Corrective rape and black lesbian sexualities in contemporary South African cultural texts

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ABSTRACT

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The increased visibility of black lesbian identities in South Africa has been met with a severe backlash in the form of what activists term corrective rape. South African newspapers started to report on the incidence of this phenomenon in 2003 with black lesbians emerging in newspaper discourse as particularly vulnerable victims. The term corrective rape has been used to define rape that is perpetrated by heterosexual males against lesbian women in order to 'correct' or 'cure' them of their lesbian sexuality. The increased recognition of lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex rights in post-apartheid South Africa has meant increased visibility for sexual minorities but has simultaneously been marked by an increase in homophobic discourse and violence. Newspapers have reported on the brutal nature of corrective rape and have given sensationalised accounts of these rapes and violence. Black lesbian women have thus entered into the public sphere in post-apartheid South Africa as victims of homophobic rape and violence.

Discourse in mainstream media or the printed press has contributed to the framing of black lesbians as unintelligible victims. Contemporary scholarship on black lesbians has consistently referenced the violence associated with their identity. The primary aim of the study is to clarify how lesbian women are represented in cultural texts and to identify counter discourses that focus on lesbian agency and desire, which is less commonly associated with their sexuality. Previous research on corrective rape has largely focused on the intersection between black lesbian identity and sexual violence as well as men and masculinities in a post-apartheid context. While this study deems it important to highlight prominent debates and media representations of black lesbian sexuality in South Africa it considers it important to resist the reproduction of narratives that associate black lesbian women with sexual violence.

This study turns to literature in the post-apartheid context to examine how narratives of sexual violence challenge representations of women as objectified victims of violence. Rozena Maart's novel *The Writing Circle* forms an important part of the literature chapter in this study. The recognition of oppression in women's narratives of sexual violence and resistance on the part of the female characters in the novel constitute central counter

discourses. The thesis also examines an autobiography and its potential to lend inclusion to the narratives of those formerly excluded on account of their race, gender and sexual identification. An analysis of Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's poignant autobiography illustrates the power of narrations of lesbian agency to undermine the gender norms that historically have restricted representations of black lesbian identity.

The study examines how lesbian identities can be reconceptualised in public lesbian cultures or in queer archives. An archive of lesbian belonging that features in this study includes the portraits of lesbian women and their narratives in the work of visual activist and photographer Zanele Muholi. The narratives of survivability, mourning and belonging in Muholi's archive uncovered and identified in this study assist in raising consciousness around the multiplicitous nature of black lesbian sexuality in Africa and beyond.

January 2017

Keywords

Corrective rape, black lesbian, homophobia, lesbian representation, sexual violence, discourse, activism, sexualities, queer archive, LGBT

DECLARATION

I, Nadine Lake, declare that the Doctoral Degree research thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree qualification *Africa Studies with a specialisation in Gender Studies* at the University of the Free State is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

I, Nadine Lake, hereby declare that I am aware that the copyright is vested in the University of the Free State.

I, Nadine Lake, hereby declare that all royalties as regards intellectual property that was developed during the course of and/or in connection with the study at the University of the Free State will accrue to the University.

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CHAPTER ONE

A BEGINNING: (REPRESENTATIONS OF) LESBIAN LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA

While South Africa today has perhaps one of the most progressive constitutions in the world as regards LGBT rights, it is also a country marked by fierce sexual violence, to the point where a "rape culture" (Gqola, 2015) has been ascribed to South African society. In this context, the lives of all homosexuals and lesbians are precarious, but some groups have been targeted by specific forms of sexual violence. The media, including the printed press, have foregrounded the phenomenon of "corrective rape" or "curative rape", that is, rape perpetrated by heterosexual males on lesbian women, in order to "correct" or "cure" their sexuality and "make them heterosexual" (Muholi, 2004; Brown, 2012; Matebeni, 2013a; Muthien, 2013). Such media reports strangely serve to make black lesbian South Africans simultaneously visible – even hypervisible – as victims of sexual violence, and invisible as agents and indeed subjects, by avoiding any envisioning of them beyond the situation of victimisation. Meanwhile, South African authors and artists have treated the social problem of sexual violence against lesbians, as well as lesbian subjectivity and existence per se, and tried to explore these in more multifaceted ways. This is to say, that in contemporary South African culture, there are several, sometimes similar, but sometimes also contradictory representations of lesbian women circulating. It is the purpose of the present study to investigate these representations, contextualise them, and problematise them from a feminist and gender studies perspective. In doing this, the seriousness of lesbian women's precarious situation in a national context that typically defines them as "unfeminine" as well as "unAfrican" and/or "unnatural" is by no means forgotten. Through analyses of media, literary and artistic discourses on black lesbian South African existence this study challenges perspectives that tend to reproduce gender norms and aspires to offer a more multifaceted understanding of how lesbian existence can be seen through notions such as liveability, intelligibility, and resistance, as well as precarity.

The study is informed by feminist theory, since this field of study more than any other has investigated female sexuality and power relations. In Adrienne Rich's important work on compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence, she argues that,

> [f]eminist theory can no longer afford merely to voice a toleration of "lesbianism" as an "alternative life-style," or make token allusion to lesbians. A feminist critique of compulsory heterosexual orientation for women is long over-due. (Rich, 1980, p. 632)

Although published in 1980, Rich's comment remains relevant across the world today, since it is clear that lesbian existence is often represented as reprehensible and disallowed. An overt example of this has emerged in post-apartheid South Africa in the form of the phenomenon "corrective rape," an obviously problematical term that references the practice whereby heterosexual men rape lesbian women with the intention of "correcting" their *unnatural* sexuality (Brown, 2012; Swarr, 2012a; Gunkel 2013; Gqola, 2015). Black lesbian women are framed as most vulnerable to these rapes. Whereas the framing of certain bodies as particularly vulnerable to violence detracts from a broader problem of sexual violence that goes beyond the boundaries of race, class, and sexual orientation, it is nevertheless important to examine the intersecting forms of oppression that render some women especially vulnerable.

In light of this, in addition to feminist theory this study incorporates contributions from African queer theory. Scholars in the field of African queer studies (Matebeni, 2013a; Muthien, 2013; Gqola, 2015) have deconstructed the idea of the black lesbian woman who tends to emerge prominently as the most vulnerable victim of violence in a post-colonial context. While lesbian studies as suggested above forms an important part of contextualising the debate on black lesbian life, I agree with Bernadette Muthien who argues for a more fluid and inclusive perspective. For Muthien,

> [r]ather than a narrow focus on lesbianism, and lesbian studies, it may serve Africa better if we re-historicise and re-claim pre-colonial fluidities as at least one way of moving beyond the stranglehold of colonial, and still prevalent binaries, oppressions and violences. In this sense alone, queer studies broadly offers a more comfortable reception, rather than a home, entirely because it offers greater inclusivity, even as it suffers the same dis-eases of power and exclusion as any other field of study. (Muthien, 2013, p. 216)

Zethu Matebeni highlights how the black lesbian category is made to 'disappear' because of social injustice, violence and the language we use (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 343). Black lesbians are often defined in relation to sexist and homophobic violence and while it is important to contextualise debates on gender and sexuality the study furthermore aspires to deconstruct discourses that frame black lesbian women as the essentialised victims of homophobic violence and hate crime. An intersectional perspective that recognises the political significance of lesbian identities as well as an African queer perspective may productively inform this process of redefining black lesbian subjecthood.

Social location and the tensions around 'speaking for others'[1]

In order to come closer to a deconstruction of discourses around black lesbian sexuality it is critical for me to position myself as researcher. Prior to starting the formal work on this thesis and throughout the writing process I have considered, and have been asked by others, what interests me about black lesbian women and the violence that surrounds their lives. This is a question that naturally evolves into one that speaks to reflexivity and one's position as a researcher. After hearing the shocking news of Zoliswa Nkonyana's murder in 2006 and the delayed trial that followed I started to become more attentive to reports on corrective rape and murder in South Africa. Since very little information had entered the public sphere prior to 2000, the entry of black lesbian women as *victims* of homophobic violence into mainstream media captured my attention and concern. A glaring paradox started to emerge between the historically taboo nature of lesbianism in South Africa and the now spectacular display of violence against butch lesbians in the media. This paradox and the existence of black lesbians fundamentally challenges the now widely circulated belief that homosexuality is unAfrican. It is also within this context that I find it important to position myself as researcher. I am aware that my position as a white middle-class South African woman does not authorise me to speak on behalf of others whose lived experiences are far removed from my own. I do however consider myself an ally to black lesbians and I can identify with the silences that surround lesbian identification. In addition to this I see the need for a proliferation of feminist voices to speak up and speak out against sexual violence and homophobia in the country. While it is clear that women from less privileged social locations are affected more severely by sexual violence I consider it important to emphasise that all women, regardless of sexual preference, race, class and social location are vulnerable to sexual violence and rape in South Africa. Finally, I consider my position as both an insider (sexual identification) and as an outsider (race and class privilege) an important part of this study in that my voice may be considered an addition to the existing voices in the literature and discourses in this growing field of African queer studies. I acknowledge that this study provides only a partial account of the existing perspectives on black lesbian women and corrective rape in South Africa. In light of this, I agree with Linda Alcoff when she claims that "[s]ince no embodied speaker can produce more than a partial account, and since the process of producing meaning is necessarily collective, everyone's account within a specified

[1] Linda Alcoff uses the term 'speaking for others' in her analysis of the authority associated with identity and/or experience when speaking or writing of/about other people, usually minorities.

community needs to be encouraged" (Alcoff, 1995, p. 108). Keeping this in mind my hope is that this study may add to existing voices and contemporary representations of black lesbian life in South Africa.

Research aim and questions

The central focus of this study is to investigate contemporary discourses – both mainstream discourses and counter discourses – on (black) lesbian women, by analysing texts (in the broad sense of the word) (Hall, 1997; Barker, 2008) in newspaper articles, fiction and non-fiction literature, and photographic art.

Research objectives that inform the study include the following:

- Exploring print media representations of black lesbian lives and problematising hegemonic discourses associated with black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape;
- Identifying counter discourses associated with black lesbian sexuality in fiction and non-fiction literature and exploring lesbian subjectivity and rape as it emerges in these texts;
- Examining representations of black lesbian lives in visual culture and exploring the tensions that emerge between discourses focused on hate crime as opposed to more positive forms of identification in public lesbian cultures.

Context

In the section that follows I provide an overview of two broad phenomena that inform this study focusing on black lesbian sexualities and corrective rape in South Africa. The first is South Africa's liberal constitution and the development of LGBT rights in the country; the second is the prevalence of gender-based violence generally, and corrective rape specifically. By providing an overview of South Africa's recent history pertaining to LGBT rights and contextualising gender-based violence in the country the study draws attention to the disjuncture that exists between rights enshrined in a liberal constitution and a homophobic reality. While South Africa has been lauded for its progressive constitution in terms of LGBT rights it has also been defined as a country with one of the highest incidences of rape in the world (Moffett, 2006; Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Simidele Dosekun (2007) defines the problem as a "rape crisis" and Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015) writes about the prevalence of a "rape culture" in her illuminating book on rape in South Africa.

A study on rape in contemporary South Africa has to recognise the role played by apartheid politics and its influence on identity politics. In addition to the politicisation of race during the apartheid years, an equally important but sometimes unacknowledged feature is the politicisation of sexuality. Deborah Posel makes a distinction between the politics of sexuality and the politicisation of sexuality when she argues that "[w]ithin a modern society, sexuality is always political, as the site of multiple strategies of regulation and discipline and their uneven effects; but sexuality is only intermittently politicized, in the sense of becoming the site of heated public argument, mobilization and conflict. Thus, if the former is a systemic feature of any modern social order, the latter is the product of historical conjunctures" (Posel, 2005, p. 127). These historical conjunctures such as a history of censorship on all sexual matters, the taboo nature of inter-racial marriages during the apartheid years, and the intolerance of LGBT minorities continue to shape contemporary perspectives on sexuality in South Africa.

LGBT rights in South Africa: A liberal constitution versus a homophobic reality

In 1996 South Africa adopted a liberal and progressive constitution that enshrined the rights of all South Africans including sexual minorities. Although the first gay and lesbian organisations such as Gays and Lesbians of Witwatersrand (GLOW) in Johannesburg and the Organisation for Lesbians and Gays (OLGA) in Cape Town only formally organised in the 1980s their support and affiliation with the current ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) through the United Democratic Front (UDF) afforded them political representation and inclusion in the Bill of Rights that was formalised in South Africa's final constitution. The consolidation of OLGA and GLOW resulted in the National Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE). The Coalition of 43 organisations played an important role in the retention of gay and lesbian rights in the constitution and Sheila Croucher explains that "[t]he Coalition hired a full-time lobbyist to act on its behalf, and drew upon the legal experience and credentials of white attorneys and activists and upon the experience and anti-apartheid credentials of many black activists to formulate and implement an impressive lobbying campaign" (Croucher, 2002, p. 320).

The accomplishment of this Coalition is summarised in the constitution which stipulates that,

> [t]he state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth.[2] (Croucher, 2002, p. 320)

South Africa has been lauded for its progressive constitution and it is the first country in the world that included a clause that stipulated against discrimination based on sexual orientation. One of the important functions of the constitution is that it facilitated matters regarding sexuality to transition from a private to a public domain. A central feature therefore of post-1994 politics as described by Posel is "the extent to which sexuality has been thrust into public prominence, in ways which would have been absolutely unthinkable and intolerable during the apartheid years" (Posel, 2005, p. 129). This important process for South Africa to transition to democracy has resulted in both gains and challenges for the LGBT community.

A curious paradox which emerges in the literature on the LGBT movement in South Africa is the constitutional and legislative strides made versus a backlash witnessed in the form of homophobia, rape and murder of LGBT individuals. In an article that focuses on the constitutional advances made by the LGBT movement Ryan Richard Thoreson argues that "[t]he GLB[3] movement has succeeded because stable political alignments allow it to concentrate on lobbying and litigation, where it has compellingly argued its own agenda dovetails with that of the ruling elite" (Thoreson, 2008, p. 679). Thoreson makes a convincing argument for the way in which the LGBT movement in South Africa framed their agenda in terms of identity politics (Thoreson, 2008, p. 681). Thoreson explains this move on the part of LGBT activists and notes that,

> [f]rom the outset, GLB activists framed their agenda in terms of identity politics: everyone, they insisted, has a sexual orientation, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual. Instead of referring to choice ('sexual preference') or practice ('sexuality'), activists insisted upon the terminology of a concrete, immutable identity – 'sexual orientation', which was cognate to racial categorisation – and strategically dropped the 'language of fluidity and contingency of sexuality.' (Thoreson, 2008, p. 681)

Thoreson argues that one of the successes of the LGBT movement can be attributed to this process whereby sexual identity was defined as an immutable characteristic and therefore in much the same way as race they would argue, with the support of political elites, against

[2] Sections 9(3) and (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.
[3] The acronym GLB is used to refer to South Africa's Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual movement.

discrimination based on sexual orientation. This move by the LGBT movement has resulted in major legislative changes for same-sex couples (mostly enjoyed by the white LGBT community in South Africa) but as witnessed in the literature there has been a slower change in attitudes toward LGBT individuals. According to Thoreson the LGBT movement had a dual strategy which on the one hand focused on litigation and on the other depended on support from political sympathisers willing to uphold a constitutional democracy. These actions resulted in the legalisation of same sex marriages and Melanie Judge observes that,

> [o]ver a decade, commencing with the decriminalisation of sodomy, a number of victories were won in the courts to extend legal equality to same-sex couples. These included immigration rights, pension benefits, joint adoption rights and development of the legal designation of 'permanent same-sex life partnership'. These incremental legal gains were hugely significant and paved the way for what some dubbed as the 'grand prize' (Berger, 2008) – the right of same-sex couples to marry in law, if they so choose. In November 2006 the historic Civil Union Act was passed, making SA the first country in Africa to legalise marriage between people of the same sex. (Judge, 2014, p. 68)

Laws were also overhauled in relation to assisted reproduction and "[i]n *J. and B. v. the Director-General of Home affairs and Others* in 2003, the Court addressed family law again by invalidating portions of the Children's Status Act that classified children born to same-sex couples with the aid of artificial insemination as illegitimate" (Thoreson, 2008, p. 681). Therefore, on a global scale South Africa's legislation on sexual rights compares with that of the most liberal and democratic in the world.

During this period of constitutional gains for the South African LGBT community newspapers started to report on increased incidents of homophobia and the emergence of a phenomenon called corrective rape. Not long after these hate crimes were reported and at the same time as the Jacob Zuma[4] rape trial the One in Nine Campaign (OINC) emerged as an authoritative, feminist social movement against gender-based and LGBT violence. Meghan Cooper observes that "[t]he Zuma trial began in February 2006, and so did the OINC, to display solidarity with the woman in the trial, and other women who speak out about rape and sexual violence" (Cooper, 2011, p. 358). The OINC was set up in response to an increasing problem of gender-based and sexual violence in the country and the ineffective response from the criminal justice system (Cooper, 2011, p. 358).

[4] Before becoming president of South Africa Jacob Zuma stood trial for raping a bisexual woman named 'Khwezi'.

The OINC is a coalition of 25 member organisations and its name is derived from,

> a study conducted in 2002 by the MRC [Medical Research Council] on sexual violence, revealing that only one in nine women who are raped in South Africa go on to report the crime to the police. The study further revealed statistics indicating that of the cases that do reach the courts, less than 5 percent of rapists are convicted. From this, the campaign saw a serious need to reassess the South African institutional and criminal justice framework that responds to women who speak out. (Cooper, 2011, pp. 361-362)

The OINC which constitutes a host of organisations fighting against hate crime and sexual violence in South Africa works not only to bring specific cases to court but also to change societal attitudes which are held by the perpetrators of these crimes (Cooper, 2011, p. 367). The OINC focuses on feminist solidarity and Awino Okech argues that the campaign

> represents, to the extent that is possible, a departure from the inclusion and transformation binary by on the one hand seeking to engage with the spuriousness of gender as a fixed identity from which organising can spring and, on the other hand, overtly acknowledging the reality of homophobia as a form of violence against women and confronting it as one of the intersecting oppressions. (Okech, 2013, p. 18)

In addition to the Campaign's central work in building feminist solidary another organisation that features prominently in responding to corrective rape is the Cape Town based organisation known as Luleki Sizwe. Through the online platform change.org Ndumie Funda, director of Luleki Sizwe was able to draw international attention to the problem of corrective rape and the petition that focused on violence against black lesbians received several thousand signatures. At this time the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJCD) committed itself to set up a multi-sectoral team to address the issue and in 2011 this department promised to "develop legislation on hate crimes as a means to strengthen the role of police and justice officials in holding perpetrators accountable and as a result send a clear message to society that such crimes will not be tolerated" (Breen & Nel, 2011, p. 33). Five years after this commitment was made and thirteen years after the first reported incidents of corrective rape Gideon Muchiri wrote that the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes Bill[5] was due to be tabled in Parliament in September 2016[6] (Muchiri, 2016). However, while it is clear that South Africa has made legal advances in terms of securing rights for LGBT individuals on paper, the literature suggests that a lack of commitment on

[5] While this Bill is intended to respond to hate crimes more generally it fails to make explicit reference to corrective rape as a hate crime. The current formulation of the Bill focuses more on hate speech and race-related hate crimes.

[6] People have been invited to make any comments to the current Hate Crimes Bill which will only be finalised after 31 January 2017.

behalf of government and homophobic attitudes in society contribute to a failed response to hate crime and corrective rape in the country.

Homophobic statements like those expressed by the South African president Jacob Zuma and other African leaders such as Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe who fiercely aligns heterosexuality with African values and has referred to gays as being worse than dogs or pigs (Laing, 2011), strengthens the belief that homosexuality is unAfrican and unnatural. The debate around homosexuality in Africa often focuses on debates related to citizenship and national belonging. A closer examination of newspaper discourse on the topic shows that there is a clear divide between the constitution and the lived reality for LGBT minorities. Gqola (2015) highlights however that the constitution is an aspirational document in the same way that the Rainbow Nation[7] coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu is an aspirational ideology for people living in South Africa. These aspirations that emerge as naturalised discourses in South African newspapers will form part of the discussion in the second chapter of this thesis.

With an article aptly titled "The canary of the constitution: Same-sex equality in the public sphere", Graeme Reid (2010) investigates public hearings held by the National House of Traditional Leaders in South Africa. Reid recognises the chasm between traditional and modern views that emerge in debates concerning homosexuality in South Africa and he explains that,

> [g]ay and lesbian equality has come to occupy a paradoxical place. On the one hand, it is a litmus test for the success of constitutional democracy – emblematic of a human-rights based social order. On the other hand, homosexuality is cast as untraditional, as un-African, and as unchristian – a dangerous threat to the social fabric. (Reid, 2010, p. 38)

Although the notion that homosexuality is unAfrican and unnatural circulates in the media, scholarship shows that same-sex behaviour has a history that dates back as far as the sixteenth century (Epprecht, 2008, p. 37). However, while the evidence refutes the idea that homosexuality is unAfrican it becomes clear that sexuality remains highly politicised. While scholars such as Craig Lind argue that the debate on homosexuality in South Africa may be a definitional one and that the constitution reflects "[w]estern liberal individualist values rather than alternative African values", this study challenges such claims and argues that these polarised perspectives on homosexuality start to emerge much more prominently in the public sphere since the adoption of the constitution in 1996. The Western/African binary offers little

[7] The term 'rainbow nation' has been used as a positive reference to South Africa's diverse population.

in terms of the advancement of human rights and the appropriation of such discourse participates in reproducing hegemonic discourses of power. Something that emerges clearly from debates on homosexuality in South Africa and the outspoken intolerance by political and other leaders is that national identity is closely tied to sexual politics. Reid confirms this when he claims that "[h]omosexuality functions as one of the ways to think about and articulate ideas about nationhood and belonging. Thus homosexuality becomes cast as 'un-African', thereby, for those who hold this view, serving to define what it means to be 'African'" (Reid, 2010, p. 46). Although some scholars, activists and journalists reference such polarised perspectives on sexuality they fail to recognise how the reproduction of such views and the failure to acknowledge social and systemic injustices, make the lesbian category "disappear" (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 343).

This study is therefore interested in exploring how black lesbian representation is influenced by homophobia and social injustice. An examination of the discourse on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality seeks to identify how black lesbians become framed as unintelligible victims and in other cases intelligible agents. Furthermore, it will explore how the category 'black lesbian' in post-apartheid South Africa has diverse representational values in media, literary and visual texts.

Gender-based violence and corrective rape

Since South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 LGBT and women's rights organisations have fought hard to uphold the sexual rights of the LGBT community. These struggles have however been challenged by homophobic and sexist discourses that have become particularly salient under Jacob Zuma's presidency. As a way of explaining this backlash against the inroads made by feminists and LGBT activists, Gqola argues that:

> It is not a coincidence that South African women, who on paper are so empowered and have won so many freedoms, are living with the constant fear of violence when we cross the street, at work, everywhere. An effective backlash always does much more than neutralise gains, though; it reverses the gains we see everywhere and it reminds those who might benefit from such gains that they are not quite free. (Gqola, 2015, p. 15)

This reversal of gains becomes clear in a society where women are taught to believe that they are unsafe everywhere, where every South African woman is a potential rape victim regardless of her race or class, and where black lesbian women live in fear of punishment in a society that demonises homosexuality and deviation from the heterosexual norm. Sexual violence against women becomes acceptable in a country where Jacob Zuma, the country's

president, was previously accused of raping a bisexual identified woman[8] but acquitted of all charges while the complainant only known in the public sphere as 'Khwezi' but formally known as Fezeka Ntsukela Kuzwayo[9] was vilified for speaking out against sexual violence. It also becomes acceptable when the then ANC youth league president Julius Malema reinforced a rape myth by stating that if a woman has been raped she doesn't ask for taxi money the morning after (Roehrs, 2011, p. 112), and where the country's president Jacob Zuma is reported to have said "[w]hen I was growing up an ungqingili [a gay] would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out" ("Zuma provokes ire of homosexuals", 2006). These misogynist and homophobic attitudes work to circumscribe the freedom of women and they enable perpetrators to rape with impunity and to appear without remorse. As mentioned previously the way in which we use language contributes to the problem and Matebeni (2013a) explores how the use of terms such as "corrective rape" can be damaging and debilitating. Matebeni argues that the terms "correct" or "cure" provide an elevated status to the perpetrator and simultaneously stigmatises the victim of such crime (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 346). Phumi Mtetwa (2011) provides an alternative spin on the term "corrective rape" and drawing from her work Matebeni notes that,

> Mtetwa inverts the term correct by redirecting it away from lesbians (or rather in relation to rapes committed on lesbian bodies) and to homophobes. Her piece 'Correct the homophobes' leaves the term 'correct' permanently in inverted commas throughout to show her own ambivalence to it. She does not shy away from problematising the term in this piece and further challenges those who are against homosexuals, and those who are yet to join the struggles of all the members of our society to be correct. She argues that they must 'correct' their ways directing our society towards social transformation and justice and not towards damaging individual lives. (Matebeni, 2013a, pp. 346-347)

In South Africa, the term "corrective rape" has most commonly been used to define rape perpetrated against women who are butch or more masculine in appearance. Matebeni cites Muholi (2004) and Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy and Moletsane (2012) and suggests that "[t]he concepts 'curative/corrective' rape arise out of lesbian and feminist activist circles in South Africa" (Matebeni, 2013c, p. 28). Matebeni points out that the hate crimes being perpetrated against lesbians in the early 2000s was termed corrective rape by the then CEO of the Forum for the Empowerment of Women, Donna Smith. The term "corrective/curative rape" has legitimately been problematised by feminist activists and scholars. Matebeni cautions against

[8] During the rape trial, the court had heard that Khwezi was bi-sexual with a lesbian orientation.
[9] Fezeka Kuzwayo was diagnosed HIV positive and died on the 8th of October, 2016.

the use of the term without critiquing the reproduction of heteronormative power inherent in its application and writes,

> [w]hile the strategic/tactical implications of the use of "corrective/curative" rape may be beneficial for activist circles in lobbying for hate crime laws, a critical reading of the language of "curative/corrective" rape suggests ambiguity in the usefulness of the term. (Matebeni, 2013c, p. 30)

This is a central point of concern that informs the rest of this study. Although I use the term corrective rape throughout this study I am conscious of the pitfalls involved in doing so. Some of these pitfalls include defining corrective rape as a special type of rape reserved for black lesbians and consequently framing black lesbians as particularly vulnerable targets of this crime.

While corrective rape has been identified in a few other countries such as Jamaica, Uganda and Zimbabwe, it has been reported on most prominently in South Africa (Brown, 2012, p. 47). Corrective rape has emerged as part of the broader problem of gender-based violence in post-apartheid South Africa. According to the South African Police Services 43,195 and 42,596 cases of rape were recorded for the respective periods 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. While there has been a slight decrease in the number of recorded cases of rape the National Victims of Crime Survey shows that between 2011 and 2014 there was a 21% decrease in reporting rape.[10] In a legislative analysis of corrective rape, Roderick Brown furthermore contextualises the problem and observes that "[d]ismally low arrest and conviction rates for sexual violence deter and discourage women from reporting the assaults. In turn, the assumption that they will not be punished for their crimes inspires more men to commits acts of sexual violence, and to commit them more often" (Brown, 2012, p. 49). Apart from the recorded accounts that thirty-one lesbians have been murdered for their sexuality since 1998 (Middleton, 2011), there is little evidence that exists concerning the number of rapes that have occurred. A Human Rights Watch Report indicates that part of the problem is that:

> South African police do not disaggregate records of sexual violence by motive or by survivors' sexual orientation or gender expression and identity. As a result it is difficult to estimate how many transgender men and lesbians are raped in South Africa every year because of their sexual orientation and/or gender expression. (Nath, 2011, p. 23)

The failure to record violence and rape against black lesbian women forms part of a broader problem of systemic and structural inequality. Nel and Judge emphasise that prejudice

[10] Figures can be found at https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-rape-statistics-in-south-africa/ for the periods 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

renders LGBT people vulnerable to secondary victimisation and drawing from Eliason (1996) they argue that "[n]egative attitudes and prejudice on the part of criminal justice officials and health care services play a role in secondary victimisation, which in turn can be referred to as institutionalised homophobia" (Nel & Judge, 2008, p. 28). The belief that homosexuality is unAfrican may play an additional role in further stigmatising and victimising black lesbians who dare to report these rapes. In addition to structural inequalities that black lesbians face Megan Morrissey highlights a few concerns regarding black lesbian representation in post-apartheid South Africa. Morrissey poses an important question regarding the way in which black lesbianism is discursively constructed in relation to heteronormativity and observes that,

> [i]f heteronormativity is deeply embedded in South Africa's sense of national identity, it becomes immediately apparent that Black South African lesbians are *not* included in such a construction; indeed, it is the intersection of both of these subject positions that serves to multiply marginalize these women. (Morrissey, 2013, p. 76)

These intersecting forms of oppression (including homophobia) are not highlighted in South African media but newspapers rather focus on the spectacular nature of violence exercised against black lesbians. For instance, one of the better known examples of homophobic violence is that of Zoliswa Nkonyana who was murdered because of her sexuality in 2006. In 2011, Mandy De Waal writes for the *Daily Maverick* about Nkonyana's trial which was drawing close to an end almost six years after the young lesbian was murdered. Nkonyana was stabbed to death by nine men for wanting to use the ladies bathroom in a tavern. Nkonyana's trial was delayed more than 40 times and it becomes clear that without the help of NGOs such as The Social Justice Coalition, Treatment Action Campaign, Free Gender, Triangle Project and Sonke Gender Justice (De Waal, 2011) that Nkonyana's case would not have been prioritised by the South African justice system. Nkonyana is portrayed as another victim of homophobic hate crime and De Waal emphasises how Nkonyana becomes yet another rape statistic when she claims that,

> Nkonyana is relegated to an effigy, a file photograph pulled by a press that now covers the story because it conveniently illustrates how our criminal justice system is going to the dogs. To people outside of her family, friends or Khayelitsha's gender movement, Zoliswa Nkonyana is a name and face devoid of all the narrative that would make her human. (De Waal, 2011)

Another prominent case of rape and murder that appears in the South African media is that of the female soccer player, Eudy Simelane. Simelane was gang-raped in 2009 and stabbed 12 times. Simelane was a well-known out lesbian and while one of the accused was given a life

sentence for murder it is reported that the 24-year old Themba Mvubu stated that he was not sorry for murdering Simelane. Mvubu's remorseless attitude suggests that perpetrators believe they are not guilty and that butch lesbian sexuality is something that needs to be corrected.

Hence, the problems connected to the phenomenon of corrective rape includes using language that can reproduce inequality and make lesbians more susceptible to homophobia and violence, the failure to prioritise cases of lesbian rape and murder, and a belief that homosexuality is unAfrican. An additional problem that emerges regarding corrective rape is that there is no specific legislation around the issue and therefore it becomes hard to identify which cases qualify as corrective rape. According to Roderick Brown,

> [i]t is not possible to accurately quantify the number of corrective rapes that occur each year because many, if not most, incidences go unreported, and of the number of reported rapes, it is not clear how many are done with the intent of correcting the victim's sexuality. (Brown, 2012, p. 46)

Unreported crimes point to a deeper problem with state institutions such as the police, justice system, and health care practitioners where revictimisation of sexual minorities often occurs. This explains why many women turn to organisations that work specifically with LGBT violence where there is greater sensitisation on these issues and where activists are willing to lobby for justice and the sentencing of these perpetrators of hate crime. Underreporting has been identified as a huge problem in terms of rape statistics in South Africa and as mentioned earlier the One in Nine Campaign has gone a far way to challenge homophobic attitudes and practices. The Campaign is also known for a die-in protest that was held at the 2012 Johannesburg Pride Protest where the organisation halted the celebration by making a political statement against the violence perpetrated against mostly black LGBT minorities. The protest highlighted the social inequalities that exist between white and black gays and lesbians and the need for greater support and solidarity within the LGBT community.

Reports on gender-based and homophobic violence, the rape and murder of black lesbians and the unequal distribution of rights in the South African LGBT community emerge prominently in newspaper discourse. South Africa is consistently reported on as a country plagued by gender-based and homophobic violence. The second chapter of this thesis will examine some of these themes more closely and reflect on the way that the category 'black lesbian' performs a certain role in revealing tropes specific to racialised and sexualised violence in post-apartheid South Africa.

Previous research

This section provides an overview of previous research on lesbian sexuality, and on representations thereof relevant to this study. First, I provide a brief background on the emergence of discourse/s around lesbian sexuality as it emerged in Western Feminist scholarship. This is followed by a discussion of existing scholarship on lesbian sexuality and sexual violence in Africa but more specifically in South Africa. I also want to draw attention to previous research conducted in the field of African queer studies. Finally, I discuss previous research focusing on representations of lesbian sexuality in South African literary and visual texts.

Representations of lesbian sexuality in Western and African American feminist research

Western feminist scholars such as Adrienne Rich (1980), Teresa de Lauretis (1988) and Monique Wittig (1993) show how lesbian sexuality offers women a way of identifying that falls outside of the oppressive regimes that operate through heterosexual identification. These scholars have challenged the idea that women exist as a "natural" group and refer to the political significance of lesbian identification (Rich, 1980; Wittig, 1993). This contribution by Western feminists is a radical departure from the medicalised discourses that surrounded lesbian sexuality in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Freud, 1927; Von Krafft-Ebing, 1998). With reference to representations of lesbians during this time Teresa de Lauretis highlights that gender crossing was regarded as a symptom and sign of sexual degeneracy leaving few options for the novelist "since there was no image of female sexual desire apart from the male" (De Lauretis, 1988, p. 161). De Lauretis refers to Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* and one of the most well-known examples of fictional/literary representations of lesbian women, and explains that female desire in this novel is inevitably influenced by what Luce Irigaray termed "masculine tropism" (De Lauretis, 1988, p. 162). In other words, women desiring women only becomes possible through a heterosexual lens or male sexual desire.

Historically, research has focused mostly on representations of white lesbian sexuality (De Lauretis, 1988). A neglected concern is the routed forms of oppression that influence representations of black lesbians.

De Lauretis raises this important concern, observing that,

> [w]hat cannot be elided in a politically responsible theory of sexuality, of gender, or of culture is the critical value of that "also", which is neither simply additive nor exclusive but signals the nexus, the mode of operation of *interlocking* systems of gender, sexual, racial, class, and other, more local categories of social stratification. (De Lauretis, 1988, p. 164)

De Lauretis refers to Audre Lorde's novel *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* as an example that focuses on the intersections between racism, classism and homophobia. In relation to Lorde's novel, De Lauretis claims that "[n]either race nor gender nor homosexual difference alone can constitute individual identity or the basis for a theory and a politics of social change" (De Lauretis, 1988, p. 164). De Lauretis identifies in Lorde's novel the importance of recognising routed and overlapping forms of oppression which is also a central concern for this study.

American lesbian feminist and socialist Barbara Smith moves beyond the recognition of these routed forms of oppression and in her scholarship identifies the absence of a critical engagement with race and lesbian sexuality. For Smith (1980), the racism commonly associated with white feminists and the anti-lesbian attitudes that emerge in both Western and Third World contexts constitute hindrances to feminist activism. Smith's definition of feminism speaks to a form of activism that is not divided along race and sex lines. Smith delves deeper into the complexities of racism and homophobia and comments that "[f]eminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women" (Smith, 1980, p. 48). Therefore, in addition to problematising heterosexuality in the Western feminist tradition, African-American scholars such as Smith (1980) and Lorde (1982) provide an intersectional and critical race framework for any study focused on feminist activism and social change.

Smith's anti-homophobic and anti-racist stance is an important consideration in all feminist work. Increased discrimination against black women globally also points to the need to stand together as feminists. Jodie Michelle Lawston (2008) raises this issue in her analysis of female incarceration rates in the United States. In her essay, Lawston "explores the myriad ways that women experience the criminal justice system, both nationally and globally, with a specific emphasis on the insidious phenomenon of incarceration" (Lawston, 2008, p. 1). The practice of discriminating against racial and sexual minorities benefits those in power and discourages those with privilege to stand in solidarity with those who are considered

marginalised outsiders. Such failed connections between women are clearly represented in the prison system with "women on the inside" and "women on the outside" (Lawston, 2008, p. 12). This "inside/outside" position relates directly to a study on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality where the marginalised outsiders are always black lesbian women.

In addition to this brief account of lesbian studies by Western and African-American scholars the study now turns to research on lesbian sexuality and gender-based violence in an African/South African context.

Lesbian sexuality and sexual violence in Africa/South Africa

A large part of research on lesbian sexuality in Africa emanates from South Africa. Dominant themes include the taboo nature of lesbian sexuality in Africa and a backlash against lesbian visibility. Scholars such as Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (1994), Mikki van Zyl and Melissa Steyn (2005), Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa (2005), Desiree Lewis (2008), Henriette Gunkel (2010), Sylvia Tamale (2011), Amanda Lock Swarr (2012a,b) and Chantal Zabus (2013) have contributed to existing scholarship on black lesbian sexuality and same-sex desire in Africa and South Africa.

In a book titled *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives* Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa (2005) emphasise the difficulties involved in conducting research on same-sex practices and same-sex relations in Africa (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005, p. 11). These authors highlight that a major challenge to conducting research related to same sex practices is the silence and taboo that surrounds same-sex sexuality in Africa. In an attempt to overcome this obstacle Morgan and Wieringa initiated the African Women's Life Story Project which would train women activists to conduct research into same-sex practices and same-sex relations. In an introduction to their book they frame this problem as follows:

> We wanted to find women who were interested in collecting personal narratives on a range of issues related to sex and secrecy. We hoped the project would stimulate new ethnographies and theoretical insights on sexuality and secrecy from African countries. The women would present their findings at a session with a regional focus on Africa at the conference. (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005, p. 11)

This project was the first of its kind in Africa and a bold attempt aimed at unveiling hidden stories around same-sex practices and same-sex relations on the continent. Morgan and Wieringa highlight that homophobia is addressed in all of the papers (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005, p. 17) and that homophobic practices contributed to the suppression of same-sex

practices in Africa. Homophobic statements by political leaders formed part of anti-homosexuality rhetoric and the authors write that,

> [c]urrent political leaders who view homosexuality as unAfrican have appropriated the perception that same-sex practices are unnatural and sinful. They regularly direct hate speech at LGBT people in their countries. This homophobia has been based on the perception that same-sex relations are alien to African culture and an import from the depraved West. (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005, p. 17)

Additional themes identified by the authors include the relationship between secrecy and survival and support for lesbian women offered by human rights organisations and LGBT activists in some African countries. Morgan and Wieringa point out that the silence surrounding lesbian sexualities contribute to their marginalisation and that "[c]oming out of the closet may offer the tenuous comfort of the support of an embattled group of LGBTI activists, but it is often also very dangerous" (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005, p. 19). A final theme identified by the leaders of the project was the importance of finding support for struggles through human rights and LGBT rights organisations.

Previous research on lesbian sexuality in South Africa regularly references South Africa's liberal constitution and its exceptional status in relation to LGBT rights (Gqola, 2007; Nel & Judge, 2008; Msibi, 2009; Reid, 2010; Van Zyl, 2011; Brown, 2012; Bennett & Reddy, 2015). Morgan and Wieringa likewise emphasise this point and write that "if the Constitution emphatically prohibits discrimination and includes sexual orientation in its list, as is the case in South Africa, LGBTI people may gain their full rights" (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005, p. 20). However, the paradoxical coexistence of a liberal constitution and a homophobic reality illustrates that rights are in fact withheld from the broader LGBT community in South Africa; a central concern in existing scholarship on lesbian sexuality in the country.

Henriette Gunkel's study is also informed by this paradox. In her book titled *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*, Gunkel highlights that her study explores "the tension between sexual subjectivity and rights on the one side, and a growing visibility of homophobia, as reflected in Muholi's image *Aftermath* on the other" (Gunkel, 2010, p. 22). To explore this tension Gunkel undertakes an in-depth investigation of post-apartheid homophobia and the emergence of a strictly heterosexual African decolonised subject. Gunkel also examines the role played by South African LGBT movements and their engagement with constructions of sexual identity (Gunkel, 2010, p. 23). This forms an important part of Gunkel's study and her intersectional perspective is instrumental to defining

the politics of inclusion and exclusion between different gay communities in South Africa. Gunkel focuses specifically on something she terms the *technologies of homophobia* in South Africa and the impetus for her study is that "lesbians are experiencing violence not only as a form of gender-based violence but also as a form of homophobia" (Gunkel, 2010, p. 5).

Studies conducted by Morgan and Wieringa (2005) and Gunkel (2010) may be defined as situated within a broader context of socio-political and historical conditions that have influenced the understandings of lesbian sexualities in Africa/South Africa. Both studies unearth stories surrounding lesbian identities in an African and South African context. Another central scholar in the field, Amanda Lock Swarr, focuses particularly on the expression of "butch" identities for black lesbians in South Africa. Swarr identifies the lack of attention paid to lesbian masculinities and notes:

> How to talk about butchness, gendered generational differences among lesbians, differences and similarities between lesbian and FTM communities, and class distinctions in butch-femme identifications have been important themes of [Western] scholarship. In contemporary South Africa, however, these debates are not particularly salient. Instead, those South Africans concerned with specifically lesbian masculinities are focused on the violence lesbians face; conversations center not on terminology and communities but on the gendered perceptions of those who target lesbians for violent attacks. (Swarr, 2012a, p. 962)

Swarr (2012a, b) departs from the focus on a crisis in masculinity (Moffett, 2006; Gqola, 2007) researched in post-apartheid South Africa but rather investigates the relationship between lesbian masculinities and the implied threat they pose to male masculinities. She furthermore examines a paradox that exists between lesbian masculinities as both a source of strength on the one hand, and vulnerability on the other (Swarr, 2012a, p. 963). Swarr defines her research as one that focuses on gender liminality in South Africa and argues that although male masculinities "inform and shape South African lesbians' understandings of gender and their constant conversations about butchness, they are not simply copying but are creating masculinities"[11] (Swarr, 2012a, p. 967). By choosing an under-researched focus on butch identities and the unique construction and co-creation of these identities Swarr makes an important contribution to existing scholarship on lesbian sexuality among black women in South Africa.

[11] Swarr thus follows on Jack Halberstam who argues in his book *Female Masculinity* (1998) that masculinity should not be reduced to a male body.

A prominent concern in each of the above-mentioned studies is the relationship between lesbian sexuality and sexual violence. Morgan and Wieringa (2005), as well as Gunkel (2010) and Swarr (2012) identify the prevalence of homophobic discourses in society and write about the relationship between homophobic beliefs and homophobic hate crimes such as corrective rape. Swarr suggests that lesbian masculinities pose a direct threat to men and she argues that,

> [l]esbians are raped in ways intended to be punitive, or "corrective" or "curative," because they undermine monolithic notions of masculinity and heterosexuality and refuse men's proposals and advances. Inseparable from this are perceptions of homosexuality as un-African or as an influence of the global North, backlashes against a perceived increase in rights in contemporary South Africa, and religious and cultural intolerance for challenges to conventions of gender and sexuality. (Swarr, 2012a, p. 962)

Scholarly contributions by Roderick Brown (2012) and Megan Morrissey (2013) contextualise the debate on corrective rape from a legal and media perspective respectively, and the research clearly establishes that homophobic discourses continue to define lesbians as unacceptable and unintelligible figures in post-apartheid South Africa. Additional research on corrective rape and hate crime in South Africa includes reports by organisations such as Action Aid (2009), the Human Rights Watch (2011), and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2013) which focus on the scope of the problem in South Africa, include interviews with the victims, and make policy recommendations. Previous research by Gunkel (2010) and Swarr (2012a) also includes analyses of corrective rape, but they tend to focus on the socio-political conditions that contribute to homophobic violence.

The present study, while drawing upon the important research of Morgan and Wieringa (2005), as well as Gunkel (2010) and Swarr (2012) problematises the representation of black lesbian women as victims of homophobic violence and develops the notion of liveability and resistance associated with black lesbian sexuality. The following section examines important research in the field of African queer studies where scholars such as Ifi Amadiume (1987, 1997), Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (1997, 2005), Mikki van Zyl and Melissa Steyn (2005), Nadia Sanger (2010), Desiree Lewis (2011), Zethu Matebeni (2013a, b), Bernadette Muthien (2013), and Awino Okech (2013) to name a few define the relevance of queer perspectives in Africa.

Departing from the binary: Queer perspectives and voices in Africa

African queer studies scholars depart from and critique the association between homosexuality in Africa and violence. Although the literature suggests that there has been a huge backlash against sexual minorities, especially black lesbians in South Africa, scholars like Nadia Sanger (2010) identify that the problem of violence against black lesbians is not located in South African townships or specific to black communities, but that

> this violence should be understood as centrally located within heteronormative values, reinforced and reconstructed through a variety of state and media discourses that dominate the public sphere in South Africa. Unlike advocates of the state and mainstream media, feminist voices on the subject are predominantly situated outside of the public consciousness. (Sanger, 2010, p. 114)

As identified by Sanger, the mainstream media and state contribute to the marginalisation of sexual minorities and black lesbians emerge as a trope in representing homophobic violence. Zethu Matebeni (2013a) argues that black lesbian women find themselves in a particularly difficult position because of a special victim status that is ascribed to them. This special status can be identified in the mainstream media and newspaper discourse that this study investigates. Matebeni highlights the tensions that emerge for black lesbians who are defined in relation to a heterosexual order. As argued by Matebeni,

> lesbians are attacked because of their perceived and real disruption of the gender and sex order. On the other hand, by framing black lesbians as special victims of a form of rape, the language of corrective rape locates black lesbians in the townships of South Africa outside the wider gender, class, sexuality and racial struggles of social justice in South Africa. (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 344)

Previous research in the domain of African queer studies contextualises the discursive construction of black lesbian identity in a post-colonial context and foregrounds the importance of challenging raced, gendered and classed perspectives reproduced in mainstream media. African queer perspectives furthermore centralise the importance of adopting a queer stance for Africans even though it may be riven with power relations. African queer sexualities are fluid in their conceptualisation and a queer perspective can add to the multifaceted forms of gender and sexual expression witnessed in post-colonial contexts. Bernadette Muthien poses an important question concerning whether there is such a construct as an *African lesbian* (Muthien, 2013, p. 214); a question that both informs this study and simultaneously highlights potential pitfalls that may be encountered when failing to acknowledge the diversity of sexualities and identities in Africa.

Along with other African scholars such as Ifi Amadiume (1987, 1997) and Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (1997, 2005), Muthien highlights the fluidity of sexual identity and gender expression in Africa. Scholars such as Muthien recognise the importance of moving beyond binary constructions of sexual identity as represented in contemporary mainstream media and the value of giving space to African queer sexualities which troubles the African/Western as well as the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy.

While many studies have focused on sexual violence against black lesbians within a social, political, legal and rhetorical context there are fewer studies that investigate alternative representations of lesbian sexuality in cultural texts. In the next section I provide an overview of scholarship on such representations in South African literature and visual culture.

Representations of lesbian sexuality in cultural texts

Previous research on LGBT literature in South Africa focuses primarily on the coming-out narrative and the presence of homosexuality, predominantly in white families, in post-apartheid South Africa (Medalie, 1999; Poyner, 2000; Bethlehem, 2002; Boehmer, 2002; Farred, 2002; Horrell, 2002; Stobie, 2007; Graham, 2012).

Lesbian sexuality is largely under-represented in contemporary South African cultural texts and often eclipsed by narratives of sexual violence. In her comprehensive analysis of race, rape and representation Lucy Valerie Graham deconstructs some of the master narratives inherent to South African cultural texts and emphasises that "[w]hile it cannot be denied that representations of sexual violation have consolidated certain master narratives in South Africa, it is also true that narratives have been suppressed where these challenge power" (Graham, 2012, p. 9). Graham's research foregrounds the historical and political context that is often elided in contemporary representations of sexuality and sexual violence. While it is evident that there are exceptionally high levels of sexual violence in South Africa Graham notes that, "the processes of history have affected the remembering and/or forgetting of rape stories" (Graham, 2012, p. 9). As argued by Graham the debate should be more focused on the tension between narratives that have been suppressed and those master narratives that have taken precedence in the post-apartheid era.

An overview of the research suggests that LGBT literature has focused more on the interplay between politics and sexuality (Samuelson, 2007; Stobie, 2007; Stobie, 2009; Munro, 2012), and importantly, that male homosexuality has been a central focus. Since this study is

concerned with literature that focuses specifically on lesbian women, I leave research on representations of male homosexuality aside. In the section that follows I discuss existing scholarship on the specific texts which I have selected for this study (literature and photography) that deal with the intersection between lesbian sexuality and sexual violence. I begin by looking at research on Rozena Maart's novel *The Writing Circle* (2007) and Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography *Black Bull, Ancestors, and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* (2008).

The Writing Circle thematises rape and narratives of sexual violence in the lives of South African women. Previous research on Rozena Maart's novel is limited to Jessica Murray's (2011) study which contextualises the salience of race for understanding rape in a South African context. Murray argues that gender should be used as the primary analytical category and she examines rape myths and misogynist attitudes prevalent in South African society. An examination of lesbian representation in Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography is likewise limited to one study: Cheryl Stobie (2011) contends that an ancestral calling and possession in Nkabinde's autobiography serves a validating transgender function and Stobie sees a conflict between modern and traditional beliefs in Nkabinde's process of identity construction. Although Nkabinde's autobiography is not central to Amanda Lock Swarr (2012a,b), in her research on butch identities Swarr refers to Nkabinde and references the paradox between *visibility* as a source of strength and something that simultaneously renders butch lesbians as vulnerable; a point that I will develop in the present study. Finally, with their ethnographic study Morgan and Reid (2003) argue that same-sex sexuality for female traditional healers offers social status and also serves as a source of power; a point that they do not develop fully, but that this study will pursue and problematise. Although Morgan and Reid's study does not focus specifically on representation it does offer important insight into an under-researched field and contributes to understanding diverse representations of lesbian traditional healers.

