against her brother, Makhanda, now “behind bars³²⁶”. The opening words set up the moral: “**Brothers and sister love each other, don’t they?**” But this “**BATTLING BROTHER AND SISTER**”, according to the neighbours, not only have a history of violent drunken quarrels, but have “pulled knives on each other”. “We hear screams and beatings”, they continue; ironically, when they are sober, “they get along quite nicely!”

However, the feuding of the “warring pair” has now reached “**THE LIMIT**” and it is not hard to see what that is: the large front page photograph shows Osie sitting on a large black wheelie bin in the middle of a township road. It is lying on its side, and she sits upon it in a triumphant pose, her legs crossed at the knee, feet bare, one arm supporting her boldly as she leans back and imperiously confronts the camera. Her dress is dishevelled and her left breast in its black brassiere bulges wantonly from her top. Behind her is a huge fire which glows yellow and red in the dusk light. “**SISTER’S FLAMES OF FURY!**” declares the headline, which enthusiastically tells us what is burning so energetically: “You burn my clothes, brother, and I’ll burn YOURS!” To the right back of the scene is a group of men, women and children who stand staring at the spectacle of the burning heap of clothes and the “defiant” and victorious Osie. Apparently Makhanda started the fire when she refused to give him money: “He always demands money from me...” she complains to the *Daily Sun*, “But this time he took things too far”. Her retribution includes taking her grievance to the cops and the paper notes with amusement that “the brother-v-sister warfare will be brought to an end – by the law”.

The complex mixture of admiration and scandal felt for such outrageous and rebellious behaviour leavens what is otherwise an overwhelming concern for the safety of young women, for the assurance of which their compliance with normative social roles is expected. Clearly, not all women agree: that they do not necessarily need such advice is evident in their preparedness to exceed moral and social prescriptions for the benefit of their own self-interest – or self-defence.

Wayward women

However, not all women seem able to look after themselves as well as Ntombekhaya and Osie, and wayward young women whose imprudent behaviour leads them into danger are a focus of concern. In these cases we get moral lessons in almost fable-like form as a front page story demonstrates. “**BEAUTY RUNS OFF WITH BEAST!**³²⁷” declares the headline, with the ominous subheading, positioned above the enlarged snapshot of a smiling young woman: “No one knows if she is dead or alive...³²⁸” This is the “beauty” of the title; to the left of her image is a smaller, grainy, black and white image of an unsmiling man, Freddy Lelake, taken from an

³²⁶ Sister’s flames of fury! *Daily Sun* 1 April 2011: 1,2.

³²⁷ Beauty runs off with beast! *Daily Sun* 7 November 2011: 1,2.

³²⁸ Stories of young women going missing and their feared death appear regularly, for their parents approach the paper for help in tracing their lost daughters: “Where is my daughter?” asks one (*Daily Sun* 27 October 2011: 4). This thirteen-year-old girl is also rescued by the paper: “SunPower brings Andile home!” *Daily Sun* 2 November 2011: 4. But others are not so lucky – on page 5 of this same edition, facing the photograph of Andile happily re-united with her mother, is another story told by a father whose daughter has perhaps been kidnapped (*Daily Sun* Cops won’t help me find my daughter *Daily Sun* 2 November 2011: 5). Like most of these, we do not hear of her return.

official document of some kind: the image captures an official stamp to top left of his head. Meeting his unflinching gaze, we understand that this is the “beast”. The report opens with a reiteration of the title theme: “**She is young, she is beautiful...**” Unaccountably, Amogelang Matshaba, a Grade 10 pupil, disappeared a month ago in the company of this man, “a convicted criminal” who is moreover “*described as dangerous by his own family!*” The page two subheading stokes the drama: “In love or in trouble?” it asks provocatively.

The report then focuses in turn upon the two mothers, the anguish of the first at not knowing the whereabouts of her daughter, whose phone is always off; and the distress of the second whose son’s criminality “is making [her] health worse”: at the time of Amogelang’s disappearance, he was out on parole for “kidnapping and rape...” Indeed, he is “always in trouble with the law”, according to his sister, and he “has no respect for anyone”, a claim vividly supported by the mother’s evidence that when she had enquired about Amogelang’s unexplained presence in her home, he rudely “just told me to shut up”.

However, the reader is not kept in suspense long, for a few days later the *Daily Sun* triumphantly announces that it has saved the day once more: “SunPower to the rescue³²⁹” it declares in bright red letters next to an image of the rescued Amogelang Matshaba, leaning her forehead on her hand and looking tired and dejected. “Sobbing and shaking”, Amogelang recounts to the reporter the drama of her escape from her boyfriend (“BEAUTY FLEES BEAST!”), who had “told [her] to choose between him and my family”, had “beat [her] up” and “forced [her] to go with him”. Afraid to return home because he would look for her, she had spent some time “moving around and begging for food”. This modern fairytale does not end, then, in the miraculous transformation of the beast into the Prince, but in the confirmation of his savagery and in the distress and suffering of the abducted partner who appears lucky to escape alive.

A less fortunate young woman is Nonlanhla Nhlapo, a 14-year old girl, who dies for her mistakes. “STABBED BY ONE OF HER LOVERS!³³⁰” points immediately to a scandalous ambiguity: a female victim, who has not one but two lovers, one of whom has killed her. The opening lines explore the moral conundrum that the headline exposes, and at the same time make the position of the story clear and the moral explicit: Not only was it a “dangerous love triangle”, but “At 14, Nonlanhla Nhlapo was too young to be having an affair³³¹” with a man in his mid-20s. “AND” continues the story, signalling its shock in capital letters, as if this were not enough, she was having an affair “with another, even older man!” The double liaison leads directly to her murder, for she is stabbed by the older partner at a tavern, where she had gone to drink after leaving her younger partner sleeping. We are told vividly how her blood “gushed from her neck and body” as her friends try in vain to save her life. The picture montage shows Nonlanhla, “GONE TOO SOON”, her grieving grandmother “STILL IN SHOCK” under her mourning blankets, and the man who killed her as he is ushered into a cell by a cop: “BUST”.

³²⁹ Beauty flees beast! *Daily Sun* 11 November 2011: 4.

³³⁰ Stabbed by one of her lovers! *Daily Sun* 21 June 2011: 8.

³³¹ The fact that sex with the young woman, who is only 14 at the time of this report, would have constituted statutory rape, is not mentioned.

Also dead is Andiswa Mantyi, whose “Life of booze³³²” led to her being raped and murdered at the age of nineteen, when ideally she “should have been having a good time exploring life’s possibilities” (See Figure 21, below). Her aunt’s words conclude a story of drinking, bad friends and disregarded advice, a stark moral lesson which the *Daily Sun* repeats for its readers: “We wish other kids could learn that disrespecting the good advice of elders often leads to sad tragedies”. To illustrate this catastrophe of lost opportunity and a life cut short, the paper has superimposed over her image – a small head and shoulders snapshot – a white cut-out banner with a slogan in green letters (perhaps from a magazine) which reads: “I want to live my dream”. It is cropped so we only see the first letters of ‘dream’ – ‘dre’ and part of the ‘a.’ Her dreams have been cut short, quite literally.

Life of booze claims young girl



DEAD: Andiswa Mantyi.

By SAMMY MORETSI

SHE was only 19 years old and should have been having a good time exploring life’s possibilities . . .

But Andiswa Mantyi was at an age where she thought having a good time with so-called friends meant drinking brandy.

And last Saturday morning, that was what she was doing.

Her mother, Lulama Mantyi (38), spoke to *Daily Sun* at her house in Simunye near Westonaria, west of Joburg, about what happened.

She said: “I tried to warn her about the dangers of boozing too much but she ignored me and went out drinking.

“She didn’t return home and now we know why. The poor child must have suffered at the end because on Monday her body was

found lying in open veld nearby.”

Westonaria police spokeswoman Linki Lefakane said: “Andiswa’s body was naked when she was found. She had been raped and murdered, but we haven’t made any arrest and the exact cause of death will only be determined after the post mortem.”

Andiswa’s aunt Yoliswa Mantyi said: “Last year she failed her matric but before that she was an A pupil.

“We tried to arrange counseling for her, but the problem was that she hung out with people who said they were her friends but were really destroying her life.

“We are more deeply hurt about this than we can say.

“We wish that other kids could learn that disrespecting the good advice of elders often leads to sad tragedies.”

Figure 21: *Life of booze claims young girl Daily Sun 17 March: 5.*

The pathos of the image lies in its metaphorical illustration of the desire of the young woman whose stubborn disregard of the advice of her elders brings a premature end to her yearning: while her desire is legitimate, her means of achieving it are censured. Young, sexually active women who run away from home, who have inappropriate relationships for their age, who take up with violent or criminal friends and partners, become object lessons for others: given what the paper knows about violent men, it anxiously exhorts young women to make responsible choices, preferably in line with the advice of parents and elders.

³³² Life of booze claims young girl *Daily Sun* 17 March 2011: 5.

Mothers

Mothers bear a heavy representational burden, for their actions provide what appear to be unambiguous moral lessons. Good mothers, and bad, present us with villains and victims in stark form. We see this clearly in the story of the victimisation of Mother Mapalo earlier³³³ (see page 203) – her faultless grief at her daughter’s death and the cruel goad she suffers from the murderer are models of proper feeling. This drives the outrage of the report no less than the actual murder. Virtuous motherhood is the zenith of a woman’s social status, a condition which renders any assault a horror. It is for this very reason that a **“HITMAN WITH A HEART!”**³³⁴ – a paid assassin who “couldn’t bear to pull the trigger” – informs the mother whom he has been paid to kill that she is a marked woman. He had seen that she was the only “breadwinner” with “three kids”. *Her virtues as a mother save her life.*

“MUM OF FIVE KILLED BY A BULLY!”³³⁵ similarly extols the mother’s merits, one who was brought up to “[believe] in respecting elders” and also taught this value to her children. If she lived by this value, she also died for it, for when she heroically defended an elderly neighbour from the boorish threats and insults of a “bully”, he kills her. The contrast with the “disrespectful devil” who ended her life could not be greater: he was “drunk”, “insulting”, and spoke “rudely” and threateningly to an older woman. This woman, a “granny”, praises the younger woman’s courage, for she rebukes the man for speaking thus to a person whose age deserved more respect. Indeed, she lays down her life for her neighbour: “[I]t would have been me dying if Manko had not spoken up for me”. The emphasis on Manko’s mothering – the number of her small children, her teaching them social values, the selfless way in which she shields her youngest child from the blows that kill her – foreground the importance of this status, which is used to identify her in the headline. She might be an ordinary *kasi* resident, but she is a good mother.

It is this contrast between the disrespectful and murderous villain and the victimised but virtuous mother, that provides the flavour of the report’s outrage. I want briefly to return here to a story introduced at the start of this chapter, concerning the sentencing of Gwala the hitman³³⁶, for something of the symbolic significance of motherhood is made explicit in the recorded words of the killer. The journalist explains that shortly after the murder of the deputy mayor in 2007 Gwala had “made me believe he truly felt sorry for killing a wife, a mother and a leader”. He had at that time told the reporter that “Killing a man is easier to deal with”, for it is “a test of strength between two men”. His next words reference the difference between the meaning of the death of a man and that of a woman: “But a woman? A mother?” he asks rhetorically. The implication is that for men, their death or survival is simply a measure of an intrinsic value located in the body – their muscle, their skill at fighting, or staying alive perhaps, a “test of strength”, as he calls it. By this measure, if the man “fails” the test, his death is not only inevitable but understandable, and need not cause remorse or alarm. However, a woman’s physical strength forms no part of this construction of physical violence, and she is instead seen

³³³ No big deal! *Daily Sun* 1 June 2011; 1,2.

³³⁴ Hitman with a heart! *Daily Sun* 21 October 2011; 1,2.

³³⁵ Mum of 5 killed by a bully! *Daily Sun* 20 October 2011; 1,2.

³³⁶ The face of a killer! *Daily Sun* 4 July 2011; 1,2.

in terms of her social role, a “mother”, which defines her virtues and should constitute her inviolability. In essence, he breaks a taboo, which horror the report graphically recounts in his own words:

“I can still see her face. She was shocked. She turned and looked at me after I shot her, right in front of her son.

“So I shot her again.

“And again.

“I must have shot her six times. Then I turned and ran!”

This “evil”, he claimed at the time, “would haunt him for ever”. “But”, as the reporter laconically remarks, “all the sorrow he said he felt had evaporated by the time of his trial”.

Sons and Mothers

Men’s actions are evaluated first and foremost in terms of their behaviour in the public realm (e.g., whether they are ‘cops’ or ‘thugs’). So for example, if a policeman kills his family, it is usually this public identity which is marked: “COP KILLS WIFE THEN HIMSELF!³³⁷” Or, as we have seen above, if in a sexual relationship, it is the man’s individual characteristics of rage and jealousy which are emphasised and censured.

The one place in which men’s actions are held up for repeated scrutiny within the roles they occupy in private or at least familial realm is as *sons*. Some sons don’t treat their mothers with the respect the paper considers they deserve, and the paper is outraged on their behalf. In “DRUNKEN MADNESS!³³⁸” for example, we meet Morris, the contemporary *kasi* anti-hero, as he runs back and forth between the tavern (where his “tough” girlfriend tells him no pay no play), and his mother's home (but “gogo Betty” hasn’t any money to give him for more booze). He goes to bed drunk, then wakes up early and burns down his mother's shack in revenge, “with all his family members asleep inside”. Fortunately, they escape; Morris, the mad and “unlucky lover”, is arrested and charged with arson.

Other mothers do not get off as easily, as the following headlines all too vividly illustrate: “Fourth time lucky for mum murderer³³⁹”, “Mum stabbed 18 times with a screwdriver³⁴⁰” and “Man bust for attacking his mum with an axe!³⁴¹” These vengeful and matricidal sons are curiously counterpointed by a poignant strand in the coverage³⁴² which relates to the mothers of more ordinary criminals, *kasi* thugs who rob, murder, rape or are addicted to drugs. These women come into view when their sons face punishment of one kind or another. Although themselves accused of no crime, the mothers are associated with their offspring’s offences and are drawn into conflicts concerning them. Emerging from reports about these confrontations are two contrasting types of mother, the sacrificial and the punitive, both of which are usefully employed by the paper as actors in its moral dramas.

³³⁷ Cop kills wife then himself! *Daily Sun* 13 May 2011: 8.

³³⁸ Drunken madness! *Daily Sun* 12 August 2011: 3.

³³⁹ Fourth time lucky for mum murderer *Daily Sun* 1 November 2011: 5.

³⁴⁰ Mum stabbed 18 times with a screwdriver *Daily Sun* 7 June: 8.

³⁴¹ Man bust for attacking his mum with an axe! *Daily Sun* 4 October 2011: 11.

³⁴² Thirty reports in the set relate to criminal sons and their mothers.

The sacrificial mother can literally give up her life in exchange for the wrongs done by her son. Here we return briefly to People's Justice and add a further nuance to what has already been presented of that phenomenon. What we see now through the diffracting lens of the paper as it turns to examine the wrongs done to mothers is the way in which the social relationships of the accused are judged alongside his crimes. That is, the whole person, which includes his ties to others, is included in the popular sentence. For many young men their primary relationship is with their mother, and she stands proxy for her child. Thus in "Mum died for her son's sins"³⁴³ the mother is killed in lieu of her son when the "angry crowd" which had accused him of theft and arson failed to find him. We learn in a follow-up article³⁴⁴ that the vengeful crowd consisted of *eighteen other women* – they burn her body. Another mother "pays for her son's sins!"³⁴⁵ when her neighbours, who are described as "frenzied", an "angry crowd" and a "maddened mob", burn down her house when her son is arrested for murder. As a known gangster, they felt his arrest "was not good enough". The distraught and tearful mother, who is "innocent", stands before the charred walls of her ruined home which had been a "neat little house" before the attack. The pity of her plight is emphasised: all her possessions have "burned to ash" and she has "had her whole life destroyed". The unjustness of the mother's fate and her suffering at the hands of vengeful neighbours as she "pays" society for the crimes of her child is the point of the story, which thereby condemns the actions of the community in a way which such reports do not when their focus is solely on the punishment of the offender³⁴⁶.

I would like to bring to attention here, in a brief aside to this discussion of sons and mothers, to the single instance in this data set of a *father* who is interviewed after his son is killed by the community³⁴⁷. Its tone differs so markedly from that of reports of mothers in such contexts that it bears some comment. First, much of the space is spent on the deviance of the young man, who is variously described as a "well-known as a thug" with "thieving ways", someone who "seemed unable to keep his hands off other people's property". As a tik³⁴⁸ addict he not only "robbed people", but was "really mad", and did things "a normal person would not do". Thus expelled from normal society, he dies a dreadful death, his head "smashed open with bricks, stones and sticks!" The photograph shows his body lying in the road covered with a red blanket which also partially covers the rocks and large concrete bricks that were used to kill him – a pool of blood seeps out beneath them.

It is striking here that while the stories of 'sons and mothers' certainly do describe the son's deviance and his punishment or death, this is primarily discussed within the context of the primary relationship with the mother, rather than with the aggrieved community. Though here, unusually, it is the male parent who is brought in, there is no mention anywhere of the young

³⁴³ Mum died for her son's sins *Daily Sun* 7 January 2011: 2.

³⁴⁴ Killed woman's corpse burnt *Daily Sun* 17 January 2011: 4.

³⁴⁵ Mum pays for her son's sins! *Daily Sun* 20 July 2011: 4.

³⁴⁶ For example, in the previous chapter, the story of the mother who has to force the police to arrest the man who murdered her daughter tells how the residents of that location burn down not only the accused man's home, but also his mother's and sister's. Their plight is not considered by the report, whose purpose in that instance is to support the bereaved and wronged mother of the murdered girl.

³⁴⁷ I saw a mob kill my son! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 6.

³⁴⁸ Tik is a colloquial term for crystal methamphetamine.

man's *relationship* with the father, who only comments that he knew of his son's reputation of having "a problem of robbing people".

The second noticeable divergence is how the paper constructs the circumstances in which the father witnesses his son's end. He explains to the *Daily Sun* that although he saw the killing, he "couldn't say anything because no one would have listened to me". He describes himself as effectively helpless and set apart from the action: he "could no nothing" to save his son and he "had no other way [of behaving other than watching]". His impotence and marginalisation is starkly different to the cases of mothers, who as central characters to these dramas are called out by the community to die, beg for the lives and weep for the deaths of their condemned children.

The difference between what is expected of the father and the role of the mother is clearly illustrated in a story which describes how a mother mediates her son's sentencing by residents: "**A MOTHER'S TEARS SAVE SON!**"³⁴⁹ We are told how neighbours catch the young man, scornfully described as a "25-year-old high school drop out", stealing a door frame from a construction site and summon his mother, Gogo Betty Shabangu, before they kill him. But she "**fell to her knees**" and begged them to spare him, for if they killed him "*she would have to bury him – and she did not have money for that*". So the people "**CALLED THE COPS INSTEAD!**" – but not before making him carry the doorframe (the symbolic aspect of his sentence) and giving him a portion of the punishment they had originally planned: a "painful beating". The residents interviewed by the *Daily Sun* explain that "although they have no sympathy for people who break the law", they "felt sorry" for the mother, who they describe as "a decent woman": in this way her reputation saves her child.

However, the story does not end here, for the report gives no little space to the moral relationship between the mother and her son, in which their mutual responsibilities are examined. We are told that although she had once had "high hopes" for him, he had betrayed his promise as her "only son" and had instead "turned into a nightmare", unemployed and hanging out with the "wrong" friends. Despite this disappointment, she continued to carry out her own motherly duties: she "still gave him motherly love" and sheltered him "under her roof". Indeed, her loyalty extends beyond his present life to his potential death, in which case she would be obliged to pay for his burial. However, he "broke her heart" with this final betrayal, and, having saved his life, she considers her present duty to him to have ended. For she tells the *Daily Sun* that although she is "very grateful" that he is going to jail (rather than being killed) she will not "bail out a son who is a criminal". Indeed, he must "stay there for the rest of his life".

Why such a drastic sentence for what is essentially a minor offence? (The police spokesperson tells the paper that he is charged with possession of stolen property.) On seeing her son in the hands of the community she had said "*My son... what have you done?*" These plaintive words, their emotional appeal highlighted by the unexpected use of italics, speak not simply to the act of petty theft but more importantly to the crisis caused by his destruction of his – and, by association, her – reputation. We can imagine that the hyperbolic punishment she advocates – a

³⁴⁹ A mother's tears save son! *Daily Sun* 15 August 2011: 1,2.

symbolic equivalent to the death envisaged by the residents – is a way of reassuring her irate neighbours that she will not be the means of his returning to commit further crimes³⁵⁰, and preserving the good standing (and perhaps, even safety) she enjoys. Given the rules of township justice, she must balance her motherly love and responsibilities with his forfeiting of their social capital. The shame she feels at this loss of standing is starkly visible in the photograph, in which she is depicted sitting and leaning upon her right arm and hiding her face from the camera with her right hand. She literally cannot look society (here, the tabloid’s audience) in the face. Instead, the image shows her angled away from the viewer towards the source of her disgrace, her delinquent son, whose image is juxtaposed with hers. He sits in almost the same pose, an echo of her shame, leaning on his arms with his head bowed, in the back of the police van as he “waits to be driven to jail”.

