

**GENDERED SPACE IN ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH'S
THE NO. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY**

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***Abstract:** Classic detective fiction provides an ideal space where issues of gender identities can be investigated along with the changing modes of crime fiction. Previously, in detective or crime fiction, women were displayed as victims or villains attached with social and cultural stereotypes. However, beginning in the 80s and 90s female characters started to be represented as detectives and investigators, which allowed space to the renegotiating of women's place in social and gender norms. Against this background, Alexander McCall Smith comes to the fore as a unique author who has managed to create the Mma Ramontswe character, owner of Ladies' No. 1 Detective Agency in an African setting, mainly Botswana, the country where he lived as a child and as a youth. Mma Ramontswe is an unconventional detective conducting her amateur profession in a space predominantly inhabited by herself and a fellow assistant lady detective. The novels evolving around No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency in serial form develop in two tracks. Firstly, the office of the agency is essentially a space for lady detectives which provides a metaphorical opportunity to explore gender roles in the less known country of Botswana, a former British colony, within the frame of postcolonial issues that are dealt with extreme subtlety by the author. Secondly, the outer space, which is Africa, where the stories occur is a geographical space recreated by a Scottish, white, medical law professor who never refrains from displaying his partiality towards Africa. Hence, the outer space becomes subject to a representation by the interpretation of a male author belonging to the colonial culture. Consequently, my presentation will focus on the discussion of metaphorical representation of gendered space in the detective fiction of Alexander McCall Smith and the social, cultural and postcolonial aspects of the representation of Africa being the outer space of these novels.*

***Keywords:** detective fiction, postcolonial fiction, Mother Africa, space, gender*