Rebellious Black femininities: Embodiments of freedom, desire and agency in South African popular culture from 1980 to present

Mbali Mazibuko (4065290)

University of the Western Cape

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Supervisors:

Prof. Tamara Shefer and Prof. Sisa Ngabaza

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Name: Mbali Mazibuko

Student Number: 4065290

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Kubo Bonke oThixo akekho onjeNgawe. Umkhulu Wena. Ngiyakubonga.

*

Lilizela Mazibuko. Mwelase. Nzima. Khondlo. Phuthini Mungwe. Manzezulu. Wena owangena nesikhuni emanzini sivutha kakhulu. Halala!

*

Lilizela Msimango. Thabizolo. Nonkosi. Mtubane. Pula! Nala! Halala!

*

Mama. Baba. I am nothing without my parents. Without learning respect and love for others through you, the grace I have upon my life would not be. I love you always. Thank you.

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DEDICATION

For the sake of my ancestor's dreams and to all Black women and girls who have at some point contended with being 'too much' of something.

…for those of us marked present

bodies without names

names without documentation

who are read widely

when we are translated

or dead

or out of print

or banned

or controversial

or between two worlds

or exiled

or censored….

-Koleka Putuma (2021, 13)

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore the notion of rebellious Black femininities and how they are articulated through and within popular culture in South Africa. I focus on the biographies of some women who have occupied the South African public imaginary over the last few decades, including the late apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The focus is specifically on Brenda Fassie as she emerges in the entertainment industry in 1980s apartheid South Africa, Boom Shaka and Lebo Mathosa during the transition to democracy and in the early democratic state, contemporary women like Khanyi Mbau, and the figure of the Slay Queen. I show how rebellious women are not simply oppositional to socially constructed notions of 'good' or 'traditional' femininities. Rather, through the biographies of the aforementioned Black women, I demonstrate that femininities that complicate binarisms are rebellious because they destabilise hegemonic gendered and intersecting social constructions. I consider a notion of rebellion that is strategically resistant to dominance, while simultaneously surviving, re-creating and co-constructing within heterosexist contexts. The biographies of Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau are not exhaustive and do not rest on a universal notion of truth but are constructed from available public archives. Through the reading of these biographies, I explore how desire, freedom and agency are present as historical and current possibilities for Black women occupying different, yet connected, spaces and times. The overarching theory through which I explore desire, freedom and agency is Audre Lorde's (1978) theory of the erotic. I assert that rebellious Black femininities, by virtue of claiming and revealing the works of freedom, agency and desire, are examples of Lorde's (1978) call to claim the erotic as our full and creative life force, from which to live meaningfully and pleasurably and to thrive. I also show how desire, freedom and agency are constitutive of rebellious femininities that exist within a gendered, heteronormative and racist context such as South Africa. By engaging the specific women mentioned, I show how their embodiment of desire, freedom and agency links with broader nationalist

perceptions of women at different points in history. Therefore Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau are presented symbolically, rather than individually, as revealing broader gendered perceptions and imaginaries. Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa, Khanyi Mbau and Slay Queens are therefore situated as connected and similar, but also representative of the ways ordinary women are heterogenous. As a form of situated knowledge, I include my own constructions of personhood and how I understand my own femininity in relation to figures like Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa. With respect to methodological considerations, this research is multi-modal and used feminist critical discourse analysis. I relied on a range of sources, including audio-visuals, interviews, discography and social media posts, through which to construct, read and interpret the biographies of Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau. This method of analysis is considered ambiguous and flexible and is best described through the metaphor of a dance. Dance can be both choreographed and improvised, to elucidate the complex and spontaneous methods of analysis used in the research.

Keywords: Rebellious, Femininities, Social Construction, Erotic, Audre Lorde, Desire, Agency, Freedom, Popular Culture, Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa, Khanyi Mbau, Slay queens

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING REBELLIOUS BLACK FEMININITIES

> I think of my work as bridging theory and narrative. I am very committed to storied articulations of ideas, but working with concepts as building blocks enables me to think about situation and character as well as my own key terms (Hartman, 2021).

I think with and through certain figures, moving into the general, because:

> Figures collect up hopes and fears and show possibilities and dangers. Both imaginary and material, figures root people in stories and link them to histories. Stories are always more generous, capacious, than ideologies, in that fact is one of my strongest hopes. I want to know how to inhabit histories and stories rather than deny them. I want to know how to critically live both inherited and novel kinships, in a spirit of neither condemnation nor celebration. I want to know how to help build ongoing stories rather than histories that end. In that sense, my kinships are about keeping the lineages going, even while defamiliarising their members and turning lines into webs, trees into esplanades and pedigrees into affinity groups (Haraway, 2004, p.1).

Through the life histories of women like Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa, Khanyi Mbau and their contemporaries, contentiously known as 'slay queens,' I show how these women, who I consider to be rebellious, articulate ideas of agency, desire and freedom. My research pays attention to the social construction and reception of *rebellious* Black femininities. I am concerned with the iconography of popular culture figures like Brenda Fassie, who emerged in the 1980s, and Lebo Mathosa, who emerged in the 1990s. I am especially interested in how Black femininities that surfaced during the final decade of apartheid and the transitional period are constructed and read as rebellious because of their aesthetic and media representation, and their embodiment of freedom, desire and agency. This thesis also seeks to explore how these earlier Black femininities resonate in the contemporary South African imaginary through, for example, the dress, subcultures and self-identification of certain young Black women, like Khanyi Mbau and myself, in the present socio-political landscape and with access to digital life-

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worlds like social media, where they perform their rebellion. The iconography of Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa are my points of departure for exploring a feminist lineage of rebellion through their claims to sexuality and sensuality. Young Black South African women who demonstrate performative identities that are similar to the defiant and provocative self-identifications of Fassie and Mathosa are now termed 'slay queens.' I analyse Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa as influential icons, and depart from Khanyi Mbau, to read and understand what is meant by "slay-queen/s" and locate them within a Fassie-Mathosa African feminist lineage and legacy. I focus on how disruptive black femininities resist the norms of respectability, sexual passivity and silence that have been central to global and national racist and patriarchal understandings and regulating of Black women's identities and practices.

Esinako Ndabeni (2018) reflects on her growing relationship with feminism and how it has been influenced by some popular culture icons. Like Ndabeni (2018), up until recently, American popular culture icons like Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé and Rihanna have been references for my own feminism, particularly in relation to transgressing gender expectations or 'rebelling'. These women have been known for their sexy performances, dance and style of dress, but so have the likes of Lebo Mathosa and Brenda Fassie, who Ndabeni (2018) cites as more relatable because we share similar geographical and cultural contexts. In this dissertation, I seek out women like me, in similar contexts, to not only challenge the hegemony of Western popular culture, but also begin to focus on some African women's practice of Audre Lorde's conceptualisation of the erotic: the expression and claim of our full life-force. Audre Lorde (1982) also introduced us to a genre she termed 'biomythography' to refer to writing and story-telling that uses a combination of biography, history and myth. In Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, Lorde (1982) offers us a biography through telling stories of her childhood, the political context within which she lived and navigated, while remembering how she came into her sexuality as a lesbian woman.

Lorde (1982, p.255) explains that Zami is 'A Carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers' that she learned from her mother, who had taught Lorde about sexuality, relationality and spirituality. Britton (2017) argues that, in Zami, Lorde explores the possibility of a place named Carriacou where Zami is practiced, which is magical, almost unreal, and therefore imagined as a mythology through which she harnesses the values of friendship and love between women. Lorde (1982) seeks a map that will prove the tale of Zami, finally locating Carriacou on a map which overturns Carriacou, the place, and the practice of Zami from myth to truth, her truth, her mother's truth and the truths of the women of Zami (Steele, 2000). I am involved in the mapping of the possibility of women existing in multiplicity, and as shifting and complex, rather than the social construction of femininity as either/or, good/bad, respectable/disreputable, while simultaneously seeking my truth. In engaging Lorde's (1982) genre of biomythography, I consider the biographies of women like Fassie, Mathosa and Mbau as connected to my own, which I detail in the following chapter. I consider biographies of rebellious women like us, as powerful and deeply political in ways that are not considered as such or dismissed as myth. The hetero-patriarchal political contexts of our lives, as rebellious women across space and time, often erase the possibilities, readings and materialisations of our erotic. It is thus the presumed impossibility of political impact and the realization of the erotic by women like Fassie, Mathosa and Mbau that inspire a biomythography. I seek to explore the myth attached to women who do not fit the mold of acceptable femininities and show, through biographical and historical-contextual readings, how we may navigate our contexts and find our communities as free, desiring and agentic Black women.

I am also reminded of what Lorde's (1982) Zami means in some South African indigenous languages, like Xhosa and Zulu. As a predominantly Zulu speaking South African, when we say Zami, this means 'my own/mine/belonging to me'. Biographies are essentially about ourselves, our individual and collective stories as they are woven together. Similarly, Lorde's mythologising of Carriacou operates as a way of exercising critical hope for its existence (King, 1988) as a place that is *mine* and *ours,* as women who love other women – platonically, romantically,

sexually. Through her life experience, Lorde (1982) also offered a perspective on the racial, gender and sexuality politics in the US at the time. Central to this biomythography is Lorde's (1982) declaration that she draws her strength from the strength of other women, and owes her ability to harness her power to the women around her. She devotes many of the stories in this book to the women she celebrates.

Similarly, and without creating the impression that this dissertation could read as alluringly and movingly as Lorde's biomythography, I engage in some of the biographical details, contexts, representations and interpretations of women whom I feel connected to, and from whom I draw my strength and learn to harness my power and my erotic. This thesis is a form of my own mythological life storytelling, accomplished through engagement with the fantastical and multiple lives of rebellious Black women. I engage the ways that I make sense of the processes involved in the continuous development of my own femininity. At the same time, it is important to clarify that the research does not solely seek to develop biographies of the women it references, although this may be the outcome. Gordon-Chipembere (2011, p.29) reminds us, in her work on Sarah Baartman,[1] that the problem with encountering the pasts of women is that the archive encompasses 'dis(re)membered parts in order to be re-membered'. Gordon-Chipembere (2011) brings together an edited volume of essays from developed and emerging scholars seeking the multiple truths and situated knowledges of Sarah Baartman's life-history, and reminds us that such work requires collective efforts. Such efforts are not limited to the writing process, but are also dialogues with one another, as figures who are alive and dead, and have rich histories housed in silent spaces and corners of invisibility. It is this inquiry of ourselves, through querying the legacies and representations of women like Baartman, that helps us forge spaces of global reflection and sisterhood (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). My reading and

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[1] Sarah Baartman was a South African Khoisan woman born in 1889 and later enslaved in England and Europe from 1910, where she was made a spectacle, carnivalized, hypersexualised and hypervisibilised because of her protruding buttocks, figure and genitalia. See also Willis, D. (2010). 'Introduction: The notion of Venus' in *Black Venus 2010: They called her "Hottentot".* Temple University Press: Philadelphia.

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understanding of Abrahams and Omsis' (2011) approach to memory and women in archives is that they suggest a biomythographical approach, where the body is representational of other life-worlds, lived and non-lived, real and imagined, and that we are thus connected and part of the stories we encounter, allowing us to make the story or the tale bigger, rendering it imaginable and possible.

Rather than simply focusing on the individuality of Brenda Fassie (1984), Lebo Mathosa (1994) and Khanyi Mbau (2005 to present), I think of each woman as representational and symbolic in cultural and national contexts that seek to regulate raced, sexual and ethnic gender performances. This research is not solely about the individuality of these women, but rather considers such figures as representative and constitutive of cultural shifts in some performances of femininity, including my own, particularly in violent contexts, grappling with the conditions and legacies of coloniality. The lives of Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi are examples of Braidotti's (2011) concept of figuration. Braidotti (2011) does not simply suggest that figurations are metaphorical ways of thinking. Rather, figurations are a critical feminist research tool and project that refers to a relational process through which we *think-with* certain figures that offer representations of the subjectivities that we are constantly becoming. Closely related to the concept of figurations is Braidotti's (2011) nomadic feminisms, or nomadic subjects, further discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, which articulates the multiple ways in which feminist subjectivities develop and shift, and how these processes exist on a continuum. Therefore, while I recognise the specific times and cultural contexts of Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi, their lives are assemblages of meanings not limited to their individuality, and acknowledging this is working within the framework of thinking as figuration. I read figuration as a situated and embodied sensibility to map our positionalities, while simultaneously defamiliarising ourselves from the figures we think with. Thus, figurations disrupt crystallised modes of belonging and hegemonic political practices because they are considered as constitutive, rather than reflective of the social world.

As figurations or nomadic subjects, I seek to understand how Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi's embodiment of femininity, which departs from and exists within tradition and respectability politics, inspires imaginaries of freedom, desire and agency. I see rebellious Black women at various points and interpretations of South Africa's national history. Essentially, and similar to Lorde's own way of writing biography alongside American injustice, I parallel the lives of Brenda, Lebo and their contemporaries with national sentiments on gender, sexuality and respectability. I demonstrate how understandings of national belonging, and the nation as imagined family, have stereotyped and constrained Black women, who have complicated, challenged and undone the 'family'. In a similar vein, Florence Ebila (2015) reminds us of Wangari Mathaai's autobiography, Unbowed, where Mathaai narrates her life experience as a member of the Kenyan National Assembly in ways that mirror the construction of womanhood and patriarchal ideologies that construct African women in particular ways. Mathaai's autobiography draws on her experience of being publicly reprimanded by the president at the time for her political opinions. Ebila (2015) points out that Mathaai was told to be 'respectable' and quiet in the presence of men, in a bid to conform to what it means to be a 'proper African woman'. Ebila (2015) uses Mathaai's autobiography as a way to elucidate the ways nationalisms are constructed alongside rigid scripts of womanhood. Biographical methods are not new, and their potential to reveal the context of their space and time have been proven across the diaspora. By analysing the disruptive nature of certain women's gender performance in popular culture, I therefore reflect critically on their disruption of hegemonic ideas about citizenship and national belonging.

