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Love in a Time of Trauma: Imagining Queer Female Sexualities in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

LOVE IN A TIME OF TRAUMA: IMAGINING QUEER FEMALE SEXUALITIES IN
POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

By

Stephanie M. Selvick

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

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LOVE IN A TIME OF TRAUMA: IMAGINING QUEER FEMALE SEXUALITIES IN
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My dissertation analyzes a range of texts that bring into view the contested regulation of female sexuality and same-sex intimacy in contemporary South Africa, and thus contributes to a burgeoning critical conversation that engages postcolonial studies, African studies, and sexuality studies. South Africa's 1996 constitution is celebrated as the most progressive in the world in terms of women's rights and gay rights, but this legal achievement is being overshadowed by the on-going, much-publicized rape crisis -- including the "corrective" rape of lesbians. My dissertation argues that authors and artists respond to this crisis by representing stigmatized aspects of female sexuality in ways that refuse to be "corrected." Claiming desire in the face of sexual violence, as these texts do, is a form of defiance towards ideas about what constitutes a "good" South African woman. African literature has often used sex, whether as seduction or rape, as a metaphor for political struggle. Works as varied as Alaa Al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* (Egypt, 2002) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (Ghana, 1973) use homosexual relations to emblemize colonial hierarchies and envision postcolonial resistance by violently eliminating homosexuality from the narrative. The South African texts I analyze un-do the idea that same-sex sex is shorthand for colonial domination and, more than that, reaffirm the right to (South) African belonging for non-conforming sexual citizens. The range of "texts" that I assemble reflects the urgent need to reach multiple

publics in unconventional ways, and includes the legal transcripts from Jacob Zuma's 2005 rape trial, photography that categorizes itself as "visual activism," live dance performance, a short story from a provocative collection of erotic writing, poetry, and a best-selling novel.

My project builds on other critical work within South African studies, such as Neville Hoad's influential *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, Globalization*, which analyzes the vexed relationship between the concepts of racial authenticity and homosexuality, and Lucy Valerie Graham's recent book *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature*, which examines the literary fixation on "black peril" narratives. I add to this critical tradition by bringing these two issues, so often analyzed separately, together; I argue that same-sex sexuality and sexual violence are intimately linked in South African popular, political, and literary discourses. The creative texts I examine make these linkages visible, and at the same time decouple them in transformative ways. In doing so, South African authors and artists challenge two dominant modes of stigmatizing queer South African female belonging -- casting women as either un-African or as mute victims of rape. Postcolonial studies has crucially placed South Africa's rape crisis within longer histories of imperialism and broader postcolonial histories of trauma. I contend that although sexual violence was a largely unspoken reality under most colonial regimes, the history of its representation in art and literature has been one of metaphorizing rape -- a strategy that distances postcolonial governments from this violence and signals a failure to imagine same-sex intimacy as African. My project's archive highlights an important collective cultural intervention which examines sexual violence on its own terms and uses pleasure to rescript belonging for sexual outsiders.

I begin my dissertation with the transcript of current President Jacob Zuma's contentious rape trial, arguing that one important narrative leading to Zuma's acquittal was the "correcting" of his self-identified lesbian accuser's sexuality to "bisexual with lesbian tendencies." This trial was a pivotal political event, in which narratives about sexual violence, sexual identity, ethnicity, and nationalism came into violent contact. I contend that the rhetorical violence that erupted from the trial includes the rewriting of Kuzwayo's sexuality, as well as the restrictive narrative espoused by Jacob Zuma which made Zulu "tradition" inseparable from patriarchy. These dominant cultural narratives about sexuality, nationality, and what constitutes violence play a crucial role within South African popular discourses and, as I maintain, influenced this trial's outcome. Kuzwayo's legal team was ultimately unable to translate her queer South African sexual expressions and history of trauma through the colonial, legal language available to her in the courtroom.

The second chapter, "Positive Bleeding," looks elsewhere in the South African cultural archive for a language about sexuality that Kuzwayo lacked during her rape trial to articulate her complex experience and identity to a courtroom and judge. I argue that allusions to blood in art and literature fruitfully link myriad stigmatized experiences and embodiments of self usually considered taboo, including HIV/AIDS, female sexuality, menstruation, and sexual violence. Through Lisa Combrinck's defiant collection of poetry *An Infinite Longing for Love* (2005), Mlu Zondi's dance performance piece *Silhouette* (2005), Zanele Muholi's mischievous and haunting photographic *Period* series (2006), and Makhosozana Xaba's revisionist short story "Inside" (2008), blood is defiantly transformed from a remnant of personal and historic trauma into that which

incites female-female pleasure and eroticism. Lisa Combrinck's poetry registers the difficulty of writing about sexuality in the midst of an epidemic and reaffirms the important task of using art and literature to reinvent modes through which to express pleasure. I contend that the politics of visibility operate uncomfortably within all four texts; blood serves as both a reminder of and departure from sensationalized images of traumatized and "corrected" lesbians. These authors and artists mitigate against the national denial imposed around HIV/AIDS and rape.

In the final chapter, I turn to Achmat Dangor's critically acclaimed novel *Bitter Fruit* (2005), arguing that he incorporates depictions of sexuality that intersect with, but ultimately complicate, the categories of gay, lesbian, and even straight. In doing so, he challenges dominant ways of thinking about sexuality as fixed and categorical, rather than multiple. For example, the protagonist Lydia heals from her experience of rape by a white apartheid-era police officer through same-sex fantasies. In doing so, she rejects the lens of victimhood through which her husband and the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission define her sexuality. Dangor also connects South Africa's rape crisis to broader postcolonial histories of trauma. Lydia's son, for instance, learns about his Muslim heritage through an anecdote which connects him to Hajera Ali, a distant Indian relative who was raped and impregnated by a British lieutenant in the early 1900s. Ali filed a rape charge, but found no justice in the courtroom, since the English officer knew all of the right narratives through which to distance himself from his crime. *Bitter Fruit* presents dominant discourses of sexuality and race -- inherited from colonialism, but which remain ever present -- as primary obstacles faced by sexual outsiders when they are trying to obtain legal recompense. This novel, and all of the

creative forms included in my dissertation, makes sexual violence and non-conforming sexual expression imaginable when institutional spaces fail to.

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It indeed takes a village to raise a graduate student. This dissertation is about belonging, and many individuals have helped me belong in various locales and circumstances. It also has several beginnings. In 2003 I joined Rangarirai Chinongoza to visit his aunt and uncle in Johannesburg, South Africa. Ranga taught me how far family extends beyond the biological -- a lesson which deeply impacts my analysis of this South African archive. The time I spent at the University of Cape Town in 2004 initiated my interest in South African studies. After taking an African literature seminar with Harry Garuba, he handed me his copy of *Nervous Conditions* -- a novel which incited my love for Southern African literature. In 2008, Jyoti Puri's "Queer Transnational" theory course at Simmons College taught me how to read this text by placing queer theory and transnational studies alongside each other.

The University of Miami has provided an invaluable intellectual home and material support. I conducted research at the Gay and Lesbian Archives at the University of Witwatersrand because of an archival research grant awarded to me by the English department. The Humanities Center helped to insure the completion of my dissertation by selecting me as their dissertation fellow. Faculty members in the English department provided mentorship. Special thanks go to David Luis-Brown, Mihoko Suzuki, and Sandra Pouchet Paquet. Members of the queer studies research group fostered a welcoming and lively queer intellectual community. Thank you to Gema Pérez-Sánchez, Steven Butterman, and Adrienne Milner. Carolyn Eberhardt and the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) organized workshops that were pivotal to my understanding of the legal means available to sexual assault survivors. Volunteering as an advocate for

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Introduction: Violence, Sexuality, and Queer Politics

The night is eating us out of futures we believe we deserve.
K. Sello Duiker, *Quiet Violence of Dreams*

In December 2013, news stories regarding Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old Indian woman who was gang raped on a public bus in New Dehli and later died in a Singapore hospital, caused national and international outcry over the role misogyny and patriarchy still play in informing rape legislation and in maintaining what bell hooks calls “a culture of violence.”¹ Anti-rape protests erupted around India and the government pledged to strengthen laws which prosecute rape. It seemed, at least for a moment, as if the Indian (and arguably international) masses had mobilized around a single incident to stop allowing violence against women to continue, and that government officials, who could impact rape legislation, were listening. A parallel was swiftly drawn between the brutality of this particular public sexual assault case in India and South Africa’s continuously unparalleled rate of sexual violence.² Perhaps BBC’s African correspondent Andrew

¹ bell hooks uses the phrase “culture of violence” instead of “rape culture” in order to fight against the assumption that only men propagate a culture which trivializes rape and blames victims. Instead, she contends that men and women have together made a culture which condones violence, and that solutions must be forged across gender lines. The radical feminist and intersectional lenses through which hooks analyzes and critiques American culture in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) complement the South African artists and authors I examine throughout this dissertation.

² This happened, in part, because the rapes of Jyoti Singh in India (December 16, 2012) and Aneene Booysen in South Africa (February 2, 2013), and which I analyze below, were executed in hauntingly similar fashions. In a five-part series on rape in South Africa, Heidi Swart writes in South Africa’s *Mail and Guardian* that although these two women had little in common, they “have become connected in the minds of the South African public after each was repeatedly raped by a group of men. Both were disembowelled and both died from the wounds their attackers inflicted on them.” The main difference, Swart contends, is in the national and public responses to these rapes. She argues that “[t]here were some similarities in the public reaction to the two attacks.” However, “in India, the public outcry became a high-pitched wail that spread across the region.” There was, of course, outrage in South Africa to Booysen’s rape. As both Swart and deputy editor of South Africa’s *Mail and Guardian* Verashni Pillay point out, after five years Booysen’s death prompted President Jacob Zuma to finally “make more than a passing reference to rape in a State of the Nation speech” (Pillay). Overall, the response to Booysen’s rape and murder has been less sustained than that of Singh, however. I suggest that the socioeconomic status of these two women is one important factor distinguishing them. Singh was studying physiotherapy in New Delhi,

Harding best captures the mood in the choice of the title for his feature: “Will South Africans Ever Be Shocked By Rape?” The question, of course, implies that South Africans are not shocked by rape. On the one hand, this speaks to the way in which sexual assault in South Africa is (perhaps) no longer seen as exceptional, but rather as a new, albeit damaged normal. On the other, Harding’s rhetorical question overlooks the extraordinary work of writers, artists, and activists who continue to speak ardently against sexual assault in South Africa. I contend that the work of South African artists and authors I include in this dissertation, such as Zanele Muholi, Mlu Zondi, Makhosozana Xaba, and Achmat Dangor, as well as organizations such as the One in Nine campaign and Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) have contributed to transnational anti-rape activism and helped to foster an environment in which activists in India *could* mobilize, almost instantaneously, to protest the gang rape and subsequent death of a 23-year-old medical student.

South Africa’s 1996 constitution is celebrated as the most progressive in the world in terms of gender and sexuality. The equality clause, in particular, makes it legally unconstitutional to discriminate against a person based on: “race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth.” This equality clause was a legal instantiation of a conceptual ideal: that South Africa could be a “rainbow nation,” a phrase that Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined in 1994 on the eve of the first democratic elections to depict the “new” South Africa as a place that includes both multiracialism

whereas Booysen was working as a cleaner at the construction site her body was found and did not finish school. I unpack the kinds of protection one assumes wealth affords individuals in my afterword. For now, it is worth noting that the lack of protection Singh’s middle-class status awarded her has, perhaps, contributed to the shock her rape caused. Whereas the violence enacted against Booysen, while living and working in a small (poor) rural town outside Cape Town, may have been seen as “inevitable.”

and gay rights. In speaking back to apartheid, the “new” South Africa’s Constitution was going to be profoundly inclusive. I maintain, however, that this legal achievement is called into question by South Africa’s on-going, much-publicized rape crisis -- including the so-called “corrective” rape of lesbians.³ In 2012, South Africa became the first country to recognize a gay national flag as a symbol for LGBT citizens. The flag’s creator, Eugene Brockman, claims that the flag has transformed from a symbol of queer South African celebration into a visual symbol of resistance against the increase in hate crimes targeted against, in particular, black lesbians.⁴ Brockman’s gay national flag visually captures the tension between South African constitutional exceptionalism and the pervasive representation of South Africa as the rape capital of the world in international media. The artists and authors I examine work within this interstice; they celebrate queer South African belonging, while still using art and literature to speak back to the prevalence of sexual violence. This dualism is perhaps best captured by Zanele Muholi’s photographic collection titled *Only Half the Picture*, in which she argues that news headlines which overemphasize lesbians as victims of rape are, indeed, only half the picture of lesbian existence. I came to this project through the question: How does one

³ “Corrective rape” refers to the idea that sexually assaulting a lesbian can and will make her heterosexual; however, I engage with the term more broadly and contend that all acts of sexual violence aim, in part, to “correct” female sexual expression.

⁴ I deploy the category “black lesbian” hesitantly and use it to emphasize the South African collective most sensationalized in media as the target for corrective rape. However, I agree with the editors in *The Country We Want To Live In: Hate Crimes and Homophobia in the Lives of Black Lesbian South Africans*, when they say that “[t]o accept that it is necessary to focus on the ways in which black lesbians in South Africa are currently overt targets of social, cultural and political violence means accepting that ‘black lesbians’ can be spoken of collectively. Clearly, this is an absurdity” (12). In media accounts of corrective rape, the term includes a vast array of sexual expressions and identities and, indeed, is a sexual category originating from the west. The category “black” for the editors above as well as for myself also often includes a wide variety of racial identifications, and yet it remains a definition “used by many of the most insightful and active people working against homophobic violence in townships, cities, rural areas and other locations in the country” (14). I put “lesbian” and “black” alongside each other, however, to emphasize the way in which apartheid racism lives on in the post-apartheid era, and is compounded by new political, sexual stigmas.

experience *desire* among this trauma? I contend that authors and artists respond to South Africa's rape crisis by representing stigmatized aspects of female sexuality in ways that refuse to be corrected. In doing so, they carve out an imaginative space of belonging for non-conforming sexual citizens in this "new" nation.⁵

The forms of widespread national and international condemnation some sexual assault cases receive often circulate as short-hand for the failures of postcolonial governments generally and black-run democracies in particular.⁶ News articles, such as Andrew Harding's feature mentioned above, are plentiful and, although they speak to a certain reality (South Africa *does*, of course, have a high rate of sexual violence), they also read as a rehearsal of old colonial hierarchies that once reflected the relationship between empire (represented here through the BBC) and colony (India, South Africa). The obstacles one then faces when trying to access the raped woman's perspective within these narratives are immense. This was never so evident than in South African satirist Zapiro's political cartoon titled: "We give you Anene Booysen." Booysen was a 17-year-old female found on February 2, 2013 by a security guard at a construction site in the Western Cape after she had been gang raped and mutilated. In an unimaginable act of strength of will and persistence, Booysen remained alive long enough to identify

⁵ I use the concept of "belonging" throughout my dissertation in order to emphasize the limitations of legal and constitutional constructions of citizenship, and to highlight the important role art and literature play in imagining and articulating what Raymond Williams calls shared "structures of feelings." I align my deployment of belonging in conjunction with the editors of *The Country We Live Want to Live In: Hate Crimes and Homophobia in the Lives of Black Lesbian South Africans*, who define "belonging" as "the dimension of citizenship that resonates with the emotional -- a feeling of belonging that transcends issues of membership, rights and duties" (7-8). Mikki Van Zyl similarly argues that a discourse of belonging "allows us to focus on the everyday dynamics of oppression which form the bedrock of marginalization and Othering. [...] 'belonging' has more substantive weight because it encompasses meanings of safety and security" [...] (367).

⁶ Amith Gupta, in *Jadaliyya*, an independent ezine produced by the Arab Studies Institute, for instance criticizes media reports which deployed what she refers to as "Orientalist feminism" when reporting on the 2012 New Delhi gang rape; she contends that India was understood and described as ensconced in rape culture. It would seem as if rape in India were a cultural phenomenon needing "white saviors."

Jonathan Quinton Davids, her ex-boyfriend, as one of her attackers. Zapiro draws Booyesen standing against a brick wall with a speech bubble saying: "...There will be a day, a day when the gang rape, disembowelment and murder of a 17-year-old girl would actually result in more than 15 minutes of public outrage and the usual lip service from the authorities. That day should be today" (Zapiro). The cartoon ends with a slogan in the bottom right-hand corner saying: "The Constitution. How the hell can it help you?" Printed only five days after Booyesen's rape and subsequent murder, Zapiro subtly calls attention to the dilemma of accessing a raped woman's perspective since, in this instance, fiction was necessary to providing Booyesen the opportunity to speak for herself.

The ethics of accessing and representing the perspective of someone who has been raped are central to the texts I examine. Maia Szalavitz's 2013 article, "What About the Victim: The Steubenville Rape Victim's Recovery," in *Time*, about the 16-year-old U.S. (Ohio) female who was raped by several football players, *also* directs attention to the way in which the raped woman's perspective, even in cases where the survivor is alive to voice it, goes unheard and, in this instance, is overshadowed by the plethora of news articles lamenting the future of her perpetrators. I juxtapose the rapes of Jyoti Singh, Anene Booyesen, and Steubenville's female victim (who chooses to withhold her name) to emphasize that sexual violence and victim-blaming are not confined to "Africa," but are globally pervasive phenomena informed by heteropatriarchy, racism, and sexual stigma; indeed, William Ryan coined the phrase "blaming the victim" in his 1971 book of the same name, which originally examined the practice of victim blaming as racially motivated ideologies used to justify structural violence against U.S. black citizens. The way that "victim blaming" now speaks to the myopic treatment of rape

survivors points attention to the interlocking systems of oppression and stigma that are bound up in articulating rape. Singh and Booyesen are distinct from the Ohio female, however, in that neither lived to see their attackers prosecuted, and both have been memorialized as daughters of their respective nations (Daily Maverick). Imagining a raped female as daughter of the South African nation is far removed from the celebratory national family Nelson Mandela once stood for. The adoption of these late raped women as national daughters functions simultaneously on a number of different registers. It is at once a tribute to them as individuals, as well as to a woman's right to everyday forms of safety; the violence these women faced represents a kind of wound to the nation. And yet it is not surprising that the United States has *not* mobilized in the same way around the Ohio female, indeed cannot cast a narrative which would allow sexual violence to be understood as emblematic of larger national problems. There is a fantasy of exceptionalism at play, instead of identification with imagined shared vulnerabilities. Casting gang-raped and murdered women as emblematic of nationalism, however, can also quickly slide into what Amith Gupta characterizes as "Orientalist feminism" -- a reducing of real and brutal crimes to culture. I agree that the national attention these women received translates into an international media spectacle which is definitely Orientalizing, and yet the very different national narrative at work in the United States cannot even imagine raped women as being worthy of mourning. The artists and authors I examine who represent the raped woman's perspective have had to forge ethical ways to bear the burden of these histories of representation, the divergent national narratives and spectacle. I would only add to Gupta's analysis that Orientalist feminism, as well as the act of memorializing Singh and Booyesen as daughters of their nations, encourages a

public to reinforce gender normative images of women by framing this tribute through the lens of protecting the honor of violated women, and by framing the nation as a symbolic family.

If, as I argue throughout this dissertation, sexual violence is one way to *physically* manage a (queer) female's sexuality, then the courtroom is one of several institutional spaces I analyze where lesbian sexuality is being discursively managed. In fact, Zapiro's political commentary reflects on the way that law alone cannot prevent sexual assault or combat cultures of violence. I maintain throughout my project that the legal and still often colonial language of the courtroom limits the way that one can imagine or articulate sexuality in relation to violence. This is vital, since rape cases are often negotiated and given hyper-visibility in and through the courtroom, and the sexuality of the complainant in "corrective rape" cases, in particular, can come strongly into play. One example of this is former star of South Africa's national women's soccer team (Banyana Banyana) and out LGBT-rights activist, Eudy Simelane, who remains one of the most well-known cases of "corrective rape" after her murder and the subsequent trial in 2008. Simelane's is one of the only cases to result in a conviction. One perpetrator pleaded guilty, after Simelane's blood was found on his pants, and two other men on trial were found not guilty due to lack of evidence. However, even during this important sentencing the judge (Ratha Mokgoathleng) found it necessary to state that Simelane's sexual orientation played no significant role in the crime aimed against her (Kelly; Bearak 2009). He further asked if there was a word he could use instead of "lesbian," since the word "lesbian" made him uncomfortable. Eudy Simelane's straight-forward self-identification as the only out lesbian in her township becomes unsayable in the court room, and the history of

her sexual trauma is altered in the official court transcript. This dynamic also played out in current President Jacob Zuma's 2005 rape trial, which I analyze in chapter one, in which the self-identified lesbian accuser's sexuality was also amended by the judge of that trial, who saw it fit to label her instead: "bisexual with lesbian tendencies." These are two very public instances where female sexuality, even post-trauma, continues to be managed and, as I contend, discursively corrected. I maintain that art and literature must be understood as an important part of the national record, because they can articulate and create narratives which go unheard in legal and other institutional spaces.

My dissertation thus analyzes a range of creative texts that bring into view the contested regulation of female sexuality and same-sex intimacy in contemporary South Africa and contributes to a growing critical conversation that engages postcolonial studies, African studies, and sexuality studies. The range of "texts" that I assemble and the wide cultural circulation of the discourses I examine reflect the urgent need to reach multiple publics in unconventional ways and includes the legal transcripts from Jacob Zuma's 2005 rape trial, photography that categorizes itself as "visual activism," live dance performance, a short story from a provocative collection of erotic writing, poetry, and a best-selling novel.

I build on other critical work within South African studies, such as Neville Hoad's influential *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, Globalization* (2007), which analyzes the vexed relationship between the concepts of racial authenticity and homosexuality, and Lucy Valerie Graham's recent book *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature* (2012), which examines the literary fixation on "black peril" narratives -- stories of inter-racial rape. I add to this critical tradition by bringing these

two issues, so often analyzed separately, together; I argue that same-sex sexuality and sexual violence are intimately linked in South African popular, political, and literary discourses. The creative texts I examine make these linkages visible, and at the same time decouple them in transformative ways. In doing so, South African authors and artists challenge two dominant modes of stigmatizing queer South African female belonging -- casting women as either un-African or as mute victims of rape. Postcolonial studies has crucially placed South Africa's rape crisis within longer histories of imperialism and broader postcolonial histories of trauma. Artists and authors wanting to represent sexual violence in their work must grapple with the weight of colonial histories of racial oppression and sexual stigma. While histories of sexual violence go back a long way, for South Africans who celebrated the end of and/or participated in the struggle against apartheid, sexual violence has become a *new* arena of struggle.

Allegorical Sexual Violence

African literature has often used sex, whether seduction or rape, as a metaphor for political struggles. It has done so in two contradictory, yet inter-connected ways: to represent and to critique colonial and neocolonial exploitation on the one hand, and patriarchal heteronationalism on the other. Both of these modes of representation put sexual and gender politics into sometimes violent contact with colonial and postcolonial institutions, binding narratives about gender and sexuality to narratives about the nation. Across the continent, sexual allegories were useful tools of the anti-colonial struggle. Stories of sexually subjugated locals, both male and female, killing a colonial oppressor clearly stood for the liberation of the nation and the arrival of postcoloniality. However,

for contemporary authors and artists wanting to explore queer sexual and gendered experiences in their work, the correlation this trend makes between female gender variance and violence, on the one hand, and sex between men and colonial exploitation, on the other, has become one more oppressive history needing to be spoken back to. Sexual violence -- itself a stigmatized form of violence -- becomes the tool which stigmatizes rather than celebrates alternative forms of gender and sexuality.

Male-authored works as varied as Alaa Al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* (Egypt 2002) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (Ghana 1973) use homosexual relations to emblemize colonial hierarchies and to envision postcolonial resistance by violently eliminating homosexuality from the narrative.⁷ Brute physical violence is rationalized as necessary to sever sexual deviance from African postcolonial futurity. In Chris Dunton's formative article on the topic, he argues that representations of male homosexuality in African literature up until the 1990s were largely monothematic and identified "as one facet of a broader process of exploitation" (729).⁸ These male-male relationships recurrently include moments of intimacy so that the participants register *as* homosexual, but then end with the passive/local lover seeking physical revenge against his active/colonial counterpart. This physical act supposedly lifts the local simultaneously out of passivity and coloniality while eradicating homosexuality from the postcolonial state. Joseph Massad contributes to this important critical conversation that Dunton began and details how the trope has developed more recently. He argues that in post-1980's

⁷ We see this, albeit in a theoretical register, in the work of Franz Fanon when he infamously said in a footnote that homosexuality and black male identity were incompatible categories. As Marc Epprecht phrases it, the equation of homosexuality equals colonialism "is recurrent in French- and English-language fiction from Africa, where African homosexuals have tended to be portrayed as tortured, neurotic, and often of mixed race or culture" (9).

⁸ *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*

Arabic fiction there has been a slew of narratives in which post-colonial nationalists triumph over colonially-marked sexual “deviants,” queer sexuality becoming indicative of postcolonial decline. In Alaa Al-Aswany’s *The Yacoubian Building*, for example, the French-Egyptian “gay” protagonist Hatim is killed by his love interest Abduh after imposing a master/slave hierarchy onto him. Postcoitally, Abduh chooses to leave Hatim’s apartment, at which point Hatim demands Abduh stay the night, yelling: “You’re just a barefoot, ignorant Sa’idi. I picked you up from the street, I cleaned you up, and I made you a human being. [...] You’d strike your master, you dog of a servant?” (236). At this, Abduh attacks Hatim, and rams his head against a concrete wall, killing him. Hatim’s murder thus allows homosexuality to signify as a replay of colonial hierarchies (or indeed postcolonial class hierarchies that are inflected with the western/local distinction) before being violently erased from the narrative altogether.⁹

Other texts produce feminist (or womanist) narratives which use representations of rape against women as a means to show the complex interplay of race and gender oppression. I read the damage rape causes to femininity and motherhood as a paradoxical queering effect living under colonialism and enduring war has on female gender constructions. In Yvonne Vera’s *Without a Name* (1995), for instance, Mazviita is raped by a freedom fighter during the Zimbabwean war of liberation and impregnated with his son.¹⁰ She reacts to this daily reminder of her trauma by breaking her son’s neck and killing him. Vera writes that Mazviita’s trauma “brought her to a complete silence, of her womanhood [...] Mazvita had lost her seasons of motherhood” (36). Vera’s novel puts

⁹ As Brenna M. Munro notes, the “association among castration, male homosexuality, and racism throws the (imagined) emasculation of colonization back onto the colonizer and leaves the postcolonial queer subject in an impossible, and stigmatized, position” (xv).

¹⁰ Yvonne Vera often uses her novels to depict how the usually silenced experiences of rape by black military officials against black women are *also* woven into the fabric of Zimbabwean Independence.

forth a bold, uncompromising critique of patriarchal heteronationalist institutions which, in times of war, often reduce women to their bodies and procreative function. While she (violently) interrogates the presumed natural symbiosis between womanhood and motherhood -- through psychologically broken women and lingering carcasses of dead babies -- Vera's objective here is not to promote alternative forms of femininity, but rather to show Mazviita's extreme gender defiance as one unruly, tragic, altogether preventable symptom of the wars imperialism engendered.¹¹

South African Laretta Ngcobo puts forth an alternative scenario in her novel *And They Didn't Die* (2007), in which her protagonist Jezile embraces, rather than kills, her son born of rape. Jezile is first raped and impregnated by her white boss, then interrogated by police for her "crime" of miscegenation, and finally abandoned by her husband, who does not perceive the rape she endured as a weapon of white rule. When Jezile later walks in on a white soldier "in a frenzy of anger and violence" trying to rape her daughter, she takes matters into her own hands (242). Seeing this soldier's gun "carelessly abandoned in a reckless moment of misplaced power," Jezile wanted to use it, but couldn't. "She had no clue how it worked." Instead, she turns to an already set dinner table and plunges "the sharpest [knife] deep into the left side of the depraved soldier" (242). While there are two violent acts in this scene, it is Jezile's murder and not the soldier's frenzied rape which catches the reader's attention as exceptional. The violence

¹¹ In contrast, *The Stone Virgins* does, in part, celebrate alternative forms of womanhood through the respect Vera pays to female soldiers who fought during Zimbabwe's struggle for independence. These women "do not apologize for their courage and long absence, nor hide or turn away" (56). They remain "the most substantial evidence of survival there is, of courage, of struggle" (60). Vera's literary recognition of female freedom fighters is important, since the participation of women *as* combatants was not easily incorporated into the heteronationalist narrative of "men" defending "mother Africa."

inherent in colonialism becomes the backdrop against which Jezile transforms a tool of domesticity into a weapon of war.

Jezile's and Mazviita's violent acts are legible as temporary moments of aberration women necessarily succumb to during anticolonial struggles. On the one hand, gender normative images of women -- as mothers of soldiers or victims of rape -- are often put into circulation to represent the wronged nation; on the other, women are frequently called upon, or desire to take part in political struggles in ways that go beyond normative definitions of femininity. This was also unmistakable in the virginity tests 25-year-old Egyptian human rights activist Samira Ibrahim was forced to experience after her arrest in Tahrir Square in Cairo on March 9, 2011. Ibrahim was one of many women arrested during a sit-in, and subsequently beaten, strip-searched, and given electric shocks and virginity tests. A number of explanations were given to rationalize the virginity tests, ranging from segregating married women from "virgins" in the prison, to protecting male soldiers from rape claims (Ortiz). Virginity tests are deployed to both discourage women from participating in political activism and to punish those who do by stigmatizing their sexuality, casting them as impure, sexual deviants. The flickering queer *literary* moments inherent in Vera's and Ngcobo's texts mirror the sexual stigma Ibrahim experienced and can therefore be seen as part of a larger cultural paradox that is produced when anticolonial (or anti-neocolonial) and gender politics come into contact. States of exception, like war, therefore involve a paradoxical mix of hyper-normative ideas about women (female bodies standing in for the honor of the nation, and thus to be violated or protected), the so-called "use" of women in normatively masculine roles (such as the female soldiers Vera celebrates), and the queer effects the damage of war often causes.

Therefore, whereas African male-focused narratives tend to restrict alternative forms of gender and sexuality for men -- Abduh only forgives himself his sexual encounters with Hatim following a masculine display of physical aggression, thus enacting a certain kind of normativizing violence -- female-focused narratives have often only been able to portray alternative expressions of womanhood when connected to the “states of exception” of violence and war.

The politics of writing about sexual violence in a postcolonial context are then understandably complex. Rape was commonly used as a weapon of empire, but at the same time miscegenation was legally and socially policed. Meanwhile, for what Ngcobo calls “blackwomen” writers, the desire to repudiate gender oppression and sexual violence in particular often conflicts with the anticolonial agenda many of these texts also bring with them.¹² At a recent conference focusing on the theoretical intersections between postcolonial and queer theories, Sarah Salih responded to the emergence of postcolonial writing about rape by asking “are we to read it as a positive thing” that authors continue to transform “local brown men” into agents of sexual violence and murder?¹³ One could further ask if gifting women with the tools of murder (the kitchen knife, for Ngcobo and a mother’s hands, for Vera) is the only feasible way to begin breaking the silence surrounding rape and sexual violence.

I look to the post-apartheid South African cultural archive to examine the way authors and artists have begun innovating an alternative language (visual, verbal, performative) through which queer sexual practices can be expressed without upholding these violent tendencies. The South African texts I analyze un-do the idea that same-sex

¹² Ngcobo uses the phrase “Blackwomen” writers to describe those who “have created ways of representing the interplay of race and gender in their lives and society, as well as in history” (Daymond 250).

¹³ “Queer Postcolonial Belonging,” University of Sussex, UK, June 10-11 2010.

sex is shorthand for colonial domination and, more than that, highlight an important collective cultural intervention which examines sexual violence on its own terms and uses pleasure to rescript belonging for sexual outsiders.

South Africa: Histories of Rape

Although there have been large advances made in South Africa toward writing gender and sexual equality into the early stages of nation-building, the prevalence of sexual violence against black African lesbians undermines this discourse of equality. Lucy Valerie Graham attests in *State of Peril* that there is “no statistical evidence that rape has increased since 1994” (4). She suggests instead that sexual violence was a major, yet undocumented, problem during apartheid which has gone unabated in the post-apartheid era (4). She posits that *discourses* about sexual violence, rather than sexual violence itself, have proliferated and are bound up with complex anxieties about the new nation and a black-run democracy. Deborah Posel offers a complementary overview of these new discourses, which the title of her article cleverly characterizes as “getting the nation talking about sex.” Posel argues that in response to the Draconian laws which regulated sex and sexuality during apartheid, the “new” South Africa has had to undo a legal web of sexual conservatism, including laws which regulated interracial intimacy and same-sex sexuality. She maintains that the presence of these new sexual discourses was never so dramatically confirmed than through the safe-sex demonstrations implemented in schools as part of South Africa’s national AIDS education campaign, and the several thousand black dildos imported as props (132). It would seem, then, that

disengaging with apartheid-era sexual stigma is not only ideologically and legally challenging, but also has real material consequences.

And yet, contemporary levels of rape do constitute a crisis. According to the South African Police Service's 2006 annual report, there were 55,000 rape cases reported in that year. Immediately afterwards, the scope of what constitutes a "rape" charge was changed to include a wider array of sexual offences, such as anal rape, male rape, indecent exposure, and human trafficking.¹⁴ The number of sexual offences recorded for 2009/2010 subsequently stood at 68,332. However, this is only a fraction of the actual number of males and females who undergo sexual coercion and forced sex on an annual basis. The reasons why rape victims choose not to press charges against their perpetrator(s) are bound up in complex issues of safety, access to and trust of police, and support by family and community members. Additionally, in the early 2000s, the reaction to national rape statistics by political figureheads fostered an environment in which "rape denialism" was acceptable. For instance, in February 2000, the Minister of Justice, Penuell Maduna, and the Minister of Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, asked Bob Simons during an interview with 60 minutes: "You have been here for more than twenty-six seconds. Have you seen anyone raped in that time?" This rhetorical question mockingly referenced the statistic that a woman is raped every 26 seconds in South Africa (du Toit 254). Only two months later the Commissioner of Police, Jackie Selebi, told ABC's *20/20* that "most South African women who report rape are lying" (du Toit 254). A generous reading of these public, indeed transnational, instances of political figures charged with insuring "justice," "safety," and "security" circulate rape myths,

¹⁴ This was an important legal change, since the sexist and phallic penetration focused definition of rape that existed prior to 2006 was an outdated colonial inheritance.

would emphasize the way in which all three individuals derail, what Saidiya Hartman might call, (South)afro-pessimism; however, using these international televised platforms to speak back to the afro-pessimism inherent in labeling South Africa a “rape capital” is achieved at the expense of women who experience rape. One might say that Maduna, Tshwete, and Selebi were simply following suit, after then President Thabo Mbeki also expressed his suspicion about the country's official rape figures in 1999 at a now well-known parliamentary address. Mbeki engaged in an aggressive debate with white, anti-rape activist Charlene Smith about the role of racism in predicting rape statistics. The South African Law Reform Commission *estimated* that 1.7 million rapes occur each year in South Africa, or, as referenced above, about 1 every 26 seconds (Wilson; Smith). Mbeki rejected this figure on the basis that it was predicting only “one in 36 rapes is reported” (Wilson) but, since 54,000 rapes were reported annually in 1999 and not 1.7 million, he argued the figure could not be trusted (Smith). Mbeki further claimed that these kinds of speculative rape statistics in South Africa are the direct result of racism perpetuated by white media and legislators who continue to stereotype black men as “savage beasts.” White legislators then accused Mbeki of avoiding the issues of sexual violence and AIDS, while the president “accused them of pretending that racism died with apartheid” (LaFraniere). Neville Hoad reads President Mbeki’s rhetoric as a reaction to what Hoad labels the “sexual ideology of racism;” he further argues that this reaction also prevented South Africa from being able to “respond systematically to the AIDS pandemic facing its citizens” or, I would add, the epidemic of “sexual violence” (xxii). The very utterance of the word “rape” is mired in the sexist, heterosexist, racist, and

colonialist histories from which it emerges. However, as South African anti-rape scholar and activist Helen Moffett explains:

[...] my years as a hotline counsellor in the latter half of the 1980s rapidly disabused me of the notion that domestic and sexual violence were the province of poor, black, or ill-educated men. I received distress calls [...] from the wives of professional men living in Cape Town's exclusive suburbs; I listened to woman who had been sexually assaulted [...] by ministers of religion, teetotallers, university professors, doctors and lawyers. [...] rape, like most crimes, is intra-communal (that is, it is usually committed by 'insiders,' not 'outsiders'); [...] In other words, sexual violence is an instrument of gender domination that is rarely driven by a racial agenda (134).