Representations of black lesbian women in visual art and activism emerge prominently in the work of Zanele Muholi. Compared to the literary texts, there is more research available on Zanele Muholi's visual art and activism. Research has focused on Muholi's two collections of photography titled *Only half the picture* and *Faces and Phases 2006-2014.* Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* features prominently in the scholarship. Existing Scholarship on *Hate Crime Series* explores the difficulty associated with representing black lesbian subjectivity in post-apartheid South Africa. For instance, Kylie Thomas (2010) asks how it becomes possible to

overturn ways of *seeing* that render lesbian subjectivity invisible. Andrew van der Vlies (2012) is more concerned with the affect associated with lesbian traumas that are often elided in representations of public-cultures and Raél Jero Salley employs the concept of *subversive resistance* as "a useful metaphor for thinking about this expanding archive" (Salley, 2012, p. 60). Previous research has also focused on the entrenched codes that influence representations of black female sexuality and lesbian identity (Lewis, 2005) and how colonialism and apartheid shaped constructs of gender and sexuality which are reproduced in post-apartheid South Africa (Gunkel, 2009; 2010). Although there are a few separate studies focusing on *Hate Crime Series*, many focus on the same images. In terms of existing scholarship on Zanele Muholi and her visual activism Desiree Lewis (2005), Henriette Gunkel (2009; 2010), Kylie Thomas (2010; 2013b; 2014), Pumla Dineo Gqola (2011), Gabeba Baderoon (2011), Nomusa Makhubu (2012), Andrew van der Vlies (2012), Raél Jero Salley (2012), Zethu Matebeni (2013b), Benita de Robillard (2016) and Rachel Lewis (2016) to name a few focus primarily on the images "Aftermath", "Hate Crime Survivor I", and "Ordeal", three photographs from Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.*

Kylie Thomas' (2010) analysis of Muholi's collection *Faces and Phases*, Raél Jero Salley's (2013) essay, Zanele Muholi's (2010; 2013b) overview and Gabeba Baderoon's 2014 afterword to the final collection of photographs titled *Faces and Phases 2006-2014* form part of the existing scholarship on this collection. Thomas explores the theme of *passing* in this collection and writes that her reading of Muholi's photographs examines the "ambiguities of 'passing' – passing *away*, passing *between* states of gendered being and passing *through* the prohibitions against making lesbian experience visible and mourning lesbian loss" (Thomas, 2010, p. 421). One can identify different forms and expressions of gendered and sexual being in Muholi's collection and Salley defines his contribution by stating, "[m]y aim is not to speak for Muholi or her collaborators. Rather, my investment is in supporting the transformative potential of Muholi's work and explicating its impact on contemporary visuality" (Salley, 2013, p. 107). With reference to being represented by outsiders Muholi notes in a short essay that focuses on her collection *Faces and Phases* in the *Queer African reader* that,

> each time we are represented by outsiders, we are merely seen as victims of rape and homophobia. Our lives are always sensationalised, rarely understood. This is the reason for 'Phases': our lives are not just what make the newspaper headlines every time one of us is attacked. We go through many stages, we express many identities, which unfold in parallel in our existence. (Muholi, 2013, p. 169)

Both Thomas and Baderoon define Muholi's second collection as a queer archive that insists on the specificity of lesbian existence. Rachel Lewis' (2016) recent study focuses on Muholi's activism and suggests that "queer conceptualizations of vulnerability and precarity can provide the basis for the articulation of new sexual rights claims" (Lewis, 2016, p. 205). The notion of a queer African archive is particularly relevant for this study. Instead of arguing for black lesbian belonging this study is more interested in exploring nuanced representations of lesbian life and queer forms of existence in post-apartheid South Africa.

Defining the contribution

The prominence of sexual violence and black lesbian sexuality in previous research on the topic signals the complexities associated with contemporary (representations of) black lesbian sexualities in South Africa. As highlighted in the previous research section, research to date suggests that black lesbian sexuality remains a taboo subject, and the scholarship suggests that lesbian women are often framed as victims of homophobia, hate crime and corrective rape. Few studies have focused on the agency and desire associated with black lesbians. It is a central concern of this thesis to foreground and complicate the intelligibility, liveability and resistance present in black lesbian lives, while not disregarding the precarity associated with their existence.

Apart from Nadia Sanger (2010), Megan Morrissey (2013), Zethu Matebeni (2013a, b) and Melanie Judge's (2015) studies on the discursive construction of black lesbians in South African newspapers, there is limited research on print media representations of black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape. A primary contribution of this study is to provide a chronological overview, thematic analysis and discourse analysis of reports on black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape in South African newspapers between 2003 and 2014. Such an analysis is a unique contribution when it comes to research on print media representations of black lesbian sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa.

Furthermore, the study makes a contribution by identifying counter discourses that foreground the agency, desire and power associated with black lesbian sexuality. The study focuses on the important act of recognising female oppression, narrating stories of sexual violence from a subject position and female solidarity in texts such as *The Writing Circle* and in Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography. The study also seeks out counter discourses in visual activism and focuses on the male gaze and social injustices as represented in Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.* Furthermore, it thematises the importance of public lesbian cultures and

the value of queer archives in Muholi's collection *Faces and Phases (2006-2014).* The section that follows focuses on the contributions that will be made by selecting texts such as Maart's *The Writing Circle* and Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.*

Rozena Maart's novel *The Writing Circle* may seem like a less obvious choice for selection because it does not speak directly to corrective rape. This novel however is one of few set in post-apartheid South Africa that makes the connection between contemporary issues of racism, sexism and homophobia in the lives of South African women. Maart's novel focuses on the everyday nature of sexual violence and thematises the vulnerability of women steeped in a society characterised by sexual violence. Maart's novel is also unique in that it highlights that women from all races, classes and sexualities are vulnerable to sexual violence and it explodes myths pertaining to rape and rapists in South Africa. In Maart's novel I consider the personal narration of sexual violence and "voice"; a unique contribution to post-apartheid fiction.

The Writing Circle focuses on how race, gender and class intersect in the lives of women and influences their representation in relation to accounts of sexual violence. Furthermore, the novel focuses on lesbian sexuality and the paradox that exists between the everydayness of sexual violence versus the taboo nature of lesbian sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa. The novel is thus central to highlighting how sexual violence in the post-apartheid era becomes framed as everyday, and how myths pertaining to rape and rapists are reproduced. Recognition of oppression and intelligibility also emerge as important themes in Maart's novel, and are central elements of counter discourses in relation to female and lesbian subjectivity.

Although the literary genres, autobiography in the case of Nkabinde and fiction in the case of Maart, are different I would like to argue that they both offer something significant in terms of representations of sexual violence and lesbian sexuality. A distinction made between life-writing (memoir and autobiography) and the novel concerns representation and hermeneutics. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson contextualise the difference and suggest that,

> [l]ife writing and the novel share features we ascribe to fictional writing: plot, dialogue, setting, characterization, and so on. But they are distinguished by their relationship to and claims about a referential world. We might helpfully think of what fiction represents as "*a* world" and what life writing refers to as "*the* world." (Smith & Watson, 2010, pp. 9-10)

Given the distinction between these two genres, I claim that *The Writing Circle* is important in that it thematises sexual violence and lesbian sexuality and represents *"a* world" while Nkabinde's autobiography makes different truth claims[12] and the text is important in that it represents how lesbian sexuality can be negotiated and re-negotiated in "*the* world". These different genres make different truth claims, but first-person, female narration in relation to sexual violence on the one hand and lesbian sexuality on the other constitute important parts of the texts.

In addition to representations of lesbian sexuality in literature this study also focuses on counter discourses and representation in visual activism and photography by Zanele Muholi. Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* thematises black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape in post-apartheid South Africa. A majority of the studies investigating Muholi's work have focused on hate crime and corrective rape, a theme that is prominent in the photographs titled "Aftermath", "Hate Crime Survivor I" and "Ordeal". In this study, however, I have selected the entire *Hate Crime Series* for analysis. I employ Roland Barthes' concept of the *studium* and the *punctum* and draw from Kylie Thomas' innovative use of the terms. Barthes' concepts serve as a useful way to read this photographic series where violence exercised against black lesbians should not only be read in relation to their sexuality. I argue that Muholi's series must be read in its totality and that the concepts *studium* and *punctum* are important in this reading. In defining the difference between the concepts Thomas cites Barthes and observes that,

> [i]n *Camera Lucida,* Barthes extends his thinking about how photographs are read through the concepts of the *"studium"* and the *"punctum."* Most photographs belong to the *studium*, that which I have learned to see by acculturation and that which cannot reach me. And then there are those photos that arrest my gaze, photographs that disturb the studium of my knowing, photographs that wound me, photographs that I love. This element within the photograph is animated through the particularity of my gaze. It is this that Barthes terms the *"punctum"* (Thomas, 2010, p. 427)

Reading Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* as a series has an effect. I argue that the photographs that have commonly been omitted from analysis such as "Case Number" and "Hate Crime Survivor II" must form part of the analysis because these photographs act as extra textual references which signify black lesbian location and social inequality.

[12] I use the term 'truth claims' to refer to how discourse influences what we understand to be true. Gabriele Griffin highlights that discourses "make certain utterances possible while suppressing others" (Griffin, 2013, p. 94). In other words, different truth claims emerge pertaining to society and individuals in different genres that are reliant on diverse discourses or regimes of truth.

In this study with its focus on language and cultural representations I would like to explore a variety of ways of imagining the lesbian body. Where previous research on black lesbian sexuality has focused on the lesbian body as victimised and oppressed I argue that a re-reading of cultural texts that focus on women-centred and lesbian existence marks the beginning of a consciousness of oppression and that *writing the lesbian body* is central to restoring its subjectivity. One means of achieving this is by following Adrienne Rich's recommendation "to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support" (Rich, 1980, pp. 648-649). This study is furthermore interested in challenging the "naturalness of women as a social category" (Wittig, 1993, p. 103) and I argue along with scholars like Rich and Wittig that the lesbian position challenges culturally imagined notions of what it means to be a woman. De Lauretis argues that in order to represent lesbian existence, there is a need to radically rethink, and re-write the female body; this is

> a struggle to transcend both gender and "sex" and recreate the body other-wise: to see it perhaps as monstrous, or grotesque, or mortal, or violent, and certainly also sexual, but with a material and sensual specificity that will resist phallic idealization and render it accessible to women in another sociosexual economy. In short, if it were not lesbian, this body would make no sense. (De Lauretis, 1988, p. 167)

I hope to contribute to uncovering and formulating ways that black lesbian bodies can indeed be represented as "other-wise," that is, outside of a socio-sexual economy that presently renders them unliveable, without agency, and lacking desire.

Theoretical framework

In the section that follows I provide an overview of the theoretical framework employed in this study. Theories that productively contribute to the thesis include Butler's conceptualisation of intelligibility and recognition, intersectionality, the notion of counterpublics, African queer theory and post-colonial feminism, and cultural representation.

Vulnerable and precarious identities

In her book titled *Rape: A South African Nightmare* Pumla Gqola introduces her first chapter on rape in South Africa by clarifying that rape is about power.

According to Gqola,

> [r]ape is not a South African invention. Nor is it distasteful sex. It is sexualised violence, a global phenomenon that exists across vast periods in human history. Rape has survived as long as it has because it works to keep patriarchy intact. It communicates clearly who matters and who is disposable. (Gqola, 2015, p. 21)

A question concerning who matters and who is disposable is particularly important for this investigation. The theoretical framework of this dissertation comes in part from Judith Butler's theorisation on the precariousness and grievability of life in her book titled *Frames of War: When is life grievable?* (2009). Although Butler focuses on the technologies of war and its consequent coding of violence, it is her theorisation around framing and the ontology of the body that I consider important here. The idea of the body becomes relevant insofar as it is understood as something that is "exposed to social crafting and form" (Butler, 2009, p. 3). Butler highlights that the body is exposed to socially and politically articulated forces and she argues that there is a differential allocation of precarity to certain bodies. This differential allocation of precarity becomes clear in Gqola's work on rape when she continues to argue that,

> [t]hose who matter are not afraid of being raped because they have not been taught to fear sexual assault. They have been taught safety. Rape is the communication of patriarchal power, reigning in, enforcing submission and punishing defiance. (Gqola, 2015, p. 21)

Butler makes a distinction between the *apprehension* and 'recognition' of life with 'recognition' being defined as the stronger term. Butler uses these terms in relation to intelligibility which she argues is "understood as the general historical schema or schemas that establish domains of the knowable" (Butler, 2009, p. 6). A central consideration of this thesis is defining how some lives become recognised or knowable and seen as intelligible while others are not.

The notion of the frame can also be productive for this study that aims to challenge dominant modes of representation that often contribute to a lack of intelligibility ascribed to black lesbian life. For Butler, the frame itself suggests that there is something (a reality) that lies outside of it.

To challenge dominant modes of representation it becomes necessary to call the frame into question and as Butler suggests,

> to call the frame into question is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene that it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable. The frame never quite determined precisely what it is we see, think, recognize, and apprehend. Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things. (Butler, 2009, p. 9)

By calling the frame into question one is actively participating in deconstructing discourses that render black lesbian women as unintelligible. Butler furthermore argues that the frame does not quite hold anything together in one place but becomes a type of perpetual breakage from that which it hopes to organise. This perpetual breakage from the frame eventually becomes part of the definition that is conveyed (Butler, 2009, p. 10). A perpetual breakage from the frame is also significant insofar as it highlights how hegemonic discourses of power influence the way in which individuals and subjects are represented. The perpetual breakage from the frame thus offers an opportunity to reimagine that which is influenced by inherent heteronormative norms of recognition.

Butler's theory on the precariousness and grievability of life is considered important for this thesis because it speaks to the way in which some lives become framed as less intelligible and consequently less grievable than others. In this study I have selected three textual genres that focus on the representation of black lesbian life and sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa. In these genres I would like to examine how the black lesbian body is framed, and the discourses that contribute to her un/intelligibility. For example, in the second chapter of the thesis that focuses on print media representations of black lesbian life I am interested in the way that the media shape discourses that can either reinforce or detract from the intelligibility of black lesbian life. I am furthermore interested in examining how the term corrective rape has been used in the media and how this shapes discourses pertaining to black lesbian intelligibility. As far as print media representations are concerned I also want to identify dominant discourses in South African newspapers and how these discourses and ideologies may influence the material realities of black lesbian women. The media chapter will also examine how the category 'black lesbian' is connected to broader concerns regarding South Africa's racialised and sexualised politics. A cursory overview of the literature suggests that black lesbian women are a particularly vulnerable minority when compared with other sexual minorities in the country. If black lesbians are framed as a group that is particularly

concerned about their safety then it is important to examine the discourses and frames that continue to frame their lives as precarious and unintelligible. This study is invested in interrogating discourses that perpetuate social injustice and aims to identify ways in which black lesbians have emerged as 'those who do not matter'.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is also a central part of the theoretical framework and crucial for examining the routed forms of oppression in the lives of black lesbian women. Patricia Hill Collins provides some context to the emergence of the term intersectionality and argues that its reception into academy became increasingly marked by a distinction between it being understood as a "paradigm for studying complex social inequalities and intersectionality as a political project for bringing about social justice" (Collins, 2012, p. 452). Collins furthermore argues that intersectional analyses has paid more attention to the way in which race, class, gender and sexuality articulate and shape individual identities, more so than group identities. Intersectionality is thus productive for this study which will explore different ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality and other categories combine to marginalise individual identities. Collins' provides a holistic definition for intersectionality and argues that,

> [w]ithin intersectionality, the emphasis on the social location, multiplicity, and relationality of social locations and worldviews also has enabled the field to develop a deeper understanding of power. In essence, systems of power (such as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, country of origin, citizenship status, etc.) cannot be understood in isolation from one another; instead systems of power intersect and co-produce one another to result in unequal materialities, the distinctive social experience that characterize them, and intersecting belief systems that construct and legitimate these social arrangements. Stated differently, racism, sexism, class exploitation, and similar oppressions mutually construct one another, drawing upon similar practices, forms of organization, and ideologies. (Collins, 2012, p. 455)

Leslie McCall furthermore clarifies that intersectionality "arose out of a critique of gender-based and race-based research for failing to account for lived experience at neglected points of intersection – ones that tended to reflect multiple subordinate locations as opposed to dominant or mixed locations" (McCall, 2005, p. 1780). Recognition of these neglected points of intersection is essential to respond in an appropriate way to violence exercised against black lesbian women.

Black lesbians often come from poor township areas, lack formal education, and are exposed to discrimination when seeking help. In a society where black lesbian sexuality is defined as

deviant and unAfrican and where their abuse is foregrounded, these women fall outside of the normative frames of recognition. In her discussion on rape and racism Crenshaw highlights that one of the problems in addressing rape myths is that racism remains unproblematised in feminism, and that sexism remains unproblematised in anti-racist discourses. A negative consequence of this is that "the plight of Black women is relegated to secondary importance" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1269). Black women are therefore left at the margins of debates concerning both racism and feminism and their oppression becomes compounded.

Intersectionality is particularly useful for a study on black lesbian sexuality and their identities in a post-colonial context. As argued by McCall (2005) intersectionality arose from a failure to account for lived experience at neglected points of intersection. Although much of the research has focused on black lesbian *sexuality* as the primary category of oppression this study wishes to explore and examine how black lesbians become the victims of multiple and intersected forms of oppression that are often unaccounted for. For example, although black lesbians are victims of sexual violence it is also important to identify and name the less visible forms of violence exercised against them. Some of these less visible points of intersection that will be examined in the study include black lesbian's social location, their entrance into the public sphere as victims of violence, a history of stereotyping African female sexuality, and racism that is perpetuated in the media. Black lesbians are often represented as voiceless or lacking agency and a central concern of this thesis aligns with the purpose of intersectionality theory which is to empower oppressed groups (Crenshaw, 1991).

The failure to recognise intersecting forms of oppression can also contribute to something that Leslie McCall defines as a "master" category that reinforces specific stereotypes or myths about marginalised groups. McCall (2005) highlights how the deconstruction of these "master" categories forms part of the deconstruction of inequality itself. This study considers it important to seek out these dominant frames, scripts or categories that reproduce inequalities and that relegate black lesbians to a position that *resists telling*. Once these routed forms of oppression have been identified it becomes easier to explain the exclusion and marginalisation of black lesbians. Employing intersectionality in this analysis also focuses on identifying ways in which to challenge representations of black lesbians as victims and to reconstruct their identities in ways that focus on their agency.

"Talking back": Can the subaltern speak?[13]

One way of moving black lesbians away from this position that "resists telling" is by exploring how notions of family and belonging have influenced their identities and social location.

As a means of defining the gross violations enacted upon women's bodies including those of South African lesbians, Desiree Lewis argues that rape reveals less about the brutality of certain individuals but that it concerns the "culturally sanctioned masculinist crafting of collective, and frequently national, projects" (Lewis, 2008, p. 105). Lewis raises an important issue here concerning the way in which violence becomes manifested through familial scripts and reminds us that gendered identities are closely related to nationalism and national belonging. The notion of "nations as biological families" (Lewis, 2008, p. 107) has furthermore worked to keep patriarchy intact and provides us with some insight into the violation of black lesbian sexuality in a relatively young democracy.

This thesis is particularly interested in the ways in which women "talk back" to coercive and disciplinary regimes of power. As a means of capturing these voices that "talk back" I will examine literary and visual texts that examine the individual narration of sexual violence and the ways in which these women resist being defined by others and hence talk back to dominant regimes of representation.

To contextualise this practice of talking back or using one's voice I would like to apply Nancy Fraser's adaptation of Jürgen Habermas' concept of the "public sphere." Fraser draws from and critiques Habermas' conceptualisation of the public sphere and argues for a more inclusive democracy by foregrounding the value of counterpublics. In terms of representation the public sphere has played an important role in determining which voices are heard. Fraser recognises this problem and notes that,

> [i]n stratified societies, unequally empowered social groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles. The result is the development of powerful informal pressures that marginalize the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday life contexts and in official public spheres. (Fraser, 1990, p. 64)

This lack of representation in public participation has resulted in the formation of alternative counterpublics. Along with Joan Landes, Mary Ryan, and Geoff Eley, Fraser argues that

[13] The title "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1985; 1988) is borrowed from Gayatri Spivak's globally influential essay on post-colonial theory.

Habermas' public sphere depended on a number of exclusions. Fraser notes that subordinated groups including "women, workers, people of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). Fraser uses the word subaltern counterpublics to define the value of these publics and writes:

> I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. (Fraser, 1990, p. 67)

In this thesis I argue that texts such as autobiography and fiction, as well as visual cultures can be constituted as significant counterpublics with valuable "voices." The counterpublic is therefore considered the overarching structure in this thesis with voices in literature, and a queer archive in visual art representing significant counter discourses and parallel discursive arenas for those previously marginalised and excluded, such as black lesbian women. Such counterpublics become particularly important for developing democracies. Positive examples of subaltern counterpublics can be found in textual discourses. An important part of the theoretical framework of this dissertation is therefore to explore the way in which black lesbian voices constitute subaltern counterpublics in the face of patriarchal and nationalist discourses. Individual voices in these publics become central to challenging heteronormative discourses and narrating their own agency. I would furthermore like to draw from bell hooks to argue that these literary and visual narratives are not merely examples of talking back but powerful acts of resistance (hooks, 1989, p. 8).

An issue taken up in Fraser's essay that focuses on subaltern counterpublics is the influential role of the media in terms of shaping the public sphere and its tendency to exclude certain groups. The voices of some groups, such as black lesbians, are often silenced or misrepresented; a theme that will be examined in the second chapter of this thesis. In her argument Fraser cites Jane Mansbridge and points out that, "[s]ubordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover they are not heard. [They] are silenced, encouraged to keep their wants inchoate, and heard to say 'yes' when what they have said is 'no'" (Fraser, 1990, p. 64). Subordinate groups are represented in relation to the views of dominant groups and consequently become even further marginalised. It is within this context that Iris Marion Young's use of the term "voice" and "enlarged thought" for democratic inclusion can be productive.

In the title to one of her books Young refers to "intersecting voices" and the idea that differently situated groups should give voice to their ideas, perspectives and opinions (Young, 1997). This point is also raised in Young's text titled *Inclusion and Democracy*. Young opens up possibilities for understanding the term "inclusion" and suggests that,

> [i]nclusion ought not to mean simply the formal and abstract equality of all members of the polity as citizens. It means explicitly acknowledging social differentiations and divisions and encouraging differently situated groups to give voice to their needs, interests and perspectives on the society in ways that meet conditions of reasonableness and publicity. (Young, 2000, p. 119)

Democratic inclusion informs both Fraser and Young's discussions on the public sphere and is a useful term for thinking through how one can foster democracy in more stratified societies. In addition to the centrality of the term "voice" in fostering democratic inclusion Young also addresses the issue of "enlarged thought". For Young politics that aim to promote social justice must "draw on the situated knowledge of the people located in different group positions as resources for enlarging the understanding of everyone" (Young, 2000, p. 109).

The purpose of this study is not to speak for those who have been silenced or excluded from public discourse but it does see the value of promoting the discursive relations that emerge in competing counterpublics. Additionally, I find Young's idea of "intersecting voices" a particularly useful concept in thinking through how a feminist academic voice can contribute or add to the existing voices (i.e. those found in the media, in literature and in visual representations) around black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape.

For my analysis, I have selected different textual genres but a common approach in them has been the emphasis on voice or autobiographical voice. In terms of a selection of genres I find myself in the same position as Ann Cvetkovich and her project on public lesbian cultures where she claims that her "approach to genre has been inclusive because the resulting range of texts and artifacts enables attention to how publics are formed in and through cultural archives" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 9). In this study these cultural archives have a strong autobiographical voice in both the literary and visual texts selected for analysis. Autobiography or *Autobiographics* as defined by Leigh Gilmore makes important truth claims as far as gender and genre are concerned. For example, in the third chapter of this thesis I will investigate how social positions are both conditioned by social and psychological forces and responded to by the autobiographer in Zandile Nkabinde's work and I examine the truth claims that can be made through personal narration in fictional and non-fictional

accounts of sexual violence. Furthermore, Zanele Muholi's work has been defined as an auto/biographical project where Muholi inserts herself into the project but also documents lesbian lives. Historically, black lesbians have been marginalised and consequently under-represented in genres such as autobiography and Gilmore highlights that "texts perform a complex kind of cultural work – never more so than when they seek to represent the 'self'" (Gilmore, 1994, pp. 22-23). The history of exclusion can also be altered through the recognition of certain truth claims that become possible in this genre. Gilmore observes that,

> [c]learly, for many readers the possibility of seeing not only some aspect of their lives but a member of their community represented in print may decisively alter their notions of what counts culturally, or what is possible. (Gilmore, 1994, p. 24)

The idea of what is possible becomes particularly salient in Nkabinde's autobiography and Zanele Muholi's collection titled *Faces and Phases*. For example, Nkabinde's text is the only personal account of a lesbian traditional healer in South Africa and Muholi's collection *Faces and Phases* is an unprecedented body of work on African queer sexualities. Cvetkovich's work on public lesbian cultures also holds value for this study and in drawing attention to the value of publics of emotion or feeling Cvetkovich notes that, "[d]ykes writing about sexuality and vulnerability have forged an emotional knowledge out of the need to situate intimate lives in relation to classism, racism, and other forms of oppression" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 4). Cvetkovich highlights the importance of lesbian public cultures with an emphasis on emotions or feeling, something that has historically been excluded from cultural archives. In the fourth chapter of this thesis I will identify and examine some of these discourses of emotion that serve as counter discourses in an unconventional cultural archive.

Cultural representation and post-colonial critique

In order to come closer to understanding the representation/s of violence exercised against black lesbians this thesis situates itself in the discipline of cultural representation. Culture must be defined in order to understand this approach to texts. As argued by Stuart Hall,

> [b]ecause we interpret the world in roughly similar ways, we are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together. That is why 'culture' is sometimes defined in terms of 'shared meanings or shared conceptual maps.' (Hall, 1997, p. 18)

Such an understanding of culture is particularly important for this study which is grounded in post-colonial feminism. For example, a feminist reading of cultural texts acknowledges that newspaper reporting on corrective rape is influenced by colonial discourses, familial scripts

and patriarchy. In an examination of the Jacob Zuma rape trial that took place in 2006 Jeanne Prinsloo develops a theoretical framework influenced by Foucault's theory on knowledge and power. In agreement with Foucault Prinsloo recognises that power is not strictly hierarchical but rather circulates and she argues that,

> discourses are neither static nor do they exist in isolation, but are in constant negotiation and contestation with other discourses. Understood in this way, they are dynamic, constantly shifting and, in a sense, regrouping in relation to other political formations. (Prinsloo, 2009, p. 84)

Following on Hall's pioneering work in the field of cultural representation this project is interested in a constructivist approach to texts. Hall draws from the linguistic work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Michel Foucault's theorisation on knowledge and power to show the relationship between discourse and power and its influence on our ability to decode meanings. It becomes clear in Hall's definition of cultural representation that the only constant is the text or signifier and that it becomes the responsibility of the researcher or reader to actively interpret or read meaning. The notion of signifier and signified is derived from Saussure's development of linguistics where he argued that the signifier connotes the physical form such as a word, image, text or photo while the signified translates into the concept or idea in one's mind (Hall, 1997, p. 31). This structural definition of discourse holds value for understanding the way in which meanings constantly change and can be revised. Hall makes this clear when he claims:

> If the relationship between a signifier and its signified is the result of social conventions specific to each society and to specific historical moments – then all meanings are produced within history and culture. They can never be finally fixed but are always subject to change, both from one cultural context and from one period to another. (Hall, 1997, p. 32)

An important consideration in cultural representation is that meaning is relational. In other words, signs (texts) themselves cannot fix meaning but concepts (meaning) are fixed by codes which are relational. Therefore, signs and words come to mean different things at different periods in time. Studying different cultural texts (words, signs and images) is thus a way of understanding concepts such as corrective rape and black lesbians. Different meanings have attached themselves to these concepts and are expressed in different ways in diverse genres dependent on the social, political and psychological forces that shape them. Graeme Reid's analysis of discourse that is espoused by traditional leaders in South Africa shows that gays and lesbians are regarded as social outcasts, marginal people or as weak individuals (Reid, 2010, p. 48). Similar discourses emerge in news reporting on corrective

rape where black lesbians are defined as social outcasts that are vulnerable to violence and in need of being corrected. As argued by Reid,

> [i]f heterosexuality is seen as the hallmark of 'custom', if patriarchy is cast as 'traditional', if a heterosexual marriage is cast as the bedrock of 'culture', then it is its 'other' – homosexuality – that comes to represent a series of opposites. (Reid, 2010, p. 48)

Furthermore, such a relational discourse which attaches power to custom, tradition and culture works to exclude those who fall outside of heterosexual nationalist norms. For example, a frame that did not recognise the legitimacy of black lesbians during the apartheid years rendered them invisible. Black lesbian's primary entry into the public sphere is thus met with violence in a society where black lesbian sexuality is apprehended but not recognised and which cleaves to patriarchal and heteronormative ideals. A central aim of this thesis is to challenge representations of black lesbian lives that render them as unliveable. In order to achieve this it is important to examine the different ways in which African sexualities have come to be defined as "deviant" and "unsophisticated" and consequently the way in which lesbian sexuality is now regarded as unAfrican or unnatural.

In her examination of African sexualities Desiree Lewis argues that "to explore African sexualities carefully means first exploring how they have been thought about; it requires what Kwame Appiah (1992, p. 240) describes as a 'discursive-space clearing', a way of both acknowledging and analysing how others have historically been imagined" (Lewis, 2011, p. 200). Historically, African bodies and their sexualities have been defined and marked as different. For example, Lewis notes that "[b]oth African men and women have been defined in terms of sexual excess, bestiality and bodily deviance" (Lewis, 2011, p. 205). An example of this perceived pathological sexuality was seen with the representation of Sarah Baartman, a Khoisan woman who in the 19th century was exhibited in Europe for her physically *different* features. Regarding Baartman's representation Lewis observes that "written and visual depictions of her body, reveal tropes that are invoked repeatedly in cultural analyses of African corporeality and sexuality" (Lewis, 2011, p. 202). Lewis highlights that these colonial discourses become ingrained as hegemonic truths in mindsets and in discursive practices (Lewis, 2011, p. 201). The critique of colonial discourses inherent to post-colonial scholarship is therefore integral to challenging these negative representations of African sexuality.

Female African sexuality has been shaped and coloured by past myths and the practice of stereotyping. As far as black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape are concerned this thesis is invested in deconstructing representations of black lesbians as unnatural and as the essentialised victim of homophobic violence in post-apartheid South Africa. In media, literary and visual representations of corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality I remain conscious of the importance of this 'discursive-space clearing' when approaching African sexualities. This study is interested in challenging norms that pertain to African sexualities and African bodies. In the section that follows I examine how African and tenets of Western queer theory can combine and be used to challenge some of these norms.

Queering gender norms in Africa

In this section I examine the way in which African queer theory and theories on lesbian sexuality may combine productively in an examination of black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape. A historical difficulty in terms of representing sexualities has to do with the language that we use. For example, Bernadette Muthien suggests that "[t]he word 'lesbian', as are most of the concepts encompassed within the rainbow or alphabet soup of letters LGBTQI, was coined and developed outside African realities" (Muthien, 2013, p. 212). Muthien highlights that homosexuals in South Africa have erroneously been referred to as *stabane* or intersex and writes about how the Khoisan people, the original inhabitants to South Africa did not identify as strictly heterosexual but regarded gender and sexuality as fluid and dynamic rather than as static binaries (Muthien, 2013, p. 212). Muthien's observations are important because they undermine some of the hegemonic *truths* surrounding African sexualities. A Western perspective on African sexualities fails to account for their multiplicity. This thesis wishes to highlight how language has formed part of a process that has excluded and marginalised some identities. For example, black lesbians have also been referred to as *stabane* or intersex and hereby been negatively framed in relation to a heterosexual binary system. It is critical to move away from applying a heterosexual lens to lesbian sexuality and in this regard I consider the work on gender performativity by Judith Butler (1990) and that on lesbian sexuality by Monique Wittig (1993) and Teresa de Lauretis (1988) an important theoretical basis for this study.

In her influential contribution to queer theory Judith Butler interrogates the norms that govern gender and highlights how her text "sought to uncover the ways in which the very thinking of what is possible in gendered life is foreclosed by certain habitual and violent presumptions"

(Butler, 1990, p. viii). Butler's comment shows how gender has operated in a way that reproduces certain norms through performative and habitual acts that have been accepted as natural in society. Butler furthermore states that this process has involved 'violent' presumptions which have contributed to the historical and contemporary marginalisation of sexual minorities. By referencing the performative nature of gender and the norms that govern it Butler shows that gender is in fact an unstable category and she summarises the questions that are considered central to her text *Gender Trouble*. Butler asks,

> how do non-normative sexual practices call into question the stability of gender as a category of analysis? How do certain sexual practices compel the questions: what is a woman, what is a man? If gender is no longer understood as consolidated through normative sexuality, then is there a crisis of gender that is specific to queer contexts? (Butler, 1990, p. xi)

Butler raises an important question here concerning the way in which the category gender can become destabilised in queer contexts and I argue that this is also the case with an analysis of texts that focus on queer or non-heteronormative sexualities. For example, I consider it important to ask how a representation of queer sexualities, specifically lesbian identities, is represented in different genres and how their reception can be understood in relation to the present socio-political climate. The violence that is perpetrated against black lesbian women suggests that their gender identification is considered inconceivable and in this regard Butler raises an important concern when she asks, "[i]s the breakdown of gender binaries, for instance, so monstrous, so frightening, that it must be held to be definitionally impossible and heuristically precluded from any effort to think gender?" (Butler, 1990, p. viii-ix). Gender identification for butch black lesbians is often framed as definitionally impossible. In this thesis I want to explore how one can think through or reconceptualise the binaries specific to gender. In the third chapter of this thesis that focuses on literary representations of black lesbian life I will explore the different ways in which lesbian gender identification are framed as un/intelligible and how performativity and the narration of lesbian identity in Nkabinde's text specifically confirms the instability and fluidity of gender. With Muholi's visual activism I furthermore will examine how the multiplicity of gender identification in her visual archive can undermine the stability of gender in an examination of narratives written by lesbian and transgender men. In my analysis of print media, literary and visual texts I draw from Butler and African queer scholars such as Matebeni, Muthien and Lewis to examine how queer theory can productively challenge static representations of black lesbian life.

In the same way that Butler argues that gender is an unstable category Monique Wittig and Teresa de Lauretis challenge the naturalness of the category 'woman'. In other words, where Butler argues that gender is the result of performative and habitual actions Wittig and De Lauretis draw from Simone de Beauvoir and suggest that one is not born a woman but becomes one. In Monique Wittig's essay titled "One is not born a woman" she highlights how lesbian identity has the ability to trouble heterosexuality's insistence on the unquestioned connection between gender and sexuality. Wittig emphasises how the feminine has been created and constructed in relation to masculine dominance and that women's bodies and minds have been manipulated to conform to an essentialised femininity. Teresa de Lauretis adds to this argument and shows how an insistence on sexual difference (between men and women) "did open up a critical space – a conceptual, representational, and erotic space – in which women could address themselves to women. And in the very act of assuming and speaking from the position of subject, a woman could concurrently recognize women as subjects *and* as objects of female desire" (De Lauretis, 1988, p. 155). The contributions made by these authors are central to an analysis of lesbian sexuality and foreground the political potential that the lesbian body has to trouble essentialised and fixed notions of gender and sexuality.

In this study I examine how the category 'woman' becomes both a bodily and psychological constraint but I also discuss how the personal narration of sexual violence and the recognition by women of other women's narratives can contribute positively by emphasising women's subject position in society. I furthermore explore how the category lesbian has been employed by black women who although aware of the risks continue to claim the identity for themselves and hereby destabilise representations of black lesbians as victims of violence.

The 'impossibilities' surrounding black lesbian life reveal much about their position in relation to hegemonic discourses of power. Black lesbians who become the victims of physical violence are also the victims of their race, class, gender, sexuality and social location. Failing to recognise black lesbians as subjects has contributed to the lack of intelligibility often associated with their identities. This thesis will respond to the failure to read the black lesbian as subject by identifying spaces, genres and forms of representation that render her as a liveable and desiring subject.

Method

This section will provide an overview of the methodological approach applied to the study and the methods that I will use. A mixed-methods approach is followed and the presence of a shared sign system in the texts that I employ is central to understanding the method of selection and analysis.

A study interested in the representation of black lesbian women and homophobic violence lends itself to an examination of power, knowledge, identity, and politics. I borrow the term *bricolage* to define my methodological approach. Shirley Steinberg explains that bricolage involves using "research strategies from a variety of scholarly disciplines and traditions as they are needed in the unfolding context and research situation" (Steinberg, 2012, p. 233). Steinberg explains that the text produced by this process which may for instance as with my study use a combination of research methods such as discourse analysis, textual analysis, and visual analysis resembles a complex collage (Steinberg, 2012, p. 233). By employing a range of methods the study wishes to provide textured descriptions of cultural artefacts or texts. In cultural studies and for the purpose of this study a text is taken to mean any practice that signifies. Chris Barker suggests that "[t]his includes the generation of meaning through images, sounds, objects (such as clothes) and activities (like dance and sport). Since images, sounds, objects and practices are sign systems, which signify with the same mechanism as a language, we may refer to them as cultural texts" (Barker, 2008, p. 11).

This thesis includes an examination of discourses on corrective rape, homophobia and lesbian sexuality in different genres. First, an analysis of the newspaper genre will explore how discourse has meaning in a specific context and how the iterative performance in this genre can naturalise or normalise certain discourses (Griffin, 2013, p. 95). Second, a textual analysis of post-apartheid lesbian literature examines the position or range of positions that the text offers the reader (Belsey, 2013, p. 161). For instance, I explore how the literary genre, in this case, autobiography and fiction make specific truth claims possible. Finally, a visual analysis of photography investigates the relation between words and images and the way in which the subject emerges in visual texts.

Gabriele Griffin explains that discourses "enable us to speak about the world in certain ways, simultaneously enabling certain modes of talk while suppressing others" (Griffin, 2013, p. 103). The process of interpretation and Steinberg's description of the general and particular are significant in this regard. Steinberg argues that critical social analysts participate in a

process of identifying the historical and social dynamics that shape textual interpretation (Steinberg, 2012, p. 246). This forms part of a hermeneutic circle where no final interpretation is sought but rather a piecing of certain parts to the whole (246). This process forms a central part of the study where for instance newspapers focus on certain aspects of knowledge (the general) but it becomes the responsibility of the cultural analyst to identify the hidden (the particular). Steinberg explains this process when she argues,

> [a] critical hermeneutics brings the concrete, the parts, the particular into focus, but in a manner that grounds it (them) contextually in a larger understanding of the social forces, the whole, the abstract (the general) that grounds it (them). Focus on the parts is the dynamic that brings the particular into focus, sharpening our understanding of the individual in light of the social and psychological forces that shape him or her. (Steinberg, 2012, p. 246)

To make this relevant to the current study it may be said that by focusing on the particulars of black lesbian life, their voices and self-narration, in light of the broader societal forces, patriarchy, homophobia and post-apartheid violence, one comes closer to understanding the emergence of certain discourses on black lesbian life.

An important part of investigating cultural representation is making a distinction between what Ferdinand de Saussure termed the signifier (words, sounds, and images) and the signified (concept or object) (Hall, 1997, p. 31; Barker, 2008, p. 7). For example, there is a difference between corrective rape and messages about corrective rape or between black lesbians and messages about black lesbians. Hall makes this clear when citing Gerbner, who remarked that,

> representations of violence on the TV screen "are not violence but messages about violence": but we have continued to research the question of violence, for example, as if we are unable to comprehend this epistemological distinction. (Hall, 1980, p. 166)

Recognising that there is a distinction between the signifier and signified provides the opportunity to interpret or *read* the text in different ways. This process of interpretation or reading the text will be examined in the section that follows.

Newspaper discourse

Method of selection

South African newspaper articles constitute the first body of texts selected for analysis in this study. One of the most comprehensive databases SABINET has been used to access SA Media, a South African news research and press clipping service covering 40 mainstream publications with over four million articles from 1977 until present. My selection includes

articles from national South African newspapers and the period of analysis begins in 2003, the year in which the first article reporting on corrective rape appeared and it ends in 2014 when I started this project. By using the search terms 'corrective/curative rape' and 'lesbian' SA Media generates 221 articles on the topic. 189 of these report directly on the phenomenon and have been used as material for the analysis. Newspaper articles that were not selected include news reports on theatre performances at South African arts festivals, scant references to corrective rape which form part of the larger debate on gender-based violence, articles including the words 'corrective' or 'correctional' and 'rape' that are unrelated to the topic and reports on the ANC president Jacob Zuma's rape trial.[14] The SA Media archive went digital in 2014 and news clippings sourced for this project include articles available up until November 2014. Therefore, articles that have appeared online after this period have not been included.

Method of analysis

Discourse analysis and semiology are central to the analysis of South African newspaper texts. As part of the analysis I set out to identify dominant discourses and perspectives in the text. Some of the questions that interest me include the way in which black lesbians are represented and framed in newspaper discourse; the way that corrective rape is defined and who uses the term; and I am furthermore interested in finding out who speaks, who is silenced and who has agency. In addition to providing a close reading of texts I also employ a form of discourse analysis. Given the large number of articles sourced on the topic I have chosen to follow a Foucauldian approach with its investment in semantic analysis. Griffin makes an important connection between the operations of discourse and hegemony and power and points out that,

> [d]ifferent theoreticians of discourse have produced different versions of how power and discourse interrelate but they all agree that power, and of course powerlessness, are expressed and maintained, but also challenged, through discourse. (Griffin, 2013, p. 103)

In the chapter focusing on print media representations I employ discourse analysis to examine the way in which discourse is produced to either reproduce or challenge inequality. For instance, I want to explore how discourses around corrective rape and lesbian sexuality are used to expose or silence injustices. Corrective rape happens within a broader context of

[14] Although Jacob Zuma's rape trial is considered important because the victim in the trial identified as lesbian newspapers do not report on it as a corrective rape and therefore articles related to the trial do not form part of the final analysis.

gender-based and homophobic violence and an important consideration in the analysis is therefore to identify if and to what extent the context is defined in newspaper texts.

Griffin cites Mills (1997) to argue that discursive frameworks demarcate the boundaries within which meaning is negotiated and she furthermore states that discourse has meaning within a specific context (Griffin, 2013, pp. 94-95). To understand the importance of both the discursive framework (newspaper genre) and the context it is useful to draw on Steinberg's definition of the general and the particular. In the analysis I focus on the representation of black lesbian women (the general) and furthermore analyse textual features (linguistic, lexical and semantic) which shape the individual (the particular). A feminist and intersectional perspective is used throughout the thesis to examine how black lesbians are defined based on their sexuality and in relation to men and furthermore to identify which features of their identity and sexuality emerge as most salient.

An important point of the second chapter is to provide a chronological overview of the developments and debates on corrective rape between 2003 and 2014. This historical overview maps the way in which corrective rape is framed in newspaper discourse, how those affected by homophobia and rape are represented, and diverse responses to black lesbian sexuality, homophobia and hate crime in South Africa. A thematic analysis addresses dominant themes in the newspaper texts. The identified themes are derived from asking questions concerning who is represented as powerful versus powerless and who is included or excluded in news reporting on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality.

Literature

Method of selection

Novels focusing on lesbian sexuality in South Africa include *The World Unseen* by Shamim Sarif (2001) and *The Shining Girls* by Lauren Beukes (2013); a short story titled *The Glass Pecker* by Lindiwe Nkutha (2005); a short story collection titled *Porcupine* by Jane Bennett (2008); and two South African anthologies by gay and lesbian writers titled *The Invisible Ghetto: An Anthology of Gay and Lesbian Writers from South Africa* (1993) and *Open: an Erotic Anthology by South African Women Writers* (2008). While these texts illustrate that there are representations of lesbian sexuality in literature none of them focus specifically on lesbian sexuality *and* (corrective) rape. To keep in line with the theme of this study I have selected literary texts that focus on the representation of sexual violence in post-apartheid

South Africa as well as lesbian sexuality. Literary texts that contain both themes include Rozena Maart's novel *The Writing Circle* (2007) and Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography titled *Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* (2008).

Themes such as rape, the everyday nature of sexual violence in the lives of South African women, and lesbian sexuality make Maart's *The Writing Circle* an important choice. *The Writing Circle* also thematises the intersection between race and sexual violence, another important consideration for this study.

A rape scene at the beginning of the novel initiates a process whereby five female characters share their stories of sexual violence. Literary representations where women tell their stories of sexual violence are limited in post-apartheid fiction making Maart's novel particularly interesting. Additionally, the representation of bisexuality and a lesbian relationship in the novel, both largely unexplored in South African literature, furthermore centralises the text's value in debates on rape and lesbian sexuality.

The second selected text is an autobiography titled *Black Bull, Ancestors, and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* (2008) by Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde. Nkabinde's autobiography is the only known literary text that covers themes of lesbian sexuality *and* corrective rape in South Africa. Autobiography has been defined as one of the most individual genres and the manner in which it prioritises the subject position is an important consideration in selecting this text (Evans, 2013, p. 35). Nkabinde's autobiography, which dedicates a separate chapter to hate crimes and corrective rape in South Africa at a time when reports about corrective rape start to circulate in the media, may also hold particularly valuable insights into the everyday lives of black lesbians at this historical juncture.

Method of analysis

Textual analysis, discourse analysis and the analysis of auto/biographical methods are considered central to the analysis of the novel. Catherine Belsey formulates a number of useful questions that may be applied when using textual analysis. These questions can be raised in reading any text, written or visual (Belsey, 2013, p. 160). Belsey asks:

> What is it about? What kinds of prior knowledge might illuminate it? What difference does it make if we locate the work textually and historically? What position, or range of positions, does the text offer its reader? How can we best let the text itself set the agenda for research that will generate insights? And finally, how far, as a result of all this labour, can we expect to arrive at a definitive interpretation? (Belsey, 2013, pp. 160-161)

The questions raised by Belsey are useful for an examination of Rozena Maart's *The Writing Circle.* A vivid description of rape in the introduction of the novel sets the scene for a conversation that ensues between the five female narrators followed by personal narratives of sexual violence. Following from Belsey's questions I consider the following questions relevant to this analysis: How does the primary rape scene compare and contrast with later depictions of rape in the novel? Who narrates these stories of sexual violence (in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class)? What is included or excluded in the stories?

A range of issues related to sexual violence and women's representation can be identified in the novel. A unique feature of *The Writing Circle* is that stories of sexual violence and identities are narrated by the female characters. A feminist perspective will be employed in the analysis to investigate how women are represented in society and how they define themselves in relation to external forces. Understanding the individual in light of the social forces that shape her is an important aspect in both Maart and Nkabinde's texts.

In addition to this, a central component of Maart's novel is its mapping of identity construction. Although the novel points out certain *facts* about sexual violence and rape in South Africa, identity construction by the female characters is a fundamental concern in the analysis. The representation of identity is prominent in both the novel and autobiography and as summarised by Evans it is essential to recognise that "we are not, as people, ever final or secure in our identities. Inevitably, we occupy 'facts' about age, gender and ethnicity, but as postmodernism has informed us, those 'facts' are themselves negotiable" (Evans, 2013, p. 45). This is particularly significant for a reading of Maart's novel and an intersectional perspective is used to highlight how these 'facts' specific to women's identities in South Africa can be renegotiated through self-narration and identity construction in and through the novel.

With Nkabinde's autobiography I include the examination of autobiography as genre. Mary Evans explains that,

> [t]he paradox of contemporary auto/biography [is that] the individual characteristics of a person become precisely that, whereas the question becomes one which is outside the person, namely the puzzle of a how particular individual emerged in particular times. (Evans, 2013, p. 33)

This question is central to my analysis of Nkabinde's autobiography. Nkabinde's autobiography foregrounds issues related to black lesbian sexuality, spirituality and religion

and homophobia. The issues that emerge as most salient in Nkabinde's self-narration are inevitably influenced by the external environment. In this section I am interested in exploring how Nkabinde positions herself in relation to these broader socio-cultural forces at play and how autobiography is used to achieve this. More particularly, I raise questions regarding the social and cultural forces in this specific milieu that influence Nkabinde's narration in terms of identity and sexuality, and furthermore how Nkabinde uses autobiography as a tool to narrate her identity and how her choice of sexual and spiritual identification facilitates a process of meaning-making for her. Furthermore, I apply a feminist perspective to argue that Nkabinde's story-telling process is related to a feminist project to "uncover the hidden lives of women" (Evans, 2013, p. 38). Apart from studies such as those conducted by Morgan and Reid (2003), and again by Morgan and Wieringa (2005), little is known about lesbian-identified traditional healers in South Africa. Nkabinde's unique narrative uncovers her identity and simultaneously uncovers the lives and stories of other lesbian-identified traditional healers. For this reason, Nkabinde's autobiography with its inclusion of previously marginalised voices is also analysed using an intersectional perspective.

An important consideration for the analysis of both Maart's novel and Nkabinde's autobiography is emphasised by Evans who claims that there are porous boundaries between fact and fiction. She adds that "[w]e are 'individuals' in a factual sense but are also individuals who construct ourselves, and others, in terms of imagined possibilities" (Evans, 2013, p. 46). These imagined possibilities in literature will be examined for their potential to disrupt naturalising discourses, and to explore the agency that becomes possible through the narration of subjective experience.