The dissertation follows from and is guided by the following questions:

- What can the biographies of Brenda, Lebo, and Khanyi tell us about the public imaginaries that are associated with their lives?
  - Why did women like Brenda and Lebo, and women similar to them, occupy so much national attention? What makes them controversial and open to public scrutiny?

- What does their 'controversy' reveal about the status of women's rights to freedom, expression and general sentiments about gender, sexuality and power?
- What can the biographies of Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi reveal about freedom, desire and agency in South Africa, in recent history and currently?
- How does a reflection of past forms of rebellious femininities help us situate current forms of rebellion, such as those displayed by the figure/s of slay queens?
- What do these figurations of rebellious Black women do to symbolically and materially disrupt dominant narratives and material conditions?

This research was motivated by the erasure of Black women's involvement in disrupting problematic norms and shaping social movements. Globally, Black women have been erased from history books, although they have usually been at the forefront of social change, speaking up against various structural forms of violence, and daring to go beyond where they were told they could (Stofile, 2017; see Lewis & Hussen, 2014). South Africa, in particular, has a long history of women involved in resistance movements against oppressive regimes like apartheid, in both peaceful and militant ways (Budlender, Meintjes & Schreiner, 1983). An example of this is the 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings, to demand an end to the pass laws which regulated the movement of Black people, limiting them to some areas (Gasa, 2007; Gqola, 2015). Women like Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Thandi Modise and Lindiwe Sisulu, who were all vocal and active anti-apartheid organisers and leaders, also joined the military wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto WeSizwe, as part of the strategy of active resistance against the apartheid regime (Modise & Curnow, 2000).

Women's participation in the struggle against apartheid, while still not documented nearly enough, is one of the more prevalent accounts of women's resistance. However, there is an urgent need to develop a fuller body of literature on how African women shape political landscapes in less politically obvious ways, for

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example, through the use of our bodies. hooks (1997), in her reflection of teaching feminist theory, explains how students have often asked how her theory would help them make sense of their own lives and social contexts. When she prompted students with movies or music, and asked what these meant to them, students were able to engage more. hooks (1997) then decided that she would teach theory in relation to popular culture material, such as music and visuals, concluded that popular culture is both pedagogical, affective and epistemic. She also concluded that popular culture is simply exciting, and excitement is an element traditional literary criticism lacks. By focusing my research mainly on popular culture, I also assert that this field is exciting, and that learning through it is just as exciting. Furthermore, popular culture is an important aspect of our social lives, which can help us understand the politics of difference, gendered constructs and even ourselves (hooks, 1997). Musila's (2022) edited handbook of African popular culture prompts readers to consider how the forms we use, including television, music, fiction, art and digital formulations, which constitute popular culture imaginations, are especially rich wells for sense-making, self-identification, contentions, pleasures, limitations and dangers. Through the circulation of the aforementioned forms, a popular culture landscape is made possible. The popular cultural imaginary reveals ambiguities and possibilities, and prompts inquiry into how they unravel, collide, are silenced and silent, and how they co-create in the knowledge production process (Musila, 2022).

I include narratives that are sometimes ignored, even in feminist scholarship. In A Renegade called Simphiwe, a profile of the life of musician Simphiwe Dana as a rebel and feminist, Gqola (2013) also says that she is anticipating scholarly work on other rebellious women like Brenda Fassie. In other works, Gqola (2004) has argued that studies comparing Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa would be useful, and here I extend this call by linking it to contemporary rebellious femininities in South Africa. This research is in part a response to Gqola's (2013) call, and to the greater call for the development of a South African feminist archive. Scholarly feminist work on women who are South African popular media icons not only moves us away from thinking entertainment is apolitical, but also contributes to the

body of knowledge on gender, sexuality, culture and their linkages with political agencies and identities that relate to nationalism and nation-building.

Brenda Fassie

Brenda Fassie was born during apartheid rule in Langa Township, Cape Town, South Africa in 1965. In 2004, at the age of 39, she died from cardiac arrest, ten years into South Africa's democracy. In 1985, Brenda Nokuzola Fassie, affectionately known as MaBrr, came into public consciousness with her debut single, *Weekend Special,* where she sang about only being able to see a lover over the weekend. Brenda was everything little Black girls were told they should not be: a smoker, a back-chatter, a sexy woman agentic in her sexuality (Stofile, 2017), and this caught the media's attention. Owing to her spectacular performances, colourful music and exceptional work within the Afro-pop genre, she has been likened to American pop star, Madonna, sometimes being called the Madonna of the townships (Madondo, 2014). Most of the accessible literature, or where we go to 'learn' about Fassie, is in the media, through news outlets that detail her formative years, her style of performance, controversial life and the political significance of her music (Mail & Guardian, 1995, 1997; McGregor, 2004). Brenda Fassie made news headlines, implying that she was constructed for public perception and consumption, as indicated by a listing of her headlines in the *Mail & Guardian's* (1997) publication, "A life in headlines". Because of the inextricable link between being in the music industry, media coverage and fame, we can understand why a lot of what is available as a source of learning about and through Brenda was written while she was still alive.

Only as recently as the late 2000s do we find literature about the question of Black women's sexuality in relation to the iconography of Fassie (Gqola, 2004). Some studies show how the historical trope of the jezebel figure has featured strongly in the public reading of Brenda Fassie (Blose, 2012; Kalinga, 2016), and Kalinga (2016) notes that this is a dehumanising framework that hypersexualises and objectifies Black women's sexuality. The jezebel trope is a distorted figure that erases the complexity and diversity of Black women's sexual and romantic lives.

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While Fassie performed her autonomy and sexuality in her public and private persona, the jezebel narrative has often coloured the politics of her performance. Kalinga (2016) also draws our attention to the fact that Fassie was able to convince a patriarchal nation to adore her, despite the discomfort her sexuality caused. Scholars like Gqola (2004) have argued that Brenda Fassie was an example of what it means to exercise agency even within a violent, hetero-sexist context. I explore the simultaneous ambiguity and clarity of Brenda's performances, music and self-representations in Chapter Five, not only in terms of her sexuality and the messaging she coded for female audiences in search of their own power, but also how Brenda negotiated her rebellious persona and agency while appealing to 'respectable' forms of femininity. I also discuss her use of art as resistance against racism and sexism. This chapter therefore builds more on her biography, context and contribution.

Lebo Mathosa

Lebo Mathosa was born in Daveyton Township in the East of Johannesburg in 1977. In 2006, at the age of 29, Lebo died in a car accident, just two years after Brenda's passing. At the dawn of democracy in 1994, we were introduced to Lebo Mathosa through the kwaito music group, Boom Shaka, and their debut single, It's about time. Boom Shaka was a kwaito group consisting of band members Junior Sokhela, Theo Nhlengetwa, Thembi Seete and Lebo Mathosa, but it was Mathosa who drew the crowd in with her vocals, aesthetic, dance moves and public pride about her sexuality as a lesbian woman. Mathosa came into public consciousness during the transition to democracy, often remembered for her 'controversial dance', 'short skirts', peroxided blonde hair, 'flamboyant' nature and 'diva' persona, and is sometimes referred to as the poster girl for freedom (Andenkan, 2006; Blignaut, 2016). The euphoria of a 'new' South Africa, signalled by the first democratic elections, made room for a positive reception for women like Mathosa. In fact, some of the literature on Mathosa positions her as an active agent in the making of the South African rainbow nation, and a confident post-apartheid youth (The Sunday Times, 2006). Lebo's life is 'caught up' in ideas of freedom, and her

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connectedness to ideas of freedom dictated e how I would structure and focus Chapter Six. I examine freedom as a constitutional, social and cultural right, in the context of Boom Shaka and Lebo Mathosa as a solo artist. I also explore her context, particularly as it relates to the transition period and early democracy, sexuality and sensuality.

Being younger than Brenda Fassie, Lebo drew significant inspiration from Brenda, and emerged from a lineage of radical sex and sexuality positive women who challenged various norms of respectability. It is culturally and politically significant that Mathosa and Fassie are both referred to as 'Dangerous women' (Kalinga, 2016), and have been celebrated for their craft, locally and internationally (Livermon, 2020). It is unsurprising that they are memorialised for their musical contribution to society, as South African social and political issues and moments have been known to coincide with the music industry. In fact, it is almost impossible to ignore the historicity of the entertainment industry in South Africa (Valela, 2020). The media has also played a significant role in profiling artists, their music and their lives in the public eye (Valela, 2020). However, they are very rarely memorialised as important political and feminist actors in South Africa. Although there have been many efforts to highlight the music and the lives of these women, there is not nearly enough literature that suggests the iconicity of Fassie and Mathosa in shaping political and cultural landscapes for Black women. Neither has there been literature that explores extensively the ways in which South African society fails to read the sexual freedom and expression of Black women outside of a performance and/or entertainment context.

Contemporaries: Khanyi Mbau and Slay Queens

Khanyi Mbau was born in Soweto in 1985, and was introduced to the nation in 2005 as Doobsie on Muvhango, a local television soap opera. Around this time, Khanyi became involved with Mandla Mthembu, a wealthy man 30 years her senior. She soon became known as a gold-digger, which overshadowed her career. From 2006, Khanyi and Mandla gained attention for their lavish lifestyle and material possessions, and Khanyi also gained attention for her self-styling and

body image, as she has been known for skin-lightening and provocative styles of dress. Khanyi's marriage to Mandla became physically and mentally abusive, which resulted in a divorce in 2012. Khanyi has since reinvented herself as an actress and focused on her career in the entertainment industry.

In recent years, women who are fashionable, well-spoken, and seen as aspiring to a life of financial security, have been termed slay queens. Women like this have often been slut-shamed because of the assumption that Black women cannot be beautiful, stylish and smart at the same time, and therefore must be involved with older, wealthy men to sponsor their lifestyles. While she has been slut-shamed because of her lifestyle and self-styling, particularly in her formative years in the media industry, Khanyi is seen by some, such as Redi Tlhabi (cited in Selisho, 2019) as the 'ancestor of slay queens'. In response, Khanyi points to women like Lebo and Brenda as having inspired her to live her life the way she desired (Blignaut, 2016). Continuing the legacy of Fassie and Mathosa, by living large and showing a middle finger to any stigma attached to Black women, Khanyi Mbau and slay queens are important figures for understanding how women from our past can be appropriated in ways that are different from how they lived. Women like Khanyi Mbau also open up alternative imaginaries of ways of being and living.

On Structure

This dissertation has eight parts. Chapter Two outlines the study and the decisions I made in research approach, and I situate myself in the research as a point of departure. This chapter also raises some debates on agency, freedom and desire. It is also here where I made decisions about my own reading and use of agency, freedom and desire. The stories of the women in this research help me to build on these concepts, and I engage each of the icons in their dedicated chapters, applying and negotiating with agency, freedom and desire, as they have been storied by other feminist theorists and myself. I also think about these women as my companions, both in a personal way and in the way of being subjects of this research. Chapter Three is the theoretical chapter, where I outline the debates in the various philosophical fields concerning this research. The chapter also

engages with and cites scholarship on gender, sexualities, culture and nation, as they frame the debates I raise in the analytical chapters. In Chapter Three, I engage debates on binarisms, and describe how I reconcile these issues within the scope of research that is predicated on the notion of being rebellious. Chapter Four discusses methodological considerations, and I reflect on the multi-modal nature of this research and the following analytical chapters.

There are three analytical chapters that follow: Chapter Five on Brenda Fassie, Chapter Six on Lebo Mathosa, and Chapter Seven on contemporary rebellious femininities like Khanyi Mbau. Each of these three analytical chapters foregrounds one of the key concepts of this research: agency, desire and freedom. Chapter Five focuses on Brenda Fassie and complex forms of agency. However, in this chapter, agency is entangled with desire and freedom in more obvious ways, and demonstrates agency, desire and freedom as they intersect across the space and time of Brenda's life. Chapter Six focuses on Lebo Mathosa in relation to freedom, because of her context and situatedness in South Africa's transition to democracy and ideas of freedom in the post-apartheid state. Chapter Seven focuses on Khanyi Mbau as a contemporary figure, and how she is linked with past and present embodiments of femininities. I 'search' for myself in this chapter as I relate with Khanyi Mbau, and the figure of the slay queen through which she and I are connected by common experiences and desires in the post-apartheid state. The choice to isolate concepts in this way is strategic, but also informed by the data. It is strategic in the sense that it has made the research more manageable, but my interpretation of the biographies and representations of the women I focus on have enabled me to read their stories in ways that are influenced by my own subjectivities, as I discuss in further detail in Chapter Four. While agency, freedom and desire are singled out in each chapter, this does not mean that these concepts operate in mutually exclusive ways. I demonstrate how agency, desire and freedom overlap, while mostly teasing out a single concept per analytical chapter. As I provide some background and general biographical information regarding Brenda, Lebo, Khanyi and contemporaries below, I will also demonstrate what I mean when I say I have been guided by their biographies.

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This research is expansive, and pays attention to the shifting time-periods within which the three women ascended. Here, I think it important to note the transnational feminist implications of this work. While I do not explicitly pay attention to this, there is something to be said about Black women occupying different times and geo-spatialities while performing rebellious femininities, such as Nina Simone, Dobet Gnahore and Sheebah Karungi. While not Black, and positioned in more privileged and opportune ways, Madonna (especially as she is also likened to Fassie) is another example of generative femininity premised on desire, freedom and agency. This research also nods to many other women, like Thembi Seete, Miriam Makeba, Simphiwe Dana, Thandiswa Mazwai, and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who are renegades in their own right and remain connected with the present and pasts on which I focus on in this research.

