Intermediality in the novels of Lauren Beukes

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Abstract

"Intermediality in the novels of Lauren Beukes"

There is the growing recognition that literary works are not independent, but have often been impacted on by various other media. Complex intersections arise between printed text and other media such as photography, film, music and visual arts. The central theoretical concept underpinning this thesis is a study of intermediality, which interrogates the various ways non-literary media are used as a resource or reference. This analysis will be explored in the novels of Lauren Beukes, and will focus on the intermedial meaning-making and influences of both analogue photography and digital visuality in the dystopian society of *Moxyland* (2008). Furthermore, it will examine visual art in *Broken Monsters* (2014) and delineate visuality in terms of "bodies", as is evident in the depiction of ruin porn and contemporary art. The presence of these visual media in Beukes's novels are pervasive and significant, and in the larger context of post-apartheid literature, these novels are interesting within fictional worlds that articulate critiques of contemporary society.

Keywords

Lauren Beukes

Intermediality

Photography

Moxyland

Broken Monsters

Visuality

Digitality

Dystopia

Declaration

I declare that "Intermediality in the novels of Lauren Beukes" is my own work, that it has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have utilised or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Signed: Micayla Tamsyn Vellai Date: 14 December 2020

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Introduction

1. Overview

In the past ten years, South African novelist, short-story writer, and former journalist, Lauren Beukes, has published four novels which have received considerable acclaim. Her writing is exemplary of post-apartheid culture, where a past of racial injustice is no longer the exclusive focal point. Instead, her writing focuses on matters such as HIV and AIDS, the rise of social media and technology, and the persistence of class and gender oppression in a post-racial society. Beukes's fictions exposes the continuing flaws in the political system and reveals how questions of freedom are still important in our contemporary society. Her debut novel, *Moxyland*, which was published in 2008, focuses on violence, oppression, and governmental control in order to sketch a dystopic future of Cape Town. This novel rapidly established Beukes as a talented writer in the field of science fiction, and it was nominated for the Sunday Times Fiction Prize. In 2010, Beukes published *Zoo City*, an urban fantasy novel based in Johannesburg, featuring "animalled" people and marked by magical-realist transformations. The novel was lauded by the well-known American-Canadian speculative fiction writer William Gibson, and won the prestigious 2011 Arthur C. Clarke Award for science fiction. Beukes extended her writing to an international setting when publishing *The Shining Girls* in 2013. This novel is based on a time-travelling serial killer in Depression-era Chicago and claimed the 2013/2014 University of Johannesburg prize. Merely a year later, she published *Broken Monsters* (2014), a dark and gripping thriller which is set in Detroit. It received attention from publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, and won best suspense novel in the ALA's 2015 Reading List.

Beukes's novels have received significant critical attention, which is largely dominated by an attention paid to their innovation in genre and their engagement with contemporary urbanity

(Adalet Snyman 2010; Louise Bethlehem 2014). I wish to extend this scholarship by reading these novels through the lens of intermediality, which Irina O. Rajewsky (2005), broadly defines as "a generic term for all those phenomena that… in some way take place *between* media" (46). In other words, the idea of intermediality explores the complex interactions between literary texts and different media such as music, photography, film, theatre, visual art and digital forms. The theoretical framework of this thesis will focus specifically on the intermedial aspects of Beukes's writing, particularly the role that photography and visual art play in her fictions. The multiple references made to photographs and filmic techniques, as well as the ekphrastic descriptions of artworks are able to stimulate new ways of reading Beukes's novels that exceed their verbal limitations. In her edited "Handbook of Intermediality: Literature - Image - Sound - Music" (2015), Gabriele Rippl explains how the reader begins to "experience, see and imagine the world differently" (15) when a text refers to or embeds media such as photography, opera, dance or digital arts. In the South African context, the growing interest of writers that incorporate and refer to other media are part of what Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie (2010), in their study of post-apartheid literature, call a "new wave of writing" (2). The presence of these visual media in Beukes's novels are pervasive and significant, and these intermedial effects have overall received very little exploration.

Before exploring the intermediality of the novels more closely, it is important to gain an overview of the fictional worlds that Beukes's novels create. Her writing is engaged with the contemporary, and what Sarah Nuttall (2004) in her study of South African culture has termed the "now" (731), and the novels thus reflect the oppressive influence of capitalism in the age of globalisation and digital change. These ideas find their expression in the urban dystopia of Beukes's first novel, *Moxyland*. This novel is set in futuristic Cape Town, where the government maintains control over the city and the people by means of advanced technology. The metropolis is plagued by various medical and socio-economic issues, with many of the

novel's dystopic elements pointing presciently to realities that have since emerged in our times. This is particularly in the case of AI controlled mass surveillance, and data harvesting from mobile phone based social media applications, which are forms of social control that are central to Beukes's novel, and have only now become pervasive. In *Moxyland*, the ownership of a SIM card offers access to food, money, access passes and health care, and determines the overall quality of life. In her dissertation, "*Bodylands*: Inscriptions of the Body and Embodiment in the Novels of Lauren Beukes" (2015), Natasha King explains how the SIM card determines the level of class in society and becomes an "extension of identity" (21). There is a crippling dependency on cell phones, which forces society to abide by the rules of the government or risk having these privileges revoked. In fact, there is in all the novel's characters an inherent fear of disconnection, which is equivalent to being an outcast in society. This demonstrates the extensive governmental power to control the class system within the city, which is used to create what King identifies as a "rigid social apartheid" (21).

Biotechnology and digital technology are primarily tools to benefit the elite classes, and in the world of the novel, the corporation recruits test subjects for genetic engineering purposes, only to dispose of them once they fulfil their commitment. To the same degree, the genetically engineered dogs, who Beukes calls "Aitos" (160), are injected with nanotechnology, and used as a weapon to enforce the law and inspire fear in the people. This form of violence is exemplified in the example of the Aito who "grabs one of the street kids… fastening its mouth like a bear trap on his arm… [t]here is a branch-crack of bone, followed by the inevitable screaming" (128). The extreme level of violence present here, coupled with surveillance, is effective in ensuring that absolute social control is maintained. Even digital technology, or virtual gaming modes are used as a decoy to control and distract society from the deeper-rooted issues. The deceptive nature of the corporation is shown when a virtual gaming avatar builds a relationship with one of the characters and encourages him to rebel against government rule. It

is only discovered later that the person who adopted this avatar actually works for the corporation and used this false identity as a ploy to initiate a revolt and maintain heightened levels of social control.

Moxyland steers away from a traditional format for the chapters and focuses on individual character narratives instead, with each chapter focalised through a specific character. The multi-layered plot and multiple-narration technique presents a complex perspective of the dystopic setting, where each of the four narrators actively and passively attempt to fight against the injustices of the corporation. Kendra Adams, an aspiring photographer and test subject for the Ghost soft drink company, resists governmental control by exploring her documentary, observant photographic practice. Even though she consents to be injected with experimental nanotechnology and commits to being an ambassador for the corporation, she remains entangled in an anarchic form of photo-capturing that is seen as dangerous and disruptive in the world of the novel. This tension is revealed when someone observes Kendra taking photographs of the corporate space, and issues her a warning by saying, "They don't like that, you know… 'They're sensitive round these parts.' All the proprietary tech" (2). Even though Kendra is aware of the legal restrictions, she suggests that the habitual use of her camera is instinctual and "automatic" (1). Her photography mentor, Mr Muller, is the only other character in the novel who still shows interest in old-school, pre-digital, photographic processes. He plays a significant role in helping to develop her images in his photo lab, and supports many of her artistic endeavours. Kendra is eventually euthanised at the end of the novel, succumbing to the power of the corporation, but the thesis will focus on the elements of her life where she resists governmental control, namely her photographic practice. Analogue photography, it will be shown, is the vital form through which truth, freedom and individuality exists in a dystopian, digital world.

Toby is, in many ways, the direct counterpart of Kendra, seamlessly immersed in the new digital world. He exemplifies the digital technology of this contemporary society through populist, graphic and visual media content which is focused on transgressive sexual and violent themes. This promiscuous, sensationalist content mostly lacks a political agenda or awareness of social change, and is therefore unthreatening to the state. Toby exposes many of his obsessions on a high-tech streamcast which he calls "Diary of Cunt" (17). This title already sets the tone for an array of explicit, visual material which he identifies as "Your weekly round-up of Toby's astounding life: good drugs, good music, sexploits with exceptionally beautiful girls, regular skirmishes with the motherbitch…" (17). He displays this celebrity identity for the sole purpose of boosting his rankings while experiencing power and notoriety when he is wearing his "BabyStrange" coat (9). This advanced, technological clothing item contains thousands of cameras and screens embedded within it that constantly document his surroundings and projects content to the world. Toby exploits many of these stories for his own gain, often lacking empathy and showing callousness towards sensitive issues. His narcissistic and opportunistic demeanour encourages shallow relationships, particularly seen in his casual sexual encounter with Kendra. The fact that his character survives in the novel while the more sympathetic characters, like Kendra, are killed off, raises questions which will be explored in the discussion of the secondary criticism.

Tendeka's narrative explores his active resistance of corporate control through methods such as protest action. He challenges the system by destroying corporate art at a gallery and demolishing the emergency rooms at a hospital as an act of rebellion. These rebellious interests are recorded and circulated on Toby's digital platform as a warning to the government. Tendeka is largely regarded as a sympathetic character who shows compassion towards his community. His benevolent nature is shown by how he governs a programme to support street children who are endeavouring to survive without cell phones as well as marrying a pregnant refugee to

provide her with citizenship, despite being gay. He is also regarded as being typically naïve which can be seen in the relationship he has with the virtual gaming avatar, *skyward. When Tendeka follows *skyward's orders to initiate a riot, the corporation releases a deadly virus that can only be cured by immunisation at the local health care centre. Faithful to his martyr persona, Tendeka refuses to seek help from the corporation and the virus results in his painful death.

The fourth central character is Lerato, an ambitious and intelligent AIDS orphan who works as a computer programmer for the Communique Corporation. Her early hardships in life motivated her to climb the corporate ladder, but have also encouraged a lack of an ability to form emotional attachments. Like Toby, she displays an unsympathetic persona and has a casual attitude towards sex and relationships. Lerato surreptitiously assists Toby and Tendeka in their protest action, although in the end, her actions are exposed as a sinister double game. She discovers that the *skyward persona was created in an attempt to incite a rebellion that would provide the corporation with a reason to increase the levels of control in the city. The corporation threatens to harm her unless she agrees to continue to assist them in their devious plan. True to the novel's sombre tone, her closing lines suggests that she does not voluntarily make the decision to remain at the corporation when she says "[I]t makes perfect sense. The process has to be managed. Fear has to be managed. Fear has to be controlled. Like people" (282). These words display the callousness of the corporation in their methods of manipulation and shows how *Moxyland* inevitably explores deeper socio-political concerns that are very often found in contemporary society.

Moxyland is carefully constructed to convey these post-apartheid issues in a gritty way. Kendra and Tendeka, who both take a stand against the inequity of the government, die at end of the novel while Toby and Lerato, who are unthreatening to the state, survive. Robyn Wilkinson (2015) suggests that this highlights "the injustice of the society in which their narratives are

set" (44). These conflicting concerns are reflected in the title of the novel, which was first called *Branded*, but was changed to demonstrate a "happy façade over a fundamentally damaged society" (*Moxyland's Stem Cells*). The title *Moxyland* reveals how the "glossy celebrity culture" creates a diversion from more significant issues such as oppressive governmental control. The image of "Moxy", that is also seen on the cover of some versions of the published novel is described as a "dino-beastie thing with a toothsome grin and beady black eyes" (72). This peculiar image demonstrates how evil is masked by a glossy digital visuality that on the surface appears to be innocuous, harmless and cute.

Beukes's fourth novel, *Broken Monsters*, is predominantly a crime thriller that explores a series of gruesome and unusual murders. It combines horror, suspense and the supernatural in a setting of post-industrial urban decay to illustrate the reality and brokenness of contemporary Detroit. The birth and death of the American Dream is revealed against the backdrop of this post-industrial landscape, and is described by reviewer Stuart Kelly as being the "Louvre for aficionados of ruin-porn, graffiti and hipster art" ("Broken Monsters by Lauren Beukes review"). These themes are communicated through highly descriptive writing to evoke the visual and navigate the relevant dystopian issues such as the dangers of social media. The novel also addresses the violent disfigurements of the human body that reveals itself through a sinister murder investigation. The police discover a mutilated body which is comprised of the upper body of a human that has been attached to the lower half of a deer. The description of the constructed and disarranged body can be better understood by the term "chimera" which derives from Greek mythology and describes anything composed of very disparate parts. These chimera bodies evoke a morbid fantasy within the novel, which seamlessly interweaves with post-industrial reality to create a blended narrative that navigates its way through different genres.

Beukes explores the representation of poverty, crime, post-industrial urban decay and a destructive art scene that is focalised through each of the characters. Gabriella Versado is the lead detective of the investigation, and she devotes an excessive amount of time to control the crime rate in Detroit. She is an assertive, authoritative figure who embodies many "masculine" attributes, befitting a successful career as a homicide detective. Although the novel does not depict her as a maternal figure, she still tries to maintain a meaningful relationship with her teenage daughter, Layla. The inability to find a balance between her demanding job and family life places immense strain on their relationship. Beukes uses this complex mother-daughter relationship to demonstrate the difficulties and pressure placed on modern women trying to manage a career and motherhood.

Layla's narrative explores the dangers of social media and the harsh realities of the digital era. She entertains herself by baiting online paedophiles and uses a sexualised performance to lure these predators. Her friend, Cas, who is a victim of sexual abuse, joins her in this dangerous endeavour as a way to seek revenge for past humiliation. These teenage girls entrap an online paedophile with the alias VelvetBoy and threaten to expose his identity. Their lives are placed in danger when the plan fails and nearly leads to Layla being captured. Layla's story eventually intersects with the larger, more dangerous crime investigation as she begins to realise the magnitude of the real threats and dangers that exist in the digital world.

Like Layla, Jonno Haim also exemplifies the digital era. He plays a critical role in documenting the post-industrial urban decay in the city and follows the leads to the murders, unknowingly in certain instances. The city of Detroit becomes the perfect scene to explore his journalistic endeavours as he searches for ground breaking stories to establish a successful career. Jonno's failure to embody the ideal masculine man is seen in his relationship with the savvy Detroit DJ, Jen Q. He uses her "cool and popular" status to boost his own confidence by explaining how she "opens doors… to places he didn't imagine" (122). She encourages Jonno to cover the

Detroit art scene by exposing him to various locations of interest. He exploits the destruction within the city for monetary gain, and the success of his video blogs eventually captures the unwanted attention of the murderer. Jonno is placed in an uncompromising position of having to use his digital fame to expose these meaty mash-ups, or chimera bodies, to the world. Through his narrative, Beukes explores how the eminence associated with social media can impact the rapid spread of online news to create much larger and dangerous problems.

Clayton Broom, who is also called the "Detroit Monster", seeks to gain prominence in the art world by constructing a new brand of artwork. He butchers innocent victims and uses parts of their dead bodies to create new forms of "life", particularly by merging these body parts with other material elements. The novel largely depicts Clayton's terrifying serial killer tendencies as a reflection of the dystopic, dark setting of Detroit. He exudes a twisted and peculiar nature when constructing chimera bodies to add beauty to the dismalness of this world. On the other hand, the novel also interrogates his ability to be creative and unique. Clayton's artistic ideas are driven by a supernatural alter-ego called "the dream", who is often seen adopting his narrative voice, and it eventually becomes impossible to distinguish between the two. This thesis will focus on the novel's overall engagement with the peculiarities of artistic activities in postmodern, consumerist society.