Media and literature have indeed played a significant role in sensationalizing racist cultural stereotypes about black male predation and black female lasciviousness, and as the texts included in this dissertation illuminate, for that very reason have become foundational arenas for debunking them.

Since homosexuality is still heavily linked to colonialism, is still discursively connected to western influences, and is still defined as decidedly "Un-African," curative rape has been defended as one way to eliminate the whiteness from black lesbians. As Brenna Munro writes in *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*, gay and lesbian sexualities were "reimagined in the 1990s as distinctly South African." However:

the very 'newness' that made these sexualities apt symbols for a transformed nation is also easily understood as 'foreign' -- and, in this context, as 'un-African.' [...] As South Africa's reentrance into the global economy has not brought about prosperity for the majority of the nation's citizens, homophobic violence has been on the rise (ix).

Contemporary sexual violence against queer people is also inflected with larger racial histories -- and echoes the literary representations discussed earlier.

As argued throughout this dissertation, the links connecting female sexuality, homosexuality, AIDS, and rape form an inextricable matrix. While Graham argues that discourses about sexual violence have increased since 1994 and Posel suggests that sex talk in general has proliferated, I argue that sexuality and violence are imagined in intimate relation and negotiated together and that sexual violence continues to have serious repercussions on the way that interpreters of the constitution (lawyers and judges, as well as artists and authors) talk about and understand same-sex sexuality in contemporary South Africa.¹⁵

Anti-rape activism has proven difficult to stage and mobilize around, partly because, as I have been discussing, sexual stigma is so intimately tied to larger racial histories of oppression. For instance, during the Johannesburg 2012 Gay Pride Parade, the One in Nine campaign famously staged an act of protest against the increase in hate crimes targeted at black South African lesbians. With 20,000 recorded participants, Johannesburg's parade is known as the largest gay pride event on the African continent. This march, however, was interrupted on Jan Smuts Avenue in Rosebank by 20 black

¹⁵ In a related vein, Louise du Toit contends in "A Phenomenology of Rape: Forging a New Vocabulary for Action" that rape and the binary gender system (the belief in only two, complementary genders) are mutually reinforcing. She argues that "the difficulty of speaking about rape [...] relates to the ways in which sexual identities are constructed in [South African] society and elsewhere. Because masculine sexuality is constructed as acquiring, initiating, active and virile, and feminine sexuality as passive, receiving, responding and void of a desire of her own, sex itself is understood as masculine aggression, as one-sided action, as colonization or invasion; in short, as something *men do to women* (or other men, or children -- people less powerful than themselves)" (260). Du Toit further quotes John Stoltenberg's *Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice*, in radically suggesting that "the act of prevailing upon another to admit of penetration without full and knowledgeable assent so sets the standard in the repertoire of male-defining behaviors that it is not at all inaccurate to suggest that the ethics of male sexual identity are essentially rapist" (260). Du Toit ultimately asserts that the male rapist is "a policeman of male sexual ethics" for the way in which rapists reinforce gender norms which distinguish male active sexual aggression from female sexual reticence (261). Du Toit's and Stoltenberg's studies therefore show that thinking about gender and sexual violence in interrelation is not new and, in fact, might be central to unpacking the narratives which justify rape. I would add to their illuminating discussion that the establishing of masculinity through rape is also racialized; white male sexual violence in the context of enforcing apartheid was as much about delimiting the boundaries of race as it was of gender. Still, I see my dissertation as extending their work by placing a critical analysis of gender and sexuality as central to discussions about rape.

lesbian activists who staged, what they refer to as, a “die-in.” The campaigners sought to secure one minute of silence for the number of South African queer women who have been raped or killed; they did so by lying in front of a large banner that read “No Cause for Celebration” (Davis). The One in Nine campaigners were swiftly critiqued by the Joburg Pride Board for not getting their protest pre-approved and therefore posing a security risk.¹⁶ The entire board has since stepped down from their role as organizers after the situation escalated, with the Forum for the Empowerment of Women and One in Nine calling for a boycott of Pride’s anti-poor agenda. Following a One in Nine campaign meeting, Kokeletso Legoete uploaded onto their facebook page a current “vision” for gay pride, which includes being “critical of [...] the highly commercial nature of the event dominated by corporate advertising” at the expense of adequately addressing “the issues faced by LGBTI people across differences of race, class, gender, and geographic location.” The clash between the One in Nine Campaigners and the Joburg Pride Board is emblematic of larger societal struggles within the queer community in South Africa and elsewhere. Video footage which recorded One in Nine Campaign’s protest was quickly posted to YouTube and showed the predominantly black protesters being stepped over, physically pushed, sworn at, and told to “go back to your lokshins (townships)” by predominantly white, gay male parade goers (Davis). The way this moment of activism also served as a replay of colonial hierarchies demonstrates how narratives regarding race and power in South Africa permeate discussions of sexuality at

¹⁶ The Joburg Pride Board has called this moment of activism an “ambush” that caused a “security risk” which resulted in the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) relinquishing their support to hold Pride around Zoo Lake and Rosebank. This reaction is uncomfortably informed by racial, gendered, and class differences -- and, at least on the surface, appears to be more about reprimanding a group of black, queer, women for acting unruly and against protocol than it does with any measurable concern about safety.

every level. The unequal access to rights the Constitution supposedly engenders was, in this moment, hyper-visible and played out as a kind of highly dramatic public allegory.

Artists of all types in South Africa who want to create an alternative language that lifts the discourse of rape out of its biopolitical entangling with a racist apartheid history have had to reckon with how sexual violence has been imagined in intimate and complex relation to racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. The responsibility of not adding to what Mbeki labels the stereotype of black men as “savage beasts,” or indeed the exoticization or abjection of black female bodies, weighs on work wanting to accomplish anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic ends. However, in the decade(s) since apartheid has ended, artists have striven for precisely that -- alternative ways of seeing and representing female sexuality and sexual violence.

The textual archive I assemble interrogates the links connecting female sexuality, violence, and ideas of victimhood. In addition, all of the texts include aspects of female sexuality that critics have largely overlooked, ones that do not fit into current critical paradigms or national narratives, including Fezeka Kuzwayo’s lesbianism, Zanele Muholi’s period imagery, and Lydia’s queer and incestuous desires in Achmat Dangor’s *Bitter Fruit*. These creative works model alternative forms of gender and sexuality and emphasize that experiences of sexual violence for (queer) South African women are *Only Half the Picture*. Although sexual violence also affects South African representations of queer male sexuality, as can be seen in K. Sello Duiker’s novels *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), I maintain that the historic entanglement of female

sexuality with racism, sexism, and issues of voyeurism are gender specific.¹⁷ Indeed, a range of recent books have critically engaged with queer male sexuality in Southern Africa, while there still remain few book length projects which put queer female sexuality at their center. When the rape of women is dealt with directly, it is often considered to be an inevitability that comes with township life, being female, being lesbian or, indeed, being South African. My project asks how this “inevitable” violence has shaped and informed representations of sexuality. I ultimately argue that artists and authors engage with this violence and, as a defiant act of female-female celebration, transform it into the catalyst for same-sex eroticism.

Queering Sexuality and Trauma

Since 1994, a number of scholarly monographs on LGBTI South African sexuality have emerged, including Marc Epprecht’s 2005 *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*; Neville Hoad’s 2007 *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*; Cheryl Stobie’s 2007 *Somewhere in the Double Rainbow: Representations of Bisexuality in Post-Apartheid Novels*; Brenna M. Munro’s 2012 *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come*; Amanda Lock Swarr’s 2012 *Sex in Transition: Remaking Gender & Race in South Africa*; Graeme Reid’s 2013 *How to Be a Real Gay: Gay Identities in Small-Town South Africa*; as well as edited anthologies, such as *Sex and Politics in South Africa* (2005) and *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho’s Daughters Out In Africa* (2011). Munro’s, Hoad’s, Epprecht’s, and Reid’s monographs largely take Southern African (representations of) gay and lesbian identities as their foci;

¹⁷ Saartjie Baartment, or the Hottentot Venus, reveals the historic hypervisibility of black, female sexuality during colonialism, as well as its trauma. Olympic runner Caster Semenya can be seen as a more recent example of black female bodies being consumed by an international and scientific gaze.

Stobie's examination of bisexuality and Lock Swarr's look at transgender, transvestite, and intersex individuals further open up a trajectory of illuminating Southern African LGBTI identities and expressions of self. Because this dissertation places female experiences with sexual violence as the apex around which sexuality circulates, it analyzes a wide range of sexual preferences which include, but also complicate, lesbian, bisexual, and even heterosexual desire. I analyze the point at which queer female sexuality interacts with sexual violence and, in a hopeful moment of sexual positivity, look to art and literature to imagine sexuality impacted by and yet beyond violence. As Njabulo Ndebele writes in *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (2004), the characters I analyze "want to reclaim [the] right to be wounded without [their] pain having to turn [them] into an example of woman as victim" (35).

The monographs listed above have forged generative ways to read queer and postcolonial theories alongside each other, despite postcolonial studies' often heterosexist cultural bias and queer theory's frequent white, western focus. I use the term "queer" throughout this dissertation in line with Judith Butler, for whom queer expresses an identity that transgresses and disrupts regulatory regimes, as well as alongside Annamarie Jagose who defines it as "an anti-normative positioning with regard to sexuality" (Hawley 3). Butler's use of queer as a site of disruption and transgression and Jagose's emphasis on anti-normativity translate usefully to a post-1994 South African context; the texts I analyze are authored by South Africans invested in disrupting several regulatory regimes at once. Sexuality and gender are two of those regimes; race is another.

Allyn Diesel's edited collection, *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho's Daughters Out in Africa*, is particularly relevant to my project because it centralizes lesbian South

African histories in order to celebrate and give dignity to them, while still challenging hegemonic notions of what “lesbian” means. Diesel writes in the introduction that “[t]oo often, stories involving lesbians have been written, or re-written, [...] in order to make them appear more [...] mainstream” (xii). Moreover, the so-called lesbian “role models” circulating in South African media are primarily western, including such figures and authors as Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, Gertrude Stein, Radclyffe Hall, Audre Lorde, and Ellen Degeneres. Diesel contends that “none of these exciting and stimulating figures was South African, leaving a great gap in possible role models for contemporary local [South African] lesbians” (xii). The texts I examine, simply put, do not include celebratory lesbian role models whom readers can commemorate and with whom they can identify. They more often broaden the geographic literary scope Heather Love deployed in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2009), which calls for “a genealogy of clear affect that does not overlook the negative, shameful, and difficult feelings that have been so central to queer existence in the last century” (127). These South African queer female and sometimes lesbian characters do not emblemize a happy progress narrative; many of these texts offer representations of women who have experienced sexual violence and multiple forms of stigma and have not found justice for these crimes. Achmat Dangor’s Lydia in *Bitter Fruit* is a key example: a mixed-race female who was raped and impregnated by a white police officer during apartheid and who later acts on the incestuous desires she holds for her son. Lydia also has a rich same-sex fantasy life that provides more pleasure to her than her husband can. She is hardly the role model that Diesel imagined when writing the introduction, and yet Lydia does provide fruitful and inventive ways to survive trauma and nurture same-sex desire.

I read queer and postcolonial theories in conversation with trauma studies in order to call for a queering and postcolonizing of trauma studies. As Irene Visser asks in “Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies,” can PTSD be applied to conflict zones or areas of enduring war to which there may be no “post” to the traumatic stress disorders its occupants’ experience? Ann Cvetkovich similarly alters the field of trauma studies by developing a queer approach to trauma, which doesn’t “look to either identity or the state as a means for the resolution of trauma” (16). Instead, “the cases that interest [Cvetkovich] offer the unpredictable forms of politics that emerge when trauma is kept unrelentingly in view rather than contained within an institutional project” (16). Both Visser’s and Cvetkovich’s writings have helped to forge my understanding and analysis of the South African archive I compile and the sometimes “unpredictable” modes of recovering from trauma deployed in these texts. Although South Africa is not categorized as a conflict zone, I encourage re-framing the enduring war on women’s bodies in South Africa (and elsewhere) as having parallel ramifications to living in a conflict zone. This theoretical synergy would shift trauma studies’ focus on PTSD as the primary indicator of trauma toward an examination of what scholars identify as accumulative trauma. The editors of *The Country We Want to Live In* phrase it eloquently:

[...] identification as a member of a stigmatized group renders both oneself and one’s closest friends, lovers, political allies and social acquaintances permanently vulnerable to violence. This is more akin to life within a war zone than to living within an environment in which different forms of assault can be easily separated from one another, and occur infrequently, at the hands of somewhat predictable assailants (20).

Perhaps assault, then, for a lesbian female, is not experienced as a discrete trauma, but rather as an everyday and damaging normal. This is true for the global north as well as the global south. For instance, Andrea Smith in *Interventions: Activists and Academics*

Respond to Violence (2004), challenges assumptions widely held throughout the global north in general and the U.S. in particular that violence is something that happens elsewhere. She rebukes this strand of xenophobia by stating that “[w]hen one-half of women will be battered in their lifetimes and nearly one-half of women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes, it is clear that we live in a rape culture that prisons, themselves a site of violence and control, cannot change” (41). Moreover, in her introduction to this anthology, Castelli asks a pivotal question to those concerned with the ethics of representing violence: “[h]ow do we account for violence’s visibilities and invisibilities, and how do we answer the ethical demand that these in/visibilities articulate?” (4).

I turn to art and literature in response to the institutional frameworks that continue to fail victims of violence and that problematically produce various kinds of visibility and invisibility. The artists and authors I examine illuminate and critique prevailing modes of representation. For instance, in Mlu Zondi’s performance dance piece *Silhouette* (2005), he stages a domestic violence scene which is simultaneously captured and projected by a videographer on stage. This video record of the violent scene encourages audience members to interrogate their interpretation of the event. This process of meta-analysis then destabilizes media accounts which either sensationalize South African women as victims of sexual violence or ignore the raped woman’s perspective altogether. Mlu Zondi and Achmat Dangor, both men, are especially aware of the politics of representation in which they engage. As Dangor says in an interview:

When [Lydia’s story] was first published it got a vehement response from many people, some saying, what are you going to do now? This is exploitation! [...] I had to make sure that I didn’t patronize [Lydia] by being some kind of liberal father, or anything like that. On the other hand,

I wanted her to be authentic, she doesn't become a Superwoman that overcomes all her traumas by simply ignoring them. So having to grapple with her physically and mentally was really quite difficult. Maybe I'm lucky I grew up in a matriarchal home, with my grandmother and three grown aunts (*The Ledge*).

The feminist inheritance Dangor attributes to his grandmother and aunts parallels and challenges the inheritance of (sexual) violence with which he argues post-apartheid South Africa is grappling. As if in direct dialogue with Castelli, Dangor and Zondi are especially tuned into accounting for “violence’s visibilities and invisibilities” and for responding to “the ethical demand that these in/visibilities articulate” (4).

Chapter Summaries

I begin my dissertation by analyzing the transcript of current President Jacob Zuma’s contentious 2005 rape trial, and revealing that one key narrative leading to Zuma’s acquittal was the “correcting” of his self-identified lesbian accuser’s sexuality to “bisexual with lesbian tendencies.” This trial was a significant political and media event wherein narratives about rape, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationalism came aggressively into contact. I argue that several strands of rhetorical violence that erupted from Zuma’s defense served to manage Kuzwayo’s sexuality and ethnicity, the latter occurring after Zuma presented Zulu masculine “tradition” and patriarchy as inseparable. These dominant discourses about sexuality, ethnicity, and what constitutes violence played crucial roles in determining this trial’s outcome. Kuzwayo’s legal team was ultimately unable to articulate and make legible her queer South African sexual expressions and history of trauma through the colonial, legal language available to her in the courtroom.¹⁸

¹⁸ The editors of *The Country We Want to Live In* are the only writers I have found who acknowledge Kuzwayo’s lesbian identification. Despite their attention to the role her sexuality played in this trial, they

On December 6, 2005 the Jacob Zuma rape trial became *the* public rape case of the century in South Africa, absorbing the attention of international and South African media. Zuma's legal team sent out a public statement, denying the rape charges and asserting instead that Zuma had had consensual sexual intercourse with the accuser. They supported this statement by claiming that Kuzwayo was not the lesbian she identified as, but was rather "bisexual with lesbian tendencies" (Mhlongo). Additionally, Zuma defended acting on his desires for Kuzwayo as culturally normative through his now much-cited invocation of male Zulu identity. Zuma asserted that Kuzwayo "encouraged him [to have sex with her/to rape her] by wearing a short skirt and sitting provocatively. As a Zulu man, he was duty-bound to oblige her" (Bearak 2008).

Fezeka Kuzwayo's legal team also used the lens of cultural normativity to defend her rape claim; they stated that the enduring familial and political affiliations between Kuzwayo's family and Zuma's would have logically prevented her from desiring him. Kuzwayo's father and Zuma were close ANC comrades who fought together against apartheid. Kuzwayo had been raised alongside and was the same age as Zuma's daughter and they were still close friends up until the trial. Kuzwayo's case therefore rested on painting an image of Zuma as a non-sexual father-figure and, of course, on her lesbian identification and desires. Lastly, as an HIV positive female and an HIV/AIDS activist, Kuzwayo's legal team argued she never would have consented to unprotected sex.

I hesitantly engage the phrase "corrective rape" throughout this chapter, wary of reinforcing the production of the very category that can then be read as abjected and

admit that in "public demonstrations 'Khwezi's' lesbian identity did not take particular precedence on the platform of concerns about socio-political injustices on which the campaign focused" (9). However, despite this oversight, "the campaign *was* driven largely by activists who had strong experience of the links between sexual violence, homophobia and the challenges faced by poor black women" (italics mine 9).

victimized. I also challenge the assumption that some acts of rape are more about correcting gender and sexual expression than others. In other words, similar violent logics of correction are clearly at play in the rape of straight women and in sexual assaults that aren't immediately recognizable as the "corrective rape of lesbians." I deploy the phrase here, however, to emphasize the rhetorical harm "corrective rape" causes -- damage that is similar to the abjection, Sara Ahmed argues, "hate crime" legislation produces: the identification of certain categories of people as more identifiably hated than others. The absence of violence in the Zuma rape case, in addition to the layers of normativity in which his and Kuzwayo's relationship was ensconced (having the sex/rape act occur in a bedroom, for instance), rendered this trial dissimilar to other more easily identifiable "corrective rape" cases. However, the lengths undertaken to correct Fezeka Kuzwayo's sexual identification demonstrate that the regulation and "correction" of dissent is not performed solely by rapists. Since the beginning of the anti-apartheid struggle much work has been done to prevent using ethnicized culture as a weapon, but by upholding a gendered narrative of Zulu normativity -- "as a man [he] was duty bound to oblige her" -- in addition to discrediting the discontinuity between Kuzwayo's professed lesbian identity and seemingly bisexual sexual history -- this trial reinforced a hierarchy of cultures which places Zuluness as legally more legible and coherent than queerness.¹⁹ As the epigraph in my chapter notes, "[n]othing confuses a story as much as characters with shifting identities" (Dangor 198).

¹⁹ This chapter makes an important distinction between "lesbian" and "queer." Lesbianism may have served as a legible, legally defensible identity given South Africa's constitution. However, in the same way that this trial instituted a restricted form of Zulu identity, it also instituted a fixed understanding of "lesbian," discarding Kuzwayo's sexual history as too "queer" to represent. The constitution attempted to make sexuality legally legible, but when it comes to a real person's complex sexual history, verifying "lesbian" turns out to be rather difficult.

I examine the trial as a discursive battle that had significant repercussions beyond Zuma's guilt or innocence. To unpack these cultural and sexual discourses, I put this rape trial into conversation with Lauren Berlant's work on public intimacy, which maintains that public institutions are also often zones of intimacy. Berlant documents that "desire for intimacy that bypass the couple or the life narrative it generates have no alternative plots, let alone few laws and stable spaces of culture in which to clarify and to cultivate them" (1998, 283-285). Zuma produced a narrative of consensual heterosexual intimacy that was reinforced by his performance of Zulu hyper-masculinity; it was then framed as the only rational way to make sense of their sexual encounter. I argue that one reason this trial became so controversial was not only the ethnic, political and sexual politics that were invoked, but also the traditional forms of intimacy Zuma's and Kuzwayo's relationship were already marked by, their political connection, "friendship," and the bedroom their encounter of sex/rape took place in -- a conventional zone of private intimacy -- that led to the rejection of Kuzwayo's rape charge.

Judith Butler's and Cathy Caruth's work on trauma theory, as well as Simon Gikandi's and Homi Bhabha's work on writing collective histories, prove useful for questioning the narrative reconstruction demanded by any courtroom. In *Undoing Gender*, Butler summarizes an important concept articulated by trauma theorists, including Caruth, which maintains that trauma is "precisely that which renders all memory false, we might say, and which is known through the gap that disrupts all efforts at narrative reconstruction" (153). She expands on this desire to know oneself through narrative, and the difficulties of doing so, in both *Excitable Speech* and *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Butler locates the act of confession as one place where individuals

are expected to construct coherent, linear accounts of their life stories. She further argues that narrative reconstruction should always be understood as constructing fiction. Homi Bhabha's views on the relationship between "nation and narration" can be read alongside Butler's and Caruth's views on writing trauma when he cites Partha Chatterjee in saying "nationalism is not what it seems, and above all not what it seems to itself" (*Nation and Narration*, 294). Butler argues that states encourage individuals to create coherent self-narratives in order to strengthen the state's appearance as unified. Bhabha supports this idea by suggesting that the nation suffers a rupture between the seeming coherence of official written history and what Gikandi calls the "mythopoetic" aspect of on-going oral accounts of history. This chapter will emphasize that it was precisely this ambivalent sense of becoming -- one made visible through a new constitution, new legal structure, and stories produced in multiple arenas about the "new" South Africa -- that this rape trial attempts to gain control over by favoring dominant narratives of postcolonial heteropatriarchal intimacy.

Chapter two, "Positive Bleeding," turns to art and literature to supplement the linguistic and conceptual constraints imposed on Kuzwayo during her rape trial to articulate a sexual history marked by trauma, as well as male and female gendered partners. I argue that blood functions as an idiom which fruitfully links myriad experiences and expressions of self usually considered taboo, including HIV/AIDS, female sexuality, menstruation, and sexual violence. In a moment of female-female celebration, these same indicators of stigma and trauma are then transformed to also produce queer sexual eroticism.

Through Lisa Combrinck's bold collection of poetry, *An Infinite Longing for Love* (2005), Mlu Zondi's dance performance piece, *Silhouette* (2005), Zanele Muholi's mischievous and haunting photographic *Period* series (2006), and Makhosozana Xaba's revisionist short story, "Inside" (2008), blood is transformed from a remnant of personal and historic trauma into that which provokes female-female pleasure. Lisa Combrinck's poetry registers the problem of writing about sexuality in the middle of an epidemic and yet stakes out the importance of using art and literature to reinvent approaches to pleasure. She conveys the theoretical position of many artists working in South Africa today: "to invent new paradigms of pleasure / in this decaying world of fractured skulls and fallen dreams" (33). This chapter demonstrates the multiple visual, verbal, and theoretical responses South African writers and artists have constructed in relation to issues of sexual violence. Nakedness is a powerful motif used by Combrinck to visualize what female sexual bliss would look like liberated from racist, sexist, homophobic, and even homonormative ways of understanding (South)African sexuality, and it is a prominent theme in the art and literature analyzed in this chapter.

Mlu Zondi uses performance art in *Silhouette* as the medium through which he denounces the way that domestic and sexual violence have been normalized in heterosexual partnerships. *Silhouette* presents two characters, one male and the other female, who enact a traditional courtship on stage. Their so-called romance ends with the male player ripping off his clothing and physically imposing himself onto his partner. I contend that the red paint the male actor spreads across the female's body and face signifies trauma -- sexual violation, emotional abuse, and physical violence all at once. During their dance, a third actor videotapes the scene and projects the visual record onto

a screen behind them. Through *Silhouette* Zondi critiques the normalization of domestic violence in “heterosexual” partnerships and encourages his audience (the performance’s fourth participant) to question their interpretations of the event -- observations facilitated by two mediums, the live performance and the visual record.

The points *Silhouette* raises can be used to interrogate normative forms of intimacy that so often go unquestioned, including those performed by Zuma and Kuzwayo in their courtroom-turned-theatre. It also becomes a useful jumping off point to imagine additional visual renditions of intimacy. Zanele Muholi’s *Period* series, for example, links the inevitability of women losing blood during menstruation to the “inevitability” of lesbians losing blood as the result of “corrective” rape. Pumla Dineo Gqola says of Muholi that her “work is less about making Black lesbians visible than it is about engaging with the regimes that have used these women’s hypervisibility as a way to violate them” (Muholi 84). The way that Muholi’s images deviate from what one expects of overtly sexual representations of black women’s bodies allows her photography to queer, or skew, what a viewer expects a photograph of a (black) nude female body to do.

I close this chapter by analyzing Makhosazana Xaba’s short story “Inside,” found within *Open: An Erotic Anthology by South African Women Writers*, which locates menstrual blood as both an indicator of trauma, and a source of desire between two women. Zodwa organizes her life narrative around the number of periods she has or has lost, a discussion which is said to “awaken” Bhekiwe’s vagina. Zodwa’s period genealogy begins with a lack -- she missed six periods at the age of nineteen because of medication. It disappeared again in 1985 during the state of emergency, “stress [she]

thinks” (121). This talk of menstrual blood initiated by Zodwa soon becomes foreplay for Bhekiwe. Reading Xaba’s story alongside Muholi’s photographs makes it difficult to think these artists weren’t working in concert. Muholi’s *Period* series can be interpreted as a visual response to the question with which Zodwa ends her monologue: “can you imagine how many litres of blood that is?” It is as if Muholi is saying, yes, I can imagine, let’s look at it together. Xaba and Muholi imagine alternative female expressions by recasting and incorporating menstrual bleeding as a source of desire, rather than humiliation. Blood is transformed from being an indicator of suffering into a source of female eroticism. Chapter two reads these four artists’ work in inter-relation across mediums, all searching for a language through which to imagine queer female desires and subjectivities. I contend that the politics of visibility operate uncomfortably within all four texts; blood serves as both a reminder of and departure from sensationalized images of traumatized and “corrected” lesbians. These authors and artists mitigate against the national denial imposed around HIV/AIDS and rape, while resisting the sensationalization of the violation of lesbian bodies.

Chapter three, “Queer Confessions in Achmat Dangor’s *Bitter Fruit*,” turns to Achmat Dangor’s critically praised novel *Bitter Fruit* (2001) that I argue continues two main threads woven throughout this dissertation. First, it questions whether institutional spaces can effectively address sexual violence. Dangor accomplishes this by interrogating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its mode of overcoming trauma; he maintains that in cases of sexual assault specifically, the TRC reinforced hegemonic forms of gender, thus sustaining previous forms of violence. Second, Dangor’s characters embody a wide range of sexual subjectivities that defy dominant discourses of identity.

These points merge at the character of Lydia who “knew that in [her husband Silas’s] eyes, her sexuality was defined by her status as a rape victim” (119). Lydia was raised in a convent, and her complicated relationship to Catholicism expresses itself in the form of “Cathy,” a Chinese female persona Lydia consistently invokes throughout her life in order to experience sexual pleasure. For Lydia, “[t]he image of Christ and his bride Catherine, entwined with Cathy, snake-like and amber-skinned, always succeeded in bringing her to a climax” (119). While many critics note *Bitter Fruit* for the way it foregrounds a discussion of racial multiplicity, this chapter shines light on how this conversation about racial heterogeneity is matched by an equally heterogeneous cast of sexual identities and desires. Among these characters are Lydia, with her queer private fantasies and history of trauma; Julian, rumored to be gay; Kate, who “announced that bisexuality was just an experiment,” (58) but who later had sex with Mikey, Lydia’s son, the product of her rape; and Mikey himself, whose “beauty will prove to be a curse” to all women (64). Mikey inherits his father Silas’s tendency to reject victimhood as an unwanted and broken form of femininity, this is confirmed when he refuses to be intimate with his friend “Vinu” who suffers from incest, but whom Mikey believes “revels [too much] in her status as a victim” (241).

Bitter Fruit tells its story in layers and through multiple narrative voices.

Therefore, the heterogeneity of race and sex is matched by the heterogeneity of narratives it ethically takes to paint the complete picture of a single story. This is elucidated through the contrast with TRC, which Lydia fears could rely on one voice, that of her rapist, to tell the story of her trauma. *Bitter Fruit* presents the TRC as coercive in its desire for public confession. Lydia objects to the ritual of confessing one’s wounds on one single

occasion and then being asked to move on entirely. Additionally, Lydia was never asked if she wanted her experience with trauma to be publicized. Instead, she was told by her husband that “Du Boise has applied for amnesty, he and three, four others, for rape, assault, on women mostly. He has named [Lydia] as one of the cases he wants amnesty from” (160). Lydia begs her husband to “stop them.” But, he can’t; “not even the president” could (160). This scene hauntingly mirrors Lydia’s rape, an encounter that Silas was also forced to listen to but could not prevent. Lydia scorns Du Boise for making the narrative of her life and sexuality his drama of contrition (127).

In *Interventions: Activists and Academics Respond to Violence*, “invisible violence” is defined as “violence that is so ordinary, so deeply engrained in the daily working of our social, political, economic, and religious institutions that it is considered normative. It is as common as air and is seldom viewed by dominant groups as violence at all” (203). Examples included are racial profiling, the detention of immigrants, and the “institutional tolerance of physical and sexual harassment and assault” (203). *Bitter Fruit* makes visible these invisible violences -- ones enacted by a revered, seemingly progressive institution. Andre Brink says of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that unless its “enquiries...are extended, complicated and intensified in the imaginings of literature, society cannot sufficiently come to terms with its past to face the future” (Miller 1). *Bitter Fruit* does some of this work and questions the ability of institutional spaces -- and we might add Kuzwayo’s courtroom to Lydia’s TRC -- to nurture complex identities and experiences, which is all the more necessary in a nation metaphorized through the image of “rainbow.”

The afterword, “Recycling Trauma,” concludes my project by demonstrating how Rozena Maart’s novel, *The Writing Circle* (2007), Zakes Mda’s novel, *Ways of Dying* (1995), and Nontsikelelo Veleko’s fashion photography (2000s) take the material remnants of violence that often go unnoticed and transform them into art. Both Mda and Maart include a parallel scene, in which a character locates a missing person by searching through a pile of discarded clothing. Deceased bodies come into the morgue, and their clothes are put into a separate room, where relatives identify their loved ones by locating the outfits they may have been wearing. In *Ways of Dying*, two nurses who work in the morgue casually discuss lavish European dress patterns against the backdrop of “all the clothes that the dead people were wearing stacked in a room, with numbers on them corresponding to the numbers on the trays” (20). In *The Writing Circle*, Maart similarly depicts a mother having to identify her dead son by verifying the blood-stained blue windbreaker he wore at the time of his death; he is later learned to be the rapist around which the plot of the entire novel is organized. I analyze these scenes, overwhelming and yet mundane, through the question: what does one do materially and conceptually with these remnants of trauma? *Ways of Dying* attempts to answer this question in another format by referring to the wallpaper with which Noria and Toloki decorate Noria’s new shanty. They reconstruct tossed out magazine covers and pages found on the ground into a “wallpaper of sheer luxury,” thus transforming the trash by which poverty is marked into a sense of shared belonging.

I end this afterword by examining the work of a photographer who has literally removed trauma from her frame. Nontsikelelo Veleko’s *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder* series (2003-2006) feeds off her enthusiasm for “anti-label,” saying: “[y]ou buy

one thing, you make another. It's like play." Veleko photographs a generation of "born-frees," and her images are beginning to create new imaginaries about Soweto that deviate from its "depressing, poverty-stricken, and crime-ridden ghetto" associations (Williamson 300). Trained in graphic design and photography, Veleko speaks back to a larger history in which both were used as tools of the apartheid regime to control identity in South Africa. Veleko hopes the lightheartedness of fashion will help her to avoid identity politics, which so often falls back on the belief that a person can only have "one true identity" (Murinik). Expanding the visual landscape around identity was also the aim of Veleko's earlier project, *www.notblackenough.lolo*, which focused on the damaging accusations of inauthenticity aimed against people of mixed heritage. In it, Veleko used variations of black and white portraiture to depict an uneven continuum of color which then ideologically celebrates racial heterogeneity. *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder* moves Veleko's portfolio into an urban world of neon colors and bold patterns. From a young androgynous woman who carries a purse made entirely of discarded cola cans, to men who wear yellow printed shirts and red knee-high socks, all defy the way race, gender, and class have habitually regulated dress. As South African literary scholar and cultural critic Sarah Nuttall says of the cultural moment, Veleko visually captures "generation Y" which distances itself from the strict identity framework established by the apartheid regime and sees the body instead as a work in process and a work of art. While Veleko's photographs do not focus on recovering from sexual violence specifically, this history of sexual trauma is entangled with broader histories of racial and gendered violence during apartheid which her art speaks back to. Like all of the imaginative works included in this dissertation, Veleko's category-blurring art is

important for the way she imagines new and creative ways of healing from trauma for groups of people who have been historically marginalized.

The artistic and literary texts I compile in this dissertation engage with and respond to South Africa's colonial history, as well as its contemporary cultural and political landscape; and yet I began this introduction with the sexual assaults experienced by Jyoti Singh, Anene Booysen, and Steubenville's female victim. The stories of these women indicate that issues of sexual violence often circulate beyond their respective nations and become transnational and translated. While my focus remains national, South Africa has a transnational history because of imperialism, is a part of the global market, and is an object of the global media gaze. As Makhosazana Xaba says in her poem about racialized violence in a post-1994 South Africa "And The Game Plays On": "the world watches / the new South Africa. The world watches / from the stadiums of the universe / The world watches / as the game plays on" (44). The media sensationalism over South Africa's rape crisis, with its various forms of sexual stigma and historical particularities, speaks to a South Africa that is post-rainbow; at times it may seem as if the days of rainbow nationalism and immediate post-apartheid euphoria are gone. And yet the artists and authors I analyze manage to articulate an erotics within this trauma and more closely reflect Alleyn Diesel's sentiments, when she writes in *Reclaiming the L-Word* that "the long walk to freedom is indeed long" (VII). The characters in the texts I analyze point attention to, in the words of Mda, new and alternative ways of living amidst the culture of violence that surrounds them. These representations and invocations of non-conforming desires and identities paint a fuller picture and imagine a broader range of human

expression than can be expected from legal documents or identity politics -- and provide a global audience with an alternative archive of South African sexuality in the making.

Chapter 1: Queer Settlements: Jacob Zuma's (Corrective) Rape Trial

*Nothing confuses a story as much as characters with shifting identities.
Achmat Dangor, Bitter Fruit*

*'This trial is more about sexual politics and gender relations than it is about rape.' Wise
words indeed but what a pity that it had to be said.
Judge Van der Merwe*

On December 6, 2005 then Deputy President Jacob Zuma's rape trial became *the* public rape case of the century in South Africa, making international headlines and absorbing the attention of South African media.²⁰ South Africa's 1996 Constitution has often been upheld as the most progressive in the world for protecting its citizens' various and multiple modes of identification, including: "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth." It enabled the recognition of both same-sex and polygamous marriages -- thus reconciling "modernity" and "tradition" -- and is often used as a rhetorical short cut to signify South Africa's modernity, equality, and democracy. The Zuma rape trial put pressure on several of these constitutional rights and speaks to a very different narrative about South Africa -- calling attention to the persistent, yet paradoxical image of South Africa as the "rape capital of the world."²¹ The high rate of sexual violence in general and the Jacob Zuma rape trial in particular began

²⁰ From June 14, 1999 to June 14, 2005 Jacob Zuma served as Deputy President of South Africa. On May 9, 2009 he was elected President, an office he currently still holds.

²¹ Human Rights Watch, as well as media reporting in the *BBC*, *New York Times*, *Sowetan* and others continue to refer to South Africa as the "rape capital of the world" although reliable statistics are difficult to gather. The increase of baby and child rape, in particular, caused a media frenzy over South Africa's rape crisis. One 2001 high-profile case involved a 9-month-old baby being gang raped by six men. The reconstructive surgery required after a child is raped makes these incidents more public and statistics more reliable. One explanation for the increase in child rape is the myth that sexual intercourse with a virgin will cure HIV and AIDS. However, even www.rape.co.za clarified that the 9-month-old baby had been raped "after the infant had been left unattended by her teenage mother" -- shifting blame away from violent masculinities and high HIV rates to young, often single, mothers.

to circulate internationally as indicative of South Africa's postcolonial failures -- of black run democracy in Africa and of an imagined "new" South Africa.