….i know

backspace

the write knows

you have a migraine in your throat

Koleka Putuma (2021, p. 50)

CHAPTER TWO: POINTS OF DEPARTURE AND CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

In some ways, this research is about reading myself in and into literature, situating my own knowledge of self as connected to the lives of other women. In other ways, this thesis is about exploring and learning from the lives and worlds of different women, how they construct themselves, how they are constructed, and how they navigate their contexts. Sandra Harding (1992) has argued that standpoint feminism offers an episteme within which to think of our experiences as women, and how they have been shaped by social interactions and institutions, while critically applying feminist perspectives and critical theory to make sense of our experiences. Similar to Haraway's (1988) situated knowledge, Harding (1992) challenge the framework of science and its claim of objectivity and truth. Rather than aiming to create a universal truth, standpoint feminism is a form of situated knowledge that seeks to position the subject as knowing through their embodied experience and positionality, which may be similar and connected to the experiences of other people, but is also different and uniquely situated (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1992). Haraway uses the metaphor of vision, of seeing, to further explain how situated knowledges do not simply work to show biases in science, but seek also to produce knowledges that the subject can *see* and be answerable for. Haraway (1988, p.589) explains how objectivity operates as a 'god-trick,' an all-seeing superior gaze that has a 'view from above, from nowhere'. Being impartial then refers to seeing in a way that is supposedly true and scientific, while 'the gaze signifies the unmarked positions of Man and White, one of the many nasty tones of the word "objectivity"' (Haraway, 1988, p.581). Therefore, in the god-trick, what is not materialised, given meaning, validated or even discarded by the gaze is not objective and answerable. Working with this notion of vision, Haraway revisits how it is in fact not 'nowhere,' but is embodied both organically and through technological mediations that help us to see more. By thinking about vision as embodied, we are able to consider a feminist objectivity that is less limiting than the gaze as situated knowledge, because our embodied vision is the way we

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organise the world and how we see it. I find Haraway (1988) particularly provocative in the way that she collapses the binary of objectivity and subjectivity by bringing us back to our situatedness in the world. Making sense of our lives and the theory that grows out from this sense-making is a form of situated knowledge. Working with the idea of vision, this chapter maps out the ways that I see myself in the world, but also the ways that the god-trick has placed itself in my visionary process. Haraway (1988) also cautions that engaging embodied vision does not always yield self-knowledge or self-transformation, but can reveal power relations that are embedded in knowledge-production processes. Therefore, this chapter pays attention to the difficulties of conceptualising agency, desire and freedom as they are entangled by colonial, white and heterosexual regimes of power. This work departs from a personal reflection of my own personhood, femininity, Blackness and erotic, as experienced in my social interactions, leading me into discussions on my understanding of the main concepts of this thesis. It is important to note that the process of conceptual clarification that I begin here is just that: a point of departure, that is further explored in the analytical chapters, as mention in the introduction.

Me: Searching from family to nation

During the early conceptual stages of my doctoral research, I thought I would look into the contemporary identity known as the slay queen. which is now a deeply politicised figure in South Africa. A general Google, Google scholar and library search on slay queens does not yield any theoretical results. Mostly, the discourse of occurs on social media and though opinion pieces, but there is one critical literary source that I have come across and engaged with. Lifestyle journalist, Kaunda Selisha (2019), offers a critical and nuanced reading of slay queens, and asserts that the etymology of the term is often misrecognised, resulting in a number of challenges associated with its identification and definition. Often, slay queens are identified as sex workers, when initially the term emerged from the LGBTIQ+ community as an affirmation and instruction to 'Slay, Queen' (Selisha 2019). To 'slay, queen' refers to showing up as your best, both in appearance and in general

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professional and life goals. However, the slay queen as an aesthetic culture and lifestyle has been appropriated by heteronormativity, and is often entangled with moral debates governed by patriarchal cultures of respectability. I refer to respectability here as rigid expectations of gender performance, where women are expected to dress and act in particularly reserved and submissive ways to be deemed respectable (Hungwu, 2006). Failing this, women are slut-shamed and marked as prostitutes. These complexities are present in the slay queen phenomenon, and I return to this in Chapter Seven. I locate myself in relation to the slay queen with the intention of revealing broader generational and historical patterns of misreading such women.

Having been invested in my own self-image, through fashion and personal grooming like skin care and make-up, I too was either categorised as a slay queen, or suspected of being one. These suspicions and confirmations are not simply verbal, but are also in the gaze, the questioning eye that quietly or obscenely asks, 'I wonder what she does' or 'She must be married to a rich man'. Both these silent thoughts are articulated in the glaring eye of both men and women because, apparently, Black women cannot be smart and beautiful and invested in self. Perhaps, the gaze of someone else silently remarks, 'How dare she?' Some of these remarks have been explicit, blatant and loud.

***

After the funeral of my grandmother in Soweto in 2019, my cousins and I sat outside and had a few drinks after a difficult morning. I was engaged in conversation with a friend of my brothers. We had been talking about politics, masculinity and romantic relationships. This new male acquaintance proceeded to ask what my line of work is, to which I reluctantly responded that I was a teacher. I was reluctant because I had grown accustomed to this question, and had learnt that it was not at all an innocent one. Usually, when I have been asked what line of work I am in, it has been to prove that I am either not employed, not educated or not involved in anything 'respectable' because of my self-styling. At the time, I was a research assistant, freelance lecturer and gender sensitivity facilitator, so I

did not necessarily lie. I was and remain a teacher. This man responded first with a suggestive grin, and proceeded to say that he did not believe me. I kept quiet because I am still unsure how you are meant to respond to such disbelief. His response to my silence was followed by his assertion that he would not be able to focus in any of my classes. I knew what he meant: I presented as an enigma. A 'learned' Black woman who also claims her body and beauty as her own? A 'learned' Black woman who presents as a slay queen? However, in that moment, it was not my agency he brought into question, but rather the set of circumstances that allow for society to read me as ambiguous or, at worst, to relegate me as hypersexual and nothing more than an object of the male gaze. This is just one of many encounters that have highlighted the complexity of presenting as a slay queen, while occupying academic spaces professionally.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

I was admitted into a psychiatric hospital for depression and anxiety in 2019. In the East of Johannesburg, I stayed at a psychiatric hospital for close to 18 days. We were not allowed to wear our pyjamas or slippers outside of our rooms at any point during our stay. At 5am, we woke up for blood pressure checks, the first round of medication, and the aerobics programme. At 7am, we had our breakfast, which is also when the nurses would compile our individual treatment schedules for the day. Treatment involved attending classes and facilitated sessions centred on coping mechanisms for managing mental health disorders. It was serious business. My mother brought me a suitcase full of my best clothes. I did not put up a fight. Every single day, while I journeyed through the treatment of depression and anxiety, I woke up to choose my outfits, which ranged from leather skirts, ankle- and thigh-high boots, berets and hats. I do not know how my mother knew this, but getting up to 'put myself together' made my experience of managing my mental health easier. I felt lighter over the days, and would enjoy getting dressed for my day. I put on my make-up and am completed by manicured hands. It made me feel normal because, when you struggle with mental health, you are also struggling with feeling abnormal. I would sit outside in the small garden they had

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made for patients to bask in the sun, but also to socialise with other people admitted for various other mental health disorders. One day, a new patient walked outside into the garden and introduced herself. She was a middle-aged white woman.

White woman: What do you do?

Me: …

White woman: Are you in fashion? Or are you married to a minister?

Me: …

White man (interjects): No man. She's an academic.

White woman: …*silence*

Me: **silence**

***

My female cousins very proudly call on me as 'iSlay Queen sasekhaya'. Directly translated, this means 'Our family's slay queen'. In this context, the slay queen is used in the affirmative. My embodied experience of gender and femininity guides the provocations I raise in this dissertation. While I said that I cannot provide a definitive terminology for slay queen, in foregrounding my own reflections and experiences of having been associated with the figure, I gesture to the meanings attached to such an embodiment. I have since become intrigued with the idea of being a slay queen and, in fact, I insist on naming myself as such, not only because it frustrates some gender expectations, but also because it is a deeply rebellious project. Because slay queens disrupt politics of respectability by occupying themselves and space simultaneously, we rebel against the standards set for Black women and Black femininities. In this work, I map a history of slay queens within the context of popular culture to make sense of some of the ways Black women claim our personhood against the rigid scripts of a racist patriarchal society, such as South Africa.

In being claimed as islay queen sasekhaya, I am placed at home, in a family unit. This is a family with men and women, where men are cited as leaders providing guidance in all family affairs, negotiating wedding dowries, known as *ilobolo,* gathering separately to eat and drink traditional beer, known as *umqombothi* or *is'qo,* as it is colloquially called. Here, like many South African ethnic cultures, power and voice, or who is audible, is male. Presenting as a young Black woman who does not usually subscribe to 'woman's' work, as I am childless and have no real intention to mother or marry carries, a set of unspoken narratives about my femininity. The peering eyes of family members when I walk in tell me that they ask about my femininity, or at least markers of it. 'When is she having children?', 'Where is her husband', 'When will she finish school?' This is not to say that my family does not love me or that I do not feel loved by them, but the reproduction of my culture depends on my body as a cultural transmitter and reproducer (Yuval-Davis, 1993).

In Chapter Three, I discuss the debates advanced by feminist theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins (1998), Amanda Gouws (2013), Yuval-Davis (1993), Spivak (2009) and others, on the intersection of gender and nation. Feminist readings of nation provoke a sense of this imagined community as the (nuclear) family, where men, women and children are organised in a familial hierarchy very similar to the social and political hierarchy of the nation. Men are considered custodians and heads of the home, with full political access and political rights, while women and children are rendered inferior, confined to the home in service of men and under the leadership of men. I made the decision to think about the nation as the family. In the context of South Africa, I find this image to be particularly provocative, given the advancement of Ubuntu in the country, a moral code that relies on kinship as the modus operandi for the practice of humanity in a previously inhumane political landscape (Kamwangamalu, 1999; Smith, 2013; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2018). Also, the fact that heads of state, both under apartheid and in democratic South Africa, have been male reinforces the notion of responsible fathers and husbands as central political actors. Presidents are named as fathers, as Gouws (2013) shows with the example of Jacob Zuma being called 'ubaba,' and before him, Nelson

Mandela being called 'uTata', and I then became curious about what it means for women and children to 'step out' of the family unit and, at times, to parallel, to mimic, to ascribe to and to disidentify with the family.

Towards phenomenological feminist liberation in Africa

I deploy African feminist perspectives on gendered experiences. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2003) argues that African feminism requires theoretical inquiries rooted in the lived experiences of African women, how these experiences are similar and connected, as well as how they are distinct and different. Phenomenology, as both philosophical and methodological feminist praxis, is of particular relevance for this study. Philosophically, phenomenology refers to the study of how we become, the processes and consciousness involved in becoming woman, feminine, Black, rather than ontological accounts that can make absolute claims about the world and social relations (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003). Reading with and citing Iris Young (1990), Bakare-Yusuf also notes that phenomenology considers reflection on lived experience, wherein knowledge is also through lived experience, rather than totalising assumptions.

Existential phenomenology involves the consideration of the temporality of embodied experience and, as it implicates embodied experience and embodied knowledge, is an epistemic choice with the potential of helping us, as African women and African feminists, to develop a framework to aid us in the struggle for new identities not trapped in cultural and/or patriarchal standards. Bakare-Yusuf (2003) notes the complex relationship between Western and African feminisms and womanisms in this regard. Western feminisms often see Africa and African women as 'trapped' within the clutches of an 'inherently' patriarchal society (Spivak, 1994; Arnfred, 2011).

de Beauvoir's theory of 'situated embodiment' can be cited as producing such absolute truths (Gray 2016; Arnfred 2002). In de Beauvoir's (2011) eyes, man embodies the Other, which appears in the essentialist mode, and she grasps herself as the inessential opposite of him. She will 'free herself from her parents'

home, from her mother's hold, she will open up her future not by an active quest but by passively and docilely delivering herself into the hands of a new master' (Beauvoir, 2011, p.825). de Beauvoir has been critiqued by a number of feminists as essentialist, reductionist, and even irrelevant, especially in the context of African women's experiences (Arnfed, 2002, 2011; Bakare-Yusuf, 2003; Gray, 2016). Arnfred (2002) notes that, while de Beauvoir's theory of the Other and situated embodiment is brave, it operates within Western conceptions that render African women especially oppressed in comparison to women in the global North. Wekker (2016) notes, specifically in the context of white Dutch people, a tendency of whiteness viewing itself as progressive, while simultaneously being racist and xenophobic. However, this racial exceptionalism exists across time and space, and has played a significant role in the global positioning and posturing of the global North. Wekker (2016) encourages a reading of whiteness as embodied experience that is actively involved in self-representations of being just, ordinary and innocent. The notion of white innocence refers to a racial exceptionalism leveraged by white people, who present themselves as progressive and 'colour-blind,' but advance essentialist ideals of who counts as human and who is legible in discourses on gender, sexuality and class (Wekker, 2016). Consequently, ideas of Africa become entrapped within the androcentric model that locates Eurowestern, middle-class and heterosexual maleness as human, and woman as other, always other and always determined by phallocentric culture. Furthermore, a renaissance of de Beauvoir's work, and the general global politics of knowledge, contributes to a view of African women and Africa as 'backward' and in need of modernisation, which is considered the only model within gender equality can be realized (Grosz 2000; Arnfred 2011). Many scholars, such as Mohanty (2003), Spivak (1994), and Bennet and Tamale (2017), have argued that Western feminist scholars have universalised women's struggles, and specifically homogenised, essentialised and othered Third World women. According to Spivak (1994), discourses that exclude and marginalise Third World women, who she refers to as the subaltern, are involved in epistemic violence. Hegemonic Western interpretations of gender relations and gender experience in Africa, or the lack thereof, pose challenges for

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recognising and citing African feminist thought, which I unpack I further detail in the following chapter. I recognise the need to work within epistemic paradigms that see the complex, multiplicity and heterogeneity of African women's lives, but also agree with Bakare-Yusuf's (2003) belief in the perceived usefulness of de Beauvoir's concept of situated embodiment, to a certain extent.