TK, or Thomas Keen, becomes entangled in Clayton's bizarre vision and is involved in the murder investigation as a result. He observes Clayton to be a strange man whose presence leaves his head "full of ghosts" (136). His initial scepticism proves to be correct when his close friend, Ramon, is murdered by "the dream", who is embodied through Clayton. TK's marginalised and subordinate status already presents many difficulties, and the death of his friend digs a deeper hole into his despair. However, he remains true to his gentle and compassionate nature by allowing this grave moment to become a turning point for taking

control of the turbulent situations in his own life like finally coming to terms with his mother's death.

Each of the character's sub-sections are carefully constructed to mirror and exemplify the overall sombre tone of the novel as a whole. In an intriguing article highlighting many of the contemporary issues that exists in Detroit, Chris Roper notes the "disintegration of normalcy that the characters experience along with the city" ("Broken Monsters: A concatenation of nanospaces"). For example, both Jonno and Clayton attempt to mask their insecurities as broken men by maintaining an unhealthy obsession for success. Beukes explores this notion of "fractured masculinity" more carefully in her interview with Caitlyn E. Stobie (2014). She notes how desperate these characters are in their quest to be seen and accepted in society (49). Jonno seeks affirmation and digital fame while Clayton is desperate to share his artwork with the world. Roper suggests that many artists are striving to create "art and meaning out of depression", particularly when Clayton's dark vision turns into violent fantasies ("Broken Monsters: A concatenation of nanospaces"). Beukes offers the reader a view of how each character experiences hardships through their own narrative in a world that is seemingly ominous and depressing.

2. A brief biography of Lauren Beukes

Before pursuing a career in fiction, Beukes worked as a freelance journalist for ten years, including two years in New York and Chicago. During this period, she engaged with a wide group of individuals from various backgrounds and circumstances such as sex workers and AIDS activists. Her dense knowledge of local deeply-rooted issues largely contributed to her development as a novelist, and some of the story material from her journalistic career is integrated into her fiction. Beukes explains that journalism has given her a fine eye for detail while script writing and satire has taught her how to twist stories to develop a fresh perspective on orthodox matters ("Lauren Beukes: 'Ideas for novels develop like a Polaroid'"). Throughout

this time, she wrote for publications such as the *Sunday Times*, *Colors*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Nature Medicine*, *Marie Claire* and *The Big Issue*.

Beukes returned to the University of Cape Town at the age of 25, and attained her MA in Creative Writing. She is originally from Johannesburg but currently resides in Cape Town, and is referred to by Bethlehem as an "actor in the settings she describes" (4). In other words, her intimate knowledge of her surroundings have largely contributed to the content of her novels. In her writing, there is both an engagement with the social conditions of post-apartheid, but also a creative attempt to transcend the realities of Nuttall's description of the South African "now" through non-realist and imaginary narratives (731). Similarly, Roper observes how Beukes explores the issues in South Africa as "finely crafted, slightly insane visions of the future [that] gave us unexpected glimpses into our pasts as well as our presents", as is seen in some of the content for *Moxyland* ("Broken Monsters: A concatenation of nanospaces"). The shift in locale in her later novels (*The Shining Girls* and *Broken Monsters*) demonstrates how her plots have changed and are situated more firmly in the global genre of crime fiction.

As a popular and widely read novelist of the twenty-first century, her other published work includes the non-fiction, *Maverick: Extraordinary Women from South Africa's Past* (2005), which was nominated for the Sunday Times 2006 Alan Paton Non-Fiction Award. This book explores the interesting lives of several influential South African women such as Brenda Fassie, Daisy de Melker and Sara Baartman to name a few. Beukes has also compiled a satirical collection of short stories and nonfiction excerpts called *Slipping, short stories, essays and other writing* (2016). Most of the stories are set in South Africa and address concerns such as the future of technological advancements, poverty and race. *Slipping* is situated in the borderlands between science fiction and realism, with a large focus on dystopian themed writing.

Beukes also works intermedially in a variety of visual genres such as directing documentaries and she particularly enjoys the work of filmmakers and directors like Christopher Nolan, Guillermo del Toro, and Alfonso Cuarón (C.E. Stobie 46). In 2010, she directed a documentary called *Glitterboys & Ganglands* which won best LGBT film at the Atlanta Black Film Festival. Her novel *The Shining Girls* also caught the attention of Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio, who, along with his production company Appian Way Productions, plans to adapt this book into a television series. Beukes's creative work across different media and genres extends to comics like *Wonder Woman in Soweto* (2015). Her interest in these various medial forms suggests that her novels are written in a broader intermedial context, and that an intermedial approach to her fiction may be a productive angle. This notion transcends the consideration of visual imagery in her prose, but also includes the ways Beukes's prose can suggest graphic media and at times, evokes visual effects like zooms or panning shots.

Her visual imagination is grounded in a rich foundation in animation and lends itself to storytelling that transcends the written, printed form. Throughout her oeuvre, Beukes expresses her deep commitment to free will and freedom of choice, and shares her firm belief that everyone should be at liberty to make their own life decisions. She communicates these sentiments through her written material, particularly when she composes the narrative for her female characters. Beukes describes these feminine characters as being "interesting for who they are, as opposed to what they can do" (C.E. Stobie 52). She takes pride in exploring unconventional methods of writing while exemplifying a twenty-first century novelist who does not shy away from the hard-hitting issues in society.

It is exactly Beukes's rich foundation in visual avenues that has directed this thesis to the idea of intermediality. In the context of her novels, intermediality interrogates the role of medial interactions as a resource to pose questions about contemporary society. The thesis will take into consideration how Beukes chooses to use intermedial techniques to refer to or describe a

particular photograph or artwork. These methods demonstrate her versatility in changing the way we read fictional texts, and broadening new approaches to reading more graphically. There exists an appreciation of the complex narrative techniques found in the layers of her multi-genre plots. But as this thesis will argue, Beukes's fictions are more than just carefully crafted works in mixed genres. Rather, her works exceed conventional modes of writing, furthering the development of reading texts through the lens of a wider sense of mediality.

3. Review of secondary criticism

Beukes's work has attracted a considerable volume of critical attention. In the secondary criticism, there is a large focus on her writing style and the innovations in her particular choice of genre. *Moxyland*, for instance, has received much praise, particularly with regard to questions of genre and placing emphasis on the novel's connections to cyberpunk, slipstream, fantasy, science fiction, and dystopia. *Broken Monsters*, however, has garnered attention primarily in online reviews and interviews, and there has been less scholarly work on this novel. It is important to note here that photography and visuality have overall received very little exploration in *Moxyland* and *Broken Monsters* respectively, and it is in this area that the thesis attempts to make a novel contribution. The following section will survey a number of critical responses to Beukes's novels, focusing on how these readings may add complexity to my own intermedial approach.

Cheryl Stobie (2012) focuses on the social critique of *Moxyland*, arguing for its value as a critical dystopian text that critiques current social issues while enabling measures of hope for an unbiased, freer and enlightened society (367). Stobie classifies *Moxyland* as one of the "post-apartheid stories" that uses fantastical elements to reveal many of the socio-political issues that South Africa continues to face today (379). She pays attention to how Beukes uses a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints to exemplify the contemporary issues against the backdrop of mixed genres such as "dystopian, cyberpunk and slipstream" (367). For example,

she reveals that the novel explores the effects of technology through crucial forms such as "advertising", "cell-phones" and the pervasive presence of governmental control (371). Stobie suggests that large parts of the novel demonstrate the violence of South Africa, and she observes how some of the characters attempt to fight against this governmental power. She argues that Kendra and Tendeka's deaths not only signifies the loss of sympathetic characters, but it also reveals the true power of the state. She furthermore suggests that Beukes uses an open ending in the novel to allow for "social dreaming", which signifies that there is hope to be found within the dismalness of this world (368).

Similarly, Adalet Snyman (2010) explores how technology raises important questions about human agency and emotion in the urban setting. Snyman points out that Toby's deeply immersive relationship with the simulated world reveals how human emotions are suppressed in the novel. She also outlines how Kendra's death demonstrates society's incapability of accommodating human emotion. Snyman does not regard *Moxyland* as having any glimmers of hope, and suggests that "[a]spiration and hope are both quashed" (122). She mentions how the novel focuses on wealth, class and technology to classify the various groups, as opposed to an attention paid to race. Snyman claims that the connection between people and virtual communities raises important questions about "the ultimate destiny of communities and the city of the future" (92). She goes on to mention that the characters become unaware of their realities when they are immersed in the online world, which essentially reveals how cyberspace consumes the natural environment. Snyman explains how Toby cannot distinguish between the real and virtual world because his "actual environment is in constant interaction with his virtual environment" (99). She also observes how language is interpreted differently in the novel, and explains that the word "squatting", which would refer to squatter camps in a South African context, actually refers to advertising that is invasive and intrusive in *Moxyland*.

The portrayal of the urban setting of *Moxyland*, beset by the presence of technology and corporate control has been noted by Louise Bethlehem (2014). She uses the term "citiness" to explain how "cities produce the modernity of the subjects who inhabit them" ("Lauren Beukes's Post-Apartheid Dystopia"). She explores the setting in *Moxyland* as a "skein of intersecting planes, flows, circuits and skins: organic and manufactured, digital and analogue, visible and invisible" ("Lauren Beukes's Post-Apartheid Dystopia"). In other words, she describes the setting as being characterised by interwoven binary oppositions (digital and analogue, body and machine, haves and have nots), which interconnect in their own unique ways. Bethlehem describes how the ownership of a cell phone not only categorises one's place in society and determines the levels of class, but also enables a "social and economic liquidity" ("Lauren Beukes's Post-Apartheid Dystopia"). These cell phones resonate with former pass laws by acting as the tool that controls the movement of people. Like Snyman, Bethlehem observes that race is no longer the focal point that is used to determine social division in the novel. Instead, the close connection to the corporate world determines society's privileges.

Ken Barris (2017) focuses on a social interaction of *Moxyland* that discusses the significance of the human form in combination with technology. He observes that governmental power is maintained by the brutality of the police force, digital surveillance and even the invasive nanotechnology that changes Kendra's physical body from within (136). Barris notes how crucial the SIM card is for day to day social living, and claims that Kendra's disconnection in the novel renders her an "outcast" as she "becomes a ghost in civic and economic terms" (137). He also observes that power and privileges are determined by class instead of race.

The post-racial view advanced by Barris is contradicted by scholars like Jennifer M. Schmidt (2014), who foregrounds the novel's female viewpoint and questions the supposed dissolution of racial boundaries in *Moxyland*. Schmidt argues that the bodies of young, white women are still problematically considered as the definition of beauty, particularly in the post-apartheid

cultural landscape. She suggests that Kendra relies on the nanotechnology as a form of empowerment to maintain her appearance and enhance her features. In spite of exemplifying her arguments surrounding racial borders, Schmidt raises important points on Kendra's photographic practice that are worth mentioning. She suggests that Kendra's old school non-digital camera represents an "object of complex bodily self-identification" (111), particularly in the way it captures imperfect photographs. More specifically, the photographic process individuates Kendra's fractured and vulnerable nature, and her camera becomes "an extension of herself" (111). Schmidt explains that Kendra experiences the feeling of being "naked" without her camera, and attempts to divert the attention from herself by reversing the "flow of power relations of the gaze by taking pictures" (111).

Catherine Forrest (2016) raises further important arguments on how photography functions in *Moxyland*. She claims that Kendra's narrative displays her effort to distinguish reality from simulation as she tries to "break away from the hyperrealistic world" (51). She explores how the nanotechnology alters Kendra's DNA to transform her into a cyborg subject. Forrest interrogates the representation of the real by explaining how Kendra attempts to capture photographs that have "traces of meaning" and are therefore considered to be valuable (53). She observes how Kendra's fascination with analogue photography allows her to embrace the "mechanical and human capacity for error" by being intrigued by the flaws in this medium (53). She furthermore describes how Kendra represents a form of "disintegrating reality", which can be seen in her collection of photographs for her art exhibition (55). The photographs consist of damaged, exposed film that are not easily accessible (55). Forrest suggests that Kendra uses these outdated methods to portray modern day life in an authentic way, particularly by observing the real through the lens of her camera in order to identify the flaws in her society. She also outlines how Kendra embraces the camera metaphor by observing Kendra's body as an "extension of this device" (58).

The body becomes a focal point for Natasha King (2015), who explores the way it is modified in *Moxyland*. Like most other critics surveyed above, she classifies the novel as one that incorporates various facets of "science fiction, cyberpunk, slipstream, dystopia, magical realism, fantasy, film noir and the comic book [genres]" (20). She observes that technological enhancements like nanotechnology have largely compromised Kendra's appearance to the extent that her physical body seems indistinguishable from biotechnology. King suggests that the nanotechnology "changes the mechanics of the human function" to transform Kendra's body into an unnatural, "superhuman" state (6). She also claims that Kendra demonstrates "extraordinary capabilities that extend beyond the human norm" which crosses boundaries between the physical and the superhuman (22). King adds that the technological advancements used to control society leads to the broader issue of what she calls "urban identity" (32). Here she explains how:

> In Kendra's case, urban identity is forged in two important ways: the first is through her mutation as a result of the insertion of nanotechnology. The second is through Kendra's reading of the city and construction of herself through the mechanism of photography. Kendra's Zion camera becomes an extension of her urban identity, and thus of her physical body. Through the documentation of the world around her the filters of her camera allow Kendra a unique perspective on the city (32).

King claims that Kendra's identity is not only revealed by her position as an analogue photographer, but also in the way the nanotechnology alters her DNA. She explains that Kendra depends on analogue photography to portray the world of *Moxyland* in a unique way. I extend this scholarship in the third chapter by illustrating how photographic techniques are used as a way to exemplify the political, aesthetic and dystopic elements in the novel.

Similarly, Byrne and Levy (2015) explore the representation of identity in *Moxyland*, arguing that the text exhibits identity as "fractured, riven and characterized by sharp edges" (71). These authors assert that because of the trauma in South Africa during the Apartheid era, identities

are subject to be penetrable and pervaded. They make the further claim that in *Moxyland*, Beukes portrays both "virtual and real identities", which is particularly seen in Toby's character when he adopts the virtual nature of playing an online game (71-72). They express similar sentiments when exploring Kendra's character, arguing that Kendra "inhabits at least two identities" and "vacillates between biological and cyborg identities" (75). Kendra is both committed to subversive, analogue technology and is deeply and fatally entangled with cyber-digital futurist technology. Overall, Byrne and Levy cite panoptic surveillance and explore theories of the "real" and "simulacrum" (77-78), concepts which I will expand upon further in Chapter Two and Three.

Robyn Wilkinson (2015) explores all four of Beukes's novels against the backdrop of the socially constructed and complex nature of gender and sexuality. She examines *Moxyland* through the lens of the cyberpunk genre, and explains how it is through this genre that "Beukes explores a number of social issues that are relevant to South Africa at present" such as capitalism and globalisation (32). She claims that familiar objects such as cell phones and SIM cards are used in new ways in the novel, and she observes the dangerous role of technology in this society. Wilkinson explains how cell phones have become the tool for monetary transactions to take place, anticipating the routine use of smart phones today to make payments. She also claims that Beukes challenges the problematic role of masculinity in *Moxyland* where Toby is negatively portrayed through his sexualised attitude towards women. On the other hand, Wilkinson notes how Tendeka is perceived to be the opposite, and is the "embodiment of a principled and compassionate masculinity" (37). She observes that Kendra uses film to document the world because of her fascination with the flaws in the photograph's end product. By contrast, Wilkinson notes that Toby relies on an extremely advanced piece of technology to capture imagery.