Photography

Method of selection

Henriette Gunkel emphasises that it is only with the turn of the 21st century that there has been an increase in visible representations of lesbian sexuality in visual culture in South Africa. The most prominent contribution to visual culture which focuses on the intersection between black lesbian sexuality and sexual violence in South Africa is the work of Zanele Muholi. One of the few examples of lesbian representation in South Africa prior to Muholi's work is that of Jean Brundit who focused on white lesbian women. Gunkel cites Joseph (2004) and notes that "[Brundit's] work focuses mainly on the White lesbian community in Cape Town. She describes a particular comfort zone, a safe space that is often linked to the

private sphere, which White lesbians to a certain extent inhabit" (Gunkel, 2009, p. 78). In contrast to this comfort zone and safe space specific to Jean Brundit's photography, themes in Muholi's photography focus on hate crimes and the lack of safe spaces available for black lesbians in post-apartheid South Africa.

A study that focuses on the representation of black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape would be incomplete without an analysis of Muholi's photography. Therefore, the third and final body of texts selected for analysis is Zanele Muholi's collection of photography.

Zanele Muholi is a black lesbian and visual activist who has produced two collections of photography focusing on the broader themes of hate crime and black lesbian sexuality. Muholi's visual activism has reached both a local and international audience and is commonly referenced in debates focused on corrective rape and homophobia in South Africa. The first series of images selected for analysis is titled *Hate Crime Series.* The *Hate Crime Series* forms part of Muholi's collection *Only half the picture* (2006) and it has been the focus of research for art historians and cultural analysts. A few dominant themes that emerge in this series which are considered central to this study include rape and resistance; structural racism and homophobia; and black lesbian identity. In light of this the *Hate Crime Series* thematicises a central concern to this study which concerns the representation of black lesbian sexuality and hate crimes.

The second body of work selected for analysis is Muholi's photographic collection titled *Faces and Phases 2006-2014* (2014). This collection consists of 258 black and white portraits of black lesbian women and transgender men. *Faces and Phases* has been defined as a queer visual archive and it is the largest body of work representing queer sexualities on the African continent. The collection departs from a focus on hate crime in Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* and includes positive portraits and narratives of queer identity that form an important part of representations on lesbian and transgender sexuality in visual culture.

Method of analysis

Semiology and discourse analysis will be employed to analyse Muholi's photographs. Gillian Rose (2013) writes about the prominent use of these methods in visual culture at present. Representations of lesbian sexuality, homophobia and corrective rape in Muholi's oeuvre provide an opportunity to define competing meanings and semiology becomes important here. For Gillian Rose "[t]he distinction between signifier and signified is crucial to

semiology because it means that the relation between meanings (signifieds) and signifiers can therefore be problematised" (Rose, 2013, p. 76). The relation between signifiers (the visual image or photograph) and signifieds (meaning or concepts) is central to analysing Muholi's photographs and can be seen as an opportunity to reinterpret meanings specific to black lesbian sexuality.

Both a compositional interpretation of the images as well as a semiological analysis becomes essential for an analysis of Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.* Some critical questions raised by Rose in terms of internal organisation of the image are defined as follows:

> Does it have figures and a background? Where are its volumes and do they balance or not? What movements or rhythm is there in the image between its volumes? Is there a depth indicated by some kind of perspective, or a flatness? Importantly, this internal organisation of an image offers a particular viewing position to its spectator. So, how does the image position you? Are you expected or invited to occupy a certain location in order to see it? Or does it baffle your look, dispersing you across its surface? Finally – and this is the moment where something more intuitive happens – what is the overall effect that these various elements produce? This is an invitation to describe the feel or tone of an image, to say something about its particular qualities, to evoke its character. (Rose, 2013, p. 73)

While not all of these questions are relevant to the analysis some of them such as the depth of the image, the location of the spectator, and the overall effect of the internal organisation are considered important. Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* describes a process in relation to hate crime and corrective rape but it simultaneously troubles and blurs representations. A semiological analysis will be used to analyse the visual representation of hate crime survivors (signifiers) and the associated meanings that emerge (signifieds). Furthermore, I consider it important to raise questions concerning contemporary and historical representations of black female and lesbian sexuality, subjective and objective representations of black lesbians, and visual representations of hate crime. In this series I want to examine how discursive constructions of power are manifested in certain social locations, and furthermore how iconic, indexical and symbolic signs influence the representation of black lesbian sexuality. Meaning emerges through difference and I am therefore also interested in examining how the differences between the images in this series and the relationship between the images and text contribute to meaning. Rose points out that,

> [d]iscourses are articulated through all sorts of visual and verbal images and texts, and also through the practices that those languages permit. The diversity of forms through which a discourse can be articulated means that intertextuality is important to understanding discourse. Intertextuality refers to the way that the meanings of any one

> discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried over by other images and texts. (Rose, 2013, p. 82)

Therefore, I consider it especially important to examine historical representations of black female sexuality and to examine how intertextual references can work to produce new meanings. For instance, how can the historical image of Sarah Baartman as the iconic image of black female sexuality influence contemporary representations of black female, and black lesbian sexuality? Mapping the relationship between these intertextual signifieds and signifiers will form a large part of the analysis.

The second body of work that will be analysed is Muholi's collection *Faces and Phases.* This collection differs in focus from the *Hate Crime Series* and includes a visual representation of black lesbian women and transgender men as well as accompanying narratives, poems, biographies and statements. Discourse analysis will be employed when reading the accompanying texts and tenets of the autobiographical genre are considered important for the analysis. Zanele Muholi has been actively involved in documenting black lesbian lives and the process she performs can be defined as an auto/biographical act. This section of the analysis therefore involves examining both the documentation of lesbian women's lives but it simultaneously offers a perspective on how Muholi writes herself into this project. As mentioned previously auto/biography has been used to reclaim previously marginalised perspectives and in this section I will employ a close reading of some of the statements, biographies, and poems to analyse these marginalised perspectives. A visual analysis will furthermore involve recognising and recording the names of lesbian women and their narratives which can be defined as an auto/biographical act on behalf of the photographer and subject. The analysis furthermore involves recognising and defining different processes of sexual identification in both images and narratives and how agency is attached to this identity construction process. In defining her project Zanele Muholi claims, "I wanted to fill a gap in South Africa's visual history that, even 10 years after the fall of apartheid, wholly excluded our very existence" (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 6); an analysis of Muholi's collection aspires to define the ways in which both Muholi and the participants involved in this project fill that gap discursively and in the realm of visual culture.

Chapter layout

The second chapter of the thesis constitutes a chronolongical and thematic analysis of South African newspaper reports on black lesbians and corrective rape. The application of a discourse analysis will be used to investigate how black lesbians are framed in newspaper discourse. The chapter contextualises prominent debates that emerge in reports on homophobic violence and corrective rape and interrogates discourses that represent black lesbians as unintelligible victims of violence. Finally, I examine how the figure of the black lesbian operates in newspaper discourse, and relate it to contemporary racialised and sexualised politics in South Africa.

The third chapter provides a textual analysis of post-apartheid LGBT fiction and autobiography. Texts that form part of this chapter include Rozena Maart's novel *The Writing Circle* (2007) and Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography *Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* (2008). The chapter explores representations of sexual violence, the narration of female/lesbian subjectivity, and corrective rape in South Africa. In this chapter the idea of uncovering women's hidden stories is foregrounded in both Maart's novel and Nkabinde's autobiography. Female embodiment, feminine bodily comportment and hybrid cultural identity are defined as central themes in rewriting female *her*stories and lesbian subjectivities in these genres.

The fourth and final chapter is comprised of a discourse and semiological analysis of Zanele Muholi's visual activism and photography. This chapter explores historical as well as contemporary representations of black lesbian sexuality and hate crime in Muholi's collection titled *Only half the picture.* The first section of the chapter explores intersectional inequalities and systemic injustices as they emerge in five photographs that constitute a series titled *The Hate Crime Series.* The second part of the chapter focuses on Muholi's (2014) collection titled *Faces and Phases (2006-2014).* The chapter furthermore identifies themes of survivability, mourning and belonging in this collection. In all of the chapters I identify counter discourses that challenge representations of black lesbians as unintelligible but rather foreground their liveability, agency and desire.

CHAPTER TWO

PRINT MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF CORRECTIVE RAPE AND BLACK LESBIAN SEXUALITIES

Introduction

This chapter examines how corrective rape and black lesbian life is reported on and comes to be understood in post-apartheid South Africa by identifying the ways that black lesbians are framed in newspaper discourse. It furthermore explores how print media representations of black lesbians reflect onto broader issues such as racialised and sexualised politics in the post-apartheid dispensation. The material selected for analysis includes newspaper articles sourced from the online news clipping service SA Media, made available through the SABINET database. The search terms that were used to source newspaper articles on the topic include 'corrective/curative rape' and 'lesbian', with a total of 189 yielded newspaper articles reporting directly on the incidence of this phenomenon and thus having been used for the analysis. The search generated newspaper articles that were published between 2003 and 2014 and I use the terms media texts, newspaper articles, news reports and press pieces interchangeably in the chapter to refer to these texts.

Discourse analysis and semiology inform the chapter's method of analysis. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis I employ a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach to explore how discourse is used to either reproduce or challenge gender norms and inequality. I also draw from the field of semiology to distinguish between what Ferdinand de Saussure termed the signifier (words, sounds and images) and the signified (concept or object). For example, this chapter makes a distinction between corrective rape and messages about corrective rape, or between the category 'black lesbian' and messages about black lesbians. In addition to discourse and semiological analysis, critical hermeneutic interpretation are made and provide insight into the meanings associated with corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality. As put forward by Shirley Steinberg (2012) this approach helps us to deconstruct societal messages that influence our understanding of the individual.

The chapter is concerned with identifying how black lesbian women are represented in relation to hegemonic social and political power. The first section of the chapter is a chronological overview of developments and debates that emerge in relation to sexual violence against black lesbian women in South Africa. In the second section of the chapter I

identify and define dominant themes. These prominent themes are: the *responsibility* assumed by, and assigned to, the government and those affected by homophobic violence, the ways in which black lesbians have become *visible* in the media, and finally how identities are shaped and often made redundant by discourses on *national belonging* as these emerge in the selected media texts.

Chronological overview

2003-2010

The period spanning 2003 to 2010 may be defined as formative in the way that South African newspapers raised debates on corrective rape and the status of the country's sexual minority groups. In this period reporting on corrective rape focused on the primary role played by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in responding to homophobic violence, political and legislative apathy in relation to the problem of corrective rape, and also delved into the prevailing perceptions of homosexuality in Africa at large.

The first piece of press coverage is found in Mufweba and Bhengu's article, appearing in the *Independent on Saturday* in November 2003 (Mufweba & Bhengu, 2003). Yolanda Mufweba and Xolile Bhengu here report on the staggering number of lesbians coming forward with accounts of rape, assault and other homophobia-driven attacks. At the time these hate crimes came to public attention through reports by non-profit organisations assisting the victims of homophobic assault and rape. While there is an absence of reports on corrective rape prior to this incidence, it becomes evident that organisations such as the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), the Durban Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, and the Rose has Thorns campaign were actively working with women who had suffered homophobic abuses. The director of the Durban Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, Nonhlanhla Mkhize said that it was clear from the outset that the reason black lesbians were being raped was because of their gender non-conforming behaviour. The news article reports that black lesbians do not feel safe in Johannesburg townships and that they are afraid of coming forward to report crimes for fear of revictimisation. The newspaper article describes the corrective rape phenomenon, providing an introduction to what it is and why it happens. Black lesbians are identified as the primary targets of corrective rape and like other news reports of this period, the article illustrates that deviating from an African standard of femininity is met with contempt and punishment.

The newspaper reports of this period proceed to highlight the victimisation of black lesbian women for their difference while citing that the country's president, Jacob Zuma, perpetuates everyday sexism and gets away with it. Pumla Dineo Gqola, feminist activist and academic, expresses frustration with the fact that the state declared Zuma, an openly sexist man, innocent of rape during his 2006 rape trial. The complainant, "Khwezi", a family friend of the president, accused Jacob Zuma of rape but gets victimised instead leading Gqola to bemoan the fact that there is nothing to celebrate on the 10th anniversary of the constitution (Gqola, 2006).

Furthermore, the news reports in this time frame highlight that violence against sexual minorities and other social injustices have become more visible in the last decade and politicians are framed as being silent on the issue of gay rights, with the larger responsibility of the protection of these rights being assumed by activists and human rights organisations. Corrective rape starts to receive more attention from human rights organisations and research bodies such as the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC; Schroeder, 2007) and ActionAid (Rabkin, 2009). The human rights research organisations are mentioned to have adopted the duty of defining corrective rape and delineating its impact on society. Newspapers report on the nature of the research conducted by these organisations, illustrating that black lesbians constitute a particularly vulnerable minority susceptible to homophobic discrimination and corrective rape. Research conducted by the HSRC reveals that there are no available statistics on reported accounts of corrective rape, and that the police force has no official mechanism in place for recording corrective rape in a way that differentiates this phenomenon from a *regular* rape case. Additionally, the ActionAid report states that crimes are perpetrated against women who pose a threat to the heteronormative status quo and makes the recommendation that the government should address the problem by identifying a separate method of categorisation.

As already mentioned, while the newspapers of this period comment on the rise in homophobic violence, political leaders are reported as being either silent, or homophobic and sexist. For example, newspapers report on Jacob Zuma's evident disdain of homosexuals and the Minister of Arts and Culture Lulu Xingwana's 'eruption' over representations of black lesbian intimacy at the "Innovative Art" exhibition held at Constitution Hill in 2009 (Isaacson, 2010). Meanwhile, NGOs and human rights organisations are reported to be active in defining and responding to the problem of corrective rape, making a strong statement that

it is vulnerable black lesbians (as opposed to other sexual minority groups) living in the township areas who are bearing the brunt of homophobic violence.

Three prominently featured cases of homophobic violence between 2003 and 2010 are the murder of Zoliswa Nkonyana in 2006, the rape and murder of Eudy Simelane in 2008, and the rape of Millicent Gaika in 2010. In all cases the police, health care practitioners and the justice system are reported as being ineffective in dealing with the manifestations of these hate crimes. The ineffective response to the murder and rape of black lesbians is a recurring theme in the newspaper discourse of this period, with black lesbians emerging as powerless victims in the face of homophobic violence. For example, Zoliswa Nkonyana's trial is repeatedly delayed, and although Eudy Simelane's case is resolved within a year, two of the accused walk free without newspapers stating the reason for this (Malala, 2009). Conversely, some newspapers report on the active role played by gay rights activists in fighting hate crimes by opposing bail and calling for harsher sentences for perpetrators (Jones, 2010a).

Luleki Sizwe, a Cape Town based non-profit organisation is reported on not only for their providing a safe space for black lesbians, but also for the organisation's central role in applying pressure on governmental organisations to act (Hunter, 2010). A close reading of the articles reveals that NGOs such as Luleki Sizwe, Free Gender and the Treatment Action Campaign are framed as experts in the field who have a more comprehensive understanding of corrective rape and discrimination through their daily involvement with the victims. Notably, organisations closely aligned with government (e.g. the ANC Women's League) are reported as 'silent' (Malala, 2009), or as paying lip service to gender equality (Commission for Gender Equality) ("Lesbian who was gang-raped, murdered had right to life", 2009).

In addition to debates focused on how government ought to be responding to corrective rape, press pieces start to report on how homosexuality is perceived across the African continent. Anti-homosexuality legislation in Uganda, and the case of Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Stephen Monjeza from Malawi who were sentenced to prison for getting engaged, are reported on as examples of the widespread notion that homosexuality is deemed 'unAfrican' (Gevisser, 2010). Additionally, news articles report on South Africa's liberal constitution and its exceptional status in terms of sexual and gay rights when compared with other African countries.

2011

While the period 2003-2010 frames the incidence of corrective rape in South Africa and the motivations for this crime, this section takes a separate look at the year 2011 as the number of journalistic pieces on this phenomenon peaked in these 12 months, revealing an increased recognition of the problem. Certain of the prominent issues reported on in 2011 include the success of the change.org online petition, an emerging divergence in views on the acceptability of homophobic speech, the exceptionally liberal status of South Africa's constitution, NGO's active role in fighting against homophobia while government is represented as disinterested in LGBT rights, continued discrimination against gender non-conforming lesbians, a call for religious leaders to stand up against homophobia and hate crime, and the need to move beyond merely documenting incidents of homophobic violence.

The year 2011 marks the period in which the phenomenon of corrective rape starts to get recognised by the international community and receives greater worldwide media coverage. The aforementioned organisation, Luleki Sizwe, issued an online petition (change.org) and acquired more than 100 000 signatures to be sent to the South African Minister of Justice, Jeff Radebe. This petition formed part of an initiative aimed at getting government to take hate crimes seriously. Newspapers report on the overwhelming success of this international petition whilst simultaneously referencing irritation on the part of Tlali Tlali, spokesperson for the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development because of the high number of emails received (Maditla, 2011). Although Tlali's initial reaction is seen as negative, Luleki Sizwe and its director Ndumie Funda's engagement with the department is generally seen as a move in the right direction. A positive step in this regard is that the Ministry of Justice committed itself to establishing a Corrective Rape Task Team to investigate issues involving hate crimes and corrective rape (Phaliso, 2011).

In other 2011 news reports discrimination against lesbians is defined as a societal problem that has remained largely unchallenged, except by those in support of LGBT rights. For example, the openly gay South African Constitutional Court Justice, Edwin Cameron, raises this issue in a letter to Ross Garland, the producer of the film *Spud* released in 2011 (Sinkins, 2011). For Cameron, the film is more sensitive in its take on issues of race than those of sexual orientation, and he argues that jokes about *giving lesbians a jolly-good rogering* (Sinkins, 2011) strengthen the already masculinist culture evidenced in South Africa, where men deem it acceptable to rape lesbians to cure them of their lesbian sexuality. Garland's

response to the letter is one of disappointment in Cameron who he feels does not show regard for *free* expression in cinema (Sinkins, 2011). The *Daily News,* the *Witness* and the *Saturday Star* all report on the letter and showcase the prevailing divergence in views about which topics in South African debate are open to jest and which are not.

At the same time that news reports debate discriminatory attitudes in the media, it is reported that David Kato, a gay rights activist from Uganda was murdered after his picture was published in a Ugandan newspaper with the headline "Hang them – 100 pictures of Uganda's top homos" (Ridyard, 2011). Back in South Africa the *Citizen* reports Kato's murder in a way that demonises Uganda's anti-homosexuality propaganda and laws, and lauds South Africa for its progressive constitution (Ridyard, 2011). Despite reigning homophobia, the notion that South Africa as a country on the African continent is somehow distinct from and more progressive in terms of gay rights legislation starts to become more entrenched in this year's media coverage and contributes to an emerging idea that homophobia is more of an African than a South African problem.

Newspapers continue the year's now familiar trend of reporting, debating South Africa's ambivalence towards gay rights and making frequent reference to the country's liberal constitution. This is evidenced in newspapers reporting on the work of organisations such as Luleki Sizwe playing an active role in drawing attention to the problem of corrective rape, while government is mentioned to be silent and inactive with newspaper headlines such as, "South Africa must live up to the law and protect gay rights" (Botha, 2011). Although the success of Luleki Sizwe's online petition is widely reported for the huge international support it was able to attract, it becomes evident that the issue is framed as a Western concern with the South African government represented as being disinterested in LGBT rights and hate crimes rooted in homophobia.

A prominent 2011 rape and murder case was that of lesbian Noxolo Nogwaza, whose body was reported to be found near a dirty stream in the Springs township, Kwa-Thema (Prince, 2011). Nogwaza is reported on as yet another lesbian raped and murdered for her sexuality, with protestors having gathered outside parliament to demand government action. Nogwaza's rape and murder is regularly referenced in 2011 and the *Witness* (Devchand & Associate Press, 2011) reports that the previously silent Justice Department had communicated an intention to provide special shelters for those affected by homophobic violence. While this idea is tabled in discussions with NGOs, the proposal yields no practical results. Nogwaza is

murdered in the same township as Girly Nkosi (2009) and well-known soccer player Eudy Simelane (2010), with the *Star* reporting that the rising incidence of corrective rape can be read as the sign of a troubled nation ("Stand up to hate crime", 2011).

News of corrective rape continues to appear, with a second 2011 report detailing the rape of a 13 year old 'openly gay girl' from Atteridgeville, Pretoria. For the first time, the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) is reported to speak out against these particular instances of rape, calling on parliament and other government structures to define corrective rape under the category of hate crime ("Heartless, senseless crime, says ANCWL", 2011). The third widely publicised case of homophobic violence in 2011 was the assault of Noxolo Nkosana, the perpetrators of which hurled insults at Nkosana and called her a tomboy before launching their attack (Nkomo, 2011). All of the reported cases confirm that the violence was being perpetrated against gender non-conforming or butch lesbians. Nkosana is described as lucky to have escaped corrective rape (Nkomo, 2011).

In light of the increased incidence of corrective rape, the *Cape Argus* reports that religious leaders had been called on to stand up against corrective rape and homophobic violence. Furthermore, this year's reporting sees calls for faith communities to serve as safe havens for those affected by hate crimes and one meeting agitating for such action was attended by the family members of lesbian Zoliswa Nkonyana, murdered in 2006. Nkonyana's case had still not been resolved by this time as the trial had been delayed repeatedly. Although reports mention that religious leaders were being called on to accept gays and lesbians in their faith communities, reports also highlight the fearful reluctance of lesbians to approach the church for help (Mposo, 2011).

The precarious and vulnerable status of black lesbians in South African society is documented in a Human Rights Watch report released at the end of 2011. This report documents interviews with 121 people across six South African provinces and provides some context to the daily lives of members of the LGBT community. Continued newspaper reporting on corrective rape highlights that black lesbians' LGBT rights remain unacknowledged and that violence against them continues unabated. Graeme Reid, an academic scholar and gay rights activist, recognises the importance of the proposal to implement a national Task Team on Corrective Rape, but points out that such a team has to act and must not merely serve as a "talking shop" (Reid, 2011). He goes on to emphasise that although reports like the one published by the Human Rights Watch are important, it is

essential to move beyond documentation and to "galvanise the government to act and to act decisively" (Reid, 2011).

2012

Some of the broader themes that emerge between 2012 and 2014 include the presence of traditionally framed homophobic sentiments, the distinction between the rights of black and white sexual minorities, persistent ambivalence toward gay rights by the South African government, and continued reporting of corrective rape and murder cases. Prominent news stories in 2012 include the traditional leader King Goodwill Zwelithini's homophobic slurs, the sentencing of Zoliswa Nkonyana's murderers, the first sentence handed down to a man in the Eastern Cape for raping his daughter's lesbian partner, and inconsistencies in dealing with hate crime cases.

In 2012 both the *Citizen* ("King's speech can make gays targets", 2012) and the *Times* (Ndlovu, 2012) report on King Goodwill Zwelithini's statement that gays and lesbians are rotten. The *Citizen* reports that while Jacob Zuma shared the stage with Zwelithini, he made no reference to the monarch's statement ("King's speech can make gays targets", 2012). Although it is true that Zuma did not make special reference to Zwelithini's statement, he did mention the challenges to building a nation that does not discriminate based on race and sexual orientation ("King's speech can make gays targets", 2012). Zwelithini's homophobic statements caused uproar among advocacy groups and the LGBT community in South Africa. In this instance we see criticism against homophobic attitudes expressed in the media, with the *Times* journalist Andile Ndlovu emphasising that Zwelithini's statement should not only be condemned by advocacy groups but by every sector of South African society on account of its constitution ("King's speech can make gays targets", 2012).

After a four year long trial, the *Sowetan* reports on a sentence of 18 years passed down to Zoliswa Nkonyana's murderers (Mackay, 2012). Although Nkonyana's case had been reported on since 2006 with the trial only starting in 2008 and finalised in 2012, the *Sowetan* publishes the story with the headline "Lesbian's killers get 18-year sentences" and the sub-heading "Accused 'remorseless'" (Mackay, 2012). The article reports on the outrage expressed by activists because of the multiple trial delays. Although Nkonyana's family members are reported not to be entirely happy with the 18 year sentence for the perpetrators, they are mentioned to be relieved with the outcome of an actual sentence at the end of the four year long trial. The news report also focuses on the 'remorseless' attitude of the four

perpetrators. The perpetrators were all under the age of 18 at the time of committing the crime and the magistrate deemed that their 'remorseless' attitude was likely to result in recidivistic criminal acts.

In the same year the *Herald* reports on the first sentence handed down to an Eastern Cape man who raped his daughter's lesbian partner after his release from prison (Mphande, 2012). The man had previously been convicted on rape charges and the newspaper reports that he sent his daughter's partner messages that "he would 'show her' when he came out of prison" (Mphande, 2012). The man denied raping the woman but was found guilty and sentenced to a further 15 years in prison. The *Herald* reports that this was the first prosecution of its kind in the province and the chairman of the Eastern Cape Gay and Lesbian Association, David Hessey, expressed his satisfaction with the quick verdict.

Newspapers go on to report that while some cases of homophobic crime are dealt with relatively quickly, others take much longer. The *Star* reports one year after Noxolo Nogwaza's murder that the police had still not made any progress with the investigation (Chin, 2012). Nogwaza was murdered in Kwa-Thema, Springs and Corinne Chin writes that although no progress had been made with Nogwaza's case, residents had gathered at the central Methodist church to honour the lives of members of the LGBT community who had been murdered for their sexuality.

2013

In 2013 South African newspapers report on the intersection between xenophobia and homophobia, the rape and murder of Duduzile Zozo, growing criticism of government silence on corrective rape, a failed response to corrective rape by the established task team, the sentencing of Millicent Gaika's rapist, and the mention of greater support for non-conforming behaviour in society.

The *Cape Argus* (Mayema, 2013a), *Cape Times* (Mayema, 2013b) and *Mail & Guardian* (Mayema, 2013c) publish an article written by an asylum seeker from Kinshasa, namely Junior Mayema. These news reports reflect on the everyday nature of homophobic and xenophobic violence in South Africa. The articles written by Mayema foreground his experience of homophobia and xenophobia in the country. He describes South African nationals as being intolerant of difference and writes about the numerous obstacles to obtaining equality in the country. News articles reinforce the notion that black South Africans

and foreign nationals see Gay Pride as a Pride of *protest* where black homosexuals deem it necessary to claim their rights and fight societal injustice. While focusing on the injustices faced by asylum seekers these news reports also reference asylum seekers' solidarity with black lesbian women. The news reports foreground that Mayema hoped that the Pride march he aimed to participate in would be one with a focus on eradicating human rights violations such as corrective rape of black lesbians, the difficulties faced by transgender people trying to get identity documents, and recognising the struggles of LGBTI asylum seekers. The *Mail & Guardian* reports on Mayema's experience with the newspaper headline "Fleeing into the arms of a hypocritical saviour" (Mayema, 2013c), with the article going on to describe the experiences of many foreign nationals, gay and straight, in trying to seek refuge in South Africa.

A corrective rape and murder case that drew media attention in July 2013 was that of 26 year old Duduzile Zozo. Zozo's body was found in Thokoza (east of Johannesburg) and newspapers report that she was found with a toilet brush "shoved up" her vagina (Aarifah, 2013). Zozo's murder is described as senseless, with LGBT organisations condemning the violence. In the same article reporting on Zozo's murder, the focus is diverted to Nigeria's refusal to accept same-sex marriages and its resistance to abolish the death penalty for homosexuality. This diversion follows the same pattern mentioned above, where South Africa's laws are regarded as being more progressive than that of other African states.

In relation to Zozo's murder, the *Star* publishes an article and questions emerge regarding the promises made to take action against corrective rape ("A cry against the killings", 2013). The *Star* reports that South Africans want to know "…how the six-month old National Council Against Gender-Based Violence is delivering on its big budget against the backdrop of murders like these. We demand to see the output of the Corrective Rape Task Team, established in 2011 by the justice, crime prevention and security cluster to help combat such horrors" ("A cry against the killings", 2013). In September 2013 the *New Age* reports that out of the 49 cases on its table, the Corrective Rape Task Team had only seen one perpetrator receiving a six year prison sentence. The remaining cases were all recorded with a final status of "remanded", "withdrawn", "undetected" or "no arrests" (Dube, 2013). The failure of the Task Team resulted in the responsibility being shifted to the government's branch for Constitutional Development and in 2016, 10 years after the first reported corrective rape, there is still no effective mechanism in place for recording these hate crimes.

Also in 2013, after three years had passed, the *Sunday Times* reports that Millicent Gaika's case is finally resolved with the police informing Gaika that they had rearrested the man who raped her in 2010 (Makwabe, 2013). Gaika is the first black lesbian woman to have gone public with her story of corrective rape. The perpetrator skipped bail and disappeared for two years after his arrest. The article reports that the organisation Free Gender played an influential role in putting pressure on the police to find Gaika's attacker. Gaika would face her rapist again in court and these delayed processes contributed to her reliving the trauma she had experienced (Koyana, 2013). In November, the *Cape Argus* reports that Gaika's rapist, Andile Ngcoza, was finally sentenced to 22 years in prison (Prince, 2013). Funeka Soldaat, a gay rights activist and facilitator for Free Gender in Khayelitsha, is reported as saying that attitudes toward lesbians have not changed over the last 20 years (Koyana, 2013). Soldaat was raped for her sexual orientation in 1995 and describes how it was impossible for black lesbians to report the crimes at that time because police officials would make fun of them. The continued reporting of hate crime against black lesbians thus suggests that discriminatory attitudes remain prevalent in society.

Newspaper reporting on corrective rape in 2013 concludes with an article by Phumlani Pikoli who argues that nonconformity must be regarded as a constitutional right (Pikoli, 2013). While the constitution enshrines the rights of sexual minorities, it emerges in news reports that homophobia rather is represented as a norm in relation to black lesbians.

2014

Newsworthy topics that emerge around corrective rape in South African newspapers in 2014 extend to criticism of the South African government's silence on LGBT rights and anti-homosexuality laws in Uganda and Nigeria, the plight of parents with gay children in homophobic communities, the rape and murder of Gift Makau, and tensions concerning the new way forward for Johannesburg Pride.

In 2014 the *Business Day* (Morudu, 2014) reports on Nigeria's decision to sign into law the Same-Sex Marriages prohibition act and criticises government involvement in adult sex lives. While previously silent on the matter, for the first time in 2014 the General Council of the Bar is reported to have condemned the South African government's silence on gay rights in other African countries. The article's author, journalist Dudu Dube, describes how South Africa has "sat on the fence" while the United States condemned Nigeria's actions to introduce anti-homosexuality legislation (Dube, 2014a). Reports on South Africa's role in

upholding the constitution and holding other African countries to account in terms of LGBT rights emerge more prominently in 2014 media reports.

While press pieces often focus on spectacular accounts of homophobic violence, the voices of those from the affected communities are seldom heard. In this year, however, the *New Age* reports on the plight of parents who are concerned about the safety of their gay children with the headline "Lesbian's mother seeks to understand daughter" (Dube, 2014b). The news article focuses on the lack of education around homosexuality and the difficulties faced by parents of gay children who often feel ostracised by the communities that they live in.

In May 2014 the *New Age* reports on a postponed trial for Duduzile Zozo's rape and murder case (Pakade & Masilela, 2014). It took four months to arrest the perpetrator, Lesley Motleleng, with reports of gay men and lesbian protesters agitating outside the court upon learning that the trial had been postponed. At the same time that newspapers report on this trial delay yet another rape and murder case emerges, namely that of Gift Makau. Similar to Zozo's violent rape and murder, 24-year old Makau is reported to have been found with a garden hose "shoved down" her throat (Kutullo, 2014). Gift Makau's murder is reported on in an article with the headline "LGBTI visibility means backlash" (Jaeger, 2014) and the Africa director for the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission is reported to have said that Makau's murder forms part of a trend where "gender non-conforming individuals are targeted for so-called corrective rape" (Jaeger, 2014). The article reports that gay men also experience corrective rape but that they are "less likely to be murdered and are less likely to report it" (Jaeger, 2014).

The 2014 press coverage on corrective rape ends with an article on Johannesburg's Gay Pride Festival (Smith, 2014). According to journalist Janet Smith, the festival aimed to have a more inclusive focus in 2014. The article foregrounds that a new board of directors would be ready to take Joburg Pride forward with a more inclusive agenda. This came after the 2012 die-in protest that was held by the One in Nine Campaign protesting against injustices towards the black LGBT community. According to Tommaso Milani, the campaign was "a seismographic indication of deeper frictions between a wealthy, white, politically lethargic, gay and lesbian constituency on the one hand, and a more radical, mainly black group of activist women, on the other" (Milani, 2015, p. 432).

To summarise, important narratives that speak to South Africa's racialised and sexualised politics emerge in reports on black lesbian sexuality and corrective rape between 2003

and 2014. A narrative that emerges prominently in newspaper discourse is that of a more liberal voice identified amongst LGBT organisations and activists as opposed to a silent, ambivalent and sometimes homophobic South African government. LGBT organisations and activists, however, are often represented as powerless in relation to an all-powerful government resulting in the problem of corrective rape being framed as 'unsolvable'. Furthermore, I argue that the belief that homosexuality is unAfrican starts to emerge more prominently in media texts in this period. By foregrounding the role played by Luleki Sizwe and an internationally signed petition, news reports reproduce and naturalise the notion that homosexuality is a Western concern. This discursive frame is strengthened by emphasising the active efforts of Luleki Sizwe compared with a disinterested and homophobic justice system. The active efforts to respond to hate crime and corrective rape are erased and prominent voices of other LGBT organisations are silenced through the singular focus on Luleki Sizwe. Perpetrators are represented as acting with impunity and appear to be without remorse. Additionally, media texts report on the brutal violation and lifeless status of black lesbian bodies. Racialised and sexualised othering is iterated in newspaper discourse with the result that black lesbians become an essentialised *other* and a precarious figure in post-apartheid South Africa. A white middle-class perspective shapes print media representations of corrective rape and black lesbian life and although the violence is condemned, the failure to identify intersecting and routed forms of oppression ultimately results in the disappearance of voices and the category 'black lesbian'. With black lesbians coming to be defined as one of the most vulnerable sexual minorities in South Africa it is important to interrogate how racialised, classed and sexed discourses in media texts contribute to the idea that the black lesbian woman is constituted as an unintelligible figure of homophobic violence.

An intersectional approach may contribute significantly to a study focused on women who are victims because of their race, class, gender, sex and sexuality. Newspaper reporting on corrective rape lends itself to an examination of these routed forms of oppression. A problem that can be identified in newspaper discourse on corrective rape is that reports focus predominantly on black lesbian sexuality without considering other aspects of their identity and social location. Kimberle Crenshaw identifies how failing to acknowledge routed forms of oppression in marginalised people's lives can be a problem and writes that "[a]lthough racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that

resists telling" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). Black lesbian women in South African media texts are often represented as either vulnerable or violated, relegating them to this location that resists telling. For example, when media texts emphasise black lesbians' violated status without explicitly stating that lesbians are black, women and poor their marginalised status is most prominently foregrounded. In light of this it is critical to deconstruct narratives informed by hegemonic discourses of power that frame black lesbians as unliveable. The section that follows examines some of the themes identified in newspapers, namely responsibility, visibility and national belonging.

Introducing the themes: Responsibility, visibility, and national belonging

The first emerging theme in newspaper reporting on corrective rape concerns the notion of responsibility. The South African government is reported to be failing to assume definite responsibility when it remains silent on matters concerning gender-based violence and corrective rape. An analysis of newspapers shows that the government is represented as silent, ambivalent and sometimes even homophobic, while NGOs are represented as active and upholding the rights of sexual minorities. In addition to this, news reports focus on the important leadership role that the government is deemed to take in enforcing the constitution, but that they fail to do so. Again, NGOs are reported on for their tireless activism and role in getting the rights of sexual minorities recognised in South Africa. Responsibility is also reported on in relation to black lesbians themselves. Lesbians are reported to be failing to assume their responsibility to report the crimes perpetrated against them, whereas many factors prevent lesbian women from reporting these crimes, e.g. revictimisation. Lesbians become framed as silent and powerless in the newspaper discourse when there is a particular focus on the brutality and violence exercised against them.

The second prominent theme in newspaper reporting relates to visibility. Newspapers report on the fact that lesbian visibility has resulted in a violent backlash from the community. Black lesbians are framed as deviating from prescriptive norms and thus become visible through their difference. In addition to this visibility, newspapers also frame lesbians as being *in*visible in society. The absence of mechanisms to record the hate crimes, combined with lesbians' marginal societal status contribute to their invisibility. Lesbians are forced to hide their sexual orientation in homophobic communities which further contributes to their status as invisible victims of crime. Lastly, black lesbians are regarded a threat to men and by claiming space they become hypervisible targets of discrimination. Newspapers tend to

sensationalise violence against black lesbians by reporting them to be violated, raped, tortured, and abused bodies, thus adding to their hypervisibility. Black lesbians' hypervisible status is also accentuated by foregrounding negative reactions to their visibility in the media. These seemingly contradictory positions of visibility, invisibility and hypervisibility identified in newspaper discourse combine in a way that reinforces the marginalised, excluded and deplorable status of black lesbians in South African society.

The final and central theme that emerges in corrective rape reporting is that of national identity, belonging and citizenship. Black lesbians' sense of belonging in society is regularly reported on as being challenged by discourse that frames their sexuality as 'unAfrican', 'unChristian', and 'unnatural.' Newspaper reporting demonstrates how the racialised and sexualised 'other' continues to draw currency in contemporary South African politics. Newspapers report on an increased presence of xenophobia and homophobia which contributes to the exclusion of certain identities from this nationalist rhetoric. These heteronormative identity constructions result in the binary of 'traditional' versus 'Western' discourse that emerges in debates on homosexuality in South Africa.

Responsibility

Government and responsibility: Silence, ambivalence and moralising

An analysis of South African newspapers shows that the South African government is continually criticised for its failure to respond to the growing problem of corrective rape and sexual violence in the country. The current ruling party (ANC) is called on to assume responsibility although as evidenced in the media, these calls are met with resounding silence. This section will explore some of the prominent issues that emerge in the newspapers and which are related to government responsibility and homophobia in South Africa and the rest of Africa. Although newspapers have focused on the failed responsibility of the government, this section also explores how the media may participate in a form of 'pinkwashing'[15] and its tendency to 'out' homophobic political leaders in South Africa and the rest of Africa.

The media is critical of government silence as is seen in headlines such as, "Government ignoring critical lack of care for thousands of sex crime victims" (Spett, 2007), "Are lesbian

[15] Pinkwashing has been defined as a practice whereby states seek to create a more positive image of their nation, government, and human rights record amongst other things by speaking about and promoting LGBT rights (Lind, 2014, p. 602).

and gay people really being heard?" (Waldhausen, 2009), "Will nobody speak out for SA's women?" (Malala, 2009), "South Africa must live up to the law and protect gay rights" (Botha, 2011) and "Bar slams SA's silence on gay abuse" (Dube, 2014a). The ANC government is framed as one of the most powerful voices in relation to LGBT rights but newspapers repeatedly report on its failure to assume responsibility and its silence on the matter of LGBT rights.

In addition to this silence, the South African government is reported on as failing to adhere to the country's constitutional values. This is evidenced with newspapers reporting on deliberate attempts by government not to activate policies that protect the rights of sexual minorities. Anthony Waldhausen, director of the Gay and Lesbian Network in Pietermaritzburg, is reported to have said that "[t]he lack of inclusion of LGBTI in government programmes are often sidelined, for instance, in the National Strategic planning. If the constitution recognises minority groups, why is it that policies regarding minority groups are not correctly implemented or enforced?" (Waldhausen, 2009). Waldhausen's question points to the disjuncture between a liberal constitution and a homophobic reality. The emerging tension between a liberal constitution in terms of gay rights and a homophobic reality is something that scholars in queer studies have become more attuned to. Amy Lind draws from the work of Weber and Canaday in writing that "[q]ueer states that are not inherently 'straight' or heterosexual are 'gay friendly', and in some significant cases paradoxical, simultaneously promoting and opposing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) liberation" (Lind, 2014, p. 601). The paradox in the latter part of Lind's statement is relevant for print media representations of LGBTI issues and homophobia in South Africa. Newspapers that report on homophobic tendencies in society whilst simultaneously calling for the promotion of gay rights and aligning themselves with a liberal agenda, shape this paradox and contribute to a form of "pinkwashing". According to Lind, "pinkwashing" is the process by which "state officials seek to create a more positive image of their government, nation, human rights record, economic policy framework, or foreign policy agenda, to name only a few by promoting or speaking about LGBT rights" (Lind, 2014, p. 602). The promotion of LGBT rights as witnessed in media texts may form part of this "pinkwashing" process where South Africa is defined as gay friendly in the media but simultaneously overlooks serious social injustices that affect the less privileged members of LGBT communities.

A form of "pinkwashing" can also be seen as being practiced by both the government and the media. For example, after the murder of the previously mentioned lesbian, Duduzile Zozo, a

parliamentary leader to the opposition party (i.e. the Democratic Alliance's Lindiwe Mazibuko) is reported on as the first political leader to visit the victim's (Duduzile Zozo) family, with the party subsequently committing itself to raise awareness around the plight of the LGBT community (Botha, 2013). Following this visit from the Democratic Alliance, the ANC's Lulu Xingwana is reported to have promised to escalate the investigations and visits the local police station in an attempt to speed the process up (Nkgadima, 2013). It would seem that the visit to Zozo's family was driven more by political competition than by genuine sympathy. Newspapers also report on the poverty of Zozo's family. The media report that the family had already spent 15 years on a waiting list for a house and Zozo's case is seen as being representative of the plight of many black lesbian women who are not only affected by homophobic threats and sexual violence, but also become the victims of broader social inequalities such as racism, sexism, and classism. Therefore, Zozo's case can be read as a clear example of "pinkwashing" and politicking that, while promoting gay rights, often erases awareness of the social injustices surrounding black lesbian women's lives.

The South African government is regularly reported as a voice that ought to be heard in terms of promoting LGBT rights. The reality, however, is that the responsibility is more often adopted by NGOs, LGBT activists and human rights organisations. While it is important that civil society organisations speak out against violence of this nature, it is equally necessary to hear from black lesbians themselves. An article headlined "Will nobody speak out for SA's women?" (Malala, 2009) reinforces the idea that women need to be defended by someone. Justice Malala explains that politicians' silence on corrective rape and other cases of gender violence reproduce prejudiced and sexist attitudes towards women. He writes, "South Africa is a country in which women are routinely perceived as children, as objects to be owned and 'set right' if they stray. If they do not 'behave' or conform to men's prescripts, they are beaten" (Malala, 2009). While Malala is critical of women's treatment as subordinate minors, he also argues that somebody should speak for them. Malala speaks of his disappointment with the ANC Women's League's failure to speak out against the abuse of one of the league's leaders and he criticises their silence on Eudy Simelane's rape and murder. Malala's emphasis on the importance of the ANC Women's League to speak out against violence and corrective rape foregrounds this paradox, where the ANC government which is represented as silent and ambivalent toward LGBT rights is simultaneously called on to promote gay rights. This central tension between an inactive government that is called on to promote gay rights

often eclipses important debates on corrective rape and silences the voices of those affected by homophobic violence.

The government is furthermore reported on as failing not only to protect the rights of LGBT people in South Africa but also as failing to speak out against homophobia and sexual violence in other African states. An example of this is found in the case of Malawian gay couple Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Stephen Monjeza, who were sentenced to prison for getting engaged. South African human rights activist, Mbuyiselo Botha, is critical of government's silence on the issue, again highlighting the disjuncture between a progressive constitution and discrimination against sexual minorities (Botha, 2011). Botha is furthermore reported on as being critical of government inaction and silence in relation to the murder of the Ugandan gay rights activist, David Kato. Newspapers report on prejudice against homosexuals in other African countries and Botha argues that "[w]hile Kato was murdered in Uganda, here at home members of LGBTI communities face the daily threat of violence and discrimination. What has become known as 'corrective rape' is particularly disturbing." He continues to explain that "[t]he lack of government action to prevent it is, of course, even more disturbing" (Botha, 2011). 'Corrective rape' and 'failed government responsibility' emerge as a prominent discursive construct in relation to LGBT rights in South Africa, contributing to a belief that lesbians are the *primary targets* of homophobic violence and that the government is *always* homophobic.

The reporting of Africa as consistently homophobic constitutes a prominent discourse in the media. This discourse is strengthened by the naming and shaming of homophobic political leaders in media texts. For example, South Africa is criticised for its failure to assume responsibility in terms of speaking out against homophobia in other African countries and newspapers report on the appointment of the homophobic South African commissioner to Uganda, Jon Qwelane. Newspapers report that the Johannesburg High Court found Qwelane guilty of equating homosexuality with bestiality, with the reports criticising his ability to act as a democratic representative for South Africa (Barber, 2011). In relation to the Qwelane case, Jason Barber poses the following question in the *Times*, "[o]ne has to ask: How is Qwelane, as a South African ambassador, possibly going to protect the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Uganda if he openly equates homosexuality with bestiality?" (Barber, 2011). Although Barber poses a necessary question there seems to be a recurring tendency in newspapers to 'out' African homophobes. This tendency to 'out' homophobes is evidenced in media reports that focus on Jacob Zuma's homophobia and King

Goodwill Zwelithini's homophobic comments that "gays and lesbians are rotten" ("King's speech can make gays targets", 2012). The naming and shaming of political leaders may furthermore strengthen this idea of a *homophobic Africa*. Sibongile Ndashe emphasises that this *single story* about Africa is a dangerous story. Ndashe observes,

> [f]or example, in talking about how homophobia is tolerated by the state in South Africa, an incident about now-President Jacob Zuma is often quoted. He was speaking to traditional leaders in ways that qualify as incitement to violence by stating that when he was growing up no gay person would have stood in front of him. Zuma was rightly and roundly condemned for these statements. At the time, he had been dismissed as the country's deputy president but was still the ANC's deputy president. Within days of his statement becoming national and international news, Zuma issued an unqualified apology. In subsequent narratives of the story, the apology continues to be erased as it is inconvenient to the single narrative of how African political leaders are not reformed. (Ndashe, 2013, pp. 156-157)

Therefore, while it is important for the media to report on failed responsibility on the part of government it is equally important to resist reproducing views that represent Africa as unapologetically homophobic. The tendency in the South African media to report on homophobic political leaders and an ambivalent and silent government contributes to the 'single narrative' referred to by Ndashe, thus preventing the acknowledgement of any positive developments concerning LGBT rights in Africa.

Government efforts to address homophobia are often erased and silenced. News reports rather focus on the inability to respond appropriately to the problem than give space to attempts made to address hate crime in the country. For example, responding to the high levels of sexual violence and corrective rape, the then Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Lulu Xingwana was reported as saying, "[y]es, we think it is high, but I think the government, in particular our department, and the justice and police departments, have been leading a campaign to fight these homophobic crimes" (Aboobaker, 2012). Xingwana's response points at collaborative work with the justice and police departments in leading a campaign against homophobic crimes, whereas the media reports foreground government failure to respond effectively. These failed attempts are highlighted in newspaper articles with headlines such as, "Lack of funding stops task team from acting" (Koyana, 2011), "No progress in 'corrective rape' probe" (Chin, 2012), "No action on corrective rape" (Sutherland, 2013), and "'Police mock us lesbians'" (South Africa Associated Press, 2014).

In summary, a central debate seen in South African newspapers focuses on government failure to assume responsibility in relation to corrective rape and in speaking out against

homophobia and homophobic laws in other African countries. By reporting on its failed responsibility it may be argued that corrective rape is defined as an unsolvable problem and that Africa is represented as untransformed in terms of gay rights. Furthermore, these debates silence and detract from the important work accomplished by LGBT organisations working with victims of homophobia and corrective rape, and black lesbians are silenced when represented in relation to an unresponsive government. Although government is described as largely failing to assume responsibility in relation to corrective rape and homophobia there seems to be a contradiction in the newspaper discourse where the media and government participate in a form of pinkwashing. Press pieces regularly reference South Africa's liberal constitution in relation to LGBT rights. The contradiction identified in newspaper discourse highlights a trend where the media continue to espouse liberal views in terms of LGBT rights but comfortably criticise the 'untransformed' and 'backward' thinking of a homophobic government and society.

These divisive views between a liberal media versus a homophobic government perpetuate discourses on social injustice and difference in society.

Gay rights as NGO and activist responsibilities: Active but powerless

Corrective rape and murder cases are often reported on as becoming known through the active efforts of NGOs and LGBT activists. Non-governmental organisations such as the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), the Durban Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Luleki Sizwe, and Free Gender are just a few of the organisations reported on for their active role in upholding and protecting the rights of sexual minorities between 2003 and 2014. These organisations are reported on as defending gay rights by fighting the backlash against black lesbians and gay men in South African townships. The organisations protest, pose questions, demand answers and are reported on as standing in for a group framed as the most vulnerable in society. They are also reported on to be playing an instrumental role in fighting for corrective rape to be recorded separately as a hate crime. In addition to this, NGOs are reported on as agitating for quicker and harsher sentencing, requesting police and health care sensitivity to victims of homophobic violence, and applying pressure on government to respond. The NGO sector's active role in defining and defending the rights of victims of homophobic violence is highlighted in the headlines of newspaper articles such as, "Rising tide of violence against women, say activists" (Joseph, 2008), "Gay activists want no bail for rape suspect" (Jones, 2010a), "Protesters slam

government for its silence on hate crimes" (Prince, 2011), "Gugulethu woman's rape petition draws global support" (Maditla, 2011), "Solve rape cases, activists demand" (Nkosi, 2011), and "Attitudes to lesbians have changed little in 20 years – activist" (Koyana, 2013).

Newspapers foreground Luleki Sizwe's active role in drawing attention to the problem of corrective rape in South Africa. Luleki Sizwe had not necessarily responded more actively than other LGBT organisations to the problem but the fact that the organisation successfully captured international attention with its online petition instantly framed it as a prominent organisation responding to hate crime. The change.org petition on corrective rape was signed by more than 100 000 people. Newspapers additionally report on how the director Ndumie Funda and her organisation demanded for the Justice Department to respond to the problem of hate crime, and the NGO is framed as being active but also frustrated with an apathetic government. Newspapers report on Funda's statement that, "[i]n absolute frustration, we decided to write a petition. This is a first for us, and never in our wildest dreams did we imagine we would get this kind of a response" ("Anti-rape site swamped", 2011). Funda's reaction to the overwhelming feedback from the international community points to two important issues: 1) the overwhelming media focus on an international interest to LGBT rights in Africa; and 2) that NGOs such as Luleki Sizwe are represented as far more responsive to the problem of hate crime in South Africa. Luleki Sizwe's prominence in relation to corrective rape reporting in this period suggests that interest by the international community holds more weight when compared with local responses to homophobic violence in the country. This debate therefore becomes framed as one where LGBT rights are represented as being taken seriously internationally but is relegated to a position of minor concern in South Africa and Africa at large.