The legal team of Zuma's accuser, Fezeka Kuzwayo, highlighted her lesbian identification and positive HIV status, both of which would have logically prevented her from desiring unprotected sex with Jacob Zuma. In turn, Zuma's legal team framed his actions within the confines of normative male Zulu sexuality. I analyze this trial in order to investigate the often cited paradox of South African constitutional exceptionalism, on the one hand, and a high rate of sexual violence on the other. Gay legal equality thus meets sexual violence at a tense intersection. I close-read the trial using work by Homi Bhabha, Cathy Caruth, and Judith Butler to unravel the various narratives which helped frame Zuma's innocence through a construction of Zulu hyper-masculinity and cast doubt on Kuzwayo's lesbianism and professed life experience of multiple rapes. This chapter will try not to engage in the 'did he, or didn't he?' (or indeed the 'is she, or isn't she?') debate. Instead, it will examine the trial as a discursive battle which had significant repercussions beyond Zuma's guilt or innocence.

Cultural narratives about sexuality and violence -- real or imagined -- play a crucial role within South African politics. The "sexual ideology of racism," as Neville Hoad phrases it, flickers within political spaces -- the courtroom, Parliament -- and influences political decision-making in unpredictable ways. As mentioned in the introduction, in 1999 the South African Law Reform Commission famously estimated that 1.7 million rapes occur annually in South Africa, or about 1 every 26 seconds (Wilson; Smith).²² Then President Thabo Mbeki rejected this statistic, saying it was

²² As also mentioned in the introduction, according to *Rape Survivor Journey*, which references the SAPS's annual report, there were 55,000 rape cases reported in 2006. Immediately after, the scope of what

dependent on the conjecture that only “one in 36 rapes is reported” (Wilson). While on the floor of Parliament, Mbeki further claimed that these kinds of speculative rape statistics in South Africa have resulted from racism in the media which continues to portray black men as “savage beasts.” A parliamentary shouting match then ensued during which predominantly white legislators accused Mbeki of avoiding the issue of sexual violence and AIDS, while the president “accused them of pretending that racism died with apartheid” (LaFraniere). This public conflict demonstrates how the line separating the prevalence of rape in South Africa from the cultural narratives through which it gains meaning is difficult to ascertain. The very utterance of the word “rape” signifies excessively and is bound up with the sexist, heterosexist, racist, and colonialist histories from which it emerges. Since the image of South Africa as the rape capital of the world has been used by international media as a symbol of failed African run democracy, it becomes one obstacle the government faces when trying to respond systematically to the epidemic of sexual violence. The prevalence of sexual violence within townships has led to a strategic silencing on the part of government officials; admitting to the above statistics is perceived as also admitting to the myth that black men are sexually insatiable, instead of, say, to apartheid’s legacy which instituted its own economy of violence and “ideology of militarism,” as Jacklyn Cock calls it, before systematically leaving South Africans of color in deprivation and poverty (Gcola 114). Cock further asserts that the “failure to dismantle [this] ‘ideology of militarism’ in a new South Africa is directly implicated in what ails post-apartheid South Africa” (114).

Acknowledging how high the rate of sexual violence in South Africa is requires one also

constitutes a “rape” charge changed to include a wider array of sexual offences, such as anal rape, male rape, indecent exposure, and human trafficking. The current rate of sexual offences for 2009/2010 stands at 68,332.

to acknowledge a slew of other societal inequalities, since sexual violence is so heavily imbricated within them. Its connection to poorly funded education systems and health clinics, unemployment, and unequal access to housing and public transportation spreads the phenomenon of sexual violence across almost every major policy issue pertinent to contemporary South Africa.

This first chapter draws attention to the rhetorical forms of violence that erupted from the trial and that are imaginatively bound up with the accusation of rape. The Zuma rape trial demonstrates, on the one hand, the positive leaps made in South Africa to provide civil rights to homosexual citizens, evident in Fezeka Kuzwayo's ability to represent herself *as* a lesbian inside the courtroom. At the same time, Zuma's legal team used Kuzwayo's complex sexual history and indeterminate Zulu identity as evidence to undermine her identity claims. Her (soon deigned) illegible sexual and cultural identities were then used as evidence to discredit her character and reliability. I read this legal withholding of self-identity, in a nation largely defined through its diversity and multiculturalism, as a form of rhetorical violence. In the end, Kuzwayo was proven not lesbian, not Zulu enough. While the main objective of Zuma's rape trial was to determine whether the act of sex/rape²³ between the accused and the complainant was consensual or non-consensual: "also at stake was almost every major social, political, and economic issue pertinent in South Africa:" HIV/AIDS, political corruption, culture, tribalism, racism, bias among media reporting, poverty, education, and of course rape (Skeen 20). As Elizabeth Skeen later frames it, Jacob Zuma's trial dealt with South Africa's most

²³ I use the phrase sex/rape throughout this chapter to position myself between claims made by both the accused and complainant. By placing rape alongside sex I also emphasize how the distinction between the two, particularly in acquaintance rape cases, can be impossible to ascertain; there is rarely enough conclusive evidence.

feared crime -- rape -- and “further incorporated its most feared disease -- HIV/AIDS” (23). Because the act of sex/rape lacked other types of physical violence which so often accompany publicized rape cases in South Africa, the character reliability of both the accused and the complainant became that which was put on trial in a classic he-said versus she-said dichotomy. The manner in which Zuma and Kuzwayo narrated the series of events was imperative to deciphering whether the accused was lying about his actions or whether the complainant had falsely accused him. Each would construct a life narrative for the court. Kuzwayo’s life narrative would include her sexual history and Zuma’s would include his political history. Both would describe their life-long friendship, as well as the series of events leading up to their sexual encounter. The reliability of each person’s narrative would serve as evidence to determine the outcome of Jacob Zuma’s trial.

Before I analyze each person’s narrative, a brief summary of the night’s events is needed.²⁴ On November 2, 2005 Fezeka Kuzwayo came to Jacob Zuma’s home to discuss some matter of importance.²⁵ They spoke briefly in his study about Kuzwayo’s romantic life (Zuma encouraging Kuzwayo to find a boyfriend, reminding her that she still had physical needs despite/because of her HIV status) but, their conversation was interrupted by Zuma’s daughter Duduzile. Since Kuzwayo had already decided to spend the night -- something not uncommon given their strong familial ties -- Zuma and Kuzwayo agreed to reconvene later. Zuma pointed Kuzwayo to the guest bedroom and, upon her insistence, agreed to wake her if it was late and she had already fallen asleep.

²⁴ All court transcript quotations are taken from Judge Van der Merwe’s judgment, which was publicly recorded and televised on Primedia Broadcasting and e.tv.

²⁵ Both Jacob Zuma and Fezeka Kuzwayo testify that Kuzwayo came to Zuma’s home to discuss “some matter of importance” however, the subject matter of their discussion is not disclosed. According to both testimonies, the discussion never took place.

Zuma also commented on Kuzwayo's attire -- the now infamous kanga -- adding he had never seen her in one before.²⁶

At this point Zuma's and Kuzwayo's testimonies diverge. Zuma contends that upon entering Kuzwayo's already open bedroom, he found her lying on her stomach, still dressed in her kanga, fast asleep. As directed, Zuma woke Kuzwayo up, asking if she still wished to finish their discussion. Once Kuzwayo replied in the affirmative, they agreed to meet in Jacob Zuma's bedroom. Judge Van der Merwe's recap of Jacob Zuma's testimony reads as follows:

In [Zuma's] bedroom the accused was busy preparing the bed when the complainant entered. She was still wearing the kanga. She sat down on the bed. The accused took off his shoes and leaned against the pillows. [...] She said she was getting cold and asked if she could get underneath the duvet. She did so. The accused then decided to put on his pyjamas and undressed in the room and [...] also got into bed. The complainant then said that her body was tired and asked the accused to massage her. He fetched baby oil in the bathroom and started massaging her back while she was lying on her stomach. She loosened her kanga to allow him to rub her entire back and he noticed that she had no underwear on. He also rubbed her legs at the back and he noticed that she had no problem when he was rubbing her legs close to her private parts. She also asked him to massage her body in front. She turned around and the accused complied with the request. Once finished she thanked him, he washed his hands and came back to bed. In bed she covered him with her arm and as the accused noticed that something was now to happen he took off his pyjamas. When he got back into bed they started touching and kissing and eventually he asked her whether she had a condom because he had none. She did not have one. He said that he hesitated a bit which caused the complainant to say that he could not leave her in that situation and they continued to have sexual intercourse. [...] Once finished the accused went to the bathroom and took a shower. When he was finished with the shower he realised that the complainant was no longer in the bedroom. He got dressed and went downstairs. She was lying on the bed with her kanga on and in answer to

²⁶ In Steve Robins' article on the trial, he notes that a small group of anti-rape activists from People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) protested outside the court wearing cotton kangas. He argues they were "responding to what they perceived to be a systematic attempt to discredit the rape accuser and portray her as an unscrupulous seducer [...]" (15). I would add that Zuma's eroticization of Kuzwayo's kanga as a means to justify their intercourse is similar to the well-rehearsed victim-blaming defense which points to what a woman was wearing at the time of being raped as justification for it.

his question whether she was all right she said that she was fine and that nothing was wrong. They talked about her leaving the following morning, they kissed each other goodnight and the accused left (S v. J. Zuma 102-103).

Zuma then attested that a policeman was on duty that night and would have heard Kuzwayo's loud complaints, had there been any.

Throughout the trial, Jacob Zuma's defense was two-fold. His legal team affirmed that while Zuma did have sexual intercourse with the complainant, the sex was consensual and not rape. They backed this statement up by insisting that Kuzwayo was not the lesbian she claimed to be, but rather was "bisexual with lesbian tendencies" (Mhlongo). In addition, Zuma bound his desires for Kuzwayo to an invocation of his male gender and Zulu ethnicity, which labeled his actions as culturally normative. Zuma asserted that Kuzwayo "encouraged him [to have sex with her/to rape her] by wearing a short skirt and sitting provocatively. As a Zulu man, he was duty-bound to oblige her" (Bearak). In doing so, he instituted a pernicious narrative about Zulu identity, masculinity, and sexual relations that was called upon as masculine "tradition." Zuma's performance of Zulu hyper-masculinity was produced through a narrative of consensual heterosexual intimacy that was instituted as the only feasible way to make sense of their sexual relations.

The events of the night in question as narrated by the complainant went as follows. Kuzwayo stressed her longstanding familial relationship with Jacob Zuma, referring to him as a father-figure whose advice she was seeking. She argues that Zuma was attending to multiple visitors on November 2, 2005 and could only later attend to

her.²⁷ Kuzwayo made herself at home and decided to spend the night. While she and Zuma engaged in a preliminary discussion in his study, they were interrupted by Zuma's daughter and agreed to finish their conversation later that evening. According to Kuzwayo, she never went to Jacob Zuma's bedroom. Rather, the act of sex/rape took place in the guest bedroom where an entirely naked Jacob Zuma woke her.²⁸ Stunned by his nudity, Kuzwayo avowed she could hardly move or speak. When he started giving her a massage with baby oil, she was able to say 'no' twice to no avail. Zuma continued with his advances and initiated sexual intercourse while Kuzwayo remained completely frozen. After the act of sex/rape, she sent sms messages to her friends, but was unable to use the word "rape" within them. It was not until the next day that she was able to shake herself from what she called a "trance" to seek medical attention.

Throughout the trial Kuzwayo's legal team meticulously plotted out the longstanding familial and political connections between Kuzwayo's family and Zuma's. Kuzwayo considered Zuma to be family, since her father had been his close ANC comrade who fought beside him during the anti-apartheid struggle. She had also been raised alongside Zuma's daughter, who was the same age as Kuzwayo, and remained close friends until the rape trial. Kuzwayo's case rested on depicting an image of Zuma as a non-sexual father figure and on her lesbian identification and desires which would logically have prevented her from desiring him. Lastly, as an HIV positive woman and an

²⁷ Jacob Zuma argued that did not have other visitors to attend to; instead, he took this occasion to invite the complainant to his bedroom.

²⁸ According to Judge Van der Merwe: "Obviously it would tend to make the complainant's case stronger if sex took place in the guest-room because if it took place in the main bedroom she must have gone there and it would be more difficult to prove rape. [...] But, [he] find[s] it difficult to see what advantage the accused could gain by making his version more difficult by transferring what happened in the guest-room to the main bedroom" (S v. J. Zuma 156).

HIV/AIDS activist, Kuzwayo's legal team argued she never would have engaged in unprotected sex.

Zuma's and Kuzwayo's versions of the night are almost identical, but include some crucial differences. While Zuma attested that Kuzwayo came to his bedroom of her own accord, she argues he came into the guest bedroom naked and that she later said "no." Zuma argued that Kuzwayo got undressed willingly, whereas she argued the opposite. In one version mutual gratification and consensual sex took place. In the other - rape. With little material evidence, where does one go from here?²⁹ Five lines of character questioning took place over the five-month long trial dealing with such socio-cultural issues as language, culture, HIV status, sexual orientation, and trauma. Was Kuzwayo an "out and out" lesbian or was she simply "inclined to lesbianism?" (S v. J. Zuma, 93). While both Zuma and Kuzwayo attested to having had a strong life-long friendship, was their relationship categorically father-daughter? Kuzwayo assures the court that she thinks of Zuma as her *malume* and/or father figure. However, is this label substantial enough to signify familial ties? Lastly and most controversially, Kuzwayo attested to having been raped several times in her lifetime. In response, Zuma's legal team would go to great lengths to prove that Kuzwayo had a history of making false rape allegations.

²⁹ The "evidence" of the medical examination immediately following the act of sex/rape was used, not as evidence to prove or disprove traumatic penetration, but rather as evidence to question Kuzwayo's lesbianism. According to Judge Van der Merwe's verdict, "the gynecological findings of the doctor who examined the complainant after the alleged rape by the accused was put to her where it is stated that the 'hymen ring disappeared or disappearing.' There was some uncertainty whether it had disappeared or is disappearing. It was put to the complainant that such a finding is only associated with frequent penetrative sexual intercourse. She had no explanation for that finding" (58). Kuzwayo's lack of explanation for evidence regarding penetration is therefore interpreted as her lying about her lesbianism, rather than, say, her being unable to explain female-female penetration.

“Malume,” “Lesbian,” and other Problems with Translation

In Pumla Dineo Gqola’s article “How the ‘Cult of Femininity’ and Violent Masculinities Support Endemic Gender Based Violence in Contemporary South Africa,” she criticizes “the dominant talk of ‘empowerment of women’” by arguing that it often “translates into the expectation that women should adapt to the current system [...] rather than [transform] [it] into a space that is more receptive to women’s contributions, needs and wants” (115). She further argues that many “attempts, successful and failed, by women to alter the economic landscape are routinely under-reported and undervalued,” thus making invisible women’s “real transformative work” (116). It may not have been Kuzwayo’s objective to transform the legal system into one that would recognize queer women’s identities, experiences, and histories, as well as forms of gender-based violence that do not easily conform to the straightforward, notably British, rape cases Judge Van der Merwe quotes at length during his 174 page verdict; but, the publicity the trial garnered allows us to usefully excavate it as one moment in South African history where queer modes of belonging, although ultimately resisted, were at least articulated as legal South African possibilities.

Kuzwayo’s sexual history and illegible sexuality set off queer explosions in a courtroom trying to contextualize non-normative identities through heteronormative and homonormative lenses.³⁰ Although Kuzwayo self-identified as lesbian, Judge Van der Merwe discarded her self-identification, deciding that she wasn’t lesbian enough.

Kuzwayo attested under oath that she has “sexually been with men and women, [she]

³⁰ In “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual,” Judith Butler describes illegible sexualities, sexual practices and relationships as those “that fall outside the purview of the sanctifying law” (18). I use “illegible”, rather than “non-normative,” to emphasize the inability of the conservative courtroom space and legal language to make sense of a lesbian who has had varied gendered partners, rather than continuing to emphasize the so-called exceptionalism of Kuzwayo’s sexual practices.

consider[s] [her] sexual orientation to be a lesbian.” Rather than allow room for lesbian identities that also include opposite-gendered sexual histories, Judge Van der Merwe summarized this identification, by saying “it is clear that the complainant is bi-sexual with a lesbian orientation. She did not testify in chief that she is lesbian orientated” (S v. J. Zuma 49). According to Judge Van der Merwe, her preference for women seemed to include enough hesitation for her to desire someone as influential as Jacob Zuma.

The purpose of this chapter is not to demonize Judge Van der Merwe for his decisions in an undoubtedly complicated and controversial criminal trial. Although the trial was originally scheduled for February 13, one month passed while trying to find a judge that would agree to impartiality. In fact, three judges prior to Van der Merwe recused themselves. Judge President Bernard Ngoepe was first assigned, the most senior judge in the Transvaal Provincial Division. He recused himself (after asking to be recused by Zuma’s legal team), claiming impartiality would be an impossible feat. The trial was simply too politicized. Judge Jeremiah Shongwe was next on the list. Shongwe’s sister turned out to be a mother to one of Zuma’s children, making impartiality, again, impossible. Next to last, Judge John Mojapelo would have been assigned to the trial, but had worked alongside Zuma during the struggle in the ANC. He declined before even being asked. Only after these three refusals did Judge Willem Van der Merwe, fourth most senior judge, agree to oversee the deputy president’s rape trial (Skeen 27-28).

The challenges Van der Merwe encountered of accommodating multiple purviews of difference within a courtroom -- including cultural, gendered, sexual, and familial -- mirror those with which many critics positioned at the crux of queer and postcolonial theory are often confronted. Rob Nixon writes that “what is needed is an approach to

differences that breaks with smiling multiculturalism and its ugly mirror image, apartheid, by recognizing that inequalities in power slice across the sites of identity” (Attridge & Jolly 11). While postcolonialism tends to take nationality, ethnicity, or race as its determining factor, queer studies nurtures critical analyses of gender, sex, and sexuality. Queer of Color critiques have worked extensively to bring these two modes of belonging -- race and sexuality -- together, whereas queer, postcolonial criticism reflects on the way postcolonial experiences are compounded by queer modes of belonging and vice versa. Seminal texts, such as *Queer, Postcolonial: theoretical intersections* and *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* have supplemented what is often understood to be white U.S. and European-dominated queer critical foci. What this South African rape trial can contribute to this theoretical conversation is a material reminder regarding what and about whom scholars are theorizing and the uneven relationship that exists between queer peoples across the globe and the queer theory that often discusses their identities, desires, and practices. How to translate queer South African sexual practices through often colonial, legal language? I will argue that Kuzwayo often lacked a language to explain the seeming contradiction between her sexual identity as a lesbian and her traumatized sexual history which included sexual encounters with men. Her sexual and (as I will argue) cultural indeterminacy were difficult to craft a strong case around. If Kuzwayo often lacked a language to explain the connection between her sexual identity and sexual history, it is difficult to censure Judge Van der Merwe for struggling to make them cohere during a trial as popularized as the deputy-president’s rape trial. Steve Robins notes the difficult position Van der Merwe was in as a white judge in new South Africa presiding over a black politician’s rape trial.

Since the “predominantly white judiciary has been under persistent attack by black legal professionals and politicians for its perceived failure to meet transformation goals,” Robins argues, it may have been “strategic” to appear “sensitive to African culture and tradition” (426). Raymond Suttner similarly insists that a prosecuting team and judge consisting mainly of Africans would have been more equipped to engage critically with and to dismantle Zuma’s cultural defense, may have been privy to the diversity found within African cultures, and could have pointed to alternative forms of African masculinities.³¹

In a nation that was, in true Bhabhaian fashion, “becoming,” this trial makes hyper-visible the way in which the narratives espoused throughout Zuma’s trial participated in “writing the nation” (Bhabha 297).³² Pumla Dineo Gqola argues that South Africa’s Constitution “as a project describes how we *should* relate to one another, what we *should* be able to assume and invest in one another, what embracing and accepting that we are all entitled to freedom, really means” (italics mine 2007, 112). She further asserts that it “defines us generously as our best selves, in ways that dramatically move away from the manifold forms of legislated and institutionalized oppression under the ‘chaotic nightmare’ that became apartheid, as Achille Mbembe (2001) might say” (113). This rape trial tested the Constitution’s limits -- the way it “generously” imagined the new South Africa. Although it has laid the foundation for individuals to invest in new approaches to difference, Zuma’s acquittal came, in part, from pitting Kuzwayo’s

³¹ Cited in Robins, “Sexual Politics and the Zuma Rape Trial” (425).

³² In “DissemiNation” Bhabha expresses frustrations at current trends of reading the nation restrictively, what he calls a “hasty reading of Foucauldian apparatuses of power.” Instead, he would like to suggest reading the nation as narration -- as an idea which continually writes itself. He argues that “there is a split between the accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, strategy of the performative (acts people do which constitute or characterize themselves).” However, he suggests that through this splitting “modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*” (297).

ephemeral queerness up against Jacob Zuma's version of Zulu masculine traditionalism.³³ In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Sedgwick uses the phrase "minoritizing discourse" to demonstrate the way dominant culture has framed the homo/heterosexual definition as that which has "active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority." Although Kuzwayo's nationality as South African was never put into question, her sexuality didn't fit the minoritizing description of "lesbian." Her sexuality was not minoritized enough to become legible. Unlike Zuma who invoked his membership to traditional Zulu culture, Kuzwayo's legal team struggled to relate her individual experiences to a collective one. At the trial's end, only one narrative and one identity would cohere as legally defensible and legibly South African.

Despite her illegible sexuality and non-linear sexual history (or because of them), Kuzwayo and her legal team often called upon normative modes of belonging to clarify her unwillingness to have consensual sex with Jacob Zuma. Her lesbian identification would reasonably have prevented her from desiring him, as would his father-like role in her life. Once these hetero- and homonormative modes of belonging were brought into the courtroom's space, Zuma's legal team was meticulous in deconstructing them. What counts as a "lesbian"? What signifies paternal behavior? What occurred was a restrictive and disparaging reinforcement of normative relationships that discredited all sorts of queer family structures, including the kinds of non-biological kinship networks many individuals forged during apartheid in the wake of forced removals, exile and racial segregation.

³³ In Steven Robins' article on the trial, he characterizes Zuma's ethnic masculinity as "100% Zulu Boy" taken from the T-shirts Zuma's supporters wore outside the courtroom (418).

Fezeka Kuzwayo's and Jacob Zuma's now well-known lifelong friendship began in Swaziland, where both families lived in exile. At the age of five, Kuzwayo testified to having known Zuma as a "very friendly uncle" (8). Kuzwayo's father and Zuma were close friends, youth members of the ANC, and later sentenced to ten years imprisonment on Robben Island together. One May 1, 1985 Kuzwayo's father died in a car accident in Zimbabwe; it took her ten years to reconnect with Zuma after this unexpected loss (8).

In trying to explain the familial connection she felt toward Jacob Zuma, Kuzwayo relied on several discourses of heteronormativity, whereas Zuma relied on Zulu culture to explain the familial relationship away. Judith Butler comments that "efforts to establish bonds of kinship that are not based on a marriage tie become nearly illegible and unviable when marriage sets the terms for kinship, and kinship itself is collapsed into 'family'" (2002, 5). How does one prove feeling "familial" without the bonds of blood? In the absence of a biological father, Kuzwayo testified that Zuma agreed to negotiate *ilobolo* should she ever decide to marry. In addition, she lovingly referred to Jacob Zuma as *malume* out of respect. In doing so, Kuzwayo leans on commonly understood relationship roles fathers were expected to have with their daughters. In response, Zuma corrected Kuzwayo's translation of "father" -- and, in doing so, her status as a "good Zulu" -- reminding her and the court that *baba* would stand in as the best translation. He further denied ever having agreed to negotiate *ilobolo*. Rather, Zuma maintains that he offered to pay *ilobolo* and marry Kuzwayo after she accused him of rape. Mark Hunter comments that although the "English-speaking press poured scorn on this statement," interpreting it negatively as a patriarchal bribe, this misses the way that *ilobolo* "marks respectability -- even more so today than formerly because of the rarity of marriage among young, often

unemployed, South Africans” (2). Hunter therefore argues that Zuma framed his actions within a “gendered sense of respectability” -- a “sense” which, I contend, sets Kuzwayo up as being less than respectable (2). Zuma’s legal team continued, by reminding the court that this “person whom she regarded as her father had no contact with her for approximately fourteen years since 1985” (S v. J. Zuma 38). This gap in communication is marked by the traumatic death of Kuzwayo’s biological father, which may have prompted Kuzwayo’s absence. And yet this communicative gap was put forth to signify a non-family, since good families presumably maintain close bonds despite turmoil. Lastly, during the night in question, Jacob Zuma and Fezeka Kuzwayo had discussed Kuzwayo’s romantic life despite/because of her HIV positive status. Zuma had mentored Kuzwayo, empathizing with the fact that HIV did not erase her physical needs for companionship. Using his cultural background as a way to cement his non-paternal role in Kuzwayo’s life, Zuma informs the courtroom that “in Zulu culture an older girl is allocated to a younger girl to educate her as far as relationships and sexual behaviour are concerned” (S v. J. Zuma 98). This proclamation first painted Zuma as the good Zulu, before blasting Kuzwayo as a cultural and sexual deviant for even suggesting Zuma had participated in such an exchange.³⁴

Zuma often referenced traditional Zulu culture as a means to explain his assumptions, actions, and oversights. Since both Zuma and Kuzwayo identify and were raised within Zulu cultural norms, this becomes an easily accessible, well-rehearsed account. Kuzwayo’s Zulu lesbianism was not easily translatable through the language

³⁴ In *The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court*, Motsei asserts that “in spite of Judge Van der Merwe’s failure to grasp an expansive notion of family that goes beyond blood lineage [...] someone who has a keen eye and ear for tradition” should have been “aware of the principle of ‘my child is your child, your child is mine’ which, in African societies, encourages biological and non-biological parents to take communal responsibility for the material, psychological and moral well-being of every child in their community” (15).

made available to her in the courtroom. Rather than read Kuzwayo's Zulu identity alongside the same trajectory as Zuma's, room must be made for the way alternative customs, expectations, and traditions may have also been incorporated into Kuzwayo's cultural education. Kuzwayo may identify with any number of South Africa's "rainbow" customs or disidentify with Zulu cultural norms. Jose Munoz characterizes "disidentification" as distinct from assimilation/anti-assimilation. Instead, he sees it as:

descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship (4).

Kuzwayo's gender and sexual identifications could have fostered the need to disidentify with some (or several) of Zuma's traditional Zulu expectations. I argue that Judge Van der Merwe, in trying to accommodate South Africa's rainbow multiculturalism, reads Zulu culture restrictively, as historically "traditional." Homi Bhabha, in trying to clarify the "double-time" in which he argues a nation constantly lives, cites Franz Fanon, who pushes against the assumption "that there is a moment when the differential temporalities of cultural histories coalesce in an immediately readable present" (Bhabha 300).

Bhabha's "double-time" invokes constant movement between past and present; a nation's present periodically invokes past moments in order to understand present circumstances in relation to past events. Achille Mbembe prefers a temporal schema that can recognize the coexistence of multiple temporal trajectories -- imagining a "time of entanglement" rather than a linear back-and-forth between past and present (17). Keeping these divergent trajectories in mind, it appears that within South Africa's multicultural post-apartheid era, Judge Van der Merwe favored an untouched version of Zulu patriarchal traditionalism which would not also include other Zulu cultural narratives, would not

have striated or changed over time. Although diversity could exist among cultures to create one seemingly unified rainbow nation, diversity within a single culture is overlooked. Mbembe bemoans that “research on Africa has hardly stood out for its attempts to integrate nonlinear phenomena into its analyses. [...] it has underestimated how many temporal trajectories co-exist” (17). For Zuma’s defense to maintain its credibility, Zulu culture was denied elasticity -- deprived of the possibility to transform, to incorporate difference, or to include varied material experiences.³⁵

Queer and postcolonial theories have striven to make room for multiple temporal trajectories -- be it Mbembe’s “time of entanglement,” which would acknowledge the temporal messiness created by colonialism, or Jack Halberstam’s “queer time,” which makes visible lives conducted outside the heteronormative plot line of ‘first comes love, then comes marriage.’ Indeed, a slew of theories, from Carolyn Dinshaw’s model of “time touching”,³⁶ to Walter Benjamin’s temporal constellation,³⁷ to Ann McClintock’s colonial anachronistic time -- characterized by a movement forward in space, but backward in time -- all try to capture the disorderliness made evident in the wake of global imperialism and/or heteronormativity. Kuzwayo’s life spans the markers of “apartheid” and “post-apartheid,” and her temporal schemas are further influenced by exile, her HIV status, Zulu culture, and lesbian identification. Since Jacob Zuma didn’t

³⁵ Steven Robins argues that “Zuma’s popularity within the ANC is largely due to his endorsement of social and sexual conservatism, African traditionalism and what Raymond Suttner (2008) refers to as ‘ANC masculinities’ (412).

³⁶ Carolyn Dinshaw’s queer historical touch does “not emerge out of teleological necessity,” but rather from “a desire for bodies to touch across time.” The archive of texts she chooses display “across its variety a consistent impulse to make contact” (2-3). How her materials relate to each other and what erupts from their touch is among her primary concerns.

³⁷ In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin observes that “[e]ach ‘now’ is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time...It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” (Baucom 3).

remember her birthday and didn't acknowledge a conversation about lobola, since talking about sex with one's offspring is distinctly un-Zulu, and since normative familial temporality never experiences absence or neglect, it was clear to Judge Van der Merwe that "the complainant tried to persuade the court that she had a very deep and intimate father/daughter relationship with the accused," but that her attempts were decidedly unfounded (S v. J. Zuma 151).

Interrogating Ignorance

I have argued that Judge Van der Merwe and Zuma's legal team instituted a fixed, insidious identity politics which negated Kuzwayo's self-identification as a lesbian and status as a "good Zulu." Despite this rigidity in conceptualizing sexual and cultural affiliation, pliability *was* awarded to one central tenet circling throughout the trial: HIV/AIDS. Jacob Zuma admitted to knowingly engaging in unprotected sex with an HIV positive person and further testified to a post-coital preventative shower. The paradox subsuming this defense was Zuma's concomitant role as head of the National AIDS Council in South Africa -- an organization that promoted abstinence, faithfulness, and condom use, otherwise known as the ABC's of HIV prevention. South Africa's well-known political cartoonist, Zapiro, blasted ironic images of Jacob Zuma, head of AIDS Council, showering. One titled "Jacob Zuma's 101 Uses for a Condom" included eight



Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4762643.stm

condoms filled with testimonial allusions. Since Zuma hadn't used a condom to prevent HIV transmission, Zapiro depicted condoms as a "court summons holder," for "keeping spectacles used to see short skirts better," as a "bedside baby-oil holder," and, of course, "as a shower cap for having an AIDS-prevention shower." Zapiro's omnipresent visual commentary demonstrates the way that Zuma's sexuality was also publicly scrutinized.

It was amidst this public scrutiny and within an era of AIDS denialism that the most controversial legal decision made within the trial emerged. Kuzwayo's status as an HIV positive lesbian and HIV/AIDS activist were vital facts upholding her rape charge. Kuzwayo testified she had "not *willingly* [had] unprotected sex" since learning of her HIV status in 1999. Judge Van der Merwe reiterated that "the complainant had enough information available to understand the dangers to herself if she had unprotected sex with another HIV positive person" (*S v. J. Zuma* 20).³⁸ Section 227(2) of the Sexual Offences

³⁸ In 2010 Jacob Zuma made his HIV (negative) status public as part of a national HIV education campaign to eradicate stigma and silence surrounding HIV; however, at the time of this trial his status was publicly unknown.

Act protects a “female against or in connection with whom any offence of a sexual nature is alleged to have been committed” from being questioned on her sexual history.³⁹ Under this act, Kuzwayo’s previous sexual experiences are viewed as legally irrelevant to her rape charge. Section 227(2) of the Act leaves room, however, for “the court” to decide that “such evidence or questioning is relevant.” In light of this Section, Mr. Kemp of Zuma’s legal team posed: “How can the credibility of the complainant on this aspect be properly tested without going into her sexual history since April 1999?” (*S v. J. Zuma* 26). Since Jacob Zuma publicly announced his HIV preventative shower, in lieu of a condom, and since Kuzwayo testified that she would never have engaged in consensual, unprotected sex, the cross-examination would dissect whether in “each and every occasion she had had sex since 1999 a condom was used” (*S v. J. Zuma* 26). Although Judge Van der Merwe “reserved the right to later rule this evidence inadmissible,” he “wanted to see the arguments that the defense would lead” (Skeen 59). While Mr. Kemp implied he was only investigating for condom use, the implications to further prove or disprove Kuzwayo’s lesbianism, as well as her professed life experience of multiple rapes, were also under question.

In a closed court, Kuzwayo endured four days of cross-examinations about her sexual past and sixteen pages of her memoir were admitted as exhibit “E2” and cross-referenced as a way to test the reliability of her sexual narrative (Skeen 50).⁴⁰ This trial thus included crucial moments of textual evidence and interpretation; its multi-generic texture makes it particularly apt for literary engagement. Among the complainant and

³⁹ Section 227(2) was instituted to “protect witnesses from hurtful, harassing and humiliating attacks, the recognition of a person’s right to privacy in the highly sensitive area of sexuality and the realisation that the exposure of their sexual history may deter many victims of sexual offences from testifying” (35).

⁴⁰ Kuzwayo was upset that her memoir was submitted as evidence. Although she intended to publish it, significant revisions to content and form were intended to take place prior to public consumption.

defendant's oral histories and Judge Van der Merwe's rape archive are also 16 pages of Fezeka Kuzwayo's personal memoir. In discussing how autobiography and/or memoir should be read, Sandra Pouchet Paquet focuses on the "radical instability of autobiography as a genre" and cites "[a]ll recent studies -- including those by Sidonie Smith, Andrews, Benstock, Bruss, Olney, Spengemann, and Lejeune, among others -- [who] underscore the instability of the genre" (8, 266).⁴¹ Pouchet Paquet suggests that autobiography is useful precisely because it "allows for greater flexibility of reference," which allows its author to collapse "the private and the personal [...] into projections of a public self [...]" (4-5). This public self is an invention -- a new persona -- crafted by the writer to represent the memoirist. In this trial, however, misreading personal memoir as referential truth prompted the court to detect these generic instabilities without properly interpreting their complexity. Discrepancies erupted between Kuzwayo's oral testimony in court and this early drafting of her memoir -- inconsistencies which were then read as symptomatic of Kuzwayo's unreliable character. By highlighting and juxtaposing two of these inconsistencies, I will suggest an alternative reading which points to the rhetorical instabilities inherent in transliterating lived traumatic experience and memory into writing, as well as within the definition of "rape."

Zuma's legal team brought in six witnesses total, two associated with the church, three from her childhood, and one Kuzwayo testified to never having met. The assistant state prosecutor Herman Broodryk remembers that "once they were allowed to go at her sexual history" that was it. "They went at it and [...] they were very well prepared" (Skeen 23). Woven into Kuzwayo's cross-examination were implicit debates regarding what counts as rape, penetration, and consent. Early in Kuzwayo's memoir, she

⁴¹ Citations can be found in *Caribbean Autobiography: Cultural Identity and Self-Representation*

referenced being raped in Swaziland at the age of five. In court she clarified that this experience was not in fact rape, but rather “an experience with a penis” (S v. J. Zuma 50). She further asserted in court that she *had* been raped on another occasion at age five -- an incident which was not mentioned in her memoir. The court did not take this assertion further. Later, Kuzwayo was asked about an attempted rape by a male acquaintance named Mashaya. Kuzwayo testified that “Mashaya and a friend of his kidnapped her, bundled her in a car and took her to his house.” Mashaya then “attempted to have sex with her,” but was discouraged enough when he discovered that Kuzwayo was menstruating. This is defined by Kuzwayo as “attempted rape.” She was further probed about her sexual relationship with Mashaya. Did she have (presumably consensual) sex with him on any other occasion? Kuzwayo could not remember. In place of memory she cited law, explaining that “any type of sexual relationship with a 13-year-old person, even with consent, [would] be an offence” (S v. J. Zuma 51).