Phoenix Alexander (2015) likewise discusses all four of Beukes's novels, and outlines the contemporary Western trends that are dominated by technological advancements and digital media. He describes the difficulty that arises with classifying Beukes's work in terms of genre and he suggests that she creates her "own special brand of dystopia: violently funny, seemingly inescapable, enmeshing itself as it does in twenty-first century pop culture" (158). Alexander describes Kendra as an "organic advertisement", claiming that her hybrid nature is representative of survival of the fittest (163). This is determined by who can adapt to the new technologies shaping the world, which shows that there is no room for Kendra in this fast-paced, digital society. Alexander observes that Beukes writes for a larger contemporary readership who are perceived as "hungry for the bombastic visions and networks modern technology facilitates" (158).

Broken Monsters, compared to *Moxyland,* has received much less scholarly attention. Although this novel features highly descriptive realist passages of writing, the larger scholarship has focused on many of the supernatural elements in the text, including the dystopic landscape. Very little attention has been devoted to "ruin porn" or the presence of contemporary art, but has rather focused on Beukes's style of writing and the way she weaves the sub-plots of the characters in a seamless way.

Wilkinson describes *Broken Monsters* as combining genres of speculative fiction and crime fiction to create a novel that forces "logic, reason, and rationality to co-exist with mysticism and ambiguity" (94). She explores how Beukes presents several characters with their individual circumstances and differences to exemplify the way "identity is constructed and understood" in the novel (96). Wilkinson highlights the femininity that exists in the novel by drawing attention to the four main female characters: Gabriella, Layla, Cas and Jen Q. She claims that each of these characters challenges traditional feminine ideals in unique ways and, through their individual plots, Beukes explores the difficulties placed on modern women in society.

Wilkinson also brings light to issues of masculinity in the novel that is seen particularly in Clayton and Jonno's characters. She outlines how each of these men fail to embody "Western hegemonic masculinity" in different ways (102). She describes how Clayton's failures are manifested by the sense of "alienation and hopelessness" while Jonno tries to mask his inadequacies by using "arrogance and misogyny" (102). According to Wilkinson, Beukes exemplifies masculinity through these specific narratives to show how the significant influence of society determines what masculinity really means (102-103).

In a journal publication, Andrea Spain (2017) argues that *Broken Monsters* exemplifies the violent nature of white masculinity in America. She suggests that these white men are driven to racist behaviour, particularly when the country does not deliver its promise of a good life. She claims that issues arise when the world does not conform to white supremacy within society. As Spain explains, these white men, like Clayton Broom, begin to lash out because of feeling "alienated" and "emasculated" (261). Spain also describes Beukes as a writer who fluctuates between the worlds of America and South Africa, adding that white supremacy dominates both of these countries in different ways. She furthermore claims that the harsh realities of politics and race in South Africa and America affects how Beukes structures her novels. She suggests that Beukes's status as a "writer between genres" demonstrates her ability to navigate "horror and science fiction while creating cross-genre feminist narratives" (258).

Alexander pays some attention to the visuality of ruin and destruction of the Detroit setting in *Broken Monsters* (159). He claims that technology such as social media platforms and video blogs plays a significant role in the novel. Alexander also notes that the representation of hybrid bodies can be seen as a recurring theme in this narrative, and he states that Detroit's broken tragedies are demonstrated through the actions of characters such as Clayton. Alexander furthermore describes Beukes's shift to an American setting as reconfiguring the "digital terrain of her earlier works" (165).

Broken Monsters has also been extensively reviewed to reveal many important themes such as digital media, violence and art that finds its relevance in contemporary society. Stuart Kelly suggests that the human aspect of Clayton's character, which is seemingly debateable through his violent actions, is shown in the way he connects with other individuals through his art form ("Broken Monsters by Lauren Beukes review"). He justifies this notion by arguing that Clayton's violent visions to commit murder are, in fact, driven by a supernatural form. Zoe Hinis draws attention to how *Broken Monsters* crosses boundaries between real life and the supernatural. She explores the dangerous presence of the internet and the complex art scene, which reflect common issues that are plaguing contemporary society ("Review of Broken Monsters by Lauren Beukes"). Similarly, Mahvesh Murad observes how the novel explores the issues linked to the internet and digital media to exemplify society's dependencies in modern life. He refers to *Broken Monsters* as a novel that "straddles genres, boundaries, pushes against definitions and limits constantly and tirelessly" ("Dream a Little Dream"). Roper, in his analysis of the characters, describes Jonno as "The most original, and perhaps most clearly delineated character" in the way he portrays the bloody artworks through technology ("Broken Monsters: A concatenation of nanospaces"). He states that this type of exposure reveals the true power of technology. The debate on constructed bodies is made more pertinent by Sherryl Connelly, who describes *Broken Monsters* as a "commonplace crime story [that] becomes infested with supernatural horror" ("'Broken Monsters' by Lauren Beukes: Book review"). She claims that Clayton's artwork is unoriginal due to the fact that there is a school of taxidermy where the body parts from different animals are fused together to create a peculiar creature. Here Connelly cites an example from 1843, where the construction of a monkey and fish hybrid was revealed. The thesis will focus on more examples of comparable contemporary art forms in Chapter Four.

From the large number of critical responses to Beukes's writing, it is clear that she is a significant South African author whose work rewards scholarly engagement. Although her novels are not connected as a series of works, parallels exist through her creative writing style and the issues she chooses to address. Her writing articulates South African post-apartheid reality in formally new, unexpected ways by employing the genre of science fiction and fantasy in *Moxyland*. On the other hand, Beukes's shift to an American setting has encouraged a broader audience by openly exposing hard-hitting realities, many of which her readership can relate to.

It can also be seen that many critics have shown interest in how Beukes blends genre to create interesting and intricate novels that have been widely recognised. These critics have devoted large parts of their work to Kendra's post-human nature, with very little focus on the importance of her photographic practice. The presence of post-industrial urban decay and contemporary art has also been largely overlooked in scholarly studies relating to *Broken Monsters*. I aim to extend this scholarship by identifying the various medial effects in Beukes's fictions to demonstrate how reading visually encourages new ways of interpreting texts.

4. Chapter Overview

This chapter so far has provided a brief introduction to intermediality and Beukes's biography as an author working across genres and media. It has also presented plot summaries of each novel and examined the secondary criticism surrounding several important contemporary issues found in Beukes's books.

Chapter Two will explore the focus on ideas and theories of intermediality in more detail. I will present several approaches to intermedial literary studies and discuss its relevance by relating it to *Moxyland* and *Broken Monsters* respectively. The chapter will also provide a detailed discussion surrounding the theories of ekphrasis to show how it is embodied in

literature. The processes of analogue and digital photographic methods will be carefully explored, largely focusing on the critical debates surrounding both of these practices. A brief discussion of ruin porn will conclude this chapter.

Chapter Three will be a critical, close-textual analysis of *Moxyland*. I will examine and demonstrate how various photographic techniques are represented and evoked in the novel through text. My analysis of relevant extracts will show how the excessive, pervasive, postmodern digital visuality associated with Toby is the polar opposite to Kendra's minimalist and modernist use of photography.

Chapter Four will focus on visuality in *Broken Monsters*, particularly ruin porn and contemporary visual art. I will pay an attention to the increasing artistic significance that is awarded to abandoned buildings and demonstrate how ruin can be exploited through digital exposure for monetary gain. My analysis of how bodies are constructed and represented will interrogate the creative limits of artists.

Chapter Five will serve as the concluding chapter by highlighting the key observations made in the previous chapters. Overall, it will provide a synopsis of the thesis to ultimately reaffirm how new ways of reading texts like *Moxyland* and *Broken Monsters* can be encouraged through intermedial forms.

Chapter Two

Intermediality and theories of photographic and visual representation

1. Overview

One of the reasons why intermedial approaches continue to attract attention in literary studies is that they encourage questions about the limitations of textually constructed ways of reading, and offer ways to rethink how media borders can be crossed. The significant number of publications dedicated to intermedial studies is evidence of its relevance, especially in a contemporary context (Mitchell 2005; Wolf 1999, 2002; Rajewsky 2005; Rippl 2015). Gabriele Rippl explains that intermediality is concerned with the way texts and other cultural forms "either combine and juxtapose different media, genres and styles or refer to other media in a plethora of ways" (1). More simply put, intermedial approaches are based on the understanding that medial forms do not operate in isolation, but form part of a broader and more complex spectrum. W.J.T Mitchell coined the phrase "All media are mixed media" to elucidate that the notion of media separation or media purity is impossible ("There Are No Visual Media" 260). He exemplifies this claim by drawing attention to the "silent film", which can be considered a pure medium, yet contains subtitles, gestures and mouthed words, as well as accompanying music that makes it anything but a silent medium (258). It can be seen that even in the extreme form of a silent film, visuality and language exist together, and combine seamlessly to create meaning.

Intersections and cross-overs between text and image have existed from the beginnings of literature. Intermedial effects like ekphrasis, which James A. W. Heffernan (1991) defines as the "verbal representation of graphic representation" (299), have a deeply-rooted history in literature since the age of Homer. The most canonical example of literary ekphrasis is the vivid Homeric description of Achilles's shield in Book 18 of *The Iliad*. Here, ekphrasis functions as a device to make the audience re-create the shield as an imaginative scene of action. In fact,

epic poets like Homer often used ekphrasis to help the audience visualise these legendary battles as a pictorial tableau, and describe certain scenes in vivid detail. Since then, a diverse range of definitions associated with intermediality has surfaced, some of which Rajewsky identifies as plurimediality, multimediality, crossmediality, and media-convergence (44). The growing interest in intermediality is seen in scholarly studies relating to literature, film, media and art history, and presents new ways of thinking about medial border-crossings by drawing attention to the "materiality and mediality of artistic practices and of cultural practices" (44).

This thesis seeks to understand the relationship between texts and embedded or referred media in a literary work. How does Beukes use intermediality as a resource to pose questions about contemporary society? More specifically, what is the relationship between photography and language? What effects can occur when a novel features a photograph or a picture, or refers to it? Are references to photographs different from those of paintings or drawn images? Do digital and analogue images have different meanings? In which ways do photographs depict the real? How is intermediality evolving in post-apartheid literature?

In this chapter, I will examine the concept of intermediality through a focus on photographic and visual representations and references in literary works. My aim is to explore the debates, theories and claims surrounding analogue and digital photography to show how Kendra and Toby exercise their respective representational practices in contrasting ways. The analysis of analogue photography will derive from claims made by theorists such as Roland Barthes (1982), Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (2004). Barthes describes the photograph to be an "indefatigable expression" of the real because of its ability to illustrate a particular moment in time that has "occurred only once" and "could never be repeated existentially" (*Camera Lucida* 4). Edwards and Hart takes a similar approach, but study images in terms of their materiality to show how the photograph directly connects to the real by being a "three-dimensional thing, not only a two-dimensional image" (1). It is exactly these arguments which interrogate how

images can be interpreted and understood beyond their presence as mere signs that will form part of my broader discussion of photography. This chapter will also explore theories and discussions on ruin porn and contemporary art forms to show how these themes are embodied through highly descriptive writing.

2. Intermediality

The concept of intermediality is realised by way of media configurations that are constantly at work with one another. According to Mitchell, multiple media forms have been classified as combinations of Aristotle's three orders of meaning-making (*lexis, melos* and *opsis*, or words, music and visual spectacle). Mitchell also refers to Barthes's much more recent study of the "image-music-text" divisions of the semiotic field ("There Are No Visual Media" 258). By no means does Mitchell ever define his observations by using the term intermediality, however, Rajewsky suggests that his theory on mixed media implies an intermedial quality. She provides her own conception of intermediality, which she classifies as an "umbrella-term" to describe the "crossing of borders between media" (46). Similarly, Rippl defines intermediality as the connections between media that describes a wide array of "cultural phenomena which involve more than one medium" (1). By the same token, Werner Wolf (1999) in his study on intermediality and the parallels and contrasts between literature and music, outlines intermediality as the "particular relation… between conventionally distinct media of expression or communication" (*The Musicalization of Fiction* 37). Intermediality is certainly more intricate than the brief definitions provided above suggest, and can be elaborated through Rajewsky's tripartite categories: "medial transposition", "media combination" and "intermedial references" (51-52).

For the purpose of this thesis, it is useful to examine these three categories more carefully. Firstly, Rajewsky defines "medial transposition" as the way in which a specific "media product comes into being", as a transformation of one medium into another medium (51). Film

adaptations of literary works are most commonly associated with this category, and even the prospect of adapting Beukes's novel, *The Shining Girls*, into a television series demonstrates the fluid relationship between the two media. Rajewsky explains that the audience experiences the original textual narrative along with watching the film, even if the audience lacks background knowledge to the text. This is because the newly formed film has its own structure that encourages different meanings (53). Secondly, there is the idea of "media combination", which is classified by examples such as opera, film, theatre and illustrated books: they all are the result or the process of combining two distinct media or medial forms (51). Rajewsky explains that these medial forms pre-exist "in their own materiality" and that this contributes to the structure and significance of the combined media product (52). This form of intermedial combination is also referred to as "multimedia" or "mixed media" (51). Film can be considered as "multimedia" because of its ability to combine visual, verbal and musical elements. On the other hand, comics or graphic novels, like Beukes's *Wonder Woman in Soweto* can be considered as "mixed media" because it contains complex meaning in different media that would not reach self-sufficiency outside of that context. Lastly, Rajewsky uses the term "intermedial references" which describes citing or evoking medial effects in a literary text, as well as generating an illusion of another medium's specific practices (52). It constitutes elements like ekphrasis or references made to painting and photography, and evokes or imitates instead of combining various medial forms. For instance, a poem may describe a painting, or a novel may make references to film, or mimic its style through the "evocation or imitation of certain filmic techniques such as zoom shots, fades, dissolves, and montage editing" (52).

Intermedial references in literary texts, are then not only references to media such as music, photography or film in a text, but can also evoke or imitate the style of a different medium giving rise to, what Rajewsky calls, the "as if" character and an illusion-forming quality (54). In an apt example by Heinz B. Heller, it is suggested that "the literary author writes… *as if* he

had the instruments of film at his disposal which in reality he does not" (qtd. in Rajewsky 55). Similarly, in her study on how photographic images are introduced into fictional narratives, Danuta Fjellestad (2015) raises key points on the processes of meaning-making in photography. The "as if" character can be identified by her example of a man positioned in front of a mirror with his back turned to the reader, and his face partially reflected by the mirror. She explains that the "photographer's position is aligned with the position of the readers/viewers: it is as if the man in the photograph were looking at us looking" (209). In both of these instances, the literary text cannot truly replicate the elements of different media but is able to evoke or imitate these structures to create an illusion (55). It is in this sense then that we can recognise that *Moxyland* does not only feature photographs as objects in the narrative, but that some scenes are written in a manner that evokes a photographic and/or filmic style. Several of the photographic descriptions mimic photographic seeing *as if* the audience could view this novel as a series of snapshots. Beukes solely uses text to stimulate camera techniques and visual effects in her narrative, most conspicuously in her use of reflective surfaces and motion techniques. These forms will be explored in more detail in Chapter Three.

Another influential theoretical study of intermediality is Mitchell's significant contribution to mixed media. Mitchell has proposed concepts such as "nesting" and "braiding", which are useful in analysing the interaction between the verbal and visual. He defines "nesting" as the phenomenon which occurs when "one medium appears inside another as its content" (262). Mitchell exemplifies this claim by means of the television when this is treated as the content of film, for example, in a scene which depicts characters watching a television show (262). He explains that any medium can be nested within the other, as in the case of ekphrasis in prose, which is "never made visible or tangible *except* by way of the medium of language" (262). This encourages the reader to literally visualise a scene, composed pictorially, in graphic detail, as is often seen in poetry. On the other hand, Mitchell describes "braiding" as the process when

one sensory channel becomes intertwined with another to produce meaning (262). He refers to the cinematic techniques of synchronised sound to exemplify this phenomenon (262). Fjellestad finds Mitchell's concepts problematic when dealing with "photographic images that are tangibly present in narrative" (198). She argues that two media cannot work together seamlessly because the image exists as a separate entity from the verbal medium (198). Photographs in literary texts are thus not only illustrative but can mark moments of narrative rupture.