Funda is reported on as having provided statistics on corrective rape and she states that over 500 people per annum reported being the victims of corrective rape and that 31 lesbians had already been murdered. While the decision to start an online petition was an important one, Henriette Gunkel writes about the complexities of global petitions and cautions against sensationalising figures. In a similar petition on corrective rape in South Africa in 2011, Avaaz.org collected close to a million signatures to force the country's president to act (Gunkel, 2013, p. 69).

Gunkel provides some context to the sensationalising effect of the petition:

> The Avaaz petition states that "'corrective rape' is based on the outrageous and utterly false notion that a lesbian woman can be raped to 'make her straight,' but this heinous act is not even classified as a hate crime in South Africa." However, it also claims, with no supporting evidence, that "in Cape Town alone, there [is] more than one 'corrective rape' per day" and that "a South African girl born today is more likely to be raped than she is to learn to read." Since no source for such a statistic is cited, the petition has the effect of sensationalizing the crimes and exploiting the "victims" for the publicity value of their images. It also ignores the many organizations and activists that for decades have been working against hate crime and gender-based violence more generally. It is also, in fact, very difficult to tell whether violence against lesbians, or against queer people generally, is indeed on the increase or whether more crimes are being reported, identified, and registered as hate crimes – perhaps due, in part to the advocacy work of a number of organizations. (Gunkel, 2013, pp. 70-71)

The quote demonstrates how the sensationalising of violence has the potential to get crimes like corrective rape recognised but these unsupported figures add to an already negative focus on homophobia in South Africa. Additionally, civil society organisations are framed as powerless without the help of international organisations such as Avaaz and change.org. For example, the CEO of change.org, Ben Rattray said, "[f]rom a position of almost no power, they've [Luleki Sizwe] been able to mobilise more than 100 000 people from across 163 countries and get the attention of the most powerful officials in South Africa" ("Anti-rape site swamped", 2011). A critical reading of Rattray's comment shows that civil society organisations are framed as powerless without international exposure and assistance. In this way, NGOs such as Luleki Sizwe are represented as active but powerless and LGBT rights are framed as a Western interest strengthening the notion that homosexuality is unAfrican. By focusing on the high figures of corrective rape provided by Luleki Sizwe, newspapers contribute to sensationalising the violence, and a singular focus on the active efforts by one organisation eclipses the important work done by other LGBT rights organisations.

In addition to being framed as powerless in relation to government, NGOs and activists are reported on as frustrated and angry when faced with government inefficiency and silence. For example, in August 2011 the *Cape Times* reported that a lack of funding from government prevented the success of a proposed task team to fight hate crimes and homophobic violence. The task team that was formed would focus on a "legislative intervention plan, a public awareness strategy and LGBTI-friendly shelters" (Koyana, 2011). Nokhwezi Hoboyi from the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) expressed his frustration with a government that is not willing to provide organisations with the necessary resources. He also highlighted that

while activists and organisations had long been calling on government to act, the first positive response came only after an international outcry (Koyana, 2011). This frustration is reported on as being exacerbated by the police and government's slow response to solving hate crimes. In response to police inefficiency, newspapers report that a group of gay rights activists protested and marched to the Kwa-Thema police station on 19 August 2011 to voice their frustrations (Nkosi, 2011). This protest action was initiated in connection with Noxolo Nogwaza's rape and murder, since no results of the supposed investigation were available three months after the incident had been reported. Newspapers report on scepticism by activists and the LGBT community in relation to government's stated intention to establish a task team to respond to corrective rape. Funeka Soldaat, a well-known activist from Free Gender in Khayelitsha, is reported on as being sceptical toward government's commitment to get serious about hate crimes (Nkosi, 2011).

After Nogwaza was murdered in Kwa-Thema in 2011, protesters gathered outside parliament to demand government condemnation of hate crimes (Prince, 2011). Kekeletso Khena, a long-time gay rights activist who led the group of protesters said, "[i]n the past 11 years our government has not said one thing to condemn hate crimes… so we're calling on the South African government, especially the Department of Justice, to fast track judicial processes against hate crimes" (Prince, 2011). The protesters in attendance held posters with messages such as 'Pissed off woman', 'Homophobia hurts', 'Zuma do something' and 'One dead lesbian is one 2 many' (Prince, 2011). These types of messages emphasise a long-term frustration experienced by activists and members of the LGBT community. The entry into the media of LGBT discourse is therefore framed as one of frustration, with the herculean efforts of NGOs and activists often being overlooked. It may therefore be argued that the rights of the LGBT community represented through NGOs and activists are framed as unachievable when NGOs and activists are themselves represented as being largely frustrated and powerless.

Lesbians/perpetrators and responsibility

The theme of responsibility in the relevant news reports is also broached with respect to lesbians as the victims of hate crimes themselves. Black lesbians seldom feature as agents in news reports but a paradox emerges when lesbians are framed as having a specific responsibility to report and speak out about the violence, but are simultaneously represented as invisible and powerless victims of violence. Newspapers report that there is a lack of

available statistics on corrective rape and lesbians' responsibility to report the crime is foregrounded in some debates. An article with the headline "Plea for lesbians to report incidents of abuse" (Schroeder, 2007) provides some context and Fatima Schroeder observes that the then chief research specialist for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Review, Vasu Reddy said "statistics of 'corrective rape' were not available because most cases were not reported" (Schroeder, 2007). Newspapers report that while one of the biggest questions at a seminar about this review concerned the absence of reporting, Reddy could not explain why women did not report the crimes and added that there is a lot of stigma attached to corrective rape (Schroeder, 2007). Another prominent example of lesbians represented as failing to assume responsibility was reported on in 2012, close to the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign when Lulu Xingwana responded to the problem of staggering rates of sexual violence by stating that a persistent problem was presented in victims' withdrawal of charges (Aboobaker, 2012). Black lesbians are reported on as failing to assume their responsibility to report corrective rape and the crime is represented as a taboo phenomenon. Nonhlanhla Mkhize added that "[e]ven without physical violence, black lesbians generally are marginalised by their families and communities for their sexual identities" (Schroeder, 2007). The narrative that surrounds black lesbians in newspaper discourse thus focuses on their marginalised status and most reports represent them as lacking agency.

Newspapers often focus on brutal and spectacular accounts of violence against black lesbians. However, while black lesbians are reported on as violated and marginalised, newspapers give more space to the justifications by perpetrators for 'corrective rape', suggesting that there is a legitimate belief that sexuality can be corrected. Ways in which the perpetrators of these hate crimes are afforded more space than lesbians is through the framing of the perpetrators as 'remorseless' (Mackay, 2012), by representing lesbians as 'lucky to be alive' (Nombembe, 2011), and by specifically reporting on perpetrators' reasons for raping black lesbians. Newspapers also report on attitudes and views toward lesbians that condemn their sexuality. For example, in the article titled "Lucky to be alive", reporting on Noxolo Nkosana's homophobic attack in which she was stabbed four times for her sexuality, the *Times* lends coverage to some of the community members' homophobic attitudes.

Philane Nombembe writes,

> [a]s Nkosana nursed her wounds yesterday, men in the poor settlement where she grew up said it was wrong for two women to be lovers. Siyabonga Ngxaki, 22, said lesbians were setting children a bad example. "This community does not accept it and they are not a good example to the kids. They should hide what they are doing because the kids will emulate them. I don't want my baby girl to see them," he said.
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> High school pupil Mzukisa Tsholoba, 18, agreed. "How can people of the same gender be in a relationship? They can do whatever they are doing elsewhere, not here." (Nombembe, 2011)

Newspapers regularly report on the reasons why societies deem homosexuality unnatural and the excuses that perpetrators give for raping lesbian women. For example, the earlier mentioned HSRC Review reports on Mkhize's statement that "most perpetrators of 'corrective rape' believed they were acting in the best interests of the victim; that they were teaching them to 'behave like women'; and that the rape was a form of 'therapy'" (Nombembe, 2011). Lesbians are also reported on as failing to assume their feminine responsibility and are reminded of their roles in society. Reports on Millicent Gaika's rape, for instance, focus on verbal attacks aimed at correcting her sexuality. To illustrate, Gaika's attacker screamed, "I know you are a lesbian! You are not a man! You think you are, but I am going to show you, you are a woman. I am going to make you pregnant! I am going to kill you!" (Prince, 2013). These examples of verbal abuse are commonly associated with corrective rape and regularly reproduced in newspaper discourse. The statements furthermore strengthen norms in relation to black female identity and sexuality. The hate-fuelled statements suggest that perpetrators see it as their responsibility to remind women of their roles in society. These discursive threats often result in material realities for black lesbians who become pregnant after being raped, contract HIV/AIDS, and as seen in these news reports, are often murdered for their sexuality.

Press pieces on corrective rape often foreground perpetrators' justifications for rape which contributes to framing black lesbians as voiceless victims of violence. On the one hand, lesbians are called on to act responsibly and report crimes but they are simultaneously represented as powerless and silent. In contrast, perpetrators are framed as either remorseless or active in articulating their justifications for raping these women. This juxtaposition in representing black lesbians as inactive and powerless versus reporting on the perpetrators' active efforts to 'correct' their sexuality entrenches an idea that black lesbian sexuality is disallowed or unspeakable and that homophobic attitudes characterise the township areas

where the rapes take place. The media thus participates in a process of marginalising lesbian identities and framing black men as homophobic rapists.

Communities and responsibility

Newspaper articles with headlines such as, "Hit me, hit me, rape me" (Serrao, 2008), "Violence and abuse are pastimes of the playground" (South Africa Associated Press, 2008), and "Pupil sex for good marks" (Monama, 2008) report on an increasing trend of violence and the prevalence of corrective rape in schools. The newspaper articles foreground the results of a report published by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) which provides "shocking" examples of violence in schools. Angelique Serrao quotes the SAHRC report saying that "[t]his game[16] demonstrates the extent and level … (of) brutalisation the youth has reached and how endemic sexual violence has become in South Africa" (Serrao, 2008). While the sensational aspects of violence are reported on in some of these news articles, Judith Cohen, the head of the HRC programme is quoted in the *Star* as saying that "'[m]ost of these cases of violence are not being reported and nobody realises the extent of the problem. Physical violence, like a boy being shot will immediately make the headlines, but a girl being raped will not. We need to expose this form of violence" (Serrao, 2008). In the same way that cases of corrective rape are not reported on or taken seriously by the government and other state actors, one recognises a similar pattern here where issues like corrective rape are reported on in a sensational way, but where no action is taken to curb the violence. News articles on school violence and corrective rape demonstrate how responsibility is constantly shifted from one social actor to another. This practice of blame and responsibility shifting also conveys the message that issues like violence, corrective rape and other sexual violations are unsolvable.

Voices from the communities that are most affected by homophobic violence are seldom reported on, barring a newspaper article in the *New Age* that reports on the plight of parents concerned about their gay children's safety with the headline "Lesbian's mother seeks to understand daughter" (Dube, 2014b). Dube claims that the parents of gay children are stigmatised in their communities and that that they receive little support and information regarding how to respond to their gay child's sexuality. The *New Age* reports on the way that families, especially mothers are seen as responsible for 'producing' gay children. A woman

[16] The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) published a report finding that pupils as young as 7 were playing games where they would pretend to hit and rape each other.

attending the LGBTI Intervention Strategy in Johannesburg, Charlotte Nkosi said: "You are labelled a failure. You will be an outcast because you are the mother of a lesbian, so your child is venomous, your child is contagious. You cannot participate in church activities, you have to sit down because you are a failure and you cannot produce what the church expects from a child. You become the gossip of the community" (Dube, 2014b). Although it is clear that parents are concerned for their gay children's safety, media texts focus on homophobic attitudes that abound in the community. Newspapers foreground statements that refer to the parents of gay children as failures or outcasts. Homosexuality thus becomes framed as not an individual but a family problem that needs to be managed. The narratives that emerge here speak to those of religious fundamentalism which, as articulated by Sokari Ekine, "insist on strict literal interpretations of religious texts, and a culturally essentialist position which pathologises and denies the existence of queerness on the continent" (Ekine, 2013, p. 78). Therefore, while South Africa is defined as more liberal in terms of LGBT rights on the one hand, there is an emerging narrative of an ultra-conservative, Christian and heterosexual community on the other. These ultra-conservative beliefs and homophobic attitudes are represented as being specifically attached to black communities.

Visibility

Black lesbians as visible victims of violence

A second major theme evident in news reporting on corrective rape is visibility. Newspapers report on the considerable backlash witnessed against black lesbian visibility in South African communities. A recurring theme in both newspaper reporting and literature on the subject is that gender non-conforming lesbians are punished for deviating from a prescribed gender norm. For Amanda Lock Swarr this antagonistic reaction to black lesbians can be understood as a response to a perceived threat to male masculinity. Swarr suggests:

> Scholarly discussions of varied male masculinities, while exploring historical, geographical, and cultural specificities of what it means to be a man, have widely assumed that manhood relies on a male body. Masculinities are usually understood as composed of appearances, traits, and behaviors socioculturally agreed upon as associated with males. But what happens when female masculinities, particularly lesbian masculinities, undermine the idea that one must have a male body to identify as masculine and claim masculine privileges? What if sex is simply one corporeal expression of masculinity? (Swarr, 2012a, pp. 963-964)

Swarr's argument contextualises how heteronormativity in society results in practices that are constructed on the basis of women's subservient relationship to men. Black women's social

location is defined in relation to men and this discursive construction is commonly reproduced in the media. Heteronormativity is furthermore iterated in newspapers when space is given to language that focuses on the 'corrective' potential of rape in relation to black lesbian sexuality. Some of the statements reported on are: "'If I rape you then you will go straight, you will buy skirts and start to cook because you will have learned to be a real woman'" (Rabkin, 2009); 'You need to be taught a lesson because you are too much a man' (Underhill, 2011); 'You f****** lesbian, you f****** tomboy' (Nkomo, 2011); 'I am teaching you a lesson' and 'I am correcting you' (Phaliso, 2011); and 'Why are you dressing like this? Acting like a boy? Why are you dating women?'" (Germaner, 2012). Such verbal threats are examples of the way that black lesbian sexuality is viewed through the lens of discipline and punishment and the impossibility of black lesbian desire.

Such impossibility is strengthened in cases where black lesbians are reported on as being 'Lucky to be alive' (Nombembe, 2011). The *Times* reports that Noxolo Nkosana was called a tomboy before being stabbed four times and accused of stealing her neighbour's girlfriends (Nombembe, 2011). The newspaper reports that people in Nkosana's community felt that she deserved the punishment she got and men from the community said it was "wrong for two women to be lovers" (Nombembe, 2011).

Megan Morrissey argues that black lesbian women who deviate from the feminine stereotype are regarded as "inauthentic, insincere, and are calling attention to themselves – marking them as deviant and/or disrespectful of native cultural traditions" (Morrissey, 2013, p. 80). Morrissey highlights that black lesbians are represented in this way in the media and I argue that print media representations that reproduce the image of black lesbians as deviant or disrespectful becomes the dominant frame, with limited possibilities of imagining black lesbians outside of this frame.

Framing black lesbians as deviant or unnatural furthermore reinforces a vulnerable status associated with their identity, with newspapers reporting that black lesbians are constantly under surveillance. Being framed as outsiders also compromises black lesbian agency. Of this outsider position Zanele Muholi writes the following:

> The reality of being black and lesbian in South Africa is that we become 'outsiders' inside our townships or rural communities because there are those who have defined homosexuality in racial and ethnic terms as 'un-African.' Some make the argument that those who identify as LGBT are mimicking western or 'white' culture. 'Black lesbianism' is acknowledged and constructed through a heteronormative lens and is recognised as

> situational, as 'a fashion' or a phase 'because her friends are doing it' or as a response to frustration with a boyfriend. What is conveniently forgotten is that African cultures have historically accommodated same-sex desires and relationships. (Muholi, 2004, p. 119)

Muholi's description of black lesbians' outsider status once again denotes how important an intersectional approach is to investigating black lesbian sexuality. The above-mentioned quote illustrates that black lesbian sexuality is constructed through Western, white, heteronormative, and gender essentialising categories which fail to grasp the diversity and complexity of increasingly visible black lesbian sexualities. However, the expression of this visibility has been particularly tenuous for black lesbian women who are victims of intersecting and routed forms of oppression. Reporting on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality often results in identifying how race and class also influence the identities of black lesbian women. Although Crenshaw's original contribution to intersectionality does not focus on black lesbians, it holds relevance for the current analysis where it becomes clear that news reports focus predominantly on sexuality in relation to identity politics. Crenshaw defines the problem and states that,

> [i]n the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Moreover, ignoring difference *within* groups contributes to tension *among* groups, another problem of identity politics which bears on efforts to politicize violence against women. (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242)

This failure to acknowledge difference is also seen in news reports where black lesbians are defined in a homogeneous way, as butch, and may contribute to a growing tension between those who identify as strictly heterosexual within black townships and those who fall outside of this norm, such as butch lesbians. According to Swarr, "[s]eeking visibility has become increasingly common since the end of apartheid and the advent of protected lesbian rights. But the pursuit of visibility simultaneously makes lesbians targets of violent assaults and rapes in their communities" (Swarr, 2012a, p. 968). For example, Swarr argues that "multi-faceted violence makes lesbian visibility, embodied and engendered through butchness, a site of paradoxical ramifications" (Swarr, 2012, pp. 968-969). This "embodied" and "engendered" function of lesbian visibility emerges prominently in media texts which foreground black lesbian visibility as butch or masculine. Press pieces that focus on *butch* lesbian identity and which emphasise their difference can therefore contribute to representations that focus on lesbians' unintelligible status.

Black lesbians as invisible victims of violence

While black lesbians emerge as visible victims of violence this section explores ways in which black lesbians tend to disappear or become invisible in the newspaper discourse. As discussed in the chronological overview of this chapter, news reports have focused on LGBT organising and the role played by activists and NGOs in applying pressure on the Justice Department to classify corrective rape as a hate crime. Newspapers reported that the change in legislation would facilitate a process for dealing more effectively with these crimes. However, cases of corrective rape are unaccounted for apart from sensationalised and spectacular media accounts of violence against lesbians. Chandré Gould delves into this process of violence becoming invisible and writes that,

> [b]ecause these are crimes of prejudice, they have particularly serious consequences for the victims, because they are directed at a person's identity. These crimes are not recorded as a specific category and are therefore invisible when the police release their annual statistic. They are likely to remain hidden for as long as there is not law to define and criminalise hate crimes as a separate category of crime, or until the SAPS [South African Police Service] creates a system for recording cases of hate crimes. (Gould, 2011, p. 4)

Black lesbians' second-class status in society contributes to their invisibility. Sexual violations occurring in township areas are seldom reported to the police and these crimes are not viewed as seriously as crimes that affect middle-class communities. The *Times* reports on a response by the Treatment Action Campaign's district organiser, Lumkile Fizile. He says, "[i]t's like they have neglected Khayelitsha – perhaps it is because it is a poor black area… Rape and crime is such a problem here" ("Vulnerable and poor are invisible victims of crime", 2010). The high incidence of rape and crime in South African townships remains a problem in post-apartheid South Africa and news reports seldom deconstruct the continued racism, classism and sexism carried over into the democratic dispensation.

In addition to less attention being paid to township areas, newspapers report on the slow response to finding and arresting perpetrators. Some newspapers report that activists, victims and family members of the victims are relieved when a sentence is handed over but there is also dissatisfaction with the lengthy trials and light sentences. With reference to Zoliswa Nkonyana's murder, Astrid Shapiro writes, "Zoliswa's family and friends can never bring their loved one back. Many furious South Africans think that the justice system is seriously failing the victims of rampant violent crime" (Shapiro, 2012). News texts report that the justice system fails the victims and although it is clear that the majority of victims are located in townships, the newspapers don't always make this explicit.

Lesbian invisibility also emerges in instances where certain corrective rape cases are afforded greater media attention than others. For example, a case that received greater media coverage was that of a 13 year old openly gay girl from Atteridgeville in Pretoria. For the first time, the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) is reported on as speaking out against these rapes and calling on parliament and other government structures to define corrective rape in the hate crime category ("Heartless, senseless crime, says ANCWL", 2011). This case prompted the Justice Department to release what the *City Press* defined as its strongest statement yet, with Tlali Tlali saying "[g]overnment condemns this senseless and cowardly act of criminality. Gay and lesbian rights are human and constitutional rights that must be protected and respected at all times" ("Thirteen-year-old a victim of 'corrective rape'", 2011). Some cases therefore such as this of 'an openly gay *girl*' who is framed as innocent and perhaps less conscious of her choices is taken more seriously than that of butch lesbian *women* who are ultimately framed as unrecognisable.

Furthermore, newspapers report on the way in which sexual minorities feel the need to hide their sexuality because they are constantly being surveilled and have to restrict their movement in society. After Millicent Gaika was raped her perpetrator was released on bail and she feared that she would see him again in the community where she lived. Michelle Jones reports on Gaika's fears and writes that "[s]he said she didn't feel able to go outside during the day but waited until dark, when nobody would be able to see her, to venture out for some exercise," and that she wished she could "vanish out of this world" (Jones, 2010b). Gaika is the only black lesbian woman who goes public with her story of victimisation in this period. Gaika is reported on as having said that "[s]he would like to live in a place where she could feel free. Where people wouldn't point fingers at her knowing she was a lesbian and that she had been raped twice before. Where she would be safe without having to worry about being raped again" (Jones, 2010b). While Gaika was initially confident in revealing her identity and speaking about her experience, she later had photographs of herself removed from websites and did not allow reporters to reveal her identity (Underhill, 2011). Gaika's fear of being recognised resonates with those of many other black lesbians, further contributing to their invisibility in society. For example, lesbian couple Thandeka and Xoliswa felt that they needed to hide their sexuality from the community and pretended to be sisters (Solomons, 2011). The *Sunday Argus* reports that the couple had no choice but to hide their sexuality and to move away from the community where they were known. Black lesbian sexuality thus becomes framed as "silenced" and "hidden" in communities.

News reports that focus on cases where lesbians have to hide their sexuality such as with the case of Gaika who had to remove her photos from the website and Thandeka and Xoliswa who had to leave their community contribute to representations of lesbians as invisible victims of violence.

Black lesbians as hypervisible victims of violence

A third way in which black lesbians are framed takes the form of them being hypervisible victims of homophobic violence. Black lesbians are defined as visible threats in townships and they are also referred to as taking up 'space.' For example, the *City Press* reports: "Some men say lesbians are stealing the attention of their girlfriends or potential girlfriends. A 20 year old man is reported saying, '[t]hese lesbians invade spaces and they take up all the attention when they are around. They are pathetic and I hate their presence'" (Phaliso, 2011).

Based on interviews with key informants from the Equality Project and workshop attendees, Graeme Reid and Teresa Dirsuweit suggest that men deemed lesbians as threatening to their masculinity. According to the authors, "[t]his manifested in two ways: (1) sexual rivalry and (2) punishment [lesbians were punished because they are more masculine-looking and because they are sexually unavailable] (Reid & Dirsuweit, 2002, p. 117). This is confirmed by Swarr who claims that "[l]esbians are raped in ways intended to be punitive, or 'corrective' or 'curative', because they undermine monolithic notions of masculinity and heterosexuality and refuse men's proposals and advances" (Swarr, 2012a, p. 962). In addition to posing a threat to male masculinity, the issue of space also becomes important in understanding violence against sexual minorities. Reid and Dirsuweit write about homophobic attacks in Johannesburg and argue that "[u]rban citizenship entails freedom to move, use and express identity in the city" (Reid & Dirsuweit, 2002, p. 99). This contrasts with the lack of freedom reported on in township areas. As seen with the above-mentioned examples, where black lesbians' presence is described as deplorable by homophobes, Reid and Dirsuweit explain that,

> [i]n a climate of pervasive crime and profound fear, hate crimes are hidden within broad statistics. The South African government does not keep specific statistics on xenophobic, racist and homophobic crime. This has the effect of increasing visibility of gay men and lesbians. Homophobic victimisation is endemic in violent, masculine cultures and has extensive implications for gay men and lesbians. It profoundly affects the way in which the city is used in terms of movement and the use of social spaces. (Reid & Dirsuweit, 2002, p. 99)

While Reid and Dirsuweit's study focused specifically on structural violence in Johannesburg, similar patterns are found when analysing news reports on violence against lesbians in South African townships today. The *Sunday Times* reports on a group of women who gather and share their "experiences of living and surviving as lesbians in South Africa" (Mbele & Ndabeni, 2013). It is clear from these reports that lesbians face numerous challenges in terms of lacking acceptance in their communities and that "[t]he women speak of daily threats, glares of disgust and disapproving remarks that they suffer in public and sometimes at home just because they are different" (Mbele & Ndabeni, 2013). This difference is highlighted when lesbians are consistently reported on as tortured, raped and abused bodies.

News coverage on the violation of lesbians often focuses on the brutalisation of their bodies. For example, Michelle Jones writes for the *Cape Times* and reports on Millicent Gaika's rape experience as follows: "HER eyes filled with blood, cheeks swollen and an angry wound covering her neck, Millicent Gaika looks as if she was attacked just a few hours ago" (Jones, 2010b). This report on Gaika's rape foregrounds the brutal violence surrounding black lesbians, framing them as hypervisible victims of violence. Corrective rape cases that receive the most news coverage are of lesbians who have been raped *and* murdered. In July 2013, Duduzile Zozo was raped and murdered in Thokoza, with the *Cape Times* reporting that "Duduzile Zozo's half-naked body was discovered close to her home, a toilet brush shoved up her vagina. Her mother, Thuziwe Zozo, who had lived with the fear of losing her lesbian daughter for many years, now has to live with that image etched on her mind" ("Hate crime", 2013). While it is important for newspapers to report on the brutality of the crimes perpetrated against lesbians, these news reports create the impression that all gender non-conforming lesbians face a similar fate. In fact, Zozo's fate is defined as predestined when the media focuses on her mother's fears of inevitably losing her daughter. In addition to this, reporting on the transgressive nature of black lesbian sexuality reveals the dominance of a heterosexual power dynamic in society.

In addition to Zozo's murder, newspapers report on the rape and murder of Gift Makau who was found with a garden hose "shoved down" her throat (Kutullo, 2014). This constitutes the second example of a rape and murder report using the word "shoved" in relation to violence against lesbian women, thus framing the black lesbian as brutally invaded and objectified. The *New Age* reports that the perpetrator's mother said that her son, the accused, "must take responsibility if he committed the crime" (Kutullo, 2014). Mothers are consequently reported

on as a type of moral yardstick for the actions of their children and the idea of the African mother is also referenced as being tied to moral and cultural values.

Black lesbians are often represented as violated and lifeless bodies and reports focus on the brutality of the murders. As with Zozo's case, bodies are reported on as being violently entered with the result that lesbians are represented as objects. Judith Butler's theorisation of precariousness in *Frames of War* (2009) is productive here. Butler illuminates that there are certain recognisable conditions for understanding life and writes that "a life has to be intelligible *as a life*, has to conform to certain conceptions of what life is, in order to become recognizable" (Butler, 2009, p. 7). In relation to the analysed media texts it starts to emerge that black lesbian life falls outside of these acceptable norms. The violent reaction witnessed against the black lesbian figure can furthermore be contextualised in Butler's argument on normativity. The black lesbian category emerges as the *problem to be managed* and Butler writes,

> [t]he figure lays claim to no certain ontological status, and though it can be apprehended as "living," it is not always recognised as life. In fact, a living figure outside the norms of life not only becomes the problem to be managed by normativity, but seems to be that which normativity is bound to reproduce: it is living, but not a life. It falls outside the frame furnished by the norm, but only as a relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured, but whose living status is open to apprehension. (Butler, 2009, p. 8)

The reproduction of this notion of a normative ontological status, in this case heterosexual identity for black lesbians, becomes a prominent discourse in South African newspapers. The black lesbian category that consequently lies outside of this norm becomes the *problem to be managed* and as so well-articulated by Butler, the black lesbian may be defined as living but her object status and violent treatment means that she can be apprehended but is not always recognised as a life.

In contrast to the hypervisible status of butch black lesbians, gay men are seldom reported on in connection with corrective rape. The rape of Xolani Dlomo is the only case that is reported on in the period of analysis. The close to non-existent reference to men in relation to corrective rape furthermore strengthens this notion that such rape is reserved for butch black lesbian women. Black lesbians are furthermore represented as hypervisible when the term "corrective rape" is consistently used without problematising it in the media. Zethu Matebeni problematises the usefulness of the term. Matebeni highlights that although activists have used the term "corrective rape" to capture the "extent of injustices and violence perpetrated on black lesbians because of their sexualities and identities", it remains less clear how useful

its deployment has been (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 345). In terms of defining sexual violence the choice of language is important and I agree with Matebeni when she writes that,

> [m]arking certain groups as victims of a special kind of crime can make them vulnerable to unintended further victimisation. Knowing that a victim has experienced curative rape immediately identifies her as lesbian, a category many (including certain institutions) still treat with disdain. In this sense, this language and terminology can unintentionally work against what it set out to do. (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 346)

Matebeni's claim holds particular relevance when black lesbians are consistently reported on as special victims of corrective rape. It is worth taking note of the dearth of accounts of corrective rape in relation to black and white homosexual men, and white lesbian women. The absence of reporting corrective rape in relation to these identities confirms that the black lesbian has emerged as a hypervisible category in the media.

Madhumita Lahiri (2011) takes this argument further in her analysis of the discourse surrounding corrective rape in South Africa and dowry death in India. Lahiri moves beyond critiquing the use of the term 'corrective rape' and provides an analysis of discourse associated with the *corrective* potential tied to rape. For Lahiri, the deconstruction of terms such as 'corrective rape' and 'dowry death' are central for activism in Third World countries. As evidenced in South African news reports the term corrective rape is used to emphasise the corrective action of rape intended for black lesbian women. A central concern regarding discursive constructs in the global South is that they have profound consequences for already marginalised people. As argued by Lahiri,

> [t]o some extent, this terminology is only as problematic as its purported explanation. It would be quite reasonable, for example, to affirm that these sorts of attacks are correctional in that they punish those who challenge dominant ideas of gender and sexuality. This is, unfortunately, rarely the message that gets repeated. (Lahiri, 2011, p. 122)

Lahiri deepens her argument and extrapolates the "corrective" part of rape to insidious forms of racism that commonly occur within a Third World context. Any study that focuses on representation should foreground the intersecting and routed forms of oppression that are not only present in the victim's lives but also in terms of representing perpetrators of corrective rape. I argue that a fundamental problem related to studies on corrective rape is the singular focus on sexuality and black lesbian women. By foregrounding the racialised stereotypes that attach themselves to the perpetrators of this crime one comes closer to understanding the complex dynamics involved with racist and sexist forms of representation in print media.

South Africa's racialised and sexualised history provides some clues to the way in which black lesbians repeatedly emerge as victims of rape and how only African men are reported on as serial rapists. Post-apartheid LGBT rights discourse and the contradictory emergence of brutal violence against black lesbian women in news reports provides an uneasy fit with a far more complex reality. The absence of a context-specific social and historical reality mired in racialised and sexualised regimes of representation reproduces common myths associated with hyper-sexual African men and the unacceptability of homosexuality in Africa. The absence of a racialised context and questions concerning the perpetrators emerge as fundamentally important. Lahiri reflects on these issues and comments that,

> [t]he most telling evidence of the racism inherent in much of this discourse might be found not only in the presence of this cultural explanation for the sexual violation involved, but also in the *absence* of *any* explanation of the horrific forms of torture and murder that often accompany these attacks. The violence of the corrective rapist, it seems, needs no explanation. Might it be because he is African? (Lahiri, 2011, p. 124)

The omission of this much needed historical and political context results in the emergence of two prominent discourses that are better approached using an intersectional lens. The representation of lesbian sexuality as unAfrican and the notion that heterosexual African men are hyper-sexualised rapists should be debunked and de-mythologised. An intersectional analysis and a context-specific approach highlight the multiple and routed forms of oppression constituent to sexualised and racialised violence in the lives of African and South African citizens.

It may be argued that the notion that homosexuality is unAfrican or deviant becomes normalised through these repetitive reporting practices. For these reasons, it is increasingly important to challenge discourses that reproduce the notion that all black lesbians are powerless in the face of homophobic violence. Chris Thurman reports for the *Business Day* on the difficult task of representation. He writes, "[o]n the one hand, it is important to expose the ugliness of (for example) the 'corrective' rape and murder of lesbians and the suffering it causes. On the other hand, there is a need for mainstream media coverage that normalises same-sex love and intimacy, rather than continuing to associate it with the spectacle of brutality" (Thurman, 2014). The second point raised by Thurman is particularly important for this thesis and will be explored in the third and fourth chapters.

National belonging

Intersectionality and belonging

The notion of national identity and belonging in South Africa features prominently in relation to corrective rape reporting. News reports on homophobic violence and hate crime foreground black lesbians' deficient belonging in society. Black lesbians are framed as a vulnerable minority and their victimisation is reported on as being associated with their social location.

A contested sense of belonging is influenced by South Africa's racialised and gendered politics. As Anne McClintock notes, "[s]o far, all nationalisms are dependent on powerful constructions of gender difference" (McClintock, 1991, p. 105). While black lesbians are reported on as victims of homophobic violence in black townships it is important to highlight that their identities are also shaped by racialised and gendered politics of exclusion. For this reason an intersectional approach has high explanatory power in relation to black lesbians' social location. Nira Yuval-Davis discusses the importance of social location and identity politics thus:

> When it is said that people belong to a particular gender, or race, or class or nation, that they belong to a particular age-group, kinship group or a certain profession, what is being talked about are social and economic locations, which, at each historical moment, have particular implications *vis-à-vis* the grids of power relations in society. A man or a woman, black or white, working-class or middle-class, a member of a European or an African nation: these are just different categories of social location, but categories that also have certain positionality along an axis of power, higher or lower than other such categories. Such positionalities, however, tend to be different in different historical contexts and are often fluid and contested. (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 199)

Since positionalities are fluid and contested in relation to axes of power, it becomes important to discuss the emergence of black lesbian sexualities and their sense of belonging in the context of South Africa's contemporary politics. Newspapers report on black lesbians' difference in their communities and common discursive practices of exclusion include defining lesbian sexuality as 'unAfrican', 'unChristian', and 'unnatural.' Reports that foreground black lesbians' 'other' status also participate in practices of exclusion and marginalisation. For example, Graeme Reid writes that "[f]or too long LGBT rights have been placed outside the ambit of human rights. They are relegated instead to the terrain of morality or culture. The local variation of this argument is that homosexuality is unAfrican or unChristian" (Reid, 2011). Sexuality emerges as the qualifier of difference in these news

reports which ultimately fail to represent black lesbians outside of a framework that prescribes heterosexual citizenship.

Some of the most prominent media examples of the framing of LGBT rights as a moral or cultural issue are identified with homophobic statements made by African leaders and reported on in the media. These statements often reinforce the idea that homosexuality is unAfrican and prescribe heterosexual identity as the ideal form of national belonging. Reid reports on the matter of homophobic violence and references Hillary Clinton's 2011 United Nations speech to illustrate the importance of inclusive language for sexual minorities. Clinton said, "[b]ecause we are human, we therefore have rights. And because we have rights governments are bound to protect them" (Reid, 2011). Reid explains that while Clinton's statement is accepted as true and uncontested, "[w]hat Clinton did in her speech is to insist on inclusivity, specifically on the humanity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people" (Reid, 2011). Black lesbians, however, are repeatedly reported on as 'outsiders' and excluded from the popular human rights discourse inherent to the South African constitution. Therefore, when newspapers repeatedly focus on the marginalised and excluded position of black lesbians, their rights are framed as beyond reach and shaped by this nationalist rhetoric.

Additionally, by reporting on the government's ambivalent and contradictory stance toward LGBT rights, newspapers participate in a process that frames the rights of the LGBT community, especially those of black lesbians, as unattainable. Belonging becomes particularly contested when newspapers report on South Africa's ambivalence toward LGBT rights in the country and in the rest of Africa. For example, in a move to include sexual orientation in constitutional and legal protections by the UN, South Africa is reported on as first siding with homophobic states. The *Witness* reports on the issue by stating,

> [w]e are glad that South Africa has reversed its decision to oppose the United Nations' resolutions calling for homosexuals to be specifically named as a distinct minority group prone to the unjustified killing of its members.
>
> It is, however, embarrassing that South Africa has had to be shamed into reversing its stance supporting the removal of this reference to sexual orientation in the debate on the resolution that gay people were among groups that need special protection from extrajudicial and other unjustified killings. ("Doing the right thing", 2010, p. 6)

While South Africa is put forward as being separate from other African states and called on to uphold human rights, newspapers report on its uncertainty regarding who to side with. In 2014, Nigeria passed a Same-Sex Prohibition Act which criminalised any activism that

promotes homosexuality and Uganda was in the process of passing an anti-homosexuality law with life imprisonment for those engaged in homosexual acts. The General Council of the Bar (GCB) is reported on as condemning the South African government for its silence on these issues. While the United States was described as far more vocal on the matter, South Africa is reported on as remaining silent. South Africa is described in the *New Age* article as "sitting on the fence" and the newspaper reports that "[t]he GCB calls on government to live up to its reputation, to set the right example to its own citizens and to the rest of the world and to condemn anti-gay legislation and practices wherever they exist" (Dube, 2014a). An interesting paradox emerges in reports where South Africa is represented as liberal (because of the constitution) in terms of LGBT rights when compared with other African States, but it is often represented as silent, ambivalent or openly homophobic when compared with international LGBT rights and resolutions. Debates on South Africa's stance toward LGBT rights takes up a large part of reporting on corrective rape and homophobic violence, with the result that black lesbians are even further marginalised, silenced and represented as not belonging.

An example of sexual minorities' outsider status is seen in news reports where government is reported to have failed to address the problem of homophobia and hate crime. Government ambivalence and homophobia contribute to the idea that sexual minorities do not belong. For example, the *Sunday Independent* reports on the necessity to create a new political party with the headline "New party to focus on gay rights issues" ("New party to focus on gay rights issues", 2014). A spokesman for the Equal Rights Party, Michael Herbst, explained that it had become necessary to form a new party because lesbian women were raped for their sexuality and gay children were being bullied. The article foregrounds government's silence on the topic and how it has become necessary to have someone in parliament to represent the rights of sexual minorities ("New party to focus on gay rights issues", 2014). Lesbians and gay children are represented as particularly vulnerable in this news report and their rights are reported on as unattainable in the current government structure.

In this section I have highlighted that while black lesbians are most often represented as excluded and marginalised victims it is important to identify the routed forms of oppression that contribute to marginalising their identities. Corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality is often reported on as a moral or cultural issue reinforcing the idea that homosexuality is unAfrican. As discussed in the theoretical framework of this chapter and drawing from Crenshaw's work on intersectionality it becomes clear that one needs combine both feminist

and anti-racist practices in an attempt to deconstruct discourses that perpetuate social injustice and consequently contribute to framing lesbians as unintelligible victims. This section has shown how black lesbians' marginalised and excluded status is tied to her social location, a paradox on LGBT rights as represented in the media, and her entrance into the public sphere as a victim of homophobic violence.

African versus Western notions of belonging

It is in the context of a trend of African moralising by traditional Zulu leaders that issues of national identity and the state of the nation become more prominent concerns in media texts. Some of the commonly reported on examples include Jacob Zuma's statement that gay and lesbian South Africans are a "disgrace to the nation and to God" ("Zuma should lead this campaign, 2011) which he later had to apologise for, and King Goodwill Zwelithini's statement that "gays and lesbians are rotten" (Ndlovu, 2012). News reports focus on the division between those termed traditionally African versus those who uphold the constitution and are defined as more liberal in their views. The media distances itself from these homophobic statements. While it seems like there is a polarisation of views on homosexuality in society (traditional vs. modern), it may be argued that a pattern emerges where the views of a minority middle class (white) are upheld when condemning the homophobic behaviour of *traditional* society or African leaders (black).

Andile Ndlovu writes in the *Times* that "[i]f the constitution of this country was a person, he or she may well have been stoned by now for being 'pansy' or 'Western' for allowing two men or a pair of women to be together" (Ndlovu, 2012). The constitution is framed here in direct opposition to traditional African values. Melanie Judge and Jane Arnott emphasise the importance of challenging prejudiced ideas about African sexualities. They write, "[t]he myth that homosexuality is unAfrican originates from colonial representations of African sexuality and associated attempts to police gendered and sexual behaviour. It has spawned the social production of a false, limited idea of African sexuality as exclusively heterosexual, homogenous and unchanging, which is – and has always been – out of synch with lived experiences" (Judge & Arnott, 2012). Although Judge and Arnott legitimately criticise the limited view on African sexualities, news reports tend to reproduce this idea of a liberal academic perspective as opposed to a more traditional or 'backward' perspective on LGBT rights. Judge and Arnott furthermore write about the racist and sexist tendencies as witnessed in the house of traditional leaders and they refer to its motion to "remove sexual orientation

as grounds for nondiscrimination in the Bill of Rights" (Judge & Arnott, 2012). However, the authors raise an important issue regarding a societal tendency to exclude the other with an emphasis on binaries such as "queers and straights, men and women, citizens and subjects and blacks and whites" (Judge & Arnott, 2012). These binaries translate into an uneven distribution of rights, reported on at South Africa's 2012 Pride events. This unequal distribution of rights is evidenced where members of the black gay community are protesting against injustices, while whites are represented as celebrating their freedom. While Judge and Arnott challenge these limited views on African sexuality, their voices are represented as constituting a minority perspective on the issue. Academic scholars and LGBT activists such as Judge and Arnott provide a counter discourse but are simultaneously represented as opposing the majority who view homosexuality as unAfrican.

The racialised and sexualised 'other' also emerges as a common target of xenophobic and homophobic discrimination in South African newspapers. Junior Mayema, a refugee from Kinshasa, writes about the intolerant attitude toward difference in South Africa and how he and other gay refugees experienced homophobic and xenophobic discrimination. Racial and gender discrimination is the focus of Mayema's article and he writes, "I am still waiting to find out if South Africa wants me. I am faced with all the frustrations and indignities and xenophobia that every African refugee has to deal with, but on top of that I have to deal with homophobia too: both within the asylum-seeking process and in the general society" (Mayema, 2013c). Mayema writes about the violence against women and describes how "[t]he biggest danger is one all South Africans face: violence, and particularly violence against women. Several in our community of LGBTI refugees have experienced 'corrective' rape, replicating the dangers we faced in our home countries" (Mayema, 2013a). Mayema's article foregrounds how identity and social location shape the lives of those defined as racially, sexually or ethnically 'other'. Mayema highlights that women in particular become victims of corrective rape which illustrates the point that their identity as black, lesbian, female, asylum-seekers intersect and situate them as vulnerable in relation to sexist, racist and homophobic violence. News reports on Mayema's exclusions and discrimination reflect onto broader tendencies to discriminate against the racialised, classed, sexed, and gendered 'foreigner' in post-apartheid South Africa.

Examples of xenophobia and homophobia in society provide an alternative image of the country, one where South Africa is regarded intolerant of difference. This intolerance of difference also emerges in reports on the South African LGBT community and Pride protests.

The Star reports on the internal conflicts in the Joburg Pride Board (following the One in Nine Campaign's die-in protest) leading to the disbanding of the organisation in 2013 and resulting in the suggestion that two different Pride festivals were to be held that year. This came after the protest by the One in Nine Campaign at the 2012 Pride when a group of protestors lay down in the middle of the road to protest against the parade's move away from advocacy issues. The gay community is reported on as being divided along race and class lines, deepening inequalities and preventing solidarity between gay activists and the South African LGBT community. These differences are accurately summed up by 23 year old Motlatsi Motseoile, an employee of the Gay and Lesbian Archives (GALA):

> "If you go to Soweto Pride talking about the rape of lesbians and then you have people from the north avoiding Soweto because they think it is not safe, then you can't have a unified voice," he said.
>
> "People who have a more privileged platform and a bigger voice need to bring themselves to a place where they can relate to the issues of those who are underprivileged." (Du, 2013)

This quote illustrates that society is divided in terms of the realisation of LGBT rights in the country. Such divisions are manifested in the imbalance of rights between a wealthy middle-class LGBT community and a less affluent and more vulnerable black LGBT community. The black LGBT community faces challenges including homophobia and corrective rape and continue to be discriminated against in their communities, and marginalised in the media. John Marnell, the founder of LGBTI Journalism project 'Hear Us Out', is reported on as having said that "[t]here's this extreme of nude people on the back of a truck or lesbians being murdered and nothing in-between" (Du, 2013). By reporting on gay pride and advocacy issues in this way, a message is conveyed that gay rights have already been realised in South Africa and homophobic assaults and attacks in township areas are represented as a minority problem. In addition to this, black lesbians and gay men are framed as fighting a lone battle against discrimination, reinforcing their powerless and invisible status in society.

Therefore, similar to Junior Mayema being excluded from South Africa because of his gay and refugee status, black lesbians are framed as outsiders when they are physically and discursively punished because of their sexual orientation. When the black community is framed as protesting or violated because of their sexual orientation versus a white community that is celebrating constitutional freedoms, rights for the black homosexual community become framed as unrealised and unattainable.

Newspaper reporting on corrective rape references the idea of a 'troubled nation' ("Stand up to hate crime, 2011) and it may be argued that newspapers headlines such as "This shames our nation" (2003), "The stain on our rainbow nation" (Atwood, 2011) and "Flying the frayed flag for same-sex freedom" (Smith, 2012) reflect broader issues where, on the one hand lesbian sexuality is defined as a "shame to the nation", while on the other hand corrective rape is seen as "shaming the nation".

Conclusion

This chapter sought to provide an overview of the developments in news reports around corrective rape between 2003 and 2014, and furthermore a discourse analysis of South African newspaper reporting on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality for this period. It is posited that the discourse and thematic analyses clarifies how the South African media has positioned itself in relation to minority sexualities, race and identity politics, as well as homophobia in the country.

The analysis has illustrated how race, class, gender and sexuality intersect to marginalise and subordinate the position of black lesbian women in society. News reports on corrective rape often give spectacular accounts of violence, define the targets of rape as butch black lesbians, and foreground the homophobic attitudes that emerge in relation to black lesbian identity. As argued in this chapter, while it is important for newspapers to report on violence it becomes clear that a reproduction of essentialised black lesbian identities and an iteration of the spectacular and brutal violence exercised against them can contribute to rendering black lesbians even more vulnerable to violence.

Butler's theorisation on precarity and intelligibility is also useful for understanding how black lesbians are represented as the essentialised victims of homophobic violence. Butler highlights the differential allocation of precarity to certain bodies and in this analysis it becomes clear that black lesbian women are framed in newspaper discourse as individuals who do not matter. The thematic analysis in this chapter has sought to identify frames and discourses that reproduce social injustices and that fail to acknowledge the routed forms of oppression in black lesbian women's lives. In the analysis I also focused on the term corrective rape and demonstrate how a failure to problematise the language that surrounds black lesbian identity and corrective rape can contribute to representations of these women as violated, deviant and unintelligible in South African print media.

News reports on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality reflect broader issues around race and identity politics in contemporary South Africa. Discrimination against black lesbians is inherently tied to their social location and speaks to issues such as race, class and nation. While news reports often focus on the violence that surrounds black lesbian identity, a critical analysis of the discourse reveals how racial and sexual othering and social injustices contribute to the exclusion and marginalisation of certain identities. Zethu Matebeni brings this point home in relation to black lesbian identity and argues that,

> [t]he claim to a black lesbian identity in South Africa, and in the African continent as a whole, is an important but contested claim. The lesbian category, as an identity and a social and political group, highlights sexuality and gender as well as the interplay between these and other identity categories such as race, nation and class. This interplay, I argue, recedes and resurfaces in the ways in which the lesbian category is made to 'disappear' through various forms of injustice, the use of language and through violence in contemporary South Africa. (Matebeni, 2013a, p. 343)

Matebeni's insight into black lesbian existence holds true for print media representations of corrective rape and black lesbian life. The various forms of injustice referred to by Matebeni are prominent in relation to black lesbians' physical and social location in South Africa. Furthermore, this chapter shows how the media participates in a process of othering when it essentialises African identities and foregrounds homophobia in Africa. The term 'corrective rape' gains representational value when black lesbians are signified as particularly vulnerable, visible and marginalised people and identities. Therefore, as argued in this chapter while it is important to draw attention to the seriousness of hate crimes, it is also important to resist sensationalising the violence that surrounds black lesbian lives.

A discourse analysis of corrective rape furthermore references how newspapers participate in reproducing racist norms. Although the media distances itself from homophobia and hate crime the present analysis shows how views on race, gender and sexuality continue to be shaped by an already white, middle-class minority. A tendency to foreground South Africa's liberal constitution points to a paradox between the rights of a middle-class minority who distance themselves from homophobia but, as seen in the media, employ the category 'black lesbian' to criticise social injustice whilst simultaneously silencing those most affected by homophobic violence.

CHAPTER THREE

"WRITING THE BODY": NARRATING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND LESBIAN SUBJECTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN LIFE-WRITING AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Introduction

The second chapter of this thesis focused on print media representations of corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality. A discourse analysis of media texts shows how the black lesbian woman emerges as a trope for homophobic violence in post-apartheid South Africa. Examining corrective rape in the media provides insight into South Africa's racialised and sexualised politics and simultaneously sheds light on how certain groups are silenced and marginalised. Print media representations of black lesbian life suggest that these women are a particularly vulnerable minority and that corrective rape is a special type of crime reserved for them. These dominant discourses contribute to framing black lesbians as unintelligible and voiceless victims of violence.