Dereliction of filial duty is in itself seen as a fundamental crime: it underlies and compounds more serious offences and is understood as driving mothers to punitive action. So we are not surprised to hear another “fed up” mother, whose son was caught by neighbours as he beat her up, speak punitively regarding her child in a different social context, that of the formal court of law. This court report³⁵¹ captures a moment of high drama in the sentencing of the suspect, a young man whose “mum” has now “had enough!” She tells the presiding magistrate at the trial that he should “throw her son in jail!” as she is not prepared to pay the R2000.00 fine that would secure his release. Using the court room as a platform to expatiate on the injustices done her by her ungrateful son, her rhetoric, aided by that of the magistrate, sets up a hierarchy of duties and moral relations.

First, instead of “protecting her” as a good son should, he subjects her to “torture and insults”. This is even more reprehensible because of her own sacrifice: she “carried [him] in [her] womb for nine months”. Moreover, he wilfully “destroyed [her] husband’s hard-earned property”. This is its own punishment, however, as, if he had looked after it, “he would have benefitted” from it. The implicit argument is that he ought to have looked after it, as a good son should, so that he could rightfully inherit the fruits of filial duty. But the final straw is that while she had protected him “when people told me my son was a thief”, he had ungratefully turned on her and she “became a victim too”. Furthermore, he showed no remorse for what he had done. She stoutly asserts that she “deserves better” than this and she thus harshly “refuses to forgive him”. It is clear that he “needs to learn a lesson”, and it is for this reason that she invokes the Law and tells the magistrate that she wants him to “serve his sentence” – described as “six long months” – as jail will be “a good example” not only for her own son, but for “other badly-behaved kids”, with whose injured mothers she commiserates and identifies.

Bad mums

However, the sympathy of the paper for mothers has its limits. We come at last to villainous women, the most noticeable of which are the self-same ‘mums’ with whose plight as victims the tabloid so clearly sympathises! Given their distinction as virtuous victims, their fall in status to

³⁵⁰ This is a frequent complaint as we have seen in the People’s Justice chapter: many articles quote residents angrily repudiating bail for suspects who return from bail hearings to further terrorise their neighbourhoods.

³⁵¹ Send my evil son to jail! *Daily Sun* 18 August 2011: 5.

villains is remarkable. But perhaps it is nevertheless understandable: the burdens of motherly responsibility and care that women bear, which on the one hand provide their claim to status within the current social formation, become simultaneously the measure against which they are judged and found wanting.

It is specifically regarding the care of small children and babies that mothers are villainised. They are most particularly accused of the physical neglect or abandonment of small children, and the murder of newborns. But before going into the reports, I draw the reader's attention to an aspect of the coverage which provides some context for what follows. Repeatedly, what appears in the data set is the extreme vulnerability of children. While I do not analyse this aspect of the coverage in the thesis, the many reports of abductions, rapes, murders, mutilations, accidental deaths and injuries of township children and babies forms a significant trend and must be noted. Apart from a few exceptional circumstances in which neglect is suspected³⁵², mothers are rarely blamed for crimes directed at their children by others (as we saw in the case of the murdered child³⁵³ in the chapter on Police). That they are so severely held to account for the neglect, abandonment or murder of their own children should be understood as symptomatic of a social context in which all children appear deeply vulnerable and at risk, not only from people, but from the physical environment of the township itself.

Deadbeat mums

Bad mums don't take proper care of their children, which neglect the tabloid finds deeply offensive. It severely castigates these abusive women at the same time that it protects its own moral status by ensuring that the children involved in these cases are brought to the attention of the authorities. In the face-to-face township setting these abuses soon come to the notice of neighbours. So "Residents get tough with [a] deadbeat mum³⁵⁴" when neighbours alert the local CPF to her two babies which she locks up and leaves alone when she shamelessly "goes out boozing". But she defends herself and tells the *Daily Sun* that her children's grant cards are in the hands of the loan sharks, from whom she has to borrow money to buy food. The Eastern Cape Social Development Department promises to assess the situation.

"SHE'S A DISGRACE!³⁵⁵" exclaims another front page headline about a similar "poor excuse for a mother", who leaves her child while she goes drinking. She should "rot in jail", declares an eyewitness, as she "does not deserve to live among people". The neglected boy, described as "disabled" and "desperate", "covered in his own shit" and "weak from hunger" is rescued by a neighbour, who we see in the photograph feeding him through the bars of a shack window. The mother is arrested and the child "taken to a place of safety". We see him from the back in a small photograph, as he toddles off holding the hand of a policeman.

³⁵² See Boshoff and Prinsloo (2015), which describes a case, reported in the *Daily Sun*, in which neighbours attack the mother of a young, mentally retarded woman after she is raped.

³⁵³ Mum forces cops into action! *Daily Sun* 23 November 2011: 1,2.

³⁵⁴ Residents get tough with deadbeat mum *Daily Sun* 22 June: 7.

³⁵⁵ She's a disgrace! *Daily Sun* 4 January 2011: 3.

Bad mothers also steal the children's social grant³⁵⁶ money: "BOOZING MUM MAKES DAD MAD!³⁵⁷" pictures a deserted husband outside his shack, together with his three youngest children solemnly dressed in school uniforms. The elderly father, unselfconsciously revealing his deeply patriarchal bias, complains that he has now "become a full time nanny for our kids", because the mother of his children has left home, and now selfishly steals and spends the child support grants on "booze" and her new "toy-boy lover". While the father criticizes the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) for not helping to stop his wife stealing the benefits, the reporter records the arrival home of the mother, who is "visibly drunk". Indeed, the woman is confronted not just with the Sunteam, but also the local CPF and the police, and later SASSA officials, all present at the instigation of the tabloid to witness her perfidy.

She's not the only one to be publically shamed for stealing the Child Grant money: Sonia Kgoadi is similarly accused by her abandoned husband of being a "MUM ON [the] RUN!³⁵⁸" She is "heartless" and "cruel", a mother who "is supposed to love and care for the little ones", but instead is "having a nice time using our kids' grant money". The children's plight is emphasised: they are "heartbroken" and apathetically "don't even ask about their mum anymore". The *Daily Sun* quotes a Social Development spokesperson who advises him what to do in order to be able to receive the grant. In both these cases, the older husbands of attractive younger wives lament their choice of partner: "she was hot stuff", the one complains, for until he knew better, "I thought I was the lucky one the day she married me".

Desperate mums

However, not all bad mothers are necessarily condemned, and the paper at times treads cautiously when dealing with desperate mothers. Some reports are more inclined to understand than condemn when mothers abandon their babies, as does a story concerning a "sad and desperate" teenage mother, a high-school pupil "only 16 years old", who, "angry with her ex-boyfriend", shockingly abandons her toddler, a "tiny kid", in the middle of a busy road: "MUM DUMPS BABY!³⁵⁹" This horrifying disruption constitutes the opening of the story; but the baby having been rescued unharmed, and the police summoned, the young woman is allowed to account for her actions. She "sobbed" as she explained that she had been "dumped" by the baby's father, "leaving me with the child", while he, carefree, carried on "enjoying his life with his new girlfriends".

The image shows a roadside scene in which the mother, with her rescued baby held securely in her arms, talks to two police officers. Arms akimbo, they lean against the police van listening intently to her story with stern and serious faces. They take her to social workers, who reassuringly tell the *Daily Sun* that "We will help the girl" and also perhaps "take her son to a place of safety". Unusually, in the last part of this report we hear the voice of the ex-boyfriend, a 21-year-old matric pupil whose words, read in the light of the preceding drama and the young mother's lament, reveal all too clearly his patriarchal entitlement: in his opinion, his "girlfriend"

³⁵⁶ Children from impoverished families are eligible for the Child Support Grant, administered by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). The grant is given to the primary carers of vulnerable children.

³⁵⁷ Boozing mum makes dad mad! *Daily Sun* 17 June 2011: 11.

³⁵⁸ Mum on run! *Daily Sun* 9 March 2011: 1,2.

³⁵⁹ Mum dumps baby! *Daily Sun* 18 February 2011: 4.

(not ex, as in the words of the young woman) is simply “jealous”. Unreasonably, she “wants me to be at her house all the time”. “I cannot do that because I’m studying”, he asserts.

The desperate plight of many young mothers is suggested by the frequent stories of abandoned and murdered infants. These anonymous “mothers of shame³⁶⁰” are often vilified as “evil”, and their actions denounced: “What kind of a mother would dump a beautiful baby boy like this to die?” asks one bystander of a baby found miraculously unharmed after being “LEFT TO DIE... among the rocks!³⁶¹” Pragmatically, she demands: “Why did she not give him to a centre where he could be safe?” In this way the mother’s character and decisions are found unfathomable. But bystanders’ comments contrast markedly with the words spoken by police. Their statements sometimes in these cases round off the story and take the form of ritual advice to desperate mothers to get help before taking their babies’ lives. For example, quite typically, one spokesperson commenting on a baby miraculously rescued from a pit toilet³⁶² “appealed to the community” (here, women are included in, rather than singled out from, society) to “go to social workers if they have problems they can’t solve”. The words reflect an unspoken understanding that infanticide is a crime apart and that mothers at times need particular forms of assistance. No such advice is given to bank robbers, for example. The *Daily Sun* also occasionally tries to help, such as by running articles about and giving the numbers for rescue centres for unwanted infants³⁶³.

Discussion

That the *Daily Sun* sees gender relations as complicated and fraught is clear. The data reveal a tension between expectations and reality, in which an unspoken but nevertheless compelling vision of a virtuous gender order is clearly not realised. This of course is, in one sense, to the tabloid’s advantage – the tension generates excitement, and provides it with much of its news. But it is necessary for the full picture to view its coverage from the paradigm within which the tabloid works. The *Daily Sun* does not see its role to critique the lack of ideal gender relations in the community, so much as to return the reader to it them order to better see their flaws. This is an admonitory offering, and not merely there for its salacious interest. The ultimate conclusion its stance represents must be that, like sexual and familial relationships themselves, we are for ever compelled to return to them despite their flaws, and hopefully attend to their amendment. To paraphrase Beckett’s (1959: 418) protagonist in *The Unnamable*: “We can’t go on. We’ll go on”.

While gender ‘rights’ make no explicit appearance, they are implicit in the more chivalrous masculinity that the paper demands, and the fragile freedoms that women claim, both of which are fraught with complexity. Through the coverage of violent men and victimised and resistant women, we are enjoined to consider what to jettison, retain or transform of gender relations as we know them. Rather than giving answers, it presents the reader with conundrums: what modern or traditional masculinities and femininities should we choose, what modern or

³⁶⁰ Zim’s mothers of shame! *Daily Sun* 15 September 2011: 1,2.

³⁶¹ Left to die... among the rocks! *Daily Sun* 4 October 2011: 1.

³⁶² Out of the pit of death came a baby’s cries! *Daily Sun* 26 September 2011: 1.

³⁶³ Hospital: dump babies here! *Daily Sun* 7 October 2011: 5; Door of Hope still saving lives *Daily Sun* 7 October 2011: 5.

traditional relationships, and in which circumstances? This state of conflict between these forces is, after all, the contemporary township situation; the one that the paper everywhere presents. It is also one from which – except for a lucky few – it cannot in practical terms rescue us.

‘Modern’ gender identities are thus not necessarily constructed in opposition to ‘traditional’ masculinities and femininities. Rather, the tabloid explores what modern and traditional masculinities and femininities mean in the current township context, and what attends them in terms of social expectations.

Whether traditional or modern, violent masculinities are ambivalently constructed: that men are expected to have a capacity for violence is apparent in the stories of the dumb thugs who are caught by police or community members, and the hapless rapists who cannot rape, or else fall victim to People’s Justice. Their humiliation at the hands of men and women alike, and the derision of the paper, censures their failure at performing this most fundamental requirement of masculinity, even where it condemns the circumstances chosen.

However, the excessive violence of ‘monsters’ is condemned outright: men without mercy are cast out from society, at the same time that they are, contradictorily, examined for signs of belonging, of humanness. This ambivalence is apparent in the cases of the Axe Man and the Facebook Rapist. In the former, the heightened fear of the man’s extraordinary strength and uncontrollable rage is slowly overtaken by a picture of misery; in the latter, the man’s urbanity and audacity is supplanted by abject self-pity. The tabloid’s extended examination of these two suspects is connected to the interest in the way these otherwise ideal masculinities are corrupted, first by their criminal excesses and then by their emotional disintegration in custody. The ideal image of the strong man, the astute man, is replaced by an uncertain and even shameful picture of the mutability and fallibility of a masculine ideal. What the paper demands is an impossible ideal: the non-violent, violent man.

Cops, those men from whom violence is expected as normal in their public role, are also condemned when they kill their families in private. Possessive men who kill their wayward lovers are held in contempt. Social control is promoted, and sexual incontinence judged no part of an ideal masculinity, for, whether they are modern or traditional men, rape and rapists are judged harshly. The contradiction, between expectations of violence, and the demand for reformed masculinities in which latent violence is under control, is starkly apparent.

The representation of women too, is open to ambiguity. It is clear from the chapter on People’s Justice that some women are as ready as men to carry out retributive violence, and the tabloid relishes the opportunity that such cases provide of examples of weak men and hapless thugs. However, young women and mothers are a focus of attention in particular when it comes to crimes against, and by, women. In the case of young women, while independence is not forbidden, their sexual fidelity is expected and their conformity to the guidance of elders is deemed necessary in order for them to be safe. If these safeguards are ignored and they fall prey to criminals, they alone are to blame. However, when these two safeguards fail through no fault of the own, they become examples of perfect victims whose representational purpose is to act as foil for the savagery of their unreformed partners or the brutality of thugs.

Good women are also good mothers, who protect their children at the cost of their own lives if necessary. Thus sons who bring disgrace or harm to their mothers through crime are treated harshly by the paper, which also takes the mother's side when they are unfairly judged by the community together with their criminal sons. On the other hand, to be a mother who fails in her duty to protect her children is to become an object of severe censure. However, in contrast to the condemnation of thugs, the object of this censure appears ultimately in the interests of shaming and reforming, rather than casting out, the mother.

The paper doesn't necessarily come down on the same side in each case. Its point of view is contingent and immediate, it shifts according to the moment, and each story presents different facets to a common problem which is not easily resolved. These contradictions are indicative of the complexity of the problem South Africans face, confronted with a gender order in which both men and women are tasked with unbearable, and extreme, demands.

Chapter 8: Witchcraft

It embarrassed me to read about people who seek revenge and then use muthi, costing just R10, to cause a stroke in their enemies. This shows how backward my fellow black people are. I have horrible memories of people being necklaced after being accused of witchcraft in the 1980s. The people who sell this rubbish muthi are fake sangomas. Genuine traditional healers respect their trade. Their job is to heal people, not to sell herbs on street corners and at pensioners' pay points. The fakes degrade the credibility of the traditional healers' profession. That is why traditional healers are called witchdoctors. They are incorrectly associated with witchcraft and evil (Elias Malibe 2015: 14).

The characters which appear in the previous chapters are represented as actors in struggles arranged along dichotomous lines: state or People's Justice, cops as heroes or villains, reformed and unreformed masculinities. However, I have noted how these dichotomies, no sooner constructed, are simultaneously undermined and blurred by the shifting stance adopted by the tabloid to meet the demands of specific narrative moments. This final analysis chapter on crimes associated with a 'traditional' worldview introduces another tension, that between a western secular and rationalist understanding of the world and a cosmology that includes the possibility of witchcraft. In no other aspect of the reportage is it more obvious that the tabloid sees its readers as people who live between and with the demands of two seemingly antithetical worldviews.

As a newspaper, an institution that derives from a western template but is here being reformulated to operate under these specific post-colonial conditions, the subjects that matter to the *Daily Sun* are similarly characterised by the necessity of responding to both western and local knowledges and practices, which become most visible when they are in tension with each other. In doing so, it reflects the predicament of its readership, which is itself constituted by contesting discourses, and thus living out this paradox makes the newspaper creditably 'local' in a doubled, perhaps seven ironic, way. Unlike mainstream South African newspapers which reproduce through their codes of professionalism a western and modern viewpoint, the *Daily Sun*, by way of reporting on the particularities of its audience's lived experiences, necessarily engages with local ways of seeing and brings them into focus for discussion. It does so, quite deliberately, in a spirit of relaxed criticality.

As a result the tabloid actively brings to our attention aspects peculiar to local South African life and draws into its range of possible narratives those stories that would otherwise, from a western perspective, be dismissed as credulous nonsense or superstition – belief in dreams, muthi, witchcraft, curses and the like. As the *Daily Sun* certainly takes these stories seriously it effectively demands that they be understood on their own terms, rather than being dismissed out of hand. Correspondingly, my aim is not to critique this coverage – a favourite *bête noire* for *Daily Sun* detractors – but through an analysis to show how this coverage expands and complicates our understanding of crime as it appears in the paper. For these stories are all about crimes of one kind or another, and the search for justice that follows upon them.

How the tabloid manages the strain of the tension between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ that this topic evokes is the focus of this chapter, which analyses reports of the crime *of* witchcraft and the crimes associated *with* witchcraft (this distinction will be elaborated further down). Clearly, the *Daily Sun* understands that there *is* a strain between the secular and the occult, reason and superstition. At the same time, it refuses to dictate which of these positions should prevail. This refusal to take sides leads to interesting questions: should such views even be given space? If space, then credence? If credence, with what consequences for our understandings of our contemporary South African society? Reporting witchcraft in a way that refuses outright to condemn the system of belief in which it makes sense might seem to some an abdication of journalistic responsibility, insofar as it is journalism’s supposed duty to educate and ‘develop’ its readers or to ‘modernise’ them away from such backward superstitions. However, this depends on what we mean by modernity. I argue that the *Daily Sun*’s approach to this thorny topic does indeed provide a modernising mechanism *if* we understand being modern as successfully managing the ambiguities of witchcraft within a context which denies its possibility at the same time that it presents (at least to the tabloid’s readers) overwhelming proof of its presence.

By adopting this stance I suggest that the *Daily Sun* unintentionally “contains” witchcraft for its readers. By “containment” I refer to the various ways in which African states, communities and individuals have attempted to manage the social and political dangers associated with witchcraft and its often violent consequences. Here I follow Ciekawy and Geschiere’s (1998) argument that a focus on containment “highlights how people in African societies conceptualise witchcraft as a problem and helps to locate witchcraft discourses in the everyday contexts in which they acquire their meaning and relevance. It also emphasizes human agency by drawing attention to the ways that individuals and groups attempt to define their moral and social universe and act upon these definitions in a rapidly changing world” (Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998: 3; also Pels 1998).

Admittedly, witchcraft is, by its very nature, sensationalist: this is certainly to the paper’s obvious commercial advantage. Its mode of presentations allows the reader to feel the thrill of the inadmissible; but simultaneously, for those to whom such beliefs are a matter of importance, the coverage provides recognition. Yet, this said, its presentation is not indiscriminate and the analysis reveals the lines along which it draws a boundary between what is and is not admissible, for while it validates ‘tradition’, it condemns its excesses and the crimes perpetrated in its name. It also remains aware of the limitations of the modern state and by no means advocates the law as a panacea for the wide variety of problems conjured by the presence of witchcraft beliefs. Instead, it presents for its readers the options that they have as township residents with respect to managing witchcraft’s manifestations and the search for justice that it sets in motion. I argue that it is exactly by means of this refusal to come down absolutely on one side or the other that the *Daily Sun* “contains” witchcraft, for the presentation confirms for the reader the ambivalences and contradictions of the current dispensation that they confront on a daily basis. Even more than this, its coverage helps to relocate traditional beliefs to an urban setting and transforms them into a tool for coming to terms with considerable modern pressures: for finding continuity of meaning in a modern townscape: “a new magic for a new situation”, to use Comaroff and Comaroff’s terms (1999: 284).

In emphasising this view, it is important not to use the word “witchcraft” as a general catch-all term for traditional occult belief. Witchcraft beliefs are a part of contemporary South African township society and there is no doubt that witchcraft presents for many township residents what appears to them as a very real problem. For witchcraft is a crime. It is a form of harm involving the illegitimate use of occult power which leads to all manner of misfortune, including death, perpetrated in secret by another person, often close to the victim. It is enmeshed in and related in complex ways to the wider experience of physical and systemic violence in township spaces. And insofar as it is not recognised by the state as a crime that needs its own form of justice, it contributes to the pervasive perception of state failure, for the state is seen as unable – and unwilling – to contain it. Indeed, the tabloid reports about witchcraft reveal how deep the disconnection is between the state and township residents, who are obliged to seek other means to control its presence.

In order to provide some context for the analysis, in the discussion below I draw on anthropological research to briefly discuss why understanding witchcraft as a constituent aspect of South African modernity is a useful first step to approaching the *Daily Sun*'s representations. I then briefly describe how the failures of historical attempts to contain witchcraft have contributed to the present disposition, and the connections between witchcraft and the violence experienced by so many township residents.