In these two short testimonies, distinctions are already made among an experience, an offence, an attempted rape, and rape. Jacques Derrida asserts that “bearing witness is not proving. Bearing witness is heterogeneous to producing proof or exhibiting a piece of evidence.” It is not “‘I prove,’ but ‘I swear that I saw, I heard, I touched, I felt, I was *present*’” (75-6). Kuzwayo can testify that she saw, heard, touched, felt, and was present at the experiences referenced in her memoir; but, she cannot yet reliably label, classify, or define these experiences in accordance with legal discourse. There is a discrepancy between what Kuzwayo described as rape in her memoir and what she later re-classifies as “an experience with a penis” in court. Since Kuzwayo knew that “any type of sexual relationship” with a young person would be considered an “offence,” her

reluctance to label the “experience with a penis” as a legal offence cloaks that childhood memory in ambiguity. Reading Kuzwayo’s memoir alongside her oral testimony allows us to interrogate legal rape discourse, putting pressure on which physical acts count as rape, rather than the persistent focus on what counts as consent. The court chose to interpret these literary discrepancies as indicative of Kuzwayo’s unreliability, an inconsistency which may have cost her the case. However, also at stake was the definition(s) of rape and the unstable process of transcribing traumatic memory into writing. It begs us to ask what type of language could have been available to a five-year-old who had already experienced sexual assault and what kinds of damage could be caused in asking an adult to excavate those memories -- a temporal confusion that could undermine one’s sense of self. While Kuzwayo’s sexual history was originally included to determine her behavior as an HIV positive person, the inclusion of these early childhood events which took place prior to 1999 make evident that Mr. Kemp also wanted to pursue whether Kuzwayo had a history of falsely accusing men of rape. In fact, all eight cases Judge Van der Merwe recapitulates in his judgment occurred prior to 1999. He reasoned that, since “the issue of consent in the present matter, the question of motive and indeed credibility [...] was fundamental to the accused's defense,” this unexpected line of inquiry was relevant (*S v. J. Zuma* 37). When finally asked who transmitted HIV to her, Kuzwayo could think only of one “person referred to in cross-examination as Z. He was the only man with whom she had consensual penetrative sex.” This assertion then caused some confusion as to how many people Kuzwayo “had sex” with versus those with whom she had “penetrative sex” (*S v. J. Zuma* 57). While she had attested earlier to

having had sex with five males, she later clarified that she only had penetrative sex with one.

Kuzwayo's testimony reveals the ambiguity surrounding the legal discourse about rape. Through the discontinuities between her written memoir and oral testimony, she inadvertently challenges what counts as rape, attempted rape, and legal offences. Even what counts as sex is seen to be contested. For Kuzwayo, sex need not include penetration. The confusion her clarification caused -- between five male sexual partners and one penetrative partner -- indicates that Zuma's legal team had not yet considered the option of non-penetrative sex. As if on cue, both Mr. Kemp and Judge Van der Merwe attempted to stabilize the uncertainty Kuzwayo's testimony unveiled about rape. While Mr. Kemp used *mens rea* to restrict rhetorically the use of the word "rape" -- limiting rape to only those sex acts which the guilty party "intended" as rape -- Judge van der Merwe provided a literature review of United Kingdom rape cases as one way to support his decisions throughout the trial. The battle over what counts as rape was forged over the relevance of *mens rea* which became a mini-trial within a trial. Mr. Kemp filed "an application in terms of section 174 of the Act" to discharge the accused on the relevance of *mens rea*. The Sexual Offences Act in both the U.K. and South Africa argued that rape "can only be committed intentionally" (S v. J. Zuma 85). This application for discharge (which would have awarded Zuma with an early acquittal) required Kuzwayo's legal team to prove that Jacob Zuma's mind was guilty with the intent of raping her.

At the time of Jacob Zuma's trial, "rape" was defined in South Africa as a male having unlawful and intentional sexual intercourse with a female without her consent.⁴²

⁴² Van der Merwe cites Snyman Criminal Law 4th edition page 445. Also Burchell Principles of Criminal Law 3rd edition page 699 (85).

Judge Van der Merwe cited six rape cases that were pivotal for the United Kingdom continually revising their definition of “rape.” Several amendments were made to their Sexual Offences Act in 1956 which resulted in the inclusion of *mens rea*, namely: “a man commits rape if a) he has unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who at the time of the intercourse does not consent to it; and b) at that time he knows that she does not consent to the intercourse or he is reckless as to whether she consents to it” (89). Van der Merwe referenced Lord Cross of Chelsea, Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone, and Lord Fraser of Tullybelton who agree that “the mental element in rape is not knowledge but intent. [...] Either the prosecution proves that the accused had the requisite intent, or it does not” (*S v. J. Zuma* 88). The Act has been considerably revised since 1956, but its reliance on *mens rea* to prove rape from consent remains.

Eve Sedgwick’s influential book, *Epistemology of the Closet*, categorizes the “regime of the open secret” as one way to understand the prevalence and presence of homosexuality within canonical western literature. She says: it’s not so much “don’t ask, don’t tell. But, more laconically you shouldn’t know” (52). At first glance Sedgwick’s critical work -- which focuses on literary texts, “Western culture,” and homosexuality -- seems to have little in common with a twenty-first century South African court case; however, the main impetus of her book -- to pluralize ignorance in the same way other queer theorists had pluralized knowledge -- can provide a useful lens through which to examine Zuma’s defense. Sedgwick argues that the “epistemological asymmetry of the laws that govern rape [...] privileges at the same time men and ignorance, inasmuch as it matters not at all what the raped woman perceives or wants just so long as the man raping her can claim not to have noticed (ignorance in which male sexuality receives careful

education)” (5). If Jacob Zuma could prove that he didn’t know Kuzwayo didn’t want to have sex with him -- if his mind wasn’t guilty with the intent of rape -- then his case would be strengthened to the point of acquittal. Jacob Zuma testified that he “didn’t know” an HIV preventative shower would not prevent HIV, despite his role in South Africa’s AIDS council. He “didn’t know” that Kuzwayo thought of him as a father-figure. He was also unaware of her lesbian identification, but was certain she must be bisexual because she had engaged in consensual sex with him.

This mini-trial over *mens rea* stimulated a temporary turn in events; Judge van der Merwe could not “find beyond reasonable doubt that the accused did not have the required *mens rea*” and dismissed Zuma’s application for early acquittal (S v. J. Zuma 93). Van der Merwe explains:

The complainant’s evidence, as stated in the short judgment, was not so broken down that it could be disregarded. In terms of her evidence she saw the accused naked, massaging her, while he was already on top of the bed and on top of her. From her evidence alone it appears as if the accused came into the guest room naked or undressed himself before he started massaging her. Therefrom it appears as if there was an intent to have intercourse whether with or without consent. [...] One can also not lose sight of the fact that the complainant's evidence is to the effect that she would not have consented to unprotected sex. Though she is not an out and out lesbian, the fact that she is inclined to lesbianism cannot be lost sight of (92-93).

This evidence is *not* put forth to prove that Jacob Zuma raped Fezeka Kuzwayo, only that he would have had sex with her, with or without her consent. Judge Van der Merwe made this decision “from her evidence alone,” segmenting off Zuma’s oral testimony. The Zuma rape trial was a historic moment in South African history that signifies beyond the individuals involved. The verdict was televised on Primedia Broadcasting and e.tv on May 4, 2006 and lasted hours while Van der Merwe read all 174 pages. Half-way through

his lengthy verdict and while on this public platform, Van der Merwe refused to grant Zuma *mens rea*. In doing so and if only for a moment, he gave credence to her queer sexuality and rights as an HIV positive person to safe and protected sex. Although Zuma's acquittal has been interpreted as a major step back for anti-rape activism, I encourage reading Van der Merwe's public refusal to grant Zuma *mens rea* as a small, if often overlooked, victory, even while it still puts the accused's state of mind back at the center.

Jacob Zuma's rape trial calls for literary engagement because of its multi-generic texture. It may not be surprising then that Judge Van der Merwe chose to conclude his verdict with a poem. He argues that "had Rudyard Kipling known of this case at the time he wrote his poem 'If' he might have added the following: 'And if you can control your body and your sexual urges, then you are a man my son'" (S v. J. Zuma 173). Steve Robins has noted the "lingering colonial legacies of racial paternalism" imbedded throughout the verdict, but that are especially visible in this bizarre rephrasing of an imperialistic writer, a reading which allowed Van der Merwe to belittle Jacob Zuma through the mask of Kipling (416). This racial paternalism, as Robins labels it, can also be seen in Van der Merwe's inclusion of and reliance on British rape cases dating back to the 1950s as way of defining rape and framing his judgment. Although Van der Merwe's reading of Kipling's poem was undoubtedly paternalistic, the small attempt to shift the weight of responsibility in sexual assault cases, from the complainant (who should clearly voice his/her dissent) to the accused (who should enact responsibility and ask for consent) could be seen as chauvinistically generative. This gesture moves away from

discourses that blame women for being raped to ones that re-frame male desire and masculinity through responsibility and respect.

The elusive hymen and other discourses on trauma

A rape survivor has 72 hours to be seen by a gynecologist for an examination that could possibly extract evidence to be used in a criminal trial. Sexual violence is one of few crimes where a person's body becomes the crime scene and the evidence. Many rape survivors never make it to the doctor due to lack of access, resources, or safety; Fezeka Kuzwayo did. In rape cases that lack physical violence, it can still be difficult to determine whether vaginal agitation is due to consensual sex or rape. Since Kuzwayo testified to never having had penetrative sex since 1999, this discrepancy should have been more straightforward. However:

The gynaecological findings of the doctor who examined the complainant after the alleged rape by the accused was put to her where it is stated that the "hymen ring disappeared or disappearing." There was some uncertainty whether it had disappeared or is disappearing. It was put to the complainant that such a finding is only associated with frequent penetrative sexual intercourse. She had no explanation for that finding (S v. J. Zuma 58).

Kuzwayo was further asked if there were other reasons for having a disappearing or disappeared hymen ring -- reasons beyond penetrative sex with a male? Kuzwayo (no doubt lacking expertise on hymen physiology) could not explain why her hymen was elusive. Although her exam should have been executed to review whether she had experienced trauma, the insistent focus on "frequent penetration" was instead utilized to prove or disprove her lesbianism. The scrutiny of Kuzwayo's body and her genitalia brings to mind the history of Sara Baartman, as well as Caster Semenya. The protective

national attitude toward Baartman's violated body during this period provides a striking contrast to this court case. Even Semenya's gender-queerness was defended by Jacob Zuma and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as god-given. Madikizela-Mandela asserted that "[t]here is nothing wrong with being a hermaphrodite. It is God's creation. She is God's child. She did not make herself" (Munro 2010, 392). The belief that Semenya "did not make herself" opens up the possibility for Kuzwayo's sexuality to be, in fact, a choice. The seeming incongruity between her sexual history and sexual identity may be cast as less "natural" than Semena's gender-queer physical embodiment, less sympathetic, and less defensible.

Trauma theorists in the humanities, such as Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman have taken a primarily Freudian approach to unpacking the psychic trauma that impacts the lives of genocide and holocaust survivors. This body of mostly western trauma theory tends to analyze symptoms common to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as recurring memory through flashbacks and nightmares, as well as depression. Cathy Caruth phrased it eloquently when she said "immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (1996 92). In order to survive a traumatized event, a person often represses its emotional effects, only to experience them much later in the form of flashbacks or nightmares. Trauma theory in general, and PTSD as a referent point to diagnose trauma in particular, have sparked lively debates among postcolonial scholars who see a usefulness in trauma theory, but are wary of its applicable limitations. Can trauma theory be effectively postcolonialized? Irene Visser questions whether PTSD can be applied to conflict zones or areas of enduring war to which there may be no "post" to

the traumatic stress disorders its occupants' experience.⁴³ Her primary concern is one of historical specificity, as she states:

Freud's theorization of trauma [...] centrally poses the internal, abstract and "unsayable" causation of trauma rather than a historically concrete, knowable, external causation. This lack of historical particularity sits uneasily with postcolonialism's eponymous focus on historical, political and socio-economic factors in processes of colonization and decolonization (273).

More recently, queer theorists such as Judith Butler and Ann Cvetkovich have broadened what counts as "trauma" and "war" by including a number of "public cultures that emerge in relation to trauma," such as lesbians and/or incest survivors for Cvetkovich, as well as all those lives not considered grievable, such as illegal immigrants in the United States or Guantanamo prisoners for Butler (11). Cvetkovich expands the use of "trauma culture" to that which she personifies as living in the hinge -- "the hinge between systemic structures of exploitation and oppression and the felt experience of them" (12). Important questions emerge: What counts as trauma? Can PTSD be applied to emotional conditions of living in conflict zones? What counts as a conflict zone? This conversation among trauma theory, queer theory, and postcolonial studies applies to the Zuma rape trial in uneven ways.

Fezeka Kuzwayo was seen by two professionals Judge Van der Merwe labeled "trauma experts," Dr. Merle Friedman, a clinical psychologist and Dr. Olivier, a forensic psychologist. While on the stand, these psychologists locked their (publicized) diagnoses into the logic of normalcy, and thus contributed to the normativizing features found elsewhere in this trial. Neither of these experts conducted the gynecological exam immediately following the alleged rape, but both were asked to comment on the

⁴³ Visser's "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies" frequently echoes and makes reference to the Spring/Summer 2008 special issue of *Studies in the Novel*, which focused on postcolonial trauma.

gynecological findings, as well as on the complainant herself. The tension between their ensuing reports came down to a battle of credentials -- which one was most qualified to prepare evidence for a courtroom? Dr. Friedman testified, in short, that Kuzwayo showed symptoms commonly associated with PTSD immediately following the alleged rape, a diagnosis which lends itself to supporting Kuzwayo's rape claim. Dr. Olivier rejected this diagnosis, arguing that since no psychometric tests were done to discover what would constitute "normal" behavior for the complainant, the "abnormal" behavior Friedman observed could not be validated. Dr. Olivier then refused the PTSD diagnosis and with it Kuzwayo's rape charge. This continual engagement with PTSD as the primary indicator of trauma introduced its own logic of normalcy -- one pervasive throughout the trial. A postcolonizing and queering of trauma theory would critically question whether PTSD can be applied to women who have experienced rape in a country known for its rape crisis. I suggest that perhaps rape is not experienced as traumatizing, but as an everyday damaging normal. Additionally, the reliance on generalizable diagnoses which quickly slide into the language of normalcy is ill-fitting to a person whose own experiences with and expressions of gender and sexuality are decidedly queer. The problem then of translating queer gender and sexual expressions impacted by trauma through legal and psychological language become, in this moment, hyper-visible, and the challenge of obtaining justice within the arena of law and the courtroom becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to imagine.

Dr. Likibi was the medical doctor who examined Kuzwayo at the Ntabiseng clinic at Baragwanath hospital on November 3, 2005. He testified that the complainant came to him after having been raped by a family member, "an uncle." He further testified that no

physical injuries or bleeding were found, barring a “small fresh tear on the posterior fourchette” (S v. J. Zuma 68-9). Dr. Likibi’s task was then to interpret this small tear. He argued that it could have resulted from a few different possibilities, some of which gesture toward consensual sex and others toward rape. Since the complainant testified to being sexually inactive, he contends that “any type of intercourse at that moment would have provoked that tear” from penetration to a fingernail. Passionate intercourse could have caused vaginal tearing, as well as a “lack of proper preparation before intercourse so that there was not enough lubrication” (S v. J. Zuma 69). Whereas passionate intercourse would indicate consensual sex, lack of lubrication could imply either coercion or consent. Similarly, if the complainant hadn’t been consistently sexual active, either coercion or consensual sex could have caused vaginal tearing. The way in which the physical harm Kuzwayo suffered lends itself to being interpreted as either traumatizing or consensual brings to mind Catharine A. MacKinnon, who notes that “[r]ape cases finding insufficient evidence of force reveal that acceptable sex, in the legal perspective, can entail a lot of force” (44). Thus, relying on evidence of physical harm alone makes the distinction between pleasurable sex acts and rape uncertain. We are at a forensic stand-still.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Friedman summarized her stance on Kuzwayo’s rape claim by stating that:

It is [...] consistent with the literature, as well as with [her] personal experience in dealing with rape directly as well as supervising therapists and psychologists treating patients who have been raped, that there is a variation in response. However, when the attack is completely unexpected and the victim is woken from sleep and perceives herself to be trapped, it is probable that her response would be to freeze and submit rather than to fight. In addition, the history of the relationship, as that of father/daughter, and the respect in which she held him, would further reduce the chance of her fighting. She did say 'no' twice to him and turned her face away and closed her eyes, which was some attempt at not being there or fleeing (65).

She concludes by suggesting that the shock Kuzwayo faced at being woken by a “naked [man] with an erect penis” made his intentions clear. Kuzwayo “was unable to respond in any way other than freeze” (65). Dr. Friedman reiterated that Kuzwayo’s behavior was a “normal” reaction from someone who was being raped. Although Dr. Friedman’s testimony supports and reinforces Kuzwayo’s own account of the night in question, it carries on the normativizing impulse which saturates this trial’s transcript. Kuzwayo’s sexuality, ethnicity, and behavior are consistently understood through normalizing frameworks which discredit expressions of self that do not succumb to dominant paradigms of identity and performance.

In contrast, Dr. Olivier spent her cross-examination explaining the differences between a clinical and forensic psychologist. She explains that a clinical psychologist “deals with the perception by the patient,” who is then treated for that perception; whereas forensic psychologists investigate “in detail in order to find whether the perception represents the” so-called “true factual situation” (*S v. J. Zuma* 139). Due to this disciplinary difference, all Dr. Friedman could legally verify was whether Kuzwayo believed she had been raped. Dr. Olivier was also locked into the language of normalcy, insisting that a “normal” rape survivor should want protection and would therefore lock the bedroom door or call the police. By circulating myths about rape victim behavior on this national public platform, Dr. Friedman argues that Kuzwayo’s behavior did not indicate that she had been raped at all.

In South Africa it is now famously estimated that a woman is more likely to be raped than to learn how to read. In 2006 roughly 55,000 people had reported rape cases and an estimated 450,000 cases go unreported every year (www.rape.co.za). These

statistics, as demonstrated earlier, have not gone uncontested, and all bring with them the damaging effects of what Neville Hoad labels the “sexual ideology of racism.” How does one categorize sexual violence in South Africa in terms of trauma? Fezeka Kuzwayo testified to multiple experiences of rape dating back to when she was five. Although South Africa would not be defined as a conflict zone, is PTSD an appropriate rubric for capturing the emotional, psychological, and physical effects of this enduring war on women’s bodies? As MacKinnon re-frames it, “[i]f sexuality is central to women’s definition and forced sex is central to sexuality, rape is indigenous, not exceptional, to women’s social condition” (42). For her, “until sex and violence are confronted as mutually definitive rather than as mutually exclusive,” rape, as most women experience it, “will not be seen” as violating (45). Can there be a “post” trauma for women and men who undergo gender and sexual violence? A postcolonialized trauma theory would have to take into consideration the way nationalism affects postcolonial experiences and the way ethnicized culture, despite work to the contrary, can still be used as a weapon even against its own minoritized affiliates -- members, in this case, minoritized for their gender and sexuality.

MacKinnon points to the social construction and policing of the male/female gender binary as one way to explain the persistent presence of sexual violence in the United States. She reflects:

The deeper problem is that women are socialized to passive receptivity; may have or perceive no alternative to acquiescence; may prefer it to the escalated risk of injury and the humiliation of a lost fight; submit to survive. Also, force and desire are not mutually exclusive under male supremacy (48).

For MacKinnon, “[t]he question for social explanation becomes not why some women tolerate rape but how any women manage to resent it” (44). Following along a similar trajectory, Eve Sedgwick surmises that “it matters not at all what the raped woman perceives or wants just so long as the man raping her can claim not to have noticed” (5). Dr. Olivier points out that Dr. Friedman could not have known from what baseline Kuzwayo was expressing trauma if psychometric tests were not conducted, explaining that her own expertise in forensic psychology gives her the great advantage of finding out in detail “whether the perception [of the patient] represents the true factual situation” (S v. J. Zuma 139). This back-and-forth between Friedman and Olivier emblemizes the larger discursive problems of continuing to place anti-rape responsibility on women and/or victims of violence, rather than on perpetrators. Additionally, MacKinnon concludes that since courts “seldom consider that [male] experience[s] of the real is anything other than reality, they can only explain the woman’s version as maliciously invented” (51). The psychological discourses produced throughout this rape trial were decidedly unhelpful, suffering from gender bias. For, as MacKinnon phrases it: “[t]he implicit social standard becomes: if a woman probably could not prove it in court, it was not rape” (50). In line with postcolonial trauma theorists, I suggest reframing the enduring war on women’s (and men’s) bodies as potentially parallel to living in a conflict zone, and therefore recast the question -- can there ever be a “post” to people who experience trauma -- from within this understanding. A feminist approach would underscore the enormous gender inequalities that come strongly into play in cases dealing with sexual violence and assault. If Kuzwayo had been raped several times in her lifetime, as she testified she had, how could one decipher which act of sexual assault

caused her supposed post-traumatic stress disorder? Or taken in reverse, perhaps assault, for a lesbian, is simply part of Kuzwayo's everyday. What if she no longer experiences it as traumatizing, but as a new damaged normal?

On March 6th, 2006 Fezeka Kuzwayo was greeted at the Johannesburg High Court by protesters carrying signs that read “[h]ow much did they pay you *nondinwa* [bitch]?” The next day her photograph was circulated and then burned by a group of mostly female Zuma supporters chanting “[b]urn this bitch.” On March 8, Judge Van der Merwe reminded the protesting public that nothing identifying the complainant, referred to as Khwezi throughout the trial, could be published -- imposing a false sense of anonymity which had clearly already been compromised. Zuma led his supporters in “*Lethu Mshini Wami*” (bring me my machine gun), a popularized Zulu military song often rehearsed by the ANC during anti-apartheid struggles, but which had come to personify Jacob Zuma. At the same time other protesters gathered to defend Kuzwayo's right to lay rape charges. The One-in-Nine campaign's posters rhetorically asked: “Jacob Zuma Sexual Predator???” In addition, women garbed in kangas claimed their right to wear the kanga anytime, anywhere.⁴⁴ Despite the number of NGO and feminist groups who organized to support Kuzwayo, Zuma supporters far outnumbered them, and their verbal and gestural violence followed her in and out of the courtroom.

It is possible that Kuzwayo unequivocally believed that Zuma violated her sexual rights, while at the same time Zuma believed that he engaged in some form of consensual sex. Where does that leave us? While *mens rea* uses the accused's belief system as protection -- Jacob Zuma could not have committed rape unless this was his intention --

⁴⁴ The *Mail and Guardian* published a selective timeline of the trial, where references to these forms of protest can be found: <http://mg.co.za/article/2006-03-21-timeline-of-the-jacob-zuma-rape-trial>

no laws are then in place which protects a person who believes s/he has been violated. The laws which govern sexual violence and rape might never be sufficient to unravel adequately the way gender, sexuality, culture, health, social and economic statuses, and trauma interact in any single rape case. Perhaps legal spaces are inherently limited in that they make things visible but cannot always enable justice.

A clear tension exists between the Constitution, which sets out to protect South African citizens based on a diverse list of identitarian claims, and the enactment of this document in both social and legal spheres. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler explores a similar tension -- between individuals and collectives, citizens and the nations they live in, what she labels an individual “I” and a collective “You.” She reflects on Adorno and Foucault to work through the relationship individuals have with the context through which they become subjects (for Adorno) and gain societal recognizability (for Foucault). Both Foucault and Adorno believe that what an individual becomes is in relation to a set of social norms. While these norms seek to condition an “I,” each individual also has agency in accepting or struggling against these societal norms. Foucault argues that what “I” am is always in relation to a “regime of truth.” While social norms may imply that not all citizens live up to those norms, or choose lifestyles which are non-normative, “regimes of truth” put some citizens at risk of not being true; their very “recognizability” as subjects becomes threatened.

Kuzwayo’s sexual recognizability was questioned throughout the trial. While the Constitution guarantees civil rights to South African citizens despite differences in “race, gender, sex [...] ethnic or social origin, colour, [or] sexual orientation,” what constitutes “sexual orientation” is left undefined. Butler asks one pertinent question of Adorno, and

we could add Foucault: Do they “consider that norms also decide in advance who will and will not become a subject?” (9). While the Constitution has enabled the recognition of same-sex marriage, it has yet to carve out a space for queer South Africans whose sexual histories and expressions do not live up to homonormative ideals. As “curative” rape statistics and Zuma’s rape trial emphasize, there is a slippage between legality and social recognizability. Legal rights become fractured from societal norms that should now be considered birthright.

This rape trial relied heavily on personal history and narrative, as well as on traditional psychoanalysis that sought to determine Kuzwayo’s level of traumatization. Butler asserts that there is a danger in assuming a person can give a coherent and complete account of themselves. She believes that if state regimes were responsible, they would “suspend the demand for self-identity, or more particularly, for complete coherence.” She traces the practice of giving an account of oneself to traditional psychoanalysis which assumed a client was capable of telling “a single and coherent story about herself that will satisfy the wish to know herself” (42). The therapeutic reconstruction Kuzwayo engaged in throughout the trial is mirrored in South Africa’s attempt to re-create anew.

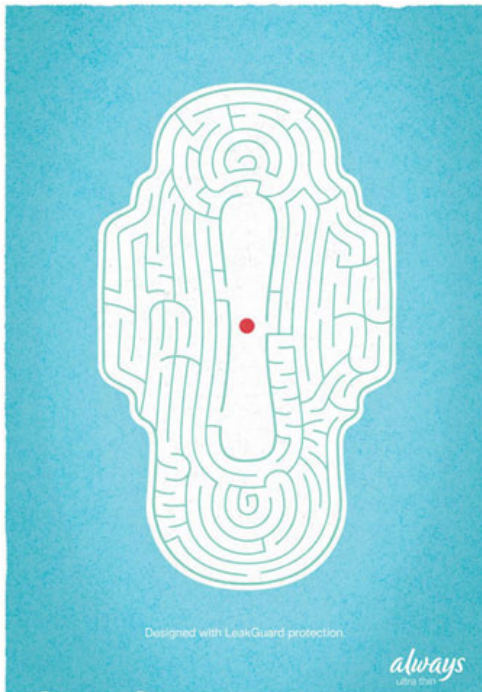
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that South Africa deployed soon became *the* model for overcoming colonial violence. Almost two dozen countries worldwide, including Rwanda, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Ghana, Morocco, and Nigeria have deployed truth telling models to overcome adverse histories (Graybill). These truth-seeking projects attempt to understand a nation’s violent past fully to reconcile these events and to move on to the nation building process. Just as traditional

psychoanalysis created and reinforced a narrative fiction that assumed identity to have a complete and coherent end-point, South Africa's TRC may have contributed to the hopeful myth that all apartheid-era violences have been amended. Although sexual violence was one tool of the colonizing mission, the word "rape" was never used during the nation's TRC therapy session. The term "assault" was regularly used in its place (Smith). Despite this silence, Nthabiseng Motsemme's pioneering work on women's testimonies and voices during the TRC has argued that "'the mute always speak,' so that the effects of silence and silencing are not always the wishing away of what cannot be spoken" (Gqola 114). In fact, Mmatshilo Motsei argues that "[o]ne good thing about the charade surrounding Jacob Zuma's trials is that it gives us an opportunity to stop and reflect as a nation" (7-8). Pumla Gqola ends her article on gender based violence with precisely this type of necessary reflection, by asking her readers to imagine a world in which the Jacob Zuma rape trial would be impossible.

On multiple occasions Fezeka Kuzwayo was encouraged to drop the rape charges and settle out of court. I would like to think that, despite the outcome, this refusal to settle has helped make visible the too often mundane state of gender-based violence. Sexual violence goes beyond the act of rape. In this instance it could include the types of public victim-blaming Kuzwayo endured for choosing to wear a kanga, the pro-Zuma forms of activism found outside the courtroom, and the erasure of her sexual identity. Andre Brink says of the TRC that unless its enquiries "are extended, complicated and intensified in the imaginings of literature, society cannot sufficiently come to terms with its past to face the future" (Miller 1). The manner in which this trial made its way into the public imaginary can usefully be read alongside the TRC. I place the implications of this trial into

conversation with the contemporary South African artists and authors arguing that it has become a cultural touchstone for individuals working on issues of sexual violence in South Africa today.

Chapter Two: Positive Bleeding



Source: <http://willychyr.com/portfolio/always-maze/>

In 2010, as an intern at Leo Burnett, Willy Chyr developed his first sanitary napkin advertisement to expand his creative portfolio; he had no intention of making history. Without a copywriter, he chose a solely visual campaign. Without a focus group, he asked his friends to contribute their input. In the end, Chyr had two primary goals: no selling a lifestyle and no blue water. Chyr's *always* advertisement is now known as the first and only feminine care product ad to incorporate blood. Although he is unconvinced that it will make any noticeable impact on the advertisement industry, the media attention his campaign received from blogs and online newspapers indicates that it has made feminist waves that expose how pervasive the menstrual taboo still is, by making visible that which is supposed to remain private.

Willy Chyr's advertisement, although from a very different cultural context than post-apartheid South Africa, demonstrates how visual images of bleeding are open to associative interpretation. In fact, Chyr later told press that he never intended for that infamous red dot to be interpreted as blood; it was envisioned as rhetorical pun -- a red, grammatical period used to metaphorize woman's menstruation visually.⁴⁵ Chyr may also have been unfamiliar with South African visual artist Zanele Muholi who deployed a similar logic on her cover of *Only Half the Picture* in 2000, using her own menstrual blood to create the single red dot which opens her photographic collection. The -- perhaps coincidental -- correlation between Chyr's advertisement and Muholi's photographs also shows that taboos around female sexuality and embodiment are not confined to Africa, that they should not be read as a sign of "backwardness" but rather as a globally pervasive sign of discomfort around female bodiliness.

The South African authors and artists included in this chapter use blood to represent myriad socio-political issues, ranging from menstruation and "dirty" femininity to HIV/AIDS, female sexuality, and sexual violence. Much has been written about the lack of literary representation of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Chapter one illuminated how Thabo Mbeki's 1990s AIDS denialism created an environment in which Jacob Zuma, head of the National AIDS Council, could posture HIV ignorance. Zuma's HIV preventative shower soon became symbolic of the political paradox South Africa was

⁴⁵ In November, 2011 the U.S. focused feminist blog *Jezebel: Celebrity, Sex, Fashion for Women. Without Airbrushing* posted an article written by Chyr about his accidental taboo breaking advertisement and subsequent shock at it -- the only ad he produced while briefly dabbling in advertising -- being labeled a "historic moment" (<http://jezebel.com/5856336/>). Chyr remarks that unlike running shoes or alcohol, the "femcare category" does not easily lend itself to crafting a trendy lifestyle around and is, instead, bathed in stigma. As a young and admittedly naïve intern, he claims to have simply wanted the challenge. On May 22, 2013 the same website posted an article announcing the first ever recorded slam poetry event focusing on menstruation. The slam took place in New York City at Marymount Manhattan College as part of the biennial Society for Menstrual Cycle Research Conference.

suffering, from having the highest rate of HIV in the world alongside the governmental refusal to engage with that reality. In “An Eerie Silence” South African author Jonny Steinberg asks simply: “Why is it so hard for South Africa to talk about AIDS?” As the South African government was tentatively revising its antiretroviral drug policies in 2005, Steinberg noticed that in terms of “imaginative and intimate literature on AIDS in South Africa [...] there was almost none.” In fact, “[r]eading through South African literary offerings, one would not have known that a flood of young deaths was washing through the land.” It is difficult to say whether Steinberg would agree that the authors and artists included in this chapter do, in fact, “talk about AIDS.” Instead of directly saying “AIDS,” these texts suggest implicit and associative links among HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, and menstruation, which make evident the shame and stigma implicit to these experiences of self and which converge at the point of female sexuality.

Period shaming has a long and varied genealogy. In Emily Martin’s now classic study, “Medical Metaphors of Women’s Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause,” she documents that in eighteenth century England losing blood through menstruation not only had positive connotations but was even mimicked in male health practices through the analogous process of bloodletting. She argues that although the product, menstrual blood, was often seen as unclean, the *process* of bleeding was understood as “inherently health-maintaining” (31).⁴⁶ Martin claims that the social unrest that marked the end of the

⁴⁶ See also Chris Bobel’s *New Blood: Third-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation*, which documents that “[i]n seventeenth-century England, menstruation was construed as the requisite shedding of an excess of blood. This process, per se, was not pathologized, although menstrual fluid was considered unclean and foul” (32).

eighteenth century also brought with it changes to the social order of gender in Europe.⁴⁷ The social construction of the male above female hierarchy had been (falsely) established as the natural order of things and was now being challenged. Martin asserts that “[i]f the social order were merely convention, it could not provide a secure enough basis to hold women and men in their places.” Therefore, in order to maintain male privilege and superiority, social and biological sciences -- what I call scientific sexism -- began to claim that “the pattern of male-female relations that characterized the English middle classes was natural, inevitable, and progressive” (18). Male and female bodies were more frequently seen as biologically distinct. At the same time, scientific racism was on its way to “proving” that, as Geoff Cronje plainly puts it, “Africans were on average less intelligent than whites” since “[b]rain size” was thought to be “positively associated with intelligence” (Dubow 228; Lynn 365). Racial pseudo-science became a tool the imperial project used to rationalize its mission and maintain white superiority ideologically. By the end of the nineteenth century, racial and biological sciences had coded both female and African bodies as dirty. The way menstruation was viewed in England had changed drastically; it was now “seen as soundly pathological,” a female “disorder” (20). Timothy Burke similarly contends that “[...] visceral feelings about the bodies of Africans, visions of them as dirty or diseased” were among “the most intensely expressed aspects of racist sentiment in southern Africa” well into and “over the course of the twentieth century” (17).

⁴⁷ See also Thomas Laqueur’s influential *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, in which he traces the drastic change in perspective toward female bodies and erotic pleasure that scientific, cultural, and psychological texts embraced starting in the 18th century.

Longstanding popular, political, and scientific beliefs about Africans' bodily alterity were exacerbated by the onset of HIV/AIDS. In Marc Epprecht's seminal text, *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS* (2008), he maps out the construction of a singular African sexuality, which includes:

above all, the supposed nonexistence of homosexuality or bisexuality, along with Africans' purported tendencies toward heterosexual promiscuity, gender violence and lack of the kind of internalized moral restraints that supposedly inhibit the spread of HIV in other cultures (1).

He clarifies that the belief in a singular and different African sexuality made a certain kind of sense in the 1980s. The "genetic variation of HIV-1 was different in Africa from the clade that was infecting gay men in the West," which "added to the accumulating logic of difference" (3). Of course, the irony remains that while African opinion makers were understandably defensive about foreign ideas regarding a singular African sexuality (marked by promiscuity and gender violence), many "at the same time buttressed one key aspect of it:" exclusive heterosexuality (3). Epprecht explains that although

the long shelf life of negative stereotypes in contemporary discourses was evidence of whites' pervasive unthinking racism against Africans [...], many African leaders accepted or even amplified the accompanying stereotype that homosexuality was exotic in Africa (3).

In fact, "[b]oth African and foreign scholars proved surprisingly receptive to this unscientific assertion" to the point that "this understanding of African sexuality is now typically so much taken for granted that it does not even warrant a footnote to substantiate or qualify it" (3). The artists included in this chapter have had to wrestle with these three intertwining strands of pathology that have stemmed from elsewhere, but that continue to stigmatize the categories of "woman," "African," and "homosexual" in

unpredictable ways. My introduction discussed the South African Parliament's hyper-awareness of and engagement with racist discourses which lambasted black, African men as sexually insatiable. These discourses were inherited from colonialism, are mirrored in U.S. racism, and continue to weigh on South African political debates in the present. The writers and artists in this chapter perform a different kind of engagement with inherited stigmas. I contend that they connect the historic erasure of homosexuality, from within a spectrum of possible African sexualities, to the national silence imposed on the topics of HIV/AIDS, and to gender violence. To use Sara Ahmed's concept, these artists use the "stickiness" of blood to form alliances between stigmatized and silenced experiences and embodiments of self.

The artists, performers, and writers I examine in this chapter expose and recode taboos that are often used to justify violence against black lesbian bodies. To take my key example, menstruation specifically is recast as sexual foreplay, as that which incites female-female sexual pleasure and eroticism. Returning briefly to Emily Martin, she emphasizes that:

The construction of [menstrual bleeding] in terms of a purpose that has failed is beautifully captured in a standard text for medical students. [...] 'When fertilization fails to occur, the endometrium is shed, and a new cycle starts. This is why it used to be taught that 'menstruation is the uterus crying for lack of a baby' (45).

Menstruation enunciates at the same time the entrance into "real womanhood" (being sexually fecund) and *not* being a "real woman" (by not having a baby). Martin takes this link between the medical construction of menstruation as "failed production" and "our negative view of it" one step further by surmising that menstruation "also carries the idea of production gone awry, making products of no use, not to specification, unsalable,

wasted scrap” (45).⁴⁸ This medical association of menstrual bleeding with production gone awry and with products that were made for no use allows menstruation to become an apt poetic visual metaphor to represent and critique “curative” rape practices in South Africa -- violence enacted to punish non-procreative intimacy and queer love. The authors and artists in this chapter refuse to be “corrected” and have managed to articulate a lesbian erotics in the midst of sexual violence. They do this by using blood to forge associative links among menstruation, HIV/AIDS, female sexuality, and sexual violence. In a defiant act of female-female celebration, blood soon also becomes the vehicle through which to express same-sex eroticism.