As discussed in the theoretical framework in the first chapter of this thesis the media plays an influential role in shaping the public sphere and also tends to exclude marginalised groups (Fraser, 1990). Additionally, marginalised groups such as black lesbians are often misrepresented and hence further marginalised. This chapter explores alternative narratives or as Nancy Fraser articulates it, "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). Examples of such parallel discursive arenas and oppositional interpretations can be identified in post-apartheid South African literature.

The texts selected for the present analysis are Rozena Maart's novel titled *The Writing Circle* (2007) and Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography *Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* (2008). A nuanced reading and interpretation of black lesbian life in post-apartheid literature may productively challenge the unintelligible status ascribed to black lesbians. This chapter examines themes of sexual violence and black lesbian identity and it is particularly invested in uncovering hidden stories that surround women's lives. In her book *Frames of War* (2009) Judith Butler focuses on the ways in which certain bodies become framed as unintelligible or less valuable. This theme emerges in both Maart and Nkabinde's texts. Furthermore, I turn to Iris Marion Young's (1980) influential essay on body

comportment for an analysis of rape in Maart's novel and the narration of agency in Nkabinde's autobiography.

Rozena Maart's *The Writing Circle* focuses on the narratives of five women living in post-apartheid South Africa who have experienced some form of sexual violence. South Africa is a country with exceptionally high levels of gender-based violence and this is a central theme in the novel. Canadian reviewers Jennie Palmer and Whitney Light share a sentiment of confusion concerning the high personal security measures taken by the women in this novel and Palmer writes, "I wondered why the women were so worried, but it soon became clear that a woman's personal safety is a serious matter in South Africa."[17] Light provides some context and explains that Maart worked as a social worker at the emergency and gynaecology unit at a Cape Town hospital in the late 1980's where she witnessed cases of rape and violence against women. [18] The high levels of violence in the country and Maart's personal experience thereof therefore serves as an explanation for the representation of women living in constant fear.[19]

The Writing Circle foregrounds first-person narratives of sexual violence, explodes rape myths, and addresses the theme of lesbian sexuality in post-apartheid South Africa. Sexual violence in South Africa is not a straightforward matter. *The Writing Circle* is an important text in this regard since it raises issues that make it possible to explore and examine the intersection between race, class, gender and sexuality in relation to sexual violence; an under-researched theme in South African literature. *The Writing Circle* is interesting in that it thematises the everydayness of sexual violence in the lives of South African women.

Although this is not the central thesis in Nkabinde's autobiography it does inform her text. Nkabinde's personal experience of rape and the interviews she conducts with black lesbian traditional healers confirms that sexual violence is specific to the lives of South African women. Furthermore, like Maart, Nkabinde explores the taboo nature of lesbian sexuality. The text can also be defined as a parallel discursive arena where Nkabinde provides an oppositional interpretation of black lesbian identity. The narration and performance of Nkabinde's identity will be examined in detail in this chapter.

[17] This book review by Jennie Palmer is available online at https://rozenamaart.wordpress.com/fiction/the-writing-circle/
[18] This book review by Whitney Light is available online at https://rozenamaart.wordpress.com/fiction/the-writing-circle/
[19] Maart currently lives in Canada and Light refers to Maart's statement that Canadians don't imagine violence the way South Africans do but that writing could help one understand.

In this chapter I argue that themes which are common to both texts include "recognition of oppression" and "narration of subjectivity." In her influential essay titled "One is not born a woman" Monique Wittig (1993) highlights how women's oppression is influenced by the notion that women are a *natural* group, biologically and psychologically different from men and she argues that women have been manipulated both psychologically and physically to live their lives in an oppressed way. Wittig explains that the "feminine" has been shaped and developed by society and she challenges the subservient status ascribed to women when she refers to the *myth of the woman.* Wittig's theorisation around women's oppressed status in society is important for understanding the relevance of both Maart and Nkabinde's texts. I argue that the female characters or narrators in both texts become conscious of their oppression and hereby resist *the myth of the woman.* I take this idea further by arguing that the women in these texts challenge this myth when they become subjects of their own narratives and actively participate in a process of *writing the body.* This becomes possible through a narration of agency. For Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010), narrating agency involves more than an expression of free will or individual autonomy (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 54). Drawing from Butler's work on agency they confirm that agency is the "'performativity' of subjectivity" (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 57). The female narrators in Maart's novel challenge the *myth of the woman* by recognising each other as subjects and by narrating their own stories of sexual violence and subjectivity. In Nkabinde's text I will examine how she performs her subjectivity through the narration of her lesbian identity.

Nkabinde's autobiography foregrounds issues related to black lesbian sexuality, spirituality and religion, and homophobia. These issues shape Nkabinde's identity but Nkabinde also uses the genre autobiography to narrate her individual identity. In this chapter I am interested in examining how social and cultural forces shape her identity and I also explore how Nkabinde responds to these forces and narrates and performs her identity and gender through autobiographical writing. A central consideration in the analysis of the text is that the individual exists as a discursive formation both constructed by and responding to socio-cultural forces in that specific milieu.

A close reading of the two texts will focus on the prevalence of sexual violence in the everyday lives of South African women, the complexities of identifying as a black lesbian in post-apartheid South Africa, and women's narratives of sexual violence and/or sexuality. Maart's novel and Nkabinde's autobiography provide rich accounts of women living through and challenging sexual violence and hate crimes in post-apartheid South Africa; the rape

theme is prominent in both texts. In both, too, female first-person narration is an important device for uncovering women's hidden stories of sexual violence, but also of desire, agency and lesbian sexuality.

Life-writing

The section that follows will discuss the literary genres specific to the texts that I examine in this chapter. The first part of the discussion focuses on Maart's novel *The Writing Circle*. In the first chapter of this thesis I alluded to the distinction that can be made between life-writing (autobiography) and fiction (the novel). While it is important to make a distinction between the two genres it is also necessary to acknowledge the similarities between them. In defining the contribution of this thesis I drew from Smith and Watson who argue that although life-writing and fiction share certain features such as plot, dialogue, setting and characterisation (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 10), the genres can be distinguished in relation to claims about a referential world. Smith and Watson suggest that it may be helpful to think of fiction as representing "a world" while life-writing can be thought of as referencing "the world" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 10). Therefore, it can be argued that the worlds constructed in both fiction and life-writing are related to the creation of discursive realities. These discursive realities are often influenced by the experiences of the narrators or individual authors. As mentioned earlier, some reviews on Maart's novel refer to her occupation as a social worker and her first-hand experience working with rape victims. Whitney Light's review of the novel highlights that helping end violence against women is a part of Maart's life's work.[20] Therefore, while Maart's novel can be read as fiction it is likely that her personal involvement in the field of sexual violence is drawn upon in this text to make certain truth claims. Such truth claims are often dependent on the genres in which they emerge and I am interested in exploring what the texts in this analysis can achieve. I follow on Smith and Watson's (2010) argument that the boundaries between the novel and autobiography are fluid and dynamic and it is important to consider what the texts *achieve* rather than what they *are*. Furthermore, I argue that Maart's novel can be constituted as something that Smith and Watson refer to as self life-writing. The authors cite Couser in "Genre Matters" and write that "self life writing 'encode[s] or reinforce[s] particular values in ways that may shape culture and history'" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 19). In both Maart and Nkabinde's texts I want to examine what types of truth claims become possible in fiction

[20] This book review by Whitney Light is available online at https://rozenamaart.wordpress.com/fiction/the-writing-circle/

and in autobiography and I am particularly interested in what these texts are able to achieve in terms of their discursive representations. In the section that follows I examine the genre autobiography and the importance of this genre in terms of accounting for identities that have previously been marginalised or excluded.

Autobiography

Autobiography as genre has historically represented writers who have assumed privileged positions in society, for example white males. However, as is the case with Nkabinde's autobiography the genre is increasingly being used by writers who have been marginalised because of their race, gender, class and sexuality. In her book titled *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*, Leigh Gilmore provides an overview of the history of autobiography and examines how women's self-representation can be understood in relation to the genre. Gilmore's perspective that the autobiographer tells a story in relation to a "certain standard of 'truth'" will be used as the point of departure in the textual analysis of Nkabinde's autobiography. Gilmore refers to the important intersection between gender and genre in autobiography and asks a fundamental question concerning an investigation of women's autobiographies. According to Gilmore,

> [t]he encoding of gender and genre in the case of autobiography can be focused initially in this way: gender is produced through institutions and discourses that seek to divide and differently authorize persons as 'men' and 'women'; genre is produced by stabilizing and seeming to answer the questions: What is a 'self' that it can be represented? What is autobiography that it can represent a self? We can see the ways in which autobiography is produced within discourses of identity that are powerfully informed by concerns about gender when we ask the definitional question that links gender with genre: What is women's autobiography? (Gilmore, 1994, p. 17)

While this may seem like an over-simplified question, it remains a necessary one to ask because of the truth claims that become possible in genres such as autobiography and to a certain degree, in fiction. These truth claims also hold value for the genre which can take the form of confession as described in Foucault's work on identity and sexuality; a theme explored later in the chapter concerning Nkabinde's positive identification as a lesbian woman. Previously marginalised groups such as women, racial and sexual minorities are starting to use autobiography because of the way in which gender, race and identity can be reconceptualised in the genre.

Gilmore describes it as follows:

> For many women, access to autobiography means access to the identity it constructs. Therefore, the distinction between self-representation as a political discourse and self-representation as an artistic practice is less important than their simultaneity of function in a particular culture and for specific audiences. Inasmuch as the 'individual' is a discursive formation, autobiography is one of the major discourses through which it is produced and maintained. (Gilmore, 1994, p. xiv-xv)

This study concurs with Gilmore's comment that the individual as discursive formation becomes possible through autobiography and I use this theoretical lens in reading Nkabinde's autobiography. Identity as a discursive construct in autobiography is interpreted as the truth which Gilmore argues becomes a stabilised category. The relationship between autobiography and truth is therefore an important one because of the potential it has to uphold an individual's truth claim, also those expressed by minority sexualities.

It has been suggested that "'discursive frameworks demarcate the boundaries within which we can negotiate [meaning]'" (Mills in Griffin, 2013, pp. 94-95). These discursive frameworks differ from genre to genre and context to context and it may be argued that it is possible to identify different voices in fictional and non-fictional prose narrative. As discussed in the theoretical framework of the thesis this study considers it important to foreground black lesbian voices. An examination of the literary genre in this chapter seeks to identify previously marginalised identities and "voices" which I argue constitute part of a positive counterpublic. It is within this context that Iris Marion Young's conceptualisation of "voices", social position and agency becomes significant. To fully appreciate the value of Young's use of the term "voices" it is important to consider her conceptualisation of social positions. Where intersectionality foregrounds the importance of intersecting identity categories in shaping one's position, Young argues for a less fixed and more nuanced representation of social positions. For Young it is important to understand social positioning as *conditioning* rather than *determining* of certain social groups because it "gives voice to the intuition that social group members do not have some 'fixed' or 'authentic' group identity that they share" (Young, 2000, p. 102). According to Young, people's voices should not be seen as intrinsic to their identity thereby essentialising groups and their needs but she emphasises that we should rather see groups as shaped by specific societal norms. Recognising that social positions condition rather than determine identities therefore gives greater space to agency and individual voice.

Young claims that,

> [p]ositioning in social structures such as class, gender, race, and age condition individual lives by enabling and constraining possibilities of action, including enabling relations of superiority and deference between people. None of this, however, determines individual identities. Subjects are not only conditioned by their positions in structured social relation; subjects are also agents. To be an agent means that you can take the constraints and possibilities that condition your life and make something of them in your own way (Young, 2000, p. 101).

In this chapter I identify and foreground the ways in which narratives of sexual violence and lesbian identity are articulated in life-writing and an autobiography. I argue that the texts selected for analysis constitute significant counter discourses where individual voices overlap, narrate agency and speak back to sexual violence.

Additionally, I argue that Nkabinde's voice in her autobiography is one that positions itself in opposition to negative representations of black lesbian identity in South Africa. Gilmore provides some insight into this process of personal narration in autobiography and writes that,

> the discourses of truth and identity are varied and complex and when an autobiographer wishes, for example, to represent herself in opposition to a certain standard of 'truth', I would argue that she knows what she's doing *rhetorically* and not merely telling what happened. An emphasis on the rhetorical dimension of autobiography indicates its performative agency. (Gilmore, 1994, p. 25)

The ability to narrate agency through autobiography makes this a particularly useful genre for people who have historically been denied ownership of their own voices and bodies. Desiree Lewis highlights that African female sexuality has a history of negative representations and that black women have been defined as 'other' and lacking agency. Lewis writes that, "[a]lthough much scholarship dwells on the misrepresentation of African female sexuality, there is a relative paucity of work on African women's sexual pleasure: far fewer writers have constructed women's sexuality in relation to desire and sexual autonomy" (Lewis, 2011, pp. 206-207). In the sections that follow I will focus on themes of sexual violence but I find it particularly important to foreground narratives that focus on desire and agency as expressed by the female narrators in these texts. The first section focuses on Maart's *The Writing Circle.*

Rape in Rozena Maart's *The Writing Circle*

Female bodily comportment and *the myth of the woman*

The Writing Circle is set in post-apartheid South Africa and comprised of first-person narratives of five women who have experienced sexual violence. The major characters in the novel are Isabel, Jazz, Carmen, Beauty and Amina. These women occupy middle to upper-middle class positions in society, although some of them come from less privileged backgrounds. The women are friends and part of a writing circle where they can share stories about their lives and experiences of sexual and physical violence. Isabel is a social worker who primarily works with victims of sexual violence and assault.[21] The second prominent character in the novel is Jazz, an Indian woman and doctor who grew up in Uganda. Jazz was sent to live with her aunt and uncle in England after she discovered that her mother and her uncle were having an affair; she identifies as bisexual. Carmen is the only white woman in the novel. She grew up in England and comes from an upper-middle class family. Carmen was repeatedly raped by her father when she was a young girl and again as an adult by a stranger. Beauty is a black Xhosa woman whose husband Khaya died in detention and who lost her brother Frank to AIDS. As a young girl, Beauty is raped by her grandmother's employer, an older white man named Mr. Pirelli. The fifth female character is Amina. Amina is a Muslim Indian woman who has studied design abroad, and who has been married to an abusive man, Fuad, who died in a car accident. Hence, the women come from different racial, class and religious backgrounds. The characters are introduced to the reader in slightly different ways, and Maart provides different kinds of information about their social situations.

The novel opens with a rape scene. Isabel is raped by a black man who forces himself into her car as she arrives home where the writing circle is being held. The members of the writing circle are unaware of her arrival until they hear a gunshot; the moment that Isabel shoots her attacker. Unlike the other characters in the novel, Isabel's race is not made explicit. The omission of Isabel's race can serve two functions. First, it challenges the familiar rape narrative of a white woman being raped by a black man. Second, by omitting Isabel's race, it may be argued that sexual violence should be understood as something that affects women of all races.

[21] Isabel's character and her occupation are similar to that of Maart who worked as a social worker with victims of sexual violence in Cape Town.

The rape incident and the killing of Isabel's rapist sets the scene for a story that on the surface deals with the disposal of the man's body, but more importantly initiates a process where each woman in the writing circle is confronted with her own memory of sexual violence. This process of remembering stories of sexual violence plays an important role in breaking the silence around rape and challenges some of the myths associated with who rapes and who is raped. The situation in the initial rape scene involving Isabel is commonly acknowledged as a 'real rape' where the attacker is unknown to the victim. Common rape myths confer meaning to this rape scene and it can be argued that this *familiar* rape scene is used to contrast with the less familiar rape narratives that emerge with characters such as Beauty and Carmen later in the novel.

Simidele Dosekun (2007, p. 93) draws from research by Gordon and Riger (1989) and Stanko (1995) and confirms that "[f]eminist scholars have long argued that rape is most often represented in mainstream and institutional discourses as 'stranger-danger'; as the violent, indiscriminate act of an unknown, usually pathological man." Dosekun's interviews with fifteen women at the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa revealed that the majority of the women interviewed in a multi-racial group, except for two black women confirmed that they believed rape was something committed by a stranger. Isabel's rape is representative of this 'stranger-danger'. The rape scene also draws attention to the power dynamic that exists between the perpetrator and victim, male and female, and subject and object. As mentioned earlier, this representation of rape is particularly salient in a South African context where race and sexuality are closely entwined (Graham, 2012). [22] It may be argued that this rape myth is later challenged in Maart's novel when it emerges that rape is committed more often in the home by somebody known to the victim-survivor than by a stranger.

A central aspect of the description of Isabel's rape is her personal narration of the experience, for she describes how she looks back upon herself while being raped, disconnected from her body.

[22] The intersection of rape and race is discussed at length in Lucy Graham's book titled *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African literature* (2012).

In the words of Isabel,

> [s]he had agony written all over her face, as her arms and hands jerked with the rest of her body to the detestable pounding the man mounting her put them through. In that brief moment when I saw her face, all of it, in muted tearful silence, I recognized her. I recognized her because she looked right at me. In a drawn-out almost dreamlike moment I recognized myself as though I were staring at a mirror, except the reflection in the mirror was not the same as the one on the other side of it. (*The Writing Circle* (*TWC*), 2007, p. 12)

The above-mentioned description of rape offers some insight into the space that the female body inhabits in relation to sexual violence and the victim-survivor's objectified status. Isabel is *immobilised* by the invasive violence enacted upon her body. She becomes an object in the hands of the male subject.

A powerful detail in this passage is that of the involuntary movement of Isabel's arms and hands. Isabel's arms and hands are jerked around and provide the image of an object being manipulated by the violence enacted upon it. Isabel recognises herself by looking back upon her body and this provides a visual image of a woman assuming an object position and thereby embodying immanence (an object state). In the process of embodying this immanence, she becomes a body, or even disconnected body parts that are "jerked" involuntarily (*TWC*, 2007, p. 12).

I draw from Iris Marion Young's theory on embodiment for an analysis of Isabel's rape. Building on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Young (1980) underscores the subject-object relationship and contributes to understanding female embodiment by defining the 'feminine' as *immanence* or an object status. Young furthermore defines the 'feminine' as "the *typical* situation of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves" (Young, 1980, p. 140). Young also writes of the complexity and tension of a woman living her body as an object on the one hand, but simultaneously as a capacity. This tension can be seen in Isabel's description of the rape, where her body is reflected upon as immanence or as an immobile object but her ability to recognise herself references potentiality. To clarify, Young defines this tension as an "*inhibited intentionality*, which simultaneously reaches toward a projected end as an 'I can' and withholds its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed 'I cannot'" (Young, 1980, p. 146).

While this "typical" situation of women's objectified status in relation to sexual violence may be diversified in the twenty-first century depending on different contexts, it is nevertheless a prominent theme in Maart's novel. It may be referred to as a situation that speaks to the reality of women inhibited in their movement because of the fear of sexual violence that characterises South African society. Similar to Judith Butler's argument that the feminine is excluded, and produced to exist as the other for the patriarchal economy to operate (1988), Young explains that the feminine is associated with immanence resulting in a woman's body becoming defined as an object in relation to the male subject. Young's argument around feminine body comportment and women's immanent status speaks to the envisioning of representation of the male subject inhabiting and using the female as an object as witnessed in the rape of Isabel. A woman's inhibited status and movement is also related to Wittig's work on *the myth of the woman.* Isabel is compelled to assume an unfree and inhibited status that is associated with living her life in an essentialised *feminine* manner. This inhabiting of the female body is a theme that I will return to in the analysis of Nkabinde's autobiography.

In addition to Young's argument concerning immanence and a feminine object status, Young argues that a woman's position in society is that of an object *in* space/place. This notion of living one's life as an object is central to the literary depiction of women in Maart's novel who constantly have to reflect on their object status and monitor their movements in order to avoid an attack or violation.

The self-questioning that takes place after Isabel's rape reveals that Isabel lives her body as something that is objectified and open to attack, and therefore as responsible for fending off an attacker. Her questions reveal the assumed responsibility in living her life in an objectified way. In Isabel's words,

> "Why didn't I close the gate faster? … Why didn't I see him standing there? … He slipped right into the yard without me noticing… That bloody electronic gate…Why did I smoke? If only I was paying more attention…I shouldn't have had the music on so loud." (*TWC*, 2007, p. 31)

These questions draw attention to the way in which women are forced to assume an objectified (immanent) position in society. Living life in an objectified way is seen as a woman's responsibility and this in turn also makes her an object of men's desire, pleasure and abuse.

Young defines this self-monitoring or feminine body comportment as follows:

> The objectifying regard which 'keeps her in her place' can also account for the spatial modality of being positioned and for why women frequently tend not to move openly, keeping their limbs enclosed around themselves. To open her body in free active open extension and bold outward directedness is for a woman to invite objectification. (Young, 1980, p. 154)

This object status and women's circumscribed space in society is confirmed in Dosekun's (2007) research when interviewing a young woman who used to travel by train to UCT. When asking the respondent 'Mimi' whether she would take the train at night she responded, "No, never…that's like asking to die…because rape is so high in this country you know… [but] some people work night shift and they have to take the train" (Dosekun, 2007, p. 94). Dosekun's research reveals that women's bodily comportment is influenced by the fear of being raped. The constant fear of sexual violence that South African women live with is a theme that is crucial in Maart's novel. Such fears surface in the novel where women take responsibility for their own safety, seldom travel unaccompanied and remain vulnerable to sexual violence.

Furthermore, Maart's novel highlights that certain lives and bodies are regarded more valuable and intelligible than others. Butler's conceptualisation of precariousness and grievability can serve as a productive lens for reading intelligibility as it emerges in the novel. This theme becomes particularly salient at the beginning of the novel where the five women establish a plan for how to dispose of Isabel's rapists' body. As a mixed-race South African woman, Maart would be sensitive to the racial dynamics in the country and the concomitant practice of devaluing black life. Isabel's rape and the body of her attacker emerge as problems that need to be managed and solved in the novel. Solving the problem involves a consolidated effort from the major female characters in the novel to bury the body of the rapist who at this point is unknown but later revealed as Beauty's friend Mary's son, Peter. In the process Isabel merges into the background and personal narratives of sexual and physical violence experienced by Beauty, Jazz, Carmen and Amina move to the foreground. Isabel's healing process is in part dealt with by herself because of her resistance to seek help but her friends and members of the writing circle provide support throughout the novel and play an active part in *burying the problem.*

Devoid of a name and identity in the novel, Isabel's rapist who is a black man, has no history and automatically becomes associated with rapacious black sexuality (Posel, 2005, p. 128).

Helen Moffett writes one year before *The Writing Circle* (2007) was published that "[t]en years of transformation have nevertheless failed to deconstruct the old apartheid narratives of sexual violence that demonise black men as incontinent savages, lusting after forbidden white flesh, with the result that open discussion of a major problem is at a standstill" (Moffett, 2006, p. 135).

A black female character named Beauty offers an alternative narrative and challenges some of the negative representations of black sexuality. The issue of racism and sexuality in a post-apartheid context also emerges prominently through Beauty, and raises the problem of less value being ascribed to black life. In her words, "[e]ven now, working as a sculptor in a society where freedom has meant that more households want domestic servants than before and which permits the continual exploitation of Black women, because [post-apartheid South Africa continues to benefit an elect middle and upper-middle class] although there is no apartheid any longer there is its stepchild in its aftermath" (*TWC*, 2007, p. 54). Beauty's assessment here summarises the problem of racism and sexism that has carried over into the post-apartheid era. As a black woman, Beauty's voice is important in this context and her first person narration of racism and sexism speaks directly to the issue of intelligibility that emerges with print media representations of black lesbian women and also in relation to black life in this novel.

Beauty comes from a working-class family. She experiences numerous losses including the loss of her husband to political violence (apartheid) and her gay brother to AIDS. Beauty acknowledges the human side of Isabel's perpetrator and she is the only character in the novel that reflects on his position within a family and in society. According to Beauty,

> Isabel's attacker could not have felt he mattered to anyone, why else would he do what he did? And because he felt he did not matter, nothing mattered to him. He was perhaps in his late thirties. Although I did not know him my thoughts were with his mother. How would his mother feel when she discovered her son missing, and worse still, that he was killed in the act of raping and hijacking a woman in her car, right in her own backyard, in the nice and friendly grey suburb of Observatory? How would she mourn her son? (*TWC*, 2007, p. 58)

Beauty's questions speak to the issue of intelligibility and grievability of life. Butler (2009) argues that for life to be recognised as valuable it should also be understood as grievable. She asserts that recognition of the precariousness of life adds to its value and makes it grievable.

Butler's theory on intelligibility may be used to argue that Beauty's comments in the passage above serve to queer or make strange recognisable[23] frames of representation.

Important issues that are raised in Maart's novel concern the representation of black life. This becomes prominent with the identity of Isabel's rapist who is regarded unintelligible because of his status as a poor black man and with Beauty's narrative where, as I will soon demonstrate, her rape is defined as less serious than that of Isabel's. Questions regarding race, class, sexuality and gender are carefully addressed in Beauty's narrative. Butler's theorisation around intelligibility and grievability is important in this regard where the rapist Peter is framed as ungrievable and Beauty's rape narrative and her body is represented as less intelligible than that of Isabel in the novel. Maart's novel is thus important in that it thematises the way in which class, race, gender and social location intersect in people's lives and also contribute to representational schemas that render some bodies and lives as less valuable than others.

In addition to certain lives being framed as more valuable than others, an interesting paradox that emerges in Maart's novel is the everydayness of rape versus the taboo nature of lesbian sexuality. This paradox is foregrounded when Carmen is raped and then helped by two mixed-race lesbian women. A woman who helps Carmen is Cynthia. After hearing of the rape, Cynthia's mother phones Carmen to provide emotional and moral support. Cynthia's mother speaks openly to Carmen about the everyday problem of sexual violence but is unaware of her daughter's lesbian sexuality. The conversation that ensues between Carmen and Cynthia's mother is revealing of a dynamic where rape is described as an everyday phenomenon but the silence that surrounds Cynthia's identification suggests that lesbian sexuality remains a taboo subject. Carmen says,

> I burst into tears, so overwhelmed by the kindness and consideration that had been offered, and this from people I don't know. I could not understand why Cynthia thought her mother incapable of understanding the nature of her relationship with Esmeralda. Surely she would extend the same wisdom she had shown me to her daughter, who had reached the age of consent and had just lied to her [her mother] about being alone. (*TWC*, 2007, p. 43)

Lesbian relationships are framed as inconceivable while rapes are defined as a societal norm when Cynthia's mother says that "men of all ages, creeds and colours raped women" (*TWC*,

[23] The word 'recognisable' is borrowed from Judith Butler's definition of the term in *Frames of War* (2009). Butler argues that there are specific norms which make life recognisable and that "[t]he problem is not merely how to include more people within existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differently" (Butler, 2009: 6).

2007, p. 43). Reference to the minor lesbian characters in the novel resembles a familiar pattern as seen in the media texts where rape and sexual violence is openly addressed, while lesbian sexuality is defined as unnatural and disallowed, and not foregrounded as such.

Inherent to both Maart and Nkabinde's texts is the intersecting and routed forms of oppression in the lives of black and black lesbian women. The black female narrator in Maart's novel, Beauty, is a woman who has experienced raced, gendered and classed violence.[24] Beauty grows up in apartheid South Africa and her 'other' status makes her vulnerable to multiple levels of oppression and violence. Beauty's social location also makes her vulnerable to sexual violence and she is raped by her grandmother's white employer, Mr. Pirelli.

Beauty was raised by the women in her family and her mother was employed as an apple picker in Elgin. The narrative of rape in Beauty's life points to gross inequalities between white and black South Africans and references how Beauty becomes a victim because of her race and sex during the apartheid years. Beauty's narrative begins where she is invited to an interview with the possibility to be accepted as a student at the Fine Arts Department at UCT, Cape Town. Beauty's family is poor and dependent on the financial support of her grandmother's boss, Mr. Pirelli. In this narrative, Mr. Pirelli offers to drive Beauty to her interview at UCT. During the apartheid years, white and black South Africans were seldom seen together and therefore this opportunity is unique for Beauty. Beauty reflects on the experience and says,

> "[i]magine that: there I was, a seventeen-year-old Black girl from Khayelitsha[25], in the car of a White man, in the front seat, in 1987, and thinking that I was being treated, for once, as his equal" (*TWC*, 2007, p. 55).

Beauty's statement summarises the unequal relationship between white and black South Africans during apartheid. It was practically unheard of that a black person would travel in the front seat of a car with a white person. The statement also references the different worlds that are inhabited by Mr. Pirelli, a white man who is financially independent compared with a young black girl who comes from the poor township Khayelitsha in Cape Town. Beauty's

[24] Smith and Watson describe the importance of viewing identities as intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Collins & Bilge, 2016). They argue that "[t]o speak autobiographically as a black woman is not to speak as a 'woman' and as a 'black.' It is to speak as a black woman" (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 41).

[25] Khayelitsha is an informal township located on the Cape Flats outside Cape Town. South African townships were established under the Group Areas Act under Apartheid where black South Africans were removed from the most developed areas of South Africa. The Xhosa name for Khayelitsha is *New Home* (http://www.sahistory.org.za/place/khayelitsha-township).

thought that she is being treated equally for once is however violently disrupted when Mr. Pirelli uses this opportunity to rape her. Beauty becomes the victim of overlapping forms of oppression because of her race, class, gender, and age. The unfolding of the rape event is described in the passage below:

> Despite my protestations, he forced himself on me, saying I was making a fuss over nothing, when fifteen minutes ago I had been solicited by an uncouth farmhand who would have been very different with me. He was a nice man, he said, and he had asked nicely, and he would not be mean or violent and would still take me to UCT for my interview. I had never had sexual intercourse before. I knew that I did not want to have sexual intercourse with him, even though he tried to convince me that it would be my only time with a White man, and that I should see it as a learning experience. "Black men will not appreciate you the way I do," he said, in that patronizing, colonial, overbearing sort of way I am now old enough to identify. (*TWC*, 2007, pp. 56-57)

In the above-mentioned quote, Beauty's body is framed as something that is available to all men. The fact that Mr. Pirelli states that the 'uncouth' farmhand would have been different with her suggests that Beauty has no choice regarding the decisions over her own body and that rape is a foregone conclusion. The introduction to this passage illustrates that Beauty does protest against the rape. The passage however reads very differently from Isabel's rape at the beginning of the novel. Isabel's rape represents a stereotyped rape or rape myth where the perpetrator is a stranger and the victim is usually that of a powerless female who is "jerked" about by the intimate intrusion into her body. Isabel's rape scene also references the long period of recovery and devastation associated with rape in the lives of predominantly white women. Where attention is paid to bodily violation with Isabel, Beauty's rape on the other hand is narrated in a matter-of-fact manner with Beauty simply stating "he forced himself on me" (*TWC*, 2007, p. 56). These differences in the novel are important in that they emphasise the difference in value ascribed to white and black bodies. As Smith and Watson observe,

> [c]ultural discourses determine which aspects of bodies become meaningful – what parts of the body are there for people to see. They determine when the body becomes visible, how it becomes visible, and what that visibility means. (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 50)

In the re-telling of Beauty's rape, it may be argued that Beauty's body remains invisible, in the same way that black lesbians 'disappear' or remain invisible, because of social injustices and inequalities. Although Isabel's race is not made explicit in the novel, Beauty's race is prominent in relation to her rape and the lack of intelligibility and visibility ascribed to her body stands in opposition to that of Isabel whose rape is visually provocative and powerful.

The issues that emerge in these two distinct cases are worth taking note of. The representation of Beauty's rape speaks to the normative nature of violence surrounding black female bodies. The violation of Beauty's body focuses more on the power dynamic that exists between white male privilege during the apartheid era and the powerless status of black women; no details about the physical assault are revealed. Although Isabel is described as powerless in relation to her rapist, attention is paid to the physical violation of her body, unlike in Beauty's story. While Isabel's rape is represented as far more intimate and serious, Beauty's rape is framed as more common in the lives of black women. As a result of this, violence against the female black body (rural, poor and young) is apparently regarded as less serious than physical and sexual violations of, for instance, white female bodies (urban, affluent and mature). The violence enacted against black women emerges as a societal norm which consequently results in limited access to justice. The limited options available to black women who have been raped are raised in Maart's novel with the description of Beauty finally arriving at UCT. Beauty says,

> "I got out of his [Mr. Pirelli's] van as fast as I could. I ran to the nearest toilet and asked one of the women to help me clean my face and sort out my work. She stared at me as though she knew what had happened and had been there before. She caressed my face and straightened out my eyebrows, as though they were the only two things that mattered to her. Through it all, she did not once look at me, but bit her lip and blinked back the tears." (*TWC*, 2007, p. 57)

The shared experience of sexual violence in this passage refers to the everyday violence that black women from South African townships were accustomed to and continue to face in a post-apartheid context. There is also a sense of an unspoken solidarity between black women that fails to be referenced outside of these intimate spaces. Beauty's narrative serves an important function in a society where black women seldom have the opportunity to speak about sexual violence and rape on their terms. The contrast between Isabel's rape and Beauty's rape is also a powerful reminder of the social inequalities that were part of apartheid society but continue to define the reality of women in South Africa today. Maart is conscious of the inequalities that characterise black and white women's lives in South Africa and her choice to include these separate narratives of sexual violence reflect onto South Africa's history of racialised and sexualised violence. Butler's theory on intelligibility and precarity provides productive insights into the differential treatment of black and white bodies and the way in which some lives are regarded as valuable and intelligible (white) while other bodies are regarded less visible and consequently less intelligible (black).

Maart's text provides an important exploration of the rape theme, and thematises racialised and sexualised politics during the apartheid years and in contemporary South Africa. In the section that follows I examine the rape theme in Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography, in which the author delves into the complexities of identifying as a black lesbian in post-apartheid South Africa. A chapter in Nkabinde's autobiography titled "Hate Crimes" focuses specifically on corrective rape and murder of black lesbian women known to the author.

Rape and black lesbian sexuality in Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's *Black bull, ancestors and me*

Intelligible and grievable victims of violence

Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma[26] is Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's account of living her life as a black lesbian and traditional healer in South Africa. In this autobiography, Nkabinde tells the story of her early realisation that she is a lesbian and her calling in life to become a traditional healer. Nkabinde grew up in a poor South African township, witnessed domestic conflict between her parents, and was raped twice. Although Nkabinde experiences much hardship she speaks openly about her lesbian sexuality and she writes from a place of strength. Nkabinde claims visibility, space and freedom as a black lesbian woman living in a society that has historically disallowed the visibility, presence and expression of black lesbian sexuality. Her quest to define her sexual identity moves beyond a mere 'coming out process' to seeking a lifestyle, a sense of community and a life ethos that affirms her identity as a lesbian, a Zulu woman and a traditional healer.

As mentioned in the previous section, rape also informs Nkabinde's autobiography. While Maart's novel raises concerns regarding the silences that surround bisexual and lesbian identification, Nkabinde's autobiography makes the connection between lesbian identification and rape. Nkabinde's relationship with Sizakele Sigasa, a woman who was raped and murdered for her sexuality forms a central part of Nkabinde's chapter on hate crimes. Although the chapter focuses on rape Nkabinde's reflections on her personal relationship with Sigasa constitutes an important counter discourse as far as black lesbian sexuality is concerned. The reference to this personal relationship between Nkabinde and Sigasa reminds us that these are small and connected communities.

[26] 'Sangoma' is a Zulu word used to refer to South African traditional healers.

In the excerpt below Nkabinde writes about the rape and murder of Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Masooa that takes place in Orlando, Soweto:

> Sizakele and Salome were found by a man who was jogging past a vacant plot. Both had been raped and brutally murdered. Sizakele was found with her hands tied together with her underwear and her ankles tied together with her shoelaces, with three bullet holes in her head and three in her collar bone. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 144)

Sigasa and Masooa's rape and murder and the representation thereof resemble that of the cases of lesbian rape and murder in media texts. Nkabinde introduces her chapter titled 'Hate Crimes' with a focus on her personal relationship with Sigasa. Although the chapter's primary focus is on the violence perpetrated against lesbians, Nkabinde focuses on their relationships, as well as their position in and contribution to the communities that they live in. By focusing on the relationship that Nkabinde had with Sigasa she also positions herself as a member of this community. Nkabinde's relationship with Sigasa did not last long and she attributes its failure to Sigasa's desire for Nkabinde to be more feminine. Of her relationship with Sigasa, Nkabinde writes:

> Our relationship lasted for seven or eight months. I had dreads at that time, long dreads, but I wanted to shave my head. She didn't like me to be a tomboy. She wanted me to bring out the feminine side in me. She didn't like the masculine side of me. I told her, "That is me. It will never change." It became a problem in our relationship. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 143)

Three things are achieved when Nkabinde writes of her relationship with Sigasa. First, the image of Sigasa as a lesbian violated for her sexuality is challenged through this narrative which confirms the existence of a lesbian relationship. Second, Nkabinde affirms her masculine identification in lesbian relationships and her unwillingness to compromise on this. Third, the plurality of relationships with different forms of lesbian identification emerges as an important concern. Although lesbian relationships take on various forms within the black lesbian community, some relationships resemble the norms associated with a heterosexual relationship. Swarr's research on black lesbians illustrates that some lesbian relationships involve a butch lesbian who enters into a relationship with a straight woman (Swarr, 2012a, p. 962). This can often result in the unquestioned reproduction of gender norms reflecting dominant masculine roles and subservient feminine roles. Adopting this heterosexual norm can lead to conflicts among lesbian women as seen with Sigasa and Nkabinde. Butch lesbian visibility also becomes possible through an expression of masculinity but as Swarr explains, and as seen in the chapter on media discourses, this can also make lesbians vulnerable to discrimination.

For Swarr,

> [l]esbians often challenge gender expectations through their expressions of masculinities and sexualities, leading to increased visibility in their communities. And many South African lesbians, especially those in the former townships outside urban centers, pursue sexual relationships with "straight" women that are deeply emotional and intense. These relationships facilitate intimacy and affirm lesbians' masculine expression. However, visibility and relationships paradoxically put lesbians in grave physical danger. Lesbians are perceived as both threatening and unavailable by men in their communities, and same-sex relationships and expressions of butchness often lead to physical attacks and rapes targeting butch lesbians. (Swarr, 2012a, p. 962)

Sigasa's visibility as both a butch lesbian and an activist formed part of her identity. Nkabinde writes the following about who Sigasa was: "Sizakele was a well known [sic] out lesbian and HIV activist working for the Positive Women's Network. Whoever murdered her and Salome, who was the mother of a one-year-old baby, knew they were lesbians" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 144). Therefore, their lesbian status and their relationship as suggested by Swarr made them visible but simultaneously made them vulnerable to rape and homophobia.

While black lesbians are often represented as unintelligible and unliveable in media texts, Nkabinde's account of their lives provides important counter discourses. Nkabinde reflects beyond the violence associated with their sexuality and writes of their relationships, their professions, and their families. The autobiography plays an important role in foregrounding Sigasa and Masooa's position within a family, community and society. Black lesbians are often depicted as ungrievable victims of violence in the print media. Nkabinde's text challenges this mode of representation and emphasises how these women formed part of a community that grieved their loss. Nkabinde writes,

> [h]undred [sic] of people crammed into the Ipelegeng Centre and the Mopedi Community Hall for their memorial and funeral services. It was so crowded that I could not get into the hall. I spoke to Sizakele in my heart. I told her I was praying that she should fight and not rest until the people who killed her have been brought to justice. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 144)

Sigasa and Masooa are described as valued members of their community. They are mourned by family members and community members who they supported through their activism. Nkabinde accomplishes something important when she addresses Sigasa. She confirms her survivability even though her life has been taken. For example, although black lesbians are murdered they continue to live on in the memories of those who knew them; memories that

encourage members of the community to seek justice by finding and prosecuting the perpetrators of corrective rape and murder.

Where many butch black lesbians are defined as vulnerable to rape Nkabinde defines herself as different from other lesbians because of her status as a traditional healer. Nkabinde's sangoma status provides her with a special measure of protection and Nkabinde writes that people in the community are scared of traditional healers. A clear distinction is made in Nkabinde's text between lesbians that are violated for their sexuality and Nkabinde who has been called to assume her position as a traditional healer. Nkabinde recognises the challenges for black lesbians living in South African townships and writes that,

> [i]t is difficult and dangerous for black lesbians in Soweto. Lesbians are contracting HIV because of rape. Men don't accept lesbians. They think they have to teach them a lesson by raping them. They call it "corrective rape." Black lesbians who have been raped say that during rape the rapist insults them, saying things like, "Ja, you! You thought you were a man!" Or, "You are a lesbian because you have never had a great penis!" Men think that if they teach a lesbian how to have sex with a man it will change her behaviour. But will a woman who is raped feel like sleeping with a man? Has being lesbian got anything to do with men? (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 145)

Nkabinde distances herself from the danger and threat associated with being a lesbian in the passage above. At the same time as defining corrective rape, she also challenges the assumption that lesbians can be made straight by rape. This is challenged when she poses the necessary questions that are omitted in print media representations on black lesbian life. In addition to this, she uncouples the association of black lesbianism and rape when she legitimately claims that being a lesbian has nothing to do with men and hereby challenges the discourse prevalent in the media where black lesbian sexuality is associated with the punitive practice of corrective rape.

The reality for black lesbians is that they remain unprotected and vulnerable to homophobia and rape. This is highlighted in the autobiography when Nkabinde writes that "[t]here are no safe spaces anywhere" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 146). She furthermore references a problem concerning space when she writes about the lack of available spaces for black lesbians to express their sexuality and meet other lesbians.

Nkabinde writes,

> [t]here is one lesbian event that is happening in Rosebank [central Johannesburg], but it is once a month. To go there if you are a lesbian from the township means you must first pay double transport to go to Rosebank, then you must have money for drinks, and when

> you finish clubbing at 12 at night you must have money for a meter taxi back to the township. It is not easy. That is why lesbians who are looking for fun or to meet people will go to Breeze [a nightclub in Soweto] even though they have heard of all the incidents and they know that lesbians are targeted when they leave the club. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 146)

An issue that was raised in *The Writing Circle* concerning hiding one's sexuality also emerges in Nkabinde's autobiography. While Nkabinde feels comfortable in expressing her lesbian sexuality, this is not the case for all black lesbians. Women who identify as butch are framed as particularly vulnerable to corrective rape and other homophobic attacks. Nkabinde expresses a difference between herself and other lesbians when she writes, "I am more protected than other butch lesbians because I am a sangoma and because I am well known in my community but I do sometimes have that fear in me" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 147). Nkabinde defines herself as different from other lesbians but she does recognise the risks involved with assuming a lesbian identity. A certain measure of freedom exists for Nkabinde as a lesbian sangoma and this is carefully articulated and claimed through performative acts in her autobiography. However, Nkabinde's interviews with lesbian sangomas revealed that some of them felt the need to hide their sexuality. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that all lesbian sangomas feel protected because of their sangoma status.

Research on black lesbians in post-apartheid South Africa has historically focused on the violence that surrounds their sexuality. This has resulted in the erasure of representations of agency and desire in the lives of black lesbian women. In what follows I am interested in exploring how Nkabinde's autobiography provides an oppositional interpretation in terms of identities, interests and desires which becomes possible through her positive identification as a black lesbian woman. Nkabinde's sexuality is carefully shaped and articulated through her ancestral calling. This complex process of identification and negotiation of sexuality will be examined in the sections that follow.

Nkabinde's lesbian and gender identity

Opening up possibilities: Ancestral guidance toward female masculinity

Nkabinde opens and closes her autobiography with a praise poem dedicated to her ancestor, Nkunzi. Nkunzi performs an influential role in Nkabinde's life and Nkabinde simultaneously claims agency and defines her desires in the autobiography. Nkabinde opens her autobiography by claiming her identity: "My name is Nkunzi. I am a Zulu woman, a lesbian, and a sangoma. This is my story" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 4). Nkabinde's autobiography is a

fascinating account of her life in that it speaks to the different components of her identity; she carefully defines who she is and foregrounds the interconnected nature of her culture, sexuality and her status as a traditional healer. The opening statement in Nkabinde's autobiography is important in terms of what it accomplishes rhetorically. She begins by claiming "[m]y name is Nkunzi" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 4), and since Nkunzi is the name of her male ancestor, Nkabinde immediately challenges the norms that govern gender and language by claiming a male name. In a discussion of a fictional narrative about the tomboy Halberstam suggests that language fixes people in place artificially but securely (Halberstam, 1998, p. 7). Choosing a name is part of this process of fixing people in their place, something that Nkabinde challenges when choosing a male name and identifying with the male ancestral spirit whose name she has adopted.

Nkabinde was born on the 7th of December 1975. She is a twin however her brother was stillborn. Nkabinde writes of the influence of Zulu culture and tradition in her life and the autobiography illustrates how her sexuality is defined as closely connected with her culture and her ancestral calling. The intimate relationship that she has with her ancestor is foregrounded in the beginning of the autobiography and emerges as a central theme throughout. Nkabinde explains:

> When I think about my life, I realize that I felt the presence of the ancestors at a young age. They were always with me. I have been told that twins have special powers for communicating with *Amadlozi*[27] and with each other. Now I understand that my twin brother died because otherwise I was going to die. Something happened in my mother's womb so that only one of us could survive and my ancestors saw that it had to be me because of the work that I am supposed to do to bring healing to the family and to the community. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 13)

Nkabinde's brother, a male figure who was connected with her in the womb, is lost, but replaced by a male ancestral figure intimately connected to Nkabinde and framed as calling her to a greater purpose. This passage also illustrates how Nkabinde situates herself within a traditional context. Nkabinde writes of the loss of her brother as something that was predestined by the ancestors. She also writes that her purpose in life is to bring healing to the family and community. The healing purpose in her life serves as an important counter discourse. In contrast to the notion that black lesbian women are seen as challenging the traditional family structure and corrupting community values, Nkabinde's narrative provides

[27] Amadlozi is the Zulu word for ancestors.

an oppositional interpretation and frame where her relationship with the ancestors provides the opportunity to bring about healing.

In addition to defining a purpose for her life, the loss of Nkabinde's brother is also appropriated in a manner that affirms her lesbian sexuality. Nkabinde writes, "[a]fter hearing the news about my twin brother, I started to think about how my life would be different if he had lived. Maybe I wouldn't even be gay" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 7). In this way, Nkabinde's lesbian sexuality becomes framed as permissible, partly as an effect of the "male presence" in a society that defines it as unAfrican or unnatural. Nkabinde's lesbian identity is furthermore sanctioned by her ancestral calling where Nkunzi is defined as inhabiting and using her body.

Nkabinde's identification as lesbian is framed in different ways dependent on her social location. On the one hand Nkabinde's sexuality is legitimated by the male ancestral spirit that wills her to have a desire for other women. On the other hand, Nkabinde also identifies as a lesbian by claiming the rights made possible for sexual minorities through South Africa's democratic constitution. It is clear that Nkabinde accomplishes something quite unique through the narration of her lesbian identity and it may be productive to examine this accomplishment by reflecting on historical perspectives on sexuality. The perspectives that are relevant for the analysis include Michel Foucault's definition of *Scientia Sexualis* and ideas concerning the lesbian as someone stuck between the masculine and feminine. For example, Foucault describes how any expression outside heterosexuality became defined as a perversion. Lesbian women were often defined as inverts or as women stuck between genders. Foucault refers to *Scientia Sexualis* or the "science of sexuality" which was considered civilisation's method of telling the truth about sex in society (Foucault, 1990, p. 51). Foucault writes of the way in which sexuality has been influenced by a historical construction of truth and falsehood which needs to be revised. Foucault states that,

> [t]he essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable: in short, that sex was constituted as a problem of truth. (Foucault, 1990, pp. 56-57)

The *truth about sex* has historically posed challenges in terms of narrating one's identity, gender and sexuality in literature. In Western 19th and early 20th century discourse sexual desires that did not resemble those specific to heterosexuality were defined as perversions. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, for instance, describes the lesbian as a masculine soul in a feminine bosom (Von Krafft-Ebing, 1998, p. 264).

This idea is also present in Nkabinde's autobiography where Nkunzi (the masculine soul) is defined as inhabiting Nkabinde (the feminine bosom). However, where this was defined as a perversion in the past it may be argued that Nkabinde accomplishes something different when she writes about Nkunzi's presence in her life. Nkabinde's appropriation of the masculine spirit is something positive that legitimises Nkabinde's lesbian identification. Nkabinde's identification process is complex and varied and she negotiates her sexuality differently when she moves between identifying as male, female, butch, in-between, ancestrally guided and innately lesbian. Therefore, Nkabinde does not choose to identify with a specific label or category but moves between different forms of gender and sexual identification in a more fluid way. It can be argued that previously held assumptions, for example, that there is a specific truth to sex or that heterosexuality is the acceptable standard or norm in society is challenged in this text written by a black lesbian traditional healer.

The way in which Zulu culture forms a central part of Nkabinde's life is also prominent in the autobiography. Nkabinde does not outright reject culture on the basis of its patriarchal foundation but rather works with it in order to define a unique cultural identity for herself. Nkabinde spent part of her childhood growing up in a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal with her uncle Vusumuzi. Nkabinde's father was largely absent while she was growing up and she developed a close relationship with her uncle. Nkabinde speaks fondly of this time in KwaZulu-Natal where she learnt about Zulu culture and the different roles prescribed for men and women. Nkabinde describes her discomfort with some of the women's roles in the passage below:

> I learned what is expected of a Zulu girl and I learned about the life of a Zulu man. I was more interested in the life of a Zulu man. Some of the girls' things did not feel right for me. I remember I was told to drink warm milk from the cow so that I would grow up to be a healthy mother and give birth to healthy children. I had to struggle to drink that milk. I didn't like the taste and I didn't see myself as someone who would get pregnant and be the mother of children. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 20)

Nkabinde feels less comfortable with women's roles and she rejects norms associated with being a woman such as motherhood. She expresses a desire to write a book about her life because she knows that she will not have children (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 78). Her choice to write a book (an intellectual production) can also be read as resistance to the patriarchal ideal for women to produce children and be confined to motherhood. Nkabinde acknowledges the roles prescribed for women and does not reject them but her appropriation of the masculine

through her ancestral spirit and her respect for the traditional provides her with the space and freedom to identify differently within this context.