Witchcraft and modernity

With regard to my use of this mostly-anthropological literature, I must point out some qualifications of my own. I invoke the tradition/modernity binary aware of the pitfalls into which this over-worn juxtaposition invites us to fall. As I must once again reiterate, my concern is not with veracity. My aim is not to see how accurately – or incoherently and incompletely – the *Daily Sun*, a modern institution, reports on the ‘traditional’ belief in witchcraft, or how these representations conflict with or subvert more ‘modern’ – for some, more desirable – portrayals of its characters. Indeed, the newspaper does not pretend to a scientific representation; its mode is essentially intuitive and unselfconscious. But it must conform to how its readership is inclined to see things; to fail in this would be to lose authenticity. It is this more complex and even confused mix that results that especially interests me.

I am influenced here by Geschiere, Meyer and Pels' (2008: 3) critique of the “tautological and unilinear” binary produced by discourses of modernity. Drawing on Latour (1993) they argue that “the opposition of modern and traditional was an ideological product of modernity, itself” a “pure” dichotomy that ignored “the necessary mediations and translations between these poles”.

Yet a strong tradition/modernity binary is one that at first sight appears to hold fast to the imagination of many South Africans who consider these matters. One explanation for its local persistence is to be found in Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject* (1996), a political analysis which accounts for the differences to be found amongst specific groups within post-colonial African states. The origin of this difference lies in indirect or decentralised rule, in which the majority of rural Africans were ruled via ‘traditional authorities’ (that is, tribal chiefs) at the behest of the coloniser. What emerged, he argues, was a “bifurcated state” (Mamdani 1996: 16) in which rural peoples were divided along lines of ethnicity, and rural areas were separated from urban.

Residents of these spaces had different relationships with the state: (white) urban residents were given the rights and privileges of citizens, while (black) rural residents became ethnicised, tribal ‘subjects’. The differential treatment and status of rural residents was justified on the grounds of ‘custom’, but this became a reified and sedimented custom, with its attendant subjectivities, legislated in the interests of the colonisers.

Apartheid legislation reinforced these colonial structures, in particular the 1927 Black Administration Act and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. Eviscerated of the checks and balances that moderated chiefly power prior to colonial intervention, the ‘Tribal Authorities’ could now rule with impunity, an autocratic governance which became highly unpopular and against which the struggle directed much of its force (Ntsebeza 2008). Yet, ironically, given the new state’s liberal and rights-based Constitution, post-independence legislation has reaffirmed and even extended the power enjoyed by traditional authorities under apartheid³⁶⁴.

This intractable rift, or interstice, in the democratic state (the origin of the legal pluralism that we met in the discussion on People’s Justice) has implications for the kinds of subjectivities validated in different social spaces.

All this is agreed and common ground. However, there is a danger of over-emphasizing this opposition which, while providing a useful starting point for thinking about the contradictions of our contemporary South African milieu, runs the risk of reifying what is more usefully conceptualised as a dynamic tension in which the modern and the traditional are interleaved and mutually constituting. On the ground, instead of a binary, we meet instead a “murky and smudged picture of blending lines and uncertain textures” (Oomen 2008: 84) in which ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ institutions and discursive spaces, and the subjectivities, values, attitudes and behaviours associated with them, provide a range of resources which are drawn on opportunistically as need arises (Niehaus 1998; Bank 2011³⁶⁵).

The thrust of this argument is central for the position I adopt in relation to the *Daily Sun*’s witchcraft reports. An uncritical understanding of witchcraft takes it to be the very stuff of ‘tradition’, a worldview associated with a simpler, pre-modern, pre-scientific, sacral society associated with a (more backward) time before ‘modernity, with its rational, secular and instrumentalist outlook. Indeed, witchcraft “conjures up the very inverse of practical reason” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: xv). In the South African case, it may be tempting then to ascribe such beliefs to customary and rural subjects whose ‘traditional’ social order still prevails in so many parts of the country. But relegating witchcraft beliefs to a less developed ‘tradition’ only adds to the ideological force of the yard-stick of western modernity by which African modernity is measured and found wanting – in short, it denies that Africa is coeval with the west. This is a premature dismissal, which refuses to consider how aspects of ‘tradition’ come to

³⁶⁴ Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 2003 (re)establishes Traditional Councils. The Communal Land Rights Act of 2004 recognises the authority of Traditional Councils to administer and allocate land to rural residents. The complex strategic game played out post-apartheid between the ANC government and the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) to control the rural constituency is set out by Ntsebeza (2005).

³⁶⁵ Bank (2011), for example, resists Mamdani’s stress on the separation and opposition of (traditional) rural and (modern) urban identities, and describes how, in the East London townships during the struggle period, there appeared instead a co-operative tension between the values and approaches of their subjects.

survive and indeed flourish as a constituent element of our contemporary milieu (Geschiere, Meyer and Pels 2008).

An extensive anthropological literature grapples with this subject and attempts to account for the intractability and resilience of witchcraft discourses at the present time (Moore and Sanders 2001; Ellis and Ter Haar 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; 1999; Geschiere 1997; 2013; Ciekawy and Geschiere 1998; Ashforth 2005). A prominent strand in these debates is how witchcraft beliefs persist in articulating themselves within the social, economic and political consequences of an increasingly globalised modernity, despite being viewed disparagingly, as they are, locally, in the context of the failure of African 'development'. It is the ambiguous nature of the power of witchcraft that seemingly enables it to successfully accommodate present-day conditions and allows it to be re-made in new contexts (Moore and Sanders 2001; Geschiere 1997): witchcraft, rather than a static remnant of the past, is a creative and evolving "mode of producing *new* forms of consciousness; of expressing discontent with modernity and dealing with its deformities... [a] new magic for new situations" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 284).

Witchcraft and violence

The social and economic dislocation engendered by the rapid change consequent on South Africa's entry into global neoliberalism is, however, only one contextual factor which accounts for the recent proliferation of witchcraft. Another feature of the local social landscape is violence. Within the Comaroffs' analysis, violence is part of the wider economy, in which crime becomes a means of "routinized redistribution" within an economic order "that has sanctioned dramatic polarities of wealth and caused intense jealousy among neighbours" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 292). In contrast, Ashforth (2005) and Niehaus (2013) draw explicit attention to violence as a formative aspect of the South African social context. Their claims resonate with what we find within the pages of the *Daily Sun*, which so vividly illustrate the violence that characterises township society, for it is amongst these stories of aggression and brutality that we readily locate accounts of witchcraft. Here is the negative and destructive aspect of that modernised 'township magic' mentioned previously: witchcraft becomes an illicit means to gain traction in a capitalist rat-race and to disadvantage rivals. Or, even more dangerously, success of a worldly kind can be interpreted by those less fortunate as necessarily having been obtained by such occult means! Violence of a more conventional kind may be the consequence of such suspicions. Ashforth's contention is that the spiritual insecurity that derives from township residents' fear of the ubiquitous presence of witchcraft, and the insecurity that arises from other forms of interpersonal and systemic violence, must be thought of interdependently. This is because they pose *similar questions about the availability of justice for the ordinary township resident*: "The key to linking concerns such as those surrounding spiritual insecurity in everyday life with the politics of the state... lies in taking seriously the questions of security and justice that arise from efforts to manage relations with invisible forces acting upon life" (Ashforth 2005: 16).

The idea of spiritual insecurity is also pertinent to the story told by Niehaus (2013) of how his black research assistant, Jimmy, came to believe that his father was bewitching him and the extraordinary measures he took to free himself from his father's magic. In trying to account for

Jimmy's desperate and fatal struggle, Niehaus argues that the insecurity he experienced was rooted in his "encounters with 'structural' and 'interpersonal' violence during the apartheid era" which "shaped his encounters with misfortune and witchcraft" (Niehaus 2013: 205). Both the sustained structural violence of apartheid, and also the "more insidious forms of violence at home, on village streets, and in public institutions such as schools and universities" experienced at the hands of kin, neighbours, teachers, fellow students and political activists, reflected the violence of witchcraft: "If one were to view witchcraft in terms of the metaphor of a mirror, then what the mirror reflects are the various forms of everyday violence. There is a continuity between the violence of mystical and social realms" (Niehaus 2013: 205).

Containing witchcraft

What both ethnographies reveal is the *lack* of containment of witchcraft in contexts characterised by rapid social change inflected by high levels of systemic and inter-personal violence. This lack is attributable in part to South Africa's history of colonisation and apartheid in which the colonial state and apartheid states attempted to *eradicate* rather than manage witchcraft beliefs³⁶⁶. Ironically, the political authority and legitimacy of chiefs, so necessary to the decentralised colonial administration, depended in part upon their role in controlling witchcraft. Their protection of witchcraft victims and the neutralising of the witch preserved the moral order at the same time that it acted as a potent source of political legitimacy: "Their actions against witches were an important ritual strategy to retain authority. It dramatised their capacity to punish the perpetrators of misfortune, and to assist those who sought compensation for the crimes that had been committed against them by witches" (Niehaus 2001a: 139; Mavhungu 2000; Petrus 2012). During the colonial period, chiefs and headmen defied the authorities (who enforced the law selectively) and continued to adjudicate witchcraft accusations and crimes within customary courts. The success of this approach is supported by the evidence presented by Niehaus (2001a) which shows that in the early part of the twentieth century witchcraft accusations were few, and the presence of suspected witches was largely tolerated without recourse to violence³⁶⁷.

However, the authority of traditional leaders in this regard was largely eviscerated by the implementation of the apartheid 1956 Bantu Authorities Act and the Witchcraft Suppression Act No.3 of 1957. This latter made it a criminal offence for anyone to accuse another of being a witch, to practice witchcraft, to consult a "witch-finder" or to offer another person advice or the means to bewitch others. The legislation uses the word "pretend" several times – for example, "pretends to use supernatural power" – underscoring the rationalist and Eurocentric framing of the law (Hund 2000). This attempt to stamp out an entire worldview has had profound implications for secular crime control. Compelled to refrain from adjudicating witchcraft-related crimes, chiefs (and the state law that supported them) were now seen by their subjects as *siding with witches*, rather than providing protection for their victims. When the older, institutionally regulated and accepted methods of detection, adjudication, penalties and compensations (such as

³⁶⁶ The earliest South African colonial witchcraft laws are chapter xi of Act No.24 of 1886, the Native Territories Penal Code, which carries the heading "Pretended Witchcraft"; and Act No.2 of 1895, the Witchcraft Suppression Act (Cape Town). See Witchcraft Suppression Act No.3 of 1957.

³⁶⁷ Niehaus (2001a: 138) records an interesting observation from an elder which has implications for our present study: "In the past witches were not killed. Their punishment was to be exposed."

finer or banishment) were removed, accusers turned to violence as punishment, and murder was and is the frequent result.

Clearly, the need for the control of witchcraft and justice for the suffering it causes did not disappear with the criminalisation of witchcraft accusations. Instead of declining, the intervention of the state led to an increase rather than a decrease of witchcraft accusations, which were often accompanied by violent retribution akin to People's Justice (Niehaus 2001a; Hund 2000). By the latter part of the twentieth century it became clear that witchcraft-related crimes were a cause for general concern. It is estimated that over 300 witchcraft-related killings took place between 1985 and 1995 (Ralushai et al 1996: 191-239³⁶⁸). As proponents of a liberal democracy, the ANC leadership has publically condemned witchcraft and the attacks associated with it.

Yet for political reasons the ruling party could not be seen to do nothing about witchcraft itself. In 1995 the new government appointed the first post-independence Commission, the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry (1996) into witchcraft, as a response to the many murders that had taken place in the Northern Province. The report takes witchcraft seriously, and proposes that the state repeals the Suppression of Witchcraft legislation and actively prosecutes witches *and* the inyanga who identify them – to this end it proposes a Witchcraft Control Act³⁶⁹. The report is criticised for various failures and omissions which it is not necessary to go into here (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Hund 2000; Niehaus 2001b; Geschiere 2006). However, it has the merit of drawing attention to the need for a coherent state-led response to the threat that witchcraft poses to the security of many South Africans³⁷⁰. However, these recommendations have yet to be put into practice; and in the meantime, it is left up to individuals to seek redress for themselves. The intermixture of these ideas with the recurrent mass xenophobic attacks of 2016 (again, a municipal election year like 2011) where foreign shopkeepers were targeted as alleged traders in human body parts, is an unfortunate example of the consequences of such a vacuum in a considered state response.

The current lack of provision for access to justice for witchcraft victims leaves many South Africans without redress. The current law does not recognise the existence of witchcraft, which is incommensurate with secular justice due to lack of empirical proof. Law enforcement only prosecutes those material crimes that arise out of belief in witchcraft. That is, witchcraft *itself* is not dealt with so much as its *consequences*.

³⁶⁸ Ralushai et al 1996: 191-239. Niehaus (2001b) criticises this figure as too low, citing the 73 witchcraft-related murders in Lebowa alone in 1993. These later attacks and their motivations have been the focus of intense scrutiny; they were linked to the complex political developments of the struggle period, in which Comrades led witch-hunts in attempts to eliminate “evil”. In addition to the examples contained in the Ralushai report, see Jensen (2012); Bozzoli (2004); Niehaus (1993; 1998).

³⁶⁹ The legal quagmire that would be created if the Report's recommendations were to be implemented is dealt with by Geschiere (2006).

³⁷⁰ A similar proposal was put forward by the Thohoyandou Declaration, in the report on the South African Commission on Gender Equality's National Conference on Witchcraft Violence in 1998. The national conference on witchcraft violence, 6-10 September 1998, convened by the Commission on Gender Equality, issued a Declaration which criticised current law which works “from a premise that denies the belief in witchcraft”, and recommended changes to the Suppression of Witchcraft Act so that witchcraft practices and accusations can be better legislated and controlled.

Witchcraft and Media

In the international witchcraft literature, discussions of the role of media do on occasions make an appearance. Media are primarily present as manifestations and producers of modernity, which are subsequently drawn into and become sites for the articulation and negotiation of witchcraft discourses – for example, Meyer’s work on the mass audiovisual mediation of Ghanaian religion and magic (Meyer 2003; 2006). More pertinent to my analysis is Bastian’s ethnographic research (1993; 2001) which is explicitly linked to the witchcraft discourses that circulate through the highly popular Nigerian tabloid press. Far from withering away in the face of modernity, Bastian argues, “discussions of witchcraft flourish in popular media and provide new material for descriptions of the experience of deprivation and evil in the urban world” (Bastian 1993: 155). Readers use these mediated witchcraft narratives as resources to “consolidate their everyday life experiences and make sense of a world that contains both witchcraft and international capitalism” (Bastian 1993: 155). If witchcraft is the “subtext” through which the misfortunes of township life are made meaningful (Ashforth 2005: 12), a lens through which the social world is interpreted, we can then view it as a *form of mediation* that makes the world mean in particular ways: witches “mediate the imagination of sociality” as Englund puts it (2007: 298).

This West African analysis illustrates how the *Daily Sun*’s strategies are not without their parallels elsewhere on the continent, but of course the tailoring necessary for local conditions and beliefs is exclusively the paper’s own. The *Daily Sun*’s reports of witchcraft are the most prominent aspect of the supernatural to appear in its pages, which otherwise range from prophetic dreams to miracles of one kind or another. In order to distinguish between three kinds of witchcraft-related crime in the analysis I draw on Petrus (2011) who differentiates between witchcraft itself, witchcraft accusations and the assaults and murders associated with them, and muthi murders. In the case of witchcraft *per se*, the crime lies in the hardship, illness or death it causes: “when witches and their evil forces are at work... illness, death and other misfortunes become forms of unjust injury, damage deliberately inflicted on an innocent victim” (Ashforth 2005: 10).

Muthi, sangomas and witchcraft accusations

Such attacks are brought about by witches through the skilful manipulation of muthi. Muthi refers to those substances which contain or provoke powerful (occult) forces. As the origin of the word suggests (it derives from the Nguni root-word, “thi”, meaning “tree”), muthi is commonly derived from plants; but it is by no means restricted to vegetable matter, and can include any substance or thing considered to contain inherent agency. Reports of witchcraft in the paper often take the form of the discovery of planted muthi by a diviner or prophet and the steps taken to ensure the victim’s recovery and future protection. This may include returning the ‘curse’, as it is termed, back to the sender. The harm or even death this is said to cause the witch is legitimated as form of retributive justice.

However, the potency of muthi is neutral, and can be used either to heal or to harm: a healer will make and use muthi to protect, strengthen and cleanse; the witch will use the same substances to bring adversity, illness and death to others, or bring power and wealth to himself (Geschiere 2006). “The defining capacity of both the witch and the healer is the ability to interact with the invisible agency inherent in certain substances to create muthi so as to effect specific desired

ends in concert with these forces” (Ashforth 2005: 136). This ambiguity is the cause of much anxiety concerning the status of the healer. For this reason, Geschiere (2006: 235-236) notes the efforts made in the Cameroons to distinguish between “*bonafide*” and “*malafide*” healers, not only in order to separate ‘real’ healers from charlatans, but also to draw a line between those who heal while they also dabble in witchcraft, concerns that, as we will see in the analysis, also preoccupies the readers of the *Daily Sun*³⁷¹.

The second case, witchcraft accusations and attacks, is sometimes associated with this ambiguous status of the healer. Healers can easily be accused of witchcraft because they work with forces equally available to the witch. For this reason, older women who experience *twasa*³⁷² and undergo training as *sangoma*, i.e., learn to work with *muthi* and access the power of the spirit realm but do not practice as healers, are susceptible to suspicion of witchcraft (Ashforth 2005). In the case of the afore-mentioned witchcraft hunts in the Northern Province in the 1990s, many of the men and women accused were *inyangas* (Geschiere 2006). Witchcraft tends to come to public notice only in this case, when elderly women are accused of being witches and murdered by male youths, when witchcraft accusations and attacks are framed within a gender-rights discourse as a public issue (Ashforth 2005). However, not all witchcraft accusations are made against older women, for men too are regularly accused (Niehaus 2001a; 2013). The common denominator in these attacks appears to be inter-generational antagonism within a context of severe economic inequality (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). The *Daily Sun*, to different degrees, reflects instances of all these kinds.

But witchcraft-related crime is far more extensive and problematic than the incidence of witch killings alone would suggest. Indeed, the killing of the elderly is only one, relatively minor, aspect of the *Daily Sun*'s coverage. It is the third form of witchcraft-related crime, *muthi* murders, which receives more prominent attention. *Muthi* murders occur when people are killed in order to acquire those body parts necessary for the concoction of *muthi* to create wealth and other good fortune. Gaining access in this way to the occult force that brings prosperity and power is associated with witchcraft because the *muthi* is “obtained at the expense of [an]other who should rightfully share in it” (a kind of balance of distributed life force which is illicitly tipped in one’s favour), and the illegitimacy of these uses “derives from the fact of killing an innocent person in order to advance oneself – the height of selfishness” (Ashforth 2005: 41; also Petrus 2011). *Inyanga* or *sangoma* can be implicated in these deaths as they are the ones responsible for making the *muthi* that contains the body parts.

Working with contradictory world views

As I have emphasised, the *Daily Sun*'s fascination with stories that involve the occult is intriguing not only because they make for interesting narratives, but because they so aptly demonstrate how their readers live with disparate world views (or perhaps the stories are compelling because living with the conflicting demands of antithetical world views inherently makes for interesting narratives...). Importantly, this is not a case of either/or, but of both/and.

³⁷¹ This concern is also visible in the attempts to create professional bodies that will regulate and control the activities of traditional healers. See Ashforth (2005); Geschiere (2006).

³⁷² *Twasa* refers to the process of training an initiate undergoes in order to develop the powers to become a diviner.

This is clearly seen in a series of articles which describe how the Nakale family are terrorised by witchcraft fire, “vutha³⁷³”. The “deadly”, “mysterious” and “ghostly” fire has been “stalking” the family home, arriving at night to destroy their belongings. Now their lives are “a living hell” and they are “out of their minds with terror!” The problem is said to be jealousy: “People tell them that a tokoloshe is to blame and that it could have been sent by someone who is jealous of them”, a diagnosis supported by a reputable source, Joseph Buba, a “well-known sangoma”. He confirms that this is “the work of an evil force sent by jealous people”. Elusively, the report suggests that the jealousy stems from their “luxury house” which the homeowner, Ndeshaany Nakale, “worked hard to build”. Bitterly reflecting on the terror they have been subjected to, he remarks “I would rather live in peace in a shack”.

Up to this point, the report dwells on the emotional effect on the family members of the repeated fires and their distress. The material consequences of the arson (the image shows burned belongings lying on the ground outside the scorched walls of an imposing face-brick home) and the family’s helplessness, for they have asked “holy men and zangoma” to help them “remove the evil spell on the house”, to no avail. However, the final paragraph introduces a new voice, that of “a fire-fighting expert”, Johan Pieterse, who firmly asserts that “there was no way a fire could start without a cause” – a material one, that is. Clinically, he diagnoses the origin of the fire: “In most cases, a fire starts because of an electrical fault of which the homeowner is not aware”.