In chapter one, I demonstrated how what Neville Hoad labels the “sexual ideology of racism” becomes one obstacle to systemically responding to the epidemic of HIV/AIDS; I maintain that the same is true for the rape crisis. To move past this obstacle, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) created an anti-identitarian “HIV Positive” campaign, which declaimed “it’s not your HIV status that matters, but your HIV politics” as one means to destigmatize HIV in South Africa (McRuer 53). The Treatment Action Campaign was founded by HIV-positive activist Zackie Achmat who publicly refused to take antiretrovirals (ARVs) until they were widely accessible and affordable to all South Africans. During his fight, government apologists blasted Achmat and TAC as being “unpatriotic” and “anti-African” (Robins and von Lieres 582). Although Achmat clearly and repeatedly announced his strong ANC affiliation, his political loyalty was muddled by his critique of the ANC’s HIV policies. In *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections*,

⁴⁸ In *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, Valerie Traub traces another “crucial contradiction in medical texts: the tension between an investment in women’s [heterosexual] erotic pleasure and an aversion to female genitalia” (79). Her discussion of early anatomical understandings of female genitalia further reveals the biased gendered strategies medical writers implemented when producing scientific and cultural knowledge about female bodies.

John C. Hawley argues that “nation-building cultures” often view “sexual dissidence [as] a distraction: you are either one of us, or you are not” (9). As Jamaican-Chinese, lesbian writer Stacyann Chin captures in “Cross-Fire:” “the state needs us to be left or right. [...] If you are not for us, you must be against us” (368). Hawley historicizes that although “this production of alterity has been closely analyzed for its historical justification of the colonizing project,” it also “serves a similar function for those postcolonial states that seek self-definition in contradistinction to the Western powers that have ‘left’” (9) All of the artists and authors included in this chapter have had to forge their own disidentificatory forms of activism that celebrate their identities as uniquely South Africa, while still censoring forms of domestic and sexual violence that have become unavoidable.

This chapter journeys from Lisa Combrinck’s defiant collection of poetry *An Infinite Longing for Love* (2005), to Mlu Zondi’s performance piece *Silhouette* (2005), to Zanele Muholi’s mischievous and haunting *Period* series (2006), and ends with Makhosozana Xaba’s revisionist short story “Inside” (2008). All of these cultural “texts” come from, rely on, or create activist networks through their work and all of them censure the national denial imposed around HIV/AIDS and rape. These artists have begun the arduous work of resignifying bleeding from being a remnant of pathologized trauma into that which can lead to and incite female sexual bliss and cultural change. This chapter looks elsewhere in the South African cultural archive for the language Fezeka Kuzwayo lacked during her rape trial to articulate her lesbianism alongside a sexual history marked by violence and “too many” rape charges against men. All have begun inventing languages -- visual, performative, poetic -- through which to articulate violence

imbricated with sex against bodies that are potentially queer. All have attended to the trauma that necessarily marks their protagonists' lives and then transform that trauma (again, necessarily) into something else entirely. I read these four artists' work in interrelation across mediums because all are searching for a language through which to imagine queer female desires and subjectivities often affected by sexual violence.

Lisa Combrinck's radical politics of love

Lisa Combrinck's collection, *An Infinite Longing for Love* (2005), captures the theoretical stance of many artists working in South Africa today: to "invent new paradigms of pleasure / in this decaying world of fractured skulls and fallen dreams" (33). Combrinck, a poet and writer, is also the Spokesperson for the Department of Arts and Culture in South Africa. She is a former editor and columnist for the *Sowetan* and has served as a speechwriter in the President's office. Her poetry is highly anthologized. I argue that her collection insists that individuals imagine creative intimacies anew and warns that "[t]he spoors of the struggle / are difficult to identify / and dangerous to follow" (33). Combrinck distinguishes her poetry from and yet builds from an archive of anti-apartheid protest poetry that used writing to (aggressively) celebrate heroic forms of black masculinity but that rarely represented female participation in the struggle. In response, Combrinck's poetry insists that female erotic experiences are central to South African life and letters. Leloba Molema argues that Combrinck's collection "highlights the great paucity of erotic poetry by and for women in the African literary canon," and for this perspective, defines Combrinck's poetry as "nothing short of revolutionary."

Combrinck's collection begins with a prologue which directs a reader through her fifty seven poems. It begins bleakly: "Like a slug, leaving a trail of mucus behind, I leave this long secretion of words. [...] Somewhere in this struggle, there appear glimpses of consummated desire, but they remain tiny, miniscule chinks of light viewed from the bottom of the prison cell" (np). The emphasis on *this* struggle distinguishes her political moment from the struggle against apartheid, drawing analogous attention to the continuity between these generations of writing, and yet emphasizing their topical differences. Rather than provide a model for future activists, artists, and authors to follow, rather than impose her political rubric onto those in "this struggle," Combrinck wilfully evacuates her poetry. She invites her reader to "[b]reak open the bars. Walk in my womb. Bathe yourself in the presence of these words, the soapsuds of now." But warns: "[...] do not grow drunk. Do not water the future with these words. [...] No future must carve out its route from these words" (np). Later in this chapter, artists will embrace and re-cast "dirty femininity" as that which can incite female-female eroticism; here, however, Combrinck distinguishes herself from this pervasive stereotyping through the poetic reference to "soapsuds." At the same time, she refuses to use her newly clean womb for growth. This radical refusal of reproductive futurism can be read alongside Lee Edelman's polemic, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. For Edelman, the figure of the child in social discourse and popular culture represents the hopeful promise of a future to come against which the narcissistic queer is positioned negatively. Combrinck argues for a similar stance, but she anchors her sentiments in the responsibility of the writer. Her poems usefully connect the figure of the queer and the non-procreative woman, to a similar kind of artistic and authorial refusal. Combrinck

argues that “[...] the dying must be able to choose whether their last words should be forgotten and die with them or whether they should be remembered and abused.” Rather than burden the future with her words or allow them to be (mis)used as future political tools, Combrinck’s prologic persona chooses “the former, euthanasia for the author.”

Later in this chapter, I will demonstrate how Makhosazana Xaba’s short story, “Inside,” suspends sexual consummation and uses this suspension as erotic foreplay -- a hopeful promise of sexual pleasure to come. Combrinck stretches this period of suspense, what she calls an “infinite longing,” to agony which sadistically results in “infinite cycles of erection and ejaculation. Pleasure which suddenly sours. The unending pain of permanent orgasm. Without pauses. Without breathing spaces” (np). In “Bird hearts taking wing: Trends in contemporary South African poetry written in English” (1996), Kelwyn Sole observes a striking trend among post-protest poets who are sceptical of unwavering political optimism. It is notable then that Combrinck’s “For My Firstborn,” an example of this supposed incredulity, is downright hopeful compared to *An Infinite Longing*, which was written nine years later. In 1996, Combrinck believed “This poem simply warms you to the future / It is a blanket covering the back” (np). Crafting images of poetry as warming and covering is strikingly dissimilar to Combrinck’s 2005 prologue which advises that “[n]o future must carve out its route from these words” (np).

Combrinck does not participate in celebrating the nation. Instead, she likens the optimism so frequently seen in “official pronouncements and the media” to the “unending pain of permanent orgasm” and urges her contemporaries to “[d]ress yourself in your own dreams, untouched by my hands” (np). In 2005, the anticipation for robust political change so closely connected to the new nation and its progressive Constitution has been

left unanswered. Yet, despite (or because of) Combrinck's ideological dedication to writing back to a male dominated literary tradition, she steeps her poetry in one pervasive motif: femininity and female sexual pleasure.

Combrinck reimagines femininity within a framework of erotics. In "Concerning the Subject Matter of this Poetry," she argues that she wants nothing more than to "let the poem throb furiously / with an urgent, persistent femininity" (5). She casts femininity as that which actively desires, creates, and "write[s] lines and lines of erotic love poetry" (6). This celebration of femininity, not devoid of sex, is paradoxically positioned alongside the destructive feminine -- represented through an isolated, blood-thirsty moon. Combrinck reaffirms menstrual bleeding and places it within a celebratory paradigm of female pleasure and eroticism. "Menstruating at Full Moon" anthropomorphizes the triumphant, feminized moon who satisfies her "monthly hunger-lust for blood" (47). Combrinck's moon:

[...] rises above the watermark,
 taking her solitary, solid shape up in the sky.
 Her position is still unchallenged.
 The stars step aside in respect and fear:
 they are too scared
 to outshine her.
 [...]
 She is triumphant once more
 her monthly hunger-lust for blood duly satisfied.
 [...]
 She is resplendent in white, a fine, striking figure.

Her belly is always flat (47).

The parallel between this moon's monthly consumption of blood and menstrual cycles is not lost in the rest of the poem. This moon satisfies her "hunger-lust" -- a phrase which codes the moon's appetite as sexual and lustful for female (menstrual) bleeding. Within this magical universe, a feminized moon desires and consumes blood without tainting her chastity or fearing pregnancy -- symbolized through her virginal white splendour and perpetually flat belly. She refuses to be corrected for her active sexual expression and "even the stars step aside in respect and fear" (47). Blood awakens the moon's spirit and excites her. This lustful, hungry, all-consuming and highly eroticized female desire for blood is further framed as "natural" -- as natural and the moon and sky.

The imaginative world of Combrinck's moon is celestial, triumphant, and independent. Yet, back on earth, "everything / intensely venereal, insistently sexual -- destroys us" (15). In "Concerning Diseases of this Blood," Combrinck explores the paradoxical political valence of loving and desiring in South Africa through her opening lines: "They say that we have loved too much, / We, who have not loved" (15). The looming presence of an audience lingers in the pronoun choice, "[t]hey," and signals an accusatory audience (both national and international). South Africa's AIDS crisis is at the center of this poem and yet remains unspoken. Instead of directly saying AIDS, allusions to HIV/AIDS permeate her collection and are placed within a sexual disease alliance complete with "Herpes, blisters, warts, discharge -- everything" (15). In this world where "wombs become tombs. / [and] Penises are diseased," loving someone becomes the most radical political choice a person can make. Combrinck re-casts love, like disease, as contagious, arguing that: "We walk around as lethal as nuclear warheads.

“/ Love like an ulcer grows” (15). The grotesque bodiliness of Combrinck’s earth rests ambivalently alongside the lyrical eroticism of her blood-thirsty moon. It seems that sex has not only become hyper-politicized, but also a pervasive subject of fear.

The open-endedness of blood as an artistic signifier enables it to connect several of Combrinck’s poetic motifs, including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, menstruation, and female sexual expression. Specifically, she uses blood to expose the tenuous line distinguishing desire from disease. Her deliberately abstract pronoun choices of “we” and “they” refuse to participate in identity politics or to place blame -- at least for a while. Combrinck’s poetry registers the difficulty of writing about sexuality in the midst of an epidemic and intense stigma -- raped thighs and blood. In “Love song for Dambudzo Marechera,” for example, Combrinck laments:

Oh Dambudzo
 I am tired of ritual suicides
 I am sick of the human blood bursting from our pens,
 The diseased redness
 Of our raped thighs.
 [...]
 Let me pick up
 your spoors of words
 trace the trail of your blood
 touch your dreads
 with wonder and with love (65).

This poem is essential for staging the distinction between her generation of writing and the post-apartheid anger imbued within protest poetry which Combrinck argues is

analogous to violence -- to “human blood bursting from our pens” (65). And yet the sharedness of “our pens” and “our raped thighs” implies that Combrinck has inherited this legacy of violence and pain from which Marechera writes (65). This is a complicated moment, one which begins to articulate a shared Southern African history of trauma. An intimacy soon develops as Combrinck offers to pick up Marechera’s “spoons of words.” The Dutch South African border colonists often considered it a science to trail “spoons,” or the footsteps left by animal and people. The enduring effect of colonialism is therefore their shared struggle, one that crosses the border and surpasses gender. And although Combrinck yearns to protect Marechera’s words, to trace his blood, and to touch his dreads, it remains unclear if she can or does.

The anger often expressed through protest poetry was one literary mode that challenged the draconian laws experienced under apartheid; yet, in 2005 Combrinck reminds her (South African) readers that “no one is in love with the struggle.” Instead, she argues that “We fight for the rights of people / to have land and love” (6). Through this intertextual gesture of intimacy, Combrinck pays homage to generations of writers that came before her and who struggled to love. In contrast, she urges her contemporaries to go “[d]ress yourself in your own dreams, untouched by my hands” (np). In the end, Combrinck joins a new generation of writers struggling to chip “away at the mask which they made.” However “[t]his is what the story is about. The freedom that comes from complete nakedness, when one has been clothed in shrouds for so long” (1). Nakedness is a powerful motif used to visualize what female sexual expression could look like liberated from racist, sexist, homophobic and even homonormative ways of understanding (South)African sexuality. Combrinck wants to imagine an expression of

love that is unconcerned with the “shrouds” of death and disease that so often accompany it. As we will see too in many of Muholi’s images, Combrinck places the nude female body at the center of her politics -- “beings,” which are “stripped, bare” and “desire undressed” are seen as a generative sounding board to imagine creative feminine intimacies anew (7, 8).

What is So Positive about Bleeding? Mlu Zondi & Zaneli Muholi

Mlu Zondi’s performance piece *Silhouette* (2006) and Zanele Muholi’s collection of photographs *Only Half the Picture* (2006) engage with ethical questions about whether it’s possible to represent sexual violence aesthetically without violating, romanticizing, or indeed eroticizing the subject of the piece. While Zondi uses paint to artistically represent blood on the stage, Muholi creates photographic representations of real blood, often her own. The politics of visibility rest uncomfortably within both works; blood serves as both a reminder of and departure from sensationalized images of traumatized and “corrected” lesbians. In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Judith Butler speaks to the precariousness of gay and lesbian visibility by asking: “Can the visibility of identity *suffice* as a political strategy, or can it only be the starting point for a strategic intervention [...]” (Salih 126). Saidiya Hartman’s foundational book, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century*, shares Butler’s concern while focusing on the vexed relationship “witnesses” have to representations of violence. Hartman asks: “how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence of the numbing

spectacle” (4). Whereas Butler is wary of privileging certain kinds of gay and lesbian images over others, thus instituting internal exclusions, Hartman searches for ways in which violence can be illuminated without being consumed, given voice to without also reinscribing the hierarchies of power from which the violence originated. This section explores how blood is placed at the center of Zondi and Muholi’s work and becomes the catalyst used to represent and respond to sexual violence ethically.

Zondi began working on *Silhouette* together with Ntando Cele in 2005; one year later the piece won the coveted MTN New Contemporaries Award. The thirty minute short incorporates live video, paint, dance, performance, and text. *Silhouette* centers on two

grotesque, almost burlesque caricatures of stereotyped male and female identity. The male is lascivious, insatiable, and abusive. The female is spontaneous, organic – she farts and spits – but these are male prerogatives, and for violating them, she is inescapably typecast as slatternly and whorish (Meersman).

During their courtship, the female partner lathers red paint on her face to impress the male, an act for which she is later punished. As Mary Russo notes in “Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory”: “[m]aking a spectacle out of oneself seem[s] a specifically feminine danger,” one that “any *woman*” could fall into “if she [is] not careful” (her emphasis 318-19). The courtship on stage ends with the male partner ripping off his tuxedo and forcing himself onto his female partner while licking her face.

The ambiguity of the red paint incites multiple readings, allowing it to reference female seduction and sexuality (often artistically tinted red), menstruation (a process definitive to womanhood), and traumatic blood loss. Since Cele revels too much in her womanhood, the male partner takes Cele’s red paint from her. The meaning of the paint

changes as it spreads from the female's face, to her male partner, and back. During their duet, a third player videotapes the scene and projects these images onto a screen behind them -- indexing the role that news media play in framing female sexuality and trauma (Rensburg). Zondi encourages his audience to question their interpretation of the event -- observations facilitated by two mediums, the performance and the visual record of the performance. In "Violence of Protection," Minoo Moallem examines the relationship between (visible) violent acts and the (invisible) frameworks that enable them to cohere. For Moallem, the rhetoric of protectionism decides in advance which subjects will be prioritized as worthy of protection.⁴⁹ *Silhouette* is important for the way it exposes the frameworks of representation -- from the presence of the videographer on stage, to his visual record of the performance, to the audience members' role as spectators only. The constructedness of red paint as a visual metaphor requires audience members actively to read and engage with the violence and highlights the difficult task of interpreting female trauma. Important questions materialize: Do audience members consider the female player's trauma to be real? Under what circumstance of documentation or witnessing is her pain authenticated? Lastly, who, if anyone, is ethically responsible for Cele's suffering?

Zondi frequently analyzes heterosexual partnerships; yet, I contend that the mixed media he uses mark his productions as generically queer, as does his position as a male feminist and anti-violence activist. Having trained in both dance and drama, Zondi says of his work that "the contemporary dance world does not easily accept his brand of performance, and that [...] positive feedback and encouragement were mostly received

⁴⁹ Judith Butler has also explored this issue in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*

from visual artists and practitioners” (Rensburg). Zondi’s work has been compared to queer South African performance artist Steven Cohen, who is best known for *The Chandelier Project* (2001-2002), which Cohen defines as an “intervention.” During this piece, Cohen, scantily clad in a crystal, illuminated chandelier tutu and platform heels, interacted with residents of Newton, an informal settlement under the M1 highway in Johannesburg. City council employees destroyed the settlement to make room ironically for the “Mandela Bridge,” and Cohen argues that his piece literally sheds light on this infrastructural injustice through his lit up tutu. Cohen’s often controversial work has received mixed reviews. The attention *The Chandelier Project* received may have popularized Cohen as an artistic figure more than it shed so-called light on those forms of oppression in South Africa many refuse to look at. His white, queer visibility sat uncomfortably alongside the still invisible trauma shanty dwellers face in the name of structural “development.” However, his contribution in restlessly pioneering and popularizing the combination of performance art and dance in South Africa has been instrumental in building an arena for artists like Zondi (Cohen).

The questions Zondi raises in *Silhouette* can provide another perspective on the Jacob Zuma rape trial and the gender roles and expressions it propagated in the name of cultural authenticity and tradition. Zondi’s piece identifies violent masculinities as that which hinders sexual pleasure and intimacy. It begins to enact certain forms of heterosexual pleasure, but then forecloses them through violence. Zondi visualizes the trauma caused by blindly following gender norms to their logical and excessive ends, suggesting that adherence to gender complementarity can only result in trauma. Zondi plainly rebukes aggressive masculinities. Yet, how we are supposed to interpret Cele’s

character remains less clear. Trauma experts, like those included in Zuma's trial, need not question whether Cele experienced trauma; the red paint marks her body and loudly enunciates her pain. Who is to blame for her suffering, however, is left to the audience to decide: the reckless female lathering her face with red paint, or the male threatened by Cele's active sexual expressions?

Throughout the production, Cele danced on stage wearing a layer of bubble wrap shaped like a dress. This bubble wrap is highly suggestive and illuminates the materiality of protection. The failure of her dress to prevent rape speaks to the accessorization of female safety and brings to mind a slew of consumer products packaged to prevent women from being raped -- all of which paradoxically also expose a fear of female sexuality. The fifteenth century chastity belt, for example, was a locking garment of clothing worn around a girl's waist and was designed to prevent unwanted sexual intercourse, but it also incidentally prevented masturbation and the illness masturbation would supposedly lead to if women had control over their sexual pleasure. More recently, controversial anti-rape female condoms were introduced in South Africa to empower women to prevent rape. In 2006, South African Sunnet Ehlers was inspired to create Rape-aXe, a hollowed out female condom with small hooks inside. The condom would cause an unwanted penetrator immense pain during withdrawal and could only be removed from the woman surgically, alerting hospital staff and police in the process. It was designed with the onset of baby and child rape in mind, and is therefore intended to prevent both rape and HIV (Nuttall 138-9).⁵⁰ If surgically removed, the penis is left unharmed, says Ehlers; "[t]here is no bleeding" (139). Yet, anti-rape activist and

⁵⁰ Sarah Nuttall analyzes several South African anti-rape devices, the earliest of which was designed to protect babies and young girls. The belief that if one has sex with a virgin s/he will be cured of HIV/AIDS has contributed to South Africa's rape crisis and demonstrates how interlinked rape and AIDS are.

journalist Charlene Smith -- who in 1999 published an account of her rape and subsequent journey to acquire anti-viral drugs -- argued it would simply provoke wounded rapists to kill the women they rape (Dixon). Understandably, Rape-aXe has faced feminist critique for the emphasis and responsibility it still places on women to prevent rape, instead of on rapists, or on the socio-economic, legal, and, as this chapter emphasizes, historic gender inequalities which have enabled cultures of violence. And yet Nuttall notes that there is something mischievous about an object which can be inserted into a female body to violate and injure another. She reflects that although “penises have always had the potential to do this to a girl’s vagina,” it is somehow taboo breaking to give women this power.

In Yes Means Yes! Visions of Female Sexual Power & a World Without Rape, Jaclyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti make a rhetorical move away from the old “no means no” model to a more sexually aware and sex-positive “yes means yes” campaign. The goal of their book is “to explore how creating a culture that values genuine female sexual pleasure can help stop rape,” suggesting that one societal obstacle to anti-rape activism is the overwhelming suppression of female sexuality (7). While Friedman’s and Valenti’s geographic focus is the United States, South African critic Pumla Dineo Gqola observes a similar trend in South Africa, saying “[i]t is a strange country we live in where women are so ostensibly empowered and yet cannot communicate what they want sexually” (117). While neither would argue freedom of female sexual expression as the only step toward reducing sexual violence against women, both view it as paradoxically central.

How does fear of female sexual expression contribute to South Africa's rape crisis? Cele's protective bubble wrap formed into the silhouette of a dress speaks to a unique set of ethical and aesthetic questions about representing violence against women. How does an artist stylize representations of trauma for the stage and what histories emerge from these stylistic choices? Since bubble-wrap succeeds metaphorically, but is fairly useless as actual protection, does Zondi choose it to censure and satirize the co-optation of rape by a global marketplace? *Silhouette* leaves a viewer with more questions than answers. Zondi uses paint to represent blood on stage, but refuses to confirm what causes Cele's bleeding, physical or sexual assault? The red paint connotes differently throughout the production and indexes female sexuality and seduction (tinted red), grotesque womanhood (often analogous to menstruation), and finally violence. *Silhouette* deconstructs the naturalization of violence within intimate partnerships and identifies gender violence as one central and perhaps inevitable symptom which comes from rigidly investing in gender complementarity. Zondi mixes media, censures aggressive masculinities, and taunts his audience into questioning, analyzing, and critiquing their understanding of an event that unfolds in front of them. *Silhouette* aids in Zondi's coming out as an ally and can be read alongside the red T-shirts TAC supporters wear which simply state: "Be Positive." TAC's "be positive" methodology is one that refuses identity politics and encourages broad and visible alliances. Zondi's positionality as a straight, black, South African male makes him an important activist ally and contributor to an archive trying to make female trauma from sexual violence visible.

The question of positionality is an important component informing both Zondi and Muholi's work, although in different ways. The question of speaking as a "survivor"

versus speaking as an ally versus speaking from belonging to a targeted community necessarily impacts how their work is both constructed and received by audiences.

Coming out as a “survivor” of sexual violence involves verbally reconstructing one’s sexual history, and it may change how others perceive one’s sexuality. Muholi’s essay brings together a visual archive she began in 2003 which documents the complexity of coming out as a lesbian who has suffered from sexual violence. I am reluctant to use the label “survivor” here, for the way it often masks, or overcompensates for, the enduring physical, emotional, and sexual fragility surviving also includes. In order to deconstruct and problematize the triumphant celebration the term “survival” is sometimes imbued with, Muholi visually documents South African lesbians at various levels of survival, engaging in countless acts of sexual and emotional intimacy. *Sistahs, 2003*, for example, playfully captures one woman, dressed in a white bra and panties, dancing in front of another. The casual nudity and laughter captured within this image speaks to an intimate life after rape, and implies that one’s sexuality need not be ineradicably traumatized.

Dada, 2003 focuses instead on a condom-wrapped strap-on and speaks to a very different survival narrative -- that of living and loving among HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. In slight contrast, *TommyBoys, 2004* frames two butch women sitting on gravel crying. The woman on the left protectively crosses her arms around her torso, while the woman on the right wipes away her tears with a white shirt. The relation this image has to those of bedroom dancing and safe sex is left open. The elasticity of meaning attributed to Muholi’s images avoids the proscriptive progress narrative psychologists, like those included in Kuzwayo’s trial, often use to categorize levels of traumatization. Muholi’s

work makes room for various modes of queer female South African belonging and existence.

Muholi self-identifies as a “visual activist” and is a co-founder of FEW (the forum for the Empowerment of Women) and former photographer/reporter for *Behind the Mask*, an online magazine that discusses lesbian and gay issues in an African context. Muholi extended her work at these organizations through photography by exploring “how visual activism can be employed” to fight against the epidemic of hate crimes and queerphobia or lesbophobia in South Africa. Pumla Gqola asserts that “Muholi introduces a powerful idiom, what Desiree Lewis calls a documentary dialect that allows the former to ‘speak about victimization without rendering her subject a victim and without endorsing conventions associated with familiar images of victimization’” (85). This “documentary dialect,” enables Muholi’s work to address rape against lesbians in South Africa without pathologizing lesbians as victims of South Africa’s rape crisis. The respect and trust Muholi earns from the people she photographs also contributes to a new way of making visible the relationship between a subject and the framework from which that subject gains recognition. In “Is anybody comfortable?” Nonkululeko Godana points out that the woman in *Aftermath, 2004*, for example, called Muholi a few hours after a “friend” raped her to prove she wasn’t a man. The photograph was taken only a few days later. This image focuses only on the woman’s torso and legs. A large healed scar runs down the woman’s right thigh, while she stands tall protectively covering her groin. The vexed relationship the scar has to her positioned hands speaks to the layers of trauma she has endured and which continue to mark her body. Her willingness to document this pain, the agency and indeed strength, is illuminated by the strategic photographic framing.

Only representations of the trauma have been made visible. The woman's refusal to be photographed entirely speaks to a different kind of aesthetic responsibility than Mlu Zondi's fictional performance piece. The documentary realism of Muholi's work forces her and the people she photographs to negotiate with and position themselves against the hyper-visibility of raped lesbians in mass media, as opposed to the silencing of domestic and sexual violence within heterosexual partnerships that Zondi navigates. While Zondi exaggerates the rules which police gender complementarity in order to make a feminist point, Muholi quietly and selectively narrows her focus. As Munro eloquently phrases it, "[t]his collection is called 'only half the picture,' after all, raising the question of what you can and cannot see in these images, and what should and should not be made visible."

Zanele Muholi transitions through several motifs which begin with a celebration of same-sex sex, love, and intimacy. *Sistahs, 2003* and *Dada, 2003* are playful renditions of same-sex sexual intimacy and quickly enunciate Muholi's objective -- to demonstrate how sensationalist news headlines about violated and traumatized lesbians are *Only Half the Picture*. Violence is, however, a part of this story, and two blank pages follow to allow a viewer the space needed to emotionally prepare for the *hate crime survivor* series. *Ordeal* marks the beginning of Muholi's sexual violence documentation and focuses closely on a woman's hands tirelessly washing soiled laundry in a metal bucket. This image leaves one's imagination to ruminate over how and what the clothing was soiled with, as well as points to a relationship between violence and the oppressive drudgery of

“women’s” work.⁵¹ *Hate crime survivor I* poignantly retains Muholi’s tendency for tight photographic frames, by honing in on one person standing, hands clasped together in front, as if handcuffed. In place of metal cuffs are white, plastic, hospital bracelets showing the imprisonment some face for simply embodying themselves. *Only Half the Picture* argues, in part, that so-called “official documents,” such as police reports and hospital forms are embedded in and part of the lives of black lesbians living in South Africa. The *hate crime survivor* series reveals how the same professionals responsible for interpreting and enabling the constitution’s equality clause (lawyers, judges, government officials, police officers, doctors) are also paradoxically responsible for handling rape cases, from filing legal charges, to performing gynecological and psychological examinations. As Muholi inserts herself into this conversation, it becomes evident that artists and authors are also important interpreters of the Constitution who can imagine and visualize same-sex intimacy broadly and in intricate relationship to violence.

Following this sequence -- a defiant opening celebration of lesbian sexual intimacy, of condom-wrapped strap-ons and dancing women, and the subsequent visual representations of the violence many also face -- Muholi places her radical images of menstruation. Through deliberate abstraction, Muholi allows blood to signify more largely, literally bringing taboos surrounding HIV, menstruation, and sexual violence into the public sphere. Her images of bleeding are categorically split between those labeled *Period* and others which remain *Untitled*. The open-endedness of visual art about blood

⁵¹ My afterword, “Recycling Trauma,” looks to artists and authors who actively engage these physical remnants of trauma, including clothing. This particular image especially brings to mind those SlutWalk participants I analyze in that chapter who defiantly march while wearing the outfit they were assaulted in, carrying signs which loudly claim that their dress did not say yes.

and the photographs not titled *Period* fruitfully link the already stigmatized process of menstruation to blood loss due to gender and sexual violence.

Period I-V and *Untitled, 2006* show blood on a disposable pad, a dirt road, a porcelain shower and on a lined sheet of notebook paper (40-41). *Period I* is taken from the vantage point of the person within the photograph. It is a high-angle shot which looks down between a person's feet at a sanitary napkin soaked in blood. The woman's body in the image is blurred, forcing a viewer to look only at the blood. *Period II*, unlike the first, allows a trail of blood to be camouflaged by its surroundings of rock, dirt, and grass. A viewer has to squint to locate the blood's trail they know must be present; its title and proximity to other images of bleeding enunciate its existence. *Period V* moves the bleeding indoors and captures a long thin line of clotted blood flowing down into a shower drain. Even without the topical links to sexual violence and lesbian sexuality, I contend that these images would be visually and politically transgressive. Like Zondi, who exposes the way domestic and sexual violence has been naturalized, the direct link Muholi makes throughout her collection between simply being female and "simply" being raped is an unsettling truth.

Muholi positions radical images of menstruation alongside, and also differentiates them from, those of hate crime survivors, nudging viewers to connect the systems of oppression which render both experiences as pathologized. On the one hand, these images connect the seeming naturalness of menstrual bleeding to the current banality of blood loss due to trauma, deconstructing sexual violence against lesbians in the process. On the other, images of menstruation are framed by the larger commentary on lesbian sexuality and, I argue, repositioned within a broader lesbian erotics. In keeping with the

former, *Period I, II*, and *V* can all be interpreted as *either* about sexual violence *or* about menstruation. In *Period II* a small blood trail is surrounded by dirt and rock, which comprise the majority of the photograph. Since Muholi primarily works in townships, are we to suppose this trail was left by a woman menstruating who had no access to sanitary napkins; or is it a remnant of lesbophobic violence? The twinning of signification encourages a viewer to ask in what ways gender oppression influences lesbophobia. *Period V* shows a trail of clotted blood spilling down the drain of a shower. The shower is an important safe-space for survivors of sexual assault and violence. Washing away the trauma is a common cleansing ritual; and yet, the visible blood clots also invoke menstruation. With the exception of *Period I*, none of the images within her *Period* series allows the person's body to be displayed. The process of bleeding is rendered invisible; all that is recovered is the (once pathologized) product.

Muholi's *Period* series brings to mind Judy Chicago's shocking photolithograph *Red Flag* (1971) which displayed a close-up of Chicago removing a bloody tampon from her vagina.⁵² The 1970s third-wave feminist movement in the United States carried with it many forms of menstruation activism. The Bloodsisters were often considered the pioneers of this movement and advocated for DIY handmade sanitary napkins as a challenge to the largely male-run multinational corporations who continue to profit off

⁵² In 1995, Judy Chicago (re)installed her infamous *Menstruation Bathroom* to New York City and then Los Angeles. *Menstruation Bathroom* was one of seventeen rooms which made up Womanhouse -- an abandoned Hollywood mansion refashioned into an art installation which displayed the work of seventeen female artists, each of whom received her own room. Chicago cleverly chose an all-white bathroom and littered it with menstrual products and blood. When Womanhouse opened in 1972, it made waves in an art world dominated by men and challenged the economic value-system which rarely placed high premiums on art created by and about women. When it was reinstalled twenty-three years later, Chicago "was struck by two things -- first that the range of sanitary products for women had grown enormously and second, the sense of shock elicited by this piece remained as potent as ever" (Bobel 47). At the time, in 1995, Chicago couldn't have known that fifteen years later still a mere intern could produce feminist waves with his simple and eloquent *always* advertisement by visually representing a single drop of blood.

women, but who rarely advocate for female health, cost-effectiveness, or environmental sustainability. The Bloodsisters, along with other 1970s feminist activists, combined their hefty critique of U.S. consumer culture with ecofeminism to protest against the use of “synthetic chemical pesticides” in and trash caused by single-use tampons (Bobel 45). For menstrual activists located in the U.S., the “premium placed on feminine beauty” was irrevocably connected to the menstrual taboo, which shamed women into secretly hiding menstruation. What makes Chicago’s photolithograph unique to the radical menstruation movement, marked by a concern with hyper-consumerism and pollution, was its reception. Chicago remarked that “many people, in a stunning display of menstrual denial, did not know what the red object was; some thought it was a bloody penis” (Bobel 46-47). Although Chicago interpreted/neglected this commentary as “ignorance,” a refusal to see the tampon for what it was, the (mis)reading adds a powerfully queer dynamic to 1970s menstruation activism, as well as connecting Chicago’s accidental gender play with Muholi’s deliberate gender queering. In two of Muholi’s images labeled *Untitled, 2006* she photographs herself bringing a tampon to her lips like a cigar. In the first, the person is hunched over, tampon in mouth, as if just having taken it out (33). In the second, Muholi’s playfulness shines through a two-page spread. On the left-hand side Muholi smokes the blunt end of a bloody tampon; adjacent on the right rests a woman’s vagina with braided pubic hair. The post-coital playfulness, indeed *pleasure*, which encapsulates these images, recasts menstruation within a visual, lesbian erotics. The archetypal cigarette after sex is replaced with a woman’s slightly used tampon.

Menstrual bleeding is indeed a queer process. Chicago and Muholi recuperate dirty femininity and use art to ‘speak back to’ the menstrual taboo. Period imagery can be

used to affirm the “womanness” and “naturalness” of lesbians. And although menstruation is indeed a uniquely female experience, the gender fluidity in both artists’ work queers their images and highlights its potential eroticism. The pleasure which arises from gender play is a strong supporting thread woven throughout Muholi’s collection. In one image labeled *Untitled, 2006* Muholi smears clotted blood on a lined sheet of notebook paper and forms it into the shape of either a phallus or a womb (40-41). Two smeared spheres are connected by a long phallic object strategically placed between them -- a scrotum by any speculation, and yet Muholi’s collection only photographs women. *Untitled, 2006* perhaps uses the abstraction of smeared blood on paper to emphasize the absurdity of gender policing -- it taunts a viewer into trying to classify the gender invoked by an ordinary sheet of white paper. Yet, the process of finger-painting necessary to create this piece also speaks to the lightheartedness of gender play. The malleability of blood lends one to read into the artistic process, invites readers to imagine further artistic smears -- changing the order or orientation of the image entirely.

Sara Ahmed deconstructs the normalization of hate crimes by simply asking: “If hate is ordinary, does it make sense to refer to it as a crime?” (56). The mundanity of Muholi’s images in particular, which are placed within bathrooms, in bedrooms, and capture women washing laundry, beg a similar question. When will the ordinary experiences of womanhood not also be informed by violence? Muholi responds to social stigma by recycling it into something that sustains lesbian eroticism. Desiree Lewis argues that “[i]t is implied that pleasure cannot be separated from the range of meanings and legacies that are directly and indirectly invoked in her images” (Gqola 84). These legacies include the way female bodies have been exoticized and commodified, as well as

how disease has come to affect sexual practices and expression. Gqola ends her article by affirming Muholi's *Period* series as both "joyful and mischievous" (88). There is a queerly construed pleasure and paradigm of erotics that come from violating gender norms. *Only Half the Picture* challenges us to re-evaluate what counts as erotic and offers images of menstruation as one viable option.

Revisionist Fantasies, Erotic Bleeding

Makhosazana Xaba's short story "Inside," found within *Open: An Erotic Anthology by South African Women Writers* (2008), continues this imaginative relocation of menstrual blood as a source of desire between two female lovers. *Open* is the first erotic anthology written by women, for women (in any language) in South Africa and boldly portrays the often contested subject of female sexuality, while representing a vast array of queer sexual practices and partnerships. Taking up where Zondi left off, Xaba models alternative forms of femininity through an incorporation of menstrual bleeding as a source of desire, rather than shame. Like Muholi, she playfully locates bleeding as central to female-female intimacy and partnership. Xaba trained as a nurse, has worked as a women's health specialist in NGOs, and often uses this experience to write about the intersection of gender, sexuality, and health. Menstrual bleeding in Xaba's story is marked by histories of imprisonment and loss before being recuperated as a source of pleasure.