Bakare-Yusuf (2003) contends that there is value in engaging de Beauvoir's situated embodiment, in so far as it takes into consideration context and histories that inform and shape our gendered experience. However, while the concept of the situation is important, it is also an entrapment that assumes that culture is a static and rigid standard, constituted by something, someone out there, and not by us (Davies, 1999; Bakare-Yusuf, 2003). Bakare-Yusuf (2003) argues that, because people constitute culture, it can be re-constituted by people, therefore situating African women as cultural actors capable of re-imagining. So, too, is patriarchy a culture that is fragile and unstable, and therefore open for re-imagination by its cultural actors. Be that as it may, de Beauvoir's situated embodiment remains important in so far as it expresses how one is born into a context or 'situation' within which one's life is and can be shaped (Gray, 2016). In recognising context and 'situation', it is important for African women, and global South women more generally, to adopt a model of sense-making that is not deterministic and self-limiting, to create room for future imaginaries, shifts and developments in subjectivities. Thinking about lived experience as epistemology requires engagement with plurality and formations of power (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003).

Existential phenomenologies of embodied experience require considerations of power, and Bakare-Yusuf (2003) suggests that, rather than totalising power as oppressive, we should engage a theory of power. Bakare-Yusuf's (2003) theory of power suggests African women's embodied experience be understood as 'power to,' which refers to capacity, rather than 'power over,' which refers to limitations, a deterministic model of power that renders African women infinitely limited by our situation. Bakare-Yusuf (2003) and Arnfred (2011, 2015) argue that foregrounding the existential phenomenology of embodied experience, which postures a more

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expansive theory of power, gives us an opportunity to explore the ways African women can and do forge new identities and gendered experiences. In this research, I seek to explore an African feminist present, and how the present reads the past for the sake of African feminist futures. I borrow from Arnfred (2011) and Grosz (2000), who suggest that we read ourselves historically from our present circumstances; in so doing, our present can inspire feminist futures of liberation.

By beginning with me-search, implicating my situation and embodied experience, I read and write the past as the women (Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau) who I intuitively locate as part of my present, who but exist/ed within a specific situation and context that constitute the past. I therefore do not ascribe to rigid temporalities, but rather consider time as affective. By this, I mean I consider time to be a constant circulation and back-and-forth between past, present and future, where our experiences are never only located in a particular time, but can be interrelated with other time-spaces. While recognising a past and present with situational constraints in terms of gender equality is important and relevant, this research seeks to reveal the diverse ways African women capacitate ourselves to constitute our own ideations of agency, freedom and desire. I provide some insight into how I think about these concepts below, while building on them in the analytical chapters that follow.

Conceptual readings of agency

I understand that agency is not simply a concept to read and recite, but for the purposes of clarity, I explain how I identify, use and experience agency within the scope of this dissertation. Agency has been a point of discussion for many feminists, liberal and political theorists, and has also often been used interchangeably with concepts such as freedom, moral authority and rationality (Davies 1999). Abrams (1999) argues that liberal theories often use autonomy as synonymous with agency, but contends that this ignores the feminist work put in to assign a meaning to agency that is different from autonomy. Autonomy, as a liberal concept, refers to an individual human characteristic that exists essentially in particular acts that are understood as rational (Abrams 1999). Abrams (1999)

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finds that the focus on individuals is narrow and pernicious, and ignores the social context and relation within which autonomy might even exist. Davies (1999), and Madhok, Phillips and Wilson (2013) assert that feminists have long challenged humanist and liberal theories of autonomy that conflate it with agency, and which depend on making dominant the discourse of being rational, detached from emotion and understanding oneself as positioned combatively against society. The unemotional, rational human being who is able to 'conquer' their external circumstance, rather than view him or herself as constituting society, is celebrated for overcoming difficulties set up in the social world. The central message here is that humans are acted upon and that not all will conquer, only the masculine.

Davies (1999) also shows that, often, what is actually meant by agency is autonomy, where liberal and humanist theorists place emphasis on an individual model that understands agency as a feature of every sane, adult human being. But because women, children and Black people are not considered equal to men and/or whiteness, they are not considered fully human, nor have they been treated as such (Davies, 1999; Wynter, 2015; Wekker, 2016). Women, children and Black people are not afforded the 'basic' and 'human' characteristic of being autonomous, rather being seen as seeking out a practice that helps them resist experiencing dominance. Abrams (1999) reminds us that feminist agency moves us beyond the limitations and exclusions of autonomy, emerging as feminist accounts of women's self-determination manifesting in various individual and collective forms of self-definition and self-direction (Abrams, 1999). However, agency is not simply the absence of coercion, as Madhok, Phillips and Wilson (2013) point out. Because agency is racialised, classed and gendered in ways that disproportionately affect and complicate the agency of poor Black women, it cannot be organised around the dichotomy of agents or victims. There is a rather complicated relationship between agency, coercion and gender, which we can begin detangling through a reading of power.

I think of agency as a practice of power and the capacity to act, similar to how Bakare-Yusuf (2003) encourages us to think about power and capacity. Agency is

exercising power within both limitations, as in oppressive societies, and within enabling contexts. It can be individual and collective, but can also be ambiguous and difficult to read (Davies 1999; Ligaga 2019). Davies (1999) asserts that, while women are not considered 'autonomous' by the colonial Cartesian body-mind split, this colonial paradigm concedes that women have access to all faculties, including the emotional, creative and rational, whereas men have access to only the rational. I recognise that speaking to faculties as gendered risks slipping back into binary discourse. However, in discussing women's access to all faculties rather than simply the privileging of 'male rationality,' and the denial of creative and emotional psycho-socialities, I seek to recover women as wholesome, holistic and fully human. As such, our practice of agency is an all-encompassing project that allows us to,

> move within and between discourses, [and to] see precisely how they subject her [and] use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others' (Davies, 1999, p.46).

I read agency where it might not be understood as such, either because women are entrapped in dominant discourses that render us victim, or because of a refusal to accept women's agency as such because it disrupts the neat boundaries of acceptable gender performance. Dina Ligaga has done similar provocative work, where she has traced opportunities for agency and self-determination in contexts that render women vulnerable and oppressed (Ligaga 2015; 2019). Ligaga (2019) proposes that reading agency under circumstances and in contexts where women are vulnerable requires a feminist epistemology that first recognises women's suffering and resilience as a way of surviving. In her research on women who have been human trafficked, Ligaga speaks to 'ambiguous agency,' referring to the resilience of trafficked women and the ways they survive their experience. Remembering Madhok, Phillips and Wilson's (2013) suggestion that some practices of agency are products of coercion, Ligaga's notion of ambiguous agency tends to the question of power when agency is practiced. The ambiguous nature

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of agency can be understood as related to its context, and the extent to which it is enabling, coercive and invested in women's self-actualisations. In Ligaga's (2015) research on popular culture and agency, she engages specific celebrities and their use of social media, and asserts that dismissing women's use of social media as simply attention-seeking, or being quick to read these women as hypersexual, borrows from sexist logics and encourages easy readings of agency. At the same time, we recognise the ways women are considered consumer and consumable, as a result of the commodification of women's bodies as market value in the capitalist regime (Verkerk, 2017; Mazibuko, 2022). Because Black women's bodies are particularly subject to objectification, hypervisibility and hypersexualisation, it is easier to victimise women presenting in provocative ways than it is to engage their agency in the matrix of representation (Ligaga, 2015; Mazibuko, 2022). My own reading of agency is thus complex, and requires a recognition of women's context, circumstance, capacity to act, and limitations on their capacity, through consideration of coercive power and the ways that agency is self-directive.

Freedom

Freedom is a complex and contested concept with no single definition, and Utibe (2015) suggests that freedom is better described than defined. Hirschmann's (1996) Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom, opens with a series of women's real-life experiences, and invites us to think about the circumstances under which these women must make choices, as well as whether the choices they – we – make are indeed made freely. One of the examples Hirschmann (1996) makes is of a lesbian woman, Charlene, who works in a corporate law firm and conceals her sexuality for fear of being discriminated against and therefore denied promotion opportunities. Her fear of being 'outed' begins to strain her relationship with her partner, Sally, who suggests that outing Charlene to her colleagues may in fact free her and re-stabilise their relationship. In another example, Hirschmann (1996) shares the experience of a young unemployed single mother who was date-raped and consequently fell pregnant. This woman struggled to access safe and free

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abortion services, thus forcing her to carry her baby to full-term, and having to decide between giving up the baby for adoption or raising the baby herself. This particular woman ends up choosing to keep and raise the baby. Hirschmann (1996) contends that, while it may be easy to say that these women make choices, their context is not one that enables their freedom, because freedom is about exercising meaningful power in the context women find themselves.

Scholars like Livermon (2012) contend that freedom is also gendered and related specifically to sexualities. He argues that the granting of legal freedoms in regimes such as democracy, and through instruments like a constitution, is not enough. For example, freedom for queer people is specifically related to forms of cultural belonging that are not fully accounted for by the state. Freedom also refers to the recognition of Black queer people in families, communities, culture and nation. Livermon's (2012) contribution on freedom relates to the heteronormative Black subject formations that render queerness as anti-Black. Thus, freedom for Black queers means recognition and belonging in their communities, families and the nation that renders them visible. By queer(y)ing freedom, as Livermon (2012) suggests, we provoke freedom's exclusivity, destabilising it to reveal who it includes and excludes in its heteronormative framework.

Utibe (2015) argues that political theory often relates freedom to concepts such as democracy and constitutionalism, as articulations and evidence of freedom. Democracy and constitutions can come to resemble the context within which we can exercise agency. Certainly, in South Africa, the transition to democracy from the 1990s has been understood as a transition to freedom, where the context of South Africa becomes one emphasising equality and a constitution that advances equal human rights (Livermon, 2012). The 'struggle for liberation' under the apartheid regime has culminated in a supposed end to struggle, with the emergence of a democratic dispensation. What oppressed groups could and could not do, where they could and could not go for education, for recreational activity, for residential purposes, were conditions of political unfreedom. However, this did not stop oppressed groups from organising and resisting. The conditions of

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unfreedom required their resistance and resilience. Gqola (2007) also notes that the South African constitution is an aspirational document that states that we are all entitled to freedom. While South Africa is celebrated as having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, the material and cultural conditions of many people, especially Black women and queer people, continue to deteriorate, and offer only certain choices. As Naidoo notes, 'We are living in a democracy that is at the same time violently, pathologically unequal' (2016, p.2).

Freedom is a necessary condition of agency (Utibe, 2015), but this is not to say that agency cannot emerge where freedom is lacking or absent. Therefore, freedom is distinguished from agency in that it is a state that Hirschmann (1996) argues is ambiguous. I use freedom in ways that are not only political and constitutional, but also refer to a state of being free, an insistence on being free, even when the social construction of women and our choices are shackled by heteropatriarchal norms and the political context within which we find ourselves. I read freedom as a phenomenological experience. While I recognise the political and cultural context of most African women as 'unfree', I think of freedom as imagination, as I explore in detail in Chapter Six on Lebo Mathosa.

Desire

Because I understand the erotic as women's full creative and diverse power, in the ways that Audre Lorde (1978, 2006) has inspired, I think about desire as entangled with the erotic, functioning also as a necessary condition for women's imagination of freedom. Desire is a crucial source of knowledge about ourselves, because it articulates wants, longings and urges that are not only sexual (Davies, 1990). hooks (1997) refers to desire as a yearning for radical social change where all people meet on common ground. Central to understanding desire is that desires are usually hidden beneath the surface of tangible and obvious things (job, 2021). Revealing desires, Scruton (1986) argues that theorists like Freud have theorised desire as a habitual and fleeting sexual instinct or impulse which expresses a certain level of hatred for sex. For Scruton (1986, p.6), desire is a distinct human phenomenon, 'and one that urges on us precisely that restricting sense of

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"decency," which once forbade its discussion.' Shame has been used to impede women's desires, especially their sexual desires (Bareket *et al.*, 2018). Bareket (*et al.*, 2018) have argued that assertive female sexualities and desires have posed a threat to hegemonic patriarchies. Sexuality as a full life force, rather than just a sex act, as Tamale (2011) reminds us, requires an embrace and practice of desire. I assert that desire, as a refusal of shame and practice of the recognition of wants, longings and urges, is a necessary condition for the erotic. Lorde (2006, p.88) describes the erotic as the 'beginning of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings,' an 'internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire'. Therefore, it is in the embrace of the erotic that we live desirably in the direction of our hopes and dreams. To be able to do what we desire, be it sexually, creatively or through the choices we make about how to style our bodies, means we have the capacity to construct our contexts in more meaningful ways. Power is an exercise of the erotic, as I have shown in my literature review. Desire means a number of things: it is politically imaginative and related to sexualities. An entitlement to freedom through active desiring is made possible by the embrace of the erotic. This research searches for freedom, rather than defines it. I search for it in the nation, and the nation as the family, through Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and women occupying similar forms of rebellion.

Power and the uses of the erotic in Africa

I depart from an engagement with the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender. Citing key thinkers, such as Quijano (2000, 2001) on the coloniality of power, and Lugones (2008) on the coloniality of gender, this research is curious about the arrangements that power, as a colonial project, produces and how African gender and sexualities may be recovered from coloniality or the 'logic' of colonialism. Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power considers coloniality a hegemonic Eurocentric model of social classification, in which fights for control over labour, sex, authority and subjectivity/inter-subjectivity are manufactured, and power is then produced as control. Through the expansion of European colonialism, race becomes central to social classification and forges geocultural

identities, thus reinforcing difference (Lugones 2008). Social classification includes differentiation between gender, sexualities and class, and these categories are then interpreted dualistically.

Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power is constitutive of the modernity and rationality narrative, wherein ideations of progress and production are rooted in heterosexist capitalist expression. It is this coloniality of power that captures gender, particularly in Africa, as a contested space where interpretations of African gender relations are read only as regressive and in need of saving. Lugones (2008) also points out how social classifications are often read separately, thus erasing the experience of and knowledges about Black women, Black men, poor Black women, and poor Black men, since the models of social classification prioritise knowledge from the most privileged. Therefore, Lugones (2008), while preserving Quijano's coloniality of power, complicates this theory by arguing that Quijano (2000) unknowingly concedes to, and is complicit in, a heterosexual and patriarchal society.