In his article "Intermediality Revisited: Reflections on Word and Music Relations in the Context of a General Typology of Intermediality" (2002) Wolf claims that intermediality is a signifying practice that transgresses boundaries between "conventionally distinct media of communication" (17). He outlines four key intermedial phenomena: "transmediality", "intermedial transposition", "intermedial references" and "plurimediality" (18-21). Wolf's typologies are strikingly similar to that of Rajewsky, such as "intermedial transposition", which he describes as the transfer or borrowing of material and features from other media such as film adaptations (20). He also defines "plurimediality" as the combination of media or the effects of medial hybridity like illustrated books that contains words and images (22-23). Wolf interprets "intermedial references" as the involvement of another medium which only occurs indirectly in various ways, whereby the medium that is referred to exists as an idea or a reference (23). He classifies this typology in two subcategories: He identifies the first as "explicit reference" and explains that this is used most commonly in "verbal media" when one medium, such as a piece of music, or a work of art like a painting, has been incorporated into another medium and is cited or discussed (24). Wolf describes the second subcategory as "implicit reference", and explains how the "signifiers of the work and/or its structure are affected by the non-dominant medium, since they appear to imitate its quality or structure", as in the case of imitating references through partial production (25).

Literary scholars have also understood intermediality as an extension of the well-established idea of intertextuality. Bulgarian-French philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva first coined the term "intertextuality", which describes the interconnection between texts and particularly works of literature. Maria Jesus Martinez Alfaro explores Kristeva's theory more carefully in her journal publication "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept" (1996). She explains that intertextuality understands texts "not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical… shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures" (268). In other words, this term can refer to a variety of texts which all relate to one another by coexisting as a dynamic, open system that generates different meanings. The features of intertextuality are also deeply rooted in history from Plato and Aristotle, to Longinus and Bakhtin, and many of Kristeva's ideas can be regarded as an extension of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of "Dialogism" (269). Kristeva defines Bakhtin's notion more carefully in a selection of essays within *The Kristeva Reader* (1986), which recognises that "literary structure does not simply *exist* but is generated in relation to *another* structure" (35-36). Barthes also draws on the features of intertextuality in his essay, "The Death of the Author" (1967), by regarding texts as "quotations" that are comprised of "multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation" (148). This idea finds itself situated in *Broken Monsters* where Beukes cites Marshall McLuhan as well as Plato's cave analogy (165; 139). It is precisely in her creative use of intertextual references that Beukes creates original works of fiction. It can then be seen that Barthes's argument is not only limited to text, but can also include visual and other media such as paintings that were inspired by former artists, or multimedia such as movies that incorporate ideas from novels.

Gillian Rose (2001) provides a comprehensive discussion on the importance of visual images in contemporary society. She argues that visual images are generally encountered by some form

of text, as in the case of paintings in a gallery. Here she explains that the most abstract painting is usually accompanied by some form of description on the wall which is used to provide context and further clarity. Rose claims that visual images and objects are "always embedded into a range of other texts, some of which will be visual and some of which will be written and all of which intersect with each other" (10). What has been left out of this conversation is the notion that evoking visual imagery is possible and valuable without the presence of actual photographs in a text. Rose further argues that "visual modes of conveying meaning are not the same as written modes" (10). It is exactly in this aspect that this thesis aims to show how language can be used as a tool to encourage various visual techniques and meanings, and how these meanings can be conveyed through various medial forms purely by means of relying on novels that consist of printed words.

3. Theories of Ekphrasis

Beukes's novels frequently refer to photographs, digital images, works of art or film, and these are often moments of highly detailed description, in other words constituting the intermedial device of ekphrasis. In recent years, the term ekphrasis has gained popularity as a critical concept in contemporary studies. Although this term has been traditionally associated with the analysis of works of art and poetry, the various ways of now reading ekphrasis, and its application to a diverse range of aesthetic phenomena such as photography and literature has encouraged various definitions of this concept. As a long-standing literary tradition, Greek classical theory suggests that certain forms of verbal description can create a visual effect in the mind of the listener, as in the case of the Homeric description of Achilles's shield. In contemporary culture, the visual object, whether real or fictional, is portrayed in the medium of language, as is evident in Heffernan's basic definition of ekphrasis which I have cited earlier. The goal of ekphrasis is to evoke the creative imagination by allowing the reader to envision a highly descriptive passage as if it physically existed in front of the mind's eye. In many cases,

of which will also be seen in the analysis of Beukes's primary texts, the object that is described only comes into a virtual visual existence, as it were, through its representation in verbal form.

The power of language is effective in relaying such effects, particularly in the representation of poetry. In her dissertation on ekphrasis in literature and film, Laura Mareike Sager (2006) observes that ekphrasis is largely inspired by Horace's phrase "ut pictura poesis" (3), which means "as is painting so is poetry". Horace suggested that poetry is deserving of the same critical analysis as painting whereby both of these mediums should be closely interpreted with an aesthetic appreciation. Poets chiefly based their works on expression and meaning by acquiring a deeper understanding of the descriptive power of words and appreciating its ability to evoke visual imagery. English Romantic poet John Keats is a classic example of adopting this notion. His poem of 1819 "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is largely regarded as a work of ekphrasis as he describes the images and designs on the surface of the urn in vivid detail.

Mitchell makes a valuable and significant contribution to the discussion on word/image in his article "Ekphrasis and the Other" (1995). He analyses three ekphrastic forms of realisation: indifference, hope and fear. He uses these phases in an attempt to add complexity to Heffernan's conception of ekphrasis. Mitchell explains that "ekphrastic indifference" is based on the perception that a verbal representation cannot represent an object the same way a visual representation can. For this reason, the reader deems ekphrasis impossible, and believes that verbal representations cannot "bring its visual presence before us in the way pictures do" (152). This notion encourages debates on the subject of ekphrasis whereby certain literature such as the analysis of the Shield of Achilles inspires a sense curiosity and fascination in the reader. The interest in these theories and debates leads to Mitchell's second phase which he calls "ekphrastic hope" (152). In this instance, the reader begins to realise the power language has to create vision through text. The impossibility of ekphrasis is conquered in the imagination and the attempt to visualise closes the gap between text and image. This significant moment of

realisation in "ekphrastic hope" is quickly encountered by the third phase which is called "ekphrastic fear" (154). Mitchell calls this the "moment of resistance" when we begin to realise that the figurative nature of ekphrasis might become lived and real (154). By realising that the success of ekphrasis would encourage a collapse of difference between verbal and visual representation, we suddenly find ourselves desiring the very distinction we had hoped to overcome.

Many of the extracts in the novels of study for this thesis are very distinctive of "ekphrastic hope". As readers, we are presented with the possibility of visualising the imagery referred to in the text. Yet, the violent content of such images, for example in *Broken Monsters*, also immediately encourages "ekphrasic fear", as the reader recoils from the graphic materialisation of the scene. Similarly in *Moxyland*, Kendra's black images ultimately stage a resistance to signification, and collapse the ekphrastic exercise into the void of the non-representable. It is also important to note that in the novels under discussion, most of the instances of ekphrasis take place through the direct speech of the characters. This is seen in Kendra's description of the Ghost logo illuminating from her wrist, as well as her description of her *Self-Portrait* (60; 66). The artworks in *Broken Monsters* are also highly descriptive and interpretive, and can evoke a personal reaction from the point of view of the character. These complex ideas will be analysed further in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

4. Photography

Moxyland consciously and self-reflexively engages with photography as a medium, and it is important to consider debates around photography in some detail. The complex relationship between literature and photography has been plagued by tension since the birth of this new visual medium in 1839. Throughout the years, there has been comprehensive discussions on how literature has navigated and engaged with the photographic medium (David Cunningham et al. 2005; Danuta Fjellestad 2015; Edward Welch 2019). The complex relationship between

these mediums are constantly shifting and progressing, “taking on a range of forms, stages, and preoccupations” (Welch 434). Since then, there has been an increasing number of authors who have found significance and fluidity in incorporating photographic images, references or techniques in their texts.

In order to understand how photography situates itself in Beukes’s novel, each process (analogue and digital) needs to be briefly discussed. Analogue photography uses chemical processes instead of electronic methods to capture images on thin, transparent strips of plastic called film. Light enters and interacts with the chemicals in the film to record an image. When the reel of film reaches capacity, it must be processed and developed with chemicals in a photo lab. In this process, the film is placed into a chemical bath to create what is known as fixed negative pictures where the lighter areas look darker and the darker parts look lighter. These negatives are then used to make finished versions of the photographs, or positive images, by reversing the tone.

On the other hand, digital cameras work very differently. Light enters through the lens as soon as the button to take a photograph is pressed. The light sensitive sensors records the incoming light rays and transforms it into electrical signals. This light from the object or scene that is being photographed hits the image sensor chip, which breaks it up into millions of pixels. The sensor then measures the colour and brightness of each pixel and stores it as a number. Essentially, the digital photograph is a long string of data or numbers that describes the exact details of each pixel it contains. In other words, a digital photograph is actually just a code of millions of 0s and 1s which must then be decoded by a computer to give the illusion of an image.

What can clearly be seen is how differently these photographic forms work to process and display images in their own unique ways. Each process raises important points on how

photographs are interrogated and evaluated in terms of its authenticity and truth value. Unlike paintings, photographs capture actual light on a surface which exemplifies its direct connection to the real. In *Camera Lucida,* Barthes explores this notion of the real by suggesting that the "Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially… the event is never transcended for the sake of something else" (4). He explains that the photograph is never separated from the referent, or that which it represents. In the most basic rendition, this implies that the photograph is the thing itself and remains true to its objective as a "class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both" (6). Barthes illustrates this idea by observing how people would generally say "this is me as a child" (5) instead of saying this is a photograph of when I was a child. It is exactly the idea that the photograph is attached to its referent and represents a segment of time which brings Barthes to another important observation, where he expresses that photographs "possesses an evidential force… its testimony bears not on the object but on time" (88-89). In this instance, photographs represent pieces of evidence or fingerprints to show how moments that are captured in real time implies that something substantial actually existed.

Similarly, Edwards and Hart refers to several of the claims made by Barthes, but discuss this against the backdrop of the materiality of images. These authors observe how the material and presentational forms of photographs are largely overlooked and neglected in scholarly studies. They direct their focus to Barthes's observation that a photograph is a material object which "carries on it the marks of its own history, of its chemical deterioration" (1). This materiality significantly influences how images are shaped and understood, particularly by interrogating how it exists in the world. Edwards and Hart outline two key forms of the materiality of photographs. The first is the plasticity of the image itself such as the paper it is printed on or its chemistry. The second is presentational forms like albums and frames (3). The influence of this type of visual material is certainly a defining factor within photography and each of these

forms situates itself in the world of *Moxyland*. This is seen particularly in the damaged materials Kendra chooses to use as a reflection of her identity as well as the way she presents her images. As Edwards and Hart note, these material forms "exist in dialogue with the image itself" to create value added to it (2).

Tamsyn Adams (2018) does not cite Barthes in her dissertation, but raises important points about the material properties of analogue photographs that are worth mentioning. Adams considers the various components of a photograph to outline the interaction between the physical properties and human and material influences that produces it. Various interactions of images contribute to different visual effects such as the "[f]raming, depth of field, exposure, contrast and scale" (32). The tactile properties of photographs such as the "soft shuffle of paper, the crisper, resistant ripple of film, the olfactory trace of chemicals that linger long after the objects' immersion in various darkroom baths" all contribute to the overall display of images in their own unique ways (33). In *Moxyland*, Kendra's authentic representation of herself through her entirely black photograph is constructed from rotten materials, yet it is exactly these materials that makes her portrait so valuable and genuine.

With the advent of digital image technology in the 21st century, the direct correspondence of the photograph to the scene before the lens has changed, a disruptive shift that *Moxyland* engages with. The use of filters and digital manipulation has led to a society that is controlled by fake news and simulations. It is impossible to make a distinction between the real and the simulated because of the advanced processes that define digital photo-capturing. Many scholars and theorists have discussed the impact of digital photography within society and how it has transformed and improved over time.

In postmodern culture, society has become so reliant on technological models that direct contact with the real world has been lost. French sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1994) observed

how images have become detached from any relation to the real world, and the result is that we now live in a scopic regime dominated by simulations or simulacra, which can also be regarded as "the hallucination of truth" (8). The simulacrum is defined as that which imitates reality, and this representation now determines the real world to the extent that society has lost the ability to distinguish between the natural and artifice. Baudrillard uses this notion to address how replicas and mass production are increasingly shaping society to the point where the emotional attachment to photography is diminished. In *Moxyland*, we will see how images are produced on a large scale and at rapid rates to the extent that society becomes immersed in a world dominated by "fake news". This form of digital simulation versus modernist real will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Daniel Rubinstein, in his essay "What is 21st Century Photography?" observes how classical photography is at the "end of its life" and in a state of "advanced decay", which are notions that will be explored further in the third chapter. He discusses how the death of analogue technology and the photographic camera in contemporary society is "simultaneously being transformed by a new set of forces" which clearly suggests the rise of digital technology. The Age of Information is characterised by the emergence of a machine that replicates the activities and processes of the mind. In other words, 21st century photography is a representation of "the exploration of the [labour] practices that shape this world through mass-production, computation, self-replication and pattern recognition" ("What is 21st Century Photography?"). These processes dominate in modern day society where perception is distorted, and images are easily manipulated and deemed unoriginal. As Rubinstein explains, these pervasive new technologies operate by means of "mass delirium, reproduction and infinite exchange" and ultimately dismisses capturing photographs as real time events ("What is 21st Century Photography?").

In a different vein, Barthes also links the photograph to death, a connection made long before the decline and demise of analogue photography was apparent. He describes this "micro-version of death" (*Camera Lucida* 14) by mentioning how he, the subject, now becomes the object. As he further explains, "[O]thers … turn me, ferociously, into an object, they put me at their mercy, at their disposal, classified in a file, ready for the subtlest deceptions" (14). He describes how, when he sees himself as the product of what is being photographed, it becomes a sense of "Death in person" (14), and when he finds the same photograph on the cover of a pamphlet he becomes distressed by the artifice of printing. His reaction to this sight is described as a "horrible disinternalized countenance" (15).

It can be seen that digital technology is perceived to be a faster way of capturing images by being readily accessible, yet digital photographs are essentially manipulatable code that can lack human agency and therefore an emotive force. These glossy, sterile images are easily photoshopped and filtered to the point where they become a synthetic display of an object or scene. Digital image makers recognise the artifice that exists in their images and opt to use black and white filters or add blurry effects to the image to achieve a flawed and imperfect result. The term "synthetic dirt" surfaces as a way of understanding such fake effects of synthetic digital manipulation. In the call for papers surrounding the discussion on "synthetic dirt", Ashraf Jamal, along with several authors who have worked productively with the term, explains that some sound recording studios are so high-end that there is the ability to create pure sound, without noise or "dirt" ("Synthetic Dirt"). Natural, "dirty" forms of sound are replaced by digital recordings, where these listeners no longer have a connection to music. Such digital art forms lack humanity and create an illusion of being real in a synthetic world where digital technology mimics these various forms. Even in *Moxyland*, Toby explains how the "audio techs had to adapt the digital to synth the effects of analogue" (161). Digital image makers, like Toby, aim to express the meaning-making through synthesising photographs that

have already experienced the process of retouching and manipulation. In this sense, they never fully achieve that level of authenticity, because the capitalist effects of mass-produced replicas are still susceptible to falsification.