Xaba's narrative describes the lust between two women, Zodwa (Zo) and Bhekiwe (Bheks), whose mutual attraction is instantaneous. Zodwa is a physical

education teacher at the high school Bhekiwe's younger brother attends. Bhekiwe is a university student researching the history of women beadworkers in South Africa.

Menstrual blood is used simultaneously as bearer of traumatized history and sexual foreplay. After several weeks of flirtation, Zodwa finally invites Bhekiwe over to her home under the guise of discussing Bhekiwe's research project. During their date, Zodwa responds slightly out of the blue to a question about labor laws, by saying: "Talking of personal histories -- I need to shower, my period is on. You don't mind waiting, right?" Bhekiwe reasonably asks back: "Zo, what has your period got to do with personal histories?" To this, Zodwa recites a monologue that demonstrates how women's bleeding does, in fact, tell their life story:

Well, let's see, I started menstruating a day before my fifteenth birthday. I'm thirty-two years old. That's seventeen years; 204 months of bleeding. But then, I missed six months when I was nineteen because of medication I was on. In 1985 I was in prison during the state of emergency, and my period disappeared. Stress, I think, but it was only for three months. I've been regular since. That brings the total down to 195 months. Can you imagine how many litres of blood that is? (Xaba 121).

Reading Xaba's story alongside Muholi's essay makes it difficult to think these artists weren't in explicit conversation. Muholi's *Period* series seems to be a visual response to Zodwa's question "can you imagine how many litres of blood that is?" It is as if Muholi is saying, 'yes, I can imagine, let's look at it together.' In Xaba's story, the "talk of menstrual blood awakens [Bhekiwe's] vagina. She feels a sudden seeping of juices, and smiles to herself" (122). Menstrual blood is first marked by histories of imprisonment and loss and then becomes the catalyst which sexually excites Xaba's female protagonist. Blood loss is recuperated as a source of female-female pleasure and eroticism.

Xaba's short story ends before Bhekiwe and Zodwa consummate their desire. Instead, the reader is tantalized by the way Bhekiwe "wonders what [Zodwa's abdominal muscles] would feel like under her fingertips." She says Zodwa's physique is what her "aunt would call 'a sculpture of womanhood,'" locating a celebration of strong female bodies within the structure of an extended, matriarchal family. Bhekiwe's "aunt used to say that the reason some women have such artistic bodies is because women made their own moulds when god took a break" (119). Bhekiwe's family foregrounds a feminist revision of the heteronormative, patriarchal creation myth at the center of Christianity and enables Bhekiwe's further eroticization of it. Christianity is also challenged by Zodwa, who claims: "Catholicism and education: deadly combination" (126). Zodwa, of course, teaches at the same Catholic school that Bhekiwe's brother attends. Her defiant proclamation incites Bhekiwe to wonder whether "her father [had] done any of his own research on the school" or if he simply sent her brother there "because Mandela's grandchildren" were also registered (127). In a few short dialogues, Bheks and Zo push-back on the weight of familial, religious, and even national responsibility. Discourses of belonging that are woven throughout these three institutions are exposed as that which hinder, rather than promote, female independence and strength.

"Inside" queers established narratives of national belonging for the figure of the returnee. Bhekiwe immediately begins distinguishing Zodwa from her other friends who are all children of exiles. Bheks ruminates over how their parents "hold regular get-togethers to talk about the struggle, their countries of exile, the democratic government -- its fortunes and foibles, black economic empowerment deals, and affirmative action" (122). In contrast, Zodwa points Bhekiwe's attention to the gender discrimination she

faces in the work place and the inherited legacy of Christian education contemporary youth are still subjected to. Xaba's short story, like all of the cultural texts included in this chapter, contributes to and visually marks the transition away from writing about the intense political struggle of black men under the Manichean institution that was apartheid. In *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid, and democracy, 1970-1991*, Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly distinguish post-apartheid from anti-apartheid literature by contextualizing that "Apartheid, the system of legalized racism, demanded strategic opposition." Therefore, "[t]he African National Congress's approach to culture as a weapon in the struggle, and more specifically, the call for literature to represent the victimization of the oppressed in realist form" should be understood and celebrated as "instances of such strategies" (2). Both authors conclude, however, by emphasizing that "an adherence to the ideology of the institutionalized culture of resistance appropriate to the anti-apartheid struggle, but limited by the framework of that time, may prove reactionary rather than liberatory in a post-apartheid context" (2). Bleeding for one's nation during the struggle against apartheid has been used in literature to envision and pay credence to traditional forms of black masculinity. The artists included in this chapter build from South Africa's literary history of protest and activism, but re-make bleeding as central to South African conceptions of female same-sex sensuality. Because Bheks was born in Tanzania, her father named her Bhekiwe in hopes that "their relatives and the spirits of the ancestors would look after her" (116). Central to Xaba's understanding of family, too, is a transnational network of ancestors and relatives. Queer, non-biological, spiritual family units are seen as generative, safe spaces. Even Zodwa, who was the "youngest of five children," suffered from the loss of a biological kinship network. Two

of her siblings “had died of AIDS, and one in a car accident. Zodwa paid school fees for two nieces and a nephew [...]. She also supported her mother [...]” (117). Although Zodwa’s family lives in and are from South Africa, they reside in Limpopo, but “no school would employ” Zodwa there. “They preferred male teachers because they’re better at sport” (118). The irony of Zodwa, a marathon-running physical education teacher, being physically less capable than her male colleagues saturates the declaration. Xaba parallels these two alternative exilic family models. Unlike Zuma’s rape trial, which exhaustingly reinforced a narrow interpretation of the biological nuclear family, Xaba presents alternative family structures -- aunts that praise women’s bodies, a feminist revision of Christianity’s creation myth, and long-distance support systems, as filled with possibility. Women play a foundational role in re-imagining family and a reader is left wondering if Bheks and Zo have become/will become “family.” Xaba privileges fluidity of movement, family, and belonging that challenge normative ideas regarding which citizens count and who is related.

We are no longer simply reading a South African short story, but rather a text which contains Southern African traces. The national framework is disrupted through Zodwa’s and Bhekiwe’s intimacy, conversations, and questioning. Their senses of self are informed by Southern African movement, and yet the national frame holds firm and is refracted even in Zodwa’s bodiliness and her menstrual process -- one that indexes her imprisonment during South Africa’s state of emergency. Among the various revisions these women make to the menstrual taboo, Catholicism, family, and nation we discover that Zodwa is a writer. Poetry and jazz are central to Bhekiwe’s and Zodwa’s intimate attachment. Early in the narrative and their relationship, Bheks and Zo meet at Kippies

jazz club where the Tanzanian Taiwa was playing. Back at Zodwa's home, "Spirits of Tembisa" plays and "transports [Bhekiwe] to the dusty streets of her childhood in Tanzania" (122). Zodwa lingers over the image of a Bhekiwe swaying to Taiwa on CD and confesses: "I'd like to find a place inside you that I'd take somewhere you've never been" (123). Zodwa, as the title suggests, wants to go "Inside" -- a place of emotional and erotic intimacy. Zodwa then shares with Bhekiwe her poetry, forging an emotional link and creating further depths of interior intimacy. Just as Muholi refuses to portray cliché images of hyper-sexualized black, female bodies, Xaba uses poetry, music, personal history, and bleeding as tools in Zodwa's and Bhekiwe's courtship. Bhekiwe and Zodwa are literally able to write their own rules, create their own families, and distance themselves from religion because of its internal exclusions. Bhekiwe's academic interest in oral history is positioned alongside music, poetry, and revisionist myth as collaborative, productive ways to excavate and commemorate maternal lines lived outside the official narrative. They incite a pathos that makes one go inside. Emotional and intellectual intimacy is favored ahead of overt, physical sex.

In Elleke Boehmer's 1998 chapter "Endings and New Beginning South African Fiction in Transition," she argues that during the late apartheid years writers stopped crafting the circumstances under which they wrote, allowing circumstance to instead craft their writing. She maintains that late apartheid South African novels written in English imposed a narrowing of possibility, were less exploratory and more uncomfortable with indeterminate endings. She close-reads earlier literature, including Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, for examples of indeterminate endings, and poignantly attests

that:

[...] it would be encouraging to see in South African fiction the return of endings that allow for new beginnings, for gestative mystery [...] open-endedness that makes room for new and various ways of thinking about the future -- no longer inevitable interregnum, arrested birth, the moment before death -- in short, the foreclosure of the frozen penultimate (51).

It is a small leap from the closed *rhetorical* endings Boehmer speaks of, to the kinds of fixedness being imposed onto gender, sexuality, family, and citizenship spoken back to in this chapter, but ultimately upheld in Zuma's trial. "Inside" ends with Bhekiwe opening her diary and writing one item: "finding oneself." She then "continues into an unplanned day," while feeling "Zodwa's smiling eyes lingering on her" (128). Xaba, like writers of earlier South African fiction written in English, does not "fix a single frame for the future" and perhaps rejects the lingering "determinisms of apartheid" (43).

Both Muholi and Xaba participate in creating a lesbian aesthetics which celebrate, rather than pathologize, female bodies -- their cycles, strengths, histories, and experiences. Both eroticize physical intimacy, rather than "sex acts" as normatively understood, as central to female-female pleasure, helping to forge an alternative narrative about black female sexuality and lesbianism. Xaba, like Muholi, builds off this excavation of lesbian womanhood by casting menstruation as both historicizing and erotic. Menstrual blood is capable of revealing one's history of trauma and erotically connecting two women. What distinguishes "Inside" from Combrinck's, Zondi's, and Muholi's work is the notable absence of HIV/AIDS and violence; Xaba manages to separate "lesbian" from those stigmas. With the suffering all in the apartheid past, this story attempts to write lesbianism into nationalist narratives, and a "positive" futurity, rather than rebuke nationalism for its failures in the present.

Conclusion

In 1985 South African writer Joan Metelerkamp wrote “Jeremy Cronin (from Inside) Calls,” the first poem in the first collection of her then still budding career as a poet. In it, literary allusions to Jeremy Cronin and Olive Schreiner abound, as Metelerkamp writes what she describes in a 1992 interview as a “private poem about a public thing” (3). Metelerkamp wrote “Jeremy Cronin” just before the emergency, “before the very worst” and straightforwardly connects violence to bleeding and death (3). In this late apartheid poem, blood does not index stigma and is not, indeed cannot yet, be recuperated or recycled into a positive motif. Metelerkamp writes:

[...]

All over South

Africa, black and white

Women are spilling boys’ blood

And holding buckets and watering-cans to catch it

Again with their falling tears to cultivate

heroes.

‘It is our intention to enter into the do-

main of war and to

labour

there till in the course of generations we have extinguished
it’;

[...]

(Listen, when there is bleeding

it means death,

where there is

bleeding

it means no life, know

that blood flowing is death.)

[...] (Weyer 23-4).

Metelerkamp weaves several voices to create her dialogic poem and submerges her own literary commentary into parenthesis, including the repetitive “(avoid killing).” She uses the poem to subtly question the anti-apartheid public rhetoric of 1980s South Africa which often saw violence as a necessary precursor to a non-violent democracy -- a laboring in war until it is extinguished (3). Blood then functions as a persistent literary and cultural idiom. Although, for Metelerkamp, there is nothing positive about bleeding, her work is a necessary predecessor to the abstracted, associative, multi-referential representations of bleeding that Combrinck, Zondi, Muholi, and Xaba produce. Like Metelerkamp, the artists and authors in this chapter are desperately trying to carve out an alternative narrative, to, in the words of Combrinck, chip “away at the mask which they made.”

Kelwyn Sole reflects that:

[...] South Africans have lived in a society they know the rest of the world holds up as an example of how peace and concordance can be achieved between people with the most irreconcilable of differences. Along with the pride that is felt in this is a knowledge that endemic violence, crime, and distrust have not significantly abated around them (8).

The authors included in this chapter have had to wrestle with the ever-presence of violence in their everyday, a challenge Zakes Mda might call trying to represent how “[w]ays of living are our ways of dying, or should I say our ways of dying are our ways

of living?" (163). For Combrinck, Muholi, and especially Xaba this means recycling the violent repercussions same-sex loving women face -- which results in blood loss -- back into the very source of their stigma -- same-sex desire. In the process, blood is transformed from a remnant of historic and personal trauma into a catalyst for lesbian desire and eroticism.

Chapter 3: Queer Confessions in Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit*

I want to reclaim my right to be wounded without my pain having to turn me into an example of woman as victim.

Njabulo Ndebele, The Cry of Winnie Mandela

[T]he one who is wounded is marked out -- literally and symbolically -- by the wound. The wound is a sign of difference. Even Harry Potter has a scar.

Jeanette Winterson, Why Be Happy When You Can Be Normal?

Come and see how toughness heals itself.

Achmat Dangor, Bitter Fruit

The challenges of ethically and aesthetically inscribing sexual violence in art and literature have never been so evident than in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (1999), a bleak overview of a post-apartheid South Africa in transition. It has garnered both global acclaim -- with Booker and Nobel prizes attached to the novel and Coetzee -- and local controversy. In 2000, the ANC submitted *Disgrace* to the Human Rights Commission's investigation into racism in the media for exploiting racist stereotypes, represented by the "black peril" interracial gang-rape committed against Lucy (Atwell 332).⁵³ And yet, Coetzee places Lucy's rape alongside another incident of non-consenting sex -- that of her father and English professor David Lurie's quiet seduction turned acquaintance rape of student Melanie Isaacs, described as "the dark one" (Coetzee 164). By including these two black and white peril narratives, Coetzee makes visible the legacy of colonial-era racialized sexual violence in the present. In the process, however, he constructs a divisive, altogether unflattering image of South Africa that many would rather reject. For instance, when speaking publicly about *Disgrace*, the President at the time, Thabo Mbeki,

⁵³ In "Race in *Disgrace*," David Atwell ultimately argues that the ANC's response to *Disgrace* "racializes events in the novel in ways that are not supported" (331). Yet, Nadine Gordimer also commented in a 2006 interview that "there is not one black person who is a real human being" in *Disgrace*. More than that, she contends: "I find it difficult to believe, indeed more than difficult, having lived here all my life and being part of everything that has happened here, that the black family protects the rapist because he's one of them" (Donadio). The difference in perspective between Atwell and Gordimer highlights the way in which this *single* novel has become a kind of catch-phrase for post-apartheid South Africa and its legacy of racialized sexual violence in the present.

felt compelled to awkwardly remind the presumably international audience that “South Africa is not only a place of rape” -- reducing the novel’s notorious (fictional) portrayal of interracial rape to realism (Tait). As mentioned in the introduction, it was only two months later that Thabo Mbeki rejected the South African Law Reform Commission’s *estimate* that 1.7 million rapes occur annually in South Africa, claiming that the hysteria behind these kinds of speculative rape statistics are perpetuated by white media and legislators who continue to stereotype black men as “savage beasts.” He further engaged in a parliamentary debate with white journalist and anti-rape activist Charlene Smith over the role of race in representing rape in South Africa (LaFraniere). Smith was infamously stabbed and raped in 1999 by a black man and her rape has become a rhetorical short-cut to signify “black peril” in South Africa, as well as bias in media reporting which often overemphasizes interracial rape (Graham 134).⁵⁴

It should not be surprising that the critical and political conversation surrounding *Disgrace* was hyper-focused on its representations of rape and race, even though complex negotiations involving same-sex sexuality were also central. Tim Trengove Jones points out that, “not one of the reviewers for the major South African newspapers thought it necessary to mention that the protagonist’s daughter in J.M. Coetzee’s [...] *Disgrace* is a lesbian” (119).⁵⁵ It would appear that Lucy’s sexuality is as elusive as Fezeka Kuzwayo’s, the complainant in Jacob Zuma’s rape trial. While, in chapter one, I argued that Kuzwayo’s lesbianism was erased by Judge Van der Merwe who saw it fit to label

⁵⁴ Lucy Valerie Graham points out that intraracial rape was much more common than interracial rape; yet, because miscegenation laws were implemented during apartheid to regulate interracial intimacy, these cases received a disproportionate amount of media attention and contributed to “black peril” or widespread paranoia about black male lasciviousness against white women (4).

⁵⁵ Cited in Brenna M. Munro’s *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*; her sixth chapter performs an extended analysis of gay and lesbian characters in novels by J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, thus responding to the critical silence Trengove Jones points out.

her instead “bisexual with lesbian tendencies,” Lucy’s sexuality has simply been forgotten by most critics. Both the ANC’s rebuke of Coetzee’s novel, and the parliamentary dispute about rape further placed South Africa’s rape crisis on the global stage and perhaps also contributed to South Africa’s strategic silencing or denialism about rape. In conversations about sex, violence, and South Africa, the novel is almost unavoidable. As a popular and controversial novel about rape, race, and post-apartheid South Africa, *Disgrace* brings questions of sexual violence, race, and imperial history to the fore in the postcolonial canon.

In *Disgrace*, the raped woman’s perspective is never given. Instead, the text is continually told through David Lurie’s perspective, which paradoxically brings attention to the untold perspectives on the narrative, namely Melanie Issac’s and Lucy Lurie’s. In this chapter I turn to Achmat Dangor’s novel *Bitter Fruit* (2001), which has also been critically acclaimed, yet has not become a global emblem of the new South Africa, to ask what one could learn about female sexuality if rape was not a story that always already remained untold? Dangor, like all of the authors and artists I include in this dissertation, makes the links which connect sexual violence and female sexual expression visible. In unearthing stories about sexual violence, Achmat Dangor also unearths a plethora of imaginative ways to experience and express sexual pleasure, and thus does not allow trauma to obliterate narratives of desire.

Bitter Fruit continues the three main threads woven throughout this dissertation. First, it questions the ability of institutional spaces, such as the courtroom, to nurture complex sexual identities and experiences of trauma. Second, Dangor addresses queer female sexuality in a time of rape. Lastly, Dangor’s varied cast of sexual subjectivities

defies dominant ways of thinking about sexuality as fixed and categorical, rather than multiple. Many critics praise *Bitter Fruit* for its representations of racial multiplicity which move past Manichean binaries of black and white. However, this chapter shines light on how this important conversation of racial heterogeneity is matched by an equally heterogeneous cast of sexual identities and desires.⁵⁶ Among these characters are Lydia, with her queer private fantasies and history of trauma; Julian, rumored to be gay; Kate, the “lesbian queen” (45) who “announced that bisexuality was just an experiment,” (58) but who later had sex with Mikey, Lydia’s son, the product of her rape; and Mikey himself, whose “beauty will prove to be a curse” to all women (64). Mikey takes after his father Silas in rejecting women who have been victims of sexual violence, demonstrated through his refusal to be intimate with Vinu, his friend who suffers from incest, but “revels [too much] in her status as a victim” (241). I argue that, through Mikey and Silas, the raped woman is incited into discourse as a “new” sexuality, and then rejected by the women this is projected on -- thus showing some of what is at stake if South Africa’s rape crisis remains unabated. Individuals and institutions map victimhood onto, in particular, Lydia, who “knew that in [her husband Silas’s] eyes, her sexuality was defined by her status as a rape victim;” whereas her queer sexual fantasies nurse her into being an agent of sexual desire yet again (119). *Bitter Fruit* is an important contribution

⁵⁶ Racial and sexual heterogeneity constantly intersect throughout *Bitter Fruit*. Interracial desire and interracial rape in particular take on multiple forms. For instance, Lydia and Silas serve as foils; while Lydia imagines a Chinese female persona who succeeds in giving her pleasure, Silas violates a Chinese woman in his township by asking to look at her genitals. These interracial forms of intimacy and violence broaden the way one deploys interraciality (as well as the apartheid category of “coloured”) in literature, by looking at relationships among people whose racial identifications fall outside the categories of black and white. As Lucy Valerie Graham says of post-apartheid literature broadly, and *Disgrace* in particular, these texts “disturbingly bring into focus a history of representation in which rape and issues of race are inextricably enmeshed” (16).

to the post-apartheid canon for the way it privileges a more expansive way to imagine sexuality amidst violence.

An Ordinary Rape

Bitter Fruit is set in 1998 Johannesburg at the end of Nelson Mandela's presidency. It focuses on a so-called "heterosexual," so-called "coloured" family who "symbolized the future of the new South Africa" and around whom issues of sexual trauma unfold, including rape, incest, and voyeurism (111).⁵⁷ Politically: the father/husband figure, Silas Ali, is a former ANC activist who works in the justice ministry and coordinates with the TRC. Personally: Silas and his wife Lydia have a marriage without intimacy; when they do have sex, Lydia fantasizes about Cathy, "snake-like and amber-skinned," who "always succeeded in bringing her to a climax," but Lydia has also kissed her son Mikey "carnally" on the lips (119, 166). The novel opens with Silas accidentally running into and then stalking Francios Du Boise, a former white apartheid-era police officer "who worked for the old system, *was* the old system" and who raped Lydia eighteen years prior and made Silas listen (131). Lydia's rape is the primary act of trauma around which the novel circulates, and yet it cannot be spoken of. Her rape is intimately connected to the other episodes of trauma in the novel, for as Ana Miller points out, it has wide-reaching repercussions which "rebound across the family" (150). Dangor uses free indirect discourse which refuses to provide "external moral

⁵⁷ Anne McClintock comments that "nations are symbolically figured as domestic genealogies;" and that "[w]e speak of nations as motherlands' and 'fatherlands.' Foreigners 'adopt' countries that are not their native homes and are naturalized into the national 'family.' [...] In Britain, immigration matters are dealt with at the Home Office; in the United States, the president and his wife are called the First Family. Winnie Mandela was, until her recent fall from grace, honored as South Africa's 'Mother of the Nation'" (357).

commentary” and accomplishes this by focusing on the inner thoughts of multiple characters, thus providing readers with multiple, sometimes conflicting, perspectives (Miller 148).

This nuclear family functions, at least in part, as a national allegory: the incestuous mother-son desire, as well as failed heterosexual marital desire is a damaged reaction to unaddressed trauma. Since this family romance occurs against the background of the TRC, this family, like the nation, must reconcile with the trauma they experienced in order to move on to the national/familial building process. The TRC was set up as a truth-seeking project. It was assembled to investigate and document gross human rights abuses that took place during the late years of apartheid (1960-1994). Across a two year period, individuals who identified as either “victims” or “perpetrators” of gross human rights violations told their stories on a national platform. These public confessions were televised and broadcast on the radio and were unavoidable in the public sphere. One unique aspect of the TRC relevant to *Bitter Fruit* was the inclusion of amnesty hearings. In some cases, perpetrators could request amnesty from civil and criminal prosecution for confessing the crimes they committed. In the end, however, not one person applied for amnesty for committing sexual violence, and no “victims” of sexual violence made their experiences public. The second unique aspect of the TRC was that it was spatially divided. On the one hand, you had public hearings during which both “perpetrator” and “victim” stood on the same metaphoric platform and declared that which they had done, or that which had been done to them. Sexual assault hearings were relegated to closed-court sessions and were made private. The TRC document is written; it is available online and was presented to then President Mandela after its completion in 1998. Because sexual

violence was relegated to the private, it was not written into the script of apartheid-era offences.⁵⁸ In *Bitter Fruit*, unaddressed sexual violence disrupts this heterosexual family unit/the nation which should be healing in this moment of political transition.

Dangor critiques the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for not creating a space where sexual violence could be spoken. At the time of the TRC, it was considered dangerous to speak publicly about sexual violence, since community shame was thought to be intrinsically attached to that articulation. However, Dangor argues in an interview that this is only part of the truth, and suggests that the nation was also not ready to *hear* sexual offences. Rather than uphold the TRC as a platform to speak and heal from trauma, Dangor enables Mikey, the product of Lydia's rape, to kill his mother's rapist. *Bitter Fruit* is divided into three parts: "Memory," "Confession," and "Retribution." And yet, rape is the only crime which garners retribution in the novel and perhaps the only one which is cast as incapable of receiving justice through the nation's TRC therapy session or the courtroom. Dangor's critique of the criminal justice system is one that positions seemingly "illegal" retributive crimes alongside the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the courtroom, thus prompting readers to decide how they are different and if either is more just. In the end, criminal acts and the criminal justice system are presented as mutually reinforcing, rather than exclusive. Through Mikey, one wonders what kinds of ends will come if legal systems do not prove to be more capable of

⁵⁸ Lucy Valerie Graham documents that at the "legal recommendation of feminist scholars from the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of Witwatersrand, the TRC recognized that many women who testified cast themselves as secondary victims, and it was thus arranged for special hearings to guarantee 'a safe space for women'" (135). Graham maintains however, as do I, that stories of sexual violence have still been made "public" through news media, as well as art and literature. Therefore, it was an insecure sense of anonymity that was compromised. However, I do recognize there would have been other problems for women and men who had been assaulted had these hearings been completely public. Although the privacy creates a problem of public absence, complete publicity would have created its own forms of (perhaps insurmountable) stigma that Dangor also explores through Lydia in *Bitter Fruit*.

grappling with the complexities of and prosecuting sexual assault. It is for this reason that art and literature must be understood as an important part of the national record, because they can articulate and create narratives which go unheard in legal and other institutional spaces.

Njabulo Ndebele's critical work is very much apropos to this novel. Ndebele first read his now well-known keynote address on rediscovering the ordinary in 1984. He opened his address by saying that "the history of black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of spectacle" (31). Anti-apartheid protest poetry was one genre that successfully enabled South African authors to rhetorically challenge the draconian laws experienced under apartheid and invoke social protest and change (65). Simply put, the representation of apartheid in literature took the form of spectacle, because life was too "fantastic to be outstripped by the creative imagination" (Moyana 95-96). In turn, Ndebele deployed the concept of ordinariness as a literary antidote to this spectacularized violence. He asked writers to "rediscover the ordinary" moments of everyday life as one way to imagine alternative literary forms and a "new" and better life.

Understood through Ndebele's concepts, Silas and others who were active in the anti-apartheid struggle have to learn to "rediscover the ordinary" -- what Kate interprets as learning to "become ordinary, learn how to lie to ourselves, and to others, if it means keeping the peace [...] like ordinary people everywhere in the world" (138). Becoming ordinary is presented as a necessary, if not altogether undesired, process of the transition to democracy. Dangor writes Lydia's rape in such a way that also subsumes it within this new world of ordinariness, defined for her by Du Boise as an "ordinary event" and

justified as another hazard of “the struggle” (128). Dangor stages rape as ordinary, however, in order to critique its minimization. The way that Ndebele’s concept does and does not fit representations of sexual violence is revealing. On the one hand, sexual violence *is* spectacularized in global media and often stands-in for “new” South Africa’s post-apartheid failures. As analyzed in chapter two, it is for this reason that visual artist Zanele Muholi titled her photographic collection *Only Half the Picture*. Muholi speaks back to news headlines which sensationalize hate crimes and consequently pathologize black lesbians as victims of rape; Muholi’s collection suggests that this violence is, in fact, only half the picture of lesbian existence. On the other hand, Dangor satirizes the lack of political responsiveness to sexual violence by calling it ordinary. The prevalence of sexual violence, at the time that Dangor was writing his novel, was politically dismissed, as is evidenced by Thabo Mbeki’s rape denialism in Parliament mentioned earlier in this chapter. Dangor points attention to the way that rape has problematically been cast-off as typical, or “ordinary.”

Lydia’s rape is reconstructed to readers through Mikey, who learns about his mother’s rape after reading her diary without her consent -- a text which “has the transcendent quality of pain captured without sentimentality” (127). Rhetorically, this sexual offence is once-removed from the reader who can only access it through Mikey. Prior to this private discovery, Mikey assumed the man who raised him, Silas Ali, was his biological father. After reading the entry on her rape, Mikey realizes that “[i]t is no longer the vast fiction of great histories he is reading,” but the narrative of his conception (127). He then reflects on the details Lydia chooses to include about her rape:

Du Boise’s eyes, his smell, his grunts, the flicker of fear when he reached his climax and, for a moment, was not in control. Silas’s rage, his wild

screaming, which did not lessen her terror but enhanced it, his fists hammering against the sides of the police van, giving rhythm to Du Boise's rapacious movements.

Afterwards, the casual talk among the other cops, an ordinary, everyday event. How one of them told her to be glad that they had no time for a 'tournament,' calls were coming in from all over the townships, they had to go, the 'fucken youth are going wild.' He hoped that 'this' would teach her a lesson. A verbatim quote: 'You fucken terrorists must think again about what you're doing. Otherwise we'll naai you every time we see you.' Words embedded in her consciousness (127-8).

Lydia's perspective and bodiliness are notably absent from Mikey's interpretation and reconstruction. Her observations project outward and capture, instead, her husband's "wild screaming" which gave "rhythm to Du Boise's rapacious movements" (127).

Readers already know that sex was weaponized against Lydia to reach Silas, who worked underground during the struggle. Du Boise, who represented "the system," was threatening Silas and his political rebellion by sexually and verbally assaulting his wife. Although Lydia did not *yet* know about her husband's political activity, this scene demonstrates, despite that imposed ignorance, that she still viewed Silas as embedded in her rape, through his wild screaming which contributed to Du Boise's rhythm. Both men are described here as enhancing Lydia's terror and therefore corroborating her experience with violence.

Reading this excerpt brings to mind Sara Ahmed's comment that "if hate is ordinary, does it make sense to refer to it as a crime?" (56). Of course, Ahmed refers here to the insufficiency of hate crime legislation in the U.S, but one might also interpret it as a comment on the insufficiency of legal systems to redress sexual violence more generally. South African authors have wrestled with representing sexual violence in their work in ways that could critique its ordinariness, without sensationalizing it. From J.M.

Coetzee's *Disgrace*, to K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), set in post-apartheid Cape Town, to Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* (1999), set in 1950s rural South Africa, authors are using the novel to expose and contest the mundanity of sexual violence pre- and post-apartheid. I argue in my introduction that all three of these authors also theorize about the hinge which connects sexual violence to sexual expression. In *Quiet Violence of Dreams*, for instance, readers follow Tshepo's encounters as a sex worker in a gay male brothel which, at its best, is identified as a creative and political envisioning of a "new" South African, multiracial brotherhood. This all-male safe space enables Tshepo the sexual agency to heal from his experience of being raped by the gangster Zebron, who also confessed to having raped Tshepo's mother. Like Dangor, Duiker does not allow Tshepo's experience with sexual assault to obliterate his identity as a desiring person. The all-male brothel provides Tshepo a physical place and emotional space to enact consensual sexual expression -- at least for a while.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams is an important contribution to African literature as it inscribes both male same-sex acts and male-male rape, and yet refuses to pathologize homosexuality as an unwanted *repercussion* of sexual trauma and assault. As detailed in the introduction, African literature uses sex as a metaphor for political struggle. Both K. Sello Duiker and Achmat Dangor inscribe same-sex intimacy into their novels as a vehicle through which characters survive trauma. Dangor diverges from Duiker, however, in the vitality he attributes to Lydia's interior life. Same-sex fantasy comforts Lydia both pre- and post-trauma, and emblemizes that facet of her sexuality that rebukes "correction." Both Dangor and Duiker also look at sexual violence on its own

terms, not as a metaphor for political struggle, but as an (ordinary) lived experience. Or perhaps, as *Bitter Fruit* foreshadows, as a *new* arena of struggle: “[m]ore women were raped in [Johannesburg] than anywhere else in the world. The hyperbole of our new struggles” (77).

Art and literature are important for speaking sexual violence and making it imaginable in ways that institutional spaces often cannot (or do not). As Elleke Boehmer says of postcolonial literature more generally, there are “those among the once-colonised for whom the silences of history have not ended” (132).⁵⁹ It is not surprising, then, that *Bitter Fruit* opens with Lydia dancing on broken glass -- a poetic attempt to make her trauma visible on the outside. Despite Dangor labeling part one “Memory,” he opens with *Silas* remembering Lydia’s rape. The novel begins bleakly: “It was inevitable. One day Silas would run into someone from the past, someone who had been in a position of power and had abused it. [...] Yes, it was Du Boise. Francois du Boise” (3). The narrative continues, saying that Silas felt rage toward Du Boise, and all those who “have it good in this new South Africa” (5). He chooses to then haphazardly share his anxiety about Du Boise with Lydia. While driving into the city, he tells her that he “saw Du Boise today” (9). Nineteen years later, Lydia can only answer with one question: “Who?” When advocating for and supporting people who have been raped it is important to not make decisions or take action without their consent, since non-consent is central to their experience of violence. It is noteworthy then that Du Boise, Silas, and Mikey are all male characters who take action toward remembering Lydia’s rape without her consent, and seemingly against her wishes: Mikey in the form of reading her diary; Silas by cornering Lydia in their car and naming her rapist; and Du Boise, who attempts to non-consensually

⁵⁹ In *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*

invoke his experience raping her at the (fictionalized) TRC's amnesty hearings. Lydia reminds Silas that "[h]e raped me, not you" and Silas reasonably retorts back that "[i]t hurt me too" (13). When Silas suggests that Lydia speak at the Truth and Reconciliation hearings, she reproaches his offer, saying that the Archbishop Desmond Tutu will "never understand what it's like to be raped, to be mocked while he's being raped, to feel inside of him the hot knife -- that piece of useless flesh you call a cock -- turning into a torture instrument" (16). Then, after years of not speaking her rape, Lydia makes her pain visible on the outside by delicately dancing on "the jagged edges of the broken beer glass" (17). Immediately after, Lydia bled profusely and Silas called an ambulance that would never arrive. After decades spent fighting for the new democratic ANC government, Silas is drunkenly exasperated with his ordinary life, commenting that "[a]t least now that apartheid was gone, black and white suffered equally" (25).

Lydia's new scars bring to mind Zanele Muholi's photograph *Aftermath*. Both depict women who have scars that are, in the words of Muholi, "often in places where they can't be seen" (Gunkel 1). As described in chapter two, *Aftermath* shows a black woman photographed from the torso down, hands clasped around her genitals. A long healed scar runs down her right leg. A viewer's eyes go between the healed scar and her covered groin, both indicating experiences of trauma. Muholi's image, like all of the artists and authors I examined in chapter two, highlights the politics of visibility that operate around (visual representations of) sexual violence.

Lydia's scarification also textually echoes within *Bitter Fruit*, in particular with the scarification embodied by a young woman who is remembered by Silas as "the most beautiful woman in the township," Frances (105). Frances "Fanny" Dip was a Chinese

girl whose vagina was racially notorious and rumored to be crosswise. Silas was sixteen years-old when he asked Frances if he could look at her. Frances agreed to this act of voyeurism, and then made Silas promise on his mother's life he would not tell anyone, but, according to Silas, her eyes said "I thought you were different" (105). Silas pondered for a moment what it would mean to look at her vagina without the boastful promise of divulging its details to his friends, but ultimately agreed to her stipulation. He remembers this encounter with awkwardly romantic language:

He turned the memory of Frances 'Fanny' Dip over in his mind, the way you lovingly examine a yellowing photograph, saw her skin caught in the half-light of her father's storeroom. Sunlight penetrated through holes in the corrugated-iron roof, igniting the shadows around them, as she raised her dress just high enough for him to see the startling contrast of black pubic hair. 'Remember, you can look, but you can't touch,' she said. And afterwards he told Alec, Bruno and Toyer (curious but bemused at their heterosexual obsession with wanting to know what Frances's fanny looked like) that he couldn't tell them whether it was crosswise, that he couldn't tell them anything, because he had sworn on his mother's life not to tell anybody what he had seen, and no one broke an oath made on his mother's life (104).

Silas racially fetishizes Frances even in retrospect, dissecting her body in his mind while comparing her skin to a yellowing photograph; this inter-ethnic act of voyeurism functions as another example of Dangor's interest in hybridizing the black/white South African national narrative. Paradoxically, Silas distinguishes his desire for and behavior toward Frances from the seemingly more perverse "heterosexual obsession" of his friends. Dangor therefore draws a parallel between Silas' romanticization and his friends' lewd longing to hear the account of Frances' genitals. Both modes of gawking at the female sexed body are presented as equally damaging. This recollection ends with Silas supposedly keeping his mother's life sacred, while violating another female body and reinforcing the myths about her.

Sixteen-year-old Silas became a township legend because of his audacity in looking at Frances's vagina. He recalls that people asked him "what it was like to screw someone so strange" -- wondering if he would have to make love to her sideways, "lying across her body" due to her "sideways poes" (104). Of course, Silas did not have sex with Frances; nor was her vagina somehow strangely ethnicized by her Chinese heritage. Frances had, however, been sexually assaulted and the scar left across her vagina had mythically transformed into rumors that were both racialized and sexualized. The narrative tells us in present time, through Silas, that Frances had a scar which ran from inside of her groin right around her leg.