This could well fit the pattern of modern and traditional views juxtaposed. However, the story does not end here, for there are no fewer than three follow-up reports, each of which adds its own layer to the meaning of the original narrative. The second article, which appears the following day, records how the *Daily Sun* reporter, Muzi Zincume, witnesses the vutha attacking a family member: “**VUTHA BURNS GIRL’S DRESS!**³⁷⁴” “SunTeam sees jumping fire!” exclaims the subheading. Describing his experience in the first person, the reporter records his initial scepticism about the fire: “At first I did not believe that vutha was terrorising the family. I was suspicious...” Like the expert fire-fighter above, he expected more banal reasons for the arson: “I thought the children may be starting the fire themselves”. But he “got the shock of [his] life” when the fire jumped on the 14-year-old school girl sitting next to him. The front page photograph shows her “**FIGHTING EVIL**” at the tap, wringing her burnt skirt under a stream of water. “It was scary... it left me trembling!” confesses the reporter.

Confirmed by this dramatic eye-witness report, the story of the witchcraft fire generates intense interest amongst the *Daily Sun* readership, and the next day a third article³⁷⁵ appears in response to the many requests for information about vutha: “People wanted to know how vutha is made and how to get rid of it”. The rest of the report consists of a long verbatim quotation of the words of an authority, Liza Sibisi, chairman of the Traditional Healers Association of Ubuka in Northern KZN. He is pictured to the right of the article, sitting and gesturing with his right hand, as he explains in a matter-of-fact and authoritative manner how the “evil” fire is made and counteracted. “One of the main ingredients... is a firefly”, begins the recipe. The next step is to

³⁷³ Family terrorised by vutha *Daily Sun* 27 June 2011: 5.

³⁷⁴ Vutha burns girl’s dress! *Daily Sun* 28 June 2011: 1,2.

³⁷⁵ This is how you make vutha! *Daily Sun* 29 June 2011: 5.

make the muthi: “Once you get this glow-worm, a sangoma takes it and mixes it with other traditional herbs and animal oils”. Then comes the application. The muthi can either be “sprinkled in a target’s yard” or “sent through the air”. This second mode of activating the fire is dangerous and “hard to stop”, for in order to counteract it the “spell” has to be “returned back to the culprit and has to burn him”. The cure involves a specific plant, which he names: “A traditional doctor needs to use the African herb icishamlilo³⁷⁶ and other ingredients”. He ends by warning that prayers cannot stop it for “it can only be cured by zamgoma”.

This long recipe, its serious explication, the activation of the witchcraft muthi, the severe effects that it has on the victim, the cure of the spell and the various cautions together evoke with compelling sincerity a world in which the manipulation of occult power is real. But at the end of this article, next to Sibisi’s photograph, we find an embedded text box titled “Facts about fireflies”. It sets out in bold type a series of six terse bullet points which give empirical information about the biology and habits of the firefly, for example “There are about 2000 different species” and “They use flashes of light to attract mates”. This juxtaposition between fireflies as witchcraft muthi and the firefly as an object of scientific knowledge is made without any sense of contradiction. Curiously, the effect of the scientific knowledge is to support rather than discredit the discussion of the occult, for both discourses are represented as equally valid. What is remarkable about the presentation of the article as a whole is how the *Daily Sun* sees its readership as needing both sets of information, both insight into this arcane form of witchcraft and how to protect oneself against it, and useful and interesting facts about the firefly.

Also noteworthy in this saga is the role played by the *Daily Sun* as helper and witness. In this, as in several other such stories, the paper sees its role as an intermediary and assists victims to get appropriate help. So here it publishes the family’s request: “We ask SunReaders who might know what causes the mystery fires to help us”, a plea that is answered. For the fourth article³⁷⁷ records how a Reverend Tinyako Nyathi “had read in the *Daily Sun* about the ordeal of the Mthembu family” and had gone to help them through prayer, the anointing of oil and the cleansing of the rooms with “isiwasho³⁷⁸”. The tabloid cannot resist some humour at the hapless Reverend’s expense, for the vutha destroys a neighbour’s house at the conclusion of his elaborate ritual cleansing. “Evil fire wins first round”, laughs the subheading.

What is significant for our present argument is the appearance at the end of the story above of the representative of a different historic faith. The two belief systems are seen to interact with no sense of incongruity or inappropriateness, apart from the fact that the exorcist pastor is here somewhat outmanoeuvred by the occult vutha and no mode of understanding triumphs. A similar confrontation of different spiritual practitioners occurs in the next example, but with rather less amicable results.

At times the paper’s self-appointed role as witness and intermediary is opportunistically co-opted by readers who see the tabloid as a means to further their own interests. “**BATTLE OF**

³⁷⁶ Icishamlilo (‘put out the fire’) refers to plants that are used medicinally to treat fevers and inflammations.

³⁷⁷ Vutha too strong – even for holy man! *Daily Sun* 13 July 2011: 4.

³⁷⁸ The *Daily Sun* names this healer a “Reverend”, but his actions mark him as a prophet who instead of muthi uses “isiwasho” (Zulu, from the English) to cleanse and purify – that is, water, sanctified by prayer and other cleansing agents, in particular ash. See Ashforth (2005).

THE BONES!³⁷⁹” describes how two women, who “*come from the opposite ends of the religious divide*”, fight “like cat and dog” over sangoma Thoko Ndlela’s divining bones, which her neighbour, prophet³⁸⁰ Mavis Kubheka, has thrown away. The *Daily Sun* makes its role in this drama explicit: it is there as a witness at the request of the sangoma, who called the tabloid and said “she was going to confront Mavis and wanted the People’s Paper to come and see”. At her behest, the “SunTeam looked on” as “fists, insults and even a huge rock flew between the two battling healers!”, a scandalous spectacle which the tabloid delightedly recounts for its readers. But the scandalised laughter at the two unruly women healers is eventually subordinated to the more serious question of the consequences for the sangoma of the loss of her bones and her search for justice. Regardless of the nature of the disruption, in neither this nor the case of the vutha is the belief system itself called into question.

In this story, the sangoma is explicitly pitted against the prophet (an antagonism which also surfaces in the vutha story, where Reverend Nyathi abjures the Mthembu family “to stop using muthi and hiring zangoma”). The prophet represents Christian precepts which, emerging from an institution that self-consciously aligns itself with modern conditions, are in many ways antithetical to local custom. Nevertheless, the prophet is seen to be just as much under the authority of custom as the sangoma, for in a follow-up article she is rebuked by an elder at a tribal court³⁸¹, who constructs her as implicitly *knowing the consequences of her actions for her sangoma neighbour* (that is, customary practice is within her ken). Indeed, despite the *Daily Sun*’s construction of the ‘divide’ between the belief systems of the two antagonists, they are not so far apart as it seems, for the prophet defends herself by indirectly accusing the sangoma of witchcraft: the bones had been found “in my yard³⁸²”, and had “made my kids sick”. In addition, the sangoma is a *Daily Sun* reader, signifying an identity which is constructed in relation to the modern institution of the tabloid as much as it is in relation to a local worldview.

The paper does not demand that a *choice* is made between either Western or local precepts but simply considers what is stake when presented with seemingly irreconcilable principles which both demand attention. This stance is aptly illustrated by “**SAVED BY THE GOAT!**”³⁸³ which testifies how, when the Shivambu family “**had big problems**”, they consult an inyanga³⁸⁴ who alarmingly tells them that “**THUGS WOULD BE ATTACKING THE SHIVAMBUS THAT VERY NIGHT!**” In order to counteract this assault, he gives them muthi for their protection and tells them to buy a goat and tie it up in the yard. And now we come to the point of the story. For the Shivambus hesitated. They “didn’t know whether to call the cops or trust that the inyanga’s muthi would work”. Nevertheless, “they put their faith in the muthi...”

³⁷⁹ Battle of the bones! *Daily Sun* 23 August 2011: 1,2.

³⁸⁰ Like Reverend Nyathi in the vutha story, it is likely that prophet Mavis Kubheka belongs to an African Initiated Church (AIC). Such churches consider the work of sangomas and inyangas to be demonic or satanic. Their prophets are healers who purify and protect victims (individuals or communities) from witchcraft or demonic activity and from this perspective their worldview does not differ radically from a traditional one. See Ashforth (2005 chapter 8) for a discussion of AICs.

³⁸¹ Sangoma V Prophet! *Daily Sun* 25 October 2011: 5.

³⁸² Resolutions of witchcraft attacks as represented in the *Daily Sun* often involve the discovery of muthi in the yard of the bewitched.

³⁸³ Saved by the goat! *Daily Sun* 16 August 2011: 1,2.

³⁸⁴ Inyanga are healers who work with muthi, acquiring their expertise through serving a long apprenticeship with a master healer. Their skill with muthi is claimed to be inherited, and/or to come through direct revelation from the ancestors via dreams.

As predicted, later that night, the son, Joseph, is indeed attacked by unknown “thugs” and two shots are fired. However, one bullet merely grazes his wrist – and, miraculously, the next day, they “found the goat was dead!” We are told that Thomas and Lovisa Shivambu “believe today that the brave, black goat took the bullet that was intended for their boy”, a conclusion supported by the inyanga who declares that “his ancestors showed him that Joseph WAS supposed to die, but the goat took his place!” The complex front page images work to support this claim. Taken with a flash at night soon after the initial event, the slightly blurred larger image shows Joseph and Lovisa kneeling on a knitted pink blanket and, somewhat in the manner of supplicants, looking up solemnly at the camera. Joseph stretches out his left hand and a white circle directs the reader to the bullet which he holds out on his flat palm. His wrist is bandaged. A black goat lies dead with its neck stretched out in front of them. Cropped out of the image but partly visible to the left is the inyanga – we can see his hands, which hold a beaded calabash and a carved wooden staff. A second, smaller image supports the first with further evidence. It is a tightly focused and cropped close-up of Joseph’s injured left inner wrist and hand. The wound has since healed – the long, puckered scar is clearly visible – and the bullet that caused it is placed next to it on the wrist. Four other hands are in the picture. Evocatively, one supports the unresisting arm, while two point to the evidence of bullet and scar.

Up to this point, the article with its photographic evidence validates the interpretation offered by the family of death miraculously averted by the timely intercession of an inyanga’s muthi. But at the very end of the article, a different voice enters the narrative in the form of Lieutenant-Colonel Hlathi, who represents a rational and western viewpoint in opposition to the first. He “urged Joseph to lay charges as soon as possible”. Underneath this final sentence, in a grey text box, the *Daily Sun* asks the reader “**What do YOU think?**” and gives the mobi-site web address, where the reader can go to write her opinion. “**YOU**” is highlighted by being printed in red, and by means of this direct address summons the reader’s attention and opinion on the matter. The injunction is to think about what is, essentially, a mystery: Is it possible that the muthi worked as they claim? Did the goat really take the bullet and die for the son? What would have happened if the family had gone to the police instead of trusting the inyanga? Could the police have prevented the son’s death in the way that the muthi had? Why have they not yet laid charges? What were their “big problems” and how do they impinge? Could the fulfilment of the prophecy have been staged by external actors? Or is the whole thing a series of coincidences? Of course, going to the police to lay a charge would not necessarily mean renouncing the family’s interpretation of the event. But Lieutenant-Colonel Hlathi’s comment and the secular and rational point of view it prefers could easily have been omitted, so we must conclude that the deliberate provocation of debate around what must remain a mystery is the point of the story which ultimately declines to come down on either side.

A dream of justice

The *Daily Sun* here makes its role of cultural mediator explicit, and many of the stories that follow in this chapter can be read in the light of this self-appointed function. Connected to this role is the symbolic justice it provides where no other form of justice seems available. The connection between these two functions arises from its embrace of those forms of communication that appear at first sight to be antithetical to a modern and rational world view.

Dreams in particular are a potent form of communication and are taken seriously by those for whom the dream world is a connection to the spiritual realm. They are a means by which the dead communicate with the living, and in many cases reports about dreams concern crimes of one kind or another. People use the *Daily Sun* to tell their stories about the dead, who come to them in their sleep to warn them of the dangers they face, or to demand a posthumous justice.

So in “Haunted by dead hubby³⁸⁵” Peggy Letsholo describes how she is haunted by dreams of her husband, who frequently commands her to visit him. As she “believe[s] in prayers and dreams” she obediently went to the cemetery to visit the grave. There, the import of the dreams are realised: she finds the grave site violated by muthi – this time, including a strange knife, which evidence she holds up for the reader in a close-up shot. She declares herself “a believer” (that is, a Christian), so she doesn’t “fear such cowards” (people who use witchcraft to exact revenge). However, she “suspect[s] somebody intends to kill me” (via occult attack) because she has heard rumours that she is accused of murdering her husband. She denies this accusation, and invokes a divine witness: “God knows my husband died from a natural illness”. She won’t say what that was because it’s “confidential”. We can speculate that the reason she goes to the *Daily Sun* is part of a strategy to clear her name via this public announcement.

The material evidence of muthi and the recounting of the dreams of the deceased husband are signs that work together to evoke the crime of witchcraft. Here, the tabloid’s representation of the widow’s anxiety stands in for a justice that would otherwise be denied, for such attack lies outside of a normative understanding of crime.

But dreams can point to more mundane forms of injustice and demand their resolution. Sandy Ndlovu, a “sad mum”, tells the tabloid how she has been “**WARNED BY MY DEAD SON!**³⁸⁶” that “**HER OWN LIFE MAY BE IN DANGER!**” if she does not solve the mystery of his death. She hears him in her dreams “*urging her to fight for the truth and bring his killers to justice...*” The story is that Leonard Ndlovu “went missing” nine years ago. Some months later, he appeared in his mother’s dreams, telling her to look for him in the mortuary. There, she is shown a photograph of him “in the book of deceased” with “a bullet wound in the forehead”.

This evidence contradicts the official explanation that he died in a car crash that occurred during a police chase. The body is never returned to her – instead, he is cremated without her consent, and she is given a casket of ashes, which she sadly holds up for the reader to see on the front page photograph. The long story of how the police offer her bribes and try to coerce her into signing documents is described by the report as a “brick wall of mystery, lies and corruption!” The image of the brick wall is an evocation of the edifice used to inter the ashes of the dead – here, a burial place that is equated with an untrustworthy police. When the police spokesperson, Colonel Tummi Shai, tells Sandy Ndlovu to “come into HQ and give a detailed statement”, the report ends with the bold declaration of its heroic mission: “*Daily Sun* will make sure it is there too...”

³⁸⁵ Haunted by dead hubby *Daily Sun* 28 April 2011: 9.

³⁸⁶ Warned by my dead son! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 1,2.

In this way the *Daily Sun* announces its valiant defence of those who cannot find justice for themselves unaided, both through publishing the story and through its promise to expose police wrongdoing. The emphasis on the dream, rather than negating the mother's narrative of official obfuscation and misconduct, validates it and provides the grounds for an urgency that would otherwise be lacking in a case already nine years old.

Making sense of crimes that involve sangomas, muthi and witchcraft

While the reports above illustrate the *Daily Sun's* approach to narratives which at first glance appear 'superstitious', what follows in the sections below is an analysis of the *Daily Sun's* representations of various forms of crime which involve sangomas, muthi and witchcraft. However, while I have disaggregated these elements for the purpose of analysis, they are all interconnected, and none makes sense without the other – a story of an accusation of witchcraft will often include the presence of muthi, made or counteracted by a sangoma or inyanga. My intention in unpicking these entangled themes is to see how these representations connect to and enlarge the picture of township crime. As the various stories are presented, aspects of previous chapters come into view, as the narratives above already begin to demonstrate: People's Justice, thugs and cops, and the ordinary men and women of the contemporary *kasi*.

Sangomas

I begin with sangomas³⁸⁷ (sometimes "zangoma", the plural form in isiZulu), for they are key characters in many of the stories that we will meet. Sangomas feature regularly in the tabloid's pages as people of interest. Far from being set apart from everyday life, they are caught up in the mesh of everyday social relations and are recognisable social actors whose role within the cultural milieu of the township is taken for granted. Their actions can sometimes serve as moral lessons regarding the conservation of 'tradition' under present conditions and on what grounds and through what means this tradition is to be preserved, but also, and perhaps more importantly, they symbolise how the ideas of modernity and tradition are held in an ongoing yet vital tension with each other – at least, as they appear in the paper. As symbolic retainers of 'tradition', however, sangomas are figures who carry with them a surplus 'charge' of meaning, and as a result arouse certain anxieties for those whose might consider themselves more 'modern'.

I illustrate this by a brief digression into a non-crime article³⁸⁸ that describes how a kwaito singer, Siyabulela Nelani (in the photograph, a hip young man), goes back home to Duncan Village to train as a sangoma because his "dreams of being a kwaito star in the big city were not working out". He had been "called" by his ancestors and he "listened" to them, despite that fact

³⁸⁷ The *Daily Sun* uses the word "sangoma" (zangoma in the plural) in a generic way to refer to all traditional healers both local and from other African countries. It is an isiZulu term, the isiXhosa term being "amagqirha". To become a sangoma you must be called by your ancestors. The calling is usually recognised through dreams or illness, and failure to respond to the call leads to ancestral displeasure and thus misfortune. The process of apprenticeship, in which the necessary skills and powers are developed, is referred to as "twasa". Zangoma and amagqirha are diviners, whose work is to uncover the hidden causes of illness or misfortune in the lives of those who come to them for help. This they do through consulting with ancestral spirits through the throwing of bones (divination lots) and dreams. They are also trained in the use of medicinal plants and other material substances ("muthi") whose inherent potency is used for both physical and spiritual remedies. Diviners differ from inyanga, who work more specifically with muthi. The main difference between the sangoma and the inyanga is one of initiation and association (Ashforth 2005).

³⁸⁸ Kwaito man listened to his ancestors... and his career lifted off! *Daily Sun* 5 January 2011: 8. I am told that some consider moving between identities like this is wrong: if you are a sangoma, you must stay a sangoma. You should not be a shop assistant one day and a sangoma on your day off. In this regard, what the young artist does here may be deeply provocative to some.

that “*some people thought [he] was crazy*” (my italics). He proves them wrong and his piety is rewarded, for his fortunes as a singer turn around. “Listening to my ancestors was the right thing to do”, he says. Here, the demands of two seemingly disparate worlds are harmonised and neither is compromised. He prospers in the one to the extent that he takes care of the other.

However, not everyone can live so easily with this tension, and the *Daily Sun* consciously documents the conflict that it engenders.

So “I WON’T MOVE!³⁸⁹” on the other hand, presents a far more explicit conflict, this time between a sangoma and the state. This conflict is illustrative of the struggle tradition must engage in to reserve a space for itself in the contemporary milieu. Here, the discursive break between what is and is not acceptable with regards to ‘traditional’ beliefs broadens to incorporate practice, which in turn presents for contestation what is and is not criminal.

The paper deliberately sets up this contestation in the opening paragraphs: the sangoma, Molatladi Mashatola, also known by the colourful name “**King Mapungubwe**”, has been “running his practice” (a term that, like “surgery”, invokes an equivalence with western medicine) on the bank of the Ritavi River in Tzaneen, Limpopo, for some three years “**because... his ancestors told him to do so**”. But a disruption is precipitated by state agents, environmental inspectors who “declared his surgery a health hazard – and burned it to the ground!” The tabloid gives space to both parties to make their case. The language used by the state representatives is formal and technical. The officials are from “the provincial environmental management inspectorate” and his “surgery³⁹⁰” is a “health hazard”, for the animals he “slaughters” could “pollute” the river, which “supplies water to the surrounding area”. He is fined for the “illegal possession of protected species³⁹¹” and moreover will be “charged with contravening a court order”.

But sangoma Mashatola defends himself and, using a different measure of right and wrong, sets up a counter-claim in which it is not him but the state which is at fault. First, the spot where he works is not just any place, for “My ancestors gave it to me”. Indeed, they “instructed me to come and settle here”, a claim that he supports by reference to his historical and ancestral connection to the place: “My forefathers lived here many years ago...” and his divining bones told him “some of them died here”. Indeed, to leave this sacred ground would “be defying my ancestors”. After his shack is burned, he returns a few days later to rebuild. “This is my place”, he tells the tabloid, defiantly. The article is accompanied by a set of three photographs which variously show the zinc sheets of his shack smoking amongst some rocks; then a long shot of the sangoma standing amongst his belongings in the open air as a white man in khaki shirt and shorts carrying a clip-board or paper walks determinedly downhill towards him; while the third is a small three-quarter portrait photograph of Mashatola as he stands by a tree talking

³⁸⁹ I won’t move! *Daily Sun* 30 August 2011: 5.

³⁹⁰ The report uses the English term for a medical doctor’s consulting room in place of the vernacular “ndumba”, or divination hut.

