

Failure of masculinity



A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON A MAN'S WORLD: Margie Orford uses the crime genre to explore how women deal with a hostile and violent SA.

Margie Orford
crime
against
children
tated civil
SUE
SHALL

AGIE Orford slips into Cape Town's Book Lounge looking unlike a detective's coat with a...
...so her husky sense of drama...
...conversations, with crime in a...
...it down one day...
...a crime novel...
...arachute characters...
...mediacy of SA...
...with the chaos...
...line this country...
...to worry about...
...it is - or how it...
...ry emerges as...
...the past...
...work, the bodies...
...along the Sea...
...e in Cape Town...
...to the corpse of a...
...Namibian school...
...the desert wind...
...- tens of thou-...
...in SA and Europe...
...marks for another...
...Orford...
...ork introduced...
...pendent-minded...
...profiler Dr Clare...
...vn into the web of

...filled with hatred of the feminine, as evidenced in a 13-year-old girl being stabbed 150 times."
Orford wants to know what happens when fathers, in a literal and metaphorical sense, rape small girls and then throw them away "like an old tissue. A little girl is a symbol of hope and regeneration. Such a patriarchal culture has to implode."
Hart came to Orford, "fully clad and grown. She manifested herself with no background and I've had to give her a family and a backstory." Hart's first name is as sparse as her lithe frame, which is why there's no "r" in it.
Orford's building her investigator like a case and explains how we sometimes find ourselves "in male spaces, hostile places where we have to be neutral and inconspicuous. That's what I've done in making Clare so closed off."
It's how Orford has experienced being a woman. We split our personas, she says, in situations which might be dangerous or uncomfortable to prevent people connecting with us, such as not making eye contact when we walk down a street.
She has split Constance, the twin, off from Clare. Constance is damaged emotionally and physically by her gang rape. Clare is cerebral and intellectual. Both of them suffer from the split.
"That's how women often experience violent SA. Every time you step out of your front door - if you're lucky enough to make it through the night - you say to yourself, 'Let me go and face whatever's out there.'"

Hart again to help and it's hard not to a macho man who...
...s, understand the...
...mind of a highly...
...fearful, vulnerable...
...girl, due out within...
...s own daughters...
...mother of three...
...turned to SA seven...
...r many years of...
...on and New York...
...ked. "It's such a...
...ynistic society, so

Finding purpose in life through the pain of others

THE FALL OF THE BLACK-EYED NIGHT
Sean Badal
Umuzi

YOU'D never say Sean Badal is not from Cape Town and had only visited the city for a few months before sitting down to write a novel that captures it so perfectly.

You'd never say Badal is not a Muslim as he explores the ties that bind the community and the hypocrisy it hides so imperfectly.

The Fall of the Black-Eyed Night is Badal's third book. It traces a few months in the life of Shehzad Shadhili, who returns to Cape Town after the July 7 2005 terrorist attacks in the UK, where he was living a dissolute life.

Shadhili was arrested in London as a suspected terrorist, and something awful happened to him in detention.

We never discover what was done to him but it must have been deeply humiliating as it has affected his ability to forge relationships with people.

He works at the upmarket, fictitious Bay Regal Hotel in Cape Town where, despite his growing pill-popping habits, he struggles to sleep or connect with his colleagues and the hotel's guests.

His father is an imam in Athlone, but Shadhili and his brother are estranged from the religion and their parents' cultural norms.

But then his father's position is threatened by the arrival of a Saudi imam who is appointed to lead his congregation, and Shadhili finds it increasingly difficult to maintain his aloof distance from his family.

A wealthy German guest at the hotel dies suddenly, leaving his 17-year-old daughter behind. The girl clings to Shadhili, refusing to return to Germany and hoping that he'll make the necessary arrangements to facilitate her life in Cape Town.

As Badal's antihero is drawn into his father's drama, a colleague's crisis and the teenager's pain, his dislocation evaporates.

The denouement Badal masterminds for the Saudi imposter is spectacularly crafted as he draws on his understanding of the Muslim community in Cape Town to engineer a masterful plan to send him back to the desert kingdom.

Hugely atmospheric and exquisitely crafted, The Fall of the Black-Eyed Night brings contemporary Cape Town alive on every single page.

REHANA ROSSOUW

from Behind Bars, last year. It's a collection of writing by South African prisoners.

Orford spent nine months voluntarily helping them to reflect on their pain and loss and to write it down. All of them are serving long sentences for extreme crimes, which Orford does not excuse. But she now understands them and the culture that got them there.

"In jail, however, they have no counselling, no healing. To be honest, we should shoot them in the dock, rather than this long, slow distillation of rage which returns, repeatedly. They were cast aside as kids. They return and say, 'This is what you cut away... this is what you have to take back.'"

Orford sees contact crime and crimes against families, women and children as a sublimated civil war. "In SA the war ended and the violence started - it's gone into the bodies of women and kids. It's a failure of masculinity. Men just don't know how to behave."

That tension emerges in her books, in the slave trafficking of women and children, in family murders and wife abuse. The energy she creates between her characters and the tautness of her plots is attracting new readers and publishers every month.

Jonathan Ball made her an attractive offer which saw her split from Oshun last year. He's republishing her first two thrillers this year, along with Daddy's Girl.

Like Clockwork will be released in the UK in March by Atlantic.

Orford believes that if you like your characters, you can write about them forever.

Orford believes we're so used to living like this that we do it subconsciously. Even young girls do it when going off to varsity or out at night. "They split off the thing that's frightened them so they can keep functioning."

In spite of Hart's remoteness, Faizal's crazy about her. "There's a great sexual attraction between them, a life force that is erotic for them. It counters the deadliness that comes with crime and rape."
Orford creates the fire between them by thinking about sex. A lot. She chuckles, tosses her head.

The grim reality of her crime scenes is the result of painstaking research and "hanging out with cops at work".

She visits mortuaries to get the feeling of what it is to be dead. "There are always two crime scenes. Your body is one and so is the place where you are found."

Orford finds the notion of a body being a crime scene that has to be scraped, measured and documented, almost unbearable. "You feel an abstract compassion in a mortuary, but when I want to get to the horror of that dead girl, I think of her as a mother would and know I would just howl like an animal in a similar situation."

The challenge for this talented woman - she's also a journalist, photographer, filmmaker, author of educational books and wife of an architect - is to imbue her emotions in factual descriptions for the crime genre. "You have to show, not tell. These are not literary descriptions."
She also compiled a book, Fifteen Men: Words and Images

Fifteen Men: Words and Images

"Orford wants to know what happens when fathers, in a literal and metaphorical sense, rape small girls and then throw them away 'like an old tissue. A little girl is a symbol of hope and regeneration. Such a patriarchal culture has to implode."

achronistic portrait of the prophet's feisty wife

in what are today two of it holiest cities, Mecca and Medina.

encounter with the breathless ardour of a desert romance: "An...
...like musk rose from his

suggests that Aisha consolidated her position with Muhammad by emerging as one of his key