Fell on some rocks at a picnic, she said. A real bullshit story. That was a wound, you know, a knife wound that hadn't been properly stitched. It was so deep. If she had allowed me to touch it, I guess my whole fingertip would have gone in. Fuck, Alec, she was trying to tell me something, but I was too stupid to know (108).

Frances' (in)visible violations in this scene echo the politics of visibility that Muholi highlights in *Aftermath*. Even at the moment that Silas gazes at Frances' vagina, he cannot comprehend the trauma he sees. Whereas teenage Silas and his friends assumed Frances' sexual difference was related to her racial difference, readers discover that the way that Frances' body was marked and thus how her sexuality was discursively managed was simply one more result of having experienced violent sexual assault.

South Africa's transition beyond apartheid signified a desire to move past strict racial segregation into something more like the rainbow multiculturalism the Chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, coined during that first democratic election in 1994. Yet, *Bitter Fruit* shows how not only gender and sexuality, but also race is unavoidably impacted and informed by South Africa's

long-standing rape crisis; for instance, Frances becomes a racialized sexual fantasy due to the scars of her rape. Even Lydia's rape was explicated through racially loaded language, "[a] verbatim quote," she says; "[y]ou fucken terrorists" (128). Although Silas deems Lydia's "victimized" sexuality undesirable, he exoticizes Frances' sexual otherness. And yet, like Frances, Lydia too was trying to tell Silas something that night, that nineteen years later, the TRC would not help to articulate her pain and make it imaginable.

It is important that Lydia asserts her agency by refusing to be complicit with the TRC's truth telling methods. In her analysis of the novel, Ana Miller explains that the TRC drew on several models of damage:

South Africa and South Africans were likened to 'wounded bodies,' truth telling was posited as a way of cleansing the unhealed wounds of human rights violations and the system of apartheid; [...] and the TRC was also a Christian process of healing in which confession and contrition would pave the way for forgiveness and reconciliation (154).

In contrast, Lydia embodies something closer to the opening epigraph: wanting the right to claim woundedness without the twinning of victimhood, or I would add, public confession. Miller further categorizes Lydia's refusal to speak her trauma as "an act of rebellion" aimed against Silas, Catholicism, and eventually the TRC. Lydia's opinions and fear of the TRC are bound up with her husband Silas who works in the justice ministry and whose anti-apartheid activities made her more vulnerable to assault. In the end, she simply declines to let her rape be further subsumed by "man's gospel" (Dangor 127). While, in chapter one, Fezeka Kuzwayo tried to use the only legal recourses available to her -- doctors, lawyers, and eventually the court system -- Lydia quietly and poetically preferred to dance on broken glass than to have her pain be reappropriated by the individuals who originally enabled it.

Sexual violence stunts this moment of political transition and damages the new South African nation-state represented through the nuclear “heterosexual” family. Dangor does not provide a way out of this cycle of trauma, but rather visualizes the wide-reaching effects of the legalized racial stigma produced during apartheid which continues to reverberate into the post-apartheid era. This mode of racial pathologization affects the *sexuality* of the multi-racial post-apartheid national family: from Lydia’s and Silas’s failed marital sex, to circuits of incestuous desire, and finally the production of the mythic figure of the violated and untouchable woman that follows as the impact of unaddressed sexual trauma. Same-sex desire, in contrast, is presented as healing. Dangor demonstrates that sexual violence was one important aspect of racial violence that was largely left unarticulated and, as such, has wide-reaching and unforeseeable repercussions which will continue to plague the family/nation state.

Queer Confessions

I began this chapter by asking what one can learn about female sexuality when experiences of sexual violence are not foreclosed upon. Throughout this dissertation, authors and artists have been unearthing new “paradigms of pleasure,” in the words of Lisa Combrinck, and new queerly-construed erotics (33). The texts I examine are less concerned with “fixing” rape legislation -- although they are all certainly invested in exposing its insufficiency -- than they are with carving out an alternative space to experience pleasure and eroticism among the trauma which impacts the lives of non-conforming South African citizens. Put more simply: How does one experience desire among this trauma? I suggest that, amidst South Africa’s legacy of apartheid-era sexual

violence that hangs over this important moment of political transition, Dangor removes sexual pleasure from the body and re-locates it as a form of psychic fantasy and imaginative, non-bodily sexual play. Rich fantasy life becomes one mode for expressing sexual pleasure in such a way as to prevent it from being discursively or physically managed by other people.

Throughout the novel, same-sex desire also side-steps western rubrics of gay, lesbian, and even straight. In fact naming and categorizing sexual pleasure, what the novel also understands as “confessing” it, serves to inhibit and stigmatize desire, rather than legitimize it. Two of the most intimate and honest “acts” of sexual satisfaction and pleasure in the novel are not sex acts as normatively understood. Lydia’s vexed and imaginative relationship with Cathy, the Chinese female persona she conjures in order to experience any kind of sexual pleasure, satisfies her psyche in a way that her husband is unable to. It also remains the only source of happiness for her until the end of the novel.

Lydia says of Cathy:

[She] helped her wrench some pleasure for herself from her encounters with Silas, their lovemaking having followed the course she feared most when she was young: from love to lust to conjugal routine. Usually, her response was ritualistic, even when he did succeed in arousing her, in reaching that pure subterranean river still unsullied by the memory of being raped. Sometimes, she deliberately summoned Cathy, allowing herself to be filled with an almost malevolent knowledge of her own sensuality. The image of Christ and his bride Catherine, entwined with Cathy, snake-like and amber-skinned, always succeeded in bringing her to a climax (119).

Cathy becomes a catalyst for Lydia to perform sexual satisfaction with her husband. The “course” of marital heterosexual intimacy is exacerbated by the shared “memory of being raped” that also rests in their bedroom. The legacy of sexual shame is woven throughout this passage and highlighted in Lydia’s feeling of malevolence toward her own

sensuality. It is the illicitness Cathy invokes, who takes on the embodiment of Christian sin personified -- the snake -- combined with Cathy's imagined marriage to Christ, that entices Lydia. Christianity "entwined" with queer sexuality enables Lydia to perform, even if perhaps unconvincingly, heterosexuality.

It is important that Lydia began her imaginative relationship with Cathy before she was raped. Lydia's queerness is not produced as a reaction to her trauma, but serves as a private resource she draws on in the wake of trauma. Cathy receives her namesake from Sister Catherine: a nun whose "full lips," "stern beauty and insinuated sensuality" enticed Lydia while at seminary at Mayville (115). Lydia's connection to Sister Catherine remains unspoken. She felt "dreams of desire that she dared not speak about, knowing instinctively that they would be seen as wrong, and would therefore *become* wrong" (my emphasis 116). As long as Lydia's desires remained privately secured in her imagination, they were and would remain a source of pleasure. She feared they would be condemned if articulated verbally. Lydia's sexual shame is noticeably produced in response to a guest monk, who is "on loan from Rome," and who gave absolutions to the South African congregation for confessed sins. When it is Lydia's turn to confess her sins, she says that:

[...] perhaps it was the pleasurable prospect of a sin's telling (who knows what goes on in that part of the brain where words like 'cunt,' 'suck,' 'suckle' gather in their hordes, waiting to invade the innocent realms of the heart?), but Lydia found herself unable to speak. She flung her head back and raised her eyes [...] and started laughing [...] (116).

This foreign monk then interpreted Lydia's laughter as symptomatic of the devil and brought her immediately to Sister Catherine. The reconstruction of this interaction relies on highly eroticized rhetoric which, although written in third-person and using free and indirect discourse, privileges Lydia's perspective.

It was Sister Catherine who pulled down Lydia's school tunic, which had somehow been raised when the monk lifted her (did she imagine then that Sister Catherine's eyes had lingered for a second on her slender thighs, whose loveliness Silas would moaningly proclaim the first time they made love?). 'No, Lydia is not possessed,' Sister Catherine said, 'this is a civilized country. In spite of all its problems [...]' (117).

Throughout *Bitter Fruit* words dangerously change the nature of the thing they intend to define. Desire, when pinned down by language (or one could add, western sexual categories), instantly transitions into stigma. In the first passage, sex acts that are translated verbally become dangerous and sins that should be confessed. It is significant, for example, that among all of the words Lydia could have used to signify "vagina," she uses "cunt," a term that has a complicated relation to the derogatory, is taboo as a word, and is, of course, a word intended to defame, in part, female sexuality. In fact, all three terms are formed by hard consonants, a sort of learned verbal weaponry.

Time folds in the second passage. Adult Lydia contemplates Sister Catherine's eyes retrospectively and compares her act of looking to the way her husband's eyes also lingered on her. She further wonders if the Roman monk found Sister Catherine, a "little too attentive" (117). Queer sexual expression is once again entangled with racial and national stereotypes, characterized by the monk's projection of barbarism onto South Africa. *Bitter Fruit* depicts the complex terrain of human sexuality as linked, at every turn, to race and stigma. Dangor re-centralizes sexuality as an important part of discussions about apartheid-era racial offences, since sexual shame is presented as so intimately attached to the racial regime. In the end, it is not Lydia's "barbaric" African heritage that renders her perverse, but rather foreign discourses of sexual conservatism that view female sexual expression through the imposed and notably imported lens of perversity. Catholicism's relationship with imperial missionary work, its colonial history

and foreignness, becomes a mirror for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the demand it imposed onto South Africans for (perverse) confessions.

The purpose and effectiveness of the TRC has been the subject of major debate. The amnesty hearings in particular were hotly contested. In order to analyze Dangor's critique of the TRC, it is important to understand how the amnesty clause was originally attached to the new Constitution. The Commission was assembled to investigate and document human rights abuses that took place from 1960-1994. People who identified as either victims or perpetrators of gross human rights violations were invited to provide testimony about their experiences. The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (No. 34 of 1995) outlined the TRC's objectives as:

[to establish] as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights which were committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date, including the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations, as well as the motives and perspectives of the victims and of the persons responsible for the commission of the violations, by instituting investigations and holding hearings.

In some cases, perpetrators could further request amnesty from civil and criminal prosecution for confessing the crimes they committed. On April 15, 1996 the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) began televising the first human rights violations hearings. The hearings were broadcast every Sunday from that April in 1996 to March of 1998 in 87 hour-long "episodes" which comprised what the SABC describes as the "Truth Commission Special Report" television series (<http://sabctr.c.saha.org.za/>). In fact, SABC's website still has video embedded onto the "Truth Commission Special Report" homepage titled "TRC: Episode 01, Part 01" highlighting the production of these "truths" and availability in everyday forms of media. In an interview, Dangor compares

the Commission to the O.J. Simpson trial, saying “you could switch them on during breakfast, you could watch them all day, like O.J. Simpson” (*The Ledge*). This regimented making public of apartheid’s violence established a shared understanding of that recent history. Ndebele also comments on the production of these truths when reflecting on the first round of TRC hearings. He comments that the TRC Chairman, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was quoted as saying: “The country has taken the right course in the process of healing to hear these stories” (Nuttall and Coetzee 19). Ndebele says this was the first time he heard the testimonies be explicitly identified as “stories,” highlighting the slippage that had already occurred among truth, memory, testimony, and story.

In *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*, Richard A. Wilson explains that the political negotiations which led up to South Africa’s new political order “were among the most participatory and accountable seen in any recent transition from authoritarian rule.”⁶⁰ And yet, “the dilemma of how to deal with politically motivated human rights violations of the apartheid period was not subjected to the same process of democratic dialogue” (7). The former apartheid government, the National Party (NP), brokered a deal with the

⁶⁰ In *The Era of Transitional Justice: The Aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and Beyond*, Paul Gready comments that perpetrators do not frequently participate in truth commissions; however, the promise of amnesty in South Africa greatly increased the number of truth commission participants (25). He further explains that the statistical picture one gets from the number of amnesty claims that were reported is extremely misleading. “Most crucially, the number of ‘real’ amnesty applications was in fact very small indeed (1,646). The TRC in its final, codicil report miscalculates the total number of amnesty applications [...] (whereas the figure more usually cited now is 7,116), and fails to provide a comprehensive table of data. [...] A total of 293 members of the apartheid-era security forces applied for amnesty; most of these were from members of the security branch, while very few indeed (31 in total) were South African Defense Force (SADF) members. [...] Most amnesty applications were black; the majority came from criminals in prison trying to depict their crimes as political, rather than ‘real’ applicants; among political protagonists, African National Congress (ANC)-aligned applicants dominated. At face value, this is a very bizarre picture of apartheid era violence and perpetration” (26).

upcoming democratic government, the African National Congress (ANC), to grant amnesty to human rights offenders. One representative from each party -- the Chief NP negotiator Roelf Meyer and ANC representative Cyril Ramaphosa -- mandated that a postscript be attached to the new Constitution. Wilson reflects that:

The interim Constitution, with its last-minute postscript requiring an amnesty mechanism, went to parliament after 6 December 1993. There was never any open deliberation of the postscript at the plenary session of parliament, since it arose from a closed and secretive deal between the NP and ANC leaderships. Recognizing the exclusive character of the political deal done on amnesty is important as there is a strong moral argument that such an amnesty arrangement can only be entered into by victims themselves or their legitimate representatives and not by others on their behalf and with very little consultation (8).

It is almost impossible to trace the origins of the TRC's amnesty hearings, "since it arose from a closed and secretive deal" (8). We do know that the inclusion of an amnesty mechanism insured that many more perpetrators participated in the Commission, thus encouraging a fuller picture of apartheid violence. Dangor takes Wilson's "strong moral argument" head on (8). He uses the novel to elucidate Lydia's perspective -- to not have the story of her rape and sexuality be confessed for her by her rapist. Wilson argues that the amnesty postscript was soon subsumed within Desmond Tutu's articulated position of *Ubuntu*, and accepted through the logic of pan-Africanism. For Tutu, "*Ubuntu* says I am human only because you are human. If I undermine your humanity, I dehumanize myself" and vice versa (Wilson 9). He further claims that this perpetual search for "great harmony" is "why African jurisprudence is restorative rather than retributive," painting "[r]etributive justice [as] largely Western" (9-11). Retributive justice (broadly defined) was quickly subsumed into the rubric of Western and colonial -- that which the new South Africa was trying to distinguish itself from. Wilson and others have pointed out,

however, that legal justice (dealing with past human rights offences through the legal system) is different than the brute physical retribution Tutu was referencing. Wilson further asserts that legal justice could have been a useful middle ground between amnesty and rampant violence. *Bitter Fruit* takes an alternative stance; through several character case studies, it presents a legal system that refuses to adequately handle rape cases. However even here, as throughout the novel, women are notably absent from the process of retribution; only males are given the authority to restore a woman's supposedly lost honor. The novel suggests then that the misogyny which enables the ordinariness of rape culture is also (not so surprisingly) embedded within the current means available to handle rape cases.

Dangor is interested in how sexual violence is inadequately dealt with by any of the means currently available. On *The Ledge*'s website, for example, Dangor says in an interview that:

South Africa wasn't yet ready to talk about the dark side of war. Everybody was prepared to talk, funnily enough, about other things: I burned people, put them on the pyre and drank my beer while I watched them burn, because that was my job... The rapes began because there was the opportunity. It then became systematic. It became what we had to do, because it was *also* part of our job. But to actually *say* that you... Men are funny. I know, I'm a man myself, but we're funny. We can talk about all kinds of things, like murder, robbery, our exploits, but did you ever hear a man say to you, 'I raped a woman'? Or 'I abused a child'? That's the kind of confession that I think is the taboo barrier -- not only in our society, but elsewhere (*The Ledge*).

The rationale supporting closing the sessions which dealt with sexual offences relied on maintaining the privacy of sexual assault victims, thus showing sensitivity to precisely the anxieties that Lydia expresses about being made to testify. And yet, I maintain that designing an alternative space particularly for people who were made to experience

sexual violence encouraged victims of rape to keep their experiences private and potentially shut down any option there may have been to publicly testifying. During an interview, Dangor says that he asked several people working on the Commission how to access the testimony of sexual assault survivors. Despite these stories being told in close-court, he hoped there was some space where people could choose to access them. He was repeatedly told that these stories had never been made public. And yet, in a bizarre moment of synchronicity, Dangor recalls that:

Then one night I went to the website, and there was the entire testimony -- names, places, people -- so I picked up the phone and called this friend of mine on the commission, who shall remain nameless, and said to him: 'I thought you told me...' and he said, 'What?! It's on the *Web*?' It was a mistake. A bureaucratic mistake. It came off the next morning (*The Ledge*).

Like Fezeka Kuzwayo's "privacy" during the Jacob Zuma rape trial, the off-line status of these testimonies was imposing a false sense of anonymity that had clearly already been compromised. The problem of who gets to represent the raped woman's perspective becomes, again, central as Dangor protects his friend on the commission, choosing to have him "remain nameless," at the same time that he pulls from this "private" testimony to write his novel. The politics of gender and power, despite Dangor's best efforts to write his novel through multiple and contradictory perspectives, are therefore entangled in the publication of *Bitter Fruit*.

Lucy Valerie Graham documents that, in the end, not one single sexual assault perpetrator applied for amnesty during the Truth Commission and associates this with the TRC's call for tales of "extraordinary" violence, claiming that sexual assault often elided into the ordinary. Dangor reads things differently. He argues that what was at stake was not only the identities or experiences of sexual assault survivors, but the nation, which

was not ready for this kind of violence to be inscribed into their transitional moment and “newness.”⁶¹ Democratic South Africa lacked a framework from which it could absorb this information and still move on to reconciliation. The TRC document and the amnesty hearings in particular were far from straightforward. Through fiction, Dangor imaginatively extends the ramifications of sexual violence against women. Lydia asserts that “[s]peaking about something heightens its reality, makes it unavoidable” and that “[t]his is not human nature, but the nature of ‘confession’ that the Church has taught them” (127). The men in Lydia’s life and that are bound up with her experience of rape all want Lydia to heal from her trauma in divergent ways. Silas wants her to confess the sins enacted against her; Mikey chooses, instead, to seek retribution on her behalf by shooting her rapist; and Du Boise follows the route of amnesty and chooses to speak his sins with or without Lydia’s consent. Dangor does not necessarily make these different modes of recovering from (someone else’s) trauma analogous, but does make them relational by putting them next to each other in the novel. Amnesty, for Lydia, is akin to victim-blaming. For her in particular, the logic of the TRC says to “[c]onfess your sins, even those committed against you -- and is rape not a sin committed by both victim and perpetrator, at least according to man’s gospel?” (127). It is among these different masculinist models of overcoming trauma that Lydia quietly returns to Cathy -- the Chinese female persona she conjures in order to experience eroticism, pleasure, and intimacy.

⁶¹ Although Lydia didn’t want her status as a victim to be made public, I maintain that the issue of consent is central to her fear of Du Boise’s potential amnesty hearing. Following the logic of the novel, it is not only the publicity or privacy of sexual assault articulations that makes them potentially damaging, but rather the limitation put on women who experienced sexual violence: they were at once given a close-court community, making it that much more difficult to include rape as part of the public truth confessions.

Following Lydia's imaginative and illicit interaction with Sister Catherine, she is told by her father that he can no longer afford to keep her at Mayville. They would have to move to Johannesburg where he hoped to find more work. Once this relocation to the "frightening Soweto" had been confirmed:

Lydia wandered along the forbidden stretch of Butcher Road, just off the new freeway, watching the prostitutes ply their trade, wanting, just once, to love one of those women, with the same head-thrown-back pleasure of a beautiful sin confessed. She chose a young Chinese woman as her fantasy lover, named her Cathy [...]. Cathy became the phantasm projected before her each time she had sex with a man (only three different men, including her husband, her rapist, and, years later, a transient doctor, up against the wall of a darkened hospital ward, just for the illicitness, to remind herself that she was alive) (118).

Lydia yearns to actively express "forbidden" love towards women who practice their trade despite and/or among trauma. Framing this land as the "forbidden stretch of Butcher Road" invites one to question to whom it was forbidden, since it evidently serves as a home for these sexual outsiders who work there. The pleasure Lydia imagines love could provide her is explicated as the same kind of pleasure one obtains from confessing sins. The compulsion to confess a socially sanctioned "sin" is yet again associated with sexual illicitness and, indeed, pleasure. Lydia feels at home with these discarded women. And yet it is the illicitness which attracts her to and enables her to identify with these women.

This fantasy-driven non-penetrative source of sexual pleasure mirrors Lydia's son Mikey and his ascetic relationship with his cousin Mireille -- a relationship Mireille describes as a "wonderful 'nothingness'" (37). Young Mikey and Mireille satisfied their incestuous attraction to each other through playing "Gandhi." In this game, Mikey and Mireille lie next to each other naked in Mikey's bed, never touching. The mental strength and austerity required to withhold from each other physically is, for Mireille, far superior

to “any penis” (37). And although Mikey never violated their chastity, he often fantasized about it:

Heaven knows, it took all his will-power, all the summoned-up tyranny of mind over body, not to rise up and plunge his tongue into Mireille’s beautiful mouth, his penis into the mound exposed between her flung-back legs. He knows now that she would not have resisted, that they might well have satisfied an unspoken lust, quickly. And then, ashamed of their ‘incest’, realizing the sinfulness of this word, instilled in them by the family, the Church, their upbringing, the whole thing would have ended (36).

For both Lydia and Mikey, speaking desire, naming, indeed classifying it renders it shameful under the logic of church, family, and nation. For instance, Mikey’s and Mireille’s relationship quickly ends after a pair of adult eyes finds them and interprets their mutual nakedness as indicative of sex. “The retribution was swift” (37). Mireille is sent to live with relatives in Canada, which the novel describes as a cold kind of exile, and Mikey is prevented from ever contacting her again. Years later Mikey violates this unspoken probation and calls Mireille. Only by then she has assimilated into the adult, foreign world of shame. Mireille confessed to Mikey that what they did was wrong. “[S]he has grown up,” he reflects; “she has acquired an adult’s sense of shame, the compulsion to confess, even if falsely, in order to obtain absolution. Is this how her memory will adapt, accommodating new realities [...] seeking no retribution?” (42). Dangor repeatedly constructs his arguments associatively. He explicates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s process by placing it adjacent to Mikey’s and Mireille’s seemingly innocent, and yet socially taboo, lust. The narrative locates Mireille’s “compulsion to confess” within the realm of adult perversity, thus elucidating the “spirals of power and pleasure” Michel Foucault argues an (“adult”) observer receives from scrutinizing seemingly perverse sexual acts. Mireille lies in order to feel the relief,

perhaps *pleasure*, of adult absolution. Following Dangor's logic, then, the way that the TRC amnesty hearings demanded that perpetrators name the people they victimized is also included within this arena of perversion. Dangor exposes the compensatory pleasure that could be experienced if citizens chose to participate in writing the [new] nation according to this script of power and pleasure.

Lydia's phantasmatic, non-penetrative sexuality and history of trauma defy easy categorization. While Lydia's private relationship with Cathy began long before "her sexuality was defined by her status as a rape victim," it continues until the end of the novel, always shifting (119). The eroticism Lydia feels in the face of sexual shame and stigma, learned first through the Church and then through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, does not align with any sexual identity paradigm and is not scripted on the body. Similarly, it is not surprising that among the shared sexual trauma that Mikey is born into, indeed conceived by, that he turns to a non-bodily, non-penetrative source of sexual satisfaction. By turning to Gandhi in particular, his sexual practices are here emblemized by non-violence and hence function as a sort of anti-trauma. Mikey's and Mireille's pleasure comes from abstaining from sex, while still reveling in desire. Neither Lydia nor Mikey choose to verbalize their lusts, for as they both acknowledge, it would then "become" sinful. In the end, the perverse pleasure of "a beautiful sin confessed" is perhaps more taboo than the socially illicit forms of desire Lydia and Mikey also engage in (118).

Damaged Family Romance

In *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*, Brenna M. Munro reads J.M. Coetzee's and Nadine Gordimer's inclusion of gay and lesbian characters, for the *first* time, as one way to participate in the "rainbow nation," to reimagine whiteness, and to, therefore, "'come out' as national subjects" (174). She documents that gay writers had been incorporating homosexuality into their work since the 1980s, but that "Gordimer was the first heterosexual South African to take serious note of this cultural and political shift" (173). Munro further interprets the stories Coetzee and Gordimer tell about "white, middle-class, middle-aged Anglo-South Africans" struggling to adjust to the new nation alongside the "[r]evelation that their children are not heterosexual" as a "Queer Family Romance" (173). If, for Munro, Coetzee and Gordimer generate ways to think about sexuality and nation that "are not always already heteronormative," Dangor presents an alternative view of this queer family romance: one deeply impacted, indeed damaged, by the inherited legacy of racialized sexual violence.

The incestuous desire Lydia holds for the son born of her rape is the novel's most central sign of damaged family sexualities that emerge from apartheid violence. Half-way through the novel, Mikey performs as Lydia's spousal stand-in after Silas walks out on her, "away from her anger and terrifying grief" (161). It was Mikey, and not Silas, "who put his arms around her, whispering, 'it's okay, Mama, it's okay.'" Soon afterwards, the novel describes, again in third-person while privileging Lydia's perspective, that:

[i]t was Mikey whom she held now, and drew to her, and kissed, the way she had always wanted to draw a man to her, at her behest, for her own comfort and pleasure. Her lips on Mikey's lips, her tongue touching, just

touching, the wetness of his mouth. She led him to her bed, and he lay down almost dutifully, his eyes closed (162).

Afterwards, Lydia “wept with sorrow and relief” (162). She wanted to regain her position as his mother, but understood that their parent-child relationship had been damaged. Mikey allowed his mother to kiss him and, through that physical intimacy, Lydia discovered through Mikey a desire to be a sexual agent with a man once again. Lydia yearns to actively desire a man “for her own comfort” as one way to emotionally heal from her rape. Put more simply, engaging in consensual heterosexual sex, perhaps for the first time, is positioned as vital to Lydia’s process of healing. However, Mikey ultimately denies his mother’s sexual advances. In fact, “Mikey walked away as if nothing had happened. As if she, his mother, had not kissed him carnally, had not asked him into her bed, as if he had not spurned her” (167). Lydia hopes that Mikey develops the “selective amnesia” Silas argues post-apartheid South Africa was nurturing throughout this moment of political transition. It’s telling that in this act of self-help, that is also an act of violation, Lydia turns to Mikey, since she often “remembered smelling Du Boise’s scent on” him as a baby, “a faint stench” (120). Lydia’s incestuous attempt to resurrect her heterosexual desire is an act of violation against her son, although one that Mikey pretends hasn’t happened, which is coded allegorically for national amnesia. These damaged familial attachments then allow readers to see how violent acts move through families over time. Violence is not merely portrayed as an isolated incident that happens *to* an individual, but is rather inherited by individuals, and moves *through* the various collectives that erupt around it. In the afterword, I will analyze Nontsikelelo Veleko’s photographs of young people, a generation of “born-frees,” of people born after 1994. Although this group of individuals has not experienced apartheid-era violence,

traumatic memory moves through generations, is passed down and transformed in stories and actions, and lives on in ways that the TRC has not, and could not, prevent. Living and experiencing desire among this trauma is therefore imperative to the archive of creative texts this dissertation compiles.

Lydia's desire for Mikey occupies a tenuous position in the novel that critics have overwhelmingly shied away from. Is Lydia committing an act of sexual violation that is symbolic of how victims become victimizers? Or does she deliberately hurt Mikey because he is symbolic of her rape? It is striking that she would reinforce her heterosexual desire in the queerest way, cross-generationally and incestuously. Most important: are we meant to sympathize with Lydia? The theme of incest raises a whole series of questions the novel fails to answer. I find it noteworthy that Mikey and Lydia represent different temporalities in the novel: present and future. Mikey "lives only in the future, in the world of young people and young pursuits;" whereas, Lydia is ensconced in the present and marked by the past. The novel says in third-person that:

[w]hen mama touches Mikey, time changes to the present. He experiences what he describes (with growing intellectualism) as a 'nowness'. Time slows down, he feels its every movement. This immediacy can cause great joy and great pain. It makes it impossible for him to escape from his mother, or want to escape from her (141).

The chasm separating Mikey's generation (who was swiftly pulled into democracy) from Lydia's (who actively experienced and fought to end apartheid) is seductive for these two protagonists. Mikey experiences his mother's "nowness" as an aphrodisiac, seemingly against his better judgment (141). Although Mikey, like Silas, is tentative about what Silas would call Lydia's "terrifying grief" and what Mikey refers to as the twinning of "great joy and great pain," he finds it impossible to want to leave her tragedy. Mikey and

Silas represent divergent extremes of coping with national and familial trauma. Silas chooses the route of selective amnesia, hoping to forget the past while moving into the future, whereas Mikey romanticizes the struggle of a previous generation. Mikey plays a complicated, ironic role within the text. While his futurity appears to offer Lydia a way out of her grief (a world of young people and young pursuits), Mikey still inherits her trauma and responds to this genealogy of violence by causing various forms of damage. If Mikey does represent a kind of futurity, it is a stunted one.

I have argued that Dangor's novel suggests that one impact of South Africa's rape crisis and, I will add, the legacy of racial segregation in the present, is to damage the "new" nation emblemized by the transference of trauma and violence that occurs throughout the primary family. If Lydia turns to Mikey in order to experience some kind of (albeit, misguided) absolution, by *choosing* to sleep with the child of her rapist, as a way to heal from her past and move into the future, it is striking that the novel, through Mikey, rejects this impulse. In fact, few, if any, female characters are able to carve out their own healing mechanisms. Instead, the most "successful" recourses that take place mute the voices of women. Lucy Valerie Graham notes that even when Lydia's rape is articulated it is done so through Mikey. She suggests that Dangor's novel raises the "problems of public access to women's words about violation," and, I would add, modes of recovery. Perhaps Lydia's diary, then, allegorically represents the private close-court hearings in which women told the stories of their sexual violations. Lydia's act of journaling, like the women's hearings, was no doubt therapeutic; and yet the problem of accessing her "words about violation" is that it requires a male gaze and voice to bring it into view, without asking for Lydia's consent. The issue of consent is central and carried

over into Lydia's chosen mode of speaking and recovering from her trauma. She prefers to speak in layers -- to tell and retell as often and to whom she, as "victim," desires. The heterogeneity of race and sexuality is matched by the heterogeneity of narratives required to tell a single story. *Bitter Fruit* tells its story in layers and through multiple narrative voices; yet the voice of Lydia's perpetrator -- despite the large amount of space Dangor allocates to his character -- is never illuminated. Du Boise stands in more as an archetype of white institutional racism, and not as a flawed person with whom readers are meant to sympathize, identify, or even understand -- an empathetic block that stands in striking contrast to the TRC around which the plot of this novel is organized. Lydia fears the TRC for the power it holds to rely on one voice to tell the story of her trauma. She objects to the *ritual* of confessing your sins once, and then being expected to move on entirely. Lydia was never asked if she wanted her status as a rape victim, her trauma, to be made public. She was told by her husband that "Du Boise has applied for amnesty, he and three, four others, for rape, assault, on women mostly. He has named [Lydia] as one of the cases he wants amnesty from" (160). At this Lydia trembles, but remains silent. Silas continues, saying "I saw the brief, someone involved in the TRC's investigation recognized your name. The hearings will be in public, some time next year" (160). At this, Lydia tells Silas to "stop them." But, he can't, "not even the President" (160). The way this scene mirrors Lydia's rape, an act Silas was also made to witness but could not prevent, is uncanny. Lydia scorns Du Boise for making the narrative of her life and her sexuality his again.

In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler summarizes an important concept articulated by trauma theorists, including Cathy Caruth, that trauma is "precisely that which renders all

memory false, we might say, and which is known through the gap that disrupts all efforts at narrative reconstruction” (153). She expands on this desire to know oneself through narrative in both *Excitable Speech* and *Giving an Account of Oneself*. In the latter she locates the act of confession as one place where individuals and collectives are encouraged and expected to construct coherent, linear accounts of their life histories. Butler further argues that narrative reconstruction should always be understood as subjective and fictitious. Homi Bhabha’s views on the relationship between “nation and narration” can be read in conjunction with Butler’s and Caruth’s views on writing trauma when he cites Partha Chatterjee in saying “nationalism is not what it seems, and above all not what it seems to itself” (294). Butler argues that state regimes encourage individuals to create coherent self-narratives in order for the state to appear as a strong collective. Bhabha similarly suggests that nations fight against their own historical ambivalence, an ambivalence positioned between the seeming coherence of official written history and what Gikandi calls the “mythopoetic” aspect of on-going oral accounts of history. *Bitter Fruit* elucidates one such moment of becoming, one made visible through a new constitution, new legal structure, and stories produced in multiple arenas about the “new” South Africa. And yet in order to maintain national coherence, narratives of spectacular violence were privileged as those which needed to be included in “new” South Africa’s historical memory, in contrast to sexual violence, which as I have explained was notably segregated and made private. Dangor uses free indirect discourse as a tool which allows for multiple and contradictory perspectives thus showing the number of narratives that are also a part of South Africa’s national narrative, but which were elided in the moment of political transition. For Dangor, these alternative and supplementary narratives always

come to the surface, for as Mikey philosophizes: “history has a remembering process of its own, one that gives life to its imaginary monsters” (32).

In the end, Du Boise does not speak Lydia’s rape during the TRC amnesty hearings. He does not sew into the fabric of the new nation her pain and his tragedy. Instead, and through the support of his non-biological Muslim family members, Mikey kills Du Boise, and with him, his own heritage. Mikey’s investigation into Silas’s patrilineal family line serves to rebuke biological kinship as the only way to experience family. In choosing to identify with Silas’ Muslim background, Mikey undoes his link to his biological father and the racialized forms of sexual violence his father enacted. Mikey locates, and soon starts learning from, his Uncle Amin, Silas’s half-brother who Mikey describes as both “a potentially hostile relative,” as well as a “true Muslim” (187). Ismail immediately recognizes Mikey as being his grandfather’s kin through their shared tendency to philosophize outward. “You are truly your grandfather’s seed,” Ismail said; “such a subtle mind” (195). Mikey uses this as his opening to ask Ismail for a favor, saying that he is in search of “personal justice [...] against one person [...]. But he and his actions represent an entire system of injustice” (196). Throughout the novel, trauma is presented as that which is inherited and passed among family members; the TRC is that which is intended to help the South African national “family” to voice their grief and move onto reconciliation. Here we see the desire to seek justice, indeed retribution, as also that which could be inherited. In fact, Mikey learns about his connection to his grandfather through an anecdote which connects him to Silas’s sister Hajera Ali, a distant Indian relative who was raped and impregnated by a British lieutenant in the early 1900s. Hajera Ali filed a rape charge, but found no justice in the courtroom, since the English

officer knew all of the right narratives through which to distance himself from his crime. ““You see,” narrates Ismail; “he knows all of the defenses, all the believable things to say”” (200). Hajera Ali was failed by the Indian criminal justice system which deemed her, instead, a mentally unstable liar. Ali is sent away to have her child in order to lessen the sexual shame her family will face if she gives birth to an infant with “tell-tale blonde hair and blue eyes” -- the inheritance of her assault passed down onto her child (200). In response, Mikey’s grandfather chooses his own route of retribution. Ismail admits: “They find the officer, days after he had been reported missing, hanging from a tree, his hands bound behind his back. He has been executed.” Ismail wants the motive of his anecdote to ring clear. “There are certain things people do not forget, or forgive. Rape is one of them. In ancient times, conquerors destroyed the will of those whom they conquered by impregnating the women. It is an ancient form of genocide. [...] You conquer a nation by bastardizing its children” (204). Dangor thus speaks back to a longer and geographically broader imperial history of sexual violence and stages its racial impact through the “bastardization” Mikey swiftly identifies against.

Dangor is celebrated for foregrounding South African Indian experiences in his novels. In Ronit Frenkel’s extensive look at South African Indian literature, she comments that “with a population of almost one million people of Indian descent, South Africa is home to one of the largest Indian communities outside of India” (1). South African Indians were the first to be racially segregated under the Group Areas Act, because of the impending economic threat they posed to white business owners, and yet the impact of this experience is often elided in “South African public cultures” (9).⁶²

⁶² The Group Areas Act were three Parliamentary acts enacted by the South African apartheid government to restrict so-called “non-whites” from working or living in land reserved for “whites.” The

Instead of linking the “continued prominence of colonial and apartheid constructions of colourness” with “bastardization,” *Bitter Fruit* stages, and then critiques, this association. Rather than put forth an idea of family that is non-consensually “bastardized” through rape, Mikey first removes himself from this traumatized conception and, with it, the forced association of “bastardization” with mixed race embodiments entirely.