³⁹¹ Several stories deal with the conflict between animals and township residents – for example, the killing of owls and monkeys, associated with muthi or witchcraft – in which the SAPC is quoted as an authority. These officials employ a rhetoric of “education” to contain the conflict between animals and humans in the urban township. Moroka monkey mayhem *Daily Sun* 4 January 2011: 4; Monkey rescued! *Daily Sun* 14 January 2011: 8; Don’t kill monkeys, they’re not evil! *Daily Sun* 31 May 2011: 5.

animatedly on his cellphone. His appearance is dramatic, for his long dreadlocked hair flows down to his shoulders from its bright red bindings atop his head; he wears a necklace of beads with a large red amulet, and red beads around his wrists. What is noticeable here is how the framing, while giving substantial room to the sangoma's interpretation of the disruption, does not unequivocally endorse it. Instead, it sets the sangoma's world view up in contestation with that of the contemporary state. His words, together with his exotic appearance as he chats on his cellphone on the bank of the Ritavi River amongst his broken and burnt belongings, present to the reader a complex case of rights and wrongs.

Fake sangomas

In this story, the sangoma's work as a diviner is not questioned. The story's interest lies with his breaking laws that are antithetical to his calling and would curtail his practice. But sangomas commit other crimes which disrupt their normative social role as healers and intermediaries between the living and their ancestors. These earn them their label of 'fake', and I attempt here to unpick the nature of this 'fakeness'. However, what must be noted in advance is that, as this epithet might suggest, reports of 'fake' sangomas, far from discrediting the cosmology to which they belong, provide instead the means of reinforcing it for they serve to validate the status of their 'genuine' colleagues.

Fake sangomas are, first, those who commit crimes like rape. These ““HEALERS' FROM HELL!³⁹²” are subjects of outrage and condemnation – like the two sangoma in this story who rape the girls in their charge. To support its denunciation, the *Daily Sun* elicits comments from a range of authorities which reveal a disciplinary response. For Lyanda Matiwana, co-ordinator of the Inkolo Kantu Traditional Organisation, the crime obliterates their status as zangoma altogether: “These are neither zangoma nor izinyanga. They are rapists”. A more conciliatory voice is heard from a Kids Clinic spokesperson who observes that “While traditional healers are highly revered and must be respected, our children must be protected”. On the other hand, Women and Men Against Child Abuse demands the bureaucratic control of the entire system: the “government [should] set up a committee to document traditional healers and eradicate bogus zangoma and izinyanga”. “Eradicate”, a term associated with the control of disease or pests, speaks forcefully to a perceived problem of “bogus zangoma” who are not zangoma at all but simply men who rape. The image in contrast shows a group of elderly people, many of them women, dressed in the attire that signifies their calling as they address a group of young children whom they look at with pleased and fond expressions. Just to make sure this message is understood, the caption reads: “Real zangoma love and respect kids and won't abuse them”.

The fake sangoma here are condemned because the crime of rape is antithetical to their calling as healers. We have already seen in what light rape is held in the previous chapter. Here, the status of sangoma compounds the fierce opprobrium of the crime for it threatens the vocation with disrepute which must be forestalled at all costs. Thus it is interesting to see how a second type of 'fakeness' does not redound so much upon the profession as upon those who consult them. These fake sangomas defraud their clients and such stories may provide the material for humour at the expense of their victims who come to the *Daily Sun* to complain about being cheated.

³⁹² Healers from hell! *Daily Sun* 27 September 2011: 4.

The tabloid takes these complaints seriously, interviews the parties involved and presents their opinions, but in typical style always gives the lion's share of the report to the complainant. Thus it gives substantial space to a woman who claims to have been "taken for a ride"³⁹³ by the "well known" sangoma Dr Joseph Buba³⁹⁴ even though, as the report remarks for the benefit of the reader, he had previously "appeared several times in *Daily Sun* stories where he helped people". The small photograph shows him sitting robed in the style of a prophet in long white, gold and ochre vestments with the caption: "Joseph Buba, the sangoma accused of being a fake". The headline quotes the warning the woman gives readers: "double-check before going to any traditional healers".

The amount of money mentioned in this report is fairly small – "R2000" – a trifle to what some fraudsters can cost unwary and desperate clients. "R60 000 BUT STILL NO SEX!"³⁹⁵ presents for the reader's amazement and outrage – and laughter – the story of a couple taken in by a "sangoma from Ghana". The man had consulted her in the hope of a cure, for when it came to sex it was "no go". Alongside the amusing construction of the sangoma's calculated audacity – "she suggested that he resign from his job, collect his severance package and hand it over to her" – the tabloid sympathetically but humorously represents the man as a credulous victim. He is a "poor guy", who "should have been having a nice life" and he went to the healer "in desperation". Indeed, so desperate was he, that "he was ready to believe" her, even when she demanded a lot of money for a cleansing ceremony to rid them of the curse that was causing their sex problems. So, astonishingly, he "resigned from work and got his payout!"

When the remedy doesn't work – "Sangoma's cure flops!" – the couple goes the police and the sangoma concerned is arrested and "charged with obtaining money under false pretences". The police spokesperson is unsympathetic. "These scams happen all the time because people don't listen" he warns. The tabloid's mission in this case is to make sure people do listen to the moral of the story and learn from the mistakes of others. The last sentence describes how "the streets of East London are littered with posters promising to help people with their sexual problems". This observation links semantically to the large image, which shows a back view of a woman dressed in a respectable white towelling headscarf and blue cape as she examines one such advertisement pasted to a brick wall. In typical style, it advertises "PENIS CREAM" for "penis enlargement all sizes".

Given the report's comical presentation of the man's credulity, the sangoma's outrageous duplicity and the cop's serious warning, it would not be surprising if the entire system of belief were made suspect. But the way the fake sangoma allows the *Daily Sun* to leave the cosmology intact is evocatively recounted in "EVIL BUSTERS!"³⁹⁶ in which it tells the story of Zithulele Maneli, a "father of four", who shares his remedy for keeping his family safe from witchcraft. The report starts with amused irony. It is "hard to get a good sangoma nowadays" – for there are "**too many fake zangomas around who... take people's money in exchange for fong kong**"³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Check when you consult a sangoma! *Daily Sun* 12 May 2011: 4.

³⁹⁴ Dr Buba appeared as a source in the vutha story above.

³⁹⁵ R60 000 but still no sex! *Daily Sun* 14 October 2011: 5.

³⁹⁶ Evil-busters! *Daily Sun* 12 May 2011: 1,2.

³⁹⁷ Fong kong is a colloquial reference to counterfeit products, a portmanteau of "fake" and "Hong Kong" (a jibe at the illicit counterfeit goods brought in from the far east).

services". But Maneli is wise to their fakery: they "take chances", and "tell you lies" because they "can't even tell what is wrong". So, instead of relying on their "bullshit", he keeps dogs. The front page photograph shows him standing on a *kasi* road with his four happy dogs. He confidently asserts that they are "better than any sangoma" for they can "tell" if something bad is going to happen. For example, if there is a "tokoloshe in the house... they will start umkhulungwane (howling)... and keep the evil spirits away". His dogs thus protect his children from evil spirits. His proof of their success is that his neighbour's children have had problems but his do not: he only takes them "to the doctor for check-ups". In this way he avoids "paying huge fees to fong kong zangoma!"

This article provokes no little comment which earns it a follow up report the next day³⁹⁸, for it was apparently discussed on a radio programme³⁹⁹ in which its content was verified by none less than Sazi Mhlongo, chairman of the National Association of Traditional Healers of South Africa⁴⁰⁰. In conversation, this authority tells the *Daily Sun* editor, Themba Khumalo, that "horses can do the same job as dogs!" A reader also writes in to confirm its essential truth: "Front page story about dogs is very true. I grew up with such dogs and it's high time we leave these [fake] zangoma⁴⁰¹".

Nevertheless, fake zangoma can still be credited with power. Here, the meaning of fake shifts away from being simply fraudulent or scheming, to refer to a sangoma who uses the power at his or her disposal for illicit purposes. "Some people are still being fooled by bogus sangomas⁴⁰²", begins the report, "skelms" who tell people "that 'short boys and rats' can make them rich⁴⁰³". Andile Toni from KwaZakhele in Port Elizabeth is one of their victims, taken in by a street advertisement – a head and shoulders photograph shows him standing next to one pasted on a wall. Quoting Toni's words at length, the story neatly and evocatively sets out his temptation by a pamphlet, his arrival at the consulting room, the atmosphere created by the robed sangoma, and the choice between the magical agents of short boys or rats. But his hope turns to horror when the sangoma tells him that in order to get rich, "I would have to kill someone I love at home!" Luckily, his cellphone rings and he pretends it is the police and escapes – only to go straight to "a real sangoma, who took out the bad spirit left in me by the fake one".

For Toni, this sangoma's fakeness is not his lack of ability but the illicit use of his power. Part of the attraction of this story for the *Daily Sun*, and no doubt for its audience, is that the murder he is required to enact is all too common (such murders are discussed further down). In cases like this, the *Daily Sun* almost always quotes an authority on the matter, here sangoma Sibaya Yoyo of the Nyangazezizwe Traditional Healers Organisation, who warns readers that "fake zangoma are abusing traditional customs". In order to stay safe, he advises people who "need a sangoma"

³⁹⁸ Forget dogs – horses also fight evil spirits *Daily Sun* 13 May 2011: 3.

³⁹⁹ Which radio station is not mentioned, but it would probably be one of the SABC vernacular stations such as Ukhosi FM.

⁴⁰⁰ There are a number of Associations of this kind mentioned in the *Daily Sun*. This one may be the African National Healers Association, which attempts to regulate and develop traditional healing practice. It also serves as a consultant to various academic and research bodies. These bodies have proliferated in the wake of state attempts to regulate customary practice. See Traditional Health Practitioners Act, No. 22 of 2007.

⁴⁰¹ Facebook comment *Daily Sun* 13 May 2011: 39.

⁴⁰² Evil sangoma told me: kill loved one! *Daily Sun* 12 April 2011: 6.

⁴⁰³ The *Daily Sun*'s classifieds section runs many advertisements placed by "herbalists" that extol the power of "short boys" and "rats". These are apparently placed by Nigerian herbalists, and refer to talismans of different kinds.

to first check if they are “registered”, that is, validated by belonging to a sanctioned traditional healer’s association⁴⁰⁴.

Muthi

Fake sangomas also abet criminals through the provision of the muthi they prepare and sell. “**This man blows hyena smoke under your door – then he robs you!**”⁴⁰⁵ condenses into one dramatic sentence the substance of a story about a “self-confessed burglar”, Gift Klass from Khayelitsha in Cape Town. He tells how he buys some muthi from a sangoma, for about four thousand rand, and blows the smoke from it into the house he wants to rob. (Outrageously, gangsters pay on a kind of commission – half up front, “and the rest after they’ve successfully cleaned out a house!”) In the large photograph he demonstrates for the reader his *modus operandi*. It shows him squatting down outside a closed door and holding to his mouth a large reefer, which he directs at a gap in the doorframe. The smoke from the smouldering muthi, made from “hairs of a hyena’s tail, a pinch of soil from a grave⁴⁰⁶, and a secret mix of herbs!” allegedly puts people “INTO SUCH A DEEP SLEEP THAT THIEVES CAN STEAL ANYTHING THEY WANT WITHOUT BEING DISTURBED!” The best time is when the family is all together watching TV: “That way you know everyone is in the lounge”.

The report continues with quotes from two sangoma who confirm the essence of the robber’s claim, but who refuse to name the plants involved as the “ancestors would be angered”. We are told that hyenas tails “cost about R30 000” and are scarce – only “real gangsters” use the muthi that includes this potent material, while “junior thugs” make do with a cheaper mix of “grave soil and herbs”. Finally, a witness is quoted who amusingly authenticates the essential elements of the story. He claims that he was a victim of the muthi, for he had fallen asleep in front of the television, only to wake up in the morning with his door kicked in and all his equipment stolen. “I don’t know what happened”, he remarks sombrely, “They left me holding the remote control”.

In this way the tabloid constructs a heady combination of shock, scandal and outrage, a horror at the possibility of unsuspecting families struck helpless by muthi and made vulnerable to criminals. At least one reader is scandalised, and writes in to complain how he “read with utter disgust and dismay the remarks made by traditional healers about muthi used by criminals to steal from other people⁴⁰⁷”. Such healers are “actually as guilty as those who rob”.

About two months later the *Daily Sun* runs a follow up about this muthi⁴⁰⁸, this time inflected in a surprising and telling way. The article is an interview with an inyanga, Shadrack “Mkhulu” Mdakana, from Ramaphosa squatter area, New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. The painstaking verification of his identity authenticates his status and works to support his opinion about the latest version of this practice. Titled “THESE DVD’S ARE HOT!” the report reminds readers of

⁴⁰⁴ Such as the National Association of Traditional Healers of South Africa mentioned above. In 2015 regulations were published in the Government Gazette that all traditional healers had to register with the Traditional Health Practitioners Council of South Africa. See Traditional Health Practitioners Regulations, 2015.

⁴⁰⁵ This man blows hyena smoke under your door – then he robs you! *Daily Sun* 3 February 2011: 1,2.

⁴⁰⁶ The potency of grave soil as a sedative appears a few times. See “Robbers use new muthi – graveyard soil” *Daily Sun* 5 September 2011: 3. Here a sangoma tells the tabloid that “people are coming to me everyday complaining about being robbed by people using graveyard soil”. He advises that the most effective way to administer the smoke is through the keyhole, regardless of whether there is a key in it.

⁴⁰⁷ Healers’ actions are filthy *Daily Sun* 7 February 2011: 31.

⁴⁰⁸ These DVDs are hot! *Daily Sun* 30 March 2011: 5.

the February article, and describes how, now that “thugs have run out of hyena tails”, they have turned to more modern materials to achieve the same result. Robbers apparently now use a muthi called “malala” which they smear on blank DVDs or old LP records, which they burn and then blow the smoke beneath the door.

Inyanga Mdakana asserts that it is “young people, fong-kong zangoma and inyanga” who use this method, which he warns is “very dangerous” and potentially lethal. But he has a solution, a homeopathic remedy, which he obligingly shares with the readers. Householders can counteract the action of the thugs’ muthi by “attaching a DVD to the front gate” of their homes. This DVD must be daubed with other muthi, like “maguqo and mphenduli”, so that, when a thug starts to burn the DVD with malala, “the muthi in the gate will fight back⁴⁰⁹”. Its action is thus: the thug will fall asleep at the same time as his victims, and they will be able to catch him “in a deep sleep” when they wake up first.

In the large and arresting image (see Figure 22, page 239), inyanga Mdakana demonstrates for the readers “how thugs burn blank DVDs with malala”. Facing left, he looks obliquely over his left shoulder towards the viewer with an appearance of furtive intent. In his right hand he holds up four DVDs which he mimes lighting with his left. The dramatic and slightly sinister effect of the image is due to the way his figure and the disks stand out against the dark background of the door near which he stands: over his shoulders is a cape made from leopard-print fabric, bordered by white lace and fringed with red pleats; the disks shine with reflected light, and sun highlights his wrists which are bound with many windings of thin strips of animal hide. The startling juxtaposition of these shining symbols of modernity with the inyanga’s consciously traditional attire and air, rather than presenting an irreconcilable difference, demonstrate instead a boldly syncretic imagination. The construction of such a symbolically rich composition in word and image works to the tabloid’s advantage insofar as it provocatively draws on fears of vulnerability to commonplace crime. This fear is symbolically activated by the evocative tableaux, which demonstrate how crime is seemingly enabled by potent substances associated with the occult. In the second case, the efficacy of this power (and its pertinence for the contemporary *kasi* reader) derives from its adaptation to – or co-option of – a modern idiom. Sadly, this is more likely a chemical ‘updating’ of a traditional ingredient rather than the augmentation of muthi by the magic of the movies.

⁴⁰⁹ When a sangoma or inyanga cures a person attacked by witchcraft, they may use muthi to ‘return’ the evil forces deployed by the witch to the sender. The witch is commonly supposed to be killed, a punishment that is legitimate insofar as it is in the interests of self-defence (see Ashforth 2005). Here, Inyanga Mdakana asserts that his muthi will merely send the thief to sleep, so that his crime can be dealt with by the law, an interesting modification of the justice usually seen as appropriate to such cases.

THESE DVDS ARE HOT!

By MKHUSELI SIZANI

IN THE past *Daily Sun* has told the story of gangs that use the smoke from hyena tails to put people to sleep so that they can rob them . . .

Now the thugs have run out of hyena tails and are making smoke in a different way!

They are using digital disks and old LP records to make the smoke that leaves people defenceless against robbery.

Inyanga Shadrack "Mkhulu" Mdakana (59) of Ramaphosa squatter area, New Brighton, in Port Elizabeth, told *Daily Sun*: "Hyenas are scarce so the thugs put a muthi called malala on a blank DVD or LP record.

"Then they burn it and blow the smoke under the door."

Mkhulu said that the poor victims inside the house will be asleep in a minute and lie there without moving while the thugs

clear out their houses.

"This muthi is very dangerous," he said. "Young people, fong-kong zangama and inyanga use it."

He said if a thug closed the door after looting the house, there was a good chance that the people inside the house could die.

But Mkhulu says these thugs can be

trapped. "You can catch them by attaching a DVD to the front gate of your house with some muthi, like maguqo and mphenduli on the DVD.

"You mix this muthi with other muthi. When a thug starts to burn the DVD with malala, the muthi in the gate will fight back."

He said the victims will fall asleep - but so will the thugs. But the victims will wake up first and catch the thugs in a deep sleep.

This man blows hyena smoke under your door - then he robs you!



Daily Sun on 3 February.



Inyanga Shadrack Mdakana shows how thugs burn blank DVDs with malala.

Photo by Mkhuseli Sizani

Figure 22: These DVDs are hot! *Daily Sun* 30 March 2011: 5.

The assistance that thugs derive from muthi does not stop here, however, for some criminals also use it to escape detection. Such stories come to light through police sources, and this point-of-view works to present a different interpretation of muthi's potency. For example, "THE MUTHI DIDN'T WORK!⁴¹⁰" derides a brazen thug who "wasn't scared of stealing from the community", fortified as he was by "motlemo muthi", because it was supposed to "tell" him if police were near. But although it "let him down" his faith in it, rather than being destroyed, simply shifts to accommodate the new context: "now I've found out that it only protects me from evil spirits and not the cops".

Evidently there are limits to what the newspaper expects its readers to find credible. Clearly the above story allows sceptical readers to judge its main actor as being unduly credulous, if they so choose. But while this story first refutes, then reopens for the reader the question of muthi's efficacy, "INVISIBLE THUGS BUST!⁴¹¹" denies it altogether and ridicules the gangsters who use it to "make themselves invisible". "With muthi bottles rattling in their pockets", they brazenly hijack a bakkie, hoping to do the deed magically unseen. But it "didn't work", for the police, we are told, "saw them clearly enough..." Triumphantly, the *Daily Sun* draws the reader from the muthi account into the world view of the police, declaring that "So can YOU [see them] in this SunPicture". The image shows a street scene in a *kasi* neighbourhood. Onlookers thickly

⁴¹⁰ The muthi didn't work! *Daily Sun* 28 July 2011: 14.

⁴¹¹ Invisible thugs bust! *Daily Sun* 4 July 2011: 3.

line a pavement behind police tape, while in the foreground three plain clothes police officers, with police vests and hand weapons, are marching a struggling man through the cordon. “WELL SPOTTED” remarks the caption ironically. “We don’t care about their muthi”, says the police spokesperson contemptuously, a point the *Daily Sun* reinforces by gleefully concluding that one of the hijackers “was bust by a police dog – who didn’t think his target was invisible either!”

But just to prevent us being too easily seduced by this dichotomy of a rationalist police service versus superstitious thugs, the “**Cop who tried to become invisible!**”⁴¹² demonstrates that police are no more outside this discourse than some of the criminals they chase⁴¹³. This story is a follow up of a report which appeared six weeks earlier, “Help cops catch one of their own”⁴¹⁴. Here, readers are asked to help track down a Warrant Officer, Thulani Mbambo, who had fled after shooting his wife, her sister and mother. Here, he gets his comeuppance at a sangoma’s “surgery”, where he had gone to get “MUTHI THAT WOULD MAKE HIM INVISIBLE FROM THOSE WHO WERE HUNTING HIM”. But, dramatically, it was “TOO LATE!” For a “SunReader” recognised him sitting in the queue of customers from the photograph published six weeks earlier, and “called the cops!” The *Daily Sun* does not spend time denying the power of muthi to make him invisible; rather, it measures its unmet potential with the actual efficacy of “SunPower”, the power of the paper, which “struck” and “bust him wide open”. In this and the previous article, the *Daily Sun* “sees” what others do not, and heroically helps others to see too.

Witchcraft

While muthi can enable and protect, it can also act to harm or kill – that is, witchcraft can be deduced by the presentation of evidence in the form of muthi. Alternately, victims’ testimonies of inexplicable suffering without the presence of muthi can also suggest witchcraft, sometimes described as a “curse”. In this case the *Daily Sun*’s self-conscious role of cultural mediator works in its favour, and its task is simply to represent on the behalf of readers their beliefs concerning occult attack.