In a social ontology of photography, John Roberts (2014) observes photography from the standpoint of capitalism. He explains that there is an inherent dislike by those in power of the "uncontrollable volatility of the photograph": its ability to be subversive and anti-totalitarian (10). Roberts cites the Abu Ghraib photographs to explain how the everyday photograph can elude state control. The analogue camera poses an even bigger threat because the information is unable to be deleted or manipulated. Similarly in *Moxyland*, Kendra frequently observes how the rest of society lacks the understanding and knowledge of how her analogue camera works. This type of ignorance raises suspicion in the corporate system and threatens the methods of control, especially when the government cannot manage how these images get distributed. Roberts explains this notion more carefully by claiming that capitalism dislikes images that spill out "to be used and reframed by others to defame and embarrass the state, particularly in a world now dominated by instant image transmission" (10). In Roberts's conception, both analogue and digital images can be subversive, and the mobility of images in a networked world can make them powerful tools to disrupt stable notions of truth. As I will show in Chapter Three, Kendra deliberately does not insert her photographs into digital networks of image circulation but crafts them as singular objects that gain their meaning in the space of the art gallery, rather than the world of social media screens.

It is clear that postmodern photography lacks the material basis that allow images to be seen as a representation of authenticity. Similar to a painter who selects their canvas, brushes and paints with care, Kendra chooses her materials to construct a singular photograph very carefully. She is interested in the processes of photography, where the unpredictable result of the final product

makes the process more meaningful. It is exactly these imperfections that make her works authentic and original in a world of falsehood and "fake news".

5. Ruin Porn

The term "ruin porn" is increasingly recognised as a visual art form with the focal point of its aesthetics being the shattered cities placed in front of the camera lens. This concept stems from the act of photographing post-industrial urban decay as a form of what John Patrick Leary, in his blog, calls "pornographic" sensationalism ("Detroitism"). In their study on the aesthetics of ruin photography, Thora Petursdottir and Bjornar Olsen (2014) explains that ruin porn was first coined in relation to the decay in Detroit, but is now used to describe the action of photographing ruined buildings and infrastructure as a "seductive and aesthetically pleasing" activity (9). In *Broken Monsters*, the neglect of a social and political awareness when capturing these abandoned buildings are explored through Jonno's character, and this will be further elaborated on in Chapter Four.

Ruin websites, photography collections, and urban exploration blogs are starting to surface more often, with one of the most notable features being that there is fascination in this form of visuality. In fact, ruin photography has been criticised for all the positive attention that is directed to creative artists. In an online article, Rob Horning explains that ruin photography evokes the desire to have the ordinary, everyday world "re-enchanted… so that we can imagine ourselves as noble" ("Detroit Ruin Porn"). Likewise, Richard B. Woodward describes this term as an "erotic genre calculated to excite us with a stock set of provocative fantasies" ("Disaster Photography: When Is Documentary Exploitation?"). The aesthetic interest in this form of destruction glosses over the city's deep structural problems, and exploits the misery and despair within a certain location. The conflicted nature between the aesthetic value and destructive features can be found in Siobhan Lyons's (2018) edited book, which notes how "modern ruins arouse both despair and fascination, a fascination with our own death and a tangible image of

the precise form it will take" (1-2). She explains that ruin porn is not called ruin art particularly for the reason that it is so closely linked to obsession, and she describes how "It allows us to view, as if in a museum, something uncompromisingly real and consequential, but without having to engage completely with the dire consequences it realistically provokes" (2).

This term has also encouraged a range of criticisms which stem from the suggestion that these photographs are deprived of social context concerning its history. In other words, photographs that document ruin and destruction fail to provide a deeper background knowledge of the condition of these buildings, particularly in an economically driven society. Lyons explains how capitalism and post-humanism merges along with the collapse of buildings to signal "the potential end of a humanist, capitalistic driven manner of 'life'" (3). Ruin porn can thus trivialise the economic and social effects of this capitalist decay, and reduces it to spectacular scenes of destruction. The trivial way in which these industrial ruins are documented is a critique that is also embodied in *Broken Monsters*, when Jonno captures abandoned buildings to use for gratification while being ignorant of the human tragedies that lie behind them. Leary claims that ruin porn photography fails to acknowledge the political and social origins by saying,

> So much ruin photography and ruin film aestheticizes poverty without inquiring of its origins, dramatizes spaces but never seeks out the people that inhabit and transform them, and romanticizes isolated acts of resistance without acknowledging the massive political and social forces aligned against the real transformation, and not just stubborn survival, of the city ("Detroitism")

It is clear that this form of photography is incapable of explaining the deeper background of these tragedies and seems to direct attention to witnessing the result of the event as a focal point. The absence of this cultural and historical analysis raises fundamental problems and emotions, particularly experienced by the inhabitants of the city. This notion relates to how photographers, who are not inhabitants of Detroit, capitalise on "ruin porn". In the world of the

novel, Jonno is originally from New York but travels to Detroit to document the abandoned buildings and post-industrial landscape in a city where he is perceived as a stranger. The voyeuristic insensitivity that arises has been noted by James Griffioen, who explains how:

> The few photographers and reporters [he] met weren't interested at all in telling the story of Detroit, but instead gravitated to the most obvious (and over-photographed) 'ruins,' and then used them to illustrate stories about problems that had nothing to do with the city (qtd. in Woodward).

The most famous ruins in Beukes's novel, such as the Packard Plant, are documented on an unparalleled scale without being elaborately explored in terms of its milieu. This is exemplary then of what Petursdottir and Olsen calls a "superficial, one-eyed portrayal of urban decay" (7). Even though these criticisms arise and are very relevant in defining contemporary society, to critique these areas like Detroit would mean that large parts of its history would be disposed of, despite the availability of this context. The demonstration of what Brian Doucet and Drew Philp refer to as "ruin, abandonment and decay", places the city in an exotic scenery shell to observe and document these landmarks for pleasure and amusement ("In Detroit 'ruin porn'").

As Leary observes, the fascination with "modern ruins lies in the archaeological fantasy of discovery" accompanied by an "unembarrassed rejoicing" at the excitement of these findings ("Detroitism"). Similarly, Rob Horning claims that "ruin porn" images "tap into an archaeological fantasy that allows viewers to imagine they have survived the apocalypse" ("Detroit Ruin Porn"). These scenes adopt a dystopic landscape that are represented in a style that Leary refers to as the "Detroit Lament". This is characterised by a mournful tone which reflects itself in the dystopian setting Beukes creates.

Chapter Three

Photography in *Moxyland*

1. Overview

Beukes defies a linear reading of her fiction by constructing an intermedial relationship between photography and language. The photographic moments that are present in *Moxyland* encourage a reflection on the mediality of the text, and give insight into the novel's plot and character development. The question which this chapter seeks to explore is how Beukes uses images in her fiction, even when they are not tangibly present, to write in a manner that mimics photographic seeing? In other words, how does the implied or referenced presence of photography in the text reconstruct the way we read fictions that are composed of printed words? The chapter will also explore Beukes's ability to use various photographic and digital media meaningfully in the novel, particularly by imitating and evoking photographic techniques. Lastly, this section will explore the significance of the difference between analogue and digital photography, and show how these different image-making technologies are correlated and exemplified by the different characters.

In order to evaluate these questions, it is necessary to perform a close textual analysis of the novel, tracking each character's journey as a photographer or image-maker. The two key characters in this regard are Kendra, an aspiring artist photographer who works in analogue film format, and Toby, an egotistical blogger who exemplifies a digital contemporary visuality through his advanced technology. There are marked instances in the novel where Beukes exemplifies a distinctive visuality associated with each of the characters, for example, when Kendra says: "What resonates with me about photography is the sense of immediacy. Catching the transitive before it slips away" (124). Kendra searches for the truth value that is associated with analogue photography by creatively using her camera to capture images in real time. This

correlation to the real is an important part of this study and by comparison, it will reveal how polar opposite Toby's digital world is.

2. Kendra and analogue photography

Kendra's indefatigable commitment to analogue photography separates her from the distorted, digital world of simulation in *Moxyland*. Her individuality is shown in the way she resists governmental rule by illegally capturing corporate space. Even though a bystander suggests that she should delete the images to avoid encountering trouble with the law, she is unaffected by this warning and pretends to delete the photographs instead. Kendra is clearly aware of the ignorance that exists in this digital world by recognising that society is unfamiliar with analogue film formats. She explains the drastic measures she would have to follow to dispose of these photographs by saying, "You'd have to rip [the film] out the back, expose it to the light. But no one's ever sharp enough to notice that it's analogue" (2). The distinction between her familiarity of analogue processes and society's lack of knowledge creates a powerful divide that encourages her autonomy and sense of agency within this medium. She uses words like "rip" and "expose" to express the invasive action of tampering with her camera. Her refusal to tamper with these captured images ultimately becomes a threat to the government, who are unable to hack or manipulate this content. They rely largely on digital filters and manipulation techniques to mask the horror that exists within society. These hyperreal effects portray the city as glossy, fabricated and fake to conceal reality and truth. By contrast, analogue photography can be considered as gritty and dirty, and through the lens of her camera, Kendra views the world beyond this sparkly façade.

As a photographer, Kendra is inspired by a deep fascination and aesthetic appreciation of her surroundings which manifests itself in the content she chooses to capture. On her journey to the Waterfront Exec Station, she tries to see the beauty that lies within corporate spaces, and directs her focus to the aesthetic effects in the train when she says, "In my defence, it's

automatic; I lift my camera, firing off three shots through the latticed residue of salt crusted over the windows. I don't think about the legal restrictions on documenting corporate space" (1). Kendra is less concerned with what is taking place outside and is captivated by the random visual effects instead. She observes the pattern of smears on the glass which distorts the view through the window, and uses the word "latticed" to describe the decorative qualities of this salt formation. Kendra is undoubtedly enthralled by the composition of the image, and this can also be interpreted as a foreshadowing of being branded with the Ghost logo. She expresses a similar fascination later in the novel when she captures thousands of images of this logo that radiates from her wrist, so this might show how she anticipates the patterns of this branding. On the other hand, the action of capturing these images seems almost instinctual and unthinking. It suggests her habitual camera use, which is seen by the words "it's automatic". Although her indifference towards the legal restrictions might demonstrate her defiance, she appears less interested in documenting politically subversive imagery. So while the act of taking photographs in itself is subversive, the content of her images at this stage are not. The spontaneous use of her camera also signifies that the three shots she captures are random instead of carefully staged. These snapshots or camera clicks have the ability to evoke optical techniques and stimulate photographic effects which gives rise to what Rajewsky refers to as the "as if" character, and illusion-forming quality of intermedial references (54). This moment of capturing photographs is presented as if the reader could view it as a series of snapshots, even though there are no actual photographs present. In other words, Beukes is capable of writing without actually being able to zoom and edit imagery through text.

Kendra observes her surroundings in an aesthetic mode that is not limited to her actual camera use, but can also be interpreted through her use of photographic seeing. She travels to the Ghost Corporation that will perform her branding, and the strict corporate laws prohibit her from using her camera to document her surroundings. In this scene, she begins to see the world as if

through a simulated photographic lens which acts as a metaphor for her physical eye. While she is in the agency car, she observes the "rows of filter trees lining Vukani's driveway, sucking up sunlight" (3). Photography means literally "writing with light" and this notion is shown in the way photographers manipulate and capture light. Likewise, Kendra is very attentive to light and focuses on how these "filter trees", that constitutes artificial representations of nature, eliminate natural light through the form of absorption. This sets a dark tone to the scene as a foreshadowing of the tragic events to happen to her, which will be seen when she is euthanised by the same processes that initially have given her this renewed life. The primary light source is the sun and the extract suggests that this natural form of ambient light is now being replaced by artificial light. It also demonstrates how the synthetic enforces its power onto the natural. The way Kendra metaphorically embodies the camera to observe the scenery demonstrates her unique ability to mimic photographic techniques in complex and interesting ways.

Kendra's perspective of the city is significant by how she explores the photographic effects. This time she directs her attention to the movement taking place outside of the train when she says, "The train rises slightly, hissing as the hover reinflates, and glides off, the neon lights on the tunnel walls slipping into blurred darts as we pick up speed towards Adderley Station" (59). She pays attention to how the speed of the train creates a blurry effect and interprets this visually as a motion technique. Blurred photographic images are largely regarded as representations which are flawed and endowed with less aesthetic value. But here, the imperfection of this imagined image can be considered to be visually beautiful by relating so closely to a physical impression of the effects of motion in the real world. The distorted visuals that are slightly out of focus also creates a feeling of interest or surprise as the observer is more intrigued by the fluidity of the image. Compared to the sterile, static display of digital images, analogue visuals and photographic effects depicts the world as a flawed, volatile realm. The

ability to mimic movement through the form of photographic seeing strengthens Kendra's power to see through a metaphorical photographic lens.

Similarly, the analysis of light can be carried further to show how Kendra uses light as a tool to create figures and image-art in her mind. While she prepares to be injected with the nanotechnology, she observes how "Light catches the gleaming shells, the reflection of Dr Precious stretched thin like a Giacometti sculpture" (7). Kendra manipulates and plays with light by using the "gleaming shells" as a reflective surface, similarly to how photographers would use lakes, mirrors or pools of water. It is clear that she is aware of the impact light will create on certain surfaces and uses these photographic elements similarly to how she would operate her own camera. She uses the same aesthetic principles as the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti, who was best known for his stretched and distorted sculptures of human figures, to create an image of Dr Precious that fluctuates between an imaginary and real space. Giacometti created sculptures that were subject to his individual viewing experience, and his modernism is very similar to the image-art of Kendra.

Not only does Kendra show interest in specific light effects through photographic seeing, but this is also demonstrated by the habitual use of her camera. Toby expresses an indifference towards Kendra's image content when he explains that "[Kendra] tells me about a set of photographs she took in the loos there, photographing streaks of light under the doors, of all the things to document in club culture" (24). There is a clear distinction between what each of these image-makers chooses to capture. Toby is interested in explicit and pornographic content while Kendra focuses on an aesthetic approach. She is drawn to the interesting effects and patterns, particularly by observing the "streaks of light". This alludes to her unconventional gaze on the world where she sees things that others such as Toby would not notice. Kendra directs less of her attention to what is taking place on a social level in the club as she admits that she "specifically didn't want to photograph the usual club crap. It was about

decontextualising the space" (24). The fascinating part about capturing artificial light within a club is that when this image gets filtered through an analogue camera, the synthetic features becomes toned down as a result of the old-school, black and white elements. The image therefore captures an unfiltered reality of the club space that carries depth and substance by focusing more on various aesthetic styles, designs and formations and less on the décor.

Photography is also used metaphorically in the text. In a conversation between Kendra and Toby, she details the effects of the Ghost energy drink on her internal and external body by saying, "I'm just… improved. It's like, everything's running better… The world seems sharper. Or fiercer. As if someone's pulled the focus… Where everything is intensely real. It's super-defined" (25). Kendra uses visual metaphors to describe herself as a high-resolution photograph. These types of photographs are commonly defined by their sharpness and attention to detail, which can be seen by the words "sharper", "focus" and "super-defined". These words, in which Kendra sees herself as being photographed, are fitting descriptions of her glowing, healthy-looking appearance that has been enhanced by the nanotechnology. Her clearer and more defined outer body relates to the concept of hyper-realism to describe finer details and ultra-saturated colours in extremely high resolution images. Her transformation can be also be interpreted as a form of simulation, where the image is manipulated beyond its constraints and surpasses the point of being distinguished as a representation of the real. The link to Kendra's cyborg nature, which fluctuates between human and machine reveals itself in the novel, particularly by the word "improved". It is likely that she could also be embracing the form of a camera to describe how her body is operating efficiently. Through these characteristics, Kendra mimics the composition and rhythm of a functional machine by further admitting that "everything's running better". Forrest explains how Kendra "comes to view her body as an extension of [a camera] for it is only when she is behind it that she is granted a position of power" (58). Kendra adopts these camera metaphors to embrace a much clearer perception of

the world around her by embodying not only the photograph, but also the camera. The fluctuation between these two forms allows her to experience life through different perspectives.