By failing to recognise the intersections of axes of differences, knowledge production remains limited to heterosexual white bourgeois men and women. Lugones (2008) points out that Quijano (2000) does not engage gender, or the coloniality of gender, as socially constructed in the ways that he considers race to be. Rather, Quijano implicates gender as control over sex and its resources, while he also conflates sex with gender (Lugones 2008). Quijano (2000) fails to engage the complex relationship between sex and gender, therefore limiting understandings of gender to heterosexuality/normativities (Lugones, 2008). Therefore, a coloniality of gender, if premised on Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power, is limited to a binary, biological determinism, and a positioning of women as 'resources' that men fight over. While it is not wrong to recognise that men have historically and currently read women as objects, and therefore as reproductive resources, Arnfred (2011) and Bakare-Yusuf (2003) also show how a re-reading of power in relation to gender and the status of women, particularly in Africa, can offer renewed perspectives on deterministic models of power.

Bakare-Yusuf (2003) notes that approaches to power in relation to gender experiences and relations in Africa are often polarised and essentialist. Some African feminist scholars, such as Ife Amadiume (1987) and Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997), have emphasised that African women's power is evidenced by motherhood, thus reclaiming nurturing as agentic, despite arguments advanced by Eurowestern and American feminist movements. Other African feminist thinkers, such as Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1985), have emphasised patriarchal domination over African women through institutions of marriage and motherhood. Through this perspective of power as patriarchal, marriage and motherhood are perceived and experienced as laborious and oppressive for African women, and advantageous for men. While I concede that there is a relationship between patriarchy, power and gender relations, specifically African women's experiences, I also argue that our gendered experience is not only or always oriented around patriarchy. Simultaneously, like Lewis (2002), I believe we cannot be uncritical of the imperative for women to mother as a sign of successful femininity. The pressure placed on women to mother intersects with regimes of power that emphasise women as reproductive resources duty-bound to birth and nurture. Both perspectives of African women's experiences lack nuance and complexity, because they offer generalisations and reductionist standpoints. Bakare-Yusuf (2003) then proposes a theory of power that combines opposing perspectives on African women's gendered experience, articulating power as existing on a continuum that ranges from capacity to limitations, where African women's experience can be interpreted as power to (capacity to act for change) and power over (limitations to agency). Interpreting gender relations in Africa, where embodied experiences are interpreted and detailed as simultaneously capacitated and limited, this theory of power allows for a nuanced and malleable account of gendered experience.

As articulated in the beginning of this chapter, I began with a situated and embodied reflection, which I use to make sense of desire, agency and freedom, and their entanglement with power, nation-building processes, memory, gender and sexualities. This chapter is but an entry point aimed at highlighting, as

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discussed in Haraway's (1992) paradigm of vision, how I organise the world, and organise knowledges on desire, agency and freedom as they intersect with rebellious femininities. Most important to note at this stage, is that I am in the process of visualising the possible articulations of desire, agency and freedom as a form of erotic power and self-actualisation. Visualisation, as a continuous process of sense-making, organising and re-organising, is connected to my reading of rebellion as a complicated, shifting and infinite process that implicates the body, sexualities, nationalisms and cultural contexts, which I explore in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the thesis by engaging scholarship on gender, sexualities, binarisms, culture and nation, to frame the reading of rebellion and rebellious femininities. I begin by discussing how rebellion, resistance and subversion are often used synonymously, entangled and positioned as oppositional rather than (re)productive and re-constitutive. I provide a feminist reading and notion of rebellion that is involved in a matrix of resistance, paralleling varying embodiments and the co-construction of imaginaries. Building on debates on rebellion, I discuss the notion of rebellious femininities by citing some African feminist theorists and writers who describe femininity as socially constructed in context-specific ways. The multiplicity of rebellious femininities that are established from this point leads to an engagement with sexualities as multiple and diverse, not limited to sex acts. I then show how sexualities are related to Lorde's (1978) theory of the erotic as individual, collective and embodied power and resistance. I engage with debates on how nationalisms and culture intersect to endorse certain femininities, while discouraging others that articulate the erotic. These philosophical debates are further explored and their inner-workings revealed through the analytical chapters. Thereafter, this chapter discusses philosophical understandings of body performance and self-styling as these relate specifically to the analytical chapters, through which I pay attention to the body performances and styling practices of Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau. Finally, I consider post-feminisms and a post-feminist sensibility to read women engaged in popular cultures, and how they rebel, re-create and co-construct public spaces as a way of distancing themselves from rigid gender expectations.

Rebellion, resistance and subversion

In the context of this research, I am aware of the danger in using the concept of rebellion, because the Cartesian mind-body split encourages us to read rebellion and resistance as the binary opposite of being passive, traditional or docile.

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Furthermore, readings of rebellion are not limited to their usual relationality to destruction or failure to live up to specific cultural standards, which I will speak to in the construction of femininity in the sections that follow. Gqola (2015) cautions us against binaries, and argues that they articulate difference as oppositional and as indicating proximity to power (Braidotti, 2012; Mupotsa, 2017). For example, while Black and white, as socially constructed racial categories, indicate difference, they also indicate who is powerful and who is powerless. The same can be said about other dichotomies, such as male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, rich and poor. Mupotsa (2017) also recognises that dualistic thinking offers limited and essentialist linear logics, and thus proposes a reading of rebellion as not necessarily reactionary to power or located in a position of powerlessness. Rather, Mupotsa (2017, p.38) argues that thinking, existing and acting alongside or beside rebellion and rebellious girls is an ethic that allows for 'a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twistiness, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping and other relations.' Therefore, I am inspired to work against binaries and a reading of rebellion that is polarising, and consider it to also mean a mode of subversion, resistance and survival that is engaged in co-constructing and re-imagining for Black women.

In A Renegade called Simphiwe, Pumla Dineo Gqola (2013), writes about the iconicity of Simphiwe Dana as artist, rebel and feminist. While Dana was and remains an artist most widely celebrated within the Jazz music genre, she can also be located within the musical and artistic tradition of Afro-pop and, consequently, remembered and thought through and alongside Brenda Fassie. While there are some similarities with the women I am concerned with in this research, Dana is different in her style of music, politics, performance and aesthetic. The content and form of Dana's music, as well as her performance and aesthetic, are obviously and directly political. Not only does Simphiwe Dana contribute to a different genre of music from Fassie and Mathosa, she also has a different aesthetic and approach to political commentary. Most notably, Simphiwe Dana is known for her explicitly

pan-African and feminist perspectives, as well as her Afro-infused personal style. Dana is also an activist and actively assumed this position and responsibility.

Gqola (2013) locates Dana as a rebel because Dana widens many people's perspectives on what is appropriate and what is imaginable. She uses renegade to describe Dana as someone who works against the script, even *within* defiant spaces, which she uses to refer to some of the political Black spaces within which we seek community but do not always find it, because of the invisibilisation and erasure of Black women. Gqola (2013) argues that to rebel or be a renegade also involves being engaged with power. However, she cautions us that rebelling is not only reactionary to power, so it remains important for women to be able to think about ourselves differently.

We should allow ourselves to exist imaginatively, excitedly and pleasurably. Describing women like Dana as renegades and rebels, in the context of feminist re-imaginaries, necessarily means creating. Gqola (2013) offers us an understanding and reading of rebellion through Simphiwe Dana, as engaged in subversion, imagination, co-construction and (re)creation. In contrast, the rebellion with which I am concerned is more politically oblique, explicitly sexualised and powerfully rooted in certain black women's performance and celebration of unruly bodies, that defy even certain feminist norms of respectability. Leaning on her use of rebel and renegade, Gqola (2013) further asserts that she anticipates scholarly texts on other women like Dana, most notably, Brenda Fassie.

Certain feminist understandings of rebellion, with reference to the figure of the undutiful daughter, are useful here. Referencing Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice, a collection of essays that works towards the conceptual and theoretical development and expansion on the figure of the undutiful daughter, Mupotsa (2017) offers a profound understanding of the wide-ranging subversiveness of rebellious girls (Braidotti, 2011, 2012; Gunkel, Nigianni & Soderback, 2012; Mupotsa 2017). Braidotti (2012) is one of the contributors of the book, and she offers a preface on the undutiful daughter.

Mupotsa (2017) considers the figure of the undutiful daughter as not only defying one, but many standards of convention, tradition and discipline and therefore, defamiliarising from those traditions. Becoming an undutiful daughter means that disloyalty to structure and convention is a process and not a matter of biological essentialism. Braidotti (2012) inspires readers to think about the various ways in which to be disloyal, to structure by centring the idea of being undutiful to convention as an articulation of what she terms nomadic feminisms or nomadic subjects. Nomadic feminisms, like undutiful or disloyal daughters, are not constrained by the need and desire to adhere to structure and identity, but rather seek to exist in multiplicity, complexity and with the wilfulness to reinvent in any form of our choosing (Braidotti, 2012). In effect, undutiful daughters are also multiple and varying in their dissonance, which produces social and political options for women. Thinking about undutiful daughters as nomadic means thinking about the process of defying conventions as an unfinished, continuous process which decentralises concepts of power and tradition. Therefore, undutiful daughters are engaged in processes that Braidotti (2012) calls conceptual disobedience where, instead of simply accepting that we know and how we know in the colonial epistemology that mirrors the world, we should engage in worlding. According to Braidotti (2011), and similar to Haraway (2004), worlding suggest is a critical thought process that engages different ways of seeing, being and living which enables us to defamiliarise from the normative, rigid and static. Haraway (2004) does not believe that thinking with figurations, like that of the undutiful daughter as nomadic and involved in worlding, means that we only learn of positive and affirming possibilities, but also learn about dangers. We must note that, while figures can be productive and yield insight into the possibilities of freedom, agency and desire, they are not universally or always 'good' (Haraway, 2004; Thiele, 2021). Their figuration and worlding can also affect us, opening our bodies to potentialities otherwise limited by linear and unimaginative logics, to consider the structural, systemic and symbolic problems of their contexts, 'thus allowing us to sense the world – or at the very least some dimension of it – differently' (Thiele, 2021, p.231). Hence, figures 'root' and help us to map out how to make sense of

the world, the logics of the worlds, the shifts we make away and from those logics, and ourselves in it (Thiele, 2021; Haraway, 2004). Thinking of undutiful daughters as figurations, and women like Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau as undutiful daughters, means I consider also how they help to root me and my vision of the world, gender and sexuality, to sense the ways that some things are not always 'good' or 'right,' but can be dangerous and re-productive of hegemonic capitalist heteropatriarchy.

Braidotti (2012) and Mupotsa (2017) encourage us to consider the undutiful daughter as also engaged in resistance to disciplinary and knowledge-making boundaries placed on our ability to engage in worlding. Mupotsa's (2017) conceptualisation of the undutiful daughter is specifically related to understanding the productive work that an oppositional or differential consciousness may offer. As mentioned earlier, Mupotsa (2017) proposes that reading difference and reading *from* difference offers us creative ways within which to re- and co-construct inclusive spaces, particularly the classroom. In the specific context of the university, Mupotsa (2017) writes it is important to consider how to challenge and destabilise the conventions of the university and the classroom that create and sustain boundaries around teaching, learning and research. The classroom may not be what I am concerned with here, but Mupotsa skilfully shows us that the potentialities of power and joy can be derived from rebellion.

Mupotsa (2017) suggests a reading of rebellious girls as Sarah Ahmed's (2010) figure of the feminist killjoy. Loosely defined, the feminist killjoy refers to women who insist on being active participants in their social world, are cognisant and sensitive to the space and world around them, and not reluctant to call out problematic and violent occurrences in the spaces they – we – inhabit (Ahmed, 2010, 2017). Feminist killjoys, similar to undutiful daughters, upset polite conversations by bringing up things that are problematic (Ahmed, 2010). The challenge of being a feminist killjoy is that you can be alienated and cast out of a community because feminism is considered sensational (Ahmed, 2017). Thinking of feminism as sensational means that feminists are thought to exaggerate our

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circumstances, thus discouraging other people from taking the claims of a feminist killjoy seriously. Braidotti (2012) contends that undutiful daughters complicate the fear of alienation because processes of disloyalty to convention are predicated on the concept of difference as positive.

In exploring complex forms of agency, I draw on Gqola (2013) in her work on renegades, Mupotsa (2017) and Braidotti (2010) in their exploration of undutiful daughters, and Ahmed's (2010, 2017) explanation of the 'feminist killjoy,' whose determined quest for her pleasure challenges the happiness of socially powerful groups. I therefore lean towards an understanding of rebellion that is a site of multiple, complex and shifting relations of power. It is from this place of difference (indicated by becoming/being a rebellious girl) that rebellious girls are engaged in a creative process of defamiliarising themselves – ourselves – from the shackles of a hetero-patriarchal social script. We are simultaneously engaged in the process of co-constructing a feminist society in democratic South Africa. I understand defamiliarising as closely related to Munoz's (1999) concept of disidentification.

To illustrate disidentification, Munoz (1999) cites the theatrical performances of an artist, Marga Gomez. In her performances, Gomez highlighted mainstream gendered stereotypes and used them to subvert these stereotypes (Munoz, 1999). For example, Gomez noted stereotypes of lesbian women and the marking of women with deep voices as lesbians or 'dykes'. Working from these stereotypes, Gomez would re-tell and reshape those stereotypes, sometimes by making jokes about them in her performances. For Munoz, Gomez engaged with disidentification, which is a strategy of resistance and subversion for sexually and racially erased peoples, such as queer people of colour. At the same time, subversion can occur within sexist and homophobic mainstream culture, which is what Munoz (1999) seeks to show with Gomez's performances. Disidentification is also a process of claiming identities, like Blackness, queerness and femininity, in ways that challenge their social construction and acceptable standards of their visibility (Munoz, 1999). Races, genders and sexualities that are placed on social peripheries and marked as unacceptable, rebelliously claim their race, gender

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performance and sexuality within a socially hierarchalised context that would rather place them as non-human (Munoz, 1999). Disidentification, as an acknowledgment of social conventions, is transformative because understanding the identities socially constructed as 'proper' and acceptable, while claiming and embodying identities that challenge those norms, is a rebellious project. Munoz (1999) understands that identities are not fixed, and considers them a fiction that can be re-made, re-formulated, shifted and transformed at different points, in different situations and for different reasons. In fact, the strategy of disidentification in itself relies on the conditions of fluidity, malleability and the capacity to take on different forms for survival, resistance and re-creation (Munoz, 1999). Certainly, my reading of rebellious femininities affords a similar understanding. Specifically, in the context of queerness and queer visibility, Munoz (1999) highlights how disidentification is an important strategy that is further emboldened by artistic practices like theatre performances, that make possible the self-creation, survival and resistance practices of queer people of colour. This is a point I explore further in relation to the sexualities of Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa in the analytical chapters.