“THE HORROR OF SMILEY!”⁴¹⁵ describes how Nophelele Ngojoba finds in the yard of her upmarket home an “evil smiley” which is “full of muthi”. A “smiley” in township parlance is the head of a sheep or goat considered by some township residents as a delicacy. Occasionally, smileys feature in funny stories about township life⁴¹⁶, and so the title here provocatively brings together the horror of witchcraft with something that usually provokes laughter. The truth of this gruesome and frightening phenomenon is substantiated by the large image in which Ngojoba crouches down and gingerly pokes a long forked stick at the sheep’s head, pierced with many safety-pins through the lips, eyes and ears and tied about the muzzle with a strip of blue cloth. A cloth-covered muthi bottle sticks out the sides of the mouth. The head is in the foreground and Ngojoba looks stoically at the camera as she prods it with the stick. She is dressed smartly but

⁴¹² Cop who tried to become invisible! *Daily Sun* 22 August 2011: 1,2.

⁴¹³ Altbeker (2005) relates how Inspector Govender, a white police officer, goes regularly to a sangoma to be ritually cleansed when he kills a suspect. He offers Altbeker an alternative view of police family murders: in his view, officers who murder their families have been bewitched by the mothers of the thugs they kill in the course of their duties.

⁴¹⁴ Help cops catch one of their own *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 6.

⁴¹⁵ The horror of smiley! *Daily Sun* 28 June 2011: 9.

⁴¹⁶ Smileys, or “skops” as they are otherwise called, are a potent food, and “smiley soup” is eaten as an aphrodisiac. The old men who eat it are objects of laughter, but the inherent power of the soup is not dismissed. See for example, “Skop soup puts smiles on men's faces” *Daily Sun* 1 August 2011: 1,2.

conservatively, in a blue and orange shweshwe outfit and long waistcoat and a knitted orange cap.

Ngojoba is “**a successful businesswoman**”, and the *Daily Sun* emphasises this desirable social and economic status. Hers is no ordinary *kasi* yard, but one that belongs to an “11-room double storey house in Blue Water Bay... where all the rich people of Ebhayi live” – she had moved to this affluent Mandela Bay suburb “because everyone here minds his own business” (implicitly, unlike nosey and jealous township neighbours). But her attempts to escape the notice and ill-will of less prosperous and distant *kasi* residents have proved in vain. She attributes the appearance of the head in her yard to “jealous” people who “want to destroy me” and boldly declares that she is “haunted by witchcraft” at home and in her business. To support this claim the *Daily Sun* allows her to recount a long history of crimes she has inexplicably suffered including armed robberies, cash heists and finally arson, a mysterious fire in which she “lost everything”. Now, not long since her last ordeal, she finds the “evil smiley”. Somewhat contradictorily, she tells the *Daily Sun* that she will not read the accompanying letter “because it is going to haunt me” while stoutly declaring that “whoever is doing this is wasting his or her time” for “God is my protector and I fear none”.

Thus precariously balanced between occult attack and divine protection, between the *kasi* and the suburb, Ngojoba’s story epitomises the lived tensions which the tabloid symbolically represents for its readers. The witchcraft here is ascribed to jealousy, but in the following case it appears as a motiveless crime and the family which it affects come to the *Daily Sun*, as many others do, “for help”. “Who will death take this August?⁴¹⁷” does not offer alternatives to the Kubayi family’s conviction that they are afflicted by a curse. Instead, it simply offers a space for them to articulate their fear, which the tabloid emphasises. The headline refers to the deaths of seven siblings who have all died over the past eleven years in the month of August, now a month that “holds deep dread” for the Kubayi family as they “wait for a visit from Lady Death”. The family’s spokesperson, Mxolisi Kubayi, tells the *Daily Sun* that he “blamed witchcraft”. “The curse took my brothers and sisters one by one”, he says. Mysteriously, they “died like ants in front of us and not one of them was sick”. The crux of the story comes towards the end, after the names of the deceased and their dates of death are listed. They fear that soon one of the four remaining siblings will die. “Now, with August just around the corner, Mxolisi and his siblings... can only wait, dreading the approach of death”. “Who will be next?” enquires the tabloid ominously.

***The case of the Red Lesotho Pap*⁴¹⁸ Tokoloshe**

Witchcraft clearly matters to many readers and the *Daily Sun* must take their anxieties seriously, even as it uses to its own advantage witchcraft’s potential to thrill and horrify. Indeed, it is forced to treat these beliefs seriously, as the case of the red Lesotho pap tokoloshe suggests. This saga features inyanga “Mkhulu” Mdakana, who we met previously demonstrating the effect of burning malala on blank DVDs. It begins with an article which dramatically describes the uses

⁴¹⁷ Who will death take this August? *Daily Sun* 13 June 2011: 3.

⁴¹⁸ Pap is a colloquialism for porridge, often made from maize-meal.

and actions of a tokoloshe made from red Lesotho pap “mixed with evil muthi” – and its outrageous price: “R15 000 to R25 000!”⁴¹⁹ In an amused and amazed tone, it extensively quotes inyanga Mdakana who tells readers its history (it used to be made by Lesotho herders to guard their stock against theft) and how it is now used by business people “to expand their business” or, more sinisterly, by “jealous people” who maliciously “buy it to stop the progress of others and make their lives hell”. In other words, it is a form of witchcraft. Mdakana is given substantial space to describe how the tokoloshe is activated by the buyer with the help of the zangoma who sell it, and its appearance and its method of control. However, he ends by warning readers of its potential violence and uncontrollability, for once its owner dies the evil spirit is freed to wreak his own mischief and “he rapes the kids or pokes the wife” until “the whole family is dead”. Inyanga Mdakana holds out a board on which stands an example of the tokoloshe, and there is a close up image of the reddish-hued, roughly-made pap manikin.

However, the paper has made an error in this article, which costs it some effort to repair, as we shall see. The report’s introduction states that inyanga Mdakana “makes these little men”, and further describes him as their “father”, although we see in his long explanation that Mdakana never refers to himself as manufacturing the items. The confusion this error of attribution causes comes to our notice the next day, when a reader writes⁴²⁰ in to say that he is “worried” about “the way our traditional healers are conducting themselves”. Indignantly, he questions the trustworthiness of Mdakana, by demanding rhetorically “How can you create an evil tokoloshe and be proud of it?” It is this kind of activity that “takes away our respect... and faith” in traditional healers.

Five days later, the *Daily Sun* publishes an article designed to correct the error and dispel any misconceptions that may have arisen from it. Titled “MY MISSION IS TO CHASE OTOKOLOSHE!”⁴²¹ it begins by explaining that ever since the article about inyanga Mdakana and the image of the “dummy tokoloshe” appeared, the tabloid’s phones have been “ringing non-stop with SunReaders asking for Mkhulu’s details”. However, this attention is obviously unwanted, for the article goes on to explain how his job is to “chase away evil spirits – not to make otokoloshe!” This correction (signalled by the word “dummy” above) is repeated in Mdakana’s own words, as he explains that in his long practice as an inyanga, he has “come across many evil things”, including people who are “haunted by otokoloshe”, and that his job is to “chase them away and heal people”. Indeed, repeats the paper, Mdakana “in no way is the father of otokoloshe”. The article then moves on to a lengthy explanation in Mdakana’s words in which he explains seriously to readers how to “see” tokoloshes using matter from a dog’s eyes, “intongo zenja”.

However, this attempt to placate Mdakana proves insufficient, for almost two months later the *Daily Sun* publishes a formal apology⁴²² on page 2, the only such retraction in the data. It states “*Daily Sun* wishes to apologise to Shadrack Mdakane [sic] and his family for any inconvenience

⁴¹⁹ This pap tokoloshe sells like hotcakes! *Daily Sun* 4 August 2011: 3.

⁴²⁰ Facebook message *Daily Sun* 5 August 2011: 39.

⁴²¹ My mission is to chase otokoloshe! *Daily Sun* 10 August 2011: 7.

⁴²² Shadrack chases otokoloshe *Daily Sun* 24 October 2011: 2.

and confusion which may have resulted from the article”. A bit cheekily, it reiterates that Mdakane is “a licensed traditional healer and does NOT make otokoloshe”.

The case of the Magic 4-5

Why such a fuss over something so trivial? A possible answer appears in the story below which demonstrates the fatal consequences of being suspected of witchcraft. The story concerns a pastor, Albert Malwane, who is killed by villagers when they suspect that he used muthi to have illicit sex with village women. In typical style the subheading (or more accurately, “pre-heading”) sets up the context for the disruption contained in the headline beneath it: “Pastor accused of poking from 200m away!” reads the subheading. “**KILLED FOR HIS MAGIC 4-5!**” exclaims the headline. A more heady amalgam of sex scandal and witchcraft horror could hardly be imagined. In typical front page style, the report, which has no image, begins by setting up the initial disruption: “**Villagers believed if any woman was within 200m of the pastor’s house, he could have sex with her!**” In fact, he “*did not even have to TOUCH a woman to have sex!*” It is a form of witchcraft, whose sinister and malignant potential is emphasised by the use of the vernacular: “**THEY SAID HE WAS USING UMSHOSHAPHANSI – MEANING UNDERGROUND, NEVER SEEN BUT ALWAYS THERE!**”

In this way the initial disruption of witchcraft is foregrounded, and the text works to emphasise its illicit nature which is compounded by its cunning use to obtain sex in secret. The reader will no doubt recognise in this accusation an instance of that unreformed sexuality which is so condemned by the paper – the pastor is in effect accused of being able to rape with impunity. This context sets up the second and more serious disruption, of Pastor Albert Malwane’s murder at the hands of residents, a vivid example of People’s Justice in which the horror of his death is emphasised: people came to his house “in the dark of the night” and “took him to the hills... and allegedly burned him alive!” His wife, Thembelihle, witnesses his terrifying abduction: “When I saw them taking my husband away, I could see they were going to kill him”. She flees the house with her child and goes into hiding.

Following this chilling description, the *Daily Sun* expands on the events leading up to the murder and its aftermath, and quotes a variety of witnesses and authorities, each of which offers the reader different points of view about the matter. A village witness reinforces the accusation of the pastor’s use of muthi, and the murder is justified in this way: he was “using umshoshaphansi to have sex with our women” and “those who killed him saved us and our women”. In addition, he tells the *Daily Sun* that “We told him to leave, but he didn’t want to go”.

On the contrary, the local induna, Somphisi, tells the tabloid that “we” had met the pastor a day before the murder and that “We agreed with him that he should leave in two days”. Who “we” refers to is not explained, although we can surmise it refers to the induna and residents, nor does the report say what had led to the talk or on what basis this consensus was reached. We can only surmise that both parties took the accusations of witchcraft seriously and that the pastor had

recognised that he was in danger. Given this agreement, the induna expresses surprise that people killed him “without finding out why he hadn’t left yet”.

The *Daily Sun* again quotes the pastor’s widow, Thembelihle, who presents the reader with a further conundrum, as she is mystified at the accusations. She tells the tabloid that Malwane had intended to “ask the community what made them think we were involved in anything [to do with] supernatural activities” (a euphemism for practicing witchcraft). But he was killed before he could enquire, and what had motivated the accusations of umshoshaphansi remains a mystery. Malwane’s father, Timothy, “blasted” his son’s murderers as “evil”, unlike his son who was a “good man of God” (that is, given his calling, inherently incapable of the witchcraft of which he is accused). Finally, the police statement focuses on the justice process. The police spokesperson’s language is formal and technical: we learn the people involved were from Etitandini squatter camp⁴²³, near Malalane (elsewhere, Malelani), in Mpumalanga. Twelve suspects have been arrested and “charged with murder and arson”. They “appeared in Tonga Magistrates court”, where their “bail application was postponed”.

The next day a follow up article⁴²⁴ tells readers that this front page story had “caused a great debate on radio talk show around the nation”, and gives some examples of the opinions expressed. Interestingly, none directly support the idea that the pastor’s witchcraft is real – instead, all three examples attempt to construct a logical explanation for how the *villagers* came to believe that witchcraft was being used. The first suggests that women’s sexy dreams lead to gossip, an idea supported by a second listener who thinks that a woman perhaps talked in her sleep during a dream of sex with the pastor, which lead her “man” to “conclude that the pastor had a magic 4-5!” A third listener observes that “pastors tend to draw admiration from women”, and asserts that the “fault” may lie with the village men, who accused the pastor out of “jealousy”. Jealousy, of course, is a common motivation for witchcraft accusations, as we have seen.

But a third article⁴²⁵, which occupies well over half the page, returns to the idea of witchcraft. It features two of the accused, who, since their arrest on suspicion of murder, have been “CRIPPLED – BY A CURSE!” “Dead pastor is striking back, say murder accused”, reads the subheading. The very large image below the headline graphically illustrates the effect of the curse by showing one of the accused, Sunnyboy Mthalala, sitting slackly on a bed “IN PAIN”. His face, with lips parted slightly and eyes half closed, expresses his suffering as he lifts his left foot weakly, so that the sole is visible. Another person, cut out of the frame, holds up his limp left arm by the wrist. This visual evidence, along with the fact that he “had to be carried into the court”, substantiates his declaration that “it feels as if he is walking on a bed of nails”. But mysteriously, “doctors can’t find anything wrong”. The other accused who has “fallen sick”, Patrick Mnisi, said his fingers have “stopped working”, for they are “curling up” and he “can’t straighten them”. Convinced by these proofs, both men believe that they have been afflicted by

⁴²³ The accused appear to be contradictorily described as both villagers and residents of a squatter camp. This can be explained by Etitandini’s location within a deep rural area of Mpumalanga, and its social organisation around customary leaders.

⁴²⁴ Magic 4-5 makes waves on radio! *Daily Sun* 3 March 2011: 3.

⁴²⁵ Crippled – by a curse! *Daily Sun* 13 April 2011: 5.

witchcraft: “We believe muthi is being used to slowly kill us”. The *Daily Sun* adds evidence to support their case by quoting Timothy Malwane, the father of the murdered man, who confirms that a “curse was released at the funeral”.

The final report⁴²⁶ over a month later is much smaller, but it stands out from the page due its red border and headline. Here, state justice and a local world-view stand side by side in surreal contrast. The police spokesperson, Lieutenant-Colonel Hlathi, drily confirms that the trial date for the twelve suspects, who include a three women and a “headman”, will be set when they appear in “the Boschfontein Periodical Court in Mpumalanga” on “charges of murder and arson”. In the same manner, he supplies further details about the context of the murder, including the fact that the pastor’s house was burned down; that in addition to “using an invisible penis” he was accused of “talking to animals”; and that his wife was also accused of witchcraft, by “turning into a snail and terrorising the community”. To end, the report abruptly returns to the law. The accused “have not been asked to plead” on the charges of murder and arson, and they are “out on R1000 bail each”. This ends the case of the “magic 4-5” and it disappears from view.

Witchcraft murders

While the story of the Pastor is unusual for its extensive coverage, and for the character of the accusation, he is by no means the only person to be reported attacked or murdered after being accused of witchcraft. For example, in the edition that contains the article about the radio responses to the pastor’s murder, a short article⁴²⁷ overleaf blandly reports that twenty six people had been arrested in Hoedspruit and Maake in two separate incidents. They are charged with arson, public violence, and with “making accusations of practising evil”. In other words, they have, unusually, been charged with accusing people of witchcraft under the Suppression of Witchcraft Act. In most articles, the charges are left at murder or attempted murder, public violence and arson. For example, in an article⁴²⁸ concerning the sentencing of three young men who killed an eighty year old woman and her four grandchildren after accusing her of practising witchcraft, the report quotes Judge Lusindiso Phakathi who, rather than directly addressing the problem of witchcraft accusations, simply notes the prevalence of the murder of elderly women in the Transkei and suggests that “the courts are not doing enough in sending out a strong message to deter would-be murderers”.

In keeping with this sentiment, it is when witchcraft accusations end in the death of elderly women that the *Daily Sun* draws a line and loudly denounces those who act on them. “**FIRES OF FURY!**⁴²⁹” and its follow up, “**GOGO HORROR: 10 BUST!**⁴³⁰” illustrate this demarcation well. The first report recounts how a young man fell ill at an initiation school, and

⁴²⁶ Trial date to be set in magic 4-5 case *Daily Sun* 26 May 2011: 9.

⁴²⁷ Accusations of practising evil *Daily Sun* 3 March 2011: 4.

⁴²⁸ Killers to pay for gogo and kids’ deaths *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.

⁴²⁹ Fires of fury! *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 1,2. This edition carries on the second page the article mentioned above (Killers to pay for gogo and kids’ deaths *Daily Sun* 6 July 2011: 2.) concerning the sentencing of three young men who murdered an eighty year old woman and her four grandchildren after accusing her of practising witchcraft.

⁴³⁰ Gogo horror: 10 bust! *Daily Sun* 7 July 2011: 1,2.

dying, claimed that “**two grannies had put an evil spell on him**”⁴³¹. The entire article is devoted to the condemnation of the violent actions of the young men who seek revenge for their friend. Their actions are shocking and unequivocally damnable: they formed “*an angry crowd*”, which went on a “MIDNIGHT RAMPAGE” and indulged in an “*orgy of killing and burning*”. Unsparingly, it describes step by step their horrifying and excessive violence: “**FIRST**” “ONE GOGO WAS STABBED AND BURNED TO DEATH” and her grandson attacked “with pangas”; “**NEXT**” they burned her son’s shack; “**THEN**” they attacked the second woman, whom they doused with petrol and “**SET ALIGHT**” (amazingly, she lives), and also caught her son, who was “hacked to death and his body set on fire”. Her other two children were “critically injured with burn and stab wounds”. Noticeable here is the inclusion of the women’s children in their death sentence, just as mothers sometimes die for the crimes of their sons, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Drawing breath, the article breaks its pace and describes how “As dawn broke over Slovo Park” the “shocked police went into action”. This action is not described. It simply quotes Lieutenant-Colonel Mzukisi Fatyela who announces the arrests of “four people between the ages of 21 and 22” and their charges of murder, attempted murder and arson.

However, this is not the end of the story of the deaths of the grandmothers and their relatives, which is continued in the paper’s second article the following day. A heroic cop narrative, it admiringly describes how the police “had not taken a break after the horror”. Indefatigably, they “went from house to house, shebeen⁴³² to shebeen... and got their men!” Determinedly, they “swoop[ed]” on the shebeen where the suspects were drinking, “stormed” it and “bust” them. The ten young men whom they arrest are completely excoriated by the paper, which constructs them as callous and degenerate. They are described as having gone to a shebeen for a “**victory party**” after their “MAD RAMPAGE” where they “sat in a circle” and drank “large bottles of beer” through the night. Brazenly, they wore their “**bloodstained clothes**”, evidence of their crimes, while all round them “*lay bloody pangas and bush knives*”. This evidence leads to the “**blood stained boozers**” being “bust on the spot” when the police find them.

Their condemnation does not end here, however, for Lieutenant-Colonel Mzukisi Fatyela also has a few choice comments to make: contemptuously, he describes them as “young boys” who are “not even men”, for they have not yet “been to the mountains” (circumcised). “They know nothing about witchcraft”, he declares “angrily”, and “can’t even give us proof of how witchcraft is practised!” Without even this small defence in their favour, their actions are simply mad: they “just go out and attack innocent old people!” It is worth noting here how Fatyela’s words seem to imply a twofold misdemeanour: the accused not only commit multiple murders, but also do so with weak motivation in traditional terms, since they fail in not properly “knowing” about witchcraft, a knowledge that the “boys” are incapable of accessing due to their social immaturity.

⁴³¹ The fact that this illness and the subsequent accusation occurs while the young man is undergoing a significant rite of passage, is not coincidental. In effect, the *umkhwetha* (candidate for initiation) is denied achieving manhood and the social status and role that this implies. Witches are said to subvert such “natural” processes (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 288-289).

⁴³² A shebeen is an informal township drinking establishment.

Muthi murder

In this final section, we see coming together all the elements discussed above: bad sangomas, muthi and witchcraft; and the struggle between the discursive domains of two antithetical world views. It is the force of the conviction in muthi's efficacy that leads to murder in order to obtain a certain potent type. Such muthi contains human body parts and 59 reports in the data deal with "muthi murders", a term that refers to the death of a person whose organs or limbs are removed from the living body in order to concoct it. Thus not only are the deaths dreadful, but the intention to derive personal benefits from them renders them abominable and its use is perceived as a form of witchcraft. So stories of muthi murders are moments when the *Daily Sun* draws a firm line between what is acceptable and unacceptable in the beliefs and practices of the corresponding world view. More importantly, and perhaps more tragically, these stories are additionally significant because they reveal a preponderant fear that justice or redress in such cases is almost always impossible. Two reasons for this perception emerge from the data, as will become apparent: first, while the state draws the murders within its own jurisdiction, its success in solving the crimes is low; and second, while the murder per se might be processed by the secular state, it leaves the non-secular realm undefended and lacking acceptable resolution.

Muthi murders by their very nature are appalling events, and we are bound to surmise that the *Daily Sun's* interest in them is at least partially for their shock value: they provide the material for stories of the eye-grabbing kind that sell newspapers. So, with some relish, the tabloid allows Simon Mushiana from Khubvi Village in Venda to tell the readers from his hospital bed how he "**BEAT OFF MUTHI KILLERS!**"⁴³³, such a frightful experience that even the tabloid describes it as an "incredible story". The narrative thrillingly pits Mushiana's strength and determination to survive despite his injuries, against the ruthlessness of three "muthi hunters" who broke into his home at night and attempted to cut off his foot at the ankle with a petrol-driven chainsaw⁴³⁴. Dramatically, the *Daily Sun* ascribes the attack to "evil witchdoctors"⁴³⁵. We note the unusual word-choice: a term that this time clearly evokes an idea of barbaric and illicit power, a more forceful and pejorative epithet than the common 'fake sangoma'. Mushiana, it should be said, also uses this word in his own first person narrative: "a witchdoctor... forced me to drink... a muthi potion".