This allegorical “new” South African national family is at once characterized by inherited racial stigma and sexual shame in multiple ways. It is not surprising then that both Lydia and Mikey find solace in transnational intimacies, rather than national ones. Lydia’s takes the form of João Dos Santos Honwana, a Mozambican man she casually (and yet willfully) has sex with at Silas’ birthday party at the end of the novel. Even Silas acknowledges that this might be something she needs, saying “[n]ow not every man would be a rapist to her” (267). Mikey, in turn, acquires a non-traceable gun from his “uncle” and an additional “passage to India” for immediate escape. As Mikey shoots at Du Boise’s “unnaturally white [...] complexion,” he whispers: “My heritage [...] unwanted, imposed, my history, my beginnings” (276). Immediately after, “Lydia learns of Du Boise’s death,” not from her son, but “from a television news report” (277). This public media platform details that:

Francois du Boise was shot down in the parking lot of the Killarney Mall, in broad daylight, while thousands of shoppers thronged the centre, doing last-minute Christmas purchases. No one seems to have observed the incident, and no arrests have been made. Du Boise was this evening identified as a former security policeman who had applied to the TRC for amnesty. It is not clear which apartheid-era crimes he was seeking amnesty for (277-78).

first of several of these acts and amendments was put into place in 1950; they were not entirely removed until June 30 1991.

The way this news report becomes a sort of anti-Truth and Reconciliation Commission is unavoidable. Televised for public consumption, the ordinariness of this retributive crime goes unnoticed in the shopping mall parking lot where Mikey severed the trauma from his family and his namesake. Notably absent once again from this masculinist cycle of violence is Lydia, the only character most directly impacted by the violence Du Boise enacted. Mikey neither thinks nor chooses to ask for Lydia's consent while seeking retribution partly on her behalf.

Both Mikey and Lydia move outside the damaged national family through public acts --Du Boise's murder and subsequent passage to India, for Mikey, and sex, for Lydia; I read both as anti-TRC forms of public confessions that refuse the script of victimization, as well as verbal language entirely. Desire becomes the vehicle through which Lydia recuperates her sexuality and selfhood. Even her husband Silas admitted that "[t]here was something so ineluctably beautiful about Lydia pulling the young man to her, embracing his black body in her lovely olive-skinned arms. [...] His wife had found release at least from both her captive demons: from Du Boise and from himself" (267). Although Lydia's queer sexual pleasure is not written within the description of this consensual, notably public performance of sexual satisfaction, readers know that Cathy was always there with Lydia, for "Cathy became the phantasm projected before her each time she had sex with a man" (118). Lydia's decision to have sex with João, therefore, does not wholly reinscribe her into heterosexuality and, thus, "correct" her queerness. Quite the contrary. Lydia remembers João flippantly: "his whisper, 'I love you, oh, how I love you, Lydia!'" After one fuck, he loves her. God!" (279). Although later she describes her time with João as both "wonderful" and "unguarded," she retains, indeed recovers,

her identity as a desiring person through this cross-racial, cross-national, queered act of public sex and subsequent derision of superficial heterosexual proclamations of “love.”

Lydia and Mikey represent divergent modes of responding to the inherited legacy of racialized sexual violence and shame. Mikey removes the signifier of his bastardized conception and leaves South Africa entirely. The violence which enabled his birth turns in on itself and becomes that which ultimately ends Du Boise’s life. Lydia also finds freedom in “[t]ime and distance, even this paltry distance, will help to free her” as she drives to Cape Town alone. Like the artists and authors in chapter two, Lydia transforms the source of her stigma -- her mixed-race femaleness -- into that which can help her reach sexual pleasure once again. João desires, but does not fetishize, Lydia. Although Dangor allows Mikey to perpetuate the cycle of violence that he was born into, he ultimately removes him from the new nation. Instead, Mikey joins a network of honorary exilic martyrs, first in Pakistan, and eventually India. This makes it all the more noteworthy that Lydia remains, and I would contend, carves out her own space for queer female South African belonging post-trauma.

Conclusion

The post-apartheid heterosexual nuclear family is riven by the legacy of sexual violence; Silas’s and Lydia’s sexual intimacy is impaired because of Silas’ inability to move past Lydia’s “victimhood” -- a concept which is at once racialized and sexualized. However, the novel refuses to produce nostalgia for a normative family unit. After all, the family is also a source of claustrophobic incestuous desire. In contrast, Lydia’s journey into something new on her own terms is exhilarating.

Bitter Fruit also repeatedly shows the damage translating desire into language-made-public causes its characters -- from the "incest" Mikey and Mireille engage in, to the seditious same-sex feelings Lydia developed for Sister Catherine, to the colonial-era Indian rape case, in which the British lieutenant was able to negotiate an acquittal for having access to the most convincing narratives. For much of the novel, Dangor presents dominant discourses of sexuality and race -- inherited from colonialism, but which remain ever present -- as primary obstacles faced by sexual outsiders when trying to obtain legal recompense, and healing from trauma. Thus fantasy becomes an important alternative safe space, one that is interior and thus "private" for Lydia, but made public through the novel. Rather than inscribe a conventional lesbian narrative through Lydia, her sexuality does not conform to the western sexual categories available; she is non-monosexual and at times polysexual. This chapter ultimately looks to the novel as a fruitful medium through which sexual violence and sexual queerness can be worked through and made imaginable, since, for *Bitter Fruit*, legal and other institutional spaces are judged incapable.

I began by asking what can be learned about the hinge that connects sexual violence to sexual expression if rape was not a story that always already remained untold. In the end, I'm not sure that *Bitter Fruit* enables rape to be a told story. The only characters who have access to recognizable modes of speaking rape are men. Lydia's rape is first narrated to readers through Mikey and would have been narrated to a South African public by her rapist. Even Silas forces Lydia to hear him speak her rape after running into Du Boise in the grocery store. The inability to provide consent, then, is a problem that extends beyond the act of sexual violence and includes the multiple

paternalisms that prevent women from carving out their own modes of articulating and also recovering from trauma. Dangor's critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is one that goes beyond the controversy of the amnesty hearings. It includes highlighting the patriarchal logic upholding the TRC and its privileging of the verbal. He does this primarily through Lydia who prefers to make her pain visible on the outside only to herself, first through the self-scarification she causes to the bottom of her feet, and then through her diary in which she inscribes her trauma.

Although Lydia provides the only positive model for overcoming sexual violence, even she entered into the matrix of sexual perversions when she yearned to sleep with her son, and when that fantasy moved to action. Her attempts to experience desire anew, for a man, results in her willfully forcing herself onto her son -- at least, almost. The fact that Dangor allows Mikey to refuse Lydia creates a bleak, unsatisfying resolution. In this moment of national and political transition, Lydia's sexuality is also undergoing a transition. Penetrative sex plays a complicated role throughout the text, and one that I contend imposes a false sense of closure that ends the novel. Lydia's primary mode of experiencing sexual pleasure is not performed with the body and rests, instead, in her imagination. Non-bodily, same-sex, imaginative play is that which transforms penetration into pleasure. And yet, it is through penetrative sex with João that her sexual expression becomes mended. From one angle, the novel provides a progress narrative that equates penetration with "normal" sexuality and non-penetration with "damaged" or "victimized" sexuality. However, seen another way, it may not be the particularity of the sex act that serves as her mode for becoming a desiring person, but rather the hyper-public consent that Lydia performs -- "[o]n a billiard table, at a party, at [Silas'] birthday party, in

someone else's house" -- that propels her sexual transition (267). This public performance of consensual sexual satisfaction, one that both Silas and Mikey witnessed, defiantly announces, not her trauma, as the TRC would have her do, but her identity as a desiring and desirable person among trauma.

Afterword: Recycling Trauma

It was one of those new upmarket establishments that promised both 'style' and 'the feel of Africa' as if the two concepts were usually contradictory.
Achmat Dangor, Bitter Fruit

Make something out of our suffering, true spirit of free enterprise.
Zakes Mda, Ways of Dying

The now global anti-rape protest SlutWalk began in 2011 in Toronto after Constable Michael Sanguinetti informed students at York University during a crime prevention forum that “women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized” (slutwalktoronto). Anti-rape scholar and activist Jessica Valenti says that “[i]n just a few months, SlutWalks have become the most successful feminist action of the past 20 years.” Despite, or because of, these successes, SlutWalks have received criticism for imposing a new brand of western feminism onto the global south, including South Africa, as well as for excluding poor women and women of color for whom the ability to identify as a “slut,” however satirical, is a more dangerous endeavor. Staging SlutWalks in a country known for its rape crisis changes the political register. According to Zama Ndlovu, reclamation of the word “slut” obfuscates South Africa’s problem with sexual violence, since myths about women’s dress are significantly less prevalent. I maintain, however, that SlutWalks erupted around the belief that women should stop being blamed for being raped. For some, myths about female promiscuity or dress emblemize those dominant discourses which place anti-rape responsibility onto victims of sexual violence and assault, rather than on perpetrators. For these reasons, I see the goals SlutWalks achieved as wider reaching. SlutWalks enabled anti-rape activism to go global, mainstreaming awareness about discursive and physical sexual violence. Moreover, it provided victims of sexual assault a creative avenue to voice their dissent

against the violence they experienced. For instance, although SlutWalk Toronto encouraged women to wear ordinary clothing to symbolize the ordinariness of sexual assault, many responded to the accusation inscribed within Sanguinetti's remarks by performing the category of "slut" through clothing and make-up choices. SlutWalks is now easily recognizable for the wide range of revealing outfits worn by the activists who march. Most relevant to my project, are the courageous women and men who protest while wearing the outfit they were assaulted in, while carrying signs that read: "This Is What I Was Wearing When I Was Raped." These activists attend to and recast the material reminder of their trauma. This cultural moment demonstrates how sexual violence is already globalized in multiple ways and allows me to maintain my commitment to thinking through South African sexual violence in a global frame; it further disrupts the persistent mode of interpreting South Africa's rape crisis through the lens of Afropessimism.

This afterword provides a conclusion to my project by demonstrating how Rozena Maart's novel *The Writing Circle* (2007), Zakes Mda's novel *Ways of Dying* (1995), and Nontsikelelo Veleko's fashion photography (2000s) take, or point attention to, the material remnants of violence and trauma that often go unnoticed or forgotten, and textualize them into practical, every day art. While Veleko's photographs and Mda's novel do not focus on recovering from sexual violence specifically, the history of sexual trauma is entangled with the broader histories of racial and gendered violence during apartheid which their art and literature speak back to; and the strategies these artists and authors use are part of the larger context of South African art and literature working through issues of suffering. Like all of the imaginative texts I analyze throughout this

dissertation, these works by Maart, Mda, and Veleko are important for the way they imagine new and creative ways of healing from trauma for groups of historically marginalized people.

I position Rozena Maart's *The Writing Circle* alongside Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* since both include the haunting image of one person having to claim a dead body at the police station by sifting through a large pile of clothing. Bodies come into the police station's morgue, their clothes are stripped away, tagged, and put into a separate room where relatives can identify the bodies of their loved ones through identifying the clothing they were presumed to be wearing. These scenes, overwhelming and still somehow mundane, prompt the question: what does one do with the material remnants of trauma? For the middle-class characters of *The Writing Circle*, the physical remnants of violence are something they would rather not look at, whereas Mda's slum dwelling protagonists do not have this luxury. I suggest that both authors "recycle" the trauma they experience into creative products -- traumatic memory into literature, for Maart, and thrown-out trash into "wallpaper of sheer luxury," for Mda (111).

The Writing Circle follows five women of varying sexual expressions who convene in Isabel's home every Friday to workshop their writing. The novel opens with Isabel experiencing first a car hijacking, and then a rape; it further suggests that Jacob Zuma's rape trial, which I analyze in chapter one, informs Isabel's encounter with her attacker. Her attacker, described as "the man with the blue windbreaker," laughs at deputy president Zuma, whose face was plastered on the front cover of the *Argus* and *Cape Times* strewn across the back seat of Isabel's car, placing the time of the novel as between 2005-2006 (11). The rapist's laughter is immediately contrasted by Isabel

hearing her neighbor Mr. Isaacs yell out “Bloody Zuma!” (8). As her hijacking/rape continues, Isabel mentally contextualizes this particular sexual assault within a broader history of familial rape, including the molestation she faced at the hands of her uncle. Her sister too had been raped by her high school teacher Mr. Jacobus but, like so many of the characters analyzed throughout my project, found no legal justice; Dolores then “killed herself at the age of twenty, after spending years in and out of court” (11). Isabel experiences several physical violations at once throughout the first chapter, including non-consensual vaginal-penile penetration, as well as the attacker’s gun which was shoved in her mouth. It is the latter she manages to resist, saving her life. Isabel describes:

Suddenly I heard a loud bang and felt a stream of warm clotted liquid gushing into my face -- warm, thick, salty, red liquid, erupted from his head and spewed all over my face. I felt his head and his whole body go limp inside me...as though his batteries had suddenly been removed (13).

Isabel has turned her attacker’s gun on him, killing him. The realism used to narrate the first half of the above quotation, including references to “warm, thick, salty, red liquid,” finishes with an analogy which transforms her rapist into a machine and allows Isabel distance from her trauma. Like *Bitter Fruit*, this novel includes multiple perspectives; whereas Dangor relied on free indirect discourse for plurality, Maart uses first-person narration, allowing the five female participants of the writing circle to narrate different chapters. Where these narratives converge is around the disposal of the dead rapist’s body.

The remnants of Isabel’s trauma range from the ethereal to the bodily. When her uncle molested her, also in a car, while driving home from a fishing trip, he made her wash her hands before returning her home to her parents. Although the hand job Reggie

forced Isabel to perform left no physical evidence of the trauma she experienced, she claims her “hands smelled of him for years” (10). This sensation is precisely the kind of intangible “aftermath” that my dissertation, in turning to art and literature, examines; but which hardly qualify as admissible legal evidence. In contrast, Isabel’s rape and her rapist’s subsequent murder left “blood everywhere” (18). Jazz is the first person to find Isabel and says: “I blinked hard. All I could see was the colour red. [...] Each time I opened my eyes I saw red” (18). Like the artists and authors I analyze in chapter two, we see the same poetics of blood operating as a cultural idiom. However, this novel remains concentrated on the trauma its characters experience and does not, indeed cannot yet, produce an erotics from this bleeding.

The Writing Circle remains concerned with the politics of race and sexuality, rather than eroticism, but it contains a class critique that indexes, and also complicates, fear of black-peril. On the one hand, Jazz says of Isabel’s rapist that “[she] knew [Isabel] did not know him; none of us are friends with the new African immigrants and his appearance looked as though he was one of them” (20). At the same time, Jazz is frustrated with Mr. Isaac’s ignorance when he inquired about the loud bang of what readers know to be a gun shot. “Oh, probably those Africans who walk the streets at this time of night” he postulates (24). Although Mr. Isaacs “was as black as [Jazz’s] winter boots” and Jazz was Indian-Ugandan, she knew that they were not included in Mr. Isaacs’ reference to “Africans.” The category of “African” is then reserved for individuals who epitomize traits more closely in line with derogatory images of the African imaginary: poor, black, suffering, and still threatening. Jazz’s class-infused-racism, her insistence that “none of us are friends with the new African immigrants,” reads as a “new” hysteria

left over from an earlier South African era. Thus, “black-peril” no longer functions as simply inter-racial fear mongering, but rather is marked by a certain xenophobia that has erupted in the wake of new (poor) African immigration to South Africa.

Many of the central five female protagonists have experiences with sexual violence that build on Maart’s class criticism, including Carmen, who was repeatedly assaulted by her father, but who, like all the rape survivors in the novel, found no justice for the trauma she endured. The passage in which Carmen reflects on the classes of sexual assault one may experience is lengthy, but worth quoting in its entirety:

The trouble is that my father saw men in my mother’s family take advantage of their daughters, and of the daughters of their high society friends, and he thought he could do the same. He did not know that there was a special code for men who were born into power and privilege, those born into high-society circles who raped and sexually assaulted their daughters and their family members and suffered no consequence, except the occasional awkward mention of female relatives who committed suicide, to whom the honorary Virginia Woolf status was offered. [...] We went to the police station close to where it happened, a block from where I work. All sorts of details were asked, but nothing happened. Nothing happened at all. I rang the station a few times, and the young dapper-looking constable told me, firmly yet arrogantly, that cases like mine often ran into dead ends. Imagine being referred to as a dead end (47-48).

Throughout my dissertation the artists and authors I examine critique a criminal justice system that too often fails victims of sexual assault. Although obvious, it remains worth noting that systems established to uphold such societal ideals as “justice” are enacted by individuals and their biases, often informed by racism, classism, and (hetero)sexism. In chapter one Judge Van der Merwe imposed a limited idea of and vocabulary about gender and sexuality that makes it hard to ascertain whether or not justice was served in Fezeka Kuzwayo’s legal case. Constable Sanguinetti discussed above implied that dressing in accordance with middle-class virtues of female respectability will prevent sexual assault.

Here, the “dapper-looking constable” with whom Carmen speaks stops pursuing her legal case precisely because her family was upper-class, wealth protecting those rapists born into (and also married into) high-society. Assumptions about who is or is not raped, as well as who does or does not commit rape, are therefore central to *The Writing Circle*, and the novel constantly debunks readers’ expectations. The extensiveness and variety of sexual violence that run through this novel echoes and responds to the accusation Fezeka Kuzwayo faced during Zuma’s rape trial that she had experienced “too many rapes” to be believable. The novel references and analyzes incest, acquaintance-rape, stranger-rape, and male-rape -- or, specifically, boy-rape, as Maart’s character Igsaan is only twelve when an older man rapes him; Igsaan later tries to commit suicide by swallowing a bottle of pills, placing his response to the trauma alongside those upper-class daughters to whom the honorary Virginia Woolf statuses are reserved. Stylistically, then, *The Writing Circle* raises the problem of having a novel in which everyone is raped.

Mistrust of the criminal justice system prevents Isabel from reporting her rape, leaving the five women to dispose of a dead body they would rather forget. Amina’s brother-in-law Donny worked as a gravedigger, and although she hadn’t spoken to him in twenty years, embarrassed by his poverty, she solicits his help. She says “[m]y worst fear was actualized when Jazz asked me to help lift the dead body from the car. I had decided to forget about the dead man” (88). Amina’s narrative captures the willful amnesia she assumes her wealth allows her to impose around this physical reminder of their collective trauma. The body of this rapist and his blue windbreaker continually haunt the female protagonists. During Beauty’s final narrative, for instance, she screams and nearly faints when confronted by the rapist’s blue windbreaker, an article of clothing which refuses to

be discarded. A visit to her godmother Mary Phokobye's home in the wealthy Bishop's Court neighborhood is interrupted by a constable who follows up on Mary's recent missing person's report she filed on her son. The constable then encourages Mary to accompany him to the morgue to look at the unclaimed bodies of black men who fit her son's description, saying that "[m]ore than fifty percent of our reports are about Black men, all between the ages of thirty and forty-five" (169). Maart depicts a mother having to claim the dead body of her son by identifying the blood-stained outfit he wore at the time of his murder. Upon locating his outfit, and later his body, Mary's son is learned to have been the original rapist the entire novel is situated around. Beauty describes that "Mary [...] stuck her hand in the bag and took the blood-stained jacket out, shook it, then turned it inside out. She shook it vigorously, and the blue side of it was now visible, with dried blood and all. I cried out in horror, 'No! No! No!'" (176). Beauty is shocked to see material reminders of a man she herself helped bury. Readers later learn that rather than bury him, Donny delivered the dead rapist to the morgue in the hopes that he would be identified, believing that every person deserved to be known and properly buried, regardless of the crimes they may have committed.

I began this conclusion by asking what one does with these physical reminders of trauma, which here include a faint odor, blood, a dead body, and a wind breaker. For Maart, the title of her novel gives away her response; the final chapter closes with Mary confronting the women of the writing circle to both apologize for her son and to tell his story, saying "I don't want Peter to be remembered only as a rapist" (179). Although the novel does not directly say that Mary writes her son's story, she turns to the writing circle as an alternative space to express his humanity, since "[t]he courts will do their job and

the newspapers will take us apart” (179). Writing re-makes these remnants in a non-institutional way. The writing circle is also an intimate space filled entirely with women. Take, for instance, Amina, whose narrative concludes the novel; following a five year abusive marriage to Fuad, she is now re-married to Ebrahim, her late husband’s father -- a relationship that “had not included any form of touching in the past two years” (184). Amina’s only forms of physical intimacy come from an annual gynecological visit, a weekly professional massage, and the women of the writing circle with whom she exchanges “hugs and kisses” (184). In the end, Maart upholds this multiracial, multicultural, and sexually variant and queer group of women as a potential antidote to the physical and emotional damage they experience outside the boundaries of Isabel’s gated home. If rape is a “new” arena of struggle in South Africa, as this dissertation argues, then Maart presents class-fueled-paranoia as one major catalyst. Although one easily sees how apartheid-era racial paranoia is inherited by the characters in *The Writing Circle*, and, according to *Bitter Fruit*, also into a post-1994 South Africa, class exacerbates this crisis and has become the defining feature maintaining “apartness.”

In contrast to Cape Town’s affluent suburbs, Zakes Mda’s critically acclaimed novel *Ways of Dying* takes place in an unnamed South African slum around which the character of Toloki travels as a “professional mourner” during South Africa’s transitional years. Toloki attends funerals in neighboring townships proudly dressed in a “professional costume” he acquires from a theatre shop, while comforting families who suffer from endemic poverty and racial crimes (25, 26). Toloki was “in love” with the costume, which he describes as:

all in black comprising a tall shiny top hat, lustrous tight-fitting pants, almost like the tights that the young women wear today, and a knee-length

velvety black cape buckled with a hand-sized gold-coloured brooch with tassels of yellow, red and green (26).

The outfit had only been rented out once, “to some Americans who wanted it for a Halloween party” (26). This unwanted period costume marks Toloki as a kind of South African township superhero who travels among funerals mourning and bearing witness to lives that are lost; he also stands in stark contrast to the militant Young Tigers who believed that “[e]very death shall be avenged,” rather than mourned (184). The only days Toloki cannot mourn are on Christmas and Boxing Day, the latter of which he describes as a “senseless holiday” when “we engage in an orgy of drinking, raping, and stabbing one another with knives and shooting one another with guns” (26). Like *The Writing Circle*, stylistically Mda’s engagement with the chaotic social reality makes for a literary landscape that seems “excessively” violent and stylistically exaggerated.

The novel’s title echoes the way in which trauma is woven into the everyday, Toloki commenting that: “Indeed our ways of dying are our ways of living. Or should I say our ways of living are our ways of dying” (98). Mda frequently folds such chiasmuses into his narrative. In one scene, he juxtaposes office women working in a mortuary blithely discussing new dress patterns from Paris against the forgotten clothing of unidentified “corpses” -- ways of living becoming ways of dying (19). The novel opens in the midst of a funeral procession and soon transitions to Noria, who was searching prisons and hospitals, and eventually a morgue, for her presumably dead brother’s missing body. At the “big government mortuary,” she faced office women who ignored her and instead “talked of the best dressmakers, who could sew dresses that were even more beautiful than those found in the most exclusive and expensive city boutiques specializing in Italian and Parisian fashions” (19). The office women then tell Noria that

“[y]ou can identify your brother by the clothes he was wearing” since “all the clothes that the dead people were wearing were stacked in a room, with numbers on them corresponding to the numbers on the trays” (20). Placing these “exclusive and expensive” dress patterns adjacent to the castoff clothing from unidentified dead people raises the question of where this materiality of death goes. Noria is brought to see dozens of corpses, often “lying naked on the floor,” including “beautiful girls with stab wounds lying in grotesque positions, children who were barely in their teens, all victims of the raging war” (19). Since the government mortuary had hundreds of unidentified bodies, and “new corpses were brought in all the time, while others were taken out for burial,” Noria’s familial search was complicated. Looking through the large “pile of clothes,” rather than bodies, therefore offered a brief emotional respite, which grew to relief when she found her brother’s clothes “after just a few minutes of looking” (20). The material problem of violence -- the sheer quantity of numbered and yet unknown bodies, missing corpses, mistaken funeral processions, and piles of discarded clothing -- is painted somewhat differently here than in *The Writing Circle*, where the women, whose gated community did not protect them, resent being faced with the remnants, indeed reminders, of their trauma. Like all of the creative texts I compiled, the politics of visibility and invisibility are again central, wealth providing a veil which is expected to obstruct the violent landscape.

Among their shared poverty, Toloki and Noria carve out comfort, which the novel describes as learning “how to live” (144). Mda writes that “[t]he stories of the past are painful. But when Toloki and Noria talk about them, they laugh. Laughter is known to heal even the deepest wounds. Noria’s laughter has the power to heal troubled souls.

Toloki lavishly bathes his soul in her laughter” (95). Noria is respected in her village because of her ability to make people happy. This profession does and does not serve as an allegory for sex work, as the novel frequently specifies that she makes men happy, and yet laughter is also held as a valuable township commodity (86). Noria’s and Toloki’s eventual cohabitation remains non-sexual for much of the text. In maintaining his physical boundaries, Toloki proclaims that he “can’t look at her sleeping posture for too long” since “[t]hat would be tantamount to raping her” (153). Toloki’s expression of self is bound up in mourning the lives of strangers, practicing asceticism, and learning substantive, non-violent ways of living. Toloki’s and Noria’s non-conforming heterosexual companionship, nearly non-physical intimacy, and shared desire to fashion new ways of living -- consisting mostly of hot baths and inventive garden walks -- acknowledges and yet still moves beyond the material reminders of the poverty and trauma they constantly live among.

Ways of Dying attempts to answer the question I began this conclusion with by referring to the wallpaper Noria and Toloki decorate their new shanty with. They take thrown-out pages and covers from colorful magazines -- a “wallpaper of sheer luxury” -- transforming the garbage poverty is marked by into indulgence and comfort (111). As a gift for Noria, Toloki:

plasters pictures of ideal kitchens. There are also pictures of lounges, of dining rooms, and of bedrooms. Then on two walls, he plasters pictures of ideal gardens and houses and swimming pools, all from the *Home and Garden* magazines. By the time he has finished, every inch of the walls is covered with bright pictures (111).

The way in which Toloki imaginatively recycles what one can only presume is middle-class trash, encourages readers to see the poverty he and Noria live in differently. In

doing so, he carves out a new way of living and, as Sarah Nuttall might phrase it, “profoundly shape[s]” new class “imaginaries” (154). Toloki’s and Noria’s remodeled shanty also brings to mind Petra Brink and Pra-line Hendricks, a homeless lesbian couple that Zanele Muholi speaks with in her 2010 documentary film *Difficult Love*. Brink’s and Hendricks’ same-sex relationship is queerly marked by their age difference, a gap which provides security from hate crimes since, rather than being read as a couple, they are often presumed to be parent and child. In one scene, Brink and Hendricks give Muholi a tour of their home in Mowbray under one of Cape Town’s bridges, showing off the objects which make their “place pretty,” including a new computer, CD player, and family photos, which includes photographs they took during one of Muholi’s community workshops, as well as a magazine cover of U.S. President Obama with *his* family -- a spread which inspired Hendricks’ to compile her own family collage. They further say the rats they live among serve as family for the way in which they serve as protection from intruders. Brink and Hendricks have been living outside since they were evicted from a homeless shelter for being lesbian. When the majority of South Africans still suffer from having been geographically displaced during apartheid, and when sexual violence looms as a real lived threat, the ways in which Toloki and Noria, as well as Brink and Hendricks, recycle the discarded objects they are surrounded by and refashion them into objects which convey belonging, shifts the conversation and construct creative survival strategies; these scenes necessarily resignify objects typically associated with poverty and remake them into what Mda would label “luxury” (111).

I have maintained throughout this dissertation that sexual violence has been used as one way to physically manage a (queer) female’s sexuality and that the courtroom is

one of several institutional spaces where lesbian sexuality is *discursively* managed. For this reason, visual art plays a unique and important role for resisting these systems of control, since it can operate outside the arena of letters. In 2011 South African art historian Tamar Garb curated a South African photography exhibition for the Victoria and Albert museum, titled *Figures and Fictions*. In Mark Gevisser's review of that exhibition, he contends that photography has become "South Africa's most dynamic artform," due, in no small part to what gallery owner Michael Stevenson contends is its "immediacy in a society so animated by debate." Photography, once used to racially classify and document South Africans during apartheid, is now a "potent medium" for artists looking to push the boundaries of identity in a post-1994 world.

Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko's photographs thus provide a fitting end to this afterword for the way in which they display clothing as tools to enable creative self-re-fashioning. "You buy one thing, you make another. It's like play," says the artist, whose often gender-bending photographs of young people, a generation of "born-frees," seeks to resignify Soweto from its "depressing, poverty-stricken, and crime-ridden ghetto" associations (Williamson 300). Veleko's *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder* series feeds off her enthusiasm for "anti-label" fashion she has been decorating South African photography with since 2000. In 2003 she was nominated for the coveted MTN New Contemporaries award; in 2008 she received the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist award; and in 2011 her photographs were included in Garb's *Figures and Fictions*. Her images shock a viewer with uplifting neon colors and bold patterns, sharply positioned against the drab background that too often encompasses urban living. From a young woman with a shaved head carrying a purse made entirely of tossed out cola cans,

to men in yellow printed shirts, green hats and striped knee-high socks, all defy the way racial, gendered, and economic markers have traditionally regulated dress.

Trained in graphic design and photography, Veleko exposes how both have been tools used to control identity constructions in South Africa. Furthermore, she hopes the playfulness of fashion as a medium will help her avoid the pitfalls of identity politics which often fall back on the notion of a person having “one true identity” (Murinik). Her images are marked by, and yet ignore the identity anxieties inherited from, apartheid. For example, Veleko’s earlier project, *www.notblackenough.lolo*, took as its focus the damaging sentiment aimed against people of mixed heritage. Although this first project utilized black and white portraiture as a means through which she could critique the policing of racial distinction, by showing an uneven continuum of racial heterogeneity, *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder* moves away from the Manichean politics of race with its vivid color palette. As Tracy Murinik says of this latest collection, Veleko “uses clothes as critical props to deliberately challenge assumptions of identity.” Veleko, like Muholi, uses photography to create what Tamar Garb calls “participatory ethnography” (Gevisser). It is noteworthy that although her pictures reflect urban living, violence is notably absent from the frames. Veleko constructs this urban ethnography by documenting strangers she encounters on the street dressed in jolting colors, African print, and re-furbished accessories in the hopes that her images will recast how people imagine Africa, in general, and Johannesburg, in particular.

I am especially interested in the wide range of human expression Veleko captures in her photographs. As Nadine Botha comments, “the photos demand that you question what you think you know about these individuals and spaces.” In two images specifically,

Veleko depicts women wearing camouflage pants, bringing to mind the war on women's bodies these individuals may have to guard against. In one of these frames, a woman of color stands at a cross-walk facing the camera straight on, feet planted shoulders width apart, sporting camouflage pants, work boots, a belt with a skull and cross-bones, and a red bra which peaks above her white tank-top. This image is reminiscent of, and yet still speaks back to, the outfits women and men wear while marching in SlutWalks, carrying signs declaring that clothing choice does not signal sexual preference. The defiant red satin bra and the skull and cross bones positioned immediately above her groin pronounce her agency as a desiring person at the same time that she voices her right to consent. In the second image, a young woman of color with a shaved head stands against a white tiled wall. Here too, the woman Veleko photographs wears camouflage pants which are decorated with two silver chains that hang directly above her groin. Her red knee-high socks match the red in the clutch she carries which is made entirely of refurbished coca-cola cans. Like Mda's novel, this image indexes poverty and its creative transcendence showcasing an inventive display of self-expression through transformed objects. Many of the people Veleko photographs make their own clothes and shoes. "If you want it while they're wearing it, they'll sell it to you" says Veleko in South Africa's online arts magazine *ClassicFeel*. Her images carry locator names, such as Long Street, Gugulethu, Johannesburg, and Soweto. In other words, these images travel and document a variety of classes and spaces, while shifting the conversation about young people of color and feminine self-expression and again, in the words of Sarah Nuttall, creating new imaginaries. These images signal gender, race, class, and sexuality, but manage to not be burdened by the history of identity. Both women sporting camouflage embody gender

and sexual expressions that are not easily identifiable, while recasting the signification of camouflage and recycling garbage into clothing and accessories.

South African literary scholar and cultural critic Sarah Nuttall historicizes the cultural moment Veleko visually captures -- generation Y -- which Nuttall describes as a move away from an earlier era of resistance politics into an era marked by a politics of style and “accessorization.” According to Nuttall, Generation Y moves past the rigid notions of identity instituted by apartheid through a new conception of the body as a work in process and a work of art. A person’s subjectivity is then seen less as “inscriptions of broader institutional and political forces than as an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” (109). Specifically, this is a “remaking of the black body; its repositioning by the first post-apartheid generation” (108). Nuttall further contends that “accessorisation [...] works across the series of surfaces” (108). She encourages scholars to “take the surface more seriously” during analyses of “cultural form,” and is wary that “[t]oo often academic criticism of commodity culture and the inequities bred by globalization miss the cultural shifts that commodity-based formations signify, their growing intra-class dimensions, and their manipulation of surfaces” (15, 111). Nuttall’s belief that generation Y is “jamming, remixing, and remaking cultural codes and signifiers from the apartheid past,” sits awkwardly alongside Garb’s observations on the role of gender and race in contemporary South African photography. Garb contends that although *Figures and Fictions* tracks the “dissolution of the oppositions between masculine and feminine, and the new possibilities that can be imagined there. [...] It’s still as if you can’t do that with race.” Perhaps Veleko’s self-portrait *screamblacklips* responds to Garb’s concern the

most playfully. In it, Veleko narrows her photographic frame, capturing only the pink and black necklaces which hang tightly around her neck and black lipstick which paints her screaming mouth. Veleko explains in *ClassicFeel*, that:

[n]ow and then I like to put on black lips and people always say ‘are you punk, are you Goth? and I’m like ‘No, I’m Xhosa.’ And they don’t get it. So it’s this whole thing of being in an urban area and borrowing cultural things and then twisting it a bit.

If Toloki does, in fact, transform into a kind of South African superhero by wearing the unwanted period costume he acquires, then the ensemble Veleko both wears and visually captures shows a generation of “born-frees” combating the residue of apartheid-generated identity formations through recycled trash, hand-made clothing and shoes, bright color, African print, and found accessories. The vibrancy of these images compete with negative images of the dark African imaginary, a mythic “Africa” that even Maart’s South African characters reproduce. The androgyny captured in many of Veleko’s photographs demonstrates an attempt to imagine and live beyond the reigning binaries, which are bound up with cultures of violence.

The extensive and variety of sexual violence that runs through Maart’s and Mda’s novels, as I remark above, are noticeably removed from Veleko’s photographic frame, even if we read her rendition of public space as a deliberate stage for self-expression that distances itself from the “danger” typically associated with urban living as a response to that context of violence. I began this dissertation with the most well-known contemporary rape case in South Africa; a trial in which Fezeka Kuzwayo’s identities as a Zulu lesbian were called into question, as was her identity as survivor of multiple rapes. The stylistic choice made by Mda and Maart, to saturate their novels with rape, elucidates a literary response to a culture of rape denialism that became prominent in the early 2000s, and

which I mapped out in my introduction. They offer literary antidotes to the assumption that Kuzwayo had experienced too many rapes to be legally believable and defensible. In chapter two and three, Lisa Combrinck, Mlu Zondi, Zanele Muholi, and Achmat Dangor use images, performance art, and narrative to depict sexual violence as a lived reality that is racially burdened and historically specific; they continue, by imagining ways of living among this trauma and forms of sexual expression that surpass it. In her chapter “Thinking Through Lesbian Rape,” Zanele Muholi argues that “transnational feminist solidarities” are necessary for collectively creating “the kind of world in which we all feel safe;” and she locates this collective in both the global north and global south, in activist communities and academia (197, 199). The role of the critic is placed alongside the role of the writer and artist, as both become vital agents for “thinking through” sexual violence.

I feel particularly indebted to both Makhosazana Xaba’s short story “Inside,” which I analyze in chapter two, and Nontsikelelo Veleko’s *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder* series for allowing me to see what non-conforming gender and/or sexual expressions can look like outside the framework of rape; at the same time, however, I see the legacy of apartheid-era racial violence and the impact of contemporary sexual violence just beyond the framing of these artistic projects. Both document a new generation of young people, and Xaba’s protagonist Bhekiwe specifically identifies herself as separate from her parents’ generation, who sit around and talk about the democratic government’s “fortunes and foibles,” while she reimagines remnants of female sexual stigma into that which incites desire (122). Working through the material and conceptual life of the remnants of violence and trauma is central to the artists and

authors I include in this afterword, and they thus also consider what kind of relationship to violence the next generation of South Africans will inherit. In chapter two, Lisa Combrinck historicizes the important role protest poetry played during the anti-apartheid struggle; here creativity remains essential for crafting a shared sense of belonging for non-conforming citizens seeking to remake their place within histories of poverty and violence.

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