Therefore, a feminist reading of rebellion suggests being engaged in subversion, imagination, co-construction and (re)creation simultaneously. When femininities are rebellious, they are not simply going against the traditional gender scripts, which I unpack in the following section. Rebellious femininities are in a complicated and complex matrix of subverting the shame given to women who are not clearly and legibly traditional, but rather shift and take on different forms, moving between various femininities.

Rebellious femininity

To understand that which femininity rebels against and re-imagines, we must understand what it entails to embody and think about femininity and masculinity as conduits of gender identities and gender relations. Traditional femininity is imaged against the backdrop of masculinity and hetero-patriarchy. Brownmiller (2013) asserts that femininity is a socially constructed phenomenon that begins in childhood; through clothing, toys and activities children are encouraged to

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participate in, they are scripted as feminine and masculine so that they acquire their identities as traditional and heteronormative men and women. Nancy Chodorow (1979), Simone de Beauvoir (1972) and Sarah Ahmed (2017) also think about this process of girling and boying as scripted and within the two-sexed model. For example, child-bearing and caring, being submissive, performing desirability for heterosexual men for their consumption, and the possibility of marriage are some of the certificates of femininity that are taught to young girls (de Beauvoir, 1993; Chodorow 1995), while accessing education, authority and dominance are encouraged as masculine practices. Connell (1987) refers to femininities considered ideal in the gender binary system as emphasised femininities. Using the term emphasised femininities is productive because it shows awareness of femininities as multiple and complex.

Butler (1990) further asserts that there is no gender without the reproduction of norms and ideal performances of femininity and/or masculinity that have been constructed as concretising gender relations. Therefore, the kinds of femininities and masculinities that have been encouraged are problematic for the autonomy and agency of women, in particular. The requirements for masculinity and femininity are disproportionate and in favour of men, which has been the contention of both Western and African feminist movements (Amadiume; 1987; Lugones, 2008; Gadzwika, 2017).

However, Gadzwika (2017) argues that this approach to mapping out femininities is a Western and anthropological portrayal of gender that distorts African women's experience. Gadzwika (2017) calls us to consider how colonisation impacts our understanding of the construction of African femininity. Ife Amadiume (1987) also critiques contemporary African female scholars researching gender relations as failing to consider the Western influence and portrayals of African femininities as docile and in need of saving. de Beauvoir (1993), in her book The Second Sex, also discusses the binary that polarises femininity as powerless in comparison to masculinity. It seems that Amadiume (1987) and Gadzwika (2017) raise provocations about the imperialist nature of the critiques against femininities that

have been constructed as traditional in Africa. While in contemporary society, the arguments made about the construction of femininity by scholars like Brownmiller, Ahmed, and de Beauvoir hold, Gadzwika reminds us to consider these arguments as rooted in imperialist perspectives of African women.

Amadiume's (1987) prolific work on the construction of gender and gender relations, and assertions about feminism in Africa being rooted in matriarchal lineages, particularly in Nigeria, shows how African women have always tended towards feminist positionalities. Through their militancy and aggression, many African women have historically, and without the influence of Western society, both challenged colonisation and perceived nurturing as honourable (Amadiume, 1987). Therefore, traditional African femininities have been embodied as active, powerful and autonomous. Patricia McFadden (2005) situates post-colonialism as a consciousness and politics that reflects on the amalgamation of a series of historical relationships between various groups and political constituencies specific to the Africa. A post-colonial account of African femininity would therefore consider the history of colonialism and the direct relationship between constructions of white femininity, masculinity and African constructions of femininity and masculinity.

Western depictions of African femininity strip African women of the opportunity to co-construct assertive identities that are not rooted in the colonial, patriarchal gaze (Gadzwika 2017). While women in Western societies, through their own women's movements, have mobilised for sharing care-work with their male counterparts, Gadzwika (2017) asserts that this does not mean it was also the case with or desire of African women. She points out that care-work responsibilities have been considered honourable and divine blessings in the traditional African context, but have since fallen under the influence of Western women's process of constructing femininity (Amadiume 1987). Amadiume argues that Western feminists, patriarchs and anthropologists have neglected to consider the cultural and social contexts under which gender relations and struggles have been constructed in Africa. In so doing, Western portrayals of African femininity have been used as a proxy in Western feminist movements. While patriarchal domination is characteristic of

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African societies as well, the re-imagination of African femininities is still within the context of the Western gaze. Central to this critique is Gadzwika's (2017) resistance to the shame attached to traditional femininities, both in Western societies and in Africa. While she writes within the specific framework of African culture, she also offers us a way in which to seek alternative femininities without shaming traditional femininities. Referencing Tsitsi Dangarembga's (1988) Nervous Conditions, Gadzwika (2017) unpacks the ways that femininity is interpreted, constructed, re-constructed and challenged over space and time in the Shona culture, but also across various African contexts.

Dangarembga's (1988) fiction explores the life of protagonist Tambudzai (Tambu) in the 1960s, in Rhodesia, present-day Zimbabwe. In the novel, Tambu is an ambitious young girl with dreams of accessing a good education, but is consistently disempowered from doing so because girls and women are limited to domestic labour. We learn of her ambitions and thoughts on gender within the context of her nuclear family dynamics that privilege men and boys. Tambu's cousin, Nyasha, who is the daughter of Tambu's English-educated uncle, is throughout the book actively working against traditional forms of femininity and remains critical of her own mother's traditional embodiment of femininity. Through these gender dynamics, Dangarembga encourages us to think about the ways that femininities, masculinities and gender are constructed in the family in particular, but also across African nation-states in general.

Gadzwika (2017) alerts us that, often, feminist scholars reference Dangarembga in light of Tambu and Nyasha's desires for equal opportunity and access. However, they also miss an opportunity to read traditional African femininities as a source of power as well. The impact of masculinity and patriarchy on women's freedom is undeniable. However, the gloom and doom associated with traditional African femininities is also disproportionate and sometimes disingenuous, suggests Gadzwika (2017). Tambu's father chooses to send his son, Tambu's brother, to school, because of limited resources and gender dynamics that favour boys and men. When Tambu is denied the same opportunity, she resorts to growing maize

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to raise the money needed to pay for her own tuition fees. Gadzwika (2017) uses this example from the book to subvert the dominant narrative that femininity and consequently womanhood are burdensome in Africa. In Nervous Conditions, femininity in Shona culture is understood as femininity in relation to masculinity, in binary opposition to masculinity, and in relation to feminine activities. Femininity is also seen from a position of dependence on masculinity and patriarchy, as if it were impossible for African woman to construct wholesome, productive lives and worlds. I disagree with Gadzwika's arguments that African femininities and rebellion against patriarchal domination takes away from our capacity to restore African femininities as complimentary and in co-existence with patriarchy. Because of the spectacular forms of violence levelled by masculinity and patriarchy, part of the process of rebellion is resistance against this violence and, consequently, a refusal to co-exist with it. I do however concede that African women, as Gadzwika and Amadiume propose, can construct alternative femininities, without centralising men in their – our – process of claiming liberty.

Heeding the call to consider the construction of African femininities within the context of African societies, the critiques and insights offered by Amadiume (1987), Gadzwika (2017), Dangarembga (1988) are important in understanding context-specific feminisms and rebellious femininities. In acknowledging this, Nadia Sanger (2009) describes a similar relationship between colonisation, white femininity and Black femininity in South Africa. Sanger (2009) argues that the construction of Black femininities in South Africa is mediated by race, essentialist ideas of Africa and what she terms hyper(hetero)sexuality. Under the apartheid regime, the ways that femininities have been imagined and taught were, and in some ways remain, deeply entangled with geo-spatialities and ethno-cultural practices and values.

One of the ways to account for this intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality and culture is by taking into consideration the history of geo-spatial segregation through the formation of townships and homelands. Homelands or 'Bantustans' were developed and legislated in 1951, under the Bantu Authorities Act, which

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stated that Black people would be allocated separate land and form their own (under-resourced) ethnic states (Baldwin, 1975). The Black population was then split up and placed into homelands based on ethnic difference (Baldwin, 1975). It was also under the formation of homelands that traditional leadership, and consequently male domination, became more pervasive and obvious even though traditional leadership was still limited and influenced by apartheid leadership (Khunou, 2009). Khunou (2009) argues that traditional leadership embodies the preservation of culture and traditional values, and observes African customary law, which sanctions male succession and authority while favouring the submission and subservience of women (Khunou, 2009).

Caroline White's (1993) research on gender oppression in Johannesburg townships maps the gendered disparities in these spaces. Not only does White's (1993) research include extensive interviews with women from townships, it tries to show how traditional femininities are constructed and endorsed. White (1993) shows how Black women in townships are disproportionately oppressed in their own homes in the name of tradition. The gendered division of labour in the home, which decides that women do the rearing and caring work while men participate in public and prestigious life, is telling of the kinds of femininity that are acceptable in these contexts. All the women that are focused on in this thesis have township backgrounds. It is also in these contexts that some of the figures I think with in this thesis experience, navigate and challenge violence against women and children. Gender-Based Violence (GBV), as an assertion of male power, works to reproduce traditional and violent embodiments of masculinity and traditional embodiments of femininity. There is a plethora of research on and testimonies from women who speak to the gendered lifestyles under conditions of segregation (United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, 1978; Lee, 2005; Bak, 2008; Dlamini, 2017). The experiences of women living under apartheid reveal the ways in which they have been socialised as traditional women. Taking into consideration the femininities that are endorsed for some Black women in South Africa, this research seeks to explore what happens when women occupying similar contexts do not perform traditionally in clear and obvious ways.

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I am therefore inspired to think about rebellious femininities as existing and operating on a continuum of diverse, multiple, heterogeneous African femininities. Therefore, my reading of rebellious femininities is not simply a contestation of pre-colonial or traditional African femininities, but rather are the multiple, complementary and contradictory ways in which Black women in Africa co-construct their lives and worlds in ethics of pleasure, desire, freedom and power. Rebellious femininity implicates a politics of desire and freedom, wherein Black women locate themselves within their expression of what they desire, what gives us pleasure and what articulates our sense of freedom. The construction of rebellious Black femininities is the construction of a life-world that privileges and supports women's political, social, economic and cultural expression.

Sexualities

Sylvia Tamale (2011) also alerts us that discourses on gender must include discourses on sexuality, because sexuality and gender both play a central and crucial role in gender and power relations. While sex and gender are distinguishable, it is important to recognise their relation and their (perceived) inseparability in a heterosexual society, such as ours. de Beauvoir (1972, p.301) distinguishes sex from gender by arguing that, 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,' which implies that the alignment of sex with gender is a myth. Judith Butler (1988, 1990), like de Beauvoir (1972), argues that gender is acquired. Sex refers to anatomy and neurological aspects of the body which, in a heteronormative society, are considered to dictate of who we love and with whom we find pleasure through sex. This is also true in South Africa, as many continue to hold homophobic sentiments, particularly against Black lesbian women (Gunkel, 2010). Sexuality and gender, mediated by femininity and masculinity, are related and cannot be studied outside of one another, and gender offers us the analytical framework within which to study sexuality (Tamale 2011). Defining sexuality, like femininity, is a difficult process, because it is often defined through the lens of disease and morality, although Tamale (2011) reminds us to transcend these

epistemes. She further notes that most scholars and writers resort to defining sexualities based on their – our – own positionalities, experiences and priorities.

Sexualities are not limited to sex acts for reproductive purposes. Tamale (2011) argues that contemporary research on sexualities also works to show how sexuality is socially constructed, engaged with the biological, and influenced by social, cultural and economic considerations. As Shefer and Foster (2001) argue, South African feminist literature and South African society lack a positive language with which to hold and legitimise the sexuality, sensuality and desires of Black women. With this in mind, studying sexualities offers various insights into pleasure, creativity, subversion and violence (Tamale, 2011). A small but growing number of scholars have attempted to unpack sexualities as diverse. For example, referencing Oliver Phillips (2011), Tamale encourages a reading of sexualities as the expression of emotions, intimacy, care and desire that can take on varying forms. In an attempt to move from binary notions of sex and sexuality, Tamale, and other contributors to the African Sexualities Reader (2011), (re)claim sexualities as not only multiple and diverse, but as also encompassing gender, self-esteem, dress, sensuality, physical sensations, communication, creativity and ethics (Tamale, 2011, p.12). Central to the political and cultural broadening of sexuality is an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of power.

Audre Lorde (1978) suggests that we use the erotic as a source of power, but not in the simplistic way that refers to sex acts, as has been traditionally assumed of sexuality. The depth of what and how we feel, our intuition and internal reserves of power, are often either discouraged or exploited for the benefit of men (Lorde, 1978). Men, Lorde (1978) argues, conflate the erotic with the pornographic, in an attempt to dissuade women from using it as a political and cultural resource (Reddy 2005; McFadden, 2006). The pornographic emphasises sensation without feeling, whereas Lorde (1978) invokes a politics of opening up our senses, acting from and for pleasure, and the actualisation of our desires and freedom.

> When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we

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are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives (Lorde,1978, p.89).

Lorde (1978) encourages embodied power and strategising the erotic for our liberation. Similarly, Mamello Sejake (2020) politicises kink as meaning more than a sex act, perversion and taboo. Through her active engagement with kink and the kink community, Sejake (2020), like Lorde, reclaims kink as political resistance and a source of pleasure and power. I suggest that the erotic also offers us a strategy for critical resistance, while honing our desires in imagined communities like the nation, particularly in heterosexist and capitalist societies like South Africa (Anderson, 1991; McClintock, 1997) that insist on constructing genders across rigid lines that disproportionately affect and limit possibilities for Black women. The erotic then operates as an important cultural strategy and currency for reclaiming, undoing and challenging nationalist discourses that seek to discredit the erotic as a self-identification and collective feminist strategy.