Nkabinde does not only feel uncomfortable with becoming a mother but also expresses discomfort with some of her physical features. Although it may appear like Nkabinde conforms to transgender identity I argue that her multiple forms of identification challenge this idea. For example, Nkabinde's acceptance and enjoyment of the female spirit in her ancestral work indicates that Nkabinde is not entirely uncomfortable with femininity. Similar to butch black lesbians Nkabinde identifies as masculine[28] but does not fit the category of transgender. Halberstam foregrounds how it becomes easy to blur the boundaries of butchness and transgender when she writes that,

> [b]ecause of its reliance on notions of authenticity and the real, the category of butch realness is situated on the sometimes vague boundary between transgender and butch definition. The realness of the butch masculinity can easily tip, in other words, into the desire for a more sustained realness in a recognizable male body. (Halberstam, 1998, p. 248)

However, although it may be tempting to view Nkabinde's sexuality from a Western perspective and define it as transgender I argue that this needs to be resisted because Nkabinde achieves something unique in terms of challenging gender norms and appropriates female masculinity for herself in a society that considers it taboo. On this matter, Swarr argues that "[i]nstead of fitting Northern labels or medicalized categories, butchness [in South Africa] has come to encompass physical and social manifestations of masculinities that bridge sexual orientation and gender identification" (Swarr, 2012a, p. 969). While many black lesbians are targeted because of their *deviant* sexuality and labelled 'stabane' or intersex, Nkabinde's movement between the masculine, feminine, in-between and lesbian identity categories within a tradition that she defines as more flexible in terms of gender roles may afford her this sense of freedom. Nkabinde does not only relate to the masculine but sometimes speaks about herself as positioned *in-between* the masculine and feminine. She writes,

> [a]lthough I love it when there is a female spirit in me, I have never learned to cope with menstruation or with having breasts. I hate breasts. I didn't want to have breasts. I have never bound my breasts but my breasts are a part of my body that I don't like. If I was rich, I would have an operation to remove my breasts. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 19)

[28] The following definition by Amanda Lock Swarr (2012a: 964) concerning masculinities is relevant to the way in which the term is used in this chapter. She writes that "[m]asculinities are usually understood as composed of appearances, traits, and behaviors socioculturally agreed upon as associated with males."

The afore-mentioned passage may also reference that the female body and physical anatomy are regarded as burdensome. Feminist critics have made a connection between a woman's body and her unfree status in society. For example, Young (1980) describes how women experience the body as a burden because of the physical and hormonal changes which the body undergoes through puberty, menstruation and pregnancy (Young, 1980, p. 139). In other situations however, Nkabinde enjoys the feminine aspects of herself and she writes that, "[e]ven now, I enjoy the times when I feel feminine. I become emotional and I show my emotions when I have a feminine spirit in me. This feminine side is still in me but it doesn't come out very often, except in my work as a healer" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 23). In this example, the feminine is embraced on a spiritual/conceptual level but in other references the female body is defined as a physiological/material constraint. Femininity is accepted and enjoyed in Nkabinde's spiritual work but masculinity and her embodiment of it is embraced in Nkabinde's identification as a lesbian and in her everyday life.

Reference to her breasts and menstruation can also be linked to Nkabinde's refusal to embrace the femininity connected with female adolescence. It is clear that Nkabinde strongly identifies as a tomboy before reaching adolescence. Judith Halberstam's theory of female masculinity and the category of the tomboy is significant here. According to Halberstam,

> [f]emale adolescence represents the crisis of coming of age as a girl in a male-dominated society. If adolescence for boys represents a rite of passage (much celebrated in Western literature in the form of the bildungsroman), and an ascension to some version (however attenuated) of social power, for girls, adolescence is a lesson in restraint, punishment and repression. It is in the context of female adolescence that the tomboy instincts of millions of girls are remodelled into compliant forms of femininity. (Halberstam, 1998, p. 6)

Halberstam continues to explain that it is amazing, given the social constraints they live with, that some women emerge as masculine at the end of adolescence (Halberstam, 1998, p. 6). In addition to lesbian sexuality, female masculinity is a central concept in this study. Female masculinity as represented in the chapter on print media representations of black lesbian life is framed as reprehensible and in need of correction. Given this context Nkabinde accomplishes something unique when she challenges and resists gender norms by performing her gender and sexuality differently. She performatively adopts female masculinity and lesbian sexuality by referencing the male ancestor, Nkunzi. Nkabinde's ancestral calling and the ceremony that she undergoes to become a traditional healer can be defined as a rite of passage and the role that Nkunzi plays in her life provides her with the possibility to ascend

to a version of social power disallowed in the lives of other women or butch lesbians, which also enables her female masculinity as one possible identification.

Judith Butler's (1990) central thesis in *Gender Trouble* helps explain Nkabinde's fluid, performative and complex gender expression. The performative component of Nkabinde's gender expression becomes possible through her ancestral calling which makes it possible for Nkabinde to negotiate her identity and sexuality in the text. Butler writes that her aim was to "open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized. One might wonder what use 'opening up possibilities' finally is, but no one who has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is 'impossible,' illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate is likely to pose that question" (Butler, 1990, p. viii). Butler's use of the term 'normative' in terms of the norms that govern gender is an important framework within which to discuss minority sexualities such as presented in the case of Nkabinde. As described by Butler, bodies and identities that fall outside of these normative categories have historically been and continue to be read as false, unintelligible and unreliable.

Nkabinde's gender expression may be described as active or performative. For example, it may be useful to speak about the *in-between* or transitional process that disrupts normative gender categories as liberating for sexual minorities or groups historically excluded from cultural archives. Although I refute the usefulness of transgender identity for reading Nkabinde's identity it may be useful to draw from the in-between status or active component of identity related to transsexual being to describe the performance present in Nkabinde's articulation of her gender and sexual identity. Butler (1990) poses an important question with regard to this *in-between* status when she writes, "[w]hat about the notion, suggested by Kate Bornstein, that a transsexual cannot be described by the noun of a 'woman' or a 'man', but must be approached through active verbs that attest to the constant transformation which 'is' the new identity or, indeed, the 'in-betweenness' that puts the being of gendered identity into question?" (Butler, 1990, p. xii). This process of performing one's identity and embodying that identity dependent on the context is representative of this 'in-betweenness' that troubles gender identity and queers normative conceptualisations of African sexualities. For example, before Nkabinde receives a calling to become a traditional healer she already identifies as a lesbian. She writes, "[w]hen we arrived at home, I went to the dictionary to look up the word, 'lesbian' and after reading what it said I thought, okay, that's what I am" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 33). As a young girl, Nkabinde felt uncomfortable being dressed in female clothes and speaks

about her desire to be more masculine in dress and behaviour. In the example below Nkabinde defines the desire to be more masculine in dress and appearance as something innate and reference can also be made here to the performative act of embodying a masculine gender. Nkabinde explains:

> Sometimes, when my mother made me wear a dress, tears would come to my eyes because I felt so uncomfortable. It felt wrong to me. I felt I was not supposed to be wearing a dress. As soon as I could, I would change into jeans or shorts or a tracksuit. Then I felt I could go anywhere. My mom would nag me and tell me to stop being so rough. I wanted to tell her, my mom, that there is something that makes me like this and I am free when I am like this. I think Nkunzi was in this part of me even when I was growing up. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 24)

In this example a measure of freedom is associated with masculine dress and tomboyish embodiment in Nkabinde's life. She refers to this freedom in her dress style and identification as a young girl and acknowledges Nkunzi as being a part of her choices at this stage already. Nkabinde's lesbian identity therefore becomes inseparable from her ancestral calling even before she assumes her role as a traditional healer. Nkabinde's identity as a lesbian and as a traditional healer can be defined as part of a hybrid cultural identity. Although Nkabinde goes through a process of identifying as lesbian, as she enters adulthood she ascribes her same-sex desires increasingly to Nkunzi. However, while Nkunzi assumes a primary location in Nkabinde's life there are also instances where she independently defines her lesbian sexuality. Numerous negotiations are undertaken to accomplish this and they are constructed through her identity and location as Zulu, lesbian and as a traditional healer.

Nkabinde and negotiations of sexuality

Doing things differently: Hybrid cultural and gender identities in the post-colony

Nkabinde's identification as lesbian and the negotiations that ensue are framed as dependent on her race, class, and belief system. Given Nkabinde's varied social locations, gender should not be used as the only analytical category in exploring her identity construction. An intersectional approach which considers the routed forms of oppression in black lesbian lives and the way in which they have responded to practices of marginalisation and exclusion may be productive for an analysis of Nkabinde and other lesbian sangoma's lives. An intersectional analysis may also be productive for reading how sangomas have expressed their sexuality at different times in history depending on social location and the socio-political climate. Identification for lesbian sangomas is not a simple process and there are instances where heterosexual norms have been reproduced when claiming a lesbian identity

within a traditional context. This section explores some of the nuanced ways in which Nkabinde and other sangomas have claimed autonomy for themselves.

Although Nkabinde's narrative challenges some norms there are also accounts where gender norms in society are reproduced. For instance, this can be seen when Nkabinde assumes a masculine identity which is regarded dominant and privileged in Zulu culture. The institution for traditional healers has been defined as one of the spaces in which female traditional healers can identify as lesbian because of the guidance of the masculine ancestral spirit. Ruth Morgan and Graeme Reid (2003) suggest that this institution may have been one avenue for African women to define themselves outside patriarchy. Cheryl Stobie however argues against this and states that,

> [t]his somewhat simplistic formulation ignores problematic issues such as: the negotiation between traditional beliefs and practices, on the one hand, and a modern, globalised frame of reference, on the other, as represented in the text; the portrayal of difficulties when the desires of the male ancestor are at variance with the agency of the sangoma; and representations of masculinity with Zulu culture as portrayed by Nkabinde. (Stobie, 2011, p. 158)

In Nkabinde's autobiography one can identify instances where her desires are at variance with Nkunzi's wishes or will. However, while these challenges exist it becomes clear that Nkabinde situates herself within a traditional context and that a level of autonomy and agency is acquired and made new at the interstices between the traditional and modern or African and unAfrican. This becomes clear, for example, when Nkabinde argues that the sangoma tradition is flexible in terms of gender roles. Nkabinde describes her identity as *in-between* the masculine and the feminine. She writes,

> [i]n traditional Zulu culture, a man must be a man and do male things and a woman must be a woman and do female things but with sangomas it's more flexible. I can dance like a woman and wear a woman's clothes and dance like a man and wear a man's clothes. I can do the work of a man, like slaughtering a goat or a cow, although in traditional Zulu culture a woman cannot slaughter. As long as I have respect for the animal that is being slaughtered, I can do the work of a man. Sometimes I become too much of a man and people will look at me and say, "Today you look like a man." That is when I know it is Nkunzi's spirit in me. If I am just myself then I am not too much of a man, I am feminine too. Then I know it's me. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 73)

Nkabinde's diverse expressions of gender in different locations and at different times emphasises the performative nature of gender and the fluidity of gender roles and expressions in her life. Nkabinde challenges gender norms and the quote above illustrates how she positions herself rhetorically in relation to these governing norms. On the performative nature

of gender, Swarr draws on Judith Butler's work and states that, "gender performativity reminds us that, far from imitating men, butches exploit conceptions of masculinities for which there are no ideal models or originals, constantly redefining what it is to be masculine" (Swarr, 2012a, p. 968). In the same way that butch lesbians create masculinities, Nkabinde accomplishes this by positioning herself within a traditional context where her desires and future are governed by her ancestral spirit, Nkunzi.

Nkabinde's gender and sexuality are however not only defined in relation to her position as a sangoma but also in her search for community and in her lesbian identity in a South African context. It may be argued that Nkabinde achieves a greater sense of freedom in her sexuality and role in society by articulating her ancestor's belief that one of his grandchildren would take his name and do things in a *different way* (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 53). The notion that Nkabinde does things in "a different way" also reflects onto themes concerning the performative nature of gender.[29] It is important to emphasise that Nkabinde is not simply copying a hegemonic form of masculinity but appropriating it and adapting it to suit her needs. In other words, what Nkabinde accomplishes is a form of butch realness where "…masculinity is neither assimilated into maleness nor opposed to it; rather it involves an active disidentification with dominant forms of masculinity, which are subsequently recycled into alternative masculinities" (Halberstam, 1998, p. 248).

One central way in which Nkabinde's lesbian identity becomes sanctioned is through the statement that Nkunzi *uses her body*. Nkabinde argues that Nkunzi inhabits her body and that his presence influences her expression of masculinity and ultimately becomes an embodied experience that wills her desire for other women. While Chapter Two argued that butch lesbian sexuality makes lesbians more visible but vulnerable to violence, Nkabinde's autobiography demonstrates how (butch) embodiment for a black lesbian woman can be associated with something positive such as agency and active lesbian desire. Nkabinde references the ancestors' role in assisting her to actively express her lesbian desire in the following passage:

[29] In *Female Masculinity*, Judith Halberstam focuses on the performative nature of masculinity and butch realness in drag king performances. Halberstam's observation pertaining to the race of the drag performer (the drag king) is also important in terms of understanding how Nkabinde's race influences the visibility of masculinity. For Halberstam, "…the category of butch realness is often occupied by nonwhite drag kings, attesting specifically to the way that masculinity becomes visible as masculinity once it leaves the sphere of normative white maleness" (Halberstam, 1998, pp. 247-248). In other words, the performance of masculinity by non-whites references the denaturalised status of masculinity.

> I feel my sexuality was with me from birth. It is not from my ancestors, but my ancestors supported me. When I was a child I didn't have a choice about things like wearing a dress but as I grew up I knew I must express the feelings that were inside me and do what was right for me. My ancestors helped me to become who I was. They guided me knowing that I was going to grow up being the way I am. My sexuality is from my childhood. (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 38)

It is at this intersection of an autonomous identification process *and* an ancestral calling that Nkabinde employs aspects of both the traditional and the modern to legitimate her sexuality. Morgan and Reid write that "[i]n South Africa, a modern gay and lesbian movement co-exists and often intersects with more traditional elements in a hybrid and multi-faceted way" (2003, p. 376). Nkabinde articulates her sexuality and identity at the intersection of the traditional and the modern and by doing so new possibilities pertaining to sexuality, race and identity start to emerge. In contrast to the representation of rape in Maart's novel where the masculine – always only connected to male bodies – invasively inhabits and objectifies the female body, in Nkabinde's autobiography the spectral masculine is defined as inhabiting the female body but results in a performative display of agency and the legitimisation of lesbian desire within a traditional context.

The notion of a hybrid identity or identities is particularly relevant in a post-colonial and postmodern context. Hybrid identities are seen as productive forms of identification for those previously marginalised and Homi Bhabha (1994) explains that "[t]hese 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). Meaning emerges at the borderline between the traditional and modern in texts like Nkabinde's where identity is reconceptualised. In the words of Bhabha, "[t]he borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 11). However, while Bhabha emphasises the potential that borderline spaces offer, some feminists have critiqued this perspective. As argued by Nira Yuval-Davis, while 'hybrid' spaces provide reference to the 'boundaries' of the nation, Bhabha "fails to consider: that 'counter narratives', even if radical in their form, do not necessarily have to be progressive in their messages" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 59). Therefore, while Bhabha's theorisation regarding hybrid spaces may be seen as productive in terms of newness and identifying boundaries, it also becomes apparent that there are limitations to this newness. For example, Yuval-Davis points to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's claim that "counter-narratives have to be situated within

wider negotiations of meaning and power at the same time as recognizing local stakes and specificities" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 59). In Nkabinde's life these local stakes and specificities that are grounded in a patriarchal culture can be seen as restrictive. Therefore, although Nkabinde's engagement with the modern and the traditional and the 'newness' of identity can be defined as progressive, there are also limits within the wider context of meaning and power. This becomes apparent when Nkabinde adopts practices that reproduce heteronormative ideals.

As Stobie observes, Nkabinde's appropriation of the masculine can also result in a reproduction of heteronormative views toward sexuality. In the same way that perpetrators of corrective rape discursively construct themselves as sexually dominant, Nkabinde positions herself similarly when she writes, "I have slept with gay women and straight women, married women and single women. I love the challenge of straight women, especially if they are married or have partners. I always say, 'If you experience the touch of a woman you will never want a man again'" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 69). While Nkabinde does not rape these women, her expression of masculinity is closely aligned with a heterosexual code that gives her access to women's bodies, even those who perceive themselves as unavailable to her. By identifying as the dominant (masculine) partner Nkabinde assumes a position of masculine privilege which reinforces a gender hierarchy that may result in inequality. Lesbian identification and Nkabinde's performance of her gender and sexuality take up a central part of the autobiography. However, reference is also made to Nkabinde's loneliness in identifying as a lesbian sangoma and her search for community. In what follows I examine how Nkabinde's search for community may also affirm her own lesbian identity.

Similar to Maart's novel there is a strong sense of solidarity and community that is foregrounded in Nkabinde's autobiography. Nkabinde expresses a strong wish to establish a sense of community with other lesbian traditional healers. Her identification as a lesbian sangoma enables her to become involved with a project that was initiated by Ruth Morgan from the Gay and Lesbian Archives (GALA). Nkabinde met with Morgan in 2002 and through this meeting heard of the opportunity to become involved in a project to interview lesbian sangomas across South Africa. Nkabinde sees this as an opportunity to connect with a community and consolidate her identity. She writes, "I had a strong need to be connected to other lesbian sangomas because for a long time I had felt completely alone. I wanted to live my life as a sangoma and a lesbian – as one person – not divided up into pieces and I wanted to connect with other lesbians who felt the same way" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 79).

Nkabinde's desire to connect her lesbian identity with her sangoma status performs an important function in writing the self. In a society where black lesbianism is considered unnatural and to a certain degree false, Nkabinde's desire to connect with other lesbian traditional healers and her ability to do so undermines discourses that frame lesbians as unreal or inconceivable. Nkabinde's autobiography makes it clear that black lesbians challenge a heteronormative standard, and as Adrienne Rich argued already in 1980, compulsory heterosexuality has been challenged by lesbians for a long time. For Rich, "[t]he fact is that women in every culture and throughout history have undertaken the task of independent, non-heterosexual, woman-connected existence, to the extent made possible by their context, often in the belief that they were the 'only ones' ever to have done so" (Rich, 1980, p. 635). In a similar way, Nkabinde's sense of loneliness as articulated in her autobiography serves as an impetus to connect with other lesbian sangomas. By meeting with other lesbian traditional healers, Nkabinde's lesbian identity and traditional sangoma status are affirmed through their sharing of stories.

A prominent issue that emerges in Nkabinde's interviews with lesbian sangoma's is their shared capacity to assume and express both the masculine and feminine in their lives and in their ancestral work. The first interview that Nkabinde writes about in her autobiography concerns a lesbian sangoma called Bongiwe. Nkabinde describes meeting Bongiwe and states, "I thought she would be butch because of her voice on the phone. But I was surprised to find her dressed in feminine clothes, a white T-shirt and skirt with flowers on it and a sangoma cloth wrapped around her. She was barefoot. The first thing I noticed about her was that she had breasts and a beard like a man who has just shaved. I was impressed by her way of expressing the male and the female in her at the same time" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 80). Bongiwe is not defined as transgender but rather regarded as expressing both genders. Nkabinde's identification as both feminine and masculine recurs in her autobiography, and her discovery that other lesbian sangomas share the expression of both the masculine and feminine affirms her own identification as both butch and feminine but also shows how other black lesbians express their gender and sexuality in different ways. Similar to Bongiwe's expression of the masculine and feminine Nkabinde writes of the expression of femininity in her own ancestral work but references masculinity and the embodiment thereof in relation to Nkunzi and her desire for other women.

These gender performances are defined by Butler as follows:

> The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an "internal" feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, as an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures. (Butler, 1990, p. xv-xvi)

Such "bodily acts" are, as we have seen, constitutive of femininity and masculinity in the texts analysed in this chapter.

In the section that follows I map some of the counter discourses in Nkabinde's autobiography that focus on the intelligibility of black lesbian women and I foreground some of the myths pertaining to sexual violence and the immanent status ascribed to femininity in Maart's novel.

Counter narratives in *Black Bull, Ancestors and Me*

The performance of subjectivity in a traditional and modern context

In an article by South African journalist Tanya Farber, the relationship between masculinity and maleness and lesbian identity emerge as prominent issues related to violence against black lesbians. An interview conducted by Farber demonstrates that 'Siyanda', a man convicted of corrective rapes, believes there is a difference between lesbians and tomboys. He says, "'I will leave a lesbian to her own life. She knows she is a girl and dresses like a girl. It is these ones who act like men, who come and share our drinks and smokes and dress like us, they are the ones I must catch. I say 'come here so I can show you who on earth you are. After being with me, they know who they are'" (Farber, 2011b, p. 7). Siyanda's comment illustrates that he believes that masculinity is a natural consequence of maleness. These beliefs are widespread with the result that butch lesbian women are punished for assuming a gender expression believed to be reserved for men.

Halberstam argues that the relationship between masculinity and maleness has become naturalised in the global north. Furthermore, Halberstam suggests that female masculinity is met with most disapproval when coupled with lesbianism. Halberstam's book makes an argument for female masculinity by addressing itself to a "collective failure to imagine and ratify the masculinity produced by, for, and within women" (Halberstam, 1998, p. 15). A decade after the publication of *Female Masculinity*, the question of female masculinity for

butch black lesbians emerged as a prominent concern, as the increasing incidence of corrective rape was often framed as intended to cure lesbians of their (masculine) sexuality, as evident in the quotations above. Halberstam's theorisation around female masculinity provides new ways of thinking about the tomboy identities assumed by black lesbians in South Africa. For Halberstam gender is imprecise and elastic, which allows for a proliferation of expression. Halberstam argues that,

> [b]ecause so few people actually match any given community standards for male or female, in other words, gender can be imprecise and therefore multiply relayed through a solid binary system. At the same time, because the definitional boundaries of male and female are so elastic, there are very few people in any given public space who are completely unreadable in terms of their gender.
>
> Ambiguous gender, when and where it does appear, is inevitably transformed into deviance, thirdness, or a blurred version of either male or female. (Halberstam, 1998, p. 20)

Gender ambiguity becomes particularly salient in the discourse surrounding butch black lesbians in South Africa. Newspaper reports and research on female masculinities among lesbians reveal that terms such as 'stabane'/intersex are used to label African lesbian sexualities. By failing to conform to the norms prescribed by a strictly heterosexual standard lesbians often acquire the label 'intersex' or are regarded deviant and considered something in-between male and female.

However, such "deviancy" can also be mystified. In one example reference is even made to a snake in bed in an attempt to explain how two women can make love to each other. For instance, in an article titled 'There was nobody I could scream to', Tanya Farber reports on the community's views on lesbian sexuality and writes the following about a young lesbian she calls 'Lindi':

> In her late teens, Lindi fell in love with a young woman and they started a relationship. Not long after, a neighbour visited her mother and said "I think Lindi has got a snake." The myth of lesbians keeping a snake in bed for lovemaking was one that would come to haunt Lindi – and in a much more violent form later. (Farber, 2011a, p. 6)

In this example gender non-conformity is treated with suspicion. This also emerges in Nkabinde's autobiography where her sexuality is framed as a disability and her mother refers to Nkabinde as her disabled child. When her daughter comes out as lesbian, Nkabinde's mother responds as follows: "[e]ach and every family has their child that is disabled. God gave you to me as my disabled child. You are my child. If I throw you out, who is going to take you? I love you like all the other children" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 36). In this passage

Nkabinde's sexuality is framed as 'difference' but she is simultaneously addressed as an important family member who is loved. Therefore while there are examples that frame black lesbians as different, reprehensible and unwanted here we see recognition of difference but also a statement of acceptance.

Research conducted on same-sex traditional healers in South Africa by academics and writers such as Cheryl Stobie, Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde, Ruth Morgan and Graeme Reid reference the importance of the traditional and modern context in which same-sex sangomas find themselves living out and performing their identities and sexualities. Stobie undertakes an investigation into Nkabinde's autobiography by applying a transgender lens in approaching the boundary-crossings that are visible in Nkabinde's life. Stobie's use of transgender and the use of the phrase 'He uses my body' in Nkabinde's autobiography provide important perspectives on the way in which Nkabinde is influenced by a masculine spirit and male behaviour. Stobie argues that this 'transgender' function has both validating and conflicting effects in Nkabinde's life. While it may be productive in some ways to discuss Nkabinde's life in relation to a transgender identity, I would argue that applying a Western lens is not suitable because it detracts from Nkabinde's identification as a lesbian woman. In other words, by identifying as a lesbian woman Nkabinde is also making a political statement and hereby challenges the unintelligibility that usually surrounds lesbian sexuality, agency and desire.

Indeed, Stobie also argues that while transgender serves as a productive lens to examine Nkabinde's autobiography it can be problematic because "it entails a conflict between Nkabinde's reverence for tradition and her feminist, modernist beliefs" (Stobie, 2011, p. 149). Stobie argues that there is a validating transgender function but acknowledges that this function does not fit neatly into a Western conceptualisation thereof. Lesbian sangoma's identities and sexualities should be conceptualised in broader terms. For example, Morgan and Reid (2003) foreground the importance of local, national and transnational processes in approaching the subject of lesbian sexuality and traditional healers. For Morgan and Reid it is important to move away from the belief that sangomas are merely symbols of culture and tradition. Lesbian sangomas are influenced by local, national and transnational processes and adapt their sexuality according to context and time.

As Morgan and Reid note:

> *Sangomas* are not hermetically-sealed embodiments of tradition and culture. Nevertheless the practice of traditional healing takes place within a belief system that gives some insight into possible ways in which homosexuality was accommodated and even imbued with a certain power in Africa. (Morgan & Reid, 2003, p. 382)

The diversity of expression among lesbian sangomas that is documented in the work of Morgan and Reid (2003) and Nkabinde and Morgan (2006), confirms that sexuality, gender and identity among lesbian sangomas is influenced by local and national processes and situated within wider negotiations of power. For example, while older traditional healers have been described as understanding their sexuality "solely in terms of the will of the ancestors" (2003, p. 386), younger sangomas are described as possessing a "more hybrid sexual identity as both *sangomas* and lesbians. They first came out as lesbians before they became *sangomas*, and had to accommodate primary male ancestors who play an important role in their lives as healers and in the construction of their sexual and gender identity" (Morgan & Reid, 2003, p. 385). Nkabinde's own life is testament to this where she first discovered her lesbian sexuality and later ascribed her desire for women to her ancestor, Nkunzi. Nkabinde however admits that the ancestors were part of her life since childhood. Acknowledging the presence of the ancestors at an early stage in her life strengthens the legitimacy of both her masculine gender as well as lesbian sexuality.

As far as lesbian identification among traditional healers is concerned it may be argued that the traditional versus modern debate is less productive and can result in essentialising certain identities. A productive approach may be to consider who 'speaks' the body in Nkabinde's autobiography. Butler (1988) argues that there is a specific *grammar* in speaking the body. Butler writes of the importance of grammar and states that it is "unfortunate grammar to claim that there is a 'we' or an 'I' that does its body", she rather suggests that a vocabulary that "resists the substance metaphysics of subject-verb formations and relies instead on the ontology of present participles" (Butler, 1998, p. 521) may be productive for an understanding of the way in which the body materialises. It is perhaps better to think of Nkabinde's body becoming materialised through her performance of subjectivity. While it is important to acknowledge that Nkabinde's identity is shaped by external factors and conventions there are instances where she resists and challenges gender norms through her performativity.

On the one hand, Nkabinde's lesbian sexuality is legitimated by employing the masculine pronoun (the spectral masculine) in a traditional context where she is sometimes defined as powerless in relation to, and governed by the male ancestral spirit, while on the other hand she assumes her identity as a lesbian woman in a post-colonial context. Nkabinde's movement between the traditional and modern contexts allows for a more hybrid identity where the present and performative articulation of gender and sexual identity is sanctioned.

Although the body is influenced by historical conventions it may be argued that Nkabinde accomplishes a measure of freedom when she defines herself as powerless in relation to the will of the ancestors. For example, Nkabinde writes that "[i]f Nkunzi did not want me to be a lesbian I don't believe I would have had these feelings. He would have given me a male partner and I would have been happy with that. Nkunzi accepts me as a lesbian. He understands my feelings. Nkunzi knew he was going to use my body long before I did" (Nkabinde, 2008, p. 67). In this instance Nkabinde's lesbian sexuality is sanctioned through Nkunzi's will opening up the possibility for alternative forms of desire, agency and same-sex love.

Counter narratives in *The Writing Circle*

Recognising oppression and female solidarity as acts of resistance

A central aim of this chapter is an examination of counter discourses as they emerge in post-apartheid South African literature. While Nkabinde's autobiography referenced important counter narratives in the life of a lesbian sangoma, this section focuses on the importance of speaking back to the violence that informs the lives of South African women in Rozena Maart's novel. As we have seen, *The Writing Circle* focuses on themes such as the intelligibility of black life, lesbian sexuality, and responses to male violence.

A prominent character in *The Writing Circle* is Jazz, who is bisexual. Although the novel does not explore any of her lesbian relationships it does challenge an assumption regarding the invisibility of Indian lesbians in South Africa. Lesbian sexuality is thematised with minor characters in the novel, Cynthia and Esmeralda. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Cynthia and Esmeralda come across Carmen after she has been raped by a stranger. Cynthia and Esmeralda are mixed-race young women who support Carmen after her rape but it is clear that Cynthia is not open about her lesbian sexuality with her mother. These minor characters are important because they confirm that there is a persistent silence around lesbian sexuality. Reference to these characters illustrates a tension between uncensored violence

against women in South Africa compared with the silence and taboo that surrounds lesbian sexuality.

Another significant counter discourse in Maart's novel is concerned with the value ascribed to black life in post-apartheid South Africa. This theme is explored in Beauty's reflections on losing her brother Frank to AIDS and her husband Khaya in detention. The theme is further investigated in the loss of life and unclaimed black bodies at South African morgues. As described earlier, Beauty is the only major black female character in *The Writing Circle* and her narrative makes clear the injustices experienced by black women and men. Beauty's losses in life can also be read as linked to her place in society. She is raped as a young girl and faces many challenges that are coupled with identity and social location. Her reflections on the value of the lives of her brother, her husband, and other black lives, such as that of Peter, Isabel's rapist, centralises a debate on the value, precariousness and grievability of black lives. Beauty's views on homosexuality and illness challenge the myth that homosexuality is unAfrican, while she also challenges the notion that black lives are ungrievable. Beauty says, "I absolutely detest those who equate gayness with sin, and am least tolerant of those who place condemnation within the argument, as though punishment, like illness and death, is the obvious outcome, a deserved one at that" (*TWC*, 2007, p. 161). Hence, Beauty's experience of loss and the grievability of black life emerge as prominent themes in the novel. Thinking about Isabel's rapist, she reflects:

> How would we know how he had suffered and what his needs were? Was he a frustrated man who had suffered in his Blackness because his oppression had put him there and nowhere else? Did he get any breaks from anyone who had the wisdom and the courage to look at his potential? Why fight back by raping women? Why did he choose rape and murder when he had other options? (*TWC,* 2007, p. 54)

In this passage, Beauty relates to the human side of the perpetrator of this crime. Beauty's questions raise important concerns regarding lives that have been marginalised because of their race, class, gender, and sexuality. In the beginning of the novel, Beauty is unaware that Isabel's rapist Peter is in fact the son of a close friend, Mary. At a later stage in the novel, Beauty accompanies Mary to the morgue to identify the body of her son. In this scene the theme of grievability is raised in relation to black lives when a police constable speaks to Mary. The police constable says, "We have in our possession the bodies of several Black

men, killed within the last ten days, which have not been claimed. It is not an easy task, Madam" (*TWC*, 2007, p. 170).[30]

After Mary learns that her son Peter raped Isabel, she decides to remain quiet about the matter in order to protect her husband and herself from something that could potentially ruin her marriage and her husband's political career. Mary's silence represents the secrets held by women who inadvertently uphold a patriarchal system that reproduces a social climate in which the abuse of women becomes acceptable and normative. This silence is prevalent throughout the novel. Jazz keeps a secret about her uncle's affair with her mother and about being sexually assaulted by her father's cousin; Carmen remains silent about her father raping her; Beauty kept the secret of Mr. Pirelli who raped her; Amina kept silent about her husband's physical abuse, and Isabel refrained from seeking help and thus also remained silent about her rape. Each female character keeps secrets about sexual violence which only emerge after Isabel's rape.

Beauty's art work becomes a powerful metaphor for abused women who are in a process of recovery. Beauty is a sculptor who works on the theme of violence exercised against women's bodies. The recovering figures in Beauty's sculptures represent the women that are recovering from violence and such individual recovery processes form part of Maart's overarching theme of reconceptualising the possibilities for the female body. Young's description of women's social location as marked by immanence and transcendence can also be applied to the metaphor of these sculptures. Isabel reflects on Beauty's 'rag dolls' and describes them as follows, "[t]he dolls were models of women covered in bandages, in various stages of recovery, and looking a bit like accident victims." Isabel continues, "[t]he dolls looked like mummies, wrapped in written words and gauze, as though they had wounds, and for a second they came to life, just like that, after she told me she had named them, and I was appalled" (*TWC*, 2007, p. 111). Young conceptualises the immanent status ascribed to women because of their place in a patriarchal society but she also refers to transcendence or the possibilities available to women. The women or 'dolls' described in the passage above illustrate that women who have suffered physical and sexual abuse are often defined as objectified and unintelligible, however the recovery process in Maart's novel and the retelling of their stories of sexual violence reaches toward transcendence.

[30] The unclaimed bodies of black men can also be compared with the way in which black lesbian bodies are often framed as unclaimed and ungrievable in mediated representations of their lives.

An important counter narrative emerges at the end of the novel with the character Amina. Amina is an Indian Muslim woman who was abused for many years by her husband, Fuad. Not only the emotional but also the physical effects of the violence are attended to in Amina's story. Amina recounts the numbness in her body after the abuse she experienced by Fuad:

> Fuad hit me so hard that I think it numbed the sensation in certain parts of my body. There were times when I blacked out – just before my pregnancy – and there were days when I could not remember which day it was because I was so distraught, attending to Abdullah [Amina's son], who he hated, and avoiding the curious eyes of the maid we employed at the time. There were days when I could not feel the sensation in my nipples, even when I was breastfeeding, but I did not utter a word to anyone, because I did not want to leave a marriage that cost my father his savings and of which he seemed so proud." (*TWC*, 2007, pp. 83-84)

In the same way that Mary chooses to remain silent in order to uphold the appearance of respectability in families, Amina chooses to do the same for her father's sake, despite the abuse that *she* suffers. Toward the end of the novel, Mary decides that she wants to meet the women from the writing circle to hear the story from them personally and to tell them what she and her husband Sipho had done for her son, Peter. Mary does not want her son to be remembered only as a rapist (*TWC*, 2007, p. 179). It is however in the story of Amina who suffered severe physical abuse that we find an important counter narrative where Amina is ready to face Mary and takes responsibility for her actions that involved the disposal of Peter's body. By doing so, Amina is ready to speak back to the violence and sexual assault that she and other women from the writing circle have experienced. Amina becomes a central figure in challenging this sexual violence when she says,

> I sat in my car, recollecting my thoughts and thinking through my life. I had to face that moment when I would have to look into the eyes of another woman and tell her that I was involved in burying her son. Fuad's mother had not looked me in the eye. She did not want to see what her son had done to me and that his death, although I never wished it, brought relief. I turned the ignition on and felt a wave of strength sweep over my body. I was not afraid any more. I could face Mary. I could face her and tell her what I had done. (*TWC*, 2007, p. 199)

The meeting between Mary and the women from the writing circle serves as an important function in breaking an overwhelming silence around sexual abuse and recognising the violence enacted by men against women. The fact that the women recognise each other as subjects is also significant in terms of challenging the oppressed nature or *myth of the woman* as well as the possibility to transcend an *objectified* feminine status.

Conclusion

A prominent concern that emerges in Maart's novel and Nkabinde's autobiography is what it means to live one's life as a woman in a society where women's movement is limited because of sexual violence and where sexual minorities have historically been marginalised and excluded from the public sphere. As mentioned earlier in this chapter one of the challenges in terms of cultural representation is that black lesbian women often emerge as unintelligible and voiceless victims of violence. This chapter has therefore sought to investigate counter discourses in post-apartheid South African literature.

Feminine bodily comportment emerged as a prominent issue in both books. It is central in relation to sexual violence in Maart's novel, which reminds us of Young, who defines the feminine as "the *typical* situation of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves" (Young, 1980, p. 140). This *typical* situation often results in an immanent or objectified status ascribed to the feminine as witnessed in *The Writing Circle.* Young's essay on feminine body comportment and spatiality illuminates the way in which women live their lives as an *inhibited intentionality* as illustrated with the rape of Isabel. In the analysis of Isabel's rape in this chapter I drew from Young's theory and highlighted that the female body is often represented as objectified or manipulated by the male subject in narratives of sexual violence and rape. Additionally, this chapter foregrounds that women in the novel live their lives in an inhibited way because of the ever-present threat of sexual violence. The *Writing Circle* therefore serves as an important textual example in that it thematises the everyday nature of sexual violence in the lives of South African women and the concomitant result which this has on feminine body comportment.

In contrast to what Maart's novel accomplishes in terms of representing the situation of women living their lives in a particular way in South African society, Nkabinde's autobiography makes important truth claims that critique hierarchies and naturalised gender norms. The agency inherent to autobiography furthermore permits Nkabinde to performatively express her gender and sexuality. These expressions and acts are made possible with reference to Nkabinde's male ancestor Nkunzi who is described as using Nkabinde's body. A tension that emerges between the selected texts therefore is the immanent status ascribed to the feminine as seen in Maart's novel versus the performance of

masculinity and femininity and the possibilities that follow in terms of agency and lesbian desire in Nkabinde's autobiography.

Theories of life-writing and autobiography have proved to be useful analytical tools for the texts in this chapter. As mentioned in the introduction I was more interested in establishing what these texts accomplish than what they are. The primary focus has been to define discursive realities that inhere in these texts and to identify counter discourses on sexual violence and lesbian sexuality where they exist. First-person female narration in both texts formed an important part of identifying women as subjects speaking back to the violence perpetrated against their bodies and performing and narrating their identities. The use of autobiography to narrate lesbian identity in Nkabinde's case showed how the genre is productive in including voices of women who have previously been excluded because of their race, gender and sexual orientation. The narration of lesbian identity in Nkabinde's text demonstrated how the author successfully challenges gender norms and that the genre can be used to account for identities previously silenced or marginalised. The first-person narration of sexual violence in Maart's novel furthermore highlighted that speaking from a subject position foregrounds women's responses to sexual violence and the agency used in doing so. Both Maart's novel and Nkabinde's autobiography constitute relevant counter discourses that challenge the objectified status ascribed to women and make alternative discursive realities possible when focusing on lesbian subjectivity, desire and female sexual autonomy.

An examination of both texts demonstrates how the female narrators challenge what I referred to earlier as the *myth of the woman.* An important feature to both literary texts is that they oppose a collective account of oppression against women and thus challenge practices that frame women as unintelligible or as living their lives in an oppressed manner. In Maart's novel women speak from the position of subject and thereby challenge the tendency of others to speak on behalf of them. Narratives of sexual violence and the individual responses to this violence in a society that has represented women as without agency may be defined as a way of *writing or re-writing the body* in the novel. The novel thematises sexual violence but it also focuses on solidarity among women and their combined efforts to support each other in responding to and living through sexual violence. These women who form part of the writing circle and their narratives of sexual violence can be defined as counter discourses which challenge the *myth of the woman.*

The idea of *writing the body* is also central to Nkabinde's autobiography. The chapter examined how Nkabinde's gender and sexuality are narrated and become possible through the presence of her male ancestor Nkunzi. Nkabinde's identification as a lesbian sangoma and as a butch lesbian woman is narrated differently depending on her social location which provides her with a sense of freedom in a socio-political climate that restricts and limits the freedom and movement of black lesbian women. Nkabinde actively performs her subjectivity in this text and undermines norms that govern gender and hereby also participates in a process of *writing* and *re-writing the black lesbian body.* The practice of speaking from the position of subject and performing one's subjective status thus forms a central part of challenging *the myth of the woman and the black lesbian woman* and *writing the body* in post-apartheid fiction and autobiography.

The performance of masculinity as read in Nkabinde's autobiography denaturalises masculinity and it may be argued that while previous studies focusing on sexual violence against black lesbians have failed to uncouple maleness and masculinity, Nkabinde accomplishes a measure of agency and freedom for herself; a significant act in terms of cultural representations for butch black lesbians in South Africa. Gender hierarchies are challenged through the performance of masculinity, femininity and an in-between status in Nkabinde's text. Nkabinde *does* gender in a different way and her identity as a lesbian traditional healer and South African Zulu woman allows us to imagine alternative possibilities for black lesbian women in post-apartheid South Africa.

The notion of the counterpublic and voice can also be identified in an analysis of the texts in this chapter. I argue that life-writing and autobiography serve as competing counterpublics and that the voices in these texts perform important work in terms of narrating agency. I draw from Young's theory and agree that one should distinguish voice from identity and regard one's social position as conditioning rather than determining. Young's theory is significant in this regard because it prioritises the agency that inheres in individual voices and Young advocates for drawing from the situated knowledge of diversely situated groups. In this chapter I have argued that the voices identified in Maart's novel and Nkabinde's autobiography serve as resources for enlarged thought and capture the diverse experiences of women who have experienced sexual violence and of black women who positively identify as lesbian. These voices play an important role in terms of restoring intelligibility. For example, in Maart's novel one can identify voices that speak back to sexual violence, challenge racist accounts of sexual violence, debunk rape myths and ultimately speak for themselves. In

Nkabinde's autobiography I have identified voices that positively affirm their lesbian identity, mourn lesbian loss and fundamentally challenge the notion that homosexuality is unAfrican. In contrast to the lack of agency and voice identified in the media chapter this chapter has focused on voices that speak back to sexual violence, provide alternative and positive representations of black lesbian sexuality and contribute to restoring lesbian subjectivity and intelligibility.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUEERING THE ARCHIVE: ZANELE MUHOLI'S VISUAL ACTIVISM AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Introduction

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis examines the oeuvre of artist Zanele Muholi's visual activism. Muholi has produced the largest photographic collection of black lesbians and transgender men in South Africa and in 2016 was named[31] one of the 100 most influential contemporary artists, making her the most recognised female African artist to date (Van Niekerk, 2016). A study of cultural representations of black lesbian sexuality in South Africa would be incomplete without an analysis of Muholi's work.

For this chapter I have chosen to include Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* which forms part of the first photographic collection titled *Only half the picture* (2006), as well as *Faces and Phases 2006-2014*, her second collection. *Hate Crime Series* has featured most prominently in scholarship dealing with Muholi's visual activism and these studies have been informed by themes of sexual violence, lesbian identity and homophobia. The series documents hate crimes against black lesbians in South Africa and the photographs challenge representations of these women as victims of homophobic violence. Apart from Kylie Thomas' (2010; 2013b; 2014) analysis of Muholi's full *Hate Crime Series*, analyses by other scholars (e.g. Lewis, 2005; Gunkel, 2009, 2010; Gqola, 2011; Baderoon, 2011; Makhubu, 2012; Van der Vlies, 2012; Salley, 2012; Matebeni, 2013b; De Robillard, 2016; Lewis, 2016) have focused predominantly on the photographs "Ordeal", "Hate Crime Survivor I", and "Aftermath". These photographs depict female victim-survivors of corrective rape and sexual violence, but Muholi is careful not to represent the women in the role of the victim. The idea of memorialisation is central to Muholi's photography and I argue that these five photographs can offer important insights on the intelligibility of black lesbian life. A careful analysis and comparison of black lesbians in *Hate Crime Series* and black lesbian and transgender men in *Faces and Phases* raises important concerns related to representation, queer life, intelligibility and queer frames of recognition.

[31] Zanele Muholi was named Africa's most powerful female artist in ArtReview Magazine's Power 100 list of influencers in the contemporary art world. The awards work with 20 international judges to determine the most influential artists in the world (Van Niekerk, 2016).

The field of semiology constitutes a central component of the analysis of Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* in that it assists in problematising the relationship between the signifier (the visual image) and the signified (meaning/s). The visual aspect of the photograph and how it relates to the world forms an important part of this analysis. The visual component that documents an aspect of reality in photography or photographic images moves the art of representation one step further and Susan Sontag argues in her book *On Photography* that,

> [w]hat is written about a person or an event is frankly an interpretation, as are handmade visual statements, like paintings and drawings. Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire. (Sontag, 1977, p. 4)

Although photographs are also influenced by the photographer and her wish to capture and represent a specific version of reality, the photographic image seems to provide seemingly real evidence of lives and the events surrounding those lives. Sontag furthermore explains that photographs are "both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence" and are "attempts to contact or lay claim to another reality" (Sontag, 1977, p. 16). The 'pseudo-presence' in Muholi's photographs may refer to the existence and recognition of lesbian lives and the notion of 'absence', something that lies beyond the photograph, may be defined as the possibility of imagining or recreating realities that contest the boundaries imposed by certain frames. Such a reconceptualisation becomes a particularly important task when certain lives, such as those of black lesbians and transgender men, are represented as unintelligible and ungrievable, as we saw in the second chapter of this study.

While Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* focuses on corrective rape and sexual violence, *Faces and Phases* includes a collection of 258 black and white portrait photographs of proud black lesbians and transgender men; images that challenge negative interpretations of queer lives. The shift in focus from victimhood of hate crime to empowerment is an important consideration for selecting *Faces and Phases* which challenges "compulsory codes of heterosexuality and cultural authenticity" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 328). In her succinct afterword to Muholi's collection, Gabeba Baderoon cites Muholi in saying 'the day I became a South African was the day I took [a] positive queer image' (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 327). Muholi's statement troubles a heterosexual and already-white sense of South African belonging and raises crucial questions around citizenship in the post-apartheid context.

Faces and Phases has been called a queer archive. While the preceding Chapter Three of this thesis focused on counter discourses in literature, the present chapter illustrates the importance of Muholi's work as a counter-archive. The 258 photographs of *Faces and Phases* are annotated with statements, biographies, poems and narratives that call attention to the survivability, grievability and memorialisation of black lesbian and transgender life. A discourse analysis of these accompanying texts completes my investigation of this counter-archive. Additionally, I consider auto/biography an important lens for interpretation since Muholi documents other lives but also inserts herself into the project. For example, Muholi writes "[i]n each photograph that I take, there is a longing and looking for 'me'. I am capturing the black, beautiful portrait of my young self" (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 6). Part of my analysis has also included documenting the names of the participants and providing an overview of their individual narratives. Baderoon writes that, "*Faces and Phases* is a project that is aimed both at declaring the concreteness of existence, community and resilience and also the delicate, tender, shifting multiplicity of identity" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 331). Muholi's work may be read as an act of memorialisation, recognition and auto/biography.

In the preceding chapter I drew from Judith Butler's theorisation on precariousness and intelligibility and I argued along with Butler that there is a differential allocation of precarity to certain bodies in post-apartheid LGBT life-writing and autobiography. In this chapter I deem it necessary to return to Butler's theories on precariousness, intelligibility and grievability and I claim that Zanele Muholi's photography plays a fundamental role in challenging representations of black lesbian women as unintelligible victims of hate crime and violence. In addition to Butler's theories I employ Ann Cvetkovich's influential work on public lesbian cultures and I argue that Muholi's photography constitutes a significant counterpublic. Where Chapter Three identified voices that emerge in literature that speak back to sexual violence, this chapter draws from Cvetkovich's theorisation around queer archives and explores how Muholi's work exists as a positive counterpublic that queers normative modes of representation and belonging in Africa.

In the section to follow I examine the arrival of Muholi's work into the public sphere and provide an overview of Muholi's stance as both insider and outsider in relation to her visual activism.

Cultural production and public cultures

In an introduction to the journal *Cultural Studies* (2013), Kerry Bystrom and Sarah Nuttall raise questions concerning cultural production in post-apartheid South Africa and emphasise the importance of exploring private lives and public cultures. Bystrom and Nuttall allude to the futility of remembering what has failed in South Africa's democratic transition and instead ask questions concerning the imagining of a positive future and how cultural production may participate in this process. They raise concerns which are central to this thesis, and to Muholi's visual activism:

> political and theoretical responses that continually focus on what has failed in the democratic transition and emphasise class- and race-based divides between people as gaps that remain largely unaltered, important though they may be, seem to do little. How then can we envision moving into a different future? Through what critical vocabularies and grammars might real as well as imagined practices of desegregation be possible? (Bystrom & Nuttall, 2013, p. 308)

Bystrom and Nuttall are interested in the way that current artworks and emerging cultural forms participate in processes of re-racialisation and/or desegregation and they furthermore query "[w]hat is at stake in the public exposure of the private lives of others" (Bystrom & Nuttall, 2013, p. 308). Contemporary racial and sexual politics are informed, shaped and produced by artists and visual activists who have played an influential role in critiquing and contributing to processes of re-racialisation and desegregation. For example, some prominent artworks to have emerged in the public sphere since the turn of the century include Yiull Damaso's *The Night Watch* (2010) which depicts an autopsy in progress of Nelson Mandela, and Brett Murray's controversial work *The Spear* (2010). Damaso's work critiques South Africa's democratic leadership and Murray's work, depicting current South African president Jacob Zuma as Vladimir Lenin with his genitals exposed, was vandalised for its 'defamatory' nature. Artworks in contemporary South Africa that have critiqued the current ruling party (the ANC) and its oft-times misogynist political leaders, have created the biggest furore while simultaneously underscoring the value and influence of representation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Zanele Muholi's visual activism for black lesbian sexuality has also been regarded controversial. Although Muholi has focused on challenging negative representations of black lesbians, her work has been criticised for being visually provocative and even pornographic. At an exhibition commissioned for South Africa's Women's Day celebrations at Constitution Hill in August 2009, the then Minister of Arts and Culture Lulu Xingwana condemned

Nandipha Mntambo and Muholi's artworks. Xingwana stated that the works depicting intimacy between women were pornographic and offensive to young children. Xingwana furthermore declared that the works did not constitute art but instead were "crude misrepresentations of women (both black and white) masquerading as artworks" (Pillay, 2010). Xingwana admitted that she felt that the works failed to promote nation building. Her statements have since been critiqued in the media but also reveal that public exposure of lesbian intimacy is regarded controversial and unacceptable by some. Although Muholi's works emphasise the importance of broadening our understandings of national citizenship and belonging, Xingwana's fierce criticism references a failure to imagine sexualities beyond the heterosexual norm.