The conflicted relationship between human and cyborg reveals Kendra's struggle with her identity. She is both committed to subversive, old-school technology, and deeply and faithfully entangled with cyber-digital futurist technology. She experiences power, liberation and authenticity as an individual when she is immersed in her photography, despite being bound to corporate law. Kendra experiences turbulence in her life which reveals itself through the death of her father and the unstable relationship she maintains with her partner, Jonathan. She relies on the outdated and fixed processes of analogue photography to remain grounded in a world of turmoil. In his book on the nature of digital images, *The Reconfigured Eye* (1992), Mitchell notes how analogue photographs resist easy manipulation and are not easily tampered with: the "reworking of photographic images to produce seamless transformations and combinations is technically difficult, time-consuming, and outside the mainstream of photographic practice" (qtd. in Mark B.N. Hansen 54). The consistent, immutable nature of analogue photography encourages a sense of grounding and stability in the photographer, and Kendra seeks this form of permanency which is not only shown through photography but also through her branding. She uses her father's battle with cancer to justify her decision of becoming a Ghost sponsor by saying: "I'll never have to go through what dad did, the cancer chewing its way through his stomach, consuming him from the inside out" (60). The unpredictable, ever-changing process of life is a notion that Kendra resists. Instead, she chooses flawless skin, the certainty that she will not fall ill and a photographic practice that she believes will stand the test of time.

Even Toby observes how Kendra's identity is shown in the way she captures photographs. He describes her liberated demeanour as follows:

> She pauses in the doorway, but the camera catches me unawares. It's an oldschool design, clunky and cumbersome, but I'm too preoccupied, caught in the flash, to catch the make… she's completely composed now, as if it's the camera rather than the nanotech inside that smooths out her edges (27).

Normally the photographic subject composes himself/herself for the camera, which is, to get into a pose. But here the relations are reversed: Kendra, the photographer, is composed. This extract demonstrates how Kendra's camera is a powerful tool that does more justice by defining her as an individual than her enhanced physical appearance does. Her camera gives her power. Likewise, when Kendra is behind the lens of her camera, she observes life differently than the rest of society by removing the artificial barriers, and witnessing the world exactly as it is. When Tendeka is threatened and assaulted by the police, Kendra witnesses this brutality. She chooses not to photograph this scene because her lens of her camera displays such scenes too candidly, and she decides to detach herself from this horror instead. I will explore how her camera becomes her "everyday filter on the world" (59) later in this chapter to show the true horrors and injustices that are hiding behind synthetic displays of digital imagery.

It can be seen that whether it is through photographic seeing, or the lens of her camera, Kendra witnesses life perhaps more directly, intensively and subjectively than her fellow citizens in the digitally mediated society of *Moxyland*. This becomes apparent in a scene where she studies the photographs on her camera and says, "I take out my Leica Zion, my everyday filter on the world, and start clicking through the memchip, past the people framed in the window of the Afro Café and the unfinished graffiti on the Parade clustered between the adboards" (59-60). Kendra regards her camera as the filter on this digital world which suggests that camera-mediated ways of seeing produce a particular way of experiencing reality for her. The lens of her camera allows her to see life perhaps in a more incisive way, as opposed to the simulacra that constitute Toby's world. She also uses the technology of the lens as a new way to construct new "realities" that does not act as a photocopy of reality. The "people framed in the window"

represents the rectangular photographic framing of the camera, and also illustrates how society is caged in and dominated by corporate rule. From the inside of the café, these photographed people seem liberated and mobile yet they are actually oppressed and detained into their digital, fake realities. Natural expression and free art are also prohibited as the graffiti is "clustered between the adboards" to show that it is barricaded within the confines of digital media. These digital "adboards" seem to suffocate the graffiti to the point where the disapproval of liberated visual forms may be the reason it is deliberately "unfinished". Captured images such as these apt examples represent a form of restraint which becomes more pertinent through the lens of Kendra's camera.

The photographic imagery in *Moxyland* are also present in the manner in which objects are described ekphrastically. When Kendra documents the Ghost logo that illuminates from her wrist, there is the suggestion that her body itself has become intermedialised. The image is not only referred to, but is embodied where the attempt to visualise it is a significant aspect in the process of "seeing". This is observed when she says:

> Four thousand one hundred and twenty photographs over the time it took to develop, like film. Played back in timelapse the bruise blossoms and bursts, resolving like a rorschach into the logo. It's the exact colour of the phosphorescent algae shimmering in the waves on the beach in Langkawi (60).

Beukes describes this animated image like a "GIF" tattoo grafted on Kendra's skin, which shows that her body has itself become a signifying medium. The flashing effect of this "GIF" image, comprising a large number of sequentially displayed photographs, is shown by the way it is "[p]layed back in timelapse", where the intervals of these frames create a form of motion within the image. In other words, the way it moves through timelapse creates the flickering action, while the glowing "phosphorescent algae" colour of the Ghost logo adds to this glistening effect. The "algae" and "waves on the beach" both signify natural elements, which

are carefully positioned in contrast to the synthetic Ghost symbol. This exemplifies the fluctuation between the natural and the modified. Even when Kendra compares the movement of the logo to the "shimmering…waves", it represents a form of motion that adds an aesthetic quality to this image, allowing it to be perceived as less artificial. Although Kendra cannot faithfully represent herself in her reality because her body has been modified by the nanotechnology, her photography captures lived experiences that are not digitally manipulated. This particular extract can be read through the lens of Mitchell's moment of "ekphrastic hope" (152) which realises how vision can be created through text by means of language. The power of words conquers the imagination to the extent where the attempt to visualise this scene fills the gap between text and image. In other words, the description of this logo stimulates the imagination to make a visual representation possible in verbal form.

The materiality of the image can also be interpreted as an extension of Kendra's identity. This idea is realised in the way Kendra constructs her photograph which she labels *Self-Portrait*. Kendra is eager to work towards a successful career in analogue art photography and, with the help of her mentor, Mr Muller, she develops a series of images for an exhibition which were crafted using damaged, exposed and rotten film. The chemical deterioration of the film blends into her own destructive narrative as she explains:

> Visibility limits your imagination of the ocean only as far as you can see, ten metres, fifteen at a stretch. But it's only in the utter black that you can feel the true scale, the volume and weight of that gaping unknowable drift between continents. The photograph is called *Self-Portrait*. It is a print from a rotten piece of film. 2 x 3.5m. It came out entirely black (66).

Her description suggests a totally black photograph that is printed in a large scale format of 2 x 3.5 meters. This photograph was shot in a mirror with a reflected flash of light. The interesting part to note here is that the photograph is titled *Self-Portrait* whereas you cannot actually see Kendra in the image. The dark blankness displays her struggle in her identity and demonstrates

an unfiltered and tactile representation of herself as an individual. The materials also exemplify the dystopian setting, which is entangled in devastation. In fact, it is quite possible to read these "rotten" pieces of film as metaphors for the despair and turbulence in Kendra's life which I have previously discussed. The lack of colour mirrors her sombre personality, and displays her fractured identity which Byrne and Levy describes as "multivalent, porous… and edgy", which "shifts uncomfortably away from biological embodiment across the edge of technology" (72). The depth and heaviness of Kendra's *Self-Portrait* can be seen by words like "true scale" and "weight" which demonstrates her vulnerable nature. There is also a contradiction in this imagery as the "entirely black" end-product of the photograph can be read in contrast to her radiating and youthful external appearance. The photographic print signifies the end of representation and the end of ways to represent reality. In a sense, this photograph signifies the death or end of analogue photography which is being supplanted by the relentless swirl of digital imagery.

So far, I have argued that the materiality of images is significant and reveals a deeper meaning that cannot be measured at surface value. As Edwards and Hart notes, "thinking materially about photography encompasses processes of intention, making, distributing, consuming" (1) and it is important to consider how the imperfections of photographs resonates with Kendra as an individual. This correlation between the image and the photographer is seen when Kendra says:

> [F]ilm is more interesting than digital. There's a possibility of flaw inherent in the material. It's not readily available, so I have to get it over the Net, and some of it has rotted or it's been exposed even before I load it in the camera, but I don't know that until I develop it… That's the great thing about working with damaged materials (161).

Kendra's fragmented, vulnerable and insecure nature is in marked contrast to her refined outward "Ghost girl" (1) appearance, and her hidden self is reflected in the damaged materials

she chooses to use. The uncertainty of the final product also adds a sense of aimlessness and lack of purpose in her life. Like the unpredictable nature of the film, her life is also uncertain and unpredictable. The words "flaw", "rotted" and "damaged" express her fascination with the shortcomings in material, and in the broader spectrum, with analogue photography as a whole.

The detailed interpretation of *Self-Portrait* can also be extended to show how reflective surfaces can be exemplified as a photographic effect. The complex description underlying this photograph is seen when critics make negative remarks by saying "You can't even tell if it's technically good or not, it's all so… damaged" (164). In a brief explanation, Kendra explains that: "under the black of *Self-Portrait* is a photograph of a photograph, clutched in my fingers, captured in the mirror with a reflected flash of light. That it's all meant to be damaged" (164). Reflections often stimulate curiosity and challenge the imagination of the spectator, or the reader, in this instance. It transforms an image surface to a narrative with history and depth. The realisation that Kendra captured this photograph in front of a mirror adds complexity to the image, where she does not reveal too much about herself. In other words, these blanked out reflections deliberately discourage any sense of insight into Kendra's inner world, and the black image becomes a canvas which any form of interpretation could be projected onto. It is up to the reader to form their own conclusions surrounding the image. The fact that these critics are uncertain whether it is of value or not shows that they lack the ability to have an artistic appreciation, not only for authentic materials, but for elements that they are not familiar with.

Self-portraits, especially images taken in mirrors, conventionally act as an extension of the photographer, and in a related analogy, Robert Mapplethorpe's Self-Portrait of 1988 is similar to Kendra's photograph. Mapplethorpe was an American photographer known for his sensitive yet blunt treatment of controversial subject-matter in the black and white medium of photography. His AIDS diagnosis largely contributed to the conditions of his Self-Portrait, which exemplified his degrading health. The dark aura of the photograph, the skull cane he

clutches at and the black clothing he wears suggests his "gradual fading away" ("Tate"). Even his head that is slightly out of focus exemplifies the nature of his photograph, which rests on identity and individuality. This particular example illustrates how self-portraits have the ability to act as a private diary for the photographer. Whether the image is described or evoked, or seen in front by the naked eye, what remains is the fact that the photographic techniques that are used can reveal a great deal about the photographer.

To understand the fuller significance of photography in Kendra's life, it is important to pay an attention to the relationship she has with her photography mentor, Mr Muller. Before meeting him, she explains that she had thirty spools of film that she did not know what to do with because the only lab she could find to develop it was in Johannesburg (74-75). Analogue photography is regarded as obsolescent in a digital age, and it is a rarity to find materials (film, chemicals, paper) and someone with the right expertise that can work with this. She shows her appreciation for Mr Muller's craft by commenting that: "The image is beautiful, almost black and white, although he shot in colour. It's the time of day and the way he's worked the light that washes it out. But it's the evocative simplicity of the context, of the meaning he's brought to a landscape that's impressive" (76). Her fascination for simple and spare imagery and light effects are evident here. She is captivated by the "meaning" and "context" which demonstrates the significance the image has. Kendra's fascination with images that lack colour is also shown when she says "The image is… almost black and white". She is very precise about what she revels in and this is also shown when Mr Muller comments on her unique choice of photographic content. He describes her choice of content by saying: "Portraits of street kids holding their only possessions. Reflections in rear-view mirrors. Close-ups of people's shoes on the underway" (77). The presence of these "reflections", "portraits" and "close-ups" all suggest intimacy, seclusion and complex photographic techniques. She uses her camera creatively to display the world in unique ways.

Kendra's camera also carries the ability to document the digital world around her in order to produce more authentic ways of seeing by observing that "things are only real if they are documented, if there is visual evidence" (123-124). The analogue photograph is formed by a physical impression of the real world in the form of light passing through the lens. This results in chemical transformations on the negative that has conventionally been linked to objectivity and truth. The physical forms of representation and the mechanisms of Kendra's camera produce an authentic imprint of the real. Analogue photographs resist easy manipulation of their delicate emulsion surfaces and they are not easily tampered with. Unlike digital "photoshopping", darkroom forgeries can be easily recognised as such.

With this being said, in a society dominated by "fake news" and digital simulation, analogue photography appears to be the only medium that can provide immediate access to the real. This notion of "truth" is seen in relation to the larger question of what is regarded as real in contemporary society. In other words, the truth is endlessly manipulated and twisted in digital society, yet, it is only analogue photography that cannot easily be tampered with or changed, which validates the events that Kendra has witnessed. Kendra slips into the role of the documentary, socially conscious and politically engaged photographer when she documents the scene of a robbery in Salt River. She is confronted by Aitos who uses scare tactics to instil fear, but "[w]ithout thinking about it, [she] already [has her] Zion out, snapping the dog-hybrid standing hunched over the child… And [she] know this is illegit, that you're not supposed to photograph police procedurals without a media permit, but [she doesn't] care" (128). In this instance, Kendra is no longer the artist photographer in search of aesthetic effects, but she films this political event as evidence that it really did take place. Compared to the fluid, online changeable world, Kendra's photographs are untouched manifestations of events that have taken place in real time. The idea that she does not care about the police procedurals demonstrates her subversive drive to bring attention to the violence that takes place. Although

the government tries to mask the horror by painting a perfect picture, the dark reality is shown through Kendra's photographs. Her photographs reveal society exactly as damaged as it is. We can track her progress from the beginning of the novel to this point to show how even though she fluctuates between the political and artist photographer, her ethics and morals have remained the same. Her photographs become increasingly political as the novel progresses, digging deeper at the issues plaguing the society and revealing the brutality of the government.

In this instance when Kendra documents the images of the Aito, her photographs seem to possibly be modelling the photographic aesthetics of street photographer, photojournalist, and Magnum co-founder Henri Cartier-Bresson. Cartier-Bresson was driven to make images that mattered more in terms of their social and political importance, instead of aesthetic beauty, and his images had a great impact due to his ability to capture such moments. According to Joshua Sarinana in his article "The Decisive Moment and the Brain", Cartier-Bresson's photography was entangled in capturing an event that is momentary and spontaneous, where the image represents the essence of the event itself. Although Kendra's photographs of the political scenery mimics the style of Cartier-Bresson and other street photographers, she navigates between this style and abstract aesthetics. Her photography is exemplary of a snapshot or moment that captures a particular event by using intuition and attention to detail. This exemplifies her ability to observe scenery through Cartier-Bresson's form of the "decisive moment", which Sarinana describes as "ephemeral" by using "foresight and instinct" to capture these significant moments ("The Decisive Moment and the Brain").

It is also important to consider how analogue photography is perceived compared to digital technologies and image-making. In the art exhibition, these works are not only situated around Kendra's photographs but also include digital corporate artwork such as Khanyi Nkosi's "*Woof & Tweet*". Kendra describes this as "gruesome, red and meaty, like something dead turned inside out… and fleshy strings and some kind of built-in speakers… remixing ambient audio,

conversation, footsteps… through the systems of its body" (156-157). To the digital society, this art installation is regarded as more captivating and valuable. However, when Tendeka stages a riot and slashes the "*Woof & Tweet*" artwork into "bloody lumps of flesh" (168), it splatters all over Kendra's photograph and compromises the aesthetic nature of the photograph. Toby delivers a report of this on his streamcast:

> Kendra Adams's show is a sell-out. Her shockingly intimate portraits taken on old photographic stock interplay light and texture like a Dutch Master. The effect of using disintegrating film means the work is inherently flawed, inherently damaged… No insult to the artist or the striking technical mastery demonstrated in Unspoken- a woman's jawline arching out of shot, delineated against a twist of stairwell and the arc of city lights, or the harsh reality of a homeless woman being defused, or the witty statement of *Self-Portrait*, a 2 x 3.5 m print that is entirely black, but her skill is *not* the reason her work is suddenly so popular. It's because her photographs are newly flawed… (174-175).