Nexus: Nation/alism/ality, culture and tradition

Yuval-Davis (1993) asserts that gender relations are implicated in the phenomena of nations and nationalisms. Anderson's (1991) definition of nation is an imagined community to which individuals must have full membership (McClintock, 1997). This full membership refers to citizenship (Yuval-Davis 1993). In Lewis' (1999) discussion of the autobiographies of women active in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, namely, Ellen Kuzwayo and Mamphela Ramphele, she highlights the partiality of women's citizenship in the South African nation. Lewis (1999) asserts that citizenship for women in South Africa is not only about access to political rights, but is also a matter of belonging and social standing in the nation. Lewis (1999) further contends that, central to the autobiographies of Kuzwayo and Ramphele are reflections on mothering, family life and belonging. Their stories read differently and offer varying perspectives of how women negotiate belonging in the nation. The family and the home are constantly invoked in the broader political space as a means of constraining women to the role of cultural producers and protectors. The nationalist project in South Africa has emphasised the strength

and dignity of women in our capacity as mothers or superwomen, whose life is dedicated to obligatory social roles that are often ignored. Drawing attention to women's nurturing roles in family life, and validating women as strong, works to naturalise gendered cultural responsibilities, while simultaneously depoliticising women (Lewis, 1999). Lewis (1999) observes that, for some women, learning the social and domestic codes for being a dutiful daughter and mother is related to the desire to be accepted and to belong to a family and community. For others, nurturing responsibilities prescribed to daughters, wives, mothers and sisters are independent from their sense of belonging. Lewis notes that, for Ramphele, there is a level of individualism in her understanding of how she belongs to the nation and how she belongs to her family. For Ramphele, and the women whose experiences she shares in her autobiography, citizenship is discussed in terms of their participation, rather than their contribution to reproducing prescribed roles and duties. While Kuzwayo and Ramphele write from different viewpoints and demonstrate the heterogeneity of women's relationships and understandings of citizenship, they share a common recognition of the ways that citizenship is entangled with 'social roles and legacies which legal rights and policy-making cannot easily dislodge' (Lewis, 1999, p.44).

Nationalist ideas and discourses, as Mupotsa (2011) points out, are dependent on cultural discourses. In a bid for liberal democracy to govern through an ethos of individualism, agency and rationality, its entanglement with cultural collectives in the nationalist project poses a series of contradictions, particularly for women (Yuval-Davis 1993). McFadden (2013, p.3) argues that, while culture is valued for its ontological security and provides a basis upon which individuals can make meaningful choices, 'culture is linked with oppressive restrictions on personal freedom,' therefore troubling liberal sentiments. Women's citizenship is of a dualistic nature, where they are both included and excluded in some aspects of the nation (Yuval-Davis, 1993). Despite the fact that women are both cultural transmitters and cultural signifiers of the nation, they are often erased in nationalist theory and research (Yuval-Davis, 1993). Similarly, Spivak (2009) argues that that

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the relationship between nationalism and heteronormative reproduction is often missed. Nationalism claims legitimacy from the notion that heteronormative reproduction is ancient, and therefore common ancestry binds us in particular ways in our social lives (Spivak, 2009).

McFadden's (2013) discussion of the ways that nationalist imaginations and discourse are exclusionary gendered is important here. McFadden (2013) argues that, because culture has been re-invented as central to nation-building processes, it has been deployed as an authentic expression of anti-colonial, anti-racist ideology, therefore making it possible to position Black women outside of the most crucial political, social and economic institutions. Keeping Black women at the peripheries of nationalism allows for Black women to act as Armstrong's border guards (cited in Yuval-Davis, 1993). Border guards refer to the cultural performances and practices that maintain the 'mythical unity' of the imagined community (Yuval-Davis 1993). Women's adherence to specific cultural codes of style, dress, behaviour, and language becomes emblematic of the nation, and their citizenship is limited to cultural symbolism and their national reproductive responsibility (Yuval-Davis, 1993). Yuval-Davis (1993) focuses on three facets of nationalist ideology: an emphasis on citizenship, nations focused on cultures, and those constructed on the specific origin of people, i.e. their race. In the analytical chapters of this research, these typologies are unpacked.

Oldfield, Salo and Schytler (2009) assert that body politics, access to the right to sexuality and citizenship in Southern African countries, like Zambia and South Africa, are assumed to be universal rights. However, in practice, the quotidian experiences of women demonstrate that these rights are often limited and infringed through nationalist discourses and the masculinist character of the state. Gouws (2013) argues that men use cultural defences to justify the violation of women. Women's behaviour as 'culturally appropriate' is seen as important for a multicultural society, such as post-apartheid South Africa (Yuval-Davis, 1993; Gouws & Stasiulis, 2013). Where a woman's behaviour is seen as culturally defiant or deviant, whether through dress, language and even sexuality, they risk their

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'citizenship' and become more vulnerable to corrective violence. Drawing on examples such as the Jacob Zuma rape trial, where his victim-survivor Fezekile Kuzwayo so courageously faced a patriarchal nation that would support her rapist, cultural claims to Kuzwayo's body were also asserted (Gouws, 2013). Arguing that, 'in his culture', it is unacceptable to leave a woman aroused, Zuma and his legal defence justified rape as a cultural right. While Zuma and his legal team attempted to distinguish between culture and rights, what is central here is the fact that female bodies are used as a proxy to mediate power and gender relations. It was also in this trial that men and many women stood in solidarity with Zuma, calling him 'ubaba', the 'father', aligning national unity with familial unity, through the leadership of a man who is considered the head of the household.

Gouws (2013) draws our attention to the problematic binary that is created between culture and (access to) rights, which results in a limiting of access to rights for women, in particular, through an emphasis on 'culture.' Despite the fact that South Africa boasts a strong constitution that advances and protects the rights of women and the LGBTQIA+[2] community, cultural claims continue to undermine formal equality. Cultural discourses are entangled with patriarchy, and frequently deployed to rationalise particular moralities and ideologies which protect male power. Patriarchal culture is an ontological project premised on particular, and often violent, ideas of masculinity that render it superior. Working alongside ideas of tradition and norm, patriarchy presents itself as a natural and authentic social order, to which women must submit. Yuval-Davis (1993) shows that women's participation as full citizens is further limited by the mythical private vs. public binary, where women are symbolically relegated to the home as child-bearers and nurturers, while men are allowed to frequent both the public and private space. Men's entitlement to public political life is supported precisely because they are deemed the representatives and heads of their families, as fathers, husbands,

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[2] An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual communities. The + is indicative of the existence of other sexual minorities that may not be accounted for in the acronym

brothers and uncles. Men's status as custodians of women and children, which is a culturally sanctioned entitlement, renders them custodians of nation.

The transition to democracy in 1994 coincided with a commitment to nation-building through multiculturalism, animated by racial harmony and the concept of a rainbow nation. The term 'rainbow nation' was first coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as an articulation of the project of solidarity and extension of the African National Congress' non-racialism (McLeah, 2019). However, the use of the rainbow also invokes the important work of the LGBTQIA+ community, working for visibility and rights from the 1990's, parallel to the transition to democracy (McLeah, 2019). In South Africa, 'nation' remains a particularly shifty and fragile notion, conceived in the 1990s when the National Party engaged in negotiations with the ANC and other political parties for a transition to democracy. It is also important to link the transition to democracy with the introduction of black leadership into mainstream governance structures. This is the same leadership that drew its national consciousness from its own context, which is one of having lived separately from white people while relying on their own cultural systems of governance. The legacy of traditional leadership, and the forms of governance and administration in segregated communities, resulted in the current masculinist state (Ratele, 2007; Gouws, 2013). True to the tradition of cultural patriarchal values in Black communities, the national consciousness of this new democratic state would also remain male (Gouws, 2013).

Mupotsa (2011) also shows that, in the context of Zimbabwe, nationalisms depend strongly on discourse around culture and tradition. Being an African woman is complicated by everyday practices of culture, and negotiating dress for public and political spaces in order to maintain respectability (Hungwu, 2006). These modes of negotiating with self, the body, dress and power are intertwined with traditional African values that govern the bodies of men and women. African national identities are mostly developed from interpretations of tradition as they apply to women, femininities, masculinities and sexuality (Mupotsa, 2011). Mupotsa (2011, 2017), gesturing to the Zimbabwean crisis of violence that is enacted on the bodies

of men and women that is endorsed by what she terms the 'uses and abuses of culture', also captures the current state of South Africa. What constitutes nation is culture and the ideal of the family unit, and vice versa (McFadden, 2003; Mupotsa, 2011). Our bodies, how they are constructed and read, and how as Black women we reclaim ourselves through body performance and self-styling, become part and parcel of the national project, its stability and its perceived threat from those who do not carry themselves in ways consistent with the hierarchical organisation and principles of respectability upheld in the nuclear family unit.

Embodying rebellion through body (performance) and self-styling

Megan Penny (2005) argues that de Beauvoir, through her novels, showed how one's situation is expressed through the body, which implies that embodiment is a bodily expression of a situation, experience, feeling and idea. This is supported by research by local scholars, such as Van Vuuren's (2017) whose research on social media, photographs and self-styling is predicated on the argument that we express our innermost thoughts and self-identification through the way we present the body; and Sejake's (2020) work on kink and/or BDSM as an embodiment of pleasure and resistance. Thus, one of the ways embodiment can take place is though dress. Harah Chon (2013, p.1) argues that fashion, and the embodiment of dress, mediates social interactions between members of a community and articulates experiences of the user, which 'implicates fashion as constituting a transactional exchange of meanings that relies on individual experience to communicate aesthetic values.' Fashion creates a visual language when arranged on the body, provokes responses, stimulates physical interactions and functions as a form of social identity (Chon, 2013). Nuttall (2009) refers to Foucault's (1988) definition of self-styling or self-stylisation as 'technologies of the self', which are the ways we relate to and operate on our bodies, thoughts and conduct so as to transform ourselves. Foucault (1988) argued that he had possibly focused so much on the technologies of domination and power that he had neglected to consider a framework for understanding self-transformation and meaning-making, wondering how it has come to be that we make sense of ourselves in relation to what is

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forbidden. He went on to express concern about what knowledges of the self have been sacrificed because of the political and social interdictions to denounce what is considered forbidden. One of the interdictions Foucault (1988) referred to relates to non-normative sexualities, which have sustained the two-sex model. Foucault also stressed the value of engaging in practices that yield knowledge about ourselves. The practices and tools that people use within their cultural context to understand and affirm themselves are the technologies of self that Foucault refers to. Nuttall (2009) highlights that Foucault's (1998) technologies of the self explores political liberation and expressions of freedom through bodily life. Nuttall's reading of Foucault emphasises the body, but Foucault (1988) opened up technologies of the self to practices and tools used to attain certain attitudes, to rejuvenate the soul, to affirm an individual's aspirations and to take care of yourself. Technologies of the self are a source of knowledge about ourselves, our desires and the ways we occupy space and time.

Van Vuuren (2017) suggests that choices of clothing, material, accessories and other things we use to adorn and style the body are expressive of our life-worlds. Through self-styling, we are creatively, knowingly and unknowingly, involved in a process of producing and consuming knowledge about the world and ourselves. Several scholars, like Dina Ligaga (2014), as well as artists and activists like Zanele Muholi, explore the complex ways that women use their visual representation and self-styling as resistance. Self-styling is part of the activist and aesthetic project, and Sejake (2020) defines aesthetics as artistic and spiritual characteristics of an individual, community or object, and explains that our understanding of aesthetics and resistance involves complex personal and political processes.

Kabura Nganga (2016) asserts that African women have also historically been engaged in political resistance and liberation movements through their forms of dress and body performance. Self-styling is very important for African women because it is an imaginative and creative process to claim bodily and socio-political autonomy (Nganga, 2016). Citing the use of make-up, high heels, and dresses, scholars argue that how femininity is scripted also requires rigid practices of self-

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styling (Chowaniec, Phillips & Rytoken 2009). Chowaniec *et al.* (2009) refer to this as masquerading or having to put on a mask and, in the context of white Russian women, explain that the body is adorned and presented in particular ways so that women are clearly marked and presented as such. Femininity, forms of dress and body performance are entangled in cultural, social and political ways. Often, forms of dress and body performance that are not compliant with the social construction of femininities and gender are frowned upon and deemed unacceptable. Self-styling therefore involves a process of familiarising or defamilarising from a politics of respectability.

African feminist scholar Chipo Hungwu (2006) notes that politics of respectability continue to mediate gender and power relations. A 'respectable' woman refers to a dignified woman worthy of esteem, whereas a disreputable woman refers to an undignified woman whose behaviour, dress and presentation is received as unacceptable (Hungwu, 2006). The boundaries of respectability are gendered and entangled with the body, and how it is dressed and moves in space. The history of the control of women's access to the public sphere, to freedom of their bodies and their style of dress, is consistent and steadfast across some parts of the African continent (Lutwama-Rukundo 2016). Lutwama-Rukundo (2016) speaks to the forms of dress African woman artists often wear as part of costume in the context of performance. Referencing Ugandan music artist, Sheebah, Lutwama-Rukundo (2016) describes her sexually provocative outfits as skimpy and asserts that skimpy aesthetics encourage assumptions about the sexuality of the women who wear them.