Muholi's personal background, education and stance in relation to her visual activism provides important context for an analysis of her work. Muholi was born in Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal in 1972. She started out her activist work as a reporter and photographer for online magazine *Behind the Mask* which documented hate crimes and violence against the LGBT community in South Africa. Along with Donna Smith, Muholi co-founded the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), an organisation which makes it possible for black lesbian women to meet safely. Muholi completed an advanced photography course at the Market Photo Workshop in Newtown, Johannesburg in 2003 and held her first solo exhibition at the Johannesburg art gallery in 2004. She continued her education by completing a Master's Degree in Fine Arts and Documentary Media at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. While there she wrote a thesis mapping a visual history of black lesbian identity and visual politics in post-apartheid South Africa. Muholi's work as a journalist and photographer, and her membership of the communities in which she works provided her with the opportunity to work closely with lesbian women and transgender men affected by hate crime. Growing up as a black lesbian in a South African township, working as an activist with and for the LGBT community and having been granted the opportunity to further her education in art and LGBT activism both locally and abroad provided Muholi with expert knowledge of corrective rape, homophobia and visual activism. Muholi's active involvement as both a journalist and activist is also documented in South African print media. A newspaper article referred to in Chapter Two of this thesis titled *Gay Women Hate Crimes* (2003) reports on Muholi's work as a journalist for the online magazine *Behind the Mask* and her campaign work for *The Rose has Thorns Campaign.* Muholi's early involvement with black lesbians affected by hate crimes signifies the continued support and solidarity between

black lesbian women in South Africa. Although less well-documented in South African print media, black lesbian activism is prominent in Muholi's campaign-work and journalism, the establishment of an online black lesbian blog called Inkanyiso, and through multiple portraits of, and connections made between black lesbian women and transgender men from South Africa and elsewhere.

Muholi identifies as both an insider and outsider in relation to the black lesbian community that she has worked with in South Africa. Muholi's insider/outsider position influences her work where she identifies with the struggles of the LGBT community but simultaneously acknowledges her privileged and outsider status as someone who finds herself in the position to document. Of this position Muholi writes the following:

> I locate myself as both insider and outsider of this community. I am an insider as it is here where I find my past, where I find some of my own life experiences reflected back to me, where I find legitimation for loving women. But I am also an outsider as I am currently employed and tertiary educated, both of which afford me a degree of (unfair) access to social, economic and cultural resources not available to the vast majority of my sisters. (Muholi, 2004, p. 117)

Muholi's visual activism can be defined as both documentary and auto/biographical. In her analysis of Muholi's work Baderoon confirms this and writes that "[t]o me, Muholi is undoubtedly present in the images and her method reaches toward autobiography" (Baderoon, 2011, p. 406). Muholi's work has been defined as constituting a queer archive and she is conscious of her role in memorialising the lives of members of the LGBT community. Muholi's visual activism is sensitive to practices of exclusion and marginalisation, and foregrounds the importance of documenting LGBT life. In response to whether her work is autobiographical Muholi says, "'Yes and no'. She goes on to clarify, saying that '[i]n most of my projects I put myself, [but] it's an (auto)biographical project because it involves a lot of us'" (Baderoon, 2011, pp. 406-407). Therefore, while Muholi is invested in the project in that she identifies as a black lesbian woman aware of the dangers faced by the LGBT community, she is also interested in critiquing racist and sexist representations of black lesbian women and challenging the stereotypes that render them vulnerable to homophobic violence.

In his analysis of Muholi's visual activism, Raél Jero Salley uses the term *subversive resistance* in relation to her autobiographical method and its accomplishments in her work. Salley also refers to W.E.B. Du Bois, a black sociology professor in the United States who used the photographic medium to challenge the idea of African Americans as inferior, unattractive and unintelligent (Salley, 2012, p. 58). Salley borrows the term *subversive*

resistance from Deborah Willis (2003) who uses it in her examination of Du Bois' photography, which she argues succeeds in opposing dominant meanings or stereotypes (Salley, 2012, p. 58). Muholi's work goes about challenging a long-held history of representing African bodies and sexualities negatively. In the afterword to *Faces and Phases* Baderoon writes that Muholi's work is "deeply conscious of its antecedents" and that "[s]he wants to create narratives with depth, with a past and a future" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 334). Baderoon writes of Muholi's will to "reverse a pattern of absences in the visual archive" (Baderoon, 2011, p. 403) and informs the reader that Du Bois' photographs resonated with Muholi when she saw these at the Autograph Gallery in London in 2010. Muholi is aware of the dearth of histories of black as well as black *lesbian* life and inserts herself into a project through which she can claim a history but also imagine a future (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 334).

The phenomenon of stereotyping has been a major contributor in the negative portrayal of Africans and African sexualities. In his influential work on cultural representations, Stuart Hall refers to stereotyping as a signifying practice and contextualises what he terms a "racialized regime of representation" (Hall, 1997, p. 257). Hall explains how stereotyping works to mark difference and refers to its "essentialising, reductionist, and naturalising" effects, ultimately resulting in marginalisation or exclusion for the group concerned. As seen in the second chapter of this thesis stereotyping is also a common practice in print media representations of black lesbian life. For example, black lesbians are often represented as a homogeneous group of women who all face a similar fate: homophobic violence or corrective rape. Hall furthermore explains this process of marking difference as a strategy he terms 'splitting'. Hall argues that stereotyping "divides the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable. It then *excludes or expels* everything which does not fit, which is different" (Hall, 1997, p. 258). This process of 'splitting' is also witnessed with representations of black lesbian women whose sexuality is often defined as unAfrican or unnatural, thus flagging their perceived difference. A central feature of Muholi's visual activism lies in challenging stereotypes and *recognisable* regimes of representation.

In the next section I will begin with an examination of Muholi's *Hate Crime Series;* a series that forms part of her 2006 collection *Only half the picture.* While previous studies have focused predominantly on the three images mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, my analysis includes the entire series. The titles of these photographs are "Ordeal", "Case Number", "Hate Crime Survivor I", "Hate Crime Survivor II" and "Aftermath". The

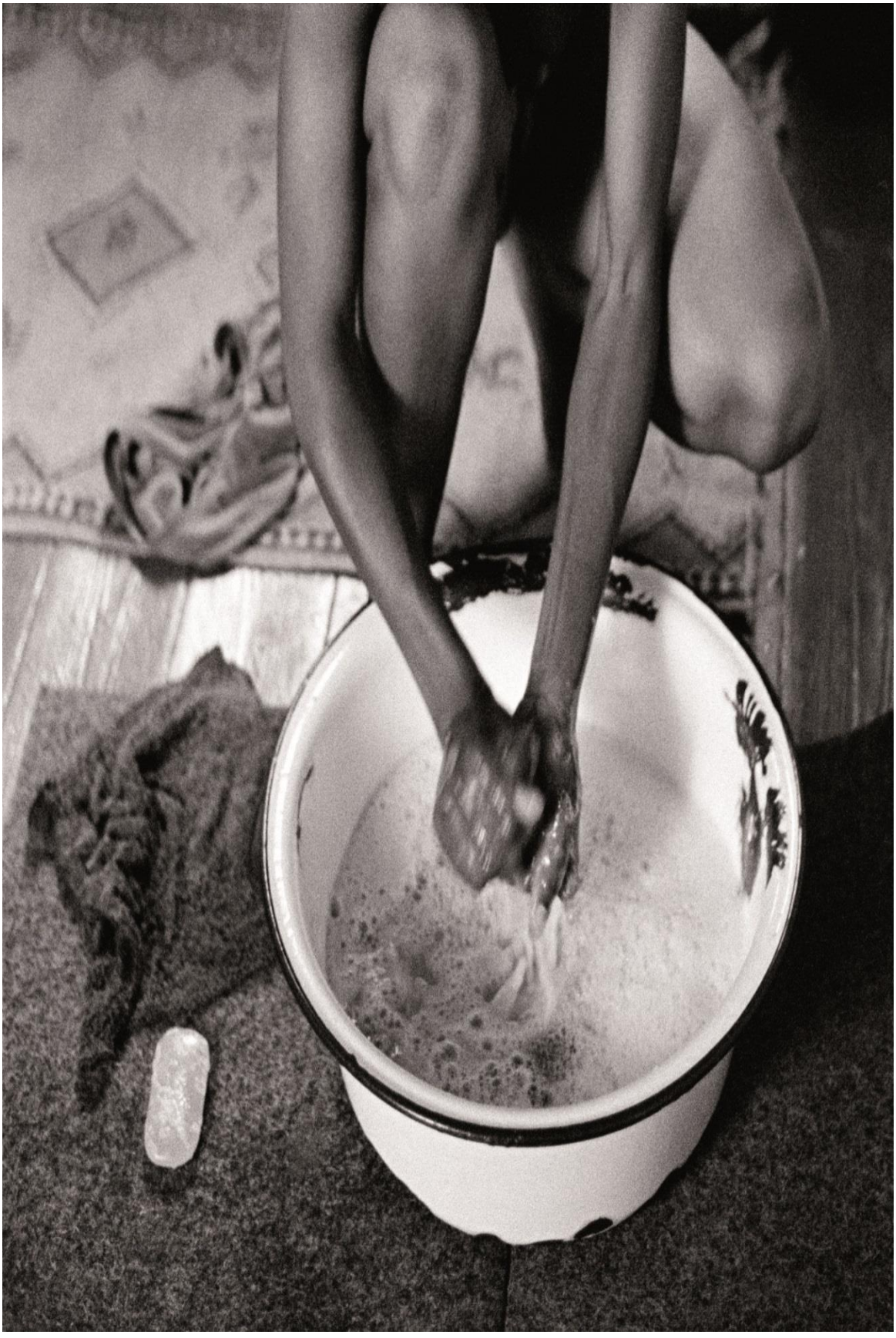
photographs are discussed and analysed in this order, with the sequencing of the images emerging as significant in Muholi's narration of sexual violence. To explain, I consider it important to recognise that Muholi starts her series with an image depicting the ordeal of responding to a sexual violation with the crouching image of a woman and that the series is closed off with an image of a victim who, although violated, remains standing and resisting the heteronormative and racist regimes of representation peculiar to black lesbian life.

"Ordeal": Representations of rape and renewal

"Ordeal" is the first photograph in Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.* The woman captured in the photograph is found in a crouching position, with her hands constituting the picture's focal point. The image of the woman is cropped to just above her knee and her hands are positioned above an enamel basin. Towels are scattered on the floor, surrounding the woman who is vigorously applying her hands to wash something clean. Given the theme of the series, this image seems to depict a woman washing herself after having been sexually violated.

Contrary to the common belief that women are powerless victims of violence, this image shows considerable female strength. Desiree Lewis picks up on this in her analysis of *Hate Crime Series* and writes that "the particular pose suggests tremendous power; the subject is not crouching or kneeling as a domestic worker might; her legs are youthful, healthy, taut and strong as though preparing for some forceful and self-defining action" (Lewis, 2005, p. 17). The image of a young, strong and healthy woman contrasts with print media representations of black lesbians as vulnerable and damaged victims of homophobic violence. The woman's blurred hands are the focal point, as is the case with images "Hate Crime Survivor I" and "Aftermath". Unlike "Hate Crime Survivor I" and "Aftermath" where the hands cover the genital area, in "Ordeal" the woman is vigorously and forcefully applying her hands in the washing action. Kylie Thomas sees the woman's hands as representative of the violation that has just taken place and in her careful analysis of the image she writes that,

> [t]here is a line of fury that runs through the arm of the woman who crouches at the edge of an enamel basin scrubbing her hands into a blurred frenzy, moving so fast and so slick with water they appear unskinned. At the center of the photograph in which everything else remains still, these hands are rendered unrecognizable, a pulpy mass, an internal organ exposed to the air, an aborted fetus or placenta. Something that cannot be washed clean. (Thomas, 2010, p. 429)



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The viewer is so strongly drawn into the action of the image that she/he feels a part of the cleansing process. The washing action is a direct reference to the sexual violation and trauma of the event, whilst simultaneously representing presence and survivability. While the media often focus exclusively on the act of sexual violation, this image is significant for its capturing the victim-survivor responding to the act, hence foregrounding her agency. The photograph does not reveal the woman's upper body and face which is also important in that it points to the often invisible psychic trauma of the violation. Additionally, the image refers to the physical and psychic traumas that have become part of the everyday lives of black and black lesbian women in post-apartheid South Africa. The scarce resources or artefacts depicted in the image can be further analysed to represent the 'ordinary life' or everyday psychic trauma of poverty, racism, sexism and homophobia that has carried over into the post-apartheid regime.

The physical location or environment depicted in "Ordeal" is significant insofar as it references the deprivations characterising this woman's life. In this scene the woman is shown to use an enamel basin to cleanse herself, and the location is devoid of an easily accessible bathroom or shower cubicle. For Lewis,

> [t]he enamel basin represented is the sort routinely used in lieu of bathroom sinks, baths and bathrooms in many South African homes, and its placement on the floor further suggests the deprivations of the world that the subject inhabits. An impression of poverty is reinforced by the used towels and bar of soap on the floor. The pose and action suggest a familiar image of the black woman as domestic worker, the depersonalised figure of service in many white and privileged homes. (Lewis, 2005, p. 17)

A tension can be identified in "Ordeal" where the woman in the image is seen to actively respond to sexual violence but reference to a domestic worker simultaneously signifies social marginalisation and exclusion. The domain of the domestic worker is evoked in the way the woman applies her hands to wash, as well as the presence of the enamel basin, a common household article used in the handwashing of clothes. Muholi is conscious of a past that has resulted in racialised inequality, as is evidenced in her 2008 exploration of white 'masters' and black 'servants' in *Massa and Mina(h),* another of her photographic projects.[32] In *Difficult Love,* a documentary focusing on hate crimes against lesbian women, Muholi visits the employers of her deceased mother and talks about the wounds that continue to open when thinking of the past (apartheid) and the present moment. Although "Ordeal" deals with the intimate violation of lesbian women, it could also be interpreted as a reference to the racist,

[32] Bester Muholi, Muholi's mother, performed domestic work for the same white family for a period of 42 years.

sexist and homophobic violence of the apartheid years which continues to play out in the lives of racial and sexual minorities today.

"Case Number", "Hate Crime Survivor I" and "Hate Crime Survivor II"

While "Ordeal" signifies the urgency of responding to hate crime and represents the historical and contemporary subjugation of black lesbians, "Case Number", "Hate Crime Survivor I" and "Hate Crime Survivor II" delve deeper into social inequalities affecting the lives of black lesbians. A prominent theme of these three photographs is the issue of vulnerability and the social location of black lesbian women in post-apartheid South Africa. With reference to Muholi's project, Salley claims that "contemporary photographs may also enable the viewer to imagine how people connect with and belong to, their communities and nations" (Salley, 2012, p. 58). In *Hate Crime Series* it becomes clear that hate crime and homophobia robs black lesbians of this sense of belonging. To forge a sense of belonging it is first important to highlight the visibility of black lesbian life and second to create safe spaces in which black lesbians can represent themselves. As seen in the literature there are very few safe spaces for black lesbians in South Africa and Salley argues that "safe spaces of refuge depend on access to education, funds, and resources, but also access to a sense of belonging and citizenship" (Salley, 2012, p. 61). The analysis of these photographs focuses on how Muholi critiques structural and social inequalities that have contributed to the invisibility of black lesbians and denied them access to education, health care, legal protection, safety and a sense of national belonging.

"Case Number": Recording routed forms of oppression and violence

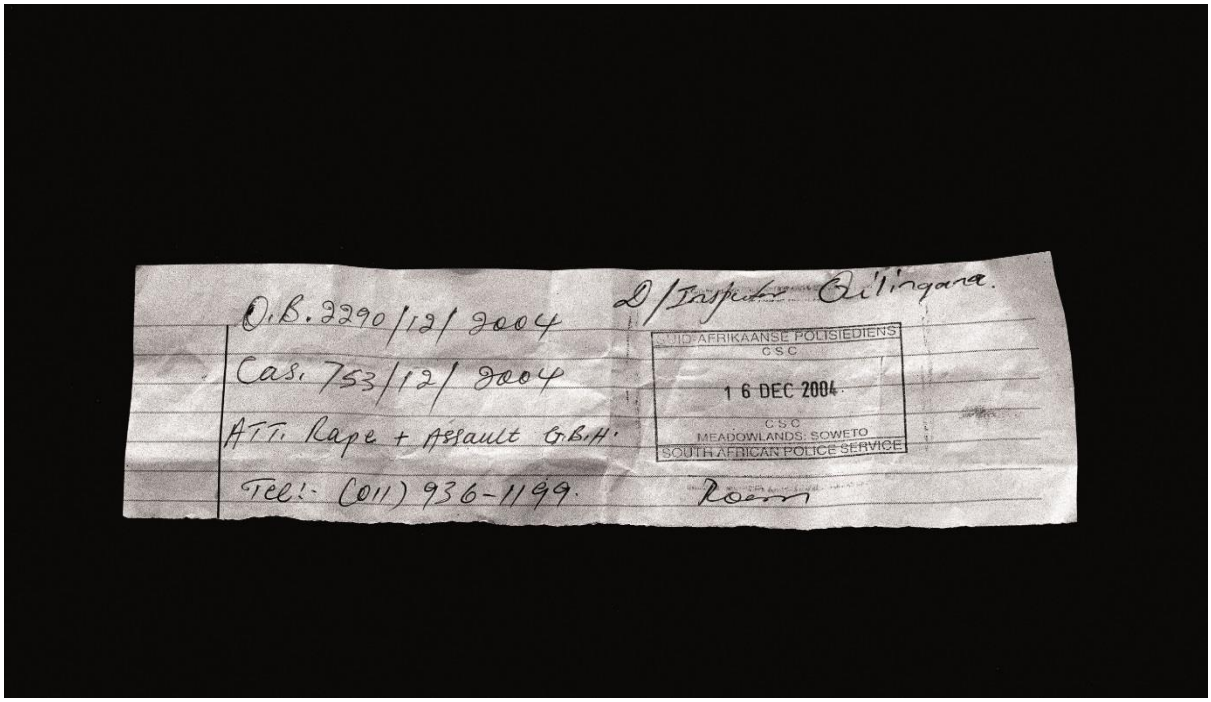
The second photograph in Muholi's series is that of a documented case number. The enlarged photograph shows a slip of paper stating the details of a rape and assault reported at the Meadowlands Police Station in Soweto on 16 December 2004. The case number and its reported details read as follows: "ATT. Rape + Assault G.B.H." (Grievous Bodily Harm) (Thomas, 2014, p. 44). This crumpled and roughly torn off piece of paper serves as evidence of a reported hate crime and would have been handed to the victim-survivor of the crime after it had been reported. The recorded date on the case number is 16 December 2004. The date is important as the year 2004 marks 10 years into South Africa's democracy and the day (16 December) is a national holiday known as the Day of Reconciliation and which came into effect after the ending of apartheid to commemorate reconciliation and national cohesion. The date itself points to the existing tensions between attempts to build an inclusive

democracy that is respectful of LGBT rights and hate crimes that continue to devastate the lives of the LGBT community.

In an article titled "Thinking through Lesbian Rape" (2004) Muholi writes of the social injustice and inequalities that black lesbians are forced to confront. In this article she narrates the experience of assisting a female victim of a corrective rape and highlights the challenges of seeking help for lesbian women from South African townships. Muholi gives the rape survivor the pseudonym 'Kid' and in the passage below summarises some of the challenges 'Kid' faces in seeking help after being raped.

> What must be appreciated in all of this is that Kid is poor, unemployed, and living with her aunt who is not only disabled but the sole breadwinner in the household. Taking the train in Johannesburg from Kagiso is expensive, not to mention dangerous. But this was her only mode of transportation as Johannesburg was in the midst of a general taxi strike. Trying to navigate Johannesburg without a car is a hectic experience on most days. But imagine for a moment the emotional and physical pain of it after your body has been violated and raped, when it feels like your body is an exhibit for everyone and when it feels like everyone knows you have been 'marked.' In a socio-cultural context where rape is still a fairly taboo subject, these feelings are overwhelming. And yet this young woman chose not to hide. (Muholi, 2004, p. 120)

Although the case number captured in the photograph is not linked to 'Kid's' rape, a reading of this rape survivor's narrative alongside the taking in of "Case Number" yields important truths about the challenges faced by women who become the victims of rape. While 'Kid' was fortunate enough to know someone like Muholi to assist her in seeking help, many lesbian women choose to remain silent on account of the taboo surrounding black lesbian sexuality and for fear of being 'marked'. Muholi's narration of 'Kid's' post-rape experience shows how Kid's case is treated as 'just another rape.' The insensitivity, apathy and homophobia of the doctors attending to the rape case inform and shape 'Kid's' post-rape experience. The initial reporting of the rape was also neglectfully received by the police official on duty, saying that he was unable to take a statement right away since he had another case to attend to (Muholi, 2004, p. 12).



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Furthermore, the joint 'reading' of 'Kid's' rape and "Case Number" leads to a number of significant insights into the phenomenon of homophobic violence and the structural inequalities that shape the narratives and choices of black lesbian women. The case number serving as a record of the crime is often the only piece of existing evidence of the crime, but an inclusion of a rape narrative underscores the seriousness of a crime that is often made invisible, and as with this slip of paper, can easily be lost.

"Hate Crime Survivor I": Queer representations of lesbian sexuality

Following "Case Number", the third photograph in Muholi's series is "Hate Crime Survivor I". As with "Ordeal" the woman's hands form the focal point of "Hate Crime Survivor I". The photograph is cropped to include the woman's lower arms and hands to just above her knees. The title of the photograph corresponds with the woman's in-patient status with the image depicting her wearing striped hospital pants and with hospital tags clasped around her wrists. Her hands are positioned unusually, with the right thumb and index finger shaped to form a dark hollow (Thomas, 2014, p. 45) and resting on her lap. "Hate Crime Survivor I" is the first photograph in the series to document the survivor's in-patient status. One cannot confidently name the gender of the person in the photograph and the hospital tags may be referencing the multiplicity of gender identifications in the black lesbian community on the one hand, but could also point to the derogatory terms and labels that make lesbians and transgender men vulnerable to homophobic violence. Terms such as stabane or 'intersex' for

example naturalise heterosexuality and gender roles with the result that lesbian sexuality is often defined as deviant or unnatural. In addition to reading the person in the photograph as someone who has been hospitalised because of a sexual violation one can also interpret the tags around the wrists as handcuffs and the hospital pants as representing the clothes worn in a prison or psychiatric hospital. Black lesbians' sexual orientation renders them the victims or 'prisoners' of homophobic crime and rape, and their lesbian sexuality or gender ambiguity can be interpreted as a restrictive or confining status as in a hospital or prison context.

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The subject's hands form the focal point, as already mentioned. According to Thomas the dark hollow formed by the subject's hands can be read as an entry point into the person's body, as well as a "metonym for the violated parts of her we cannot see" (Thomas, 2014, p. 45). The person's hands are also positioned in a way that resembles a phallic symbol, and although the photographed subject has survived a hate crime the phallic reference may be read as signifying its impotent and invisible power in relation to 'correcting' butch identification or lesbian sexuality. Muholi is careful in the naming of her photographic exhibits and it may be argued that although she is drawing attention to the seriousness of hate crime, she simultaneously wishes to foreground the *survivor* status of the participants in this series.

A further analysis of the photograph reveals that the letters BARA are printed onto the subject's hospital pants. These letters reference the Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital in Soweto, the largest hospital in the southern hemisphere and named after anti-apartheid struggle stalwart Chris Hani. The imprint of these letters can be read as a signifier of the deprivations that surround the lives of black lesbians seeking medical attention. Soweto is a township bordering the city of Johannesburg and state hospitals such as Baragwanath are mostly under-resourced and under-staffed. Mention of this hospital could be interpreted as a reference to the structural and social inequalities of the apartheid era which have carried over into democratic South Africa. For example, a Sowetan black lesbian who has been the victim of sexual assault will almost certainly report to a state hospital like Baragwanath as opposed to the private hospitals of the more affluent suburbs of Johannesburg. The hospital pants and the tags around the person's wrists can thus signify the social injustices and structural inequalities that continue to frame lesbians as prisoners or indeed criminals on account of their sexuality.

Both "Case Number" and "Hate Crime Survivor I" reference the routed forms of oppression that contribute to homophobia and social inequality. As clarified by Baderoon, the focus of Muholi's work moves beyond the sexual violence surrounding lesbian identity in that her visual activism "is both intensely personal and multi-layered – her definition of LGBTI does not focus on sexuality alone but also includes economic, racial and gendered exclusions" (Baderoon, 2011, pp. 402-403). These exclusions form a central part of the representation of lesbian life as demonstrated with "Ordeal", "Case Number", and "Hate Crime Survivor I."

“Hate Crime Survivor II”: The misshapen figure of sexual violence

“Hate Crime Survivor II” is a photograph of a hospital bed with a barely recognisable figure lying underneath a dark and heavy blanket. The figure on the bed is small in relation to an enormous hospital bed, with both the bed and the figure blurred. The photograph appears alongside “Hate Crime Survivor I” in Muholi’s series and as argued by Thomas it “powerfully undoes the flawed and fatal logic that seeks to blame lesbians who are raped” (Thomas, 2014, p. 46). Similar to “Case Number” the image brings the patient’s recorded details, situated in a metal folder at the foot of the bed, into sharp focus. This metal folder suspended from the bed is contrasted with the image of the figure faded out in the larger area of the photograph. The recorded patient details (i.e. the nature of the physical injury) are brought into sharp focus, underscoring the tension between the documented violence and the misshapen figure of violence who, although recognised on file, remains devastated and almost invisible in society. Butler’s theory on recognition and apprehension is relevant here. The black lesbian figure documented on file, is apprehended but remains unrecognised and excluded from the domain of the knowable and grievable. Furthermore, the differential allocation of precarity associated with her body renders her as unintelligible.

Kylie Thomas offers an insightful observation when she states that “the photograph portrays how the human form is overcome by the trauma of psychic collapse” (Thomas, 2014, p. 46). Thomas refers to an annihilation of subjectivity and in her analysis of the photograph reveals the following:

> Here the effect of rape is shown to be ontological erasure, the annihilation of subjectivity. The person who we know to be there but that we cannot see has not been made ‘woman,’ but has been altogether unmade as subject. (Thomas, 2014, p. 46)

“Hate Crime Survivor II” is a visually powerful and painful photograph. The unrecognisable figure on the hospital bed could be anyone and the scene could be anywhere in the world. The ‘facts’ about the person’s life, her race, gender identity and class, are not known and therefore cannot be used to categorise and label her, but the viewer is confronted with the fact that she has been sexually violated. The viewer is confronted with this reality and the trauma of sexual violence.

A reading of “Hate Crime Survivor II” can also be enhanced by employing Roland Barthes’ concepts of the *studium* and the *punctum* in his analysis of the photographic medium. While the *studium* refers to our acculturated way of seeing things the *punctum* can be defined as that

with the potential to move us and remind us that something lies outside of our usual frames of recognition. Kylie Thomas (2010; 2013b) uses Barthes' concept in her analysis of Muholi's series and writes that,

> it is not simply that Barthes' method offers a productive mode of reading Muholi's photographs, but Muholi's work shows that reading with and for the *punctum* can be understood as a mode of queer reading, an openness to ways of seeing that disrupt the heteronormative patriarchal hegemony that limits and structures our gaze. (Thomas, 2010, p. 427)

I argue that "Hate Crime Survivor II" can be read with and for the *punctum.* The faded out and unrecognisable figure lying on the bed becomes recognisable only with reference to the hospital bed and the documents that are brought into focus in the photograph. The photograph that appears alongside "Hate Crime Survivor I" has the ability to pierce or wound the viewer who is faced with the trauma and 'psychic collapse' of the victims of corrective rape. The viewer's acculturated gaze is queered in this image which effectively points at the fact that something lies outside of the frame. Read along with the other photographs in this series the photo makes clear how black lesbians are often represented as unintelligible when for instance the media fail to provide context to the social injustices that make their lives and identities unrecognisable and invisible.

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“Aftermath”: Resisting racist regimes of representation

“Aftermath” is the final photograph in Muholi’s series and is prominently featured in the scholarship. “Aftermath” is a black and white photograph of a young woman which has been cropped to include her lower body, her hands and her thighs. The woman in this photograph is wearing underwear with the label ‘jockey’, she bears a large scar on her right thigh and her hands are folded, covering her genital area. The woman’s hands constitute the strongest focal point of the photograph, followed by the scar on her right thigh.

A theme for identification in “Aftermath” concerns the representation of black female and lesbian sexuality. Historically black women’s sexuality has been negatively represented and Sharon Cooper writes in the afterword to *Only half the picture* that Muholi sees a direct connection between her work and the representation of the South African Khoisan woman, Sarah Baartman. Baartman, also popularly known as ‘The Hottentot Venus’ was transported from South Africa to Europe where she was publically exhibited for her different and perceived exotic features. Hall observes that Baartman underwent a form of extreme reductionism which he argues is “a strategy often applied to the representation of women’s bodies, of whatever ‘race’, especially in pornography” (Hall, 2013, p. 255). Hall furthermore notes that “[h]er body was ‘read’, like a text, for the living evidence – the proof, the Truth – which it provided of her absolute ‘otherness’ and therefore an irreversible difference between the ‘races’” (Hall, 2013, p. 255). Baartman’s physical difference was pathologised by Western colonisers which has had a lasting effect on the representation of black female sexuality. Hall notes the way Baartman was constructed as ‘Other’, a label applied to black lesbians in contemporary South Africa. It is precisely this difference or ‘otherness’ that Muholi attempts to subvert in *Hate Crime Series.*

Gqola suggests that Muholi’s work is less about making lesbians visible but that she aims to provide a queer perspective on a familiar reality (Gqola, 2011, p. 623). Gqola also notes that Muholi’s work involves different ways of seeing and looking, and writes that “Muholi’s photographs invite us to examine how we see Black lesbians as they chart a complicated path through which such a visualisation might take place” (Gqola, 2011, p. 623). The notion of seeing and looking also speaks to the visual structures that govern the gaze and how this can result in female objectification.

Laura’s Mulvey’s work on visual pleasure and the male gaze in narrative cinema may benefit a reading of Muholi’s “Aftermath.” I identify in Muholi’s work an opposition and

confrontation to the pleasure often derived from looking upon the female body in her series. An understanding of the manifestation of visual pleasure and female objectification in narrative cinema assists in trying to understand what Muholi resists in her photography. Of visual pleasure and female objectification Mulvey points out that,

> [t]he first, scopophilic[33], arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus in film terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. (Mulvey, 1999, pp. 836-837)

In other words, sexual pleasure is derived from active gazing upon the subject on the one hand and from the imagination (i.e. having been removed from the scene) on the other. Therefore, the first principle involves deriving visual pleasure without any direct involvement. The second principle however concerns fantasising about the subject, where the male imagines himself as the male on the screen, living out his fantasies in relation to the female.

It may be argued that Muholi's "Aftermath" subverts both of these structures by queering the heterosexual gaze. The images in Muholi's series are not for pleasurable consumption and the representation of gender-ambiguous bodies in Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* resists any ownership in relation to black female sexuality. As stated by Gqola, Muholi's work "challenges what we 'instinctively' praise with our cultured eyes" (Gqola, 2011, p. 622).

In addition to the pleasure structures of looking, Mulvey also references fetishism as central to female objectification. The gender-ambiguous woman portrayed in "Aftermath" is wearing jockey underwear, a label previously worn only by men in South Africa and with her hands positioned to cover her genital area. The term jock is also considered to have been derived from the word 'jockstrap' which refers to a male protective undergarment. Furthermore, the term 'jock' has been used to refer to an athletic man and is closely associated with white masculinity, misogyny and homophobia. The presence of jockey underwear is thus significant as the woman represented in "Aftermath" is a black lesbian and the underwear is the one thing protecting her from the male gaze or further violation. Mulvey draws from Freud's conceptualisation of fetishism and female objectification which I argue can also be

[33] Scopophilia is a term used in psychoanalysis where pleasure is derived from observing others and subjecting them to a curious and controlling gaze. It has been likened to voyeurism (Mulvey, 1999: 835).

productive for a reading of "Aftermath." The presence of *male* jockey underwear combined with the woman covering her genital area can be read in line with Mulvey's reference to fetishism and female objectification when she writes that,

> [t]he paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies. (Mulvey, 1999, p. 833)

The notion of phallocentrism is referenced through the jockey underwear in this photograph but the woman's hands are positioned in a way that protects her from any further violation, including the intrusive violation of the male or heterosexual gaze. The presence of a symbolic phallus as well as the lack thereof in "Aftermath" can be read as reference to this system that portrays women as lynch pins to the system, but the scar on her leg and sexual violation subverts any visual pleasure that could have been derived from looking upon the female body, in women's objectification.

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In her analysis of Cameroonian Angèle Etoundi Essamba's photographs of black female bodies, Ayo A. Coly poses an important question that holds relevance for an analysis of "Aftermath". She suggests:

> As a new taxonomy of the black female body, the black female nude resignifies a figure overburdened by the colonial visual history of sexual black African womanhood, namely the inscription of grotesquerie and sexual aberration on the black female body. Of course, the following question arises for the postcolonial African artist: how does one denude the discursively overburdened black female body without reinstalling it within a colonial visual economy? (Coly, 2010, p. 653)

My point is that queering the viewer's gaze is a fundamental act of resisting the racist and colonial legacies that have worked, historically, to define black female and lesbian sexuality as negative and 'other'. The manifestation of colonial and racist legacies in Muholi's work enables her to choose, and for her participants to represent themselves, in ways that resist "pleasurable" and sexual readings of the African female body. An important feature of Essamba's photography, discussed by Coly, constitutes the tension between desirability and inaccessibility. In Essamba's art, Coly claims that "[t]he stern gaze and self-absorbed stiffness of the photographic models defy possession of their bodies and secure a distance between viewer and viewed" (Coly, 2010, p. 657). This "stiffness" of bodies is also referenced in "Aftermath" where the elision of the upper body secures a distance between the viewer and the viewed and where the participant is able to represent herself in relation to a legacy of violence which she resists.

Sander L. Gilman's influential text on female sexuality in the nineteenth century foregrounds the importance of iconography in terms of representation. For Gilman, "[r]ather than presenting the world, icons represent it. Even with a modest nod to supposedly mimetic portrayals it is apparent that, when individuals are shown within a work of art (no matter how broadly defined), the ideologically charged iconographic nature of the representation dominates" (Gilman, 1985, p. 204). An analysis of Muholi's work shows that the less typical iconographic representation of victims of homophobic violence undermines negative representations of their lives and bodies.

Gilman notes that the prostitute and the female 'Hottentot' or Khoisan woman was representative of female sexuality in the nineteenth century. Gilmore observes that the *Hottentot* woman came to be understood as being representative of black female sexuality and exercised a significant influence on the iconographic representation of black women. In seeking scientific truth concerning this difference or 'otherness' in relation to western

sexuality, Gilman points out that an examination of the female and not the male's genitals was central to this othering process. Black female sexuality was defined as anomalous and Gilman points out that scientists in the nineteenth century would link

> malformation [of the labia] with the overdevelopment of the clitoris, which he sees leading to those "excesses" which "are called 'lesbian love.'" The concupiscence of the black is thus associated also with the sexuality of the lesbian. (Gilman, 1985, p. 218)

The iconographic representation of black female sexuality was therefore associated with something negative and any deviation from heterosexuality was associated with the African female body and regarded as unnatural. As described earlier, the scientific examination of Sarah Baartman's genitalia reduced her to her body parts and Gilman's observation to some extent explains the influence that these iconographic representations have had on contemporary representations and understandings of black lesbian sexuality.

However, the iconographic representation of black lesbian sexuality as deviant and excessive is subverted and resisted in Muholi's photography. "Aftermath" furthermore highlights how iconographic representations of black female sexuality and a homophobic gaze have contributed to representing the black lesbian body as frozen in history whilst simultaneously subverting these negative inscriptions. The woman in "Aftermath" is standing and it may be argued that she represents black lesbians who, despite having been violated and wounded continue to resist, challenge and oppose the idea of black lesbians as deviant, morally corrupt and as lacking agency.

The title "Aftermath" may be interpreted as an aftermath of numerous histories of black lesbian lives lived but often untold, the aftermath of a colonial and apartheid history that has contributed to the invisibility *as well as* spectacle of black lesbian sexuality, and the aftermath of a transitional politics in South Africa where women serve as boundary markers in the new nationalist narrative and where those who deviate from the heteronormative standard become targets for hatred and exclusion.

As evidenced above, an analysis of Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* provides insights into the effects of the hate crime scourge for black lesbian women. The series further explores how racialised and sexualised politics influence their representation and it troubles the idea that black lesbians are invisible and unrecognisable. The women photographed in this series represent different aspects of hate crime. For example, "Ordeal" depicts a response to hate crime but also signifies social inequalities in its referencing of domestic workers and the role

that apartheid played in marginalising and excluding the lives of racial and sexual minorities. "Hate Crime Survivor I" makes the viewer aware of the many labels attached to lesbian sexuality and the fact that lesbians are often represented as criminals or blamed for their sexual identification whereas "Aftermath" subverts the heterosexual gaze and portrays women's resistance against the violence enacted on their bodies. Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* is significant as it references the liveability, survivability and intelligibility of black lesbian life without disregarding their vulnerability and precarity. An analysis of the series furthermore highlights, in line with Butler's theory on precariousness and grievability that black lesbian lives are vulnerable and also grievable. In *Frames of War* Butler emphasises that the frames through which we either apprehend or fail to apprehend life are politically saturated (Butler, 2009, p. 1). Some lives are seen as more recognisable than others with the result that certain lives are regarded less precarious and grievable. In my analysis of the series I draw from Butler's theorisation on precariousness and I have identified how the differential norms of recognition between print media representations and Muholi's photography contribute to a differential allocation of precarity to black lesbian life in these separate textual genres.

The meaning of the title of Muholi's first collection *Only half the picture* is illuminated through this reading of the *Hate Crime Series*, for the series bears testimony to the misrepresentation of black lesbian lives and points to the abundance of untold stories. Muholi's second collection, *Faces and Phases,* responds to this problem of misrepresentation in a vast and broad documentation of the lives and portraits of black lesbians and transgender men in what ultimately constitutes a (trans)national queer archive. I discuss this second collection in the following section, illustrating its function as positive counterpublic representing the LGBT community.

Faces and Phases 2006-2014

In contrast with Muholi's *Hate Crime Series, Faces and Phases 2006-2014* accomplishes something quite different in terms of representing black lesbian life. While the former elucidates the representation of black lesbians against the backdrop of hate crime and corrective rape, *Faces and Phases* yields positive representations of black lesbian women and transgender men, and is also different in terms of sheer scope. The women in this collection participate in representing themselves, telling their stories of sexual identification and lesbian desire but also acknowledging the stark reality of homophobia and sexual violence against

the LGBT community. An additionally important feature of *Faces and Phases* is the connection made between black lesbian women. For example, Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde is documented twice in the collection. A close-up portrait of Nkabinde wearing reading glasses and her traditional sangoma beads and a full-body portrait with Nkabinde in men's clothing resonate with her diverse identification process as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. The portrait of Funeka Soldaat as a black lesbian activist in *Faces and Phases* and the reference made to her friendship with Zoliswa Nkonyana and Millicent Gaika who also appear in the print media work to demystify the representation of victimised black lesbians.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter *Faces and Phases* is Muholi's second collection of photographs and includes 258 white and black portraits of lesbian women and transgender men. The photographs are annotated with narratives, biographies, poems and statements included in a project focused on the subjects' "individual joys, hopes, longings, scars, suffering and endless love" (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 6). I here draw from Ann Cvetkovich's work on lesbian public cultures and interdisciplinary trauma studies where the concept of trauma is used as an analytical lens for documenting psychic pain often present in queer publics. Second, I argue that the transnational focus in Muholi's collection has emancipatory potential as far as representing the LGBT community is concerned. Finally, I confirm along with other scholars that Muholi's collection constitutes a visual counterpublic informed by counter discourses and narratives of lesbian survivability, mourning and belonging.

Zanele Muholi explains her visual activism and documentation of black lesbian and transgender life by saying that "[c]onfronted by the realities of loss and pain, I began a long journey of photographing black and white portraits of the mostly black lesbians and trans men around me" (Muholi, 2014, p. 6). Living close to loss is an important theme in Muholi's work. This also becomes apparent in a personal narrative where she explains that she does not have a "documented family tree, and sadly I do not have photographs of my maternal and paternal grandparents" (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 6). The loss expressed by Muholi resonates with that of Ann Cvetkovich in her book *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003). Cvetkovich echoes Muholi in explaining that the desire to write a book on lesbian public cultures started with a personal recognition of pain which drew her to the theme of trauma. Cvetkovich writes that she became interested in trauma because it "opens up space for accounts of pain as psychic, not just physical"

(Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 2). The documentation of psychic pain is particularly difficult as seen with Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.*

I propose that trauma is a productive lens for examining the obscured traces of violence in the lives of black lesbian women and will use it to read Muholi's collection of photographs, poems, biographies, statements and narratives. Cvetkovich defines the productive nature of trauma as category and writes,

> [a]s a name for experiences of socially situated political violence, trauma forges overt connections between politics and emotion. Sexual acts, butch-femme discourse, queer transnational publics, incest, AIDS, and AIDS activism, grassroots archives – these are some of the sites of lesbian public cultures where I have not only found the traces of trauma but ways of thinking about trauma that do not pathologize it, that seize control of it from the medical experts, and that forge creative responses to it that far outstrip even the most utopian of therapeutic and political solutions. (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 3)

As with Muholi's photography and its prominent focus on trauma, Cvetkovich emphasises the importance of endeavouring not to pathologise the trauma but to use it as a lens for detecting the violence that otherwise remain hidden and undocumented. Muholi writes of both the visible and invisible wars that have been waged against black lesbians and in describing her project writes, "I wanted to fill a gap in South Africa's visual history that, even 10 years after the fall of apartheid, wholly excluded our very existence" (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 6). This statement can be read as a reference to the social and structural violence enacted against the LGBT community and the manifestation of homophobia and corrective rape today further signifies the physical and psychic trauma that is endured. In her introduction to *Faces and Phases* Muholi writes of political wars against the LGBT community that criminalised sexuality in Africa but furthermore references equally destructive wars focused on devaluing black and African subjectivity. Muholi explains that,

> [p]arallel to these political wars, another kind of war was being waged, an internal war against our own black, African beauty. Africans were bombarded with commercial images peddling the use of skin bleaching creams that promised to lighten and brighten our complexions, give us a sense of self-worth and satisfy a longing to be less African even as we fought against white oppression. (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 7)

This quote casts light on the complicated tensions that emerged during the apartheid years where *whiteness* served to delegitimise black subjectivity and was simultaneously rendered the ideal racial category. The psychic trauma of racism is more difficult to document. In order to document the psychic traumas that affect LGBT lives in post-apartheid South Africa it may be useful to draw from Cvetkovich's theorisation around trauma and the archive. Cvetkovich

convincingly argues in favour of employing trauma as a productive category in initiating an alternative archive and writes,

> [b]ecause trauma can be unspeakable and unrepresentable and because it is marked by forgetting and dissociation, it often seems to leave behind no records at all. Trauma puts pressure on conventional forms of documentation, representation, and commemoration, giving rise to new genres of expression, such as testimony, and new forms of monuments, rituals, and performances that can call into being collective witnesses and publics. It thus demands an unusual archive, whose materials, in pointing to trauma's ephemerality, are themselves frequently ephemeral. (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 7)

Cvetkovich uses trauma studies as a way of "exploring the public cultures created around traumatic events" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 18). It is clear that Muholi's collection of photography has also emerged in response to traumatic events and hence also derives its significance from its potential to be read as an alternative or queer archive. These traumatic events can also be defined as crises. In her book *Cruel Optimism* (2011) Lauren Berlant explains that her book "is about what happens to the fantasies of the good life when the ordinary becomes a landfill for overwhelming and impending crises of life-building and expectation whose sheer volume so threatens what it has meant to "have a life" that adjustment seems like an accomplishment" (Berlant, 2011, p. 3). The central thesis of Berlant's book has relevance for Muholi's work where the participants in her collection are accomplishing something by merely surviving the everyday social injustices and homophobic violence that threaten their lives. Although the participants in Muholi's project cannot be viewed as striving for the "good life" in an American capitalist sense, I want to use Berlant's theory to contextualise normative modes of living that are in fact characterised by crises. In other words, an aspiration to live a "normal" life or to survive as a black lesbian woman in a South African township can also be defined as a type of 'cruel optimism'. Berlant writes that *Cruel Optimism* "turns toward thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on" (Berlant, 2011, p. 8). Here I argue that these modes of survival or "living on" in the lives of black lesbians are carefully captured and documented in Muholi's archive where normative modes of belonging are resisted and replaced by queer belonging and solidarity with the LGBT community.

Judith Halberstam and Ann Cvetkovich refer to Mark Seltzer's work on a "wound culture" and the public's fascination with torn, open and violated bodies with a collective gathering

around shock, trauma and the wound (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 79).[34] Halberstam highlights that victims of these homophobic crimes become figures who "stand in for the hurts and the indignities that are so often rendered invisible by the peculiar closet structure of homophobia" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 16). The point made by Halberstam resonates with the present study on corrective rape where certain black lesbians stand in for these hurts and indignities, thus becoming hypervisible symbols of hatred and difference. LGBT activists, organisations and newspapers repeatedly reference certain cases to make a political point about the brutality of these crimes. It is within this context that Zanele Muholi's visual archive of more than 250 participants who identify differently in terms of their sexuality is important. The physical and psychic trauma that is lost or becomes invisible in highlighting only certain cases of corrective rape and trauma is restored through this sense of community and multiplicity in an ever expanding archive.

The importance of Berlant's text is that it takes the idea of the 'good life' promised by capitalism further and contextualises its transnational effects. It is thus essential to recognise that while Halberstam argues for the importance of the local context with its specificities, it is equally important to regard Muholi's work as a transnational project. Although the majority of participants in this collection are from South Africa, Muholi also includes the narratives of LGBT individuals situated outside of South African borders and in her introduction to the collection she points to its transnational focus. Furthermore, in writing about belonging Baderoon highlights that "[t]he visionary spaces in Muholi's 'intimate archive' of Black lesbians and trans men redefine belonging and normalcy in South Africa and beyond" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 327). The significance of situating the black lesbian and transgender body and her/their sexuality in a transnational context is that it subverts the binary construction of the Western/African debate on sexuality that continues to pathologise black lesbian bodies.

Berlant furthermore argues that the conceptual notion of the 'ordinary' is thought of in her book as "a zone of convergence of many histories, where people manage the incoherence of lives that proceed in the face of threats to the good life they imagine. Catastrophic forces take shape in this zone and become events within history as it is lived" (Berlant, 2011, p. 10). The idea of the ordinary life is taken up by Baderoon in her afterword to *Faces and Phases.* With the title *Autobiographies of Ordinary Life* Baderoon writes of the emergence of an 'ordinary'

[34] One such example of extreme violation in America was the case of Brandon Teena, who was raped and murdered for passing as a man.

life that was charged by political oppression and how a minority opinion was represented as a majority opinion in public culture. Twenty-two years into democracy representations of public culture continue to be contested but archives such as Muholi's *Faces and Phases* play an influential role in resisting normative modes of belonging and continue to queer the acculturated gaze that has contributed to the marginalisation of racial minorities and queer identities.

Baderoon accurately articulates this when she writes, "[i]n the face of this history of policing bodies and interiorities and marginalising people who challenge conventional genders and sexualities, artists and writers have crafted new forms of affiliation and identity unimagined in the national mainstream" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 328). In agreement with Baderoon, in the following section I read Muholi's archive as one that queers national belonging. Black lesbians resist being defined by others and confirm a multiplicity of queer belongings in this archive of collective being. In addition to Baderoon's contribution that Muholi's collection exists as an archive of collective being I emphasise that positive images and narratives in *Faces and Phases* break the normative frame that has historically rendered them as unintelligible and ungrievable. Instead these portraits and narratives call the frame into question and point to norms of recognition that foreground themes I have identified in this collection: survivability, mourning and belonging.

Survivability

The first theme that presents itself upon analysing Muholi's *Faces and Phases* is survivability. A recurrent issue raised in the biographies, stories, poems, narratives and statements written by participants in this collection is that their lives are lived in fear. These fears are summarised in relation to a fear of homophobic violence and corrective rape but also the fear of merely surviving as a lesbian woman or transgender man in a homophobic or transphobic community. However, although black lesbians and transgender men live in fear, there is a strong sense of survivability present in their narratives. In the introduction to the collection Muholi highlights some of the challenges associated with identifying as lesbian or transgender, writing that,

> [a]s black lesbian women and gay men today we are resisting homophobia, queerphobia and transphobia simply by living our lives. We put ourselves at risk in the townships by coming out and being seen, but we refuse to comply and to deny our own existence. (cf. Muholi in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 7)

Survivability or, as Muholi phrases it, "simply [by] living our lives", informs the narratives of many lesbian and transgender men in this collection. Documented narratives show that lesbian women and transgender men continue to survive amidst physical and psychic traumas such as acquiring HIV through rape and living with AIDS, surviving and adjusting to rejection from family members because of their lesbian or gay sexuality, and surviving conditions that continue to marginalise them because of their race and sexuality.