There are several points of interest that I would like to draw attention to. Firstly, the review shows Kendra's expertise in experimenting with light, texture and "disintegrating film". Secondly, we learn that Kendra used the photograph she captured during the Salt River incident that I have previously discussed as one of her pieces to exhibit, even after the police threatened her with violence. This demonstrates her resilience to speak her truth through political photographic representations. Lastly, her photographs are described as "newly flawed", which is the result of the artificial blood from "*Woof & Tweet*". This has added a new element to Kendra's photograph.

Kendra's attachment to her camera and analogue photography in general is shown in extreme life-threatening situations. She gets caught in a riot where the corporation tries to maintain

levels of control by releasing the deadly M7N1 virus. Kendra contracts this virus (which shows a glitch in the nanotechnology experiment), and becomes extremely ill. Toby takes her safely to his apartment when she realises that she lost her camera during all the chaos. To her dismay, she wonders if anyone has found it: "I start thinking about what's on the memchip, what I've lost, what I can try and duplicate" (223). It can be seen that even after a traumatic experience, Kendra's thoughts revert to her camera, which Byrne and Levy describes as her "shield" (82). This demonstrates her relentless pursuit to keep this medium alive in a digital world and it also reflects how she is "terrified of losing anything" (124).

Eventually Kendra and Toby part ways after an argument, and this is the first time she experiences a sense of loneliness. Her camera is lost and she navigates without a cell phone or money to feed her Ghost addiction. She reflects on this total disconnection by saying:

> IS IT PERVERSE TO FEEL LIBERATED? Not just ditching that asshole, just another Jonathan, but the grounding of being disconnect that separates me from the swirl of the city around me. The dissociation is real for once, not artificially imposed and filtered through my camera. I'm a stranger among the commuters and people opening up storefronts. It's beautiful. And totally impractical, the squeeze in my stomach reminds me (252).

While she experiences complete disconnection, she also encounters liberation. On a personal level, she is no longer controlled or manipulated by Toby or Jonathan whereas on a technological level, the government can no longer monitor her movements and enforce control. She now has the ability to absorb her surroundings without these limitations, and even though she has lost her camera, she still retains the ability to view scenes through "photographic seeing". The connection between the words "dissociation" and "real" is important to note as it relates to the urge to be disconnected from society in order to experience life in the most

genuine form. She describes the unfiltered reality of the horror in the world around her as a "swirl", which relates to the turbulence in her own life. This suggests that she feels uprooted and out of place within the world by being unable to control what is happening around her. Kendra also observes that she is a "stranger" in this society, and this is the first instance where she openly admits to her apparent distinction from the rest of the world. She no longer reveals her innermost feelings through ambiguity, but instead, she reveals that she does not belong amongst the digital society. This notion can be taken further to suggest that analogue photography cannot exist in the digital world of *Moxyland*, as is signalled by her lost Zion.

Kendra's position of being emotionally lost and physically disconnected results in seeking help from the corporation. After relaying her circumstances, the corporation assures her that she will be assisted. This, however, becomes a sinister double plot and she utters these last words before she is killed:

> My eyelids flutter, letting in snatches of light like a strobe, snapshots of movement. Dr Precious pushes my shoulders, holding me down. Andile's mouth twitches. He looks away. I can't keep my eyes open. I can't move my arms. I try and push up, through the dark, which is wide open, too open, so I'm drowning in it, fighting (286).

This is a key, final moment in the novel, which represents Kendra's death as well as the death of analogue photography as she merges into the photographic representation of herself, namely the dark *Self-Portrait*. She holds onto the comfort that only her camera can provide as she mimics photographing seeing by the words: "My eyelids flutter, letting in snatches of light… snapshots of movement". This imagery links to the opening and closing movement of the shutter of a camera as her eyes represent an actual camera shutter which lets in light. Furthermore, the "movement" hints towards how her analogue camera captures motion as a representation of real life. It becomes more evident that society can no longer accommodate Kendra or her photographic art, perhaps because her actions were too rebellious and

unconventional. She describes how “I can’t keep my eyes open” which serves as a metaphor for displaying how the shutter of this subjective, embodied “camera” is closing and will no longer be operational in society.

3. Toby and digital visuality

Toby makes his debut in the novel as a sardonic, vulgar and narcissistic figure who uses digital imagery to increase his social status. The nature of his visuality stems from a pornographic and promiscuous display, which is shared through an advanced piece of technology. These technological forms undergo large processes of filters and digital manipulation, and his “BabyStrange” (245) coat in particular is an advanced future technology that displays thousands of visuals. He literally wears images, and displays them on his mobile body as he moves through the city. Toby’s choice of sexual and excessive visual material is not regarded as a threat to the state because he does not actively participate in activities against corporate rules.

The relationship between Toby and his mother serves as a fitting example of his profit-seeking nature and lack of personal attachments. Already at this stage, we are able to judge the nature of his character, particularly through their encounter. Toby uses colloquial language by labelling his mother as “motherbitch” and admits that she is “one of the favourite recurring characters on [his streamcast]” (9). He loses perspective of the distinction between the real world and the digital particularly by equating his mother to a character on his video blog. In other words, he crosses the boundary between the real and the simulacrum by allowing his digital environment to define his version of “reality”. This also expresses the inability to separate personal relationships with digital connections through the form of constant storytelling.

Toby chooses to display visual content that is aimed at entertaining and shocking the reader. His form of sensationalist visuality is shown in the explanation of his coat when he says:

> My BabyStrange is set to screensaver mode, so it clicks into a new image every two minutes. Here's a random sampling to give you an idea of what's displaying on the smartfabric that is so bothering Ten: close-ups of especially revolting fungal skin infections, 18th-century dissection diagrams and, for a taste of local flavour, a row of smileys – that's sheep's heads for the uninitiated – lips peeled back to reveal grins bared in anticipation of the pot (14-15).

Each of these images are intended to evoke a response, and it has a gruesome, "revolting" tone attached to it. Digital photography is predominantly a mass produced activity in *Moxyland* and the rate at which these images are displayed shows how easily accessible these visuals are, and how it can be shared on a mass scale. This causes the image to lose its sense of agency and as Rubinstein explains, photography in the 21st century can be understood as no more than "randomised and chaotic conflation" ("What is 21st Century Photography?"). As visuals and images are shared promiscuously, the truth becomes lost and distorted. Even Toby's technique of incorporating "close-ups" are rendered ineffective because the image switches to a different one at different intervals. By contrast, Kendra shoots at close proximity to encourage intimacy and evoke a personal connection. However, this digital society does not seek an authentic interpersonal intimacy, but rather a profusion of shocking images to which viewers have become largely desensitised. It can then be seen that the way this information is gathered and shared results in the loss of value, and it lacks an aesthetic appeal that is found in analogue photography.

Language is a powerful tool that is used to reflect the identity of the character. Beukes constructs Toby's narrative voice as a direct address to the audience. He uses a savvy, slang-style that comprises of many digital terms and catchphrases. He explains to his viewers how critical his role as an image-maker is and states that Tendeka is dependent on him to hack into

the bill boards: “Cos the fact is, kids, they need me. Can’t do without me. Security on the adboards is tighter than a nun’s twat unless you’ve got a connection” (15). His language is fluid and largely resonates with the form of technology he pursues. Kendra’s narrative voice, on the other hand, can be described as more formal and linear, and exemplifies the fixed methods of her documentary photographic practice. Toby’s crude expressions which are evident by words such as “twat” have a direct connection to his obscene visual content and also demonstrates the loss of morals in contemporary society. He is furthermore also more comfortable to use corporate, digital phrases such as “adboards” whereas these terms are seen far less in Kendra’s narrative.

Digital image-making is commonly characterised by its ubiquity and seamless integration with the human body through personal wearable electronic devices. Toby describes the advanced features of his coat by saying “I tap the cufflink with my thumb, zoom in on the can of Ghost, snap it, and wallpaper it solid over the smartfabric” (24). It can be seen that these processes can take place at rapid rates and images can be captured swiftly and efficiently. This single, simple sentence registers many processes which shows how quickly digital images can be taken, processed and shared.

The ability to record content at a fast pace also exemplifies how Toby is desensitised and cut off from human emotion and empathy. He embarks on a mission with Tendeka to disconnect a security adboard and becomes more interested in filming the operation taking place. Tendeka vents his frustration by saying, “Fuck off, Toby, there’s no time. You can’t film this part of the operation. It’s too sensitive’… But Toby is unmoved” (90). Toby is more interested in how he will profit from this exposure. His disregard is shown when he responds to Tendeka’s remarks by saying “It’s my connection. I get the footage I want” (90). The emphasis on words such as “my” and “I” reveals his selfish, self-promoting nature. He only expresses interest in what he can gain from documenting this scene.

Toby's digital immersion and obsession is also seen through his online gaming, which forms a significant part of his narrative. He fluctuates between the role of observer and the observed in an online game by noting how, "The wall blanks suddenly and Moxy fills the screen. Cos Moxy is always watching. He waves a stubby little paw in disapproval" (104). The irony here is how uncomfortable Toby is when he is being watched, which moves him from subject (when he is recording content through his "BabyStrange" coat) to object (being the object that is observed). As several critics have noted, the idea of the panopticon can be applied to this extract, and it demonstrates the impact that constant surveillance has on individuals and society as a unit. Control is achieved through self-surveillance, and the fear of being caught breaking the rules forces citizens to abide by the rules of the state. The fact that Moxy is always watching shows how constant surveillance is taking placing. As I have previously mentioned, Moxy maintains a cute façade that distorts the real evil which is concealed through this innocent image.

The pervasive digital photographic technology in *Moxyland* is personified when Toby refers to the "red bead of the camera" that "winks steadily, for the record, recording, recording" (124). This form of personification is evident by the camera adopting a life form of its own through this winking action. The surveillance is also exemplified as an evil red eye that sees everything. The imagery of the "red bead" symbolises the camera in an unnerving and uncomfortable way which displays the power of surveillance and the intimidation that arises when being watched. Furthermore, the fact that this bead is described as red in colour signals a warning or danger, which could be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the dangers associated with digital recording and corporate laws.

Toby's capitalist nature is seen more explicitly by the art gallery scene after Tendeka's staged riot takes place. Instead of showing empathy towards those affected by this traumatic experience, Toby shares how this particular recording has increased his status:

> THE FOOTAGE FROM THE SECURITY CAMS in the gallery is playlisted on all the newscasts, animal rights activists gone seriously mental, and there's all kinds of uproar… Or, to put it another way, kids, it's huge, and my exclusive eyewitness is piggybacking off it beautifully… I was the only one with the smarts to jump up on the bar to lock down the best angle. My report went out this morning – the edited version with extra commentary. I've already had an offer to syndicate Diary of Cunt from a producer on MTV (174).

Toby has a fine eye for opportunity and displays this through drastic actions such as jumping up on a bar to document this activity. The process of quickly capturing this scene demonstrates how, in the digital world, the focus is placed on how rapidly news gets distributed. It can be seen that even during a violent demonstration, Toby contemplates how he can profit from this type of exposure, referring to his "exclusive eyewitness" and "piggybacking off it beautifully". It is important to note that he refers to the "edited version" which shows how the original content has already undergone the form of modification, and becomes immersed in the world of sensationalist news. He is also able to manipulate this footage to his benefit through features such as cropping, angling and filtering. The content is meant to be scandalous, sensational and entertaining which reveals how easy it is for Toby to adjust the footage accordingly to evoke a significant response. Even Kendra observes how "Toby is shouting… into his mic" as if he was reporting live from the scene (168-169). This reveals the fluid nature of digital media and how it can opportunistically exploit sensation in any situation.

Toby also takes advantage of sensitive moments which can be seen by his statement regarding the art exhibition incident. He relays this information by saying: "Kendra Adams sold out her first exhibition a couple of days ago, but now it seems that she's sold out in another way entirely, as one of Ghost's controversial sponsor babies. And now I'm just kicking back, waiting for the offers to start spinning in" (177). His selfish needs become the priority as he

becomes an extension of the society he is trying to fight against. This is seen when he exploits Kendra's life for his own gain by promoting scandalous content to reach a level of notoriety.

Furthermore, *Moxyland*'s engagement with digitality is also evident in the photographic metaphors which accompany the sexual encounter between Kendra and Toby. This act symbolises the relational struggle between analogue and digital, and at the end, the digital reigns supreme. To elucidate, in the sex act, Kendra's nanotechnology is transmitted to Toby which allows him to fight off the virus and survive at the closing of the novel. Kendra, however, is killed by the same forces that she stands against, which reveals that the digital life is more aligned to Toby's nature. Yet, after their sexual encounter, they fall into an argument where Toby harshly insults Kendra. His response is worth paying attention to:

> Her cheek are flushed with outrage or humiliation… But I've gone too far. Something changes the channel on her expression. I wish my BabyStrange was still functional, cos it would have been great to capture the transition, kids – the twitch of muscles, that morphing of her expression from shock-wounded to contempt (248).

He responds to Kendra's reactions, not in a personal way, but immediately seeks to record them for his digital wearable blog. Kendra is less of a person here but is viewed as a digital entertainment medium with multiple channels which Toby can visually consume. Even though he is disconnected, he still speaks directly to the audience because he cannot distinguish between the real world and the digital environment anymore. It also reveals his struggle with being disconnected, and how he relies on a natural way of storytelling to describe this particular scene to maintain his connection.

While Tendeka is dying as a result of the M7N1 virus, he requests that Toby should record his death to show how the government is "wilfully killing their citizens" (276). However, Toby's impulse to profit from this vulnerability is shown when he contemplates what to do with this footage:

> Tendeka's on every channel on the TV, his face dominating the screen, Osama, coupled with some kid, Zuko Sephuma, who's already been arrested. My first thought is how much shit I'm in. How I need to just set fire to my entire apt and all the evidence and walk away, disappear… Or I have the total sony exclusive on the untimely and grotesque death of a terrorist. Or a martyr. Depends on who's paying (289).

Toby worries that he will be tainted by the death of a "terrorist" and considers fleeing, but then he remembers that he possesses some media capital in the recording of Tendeka's last interview. This extract therefore demonstrates Toby's lack of empathy, where he is willing to exploit gruesome situations for his own advantage. Byrne and Levy reads Toby as "incapable of authenticity because of his obsession with profitable self-presentation, leading to a chronic disjuncture between himself and reality" (82). This disconnection signals his inability to cross the boundary between reality and artifice.

Photography and digital imagery are both significant mediums that are exemplified in unique ways. More importantly, Beukes carefully allows the journey of each of these characters to align with how they develop as photographers or image-makers. By using various intermedial forms, analogue photography and the digital technology are evoked in the novel. There is clearly a direct engagement with photographic metaphors, ekphrastically-described objects and filmic techniques which are revealed through the language of the characters. Their respective narrative voices reflect their aesthetic practices, which is seen in Kendra's fixed manner of speech and Toby's loose form of slang. These ideas all shape the way *Moxyland* can be re-read as an elaborate exploration of visuality.

Chapter Four

Visual representation in *Broken Monsters*

1. Overview

The visual moments that are found in *Broken Monsters* challenge the conventional view of novels as textual mediums. Beukes's ability to construct texts using highly descriptive language or ekphrastic descriptions, crosses the boundary between text and visuality. As Mitchell observes, "if all media are mixed media, they are not all mixed in the same way" (399), and this notion is evoked in the novel through the complex forms of chimeric bodies, "ruin porn" and contemporary art. These themes raise important questions about the violent forms of contemporary art, and how this reflects the dystopic state of the city. Are these disarranged hybrid-bodies a murder scene or a form of creative art? What is the significance of "ruin porn" in the text? How are digital methods used as a tool to exemplify the dependency on technology? In which ways are the two male characters portrayed as broken men? How does their fractured masculinity reflect itself in their works of art?