His story is confirmed by the police spokesperson, Police Chief Leonard Randima, who remarks phlegmatically "This was clearly an attack for muthi purposes". The three suspects have been charged – and amazingly are "out on bail!" The wording and punctuation here is especially telling. The exclamation mark points to a common and pressing concern in such cases: what is commonly considered a weakness in the justice process. The too-ready release of such subjects naturally raises fears for the continued vulnerability of their potential victims, a reaction the *Daily Sun* is alive to.

⁴³³ I beat off muthi killers! *Daily Sun* 21 February 2011: 1,2.

⁴³⁴ That he is alive when this attempted amputation takes place is not a mistake, for the body part is considered more powerful if harvested while alive.

⁴³⁵ This term is used here for the only time in the data.

To end the report the *Daily Sun* draws in a second authority, Sazi Mhlongo, secretary of the Traditional Healers Association, who interprets the attack and uncovers its meaning for those readers who might need help in understanding its motive. He tells the *Daily Sun* that the foot or leg can be used “for witchcraft”, that is, to make “muthi for good luck”. He gives a couple of examples: “It could be used... by someone who wants to start a business or just wants something good in their lives”. But, carefully, in case this sounds too good to be true, he emphatically denounces the practice in the final sentence: “This is evil. Such people must be locked up”.

While the hero of this story survives to tell his own tale, others are less fortunate and the *Daily Sun*'s task is to do justice to the horror of the murders. Grieving parents are again a focus, as in the coverage of women murdered by their lovers. “**NO REST FOR THESE BONES!**⁴³⁶” for example describes the enduring grief of a mother whose four-year-old girl was abducted and murdered for muthi eleven years previously. The front page photograph shows in sharp focus in the foreground a small pile of white bones and a skull arranged on newspaper. Behind them, slightly out of focus, sit the sad mother and grandmother. The child, Sarinah, is “NOT GONE... NOT FORGOTTEN”. With the agreement of the village chief and residents, the child's bones are kept unburied “in the ceiling of the community centre” “until [the] killers are caught”. From the point of view of the mother and her community, it is the state which must act, but it manifestly fails to do so. The “SunInvestigation” that the tabloid launches to solve the mystery reveals that the woman who is suspected of carrying out the abduction and who “delivered... [the child] to the muthi killers” has never been questioned. “The magistrate didn't take her testimony”, says the chief. The mother stubbornly refuses to bury the remains until a satisfactory resolution is reached, and the paper's testimony offers her symbolic justice where no other seems likely.

Muthi murder and the state in the urban kasi

Muthi murders are not confined to remote villages but are equally urban phenomena (Ashforth 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). The tension generated by the irruption of ‘traditional’ beliefs (which belong, by association, in rural areas) within the urban township is evocatively represented by the tabloid in a series of seven articles which deal with a number of muthi murders that occur in the large township of Ivory Park outside Johannesburg. I do not go into all the details here, but simply note those aspects that forcefully represent this tension. “**MUTHI FEAR AND FURY!**⁴³⁷” opens by deliberately evoking the antithesis: “**It's a kasi in the shadow of Africa's richest city...**” begins the report, “*But it seems modern times have passed some people by in Ivory Park*”. Here the idea of urban modernity is consciously juxtaposed with a past that has no place in the city. By this logic, it is these revenants which are responsible for the terrible muthi murders: “**THEY'VE DISCOVERED AT LEAST FOUR DEAD PEOPLE THERE WITH BODY PARTS HACKED OFF – APPARENTLY FOR MUTHI!**” The victims are named and details given of the body parts removed. Not surprisingly, the “fear and dread in the township streets...” has led to a case of People's Justice, in which a man suspected of being

⁴³⁶ No rest for these bones! *Daily Sun* 28 July 2011: 1,2. The body parts of the young are thought to be especially potent. See Ashforth (2005); Comaroff and Comaroff (1999).

⁴³⁷ Muthi fear and fury! *Daily Sun* 27 July 2011: 1,2.

behind the attacks was stoned to death. Nine members of the community have been arrested for this murder: “if we take the law into our own hands, cops arrest us and release the criminals”, complains a “community leader”. But, undeterred by the arrests, and doubtful of the police’s ability to intervene, residents are organising for their own security: “More members are coming to join us on our patrols at night, where suspected killers stay”.

The next two reports record the arrest of two women⁴³⁸ (the only arrests mentioned out of a total of five murders) for the murder of Rose Phasha, an adult who was named as a victim in the first article. Shockingly, one of these suspects is her own mother⁴³⁹. The *Daily Sun* draws attention to Captain Happy Vilankulu’s use in court of the phrase “ritual murder⁴⁴⁰” by placing it within quotation marks; his attempt at a formal and forensic description contrasts markedly with the *Daily Sun*’s frequent colloquial use of “muthi murder”. This attempt by the police to distance themselves from those aspects of the case which point to a world view that includes witches and potent materials is visible again in the fourth report, “Another mutilated body found!⁴⁴¹” Here, the police are described as “refusing to speculate that [the murders] might be muthi killings carried out by ‘witches’”. The anxiety generated by the term is contained by enclosing it in inverted commas which defuse the potency of the idea – this is the only time the word is used expressly in the data. Instead, the police spokesperson, Captain Katlego Mogale, clearly articulates the rational and empirical stance demanded by the modern state: “We investigate first and only talk about facts. We don’t speculate”.

Nevertheless, the state is drawn into the countervailing discourse of muthi and witchcraft, for the sixth report⁴⁴² tells how MEC for Community Safety, Faith Mazibuko, attends the cleansing rituals held by the families of the victims. “**Zangoma conducted rituals at the weekend to cleanse the spots haunted by the restless spirits of five muthi murder victims**”. The image that accompanies the report shows Mazibuko bending down to place a small blue wreath over the green wooden cross set up “on the spot where Rose Phasha’s body was found”. Zangoma and state, muthi and crosses, rituals and wreathes: the report and the image offer a complex set of signs which suggest a momentary *detente* between world views that appear otherwise antagonistic.

In these reports concerning the Ivory Park murders, the words of the police, their formal character and the authoritative action that they construct, work against ambiguity and invoke a discourse entirely outside that of witchcraft. But, again, just as with the case of the invisible-making muthi, we find moments when the cops are no more outside this discourse than those they police. Fascinatingly, we briefly hear a police officer articulate quite seriously *in court* a discourse of witchcraft as a reason to deny a suspect bail. This happens at the bail hearing of a

⁴³⁸ Women bust after evil muthi killings *Daily Sun* 11 August 2011: 2.

⁴³⁹ Muthi murder mum in the dock! *Daily Sun* 12 August 2011: 4. See Geschiere (2013). Recall the story of Andile Toni earlier who is told by the sangoma that he would have to “kill someone he loves”. Evil sangoma told me: kill loved one! *Daily Sun* 12 April 2011: 6.

⁴⁴⁰ See Petrus (2011) for the distinction between ritual and muthi murders. The collection of body parts for muthi is not accompanied by ritual forms of behaviour. Any ritual that may occur happens later.

⁴⁴¹ Another mutilated body found! *Daily Sun* 15 August 2011: 2.

⁴⁴² Zangoma cleansing *Daily Sun* 12 September 2011: 10.

bishop who is accused of murdering a nine year old girl for muthi⁴⁴³. The court report records in a matter-of-fact way that the same testifying police officer whom we met in the Rose Phasha case, Captain Happy Vilankulu, opposed bail because the bishop “has confessed that he turned two other children into zombies⁴⁴⁴”. Anxiously, he continues: “What worries me is that [the] accused told me that he will take us to his home and reveal the zombies and bring them back to life”. Yet, simultaneously, he unselfconsciously articulates the entirely antithetical empirical discourse of the court. He recounts how he found a bottle of muthi which “Forensics confirmed contained human tissue”. But the law itself struggles: along with kidnapping and murder, the bishop and his co-accused (who include two inyangas) are charged with “contravention of the Human Tissue Act⁴⁴⁵” – a bizarre and incongruent way to accommodate a mixture of muthi made from a girl’s flesh and blood.

The HEAD in the FRIDGE! What remains after state justice

“**The HEAD in the FRIDGE!**”⁴⁴⁶ saga differs from the Ivory Park murders insofar as the *Daily Sun* determinedly keeps open for speculation the possibility of witchcraft. We again meet the same actors and events as above: a muthi murder; a community; some suspects, including an inyanga; People’s Justice; the police; and a court of law. Within the coverage, the various actors compete to impose their definition of the case and close down countervailing discourses. What is interesting is how residents’ attempts to denounce the man they allege is ultimately responsible for the murder must struggle unequally against state definitions of who is criminal in this case.

The story begins innocuously, but knowing what we do of the *Daily Sun*, ominously: “**Cops raided a house and opened the deep freeze**”. Tantalisingly, it continues: “*They stared in horror...*” The denouement is a grisly and appalling discovery: “**THE HEAD OF A TEENAGE BOY**” together with a “**DEEP-FROZEN SNAKE!**” (see Figure 23, page 251). Loyiso Jokweni had gone missing on Christmas day, and his body had been discovered decapitated in mid January. Now, shockingly, the missing head comes to light. There is visual evidence: a blurry photograph, perhaps taken with a flash on a cellphone, of a blue plastic bowl or bucket containing what can just be made out to be a face – it is only partly visible due to the white-out of the flash on what may be ice. The bucket, positioned to the top left corner of the image, is set on a chequered black and white tile floor and is surrounded at the base by what appears to be crumpled transparent plastic. The snake lies slackly on the floor alongside. It may be defrosting, for it glistens wetly. A head and shoulders photograph of Jokweni is superimposed to the top right of this picture at an angle to it, and a text box outlined in red links the face of the teen with the contents of the bucket by means of red lines. “**CHILLING**” it reads (a truly dreadful pun, emphasising the voyeuristic aspect): “Loyiso Jokweni (above) whose severed head was found (left) packed in ice in a blue plastic bowl”.

⁴⁴³ Horror muthi find of human tissue! *Daily Sun* 6 April 2011: 6.

⁴⁴⁴ Zombies are people who die and are then animated and controlled by occult means to do a witch’s bidding. By this means the witch benefits materially (but secretly) from the person’s labour. See Ashforth (2005); Comaroff and Comaroff (1999).

⁴⁴⁵ Bishop will stay behind bars *Daily Sun* 13 May 2011: 4. The terms of the Human Tissue Act of 1983 were repealed and updated by the National Health Act, No.61 of 2003. The charges use the old terminology.

⁴⁴⁶ The head in the fridge! *Daily Sun* 31 January 2011: 1.

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Monday 31 January 2011

The HEAD in the FRIDGE!

Sangoma bust over horror find!

By ANIL SINGH and MUZI ZINCUME
COPS raided a house and opened the deep freeze.

They stared in horror...

INSIDE WAS THE HEAD OF A TEEN-AGE BOY AS WELL AS A DEEP-FROZEN SNAKE!

The teenager, Loyiso Jokweni (18), went missing on Christmas Day.

The kid from Inanda, Durban, was visiting his sister in nearby Pietermaritzburg.

The boy's headless body was found on 17 January. A sharp knife had been used to cut off his head!

Cops have now arrested two people - including a sangoma who allegedly instructed a man to kill Loyiso for muthi.

News of the arrest of the sangoma spread like wildfire and more than 1 000 angry local residents burnt down his house on Saturday.

And they threatened to kill him if he is released on bail. Cop reinforcements had to be sent to the Mkhathini area near the KZN capital.

On Friday cops bust a 30-year-old suspect... in whose home they later found the freezer and its gruesome contents.

Colonel Jay Naicker said cops working on the case had later arrested a 47-year-old traditional healer.

The two suspects will appear in the Pietermaritzburg Magistrates Court today on a charge of murder.

Naicker appealed to local people to stay calm.

"The community should allow us to do our investigations. We are also investigating arson and those responsible will be arrested," he said.



CHILLING: Loyiso Jokweni (above) whose severed head was found (left) packed in ice in a blue plastic bowl in the freezer of a suspect's house. Also found in the fridge... a dead snake.

READ OUR CD REVIEWS TO SEE WHAT MUSIC YOU WILL CHOOSE! P24

Figure 23: The head in the fridge! Daily Sun 31 January 2011: 1,2.

After presenting the discovery of the head and recounting the original murder, the report rapidly goes on to describe the arrest of two men, one of whom is “a sangoma” who “allegedly instructed the other man to kill Loyiso for muthi!” (Later he is described, in the words of the police, as a “traditional healer”, and further into the coverage more specifically an “inyanga”.) This inyanga, and the fear and hatred he provokes for his alleged role in the murder, is to provide the focus of the subsequent articles. “Sangoma bust over horror find!” reads the subheading here. Indeed, the man responsible for the actual murder plays an entirely secondary role in the saga and, apart from the mention of his arrest and bail hearing, is all but ignored by the reports.

The news of the inyanga’s arrest and the allegation that he incited the murder is incendiary and we are rapidly taken into the uncertain territory of People’s Justice. The news “spread like wildfire” through the community, and outraged, “more than 1000 angry local residents burnt down his house” in Mfakathini. They threaten to kill him if he is released on bail, and police send reinforcements to the area “near the KZN capital”. The police spokesperson Colonel Naiker confirms the arrests and the date for the initial court appearance for charges. He ends the report by “appeal[ing] to local people to stay calm” and sternly admonishes them to “allow us [police] to do our investigations”. Warningly, he ends the report by adding that the investigations include those accused of arson, that is, those suspected of taking part in the People’s Justice.

So, in this first article we observe a set of positions and counter-positions adopted by the community and the police in order to contain the disruption. While the discovery is the focus of interest for the tabloid, for the residents, the disruption is not the head so much as the idea that the local inyanga provided the man who killed Jokweni with the initiating motive, that is, access to the power of the muthi for which the head was a necessary ingredient. While the police arrest the suspects, this is not sufficient for the suspicious residents, who respond with arson and threats of vengeance. The report ends with the police who, in addition to physically augmenting their power, reassert their authority verbally by issuing warnings and cautions via the tabloid.

These stances remain visible in the second article⁴⁴⁷ which briefly reports on the bail protest staged at the court by “a crowd of more than 1000” residents, who demand that bail is denied the two accused: they are “ready to hand out People’s Justice” if he is released. However, the state response outweighs that of the community both physically and symbolically. It sends in “heavily armed cops” who “took up positions” around the premises. The report, too, adopts a more guarded tone that favours the court process and in more formal language states the names of the accused – Mduduzi Manqele (here, more specifically, an “inyanga”) and Roger Thusi – as well as the outcome of the brief court appearance: the two accused will “stay in custody until 7 February”.

Interestingly, a third actor in this drama appears as a footnote to the bail protest, in the form of the traditional leader of the Mfakathini area, “iNkosi Nsikayesizwe Zondi of the Mpumuza clan”. Zondi is assisted by a heroic state representative, the MEC for Community Safety and Liason, Willies Mchunu, who attempts to resolve the disruption by visiting the “village of

⁴⁴⁷ Head case draws crowd *Daily Sun* 1 February 2011: 5.

fear⁴⁴⁸). The residents are “very scared”, for it appears in the following article that no less than twelve people from the same area are unaccounted for. Their disappearance is blamed on inyanga Manqele, and to “calm the people down” Mchunu promises some hero helpers, “a task team... of top cops” who will “investigate”.

Yet the state’s attempt to draw the disruption wholly under its jurisdiction is contested in the final two articles, published almost a month later. Instead, the coverage re-introduces a discourse antithetical to that of the state when a further sensational allegation is made against inyanga Manqele. “Tokoloshe ‘robs court’⁴⁴⁹” – a report taken from the local news-agency, the South African Press Association – quotes from a public petition handed to the residing magistrate by still-protesting Mfakathini residents. They allege that Manqele, described by the wire as a “wealthy traditional healer”, was “well-known for keeping evil creatures which collect dockets from court”; i.e., his tokoloshes remove incriminating court evidence. The residents fear that if he were released on bail, “his evil creatures will tamper with investigations”. Obviously, the residents have not acquiesced to the state’s authority on this matter and they perceive state justice to be vulnerable to intervention (which, as we know from tales of corrupt cops, it certainly is). Nevertheless, the magistrate released Manqele on bail as there “was no evidence against him” – but warns him not to return home (that is, to avoid becoming the object of People’s Justice). This abrupt ending sets up a stark contrast between the two contesting discourses and effectively works against the residents’ concerns and favours the discourse of the court.

Not satisfied with this, the next day the *Daily Sun* publishes a retort and has the final say⁴⁵⁰. This short article is an outstanding example of how the *Daily Sun* offers the reader a range of opinion about cases that involve the occult without over-determining a resolution. It begins by economically re-presenting the essentials of the case: “A human head was found in a freezer... and the house owner and an inyanga were arrested”. Then, the emphatic bail protest by residents: “People from the area pleaded with the court NOT to give Mduduzi Manqele bail”. Their reason is contained in the petition: “the inyanga is well-known for keeping tokoloshes at his house which steals dockets from court”. A shift here to the countervailing voice of Magistrate Bessie du Preez exemplifies the narrow and dismissive official line: she “rejected the people’s fears as ‘superstition’”. Immediately contradicting this accusation with an alternative authority, the *Daily Sun* quotes Mayihlone Mgcobo, chairman of the Traditional Healers Association, who confirms that it is indeed possible to “have a case thrown out of court with muthi”. He names the particular muthi – “ikhubalo” – and describes its action: the muthi is “put on a dog’s tail” and as it “disappears into the air” while playing, the “arrested person will be freed”. Finally the report returns to the justice process which contrasts starkly with the fears and grievances of the residents and their inchoate knowledge of Manqele’s nefarious power: defending her decision to grant him bail, du Preez claims that the state “failed to produce any evidence linking Manqele to the murder”. But Thusi, in whose possession the head was found, “was refused bail”. As the

⁴⁴⁸ 12 missing in village of fear! *Daily Sun* 4 February 2011: 4.

⁴⁴⁹ Tokoloshe ‘robs court’ *Daily Sun* 1 March 2011: 8.

⁴⁵⁰ Inyanga out on bail *Daily Sun* 2 March 2011: 5. This is the same edition which features “Killed for his magic 4-5” on the front page.

report ends, we are left with a sense of unfinished business, and speculation accompanies whatever promise of formal justice is offered by the courts.

However, while this ruling concludes the head in the fridge saga, it's not quite the end of the story – for the head lives on as legend in the imagination of township residents. Some months later, in an incipient People's Justice story set in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape (a long way from the original event), angry parents are about to burn down the home of a headmaster whom they accuse of having conspired with a sangoma to kill two boys for muthi. Adroitly, the police officer uses the residents' world view to his advantage, and warns them to restrain themselves: "It may be that in the house you burn down, there is a head in the fridge and all that [evidence] will be destroyed⁴⁵¹".

Discussion

This ends our journey through a fantastical terrain – heads in fridges, muthi in yards, magical penises, prophetic dreams, the murder of witches. Within a rationalist and western frame of reference witchcraft is of course impossible either to perpetrate or to verify, but this is not the point for the *Daily Sun*, nor, we may speculate from the above conflicts, for its audience. Instead, the recounting of individuals' experiences is all that is required to put forward a point of view that implies its possibility. The rest is left up to the reader, who is neither asked to agree nor disagree, but simply to consider that others have found it possible. But to look back from the safety of western rationality, from the security of a place where life is not threatened by irruptions of the supernatural into daily life, or by abduction and murder for our body parts, and to understand the insecurities and fears involved, requires something more than a clinical evaluation, or indeed scepticism. It demands an interpretive idiom that can sympathetically encompass, at the same time that it makes sense of, the stories and the strong emotions that they conjure.

The above analysis brings into focus for our attention several interrelated concerns. First, that all these stories are connected in some way or another to mundane crimes: housebreaking, arson and armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, assault, and murder. This is their common denominator, which marks how deeply entangled witchcraft beliefs are with the everyday jealousies, tensions, and frictions of township life as it is represented by the *Daily Sun*. With regard to these dramas the tabloid appears, through its self-representation, and by inference from the origins of the stories it publishes, to play the role of witness. The frequency with which the tabloid is called on to publish what are essentially private disputes and fears implies that the audience sees the tabloid as occupying a privileged position in this regard.

This privilege comes home more forcefully if Ashforth's claim concerning the secrecy of witchcraft is re-emphasised. If indeed "the secrecy of witchcraft can never be penetrated" (2000: 254), then the airing in public of what is generally kept hidden constitutes a breach in a wall of silence. In effect, to use Goffman's (1959) spatial metaphor, the tabloid brings "front stage" for public scrutiny and discussion that which is usually relegated to the "back stage" of social life,

⁴⁵¹ Fire them now! *Daily Sun* 5 May 2011:2. This incident is also recalled in the letter written by "Noko", quoted in the epigraph to Chapter one, part two, on page 26.

hidden away out of sight in networks of gossip and innuendo. SunPower then is the power to make visible what is invisible and to subject to interrogation that which is most elusive and intangible: the *Daily Sun*'s own form of magic.