For instance, Nunu Sigasa narrates her story of identifying as a lesbian and living with HIV. Sigasa also writes of her personal desires and hopes that form part of a narrative of survivability. As with all of the portraits in this collection, Sigasa confidently returns the gaze and states:

> My name is Nonhlanhla Sigasa but my nickname is Nunu. I was born in Ratanda in 1981. I have two birthdays: I was born on 10 October and I was diagnosed HIV positive in February, so each and every 15 February my HIV status turns a year older and I get to live another year. (cf. Sigasa in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 63)

Sigasa writes about living with and losing her partner to HIV but also describes her dream to publish a book one day. Living with HIV makes Sigasa conscious of her mortality but she actively resists being reduced to her HIV status and writes, "[w]e fear so much, not only HIV, and I think our fear is death, so I dealt with my fear of death because I know that we are going to die and all I can do right now is pave my way and create a better tomorrow instead of sitting at home feeling sorry for myself" (cf. Sigasa in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 63). Sigasa does not regard HIV a death sentence but references her ability to adjust to the circumstances. She furthermore addresses the importance of participating in such a project and speaking out about HIV and lesbian sexuality by writing, "I think it's important for lesbians to be able to talk openly about this. There's nothing wrong with being a lesbian, or being HIV positive; there's nothing wrong with living your own life or dreaming bigger" (cf. Sigasa in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 63). Sigasa speaks back and her narrative directly confronts and opposes the taboo shrouding lesbian sexuality and living one's life as HIV positive. She challenges these negative representations of black lesbian life and simultaneously highlights her dreams despite the challenges she confronts.

The survivability identified in Sigasa's narrative is also present with Funeka Soldaat, activist and facilitator at Free Gender in Khayelitsha. Soldaat, wearing a black leather jacket and standing with her body slightly turned, also returns a stern but insightful gaze. Soldaat is wearing the intersex symbol around her neck. She is butch in appearance and the light that

falls on her face reflects her expressive eyes and knowing gaze. The subjects in Muholi's photographs are not pathologised as Baderoon clarifies, Muholi "feels that the body is a platform of resistance" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 336). A method of avoiding this pathologising effect involves "comportment and composition that would not be immediately apparent to an outsider" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014. p. 336). Participants are photographed in a way that represents their gender identity, thus allowing them to feel comfortable and confident in their stance and gaze. Baderoon quotes Muholi who states that,

> "'[w]hen you shoot trans men or when you shoot butch lesbians you have to be careful of the breast. So I have to be careful that a person slightly gives me her shoulder to divert from the actual image that will greet the viewer when they see it. You don't want to show the private parts of a trans woman. You don't want to show the big bust of a trans man, if he is not comfortable with it. You don't want to project the big bust of a butch lesbian, if she is not comfortable. It confirms and takes you back to where you've been and you don't want to be.'" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 336)

Lesbian women and transgender men reported on in the media also appear in *Faces and Phases.* The representation of lesbians and transgender men as voiceless and unintelligible is therefore directly challenged in this collection where their faces and sexualities are documented in the queer archive. I argue along with Butler's theories on frames that the portraits and narratives documented in *Faces and Phases* are a "breaking out" from the confinement of representations where black lesbians are merely read as victims of violence. The women who are defined as unliveable and ungrievable in media representations are redefined and positively represented in the collection. In Muholi's collection, participants write their own narratives and represent themselves in a unique way. Baderoon writes of the nuanced forms of identity that emerge in this collection, stating that "[t]he photographs we are looking at are dense with visual histories. They are identity documents not created by the state, and we feel the push and pull of the images. The identities within them are multiple and soft. We become absorbed within the photographs, rather than acting upon them" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 334).

Funeka Soldaat's work as an activist for Free Gender is reported on in South African newspapers but it gains personal insight and political weight in *Faces and Phases*. Soldaat writes about Free Gender's role in fighting against and creating awareness around homophobia and hate crimes. Soldaat describes knowing Zoliswa Nkonyana and Millicent Gaika while they were growing up and writes that they both used to play soccer for a

women's team that she was involved in. Soldaat expresses the importance for LGBT people to "write our own chapters" (cf. Soldaat in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 110) and she refers to the active role assumed by LGBT activists both during apartheid and in democratic South Africa. The work accomplished by the LGBT community and activists is central to surviving homophobia and hate crime. Soldaat explains that "[t]he argument sometimes is that there were no gay people who fought in the struggle [apartheid] – politicians act like we just came out of nowhere – whereas we've been there, we were fighting alongside them in the trenches, it just wasn't documented because sexual orientation was not an issue at the time, the issue was racial oppression" (cf. Soldaat in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 110). This important statement makes a claim for the presence and role of the LGBT community in South Africa's past. Soldaat's statement also references the way that race politics has eclipsed sex and gender politics in post-apartheid South Africa with national identity often seen as being coupled with racial or ethnic identity. Survival for the lesbian and transgender community, however, depends on a type of belonging that resists racialised and sexualised codes of citizenship. In reflecting on the way that black lesbians and LGBT organisations' work is not always recognised it becomes essential to raise the issue of norms. Butler's theories highlight how norms operate to either challenge or reproduce recognisable figures and she states that "[t]he problem is not merely how to include more people within existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differentially." She continues to ask, "[w]hat new norms are possible and how are they wrought? What might be done to produce a more egalitarian set of conditions for recognizability? What might be done, in other words, to shift the very terms of recognizability in order to produce more radically democratic results?" (Butler, 2009, p. 6). In this chapter I argue that Muholi's work is important in that it produces new narratives, scripts and dialogues where black lesbians "write their own chapters" and hereby emphasise their precariousness, intelligibility and grievability. Baderoon confirms that non-elite biographies subvert normative modes of belonging and support different modes of survival. Baderoon writes that "*Faces and Phases* inhabits the realm of looser relations to the national, a sceptical citizenship, wary and critical, and capable of complex and multiple positions, uncowed by the label of 'disloyalty'. Such compelling and dissident narratives model how we might live our lives together amid a plethora of different affiliations and identities" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 329). Therefore, where print media representations undermine the inclusion and acceptance of black lesbians, *Faces and Phases* creates a space and frame that recognises queer belonging in Africa.

The theme of survivability is also present in narratives of adjustment to the threat of sexual violence and post-rape trauma. Lesbian women and transgender men bravely share their stories of rape but also emphasise their survivability when they refer to themselves as survivors or victors. For example, Lungile Dladla titles her narrative, 'I am not a victim but a victor'. Dladla is masculine in appearance, wearing a bow tie and men's trousers. Dladla's head is shaven and she owns her butch appearance. Dladla was raped in February 2010 and found out that she had contracted HIV from the rape in 2012. Dladla's narrative focuses on the traumatic experience of rape but also references hope. The conclusion of Dladla's narrative emphasises this hope and survivability when she writes, "[o]ne thing I still need to overcome is the fact that whenever I take my medication, I am reminded of what the bastard did to me! However, my inner self is strong, I'm going to beat this. HIV is not my life, I'm not going to let it get to me. I am not a Victim but a Victor" (cf. Dladla in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 166). Many of the narratives in Muholi's collection reference a painful past but simultaneously highlight survivability in the present and speak of hopeful futures. For example, Soldaat writes of a future where there will no longer be a need for gay and lesbian organisations; a sentiment which resonates with Muholi's aspiration to find "a history in which she can claim part and which would also allow her to envisage a future" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 334). Survivability thus forms a central theme in an archive that acknowledges a painful past but reaches toward a hopeful, queer future.

Mourning

Mourning is the second important theme informing participant narratives and portraits in Muholi's collection. The theme is introduced in *Faces and Phases* when Muholi dedicates the book to all mothers of LGBT children and to those who have lost their children to hate-related crimes. Muholi opens her collection with a reference to those who have passed and to Busi Sigasa, the first person, now deceased, photographed by Muholi for *Faces and Phases*. The act of mourning performs an important affective function in a context where lesbian and transgender life has been framed as unrecognisable and ungrievable. Butler provides insight into the grievability of life and argues that "[w]ithout grievability there is no life, or, rather there is something living that is other than life. Instead, "there is a life that will never have been lived," sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost" (Butler, 2009, p. 15). Print media representations that focus on individual accounts of violated and ungrievable lesbians reinforce the absence of precarity and lack of intelligibility associated with their

lives. The act of mourning the lost lives of black lesbians however constitutes a collective resistance against the erasure of queer life and emphasises their belonging.

Faces and Phases is a project that Muholi started in 2006 prior to its final publication in 2014. In the third phase of the project Muholi comments that *Faces* refers to her as the photographer and community worker confronted with the many faces of lesbians and members of the transgender community, while *Phases* refers to the many identities and stages that the LGBT community goes through (cf. Muholi in *Queer African Reader,* 2013, p. 169). However, *Phases* can also be read in line with the term "passing" that Kylie Thomas employs in her analysis of Muholi's work. Thomas argues that,

> [t]he question of what is at stake in this act of passing marks the fine line between passing as a strategy of survival, a mechanism that allows one to appear, and "passing away," becoming invisible as a queer subject through one's entry into the realm of the legible. This invisibility can be psychic, a metaphoric loss of subjectivity, and can take material form through the threat of murder that affects lesbian being everywhere in South Africa today. (Thomas, 2010, p. 433)

The tension between "'passing' between fixed-gendered positions" (Thomas, 2010, p. 433) and the threat of becoming invisible or passing away because of one's sexuality emerges prominently in this collection. Thomas provides more context and writes that her reading of Muholi's portraits "explores how her photographs work with the ambiguities of 'passing' – passing *away*, passing *between* states of gendered being, and passing *through* the prohibitions against making lesbian experience visible and mourning lesbian loss" (Thomas, 2010, p. 421). While print media representations suggest that lesbian visibility is coupled with an immediate threat, mourning in *Faces and Phases* adds a dimension and positively affirms lesbian visibility and lesbian loss.

Although *Faces and Phases* speaks to the survivability of lesbian and transgender lives there are also examples that focus on the loss of lesbian subjectivity. One such example is a poem written by Andiswa Dlamini who writes about the way in which her lesbian identity is unmade after being raped. In contrast to Nunu Sigasa's earlier narrative that emphasises hope and a positive future, Dlamini's poem addresses the undoing potential of rape and an annihilation of lesbian subjectivity. A repetitive reference to the statement 'I used to be lesbian' in Dlamini's poem relates to her positive and active identification as a lesbian prior to being raped. This repetitive reference can be defined as an act of mourning lesbian identity and subjecthood. Dlamini's poem is interesting in the way it explores the tension between butch-femme sexualities and, later in the poem, the domination associated with male

masculinity, rape and trauma. In reading Dlamini's poem I detect a correlation between Ann Cvetkovich's analysis of butch-femme sexualities in relation to trauma and touch. In the first part of Dlamini's poem she writes of her active desire for women and introduces her poem as follows:

> I used to be lesbian
> Let me explain
> I use to look at girls in a particular way
> Where I could imagine her in the conclusion of each page
> Man, I loved women (cf. Dlamini in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 275)

Cvetkovich writes of the butch-femme construction's potential to expand "the vocabulary of sexuality, which remains impoverished by presumptions that penetration means only penis in vagina or domination. Its visceral and emotional qualities transform theory's abstractions, bringing into being new possibilities for bodies and their meanings, which have implications not only for queer sexual lives but for others too" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 52). Dlamini's poem can be read as an exploration of the nuances between desire related to butch-femme sexualities on the one hand and also the dominance and violence associated with masculinity on the other. Dlamini's poem references the sensitivity of personal and physical boundaries. Dlamini describes the breakdown of a personal boundary in relation to her first heartbreak with a woman in the first part of the poem,

> I used to be lesbian
> In fact my first heartbreak was with a woman
> And I didn't know how to handle it so
> I became a heartbreaker
> just so I could see how others were dealing with the intensity you
> feel when you've lost the love
> you thought was the one (cf. Dlamini in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 275)

The breakdown of a personal boundary in relation to losing love in the first part of the poem is replaced by a breakdown or penetration of a physical and personal boundary in Dlamini's account of rape in the final part of the poem. Dlamini concludes her poem as follows,

Because he showed me the power of a man

And I could never love that

So I killed myself because

I knew that I could never stand corrected

It wasn't one of Shakespeare's tragedies

This was no love story

I used to be lesbian

But in heaven God said

We are not defined by titles

So now I live as a woman that loves … (cf. Dlamini in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 276)

Cvetkovich draws from Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in defining trauma and the protective shield or crust that forms in relation to traumatic sensation or touch in her writings on butch-femme sexualities. I argue that the definition of sensation and trauma can be read in relation to Dlamini's poem that speaks to a penetration of personal and physical boundaries.

Cvetkovich writes that "[i]n Freud's model of perception as penetration, all forms of sensation carry with them the trace of trauma. Every organism or body is by definition 'sensitive,' requiring some form of protection from the incursions of the outside world" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 53). Furthermore, Cvetkovich elaborates on the idea of sensation versus numbness that ensures the survivability of the organism. In relation to butch-femme sexualities Freud's model emerges as important. Sensation can be pleasurable but heightened or overwhelming sensation threatens mortality. Cvetkovich defines the process and writes that "[s]ensation and numbness are both marked by paradox; sensation simultaneously connects the organism to the outside world and kills it, and numbness is the effect of, as well as the protection against, the traumatic breaching of the organism's boundaries" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 54). This process of "forming a defensive crust or shield through the death of its outer layers" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 53) in relation to a description of trauma becomes particularly salient as a response to a traumatic experience in Dlamini's poem. This process of losing one's lesbian subjectivity and self is described in the afore-mentioned conclusion of the poem which references this state of numbness in opposition to a previously active and sensitive lesbian desire.

In addition to mourning the loss or potential loss of subjectivity, memorialisation and the act of mourning resists the erasure of lesbian subjectivity and queer life. Lesbians who have

passed away are remembered and included in this growing archive. Funeka Soldaat knew Zoliswa Nkonyana and in Soldaat's narrative Nkonyana is remembered as a young woman who used to love playing soccer. Duduzile Zozo, also murdered for her sexuality, is remembered and mourned by Charmain Carrol with her poem 'Untitled'. Carrol is femme in appearance and her hair is neatly tied back into a braid. Carrol confidently returns the gaze in this photograph and has a soft expression in her face and eyes. She is wearing a faux-fur scarf which covers her shoulders and breasts but leaves her arms exposed. Carrol writes of the complexities of bringing a daughter into this world where women are killed for their sexuality. The difficulty of being a mother and the possibility of mourning your daughter, an undocumented affective experience, is defined by Carrol when she writes "As I'm about to bring this life into this world for you to condemn, I am in labour and in mourning" (cf. Carrol in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 97). Carrol mourns the lesbian women who have lost their lives and she simultaneously mourns with mothers who lose children to LGBT related hate crimes.

The significance of mourning in *Faces and Phases* is connected with memory and the act of remembering. Mourning those who have already passed forms an important part of *Faces and Phases* and the collection resists and troubles the erasure of memory. As mentioned earlier, the unrepresentable nature of trauma often results in a loss of records, particularly of queer lives (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 7). The collection subverts the notion that queer lives are unrepresentable and a documentation of emotions and the ephemeral (poems, narratives and short biographies) inform this archive of queer and collective being. Sindiwe Magona emphasises the importance of documenting queer lives and while she acknowledges that "Cold is a photo, from it comes not warmth nor smile, nor hug" (cf. Magona in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 8), she highlights the need to take photographs "[s]o on birthdays and other days of remembrance You can point to the picture on the wall and say – Vusi would've been thirty today, perhaps with a Young one and another on the way" (cf. Magona in *Faces and Phases,* , 2014, p. 9). In this way, memory acts as a method of living on beyond the boundaries of the body. As in many of the other narratives, Penny Xoliswa Nkosi explains why she thinks the *Faces and Phases* project is necessary. Nkosi's statement refers to the importance of leaving a legacy and remembering queer life.

Nkosi claims:

> Aside from my love for photography, I think this kind of project is necessary especially in Africa where there is so much violence against lesbians. So to have my picture taken, that carries a lot of legacy and meaning to people who are having difficulties in imagining what a lesbian looks like. So yeah, I guess it's about legacy, isn't it? (cf. Nkosi in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 179)

Muholi opens her introduction to *Faces and Phases* with Busi Sigasa, the first lesbian photographed for *Faces and Phases* in 2006 with the title of her poem 'Remember me when I'm gone…' Sigasa died at the tender age of 25 and Muholi confronts her own sadness and mourning with this project which celebrates lesbian survival but also mourns lesbian loss. Busi Sigasa's poem and portrait also form part of the participant narratives in *Faces and Phases.* With Sigasa's portrait, her face and upper part of her body are drawn into sharp focus. In contrast to the rest of the portraits in the collection, Sigasa does not look into the camera but instead gazes into the distance, into the future. Sigasa's visibility and her poem is one of loss but also one of hope. Although Sigasa was raped and contracted HIV from the rape, the poem details how much she has accomplished and meant to the lesbian community and it emphasises the importance of remembering those who have already gone. Sigasa writes,

> Remember me when I'm gone
>
> For I …
>
> Wrote stories for the nations to read
>
> Stood without fear and told my story (cf. Sigasa in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 315)

The act of mourning identified in lesbian narratives play an integral role in restoring lesbian subjectivity and intelligibility. Butler's theories on norms of recognition and frames are important in this regard in that they highlight how these norms influence grievability and intelligibility but *Faces and Phases* emerges as a significant counterpublic of lesbian emotions with positive representations of black lesbians and transgender men.

Belonging

The final theme identified in Muholi's collection is that of belonging. In this section I discuss how belonging emerges in three different ways. First, black lesbians and transgender men define themselves as belonging to families, communities and to the community represented in this archive. Second, black lesbians and transgender men highlight some of the challenges

associated with belonging. Finally, they forge news definitions of belonging and speak of hopeful and positive futures.

Participant narratives in Muholi's collection emphasise their belonging and place in families. Amogelang Senokwane, for instance, begins her short biography by writing "[m]y name is Amogelang Precious Senokwane, the only daughter of the late Dimakatso Senokwane and Ralebese Ruiters. I was born on 3 March 1987 at Hoopstad Hospital in Free State. I was raised in Hertzogville by my mom and great-grandmother" (cf. Senokwane in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 19). Senokwane describes her coming-out process and writes of the fact that she was accepted by most of her family members. Senokwane defines herself as belonging to a family and maps her place in this genealogy. She furthermore positions herself within Muholi's project and writes of the benefits of being involved in such a collective archive. In Senokwane's words,

> *Faces and Phases* has helped me a lot, because when my family saw the book and saw me and other lesbians there, it made them more proud of me and made them understand that there are other lesbians out there and we are here to stay. My photo was also used in the *Sowetan* newspaper for an article. It boosted my confidence to another level. A lot of people became curious and wanted to know more about my life and our lives as the black LGBTI community. (cf. Senokwane in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 22)

In addition to defining and mapping one's belonging within families, *Faces and Phases* also shows how black lesbians such as Collen Mfazwe speaks of spaces of belonging beyond the family. Many of the narratives that form part of *Faces and Phases* have already been documented in Muholi's online archive of black lesbian life titled *Inkanyiso.* Mfazwe writes of a sense of belonging in a lesbian boarding house in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Mfazwe writes that they call themselves the Inkanyiso Collective, an initiative started by Muholi to involve black lesbians and transgender men in projects that can assist them in creating better futures for themselves. Mfazwe writes of the Inkanyiso collective as a new family and writes, "[w]hat I like about my new family is that we come from different backgrounds but we all envision one thing: success. We may be different, beautiful and intelligent in our own ways, but our end goal is to be productive and successful beings. Sometimes it seems unrealistic, like some movie scene, but this is not a script" (cf. Mfazwe in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 47). Mfazwe affirms the positivity associated with lesbian belonging and also challenges the notion that their lives can be read as some type of script. For example, print media representations often focus on the spectacular violence that is associated with lesbian life, i.e. reading almost as a murderous script. Mfazwe's statement can be interpreted as a refusal to

read lesbian and transgender life as unintelligible and confirms the possibilities and positive futures associated with their lives.

While there are positive accounts of belonging there are also narratives that focus on struggles in relation to belonging. For example, lesbian women and transgender men in the collection emphasise that nobody is safe and that members of the LGBT community often feel that they do not belong in their communities or in South Africa. Thekwane Bongi Mpisholo writes of the paradox between talking about freedom and living in fear. Mpisholo states, "…this freedom that people are talking about, it's not freedom in the true sense of the word. Freedom means free without paying a price to be free. Freedom is not when women are constantly walking targets – what kind of freedom is that?" (cf. Mpisholo in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 91). This lack of freedom and living in fear is further expressed by Maureen Velile Majola who writes about the lack of male role models and the fact that women live in fear of men. Majola writes,

> [a]s a young woman in South Africa, I feel unsafe. Every man is a potential rapist to me. I believe this feeling is shared by many women and children in this country. We can't trust our fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers and neighbours. We live in fear of being the next victim of rape or another statistic. (cf. Majola in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 191)

Majola's lack of trust and fear of men is a theme that reverberates throughout *Faces and Phases*. This is also related to the oft-cited psychic trauma experienced by black lesbians and transgender men which ultimately influences their sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the collection documents the challenges faced by transgender men. Transgender men are not only the victims of homophobic crime and violence but are denied recognition in post-apartheid South Africa. Betesta Segale, a transgender man, explains:

> There are many challenges that I face every day. I get stared at all the time and I am asked to identify myself everywhere I go. There are things which challenge me that others may not necessarily be aware of, like using public toilets, getting into a club and getting a job. All this is because of how I choose to identify. My papers show that I am a female but my physical appearance shows that I am a man. (cf. Segale in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 305)

Segale's everyday challenges and struggle to belong shows how society more broadly fails to recognise and accept transgender identities. The challenges that accompany transgender identity furthermore show that society lacks education and an awareness of the difficulties associated with identifying as transgender. Black lesbians and transgender men recognise the importance of creating awareness around LGBT rights. Nonkululeko Xana Nyilenda

foregrounds the importance of challenging people's beliefs that lesbians are unnatural and suggests that "[o]nce people begin to free their minds and accept that we are not bewitched, we are not anomalies of nature and we are here to stay, then change can be achieved. How we do this is through education" (cf. Nyilenda in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 37). Nyilenda's comment directly opposes the historical idea that black lesbian and transgender sexuality is anomalous, thus challenging negative representations of black lesbian and transgender life. Nyilenda's insistence that black lesbians are here to stay furthermore challenges discourse in the media where lesbian subjectivity is represented as being erased through the practice of corrective rape and homophobia.

Another means of belonging for black lesbians and transgender men can be seen in the labels that individuals choose – or resist for themselves. Some participants in the project regard labels as restrictive and therefore avoid using them. For example, Bathini Dambuza states "I'm not butch, I'm not femme, I'm just me" (cf. Dambuza in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 28). Nonkuleleko Xana Nyilenda also finds difficulty with labels and while embracing her status as a woman writes, "I don't know what 'in-between' means; or rather that in-between label is so vague it could mean so many things. I'm neither butch nor femme. I try not to put labels to who or what I am but if I had to adhere to the many terms used to coin differences in labels I suppose I'd refer to myself as 'Tom' (cf. Nyilenda in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 37). Lerato Dumse also recognises a problem with labels and writes:

> I identify as a woman, but as far as sexuality is concerned I am a lesbian. Therefore I am a lesbian woman. I am careful not to attach an additional label: I am aware of how the butch-femme construct can be limiting and unfree, so I will not define myself within those confines. (cf. Dumse in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 56)

The butch-femme construct not only perpetuates heterosexual norms in relationships but can be further confining when it employs the figure of the butch lesbian as an iconic image of corrective rape and murder. While this representation is common in the media, it is actively resisted in *Faces and Phases*.

The participants in this collection recognise how important their visibility and their narratives are in in terms of challenging stereotypes. Apinda Mpako writes about this with reference to a nude photograph of herself embracing another woman in Muholi's *Being* series.

Mpako references the centrality of this photograph in her life and writes,

> I did not have any moral objections [being photographed naked and embracing another woman] though people still ask me about that. I was clear on why I was doing it. I knew that it was an art piece – this is someone's artwork and I'm a part of it. I've had partners who have had an issue with that image but I won't budge. It's become a deal breaker; anyone who has issues with that image has no space in my life. (cf. Mpako in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 80)

Mpako positively inserts herself into Muholi's project by affirming her role and identification as lesbian or as embracing another woman in this photograph and in her life. The fact that the image has become a 'deal breaker' for Mpako also highlights the value of the photograph in terms of representation and society's reactions to it. Mpako's identification with the image and with Muholi's work also shows how Mpako forges a different sense of belonging for herself, one that is often in conflict with the views of those who don't agree with her lifestyle or sexual identification.

Furthermore, belonging is discussed in relation to queer pageants where lesbian women and transgender men have the opportunity to express their sexuality and celebrate their beauty and lives. Refilwe Mahlaba raises an important point concerning the distinction between the spaces in which lesbians and transgender men feel comfortable and where they belong. Mahlaba writes, "I feel these pageants are important because that's where we sort of escape to, in that you don't get such events in the "real world" (cf. Mahlaba in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 290). The spaces that are created with events such as these beauty pageants are also significant as far as belonging is concerned. For Baderoon, "these 'real worlds' of sanctuary, ritual and performance allow the body to be a space to live in and to play in, to form a 'real world' of its own" (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 331). These worlds are created through beauty pageants, LGBT collectives, poetry and literary narratives, and visual archives that create alternative affiliations, identities and forms of belonging.

The content of the archive is positively queered with Muholi's collection. Pamella Dlungwana, a participant of the collection writes of the complex and evolving form of this archive and her desire to see herself as part of it:

> I wanted to insert myself into an archive that was still learning its ABCs. There are all kinds of African queers out there: dominatrixes and leather boys and tranny lesbian MTFs – the vocab and the archive are growing, and I'm glad that Zanele Muholi is standing in front and centre with a Canon gawd-knows-what in her hand ready to help with the script. (cf. Dlungwana in *Faces and Phases,* 2014, p. 148)

Dlungwana is staring directly into the camera. She has short hair, large hoop earrings and glossy lips, and has a firm facial expression. The image represents femaleness, maleness and transgender being all at once. Dlungwana's comment references the complex and multiple identifications and sexualities that form part of the black LGBT community. Dlungwana refers to the expanding vocabularies and scripts that form part of this growing archive that does not want to fit into the already strict codes of national belonging but motivates for a queer form of belonging that positively represents black lesbian and transgender life in South Africa and beyond.

An analysis of print media representations of corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality in Chapter Two showed how national identity is shaped by racialised and gendered politics of exclusion. In the print media black lesbians are defined as unAfrican, unChristian and unnatural. Furthermore, the analysis which included a section on national belonging demonstrated that sexuality emerges as a qualifier of difference in news reports that prescribe heterosexual citizenship. Black lesbians' outsider status in news reports is productively challenged in *Faces and Phases.* Black lesbians and transgender men in this collection represent themselves, their bodies and their stories, and hereby resist any efforts that undermine their agency and sexuality. *Faces and Phases* which has been defined as a queer archive thus becomes a central counterpublic with multifaceted counter discourses that speak back to negative representations and interpretations of black lesbian life.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Muholi's photography makes (the visual representation of) black lesbian life and identity concrete. The analysis of Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* in the first section of this chapter focused on representations of black lesbians as victim-survivors of corrective rape and also interrogated historical and contemporary representations of their lives. As discussed, Muholi is careful not to represent black lesbians as victims of hate crime or as pathological in any way, but instead *Hate Crime Series* highlights the social and structural inequalities that often render black lesbians as unrecognisable or invisible victims of violence. The photographs in this series explore the challenges associated with living in a South African township and identifying as a black lesbian, and the homophobia that frames lesbians as criminals or as deviants because of their lesbian sexuality. These images also highlight tensions between the documentation of sexual violence versus the unrecognisable form of the lesbian figure. *Hate Crime Series* highlights the inherent agency of black lesbian

sexuality. The photographs in this series foreground survivability and resistance to a legacy of violence that continues to shape the narratives of black lesbian women. "Aftermath" formed a central part of the discussion and showed that black lesbians represent themselves in ways that challenge any further violation, and the photographs in the series as a whole productively queer the acculturated or heterosexual gaze. The analysis of Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* has formed a central part of the investigation of this thesis in that it represents the physical and psychic trauma associated with hate crime but also troubles the spectacular images of violence in print media representations of black lesbian life. Muholi's series provides an insight into social injustices, but is also a testament to the individual survival of lesbian women; a survival which remains undocumented in print media representations of their lives.

Muholi's collection of more than 250 black and white portraits in *Faces and Phases* is significant insofar as it provides a positive representation of black lesbian and transgender life and in its exploration of the multiplicity of identities and sexualities in this archive. In this section I used the work of Ann Cvetkovich, who employs the tenets of interdisciplinary trauma studies, as an analytical tool in defining lesbian public cultures. I examined how trauma as an analytical category can be used with Muholi's collection, i.e. a collection comprising psychic traumas which call for the creation of an alternative archive. Furthermore, I suggested that Muholi's collection, which situates the black lesbian or transgender body within a transnational context, subverts the Western/African debate on sexuality and gender and therefore has emancipatory potential through its refutation of the notion that homophobia is an African problem.

To conclude, I argue that Muholi's oeuvre is fundamental to challenging stereotypes on black lesbian sexuality. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and as raised by Bystrom and Nuttall, it is essential to ask what grammars or vocabularies exist that promote desegregation in the public sphere. This chapter has argued that Muholi's work and the participants involved in it positively queer the archive and that the black LGBT community is forging new ways of belonging and expanding their vocabularies and identities in contemporary cultural texts and visual representations. By applying Butler's theories on intelligibility and frames it becomes possible to see how discourse contributes to either maximising or minimising precariousness for individuals. In the media chapter it emerges that the precarity associated with black lesbian identity is minimised and I have identified how hegemonic discourses of power influence their intelligibility. The idea of frames as a "breaking out" or "breaking away" from

confinement in Muholi's work however challenges the norms of recognition manifested in the media chapter. Butler claims that "there is no life and no death without a relation to some frame"; a relevant point for this analysis which has shown how the frames of recognition in *Faces and Phases* productively undermine the unintelligible association with black lesbian identity in post-apartheid South Africa. By shifting the norms of recognition and deconstructing normative frames Muholi's queer archive thus contributes to producing egalitarian and democratic results through positive representations of LGBT lives. I conclude with a statement by Baderoon who writes that "[i]n its eight-year project of asserting the right to identity, complexity and recognition by Black lesbians and trans men, *Faces and Phases* lays claim to 'freedom in the true sense of the word' (cf. Baderoon in *Faces and Phases*, 2014, p. 327).

CHAPTER FIVE AND CONCLUSION

This study with its focus on corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality sought to deepen understanding of the representation of black lesbians in South Africa today. Since the first reports of corrective rape in the country in 2003, there has been extensive South African press coverage of black lesbian women as victims of homophobic violence. Additionally there has been a consistent trend in academic scholarship to focus on the sexual violence that is perpetrated against black lesbian women. In the introduction to this thesis I identified the problem of black lesbian women having become framed in society as particularly vulnerable targets of corrective rape. In response to this representation of black lesbian life the thesis has endeavoured to identify counter discourses in South African newspapers, literature and photography.

The second chapter of the thesis investigated print media representations of corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality. The terms "corrective/curative rape" and "lesbian" were used to source newspaper articles on the topic and the analysis provided insight into some contemporary perspectives on South Africa's racialised and sexualised politics. This chapter provided both a chronological and thematic overview of the texts as found in the period 2003-2014. Dominant themes that emerged from the analysis comprise visibility, responsibility and national belonging.

The analysis of newspaper reports on corrective rape illuminated the influential role that the media has played in representing black lesbian women as essentialised victims of homophobic violence. From the analysis it became clear that lesbians are seldom heard in relation to corrective rape and are often represented as the invisible victims of violence, a status that is reinforced by government failure to take homophobic violence seriously and the fact that South African society bears no witness to positive narratives of black lesbian identity. Alternatively the reporting of these brutal and spectacular acts of violence against lesbians also contributes to a representation of them as *hyper*visible victims. Such hypervisibility as represented in the media has reinforced their vulnerable and precarious position in society. The initial search on press pieces on corrective rape demonstrated that black lesbians become the essentialised victims of sexual violence and that *their* sexuality is regarded as particularly deplorable in society. Black lesbians tend to emerge as a trope for homophobic violence and social injustice in post-apartheid South Africa. Although the media are critical of homophobic violence and condemn these barbarous acts, it becomes clear that

they are also complicit in reproducing stereotypical norms surrounding black women and black lesbian bodies. To illustrate, a reading of these media texts reveals the critical stance of the press media towards the phenomenon of corrective rape and homophobic violence, but the reader is quickly made aware of the comfortable distance that exists between a white middle class and the daily challenges faced by members of the black community who continue to suffer a myriad social injustices. Such criticism enables the predominantly white media to project the idea that South Africa is liberal in terms of LGBT rights but represents certain communities (usually black) as lagging behind and untransformed in their views and thinking. In this chapter I identified a paradox that emerges in media reporting when the media reference the government's failure to live up to constitutional rights for the LGBT community but the media itself fails to problematise the language used to define homophobic violence and black lesbians. By failing to deconstruct the discourse on corrective rape black communities become represented as homophobic and morally corrupt. For example, the term corrective rape is not problematised in the media but simply perpetuated as a term used by activists to define the violent onslaught against predominantly butch lesbian women. News reports continue to use the term in relation to the rape of lesbians, hence contributing to the framing of black lesbians as particularly vulnerable through the delineation of corrective rape as a special type of crime reserved for these women. Additionally, black lesbians become defined as a homogeneous group in that a certain group of lesbians, mostly butch in orientation, are signified in drawing attention to the problem of corrective rape. Many of the cases of homophobic violence reported on in the media deal not only with the rape of lesbians, but tell of cases where they have been raped and murdered. This style of reporting on lesbians, which focuses on their violation and exclusion, reinforces the idea that lesbian sexuality is a taboo phenomenon in black communities and black lesbians are therefore represented as unintelligible victims of violence with their futures being represented as particularly precarious in the post-apartheid dispensation.

In Chapter Two I have also argued that the media is complicit in a form of pinkwashing as is evidenced by a style of reporting that represents South Africa as liberal in terms of LGBT rights when compared with other African countries, a fact which overshadows the stark reality that racial and sexual minorities continue to bear the brunt of social injustice. News reports on Johannesburg's Gay Pride Protest point to the paradox that exists between a liberal constitution and a homophobic reality for black sexual minorities. The One in Nine Campaign's die-in protest at Joburg Pride in 2012, which saw black lesbian activists halting

the celebration by drawing attention to corrective rape and resulted in a concomitant aggressive response on the part of mostly white members of the LGBT community, reflects a disjuncture between the liberal constitution enjoyed by a white minority and a homophobic reality for those from sexual minority groups living in South African townships. The fact that corrective rape is reported on as a crime that predominantly affects black lesbian women can be read as a reflection of the social injustices that continue to marginalise South Africa's most vulnerable groups. In this chapter I also examined how an intersectional approach highlights that black lesbians' social location, race, gender, class and sexuality intersect and contribute to their oppression in society. The surveyed media texts focus mostly on black lesbians' sexual orientation and fail to account for the routed forms of oppression that render her unintelligible and voiceless. The trope of the victimised lesbian in the media therefore operates as a means for enabling racism and othering the black population. In this way black women continue to be represented as sexually deviant and the black man is reported as the stereotypical rapist while the white liberal can demonise, alienate and condemn the racial 'other.' Chapter Two has thus brought insight into the representation of black lesbians in the public sphere and the influential role that media texts play in representing black lesbian lives. It is clear that although South African media texts draw attention to the problem of homophobia and corrective rape, they have also been complicit in silencing, marginalising and excluding the voices of black lesbian women.

A central concern of this thesis has been the challenging of negative representations of black lesbians and thus the subsequent chapters of the thesis explored representations of corrective rape and black lesbian sexuality in post-apartheid literature and visual culture. An investigation of the counter discourses in South African literature and photography thus constitute a central part of this thesis in its foregrounding of black lesbian voices and its illumination of their agency.

An analysis of Rozena Maart's *The Writing Circle* and Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde's autobiography *Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* revealed the emergence of counter discourses through the narration of sexual violence and the performance of lesbian subjectivity. The proliferation of voices that intersect in challenging representations of women as merely victims of sexual and homophobic violence is central to both these literary texts. In the introduction to this thesis I turned to the writings of Western feminist scholars such as Adrienne Rich (1980), Teresa de Lauretis (1988) and Monique Wittig (1993), who emphasise the importance of recognising a concept coined by Wittig as

the myth of the woman. I considered this an important feminist call to identify counter discourses that challenge the 'natural' *feminine* status ascribed to women and how it attaches them to oppression in society.

In addition to these scholarly contributions I referenced the important work of scholars in the field of African queer studies such as Bernadette Muthien, Zethu Matebeni and Desiree Lewis who challenge negative representations of African female sexuality but point instead to the fluidity and multiplicity of African women's identities. Both Western and African feminist scholarly contributions were employed in an analysis of the objectified status on the one hand and the active status on the other of women represented in literature on sexual violence and lesbian subjectivity.

An examination of Maart's novel revealed the importance of women narrating stories of sexual violence on their own terms. Maart's text has been valuable in terms of challenging the discursive realities of women steeped in violence and fear in a post-apartheid context. Whereas women are usually represented as the victims of violence, this novel provides an alternative discourse where women respond to sexual violence perpetrated against other female characters in the novel, e.g. the case of Isabel, and respond by talking back and reclaiming the sexual violence narratives of their own lives. Female agency gets to take centre stage through the narratives in this novel and certain rape myths are undermined through the revelation that sexual violence is usually perpetrated by somebody known to the victim. The initial rape scene of the novel attests to the trauma and objectifying potential that rape holds for women, but the narratives that follow suggest that women reclaim their subjectivity and continue to respond to such violence in different ways.

Iris Young's important essay on feminine body comportment was employed for the analysis of Isabel's rape and was productive in highlighting how women become objectified through sexual violence. Borrowing from Young's use of the terms *immanence* and *transcendence* I explored how women's objectified status in society can also be compared with the objectifying practice of sexual violence. An analysis of Isabel's rape provided insight into the way that woman's object status often prevents them from reacting to the sexual violence perpetrated against them and how they become manipulated objects in the hands of male subjects. Young also refers to something called an *inhibited intentionality,* a concept I utilised to show how although women intend to react to the violence perpetrated against them, they are inhibited because of their objectified status. Isabel's response to the rape, i.e. her shooting

of the attacker and the narratives which follow are defined by Wittig as the consciousness of oppression where women recognise and challenge *the myth of the woman.*

This consciousness of oppression and the responses to it are present, I found, in both Maart and Nkabinde's texts, although quite differently. While the women in *The Writing Circle* respond to their oppression by narrating their stories of sexual violence, Nkabinde's autobiography is also a narration of subjectivity albeit one that turns its focus to the lesbian subjectivity of a traditional healer in post-apartheid South Africa. Nkabinde's autobiography is the only text to have emerged in the post-apartheid literary canon that addresses the theme of corrective rape and narrates lesbian identity and subjectivity. Here I included a discussion of autobiography as an important contribution for the inclusion of lives and narratives of those previously excluded on account of their race, gender and social location. As discussed in Chapter Three, the genre has historically been closely tied to questions concerning gender and how gender issues can be rewritten and reconceptualised within the genre. A central consideration of this thesis has involved investigating how conceptual (discursive) realities translate into material realities. Therefore, new interpretations of people's desires, interests, and opinions are important in challenging these fundamentally unjust materialities and what Fraser (1990) termed positive counterpublics.

Nkabinde's autobiography can be considered a text that challenges the basic assumptions of black lesbian identity in South Africa and provides important counter narratives to those that frame black lesbians as unintelligible victims of violence. The narration of Nkabinde's identity captures the complexity involved in identifying as a black lesbian in post-apartheid South Africa. An analysis of the autobiography revealed how Nkabinde appropriated a lesbian identity for herself by narrating her identity differently, dependent on the social location and by performing her subjectivity in unique ways. For example, Nkabinde achieves a level of freedom for herself by identifying as a lesbian traditional healer within the sangoma culture, but also claims her lesbian sexuality by identifying as a black lesbian woman in a post-apartheid context and references her constitutional rights.

The analysis showed that Nkabinde's identification is fluid and also expressed as being dependent on her male ancestral spirit Nkunzi. Nkabinde references the early presence of the male ancestral spirit in her life and her identity as a lesbian is closely tied to the ancestors' influence and will. As discussed in the chapter, Nkabinde identifies as masculine, feminine, lesbian, in-between and ancestrally guided and in this way undermines gender norms that

reproduce binaries in society. Nkabinde's movement from one form of identification to the other in the text destabilises gender norms and undermines the prevailing practice of viewing black lesbian sexuality through a traditional and heterosexual lens.

Nancy Fraser's work on subaltern counterpublics is relevant for a discussion of what Nkabinde achieves by narrating her lesbian identity and drawing attention to the multiplicity of African identities and sexualities. As discussed in the theoretical framework Fraser highlights how subordinated and marginalised groups have found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics that represent difference voices (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). For Fraser these alternative publics consist of parallel discursive arenas where marginalised groups can provide oppositional interpretations of their identities, desires and needs (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). In this thesis I have shown how Nkabinde's voice and the other voices narrated in her autobiography constitute counter discourses that form part of this important subaltern counterpublic. For example, in her autobiography Nkabinde refers to the challenges associated with identifying as a lesbian woman in a South African township, whilst also defining her own self as different from other black lesbians through her ancestral calling. Nkabinde's reference to hate crimes in the lives of black lesbian women and the narration of a personal relationship with Sizakele Sigasa who was murdered for her sexuality also serves to challenge the idea that black lesbians are unintelligible victims of violence. Nkabinde writes about the positions that black lesbians occupy in their families, communities and professions, and foregrounds their status as valued and loved members of the community. Nkabinde describes how Sigasa is mourned by the members of her community and in doing so challenges the belief that black lesbians are ungrievable victims of violence. The act of remembering and mourning black lesbian women is also a theme of Zanele Muholi's photography and visual activism and constitutes counter narratives of lesbian survivability and agency.

An analysis of both Maart and Nkabinde's texts illustrates that female first-person narration of sexual violence and lesbian identity yields a significant form of counter discourse in post-apartheid South African literature. In the third chapter I argued that these counter discourses challenge the idea that women live their lives as naturally oppressed. An analysis of rape in Maart's text shows how women have been ascribed an objectified status but the response towards and narration of the sexually violent acts in this novel foregrounds their agency and a refusal to be defined by others. Furthermore, the narration of lesbian identity in Nkabinde's autobiography liberates African lesbian subjectivity and challenges the norms surrounding

the gender identification and sexuality of black lesbian women. Therefore, while women are steeped in a society fraught with sexual violence, these narratives of female and lesbian subjectivity, agency and liveability undermine prevailing myths concerning female bodies and sexuality. In this thesis I have argued that these texts play a central role in writing and re-writing the female and black lesbian body.

The final chapter of this thesis examined Zanele Muholi's visual activism and photography. While Chapter Three illustrated the counter discourses present in post-apartheid literature with an emphasis on "voices", Muholi's body of work presented in Chapter Four can be defined as a counter archive. Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* represents and thematicises issues surrounding corrective rape, homophobia and lesbian identity, and makes a central contribution to work on hate crimes against black lesbians. The visual series thematicises sexual violence in a way that references the seriousness of hate crime whilst resisting the representation of black lesbians as victims of rape and homophobia. Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* has been a central focus in scholarship on visual representations of black lesbian women and corrective rape.

Muholi's photographic collection constitutes the largest body of work on black lesbians and transgender men on the African continent. I included Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* as part of the analysis to show how a deliberately sequenced reading of Muholi's photographs yields important insights into black lesbian intelligibility generally, but simultaneously shed light on the challenges associated with identifying as a black lesbian woman in South Africa. A visual analysis of this series and its accompanying titles has also been important in terms of resisting the prevailing stereotypes and myths surrounding black lesbian sexuality. This series is constituted of images of women responding to sexual violence, being blamed for identifying as lesbian and consequently becoming the victims of homophobic violence and rape, and finally representing themselves and resisting the discourses that frame lesbians as lacking agency. The title of the collection *Only half the picture* is also significant in that black lesbians are exclusively represented as victims of violence and the failure to attend to the social injustices that shape their identities plays into this process which defines them as unintelligible, thus giving only a partial account of their experience of rape and homophobia. Muholi's *Hate Crime Series* thus offers a poignant way of telling the narratives of sexual violence that are often ignored, trivialised and marginalised in the public sphere.

Very few positive representations of black lesbians are found in the public sphere of post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard Muholi's second collection of photographs *Faces and Phases 2006-2014* accomplishes something significant as far as the representation of black lesbian and transgender life is concerned. Muholi's collection of 258 black and white portraits constitutes the establishment of an unprecedented queer archive which includes narratives, poems, biographies and statements that speak to the issue of homophobic violence in South Africa, but which also remember lesbian and transgender members of the community who have already passed. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Muholi has been intent on memorialising LGBT life in South Africa and beyond. This memorialisation of members of the LGBT community and their narratives forms an important counterpublic with visual and discursive representations challenging the accounts of black lesbians as inconceivable and invisible in society. The narratives and portraits of previously marginalised groups that have historically been represented in relation to dominant groups are examples of discursive practices that challenge heteronormative discourses. Fraser's articulation of the counterpublic is important in this regard and Muholi's work constitutes a queer archive of lesbian portraits, narratives and emotions that exist as powerful acts of resistance. The counterpublic furthermore resists representations of black lesbians as violated and brutalised bodies whilst centralising positive accounts of their identities. Muholi's collection speaks to the multiplicity of lesbian and transgender identities. This multiplicity is illustrated through the collection's inclusion of participants identifying as lesbian, butch, transgender, queer, in-between or none of the above in an ever expanding archive of queer visibility.

The themes identified in the analysis of the participant narratives included survivability, mourning and belonging. While many of the participants in this collection referred to the daily fears associated with identifying as lesbian, their narratives also showed how survival and survivability are central components of their lives. *Faces and Phases 2006-2014* illustrates how lesbian women living with HIV, those who have been raped for their sexuality, transgender men facing the inescapable victimisation of their sexual and gender identification and those who have lost loved ones through homophobic violence all continue to live their lives in a way that foregrounds their survivability. These women and men express their fears but also write about their hopes, dreams and desires, often anticipating a hope-filled and positive future. The theme of mourning also formed a central feature of this collection, peppered with narratives on the act of remembering and memorialising those who have already passed. Funeka Soldaat for example remembers lesbians in a positive way.

Soldaat remembers Zoliswa Nkonyana and Millicent Gaika as young women who loved to play soccer, hereby challenging black lesbian's unliveable status as represented in the media and analysed in Chapter Two. Muholi also dedicates her collection to mothers of LGBT children and to those who have lost children to homophobic hate crime. This introduction to Muholi's collection serves as an act of remembering those who have passed and focuses on grievability, something which is seldom attended to in print media representations of black lesbian lives.

Finally, the theme of belonging emerged as an important part of the *Faces and Phases* collection. Black lesbians and transgender men formulate their own belonging in a way that resists entry into racialised and sexualised codes of belonging. Where print media representations of black lesbian life accentuate black lesbians' lacking sense of belonging, Muholi's photographs and participant contributions centralises their belonging in the archive and in a community that embraces queer affiliations and identities. The murderous scripts that form the staple of South African news media reporting on homophobic violence are here replaced with scripts of positive lesbian identification. Lesbians write about their belonging to their families and their active role in creating a legacy for black lesbians in South Africa and beyond. In this thesis I identified the importance of a transnational focus in Muholi's collection. I argued that the failure to include a transnational focus where sexual minorities continue to be discriminated against can contribute to the myth that homophobia is an African problem, thus creating an environment that excuses social injustices and homophobic practices against queers. The presence of a transnational element in Muholi's collection undermines the Western/African debate which often portrays Africa as less transformed in terms of LGBT and sexual rights.

The female body has emerged as a salient entity of the thesis and has been attended to in different ways, depending on the genre under investigation. The print media representations of black lesbian bodies focused on their unintelligible and inconceivable status in post-apartheid South Africa. Representations of female bodies and black lesbian bodies in the literature resolved some of the myths that render bodies unintelligible and invisible and also opened up possibilities in terms of lesbian identification for black women as seen in the representation of Nkabinde's identity and sexuality in autobiography. The question of corporeality also informed Muholi's work, where negative representations of African bodies are simultaneously referenced and resisted in Muholi's *Hate Crime Series.* In *Faces and Phases,* Muholi's queer archive reclaims the bodies and narratives of lesbian women and

transgender men. In concluding this investigation I wish to refer again to Susan Sontag's comment that photographs exist as "both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence", a relevant concept for this study where the photographs memorialise the lives of lesbians living and passed, but also reference an absence or alternate reality where black lesbians reclaim ownership of their bodies, write and produce their own narratives and scripts, and are memorialised in an archive that favours queer forms of belonging and affiliation.

The present inquiry demonstrated that the emergence of black lesbians as unintelligible victims of violence is associated with powerful practices of racialised and sexualised *othering* in the post-apartheid dispensation. I identified significant feminist *voices* in the literature and a *queer archive* in photography and visual art that constitute a counterpublic of lesbian cultures in post-apartheid South Africa. The discovery and identification of this counterpublic enables alternative and restorative representations of queer sexualities in South African cultural texts. Although this thesis has focused on lesbian sexualities in South Africa it must be acknowledged that there is a growing body of work on lesbian, transgender and queer sexualities in Africa that offers potential for further research into the multiplicitous nature of queer sexualities on the continent.

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