The fractured nature of contemporary Detroit, entangled in misery and despair, becomes a home for the imaginings of artists like Clayton. His mind observes an array of opportunities to perform his artistry, because, as a unit, the city is dominated by broken people, objects and environments. When the supernatural force of "the dream" controls Clayton's body, it "navigates the city" and pulls on his thoughts "like strings in a labyrinth to guide it through the streets… there is evidence of the dreaming everywhere" (111-112).

This chapter will explore how Beukes's literary language stages visual effects, asking questions about the fatal entanglement between ethics and aesthetics. The two characters of study in this regard are Clayton, a failed artist who embraces a transgressive and unusual brand of art through creating chimera bodies and Jonno, a failed journalist from New York who is enticed

by the decaying, post-industrial Detroit scenery. I will examine the aesthetic and ethical value of Clayton's "artworks" to show how these visual works fluctuate between horror and beauty. Rose explains that in visual representations, "the circumstances of their production may contribute towards the effect they have", and ultimately this knowledge shapes their perception (17). On the other hand, my discussion of Jonno will evaluate the role of "ruin porn" in the novel to show how journalists and bloggers profit from the destruction within the city. I will also demonstrate how digital technology is shaping contemporary society and becomes the platform for exposing not only these post-industrial landscapes, but also Clayton's works. As I have previously mentioned, both of these men are portrayed as broken individuals who feel emasculated and struggle to maintain success in their careers. What is interesting to explore is how their similarities and differences shape the course of their narratives as individuals even as they are working in different media.

2. Clayton and chimera bodies

Clayton is ostracised by society and his desire for acceptance is reflected in his work. His first artistic endeavour takes place as an accidental occurrence after a high speed chase with his former partner results in a crash. Clayton hits a deer, and Spain defines this specific moment as his "rebirth and baptism" (263). This accident presents an opportunity to redeem himself of the notion that "[e]verything he tried seemed like a dead thing under his hands" (39). Clayton's inspiration reaches new heights, which drives him to murder a 10-year-old boy for the purpose creating a new work of art by attaching his torso to the lower part of the deer. Detective Gabriella Versado describes the mutilated body by saying, "There's a dark gash, right above where his hips should be, where he has been somehow… *attached* to the lower half of a deer, hooves and all. The white flick of the tail sticks up like a jaunty little flag. The brown fur is bristled with dried blood" (3). The disfiguration of the body becomes a representation of Clayton's fragmented and divided nature and personality, which is regarded as strange and

unnatural to the world of the novel. The construction of these chimera bodies becomes a correlate for Clayton's peculiar demeanour, and an opportunity to reverse this judgment by exposing the world to art that he considers to be more profound. This extract also reflects the dystopic Detroit landscape through words such as "dark" and "blood", which sets the tone for how the devastation that exists within the city will unfold. As Alexander notes, the visual representation of Detroit productively maps "new imaginative" frontiers of these dystopian spaces (171).

Although the reader seeks to envision this half deer-half boy image, the reality of this horrifying image can be read through Mitchell's moment of "ekphrastic fear" (154). This moment takes place when the reader begins to realise that this figurative notion of ekphrasis might actually become real as the boundary between visual and text collapses. With this body, as an ekphrastically-described object, the reader wishes that the concept of ekphrasis would not take place and withdraws from this ghastly scene instead. In this instance, the novel encourages fluid readings and exceeds boundaries that disturbs the reader, which can clearly be seen through this specific depiction.

Clayton evaluates the human body by its material properties, which is particularly evident in his encounter with the sculptor, Betty Spinks. She allows Clayton to use her studio and shows care and compassion towards him. However, "the dream" conquers his rational mind and Betty becomes the next victim for his artistry. Clayton observes how "strong and bony her fingers were, like coral" (85), and this demonstrates how he considers her body to be art materials that he can incorporate into his aesthetic vision. Although Edwards and Hart study materiality in photographic images, they raise important points that can be applied to this context, particularly by mentioning that "Materiality can be said here to have a positivistic character, in that it is concerned with real physical objects in a world that is physically apprehendable" (3). What can be suggested is that Betty's fingers clearly exists as a physical object in the world, and Clayton

becomes drawn to it. Clayton leaves behind Betty's dead, hybrid body in her own kiln to gain attention from the media and the police. The imagery is described as:

> Some kind of insect or sea creature… All spiny appendages and sharp ridges. A carapace. A clay exoskeleton arranged around the space where the body should be. There are spindly extra legs protruding outwards from the torso… A helmet over the absence of the skull, caved in over the eyes, sausagey tendrils hanging down where the jaw would be, like on a caterpillar… There are fanciful curls around the arms, leaving gaps where the flesh melted away, like dead coral (251-252).

A clear connection exists between Clayton's earlier remark where he equates Betty's fingers to coral, and in this instance of referring to "dead coral". The material properties and value are carried through between these pages and are further exemplified by the "spindly extra legs" and "sausagey tendrils". All of these added materials perhaps add more meaning to the final work, and enhances its aesthetic worth, especially by the complex way it is constructed. The macabre often evokes curiosity and fascination, and these ideas find themselves reflected in Clayton's work.

Clayton's earlier encounter with Betty can also be read through Rajewsky's "as if" and illusion-forming quality. When Betty observes Clayton's figurines, she notices the "woman with a bird's head, like a skinny Degas ballerina, her arms flung wide as if she could lift off" (83). This encourages the idea of describing this figure as if it had the tools at its disposal to fly. The reader is able to recreate this image in their imagination to deem this action possible.

When Clayton presents his masterpiece as the grand finale, Ramon's body is reduced to material for his work. The ekphrastic description is as follows:

> [H]is head is gone, replaced with a remarkable approximation of a teddy bear, an oversized bobble-head made out of papier-mache and painted baby blue, peeking out

among the forlorn stuffed toys bunched up around him, as if he's trying to fit in. The head has big round ears and a soft blue fuzz growing on it, like bread mold. The sockets are hollowed out and painted over with dollar signs. The mouth is a red painted X (429).

The contrast between child-like elements like stuffed toys, teddy bears and even the colour baby blue is positioned in relation to the overall disturbing image. These elements are added so that the reader does not withdraw from the image but instead, it slowly allows the reader to become comfortable and at ease with this visual image. The materiality is present here again and as Mitchell observes, "seeing painting is seeing touching, seeing the hand gestures of the artist" (397). To use this notion in this specific context, these materials suggest the manual labour of the artist and shows how each gesture signals that effort has been made. This is why it is so important to Clayton that his artwork is seen. He desires that the spectator should grasp a better understanding and become complicit through looking, with the murder which preceded or rather constituted the creative act.

Contemporary, postmodern art has often been perceived as an art for the world and in the 21st century, it is seen as markedly different as in the modernism era. There is no singular direction to these art forms. Even Clayton's work, which is devised from the upper half of a human body and the lower half of a deer, presents no limits to creativity. Beukes not only blends genre in fascinating ways through her writing, but she also allows the visual medium and the textual medium to work in combination with one another that stimulates broader ways of reading, and shapes the future of re-reading literary texts.

3. Jonno and the digital

Jonno is a failed journalist who travels from New York to Detroit in search of his next big story. He shows interest in documenting the ruined city, and uses this destruction for his profitable gain. He largely represents the digital age and this is often seen in his speech, through

his inner-commentary, as well as his description of the relationship with Jen Q. One example of blending real world experiences with digital media is the following inner thought: “Making out in her car. There are snapshots in his memory, Instagrams really, because they’re blurry round the edges” (6). The notion of relating his thoughts to sliders on Instagram demonstrates how he is able to visually see through this form of digitality. He also refers to the snapshots which becomes evidence of his journalistic practice. He cites the blurriness that is also symbolic of his fractured masculinity: he frequently uses alcohol to mask his inner insecure nature, especially being in a relationship with someone like Jen Q, who he refers to as his “muse” and “savior” (122)

Jonno is fascinated by the ruin in the city, which is shown in his detailed descriptions. When he observes the infamous Packard Plant for the first time, he describes it as “The number one Death-of-America pilgrimage destination… The sprawling waste of it. Broken bricks and concrete pillars holding up the sky. Everything is choked with weeds and graffiti. The word ‘fuck’ appears a lot, which seems appropriate” (122). His description clearly demonstrates how damaged these buildings are. The ruined buildings are personified, and are evident by the words “broken” and “choked”. These words represent the nature of this post-industrial landscape that is beset by suffocation and destruction. These ruins are gazed upon for amusement, gratification and pleasure, but this visual consumption ignores the current struggles of humanity. What is also interesting to note is how he uses the word “fuck” to correlate with his reaction of this building. He is clearly aware of the shocking effect it creates. This crude expression is also seen in the narrative of Gabriella after observing Clayton’s chimera bodies. When she comes across this body, her immediate reaction is “Fuck’s fucking sake” (251). In both of these instances, this vulgar expression evokes a shocking emotion in the character and also shows how disturbing the scenes in Detroit actually are.

Jonno furthermore elaborates on the ruins by observing how photographers gather at these sites to gaze upon the destruction. The fascination and curiosity is explained in this instance:

> The Acropolis of Detroit. Some genius suggested preserving the iconic ruins. That's what everyone's here for, anyway. To gawp at the broken buildings, take their portraits. The only difference between the hipsters breaking into abandoned buildings here and the middle-aged tourists in socks and sandals in the Colosseum is that the former use more filters on their photographs and the latter have audio guides… The problem, he reckons is not the obsession with ruin porn, it's that everyone is trying to figure out what it all *means* (57).

Video documenting is clearly capable of describing the results of events but is inarticulate or misleading when it comes to explaining their causes. The digital age has complicated the issue of distance from such scenes by bringing it to light but with a lower personal risk and involvement. There is no longer the burden of endangering lives in order to document events and this can be seen by the effortless manner in which Jonno and Jen Q document these abandoned buildings. This fascination also allows Jonno to be able to document his content in real time such as reporting live at a breaking news story. Even the way he describes how people "gawp at the broken buildings" shows that, to him, ruin porn is an aesthetic concept divorced from social concerns and ethical questions. In fact, he finds it problematic that everyone is trying to seek the meaning behind these destroyed buildings, which shows his indifference towards learning about the history, and he consequently displays insensitivity and callousness towards this situation.

Jonno's digital platform also showcases Clayton's artistry, unwillingly in certain instances. He immediately recoils and fears for his life when Clayton approaches him at the Fleischer Body Plant. Jonno's online presence has clearly captured the attention of Clayton, who needs his

digital tools to expose the chimera bodies that he desires to share with the world. Clayton explains to Jonno that "You're part of the infection… You're the messenger… I need you. You and your Internet to set it all loose" (452-453). Social media and digital technology can be perceived as dangerous and disruptive, particularly in this specific context. The word "infection" implies a negative quality, and it also suggests how rapidly information can be spread. It directly links to the online world that is beset by infections and viruses on cell phones and computers.

Jonno's profitable nature is also shown by documenting the events that takes place at the Fleischer Body Plant. Although Jen Q has been murdered at the same location, Jonno uses these events to his own advantage by seeking funding for his website. The documentary reads: "I am Jonno Haim, the last person who spoke to the Detroit Monster alive. Ask Me Anything… The events you've seen on Jonnoh.TV are a real record of events as they happened… Help me get the truth out and fund my documentary on Kickstarter" (507). Jonno is aware of the benefits of sharing scandalous content, even if it is at the cost of exploiting Jen Q's painful and gruelling death. He is clearly driven by fame and status which shows the lack of empathy inherent in his nature. There is also a thread of comments which follows this documentary, and one particularly interesting statement is "Don't you think it's unfair that you're propheting off Jen Q's death?" (507). It can be suggested that the word "propheting" is deliberately used to imply that Jonno has become a "prophet" of social media, and also of Clayton's imaginings. On the other hand, Jonno's followers are aware of his self-seeking, greedy nature as they try to expose the way he takes advantage of sensitive situations.

In this light, we can see that visual images and video blogs are crafted in different ways. Even though visual images produce particular effects, the image is always mediated by its context of reception. The seeing of an image, an artwork, or ruin itself always takes place in a particular social context that mediates its impact with its location to play an integral role. The dystopic

Detroit setting largely frames the scenes in the novel and mirrors the destruction within this city. Clayton demonstrates this through a violent form of artistry whereas Jonno adopts an insensitive approach to exploiting the ruins.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The preceding chapters for this thesis have explored the intermedial effects that emerges in two of Lauren Beukes's novels, *Moxyland* and *Broken Monsters*. As we have seen, an intermediality focus suggests new ways of reading texts. This notion makes it possible to understand embedded photographic and visual representations, even in wholly textual form, as exceeding the verbal limits of the text, opening up ways of seeing beyond the printed page. Beukes, as an author and creative practitioner, has a rich foundation working intermedially in a variety of visual genres such as directing documentaries and writing comic books, which can arguably be seen to enrich her ability to use these various media meaningfully in her novels.

In *Moxyland*, Beukes predicts many of the issues like methods of surveillance and cellular tracking that we now find in contemporary society. These issues are possible to write about in the post-apartheid, where genres such as science fiction and detective procedurals have been able to flourish. Beukes avoids foregrounding subject matters such as racial injustice, but folds these thematics into a larger engagement with oppressive digital technologies of the 21st century.

Cheryl Stobie has argued that *Moxyland* can be interpreted as a critical dystopia (368), but as I have demonstrated, this novel does not reveal glimmers of hope for the future. This is particularly seen in the deaths of Tendeka and Kendra, who are the more sympathetic characters, which reveals the injustices of the world they live in. The world of the novel disposes of them to show how the power of the state determines the way of living. Through their sexual act, Kendra transmits the nanotechnology to Toby, and this is the reason for his survival as a digital image-maker. The different fates of these two characters (Kendra and Toby) can be read as a metaphor for the rise of a digital era, where Toby's online simulacral

existence thrives, while Kendra's analogue world is diminished and has no room for continued existence in this society. The power of the camera, with its associations of documenting the real is a threat to the web of lies, deception and PR spin by the corporations. Kendra's photographs destabilise the utopian future, even though, ironically, it is obsolete analogue film that she uses. Her cyborg nature reflects her fractured identity in this distorted world, and it is shown more presciently through the damaged materials she uses for her photographs.

As we have seen, the candour evident in Kendra's photographs becomes a representation of the real, but my analysis of her photographs goes much further than this. I have shown how the real is represented and made visible in analogue photography, and how it is reworked in the novel. By contrast, digital imagery is easily manipulated, and I have significantly explored the effects of 21st century photography by examining theories like "synthetic dirt" and a social ontology of photography.

Even in the context of contemporary America, specifically Detroit, *Broken Monsters* explores the despair and destruction within the city. These ideas are shown more presciently through the dystopian genre, which shows the city as broken and dark, and this is reflected in the perspectives of the characters. The two male characters, Jonno and Clayton, exploit the shortcomings in the city, and use their artistry to reveal the continuous, ominous cycle of destruction and violence. As we have seen, "ruin porn" is a genre that revels in the total disintegration of the city, and I have demonstrated how Beukes carefully chooses the city of Detroit as an ideal location to explore the post-industrial decay. The importance of materiality through the concept of "bodies" has also been elaborated on to show how aesthetic value and ethics come into conflict in the creation and reception of specific "artworks".

Although Beukes's novels are not connected as a series of works, there are discernible connections that can be made between the characters of each book. While there has been

significant criticism of particularly *Moxyland (*and less so of *Broken Monsters*), I have attempted to extend these arguments through a study of intermedial aspects. This thesis shows how intermediality can interrogate the contemporary literary works and encourage further, more complex perspectives. This notion extends the idea of reading visually and broadens the study of exploring intermedial connections and effects.

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