This privileged position the *Daily Sun* of course does not hesitate to use to its own advantage, presenting itself in a heroic role, whether exposing the vulnerability of witchcraft victims, the treachery of fake sangomas, the worthlessness of invisible-making muthi, the haplessness of the cops or the ruthless selfishness of muthi-murderers. It is this very SunPower, the ability to reveal wrongs done, injustices suffered, and the recognition of the un-attainability of justice, that provides a form of containment, setting the limits of the debate.

But these – as it were – social services which the newspaper effectively offers through its reportage of such matters are only part of the total picture. Alongside these functions of exposure and containment, the stories are there to be *read*, to work, indeed, as stories, engaging the imaginations and emotions of those who peruse them. They are both supernatural and human *dramas*, and therein lies their primary appeal, their power to grasp the reader's rapt attention. But even in this elementary imaginative role, the ancient one of simple narration, a certain therapeutic efficacy can, I believe, still be discerned.

In earlier chapters, I have occasionally invoked the names of modern literary theorists in attempting to characterise the *Daily Sun*'s individualistic narratology, its way of conceiving its stories *as* stories. In the present case, I draw on the father of the whole genre, and make use of Aristotle's notion of *catharsis*. Aristotle accounted for the effects of tragic Greek drama on its audiences as working through a mode of expurgation of bad feeling: those half-conscious horrors and fears, harboured naturally by men and women exposed to so many of the possible calamities of life, could be indulged, experienced and faced full on without harm when encountered in the fictional circumstances of the acted drama, especially with the distance provided by its stylisations and conventions.

This exposure to what is feared, but in safe circumstances, he describes as a kind of discharge of painful feelings, where they are not simply avoided, but, by being faced, come, in some measure, under emotional control, a kind of mental inoculation against the real thing. The *Daily Sun*'s subject-matter is not, of course, fictional; but nonetheless its presentation of its stories in what becomes, through familiarity, a kind of ritual manner, with its rules and expectations implied, perhaps works something of the same 'cure'. People, prey to certain misgivings and horrors, are invited to participate, albeit voyeuristically, in the newspaper's uncovering of acts that embody what they most deeply fear, whether from criminals or from the supernatural or from both combined. They are then liberated from the immediate horror, as happens similarly when waking from a nightmare, by finding they occupy, for the nonce, a different reality; and also by the fact of being in the company of many others as part of a *readership*, and having between themselves and the events described words, print, paper and pictures – in this case, an impenetrable barrier.

This virtual safety enables them to gain perspective on real life occurrences of the same sort, to see them set in a relation to one another and so to gather some control over their own otherwise maybe wild apprehensions. Especially important is to see them held up to the world, fixed and

reified, in the newspaper's own printed medium, immured in its own verbal incantations. So, I suggest, the *Daily Sun* is really offering a special muthi to its readers of its own unique kind.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Thus have we reached the end of our exploration of the topography of crime and punishment in the *Daily Sun*. Partial and incomplete though it inevitably is the map that has emerged from this foray into the interior of SunLand is revealed as extraordinarily complex. It traces an uneven terrain, a fractured landscape scored with many criss-crossing paths leading to and from the four areas that are charted. Starting at the interior edges of the map – the point where the state ends and the community of SunLanders begins – we trace how the narratives of the *Daily Sun* designate who belongs and who does not belong to this virtual polity.

Throughout the coverage, a recurrent landmark has been the *Daily Sun*'s attempt to form a community, in the very process of ostensibly merely reflecting its norms and conditions. This emerges as the newspaper explicates the appropriate social roles of contemporary township residents, not only with regard to each other but also in relation to the state. The vital relationship with the readers who are the focus of this project is built around its vision of itself as a moral authority, wholeheartedly on the side of the community, unafraid to confront what it considers dangerous and suspect, whether on the part of the state or community elements themselves. The phatic function of the tabloid's crime narratives is to summon the reader as a member of this imagined community, and the moral tales it constructs are presented in the light of this self-appointed mission. Central here are the responsibilities of people to each other and to their communities. For the meanings that the paper makes of its crime material must be considered in the light of these roles and relationships; indeed, they are mutually constitutive.

As a story teller and dramatist, the newspaper prefers to work by demonstration and example rather than direct sermonising. On the whole it leaves this to its readers on the letters pages. However, our purpose has been not simply to describe, but to uncover meaning, the meaning beneath the overt communication, the sometimes hidden motivations that guide the hand.

Like a ship's helmsman surveying the conditions through which he steers his vessel, the *Daily Sun* represents itself as commanding an encompassing view of its black working class readers and their lived experiences. In this gubernatorial role, the tabloid attempts to steer a path through the vagaries of township life, acting as both witness and judge of the harms its readers suffer. By vividly presenting the crimes to which they appear so vulnerable, by its frequent calls for justice, and its own practical attempts to intervene in crimes that are brought to its attention, the tabloid heroically champions township residents' struggles for recognition in a context which appears to leave many without hope of more formal redress. Readers are in turn enjoined to become members of SunLand, a virtual but moral community which opposes itself to a range of social disruptions, of which crime and criminals are the most blatant manifestation. In doing so they are invited to adopt the subject positions offered by the paper, which constructs a variety of social roles and relationships to emulate (or abjure) with respect to the regulation of crime and the achievement of justice.

This combination has an unexpected outcome. In effect, by constructing its social contract with the implied reader on this varied ground, the tabloid engages with a profound and ongoing

existential dilemma which we can pose as a question, namely: “What are the terms on which life is to be lived in the South African township within the current dispensation?” This dilemma is presented as a dramatic one, full of import, often quite literally a matter of life or death, a riveting image of life lived at the margins of post-apartheid society. In large part, this life is represented as one subjected to a range of crime which is frequently violent, if not lethal, and where state-led justice is seen as ultimately unequal to the task of regulating society. When it is absent, popular forms of justice readily take its place.

In the stories of People’s Justice, we are presented with the consequences of belonging – or not – to the state, whether as a citizen or a suspect. However, there is an alternative centre of identification: these narratives also engage with the nature of contemporary communal belonging within and even despite the state, for what it means to belong to the state and to the community appear at times incommensurate, if not inimical. This tension forms the foundation upon which all other understandings about crime necessarily depend. For in a context where state-led justice appears remote, community is represented as potentially forming a prior and more primary alliance whose unwritten yet nonetheless acknowledged and enforceable rules hold sway and at times take precedence over formal authority. People’s Justice is repeatedly represented as not simply an attack on the state *ex nihilo*. It is shown to arise in the context of mundane crimes such as theft and rape, ongoing social scourges for which state-led resolution has, *de facto*, been declared incapable of regulating. For this reason, People’s Justice pits residents against the police and local responses to crime are weighted against the failures of these representatives of the state, whose manifest lack of capacity in providing security and an overarching authority is repeatedly scrutinised by the *Daily Sun*.

The strain between citizen and community identity that these stories reflect is echoed in the accounts of the police who attempt to regulate this uncertain space. Longed for as heroes, while vulnerable to the same forces that terrorise the ordinary citizen, and simultaneously repudiated as sometime villains, the reader is presented with a state authority whose capacity to respond to crime is manifestly suspect. The pitched battles that are fought between the police as state ambassadors and the members of Sunland, whom they alternatively attempt to subdue or persuade to join an alternative allegiance, takes place along a deep rift, a social cleft that has long divided those who belong from those who placed outside.

The crimes and indifference of the police in particular come to stand in for, and cap, other failings and absences of the state. And when the police turn their violence upon the public they are tasked with protecting, they become emblematic, in the paper’s construction, of the hostile stance of the state towards those it considers most in need of its protection. It is clear that residents confide in the *Daily Sun* more than they do they police and the tabloid is called as witness in cases where police are not seen to be able to assist.

Yet the police and the people ultimately work to comparable ends, that is, to define who belongs. Those placed outside the implied order are reduced to bare life and may be killed with seeming impunity whether by the police or by residents. The violence of People’s Justice and the violence of the police are of the same order, for both kinds are legitimised by their practitioners as indispensable: the former by community voices, the latter by police statements. Both, it appears,

are the heroes of their own stories. In the case of the police, the state is represented as frequently at war on two fronts: with township residents, who may resist the terms on which they are summoned to participate in the state; and also with armed “thugs”. In the case of People’s Justice, the inefficiency and lacklustre performance of the state is angrily repudiated and the community swiftly punishes those who wrong it. Violence, frequently lethal, thus constitutes the ground on which it is openly acknowledged all parties must play.

What becomes vividly apparent in the coverage is the extreme vulnerability of township men and women to a range of violence perpetrated by state agents, fellow residents, anonymous thugs, intimate partners or family members. In the cases of police and community violence, the situation remains more or less bounded by the needs of the people. In the former instance law-enforcement functions are overstepped; in the latter they are substituted for. The violence of the thugs against whom the police pit themselves is, however, totally illegitimate as is the violence of men who rape, murder and abuse family members and intimate partners. Here becomes visible a deep ambivalence in the tabloid’s representations of violence as it teeters on a sharp ridge between the no-man’s-land of illegitimate force and the promised land of control and authority. The apparent legitimacy extended to heroic police violence and its toleration in cases of People’s Justice is missing when men harm the community or their partners and families. ‘Necessary violence’ which establishes, shapes and protects the community, is contrasted repeatedly with the violence of outlaws who undermine its consolidation. For this reason, the injuries suffered by innocent ‘members of the family’ – those who form the body of the community that the paper seeks to establish – especially provoke the tabloid, which does not hesitate to condemn the violence they suffer and excoriate and exclude the men who inflict it.

The tabloid is less certain about the violence perpetrated by women. In general, many women who appear in the 2011 data are seen to command considerable physical, moral and official authority, but in moments of People’s Justice where women are leaders and participants the interpretation given their actions depends on the status of the man they attack – the victim is almost invariably male. Here, the paper’s use of humour and derision is telling. When powerful women target weak men, laughter and the shaming of the man are the result, a clear indication of the challenge that this particular combination of characters presents to the prevailing gender order. In stories where strong women defend themselves against violent men this tension disappears and either women’s strength is lauded, or their vulnerability pitied.

The *Daily Sun* constructs a virtuous gender order, one in which men may acceptably be violent, but not towards their partners and families. In particular, men are encouraged to control their predatory sexuality. Men come under suspicion in other ways. For example, youths who become thugs forfeit their right to familial and community protection, but their ruin may also involve the downfall of their families, their mothers in particular. When young men attack older women and children, they are considered beyond the pale and they and the violence they wield are constructed as abhorrent. In such conditions, their lives appear easily forfeited: their humiliation and fate are indicative of the utter contempt in which they are held. No stronger line could be drawn. Purged of their presence, the community consolidates itself behind the tokens of their broken and burnt bodies.

Young women, on the other hand, are exhorted to avoid trouble for themselves and their families by obeying their elders. Responsible and respectable motherhood is the acme of feminine virtue. Older women appear as venerable pillars of the community and assaults on their dignity are considered particularly reprehensible. Marriage and fidelity of established couples are praised and defended and assaults on the stability of these heterosexual partnerships are condemned. This gender order is applicable to either traditional or modern masculinities and femininities, both of which are offered as alternatives insofar as they do not work against the creation of community that is the vision of the paper.

The force of tradition is nowhere more visible than in the narratives of witchcraft, which reflect the complex ways in which this aspect of autochthonous culture has adapted the signifiers of modernity to its own ends. Advertised on billboards, caught up in the thrust and parry of township justice, deployed by thugs as they pit themselves against the police, evoked both as a talisman and threat in the precarious struggles for a better life, strategically mediated through the tabloid, witchcraft is part and parcel of the contemporary crime scene, as it is, indeed, of much of community life. Yet it is not of the contemporary state. Indeed, it draws its vigour from being Other. We see that those who feel vulnerable to witchcraft draw readily on People's Justice, since this area is considered sceptically by the state agencies. Once again we meet an area emblematic of the distance that is felt between community and state in a context where the assurances of modern and state-led identity are found wanting. When closely considered, it becomes clear that the psychological and physical violence of witchcraft-related crimes are not set apart, but echo those other forms of violence met with *en route* to this dangerous, yet elusive, area of SunLand. In terms of the map we are constructing, the signposts we erect point both forward but also back over territory already traversed.

This is the essential lesson to be spelled out by this conclusion: the various sections of this study, while separately treated, are aspects of a contiguous landscape. Township crime and punishment takes its colouring from township conditions; the *meaning* of the violence of witchcraft crimes belongs in the same context as the violence of People's Justice, however much they are frequently opposed. Violence against women may find its origin in thuggery, or from suspicions of their involvement in witchcraft, or, again, in the explosive family murders on the part of intolerably conflicted police officers. In fact the key theme of the findings in every area is conflict, and it is predominantly from this influence that the various kinds of criminal and punitive violence recounted here spring. The newspaper's critiques of both are themselves balanced on its sense of these and other like oppositions. In its pages we negotiate the uncompromising fact of township poverty versus the attractions and demands of an ideal of affluent urbanised consumerism that the global neoliberal economy validates. Similarly, we meet conflict between global secularism, with science and technology as its reality model and township versions of traditional beliefs, in which the presence of ancestors, sangomas and witchcraft are accepted features for many. The often alien nature of the enforced state structures, including the courts and the police, fail to make sense to ordinary people when their promise is unfulfilled and is in large part the stimulus to the violence of People's Justice, as we have seen. The township then, as modelled in the *Daily Sun*, is a marginal world, in that it is poised uncomfortably between versions of reality, each of which must be given its due and its value

adjudged in the pages and reports. We have found that the paper does not shrink from this mission, which means that it too is a participant in forming the very actuality it records, as I have repeatedly emphasised.

The tabloid distinguishes what is right from wrong in its own estimation while it simultaneously provokes discussion in areas where it feels it cannot dictate. It may use the devices of reported comment from different and opposing sources to underline the ambiguity of many of the areas it ventures upon, feeling, perhaps, the need to tread carefully more than just to acquiesce to a journalistic ideal of objectivity. Consequently, where ambivalence is ultimately the truth, the reportage, I argue, acknowledges that, too, in its form.

This indicates that this study has been as much an epistemology of a certain kind of reportage as it has been about a sociological reality. For the *Daily Sun* is itself caught between seeming incompatibilities as a local version of the tabloid, a form whose origins lie in a particular experiment in Northern industrialised countries aimed at expanding popular readership in the early 1900s. What it has succeeded in doing is adapting this general format to specifically local conditions and needs, a most remarkable case of translation into a different idiom and into radically different circumstances, as if it was a local product from the first. Nonetheless formal tensions – the imported tabloid form versus local expectations – do remain, but paradoxically these ambiguities serve to enhance, rather than obscure, the inherent social tensions the paper seeks to transcribe. They are themselves a part of the same historical dilemma.

As the epigraph to Chapter 21 of his comic novel *Something Rotten*, British novelist Japer Fforde (2004: 189) includes this parody of a typical British tabloid's coverage:

RAUNCHY ADMIRAL IN LOVE CHILD SHOCK

Our sources can reveal exclusively in this paper that Admiral Lord Nelson, the nation's darling, and much-decorated war hero, is the father of a daughter with Lady Emma Hamilton, wife of Sir William Hamilton. The affair has been going on for some time, apparently with the full knowledge of both Sir William and Lady Nelson, from whom the hero of the Nile is now estranged. Full story, page 2; leader, page three; lurid engravings, pages four, seven, and nine; hypocritical moralistic comment, page ten; bawdy cartoon, featuring an overweight Lady Hamilton, pages twelve and thirteen. Also in this issue: reports of the reports of the French and Spanish defeat at Cape Trafalgar, page thirty-two, column four.

Article in the *Portsmouth Penny Dreadful*, 28 October 1805.

The elements Fforde here satirises are notorious features of an overseas model: shocking revelations about public figures with prurience hidden beneath moralistic comment – a device enabling readers to combine voyeuristic indulgence and feelings of superiority over the exposed victims. And there is exposure in another sense: titillating pictures secreted on the inner pages (here an imaginary nineteenth-century version of the “page 3 girls”). The emphasis is on human

foibles and interpersonal relationships rather than matters of national importance: the historic political news is relegated to obscure back pages.

It would be unreasonable to equate the whole of Northern tabloid journalism with this parodic version; but it has its grain of truth and serves to dramatise the similarities and, more importantly, the differences in the local equivalent. Estate agents may say “Location is everything”, but certainly in our present case translation to new shores and vastly different social settings has revolutionised the significance of the tabloid’s contribution. Yes, personalities are once again the main interest in the *Daily Sun* where items of national news and the doings of government appear only selectively on the inner pages and in much abbreviated form compared to traditional coverage. And yet, the determination to highlight the human plight of ordinary men and women who are generally faceless to the mainstream press has a particular urgency and seriousness when set against the backdrop of the township and the former obscurity of its happenings.

This is particularly the case with respect to crime. In Northern terms, as we have seen, serious crime is rare relative to the total population and when met with in the newspaper its shock value can be tempered by comparative distance. In the township, fraud, robbery, rape and murder are oppressively familiar factors in its residents’ regular conditions of existence and the sympathetic appearance of such incidents in the paper affords one kind of relief from this burden. The need for one’s plight to be heard of and acknowledged by others can be, in cases such as these, by itself a matter of desperate personal urgency, and the newspaper provides the means. What in another context would be sensationalism only, in these fraught circumstances becomes a necessary social service, where little else comparable is provided.

Sensationalism is certainly key to the *Daily Sun*’s mode of presentation, as the 5cm white-on-black front-page headlines testify. Horrific content, too – murderous cops, heads in fridges, the gory details of Peoples’ Justice, bizarre witchcraft attacks, strange religious practices – is prominently featured, because drama sells papers. But in this case, the nightmare depicted is not too far from everyone’s bedside. Its extremity is only the baseline for a wider existence with its own version of horrors. I have spoken of the function of ‘catharsis’ which the paper offers its readers, and it is in this context, I believe, that its sensationalist extremes must be re-interpreted and revalued.

Titillation of the European variety was, interestingly, not an especially prominent feature up to 2011, despite tales of mystical travelling 4-5s and a few appearances of sexually rampant demon tokoloshes. Since then, under new editorship, flurries of sexually-oriented stories have appeared on familiar tabloid lines. Yet, these particular accounts feel somewhat alien, with a certain ‘forced’ quality about their depiction. One possible reason for this new impression is that the mainstream positioning of the paper may be at odds with this sort of material. The *Daily Sun* has chosen to situate its values centrally within the community it serves: its outlook is, for the most part, a community outlook, except when extreme pressures may force an unusual editorial stand. Such close identification is undermined in situations of titillation, for the voyeur’s stance is that of the distanced observer, secretly viewing, a perspective inherently at odds with that familiar

closeness which the paper more characteristically encourages. It is worth noting that page 3 nudity is still, at any rate, not a feature provided.

There are other aspects that deserve mentioning. One is the technique of narrativisation, another, the introduction of humour, and a third, the particular modes of rhetoric characteristically employed. All these have their distinctive aspects, not to be equated with what appears in Northern equivalents. The conscious storifying, and the strong antitheses offered in the reportage, construct an audience eager to engage with the serious issues involved, a subjectivity far distant from the cynical and disbelieving reader which Fiske suggests is conjured by tabloids in Northern contexts. While the *Daily Sun* is forthright about what it considers right and wrong, it is not moralistic in the manner observed in its Northern cousins. Apart from Khumalo's editorial outbursts with their paternalistic and strongly-worded admonishments and warnings, the reports avoid overt moralising, preferring to leave opinions to be voiced by the characters it chooses to represent. Allowing the reader to agree or disagree with such characters, close to the reader in terms of status, is in keeping with the egalitarian ethos of the paper. However, there are certain things the tabloid cannot tolerate and where the line is crossed it takes a firm stand, visible in its rhetorical stance. Humour is used, for example, to distinguish what the paper considers acceptable and unacceptable in values and behaviour. This motive contrasts with the sceptical laughter which is characteristic of the Northern tabloid. Humour is one stage; outrage, when it occurs, signals that boundaries have been decisively transgressed.

But the paper's rhetoric is also positively and idiosyncratically deployed to establish its function as creator of the community of SunLand. For example, the rhetorical function of the many photographic images of ordinary people, pictured within the material context of the township, bears witness to the fact that the paper also 'is there', a fixture and reality together with the people it represents. Again, its self-referential narratives of SunPower, tales of its own heroic action and intervention on behalf of its readers which vaunt its power to overcome the obstacles that stand in their way are signs of its curatorial regard of the virtual community it conjures into being. That these devices are consistently employed at this particular moment in South Africa's history to describe the lives of township readers who struggle to overcome crime and achieve some form of justice, is remarkable in itself. Whatever the commercial motivations that underlie the paper's continued success, the fascinating map of township crime and punishment that it unconsciously constructs is a noteworthy achievement which has richly repaid my close examination.

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