I particularly enjoy the idea of 'rebellion against bodily imprisonment' through skimpy fashion and sexual independence. Through public spectacle, which Lewis (2009) defines as socially marking and constructing bodies through their visual and symbolic representation, women who choose forms of dress that align with Lutwama-Rukundo's (2016) skimpy fashion are marked as improper and indecent, thus feeding into the broader patriarchal project of slut-shaming. Through a reading of Pierre Bourdieu (1990) work, Belief and the Body, and many other feminist scholars, we understand that, for the most part, the close scrutiny of

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women's bodies is always in relation to gendered fundamental principles of both body language and verbal language. These principles are predicated on the language of sexual domination and submission, where for the most part heteronormative men hold the most privilege to perform their bodies in modes of pleasure, desire and freedom. Lutwama-Rukundo (2016, p.55) also notes, through the scholarship of other African feminists, that:

> Close scrutiny of the moral opinions and agitations over this fashion brings to the fore the deep fear behind them: the fear that skimpy clothes will unleash female sexuality and free the female body from the tight clutches of patriarchy (Machera, 2004; Muhanguzi, 2014; Tamale, 2005). Women's bodies are positioned as sites of a so-called 'African morality' that must be guarded from erosion (Bakare-Yusuf, 2011) …This policing of women's morality, dress and freedom ignores women's subjectivities, desires and agency (Arnfred, 2004; Bakare-Yusuf, 2011; Musisi, 2001).

Because I read the cultural representations, readings and practices of adornment of women closely in this thesis, I find that a postfeminist sensibility can elucidate the gendered cultural politics that I am concerned with. I read matters relating to the dress, performances, music, art, popular cultures and cultural politics of women, as elucidated in the discussion of body performance and skimpy fashion, through a postfeminist lens. The patriarchal cultures that seep through women's choice of dress are also made apparent through a postfeminist sensibility.

Postfeminism

Adriaens (2009, p.1) asserts that,

> Post feminism is a new form of empowerment and independence, individual choice, (sexual) pleasure, consumer culture, fashion, hybridism, humour and the renewed focus on the female body can be considered fundamental for this contemporary feminism. It is a new, critical way of understanding the changed relations between feminism, popular culture and femininity. Media discourse play a crucial role in the representation, evolution and development of this new feminism.

Adriaens (2009) argues that postfeminism is a political position or historical shift, while others see it as a breakaway from feminism where traditional ideas are endorsed. Gill (2020) argues that postfeminism became prominent from the 1990s

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as a way of making sense of the complex representations of women. With the increase of 'girl power' and successful women came an increase in the public scrutiny of women (Gill, 2020). Women's choices, especially in terms of dress and lifestyle, remain under public scrutiny, especially in new media forms such as social media, and postfeminism centres discourses on television, advertisements, consumer culture and popular culture (Adriaens, 2009; Gill, 2020). Postfeminism is a particular cultural context from which to engage women's cultural practices, and emerged as a way of speaking about the distinct time and political moment in which contemporary women find themselves exercising their agency. Gill (2007, 2020) notes that some people refer to post-feminism with a hyphen, to speak about a time that is distinct from the past where women's agency was limited. Others refer to postfeminism as a new feminism, or as contending with 'traditional' feminism, like first- and second-wave feminism in the West. Dunn and Falkof (2021) argue that post-feminism (they write it with the hyphen) can be summarised as popular discourses that assert that feminism is no longer necessary because women are more empowered and agentic, through their access to bodily enhancement, fashion, career success and other classed capacities. To a certain extent, I agree with the argument and concern raised by Dunn and Falkof (2021). I, however, do not consider postfeminism to be replacing other feminisms, or dismissing feminism entirely because I think that the ways in which power and gender relations are currently set up will still require the work of feminists to challenge and dismantle. Furthermore, to my understanding, postfeminism is a feminism that thinks within a particular context and seeks to understand women's positionality and exercise of agency within that context of popular cultures and media cultures. Because the context of the interlocutors in this research is that of popular and media cultures, the scope of this research would fit within the framework of postfeminism although not limited to it because the research also seeks to establish women's agency and erotic in broader contexts. The postfeminist framework may assist in reading women involved in self-identifications in popular cultures and used as a guiding framework for reading Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau.

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By referring to a postfeminist sensibility, Gill (2020) means an empirical way of analysing popular culture, which is the scope of this thesis as well. Gill (2007) posits that postfeminism, which has been widely debated and remains contested, also refers to sensibilities that helps us examine what is distinctive about contemporary articulations of gender and sexuality in the media. Gill (2007) argues that there is a mutual relationship between transformations in feminisms and transformations in media cultures, and that this mutual relationship, and research on it, constitutes a postfeminist sensibility. She argues that the term 'sensibility' calls attention to affect, public moods and atmosphere that can sometimes be missed in approaches focused only on language or what can be seen. Because the body is entangled with technologies like the internet, constituting Mark Poster's (2006) notion of the 'humachine', bodies have become more accessible to global communities and gendered perspectives, but also opened up to more senses and the environment. This entanglement with technologies constitutes the posthuman (Hayles, 2004). I use 'affect' to mean the organisation and movement of emotions and feelings, as well as our hidden potential, and our lack of consciousness of the potential to flourish, and gain more insight into ourselves and the social world (Massumi, 1995; Clough, 2008; job, 2021). I consider affect to be the meanings that emotions, feelings, longings, desires and fears give and are given. These affective processes are not always conscious or housed only in the biological body (Massumi, 1995; Clough, 2008; job, 2021). Various things that we consider to be inanimate, such as objects, buildings and statutes, and things we consider to be secondary to human life such as animals, artistic practices and technologies, extend biological bodies, opening them up to more of our environment, thus creating posthumanisms (Hayles, 2004; Poster, 2006; Clough, 2008; job, 2021). I consider affect to not only be subjectively felt emotions, but also the potential for our bodies and personhood to be moulded and opened up to more possibilities of self-creation when we engage the ways we are entangled with other devices like technologies, art and clothing (Massumi, 1995; Clough, 2008; job, 2021). Affect is about being open to, cognisant of and curious about our environment, and what is made possible when we become sensible to the ways the environment affects and

extends our sensibilities to the world, our own desires, fears and positions. In this research, I pay attention to the environments of women like Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa, focusing on their bodily extensions through the use of art, their media representations and memory. In so doing, I try to understand how their desires, agency and freedoms are affected by and affect their lives, and those of us who feel connect to them. Gill's (2020) postfeminist sensibility is curious about the place of choice and autonomy as they rest in women's bodies and become central to the improvement of our psychic lives as positive, confident and glowing. I resonate with Gill's notion of a postfeminist sensibility, as it is part of this research's imperative to establish an embodied sense of confidence and positivity, as articulated through my own life-history in the previous chapter.

Other scholars posit that postfeminism is rooted within the specific context of neo-liberal capitalist society that privileges individualism, consumer culture and a decreased interest in institutional violence and activism (Brooks, 1997; Adriaens, 2009). Thus, there is a growing tension between matters of agency, consumer and commodity cultures. Indeed, because the popular culture space is riddled with the commodification of women's bodies to sell and package some artistic practices (Verkerk, 2017; Mazibuko, 2022), popular cultures remain entangled with the capitalist regime of power. At the same time, I do not think that postfeminism is oblivious to the ways popular culture and women's bodies are entangled with commodity and consumer culture (Mazibuko, 2022). I draw on postfeminist sensibilities as a matter of trying to see what possibilities there are for women's agency, desire and freedom within popular cultures. Furthermore, I lean on postfeminism to sense-make contemporary materialisations and self-actualisations that some women are engaged in, especially in the context of cultural practices. The work of seeing those possibilities in a capitalist and cultural context constitutes what Gill (2007) calls a postfeminist sensibility.

While there is a plethora of research on the objectification and hyper-sexualisation of women's bodies through the media, we also need to look at the ways in which femininities are being re-constituted through popular media culture in

contemporary South Africa. Postfeminism can be read as a political practice and critical resistance (Adriaens, 2009). I therefore find the postfeminist paradigm to be important for the scope and reach of this project. Given the context of (popular) media culture, through which I explore rebellious femininity, postfeminist sensibilities must be considered. The centrality of the body, bodily expression and bodily autonomy, as they pertain to femininity in postfeminist studies, renders it insightful for my own exploration of the presentation of body-politics in a heteronormative society such as South Africa and Africa at large.

CHAPTER FOUR: A MESSY METHODOLOGICAL DANCE

I initially struggled to decide on an appropriate methodology that would fulfil the objectives of the research, because I was insisting on a single method for a complex and layered research problem. Not only does this research consider some key transitional and national moments in South Africa's history, it also considers developments in the construction and reception of rebellious femininities, alongside parts of the national narrative. I therefore realised that the methodology would need to be consistent with the complexity and multi-pronged nature of the research. Janesick (2000) uses dance and choreography as a metaphor, and this research project has been a dance. Understanding social scientific or humanities research in this way is significant because it breaks away from traditional rhetoric around research design and, in many ways, may speak to the decolonisation of research methods. Janesick's (2000) conception of thinking in the qualitative is creative and beautifully nuanced. She teaches us that qualitative research is about the art of making dance, of creativity and complex patterns where symbols can be embodied and read in relation to the social world. I have argued in previously published work that intersectionality is also a methodology, and therefore grounded in feminist research ethics, ontologies and epistemologies (Mazibuko, 2020). Intersectional methodology refers to the use of various instruments and sources of knowledge to elucidate the multiplicity and nuances of women's lives.

The sounds and sources of my data

I have danced to the tune of the biographical method through feminist critical discourse analysis of several sources. I have relied on music, music videos, biographies, interviews (in print and televised), newspaper articles available in the digital space, blogs, television shows and tweets to gather data for this research. Thus, the research has been multi-modal, while being grounded in the biographical method. Bornat has argued that biographical methods have been used in different ways but that, in academia, they work 'to reach for meaning and accounts in

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individual biographies to both confirm and complicate understandings of the working and emerging of social process' (2008, p.343). Coincidentally, deconstructive theories challenge the stability of binaries, and in my construction and reading of biographies, I consider binaries around sexuality, gender and power as unstable and mutable.

Biographies have also become more pervasive, as a result of development in technologies that allow for the audio-visual capturing of people's lives, which can also exist on the internet (Bornat 2008). Indeed, I have relied on Google for some of the biographical details of the women whose lives I think through here, mainly details surrounding their dates of birth, family, geographies etc. However, I have also had to construct my own version of their biographies by following trails of South African newspaper articles, and paying attention to their dates, music lyrics, live performances, interviews and, where possible, biographical documentaries, like Brenda Fassie's, Not a Bad Girl (1997), where she, and others who have encountered her, speak of her life and contribution. Bornat (2008) suggests that it is not uncommon for researchers working with biographies to work with a range of different types of data to construct biographies.

Bornat (2008) refers to the secondary construction of biographies as a less-direct intervention, as the researcher writes through a vast collection of accounts of an individual's life. Because Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa have passed on, such a biographical interview for this research was not possible, and I therefore had to rely on constructing and reading biographies. Thus, one of the limits of my biographical research method, much like any critical research method, is that it is partial, interpreted and re-constructed at the discretion of the researcher. The biographical narrative method, as Popaduik (2004) has argued, can elucidate depth, meaning and context in a broader cultural matrix. By context, I also mean the context of the researcher, their subjectivities, biases and agenda (Bornat 2008). The biographies of Fassie and Mathosa are not exhaustive. There is a lot I have not discussed and do not know about their personal lives. The parts of their lives included here are biographical details available in the public sphere, and can

be accessed online. By engaging the public memorialisation of their lives, I also engage public and national sentiments related to these memories, which at the time were, of course, moments. Bornat (2008) suggests that a set of accounts of individual's lives, which then form part of their biographies, are given meaning by the framework of time and space within which they operated, but also by the framework of the time, space and biography of the researcher. Haraway (1991) reminds us that the situated knowledge of the researcher is always already implicated in our research process. Similalrly, Patricia Hill Collins (1986) argues that as feminist researchers, it is almost impossible to uncover women's truths outside of a personal connection with these truths. Collins (1986) suggests that those of us (Black women) who make claims, also need to have moral and ethical connections to the claims we make while also recognising how our truths and experiences differ. Collins (1986) refers to this as the position of being the outsider-within. As an outsider-within, you may belong to, relate and identify with a community and therefore be 'within' but also be an outsider by virtue of some differences such as those pertaining to experience or even our work and identity as researchers (Ibid). We thus occupy various roles simultaneously throughout the research journey. This complicates the notion of objective research and also supports the insertion of my own experiences in this research. Harding (1992) also reminds us that objectivity is a myth, because it was designed by colonial and sexist conditions of knowledge that have rendered men the knowers, whose research constructs a social and cultural world in very biased ways.

In terms of the final analytical chapter, which considers contemporary rebellious women like Khanyi Mbau, I include my observation of social media engagements. Ligaga (2015) has asserted that online digital platforms have come to expand the public sphere. I focus specifically on Twitter, which is a social media platform that was launched in 2006 (Meyer, 2020). This was around the same time that Khanyi Mbau was introduced to the public, as an actress and a young woman married to an older, wealthy man. The popularity of Twitter has increased since its launch, and is due to its use for microblogging in real-time (Malik, Heyman-Schrum & Johri, 2019). Twitter is a text-based and discourse-driven space where users who have

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a Twitter account communicate through posts known as tweets, which have a limit of 180 characters per tweet (Malik *et al.*, 2019). Tweets can be deleted by users, but otherwise remain available on the site for years. Users can enter certain search words, and Twitter can organise the results chronologically, in terms of the 'top' tweets with the most engagement, and tweets that are accompanied by audio-visual files. Users can also share the tweets of others through a function known as re-tweeting. Twitter users create usernames known as 'handles. The platform has become popular because it opens up space for ordinary people to air their thoughts, opinions and experiences. Researchers in the humanities and social sciences have increasingly shown interest in researching social media data, but have often done so without considering some of the ethical challenges (Williams, Burnap & Sloan, 2017). There should be efforts to protect the identities of social media users, otherwise they may be vulnerable to attacks (Williams *et al.*, 2017). As such, I have anonymised the authors of the tweets that I include in this thesis.

Notes on positionality and methods of analysis

In turning to the lives of Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa, I consider my own situatedness as a young Black woman living in post-apartheid South Africa, occupying feminist sensibility and a tendency to be 'improper' in varying social settings. This practice of reflexivity, the acknowledgement of my subjectivities as researcher, impacts the focus of this research and which parts of the biographies of my interlocutors I included, and which parts I did not. In my process of engaging the various accounts of the subjects' lives, like Hartman (2021), I had a deep encounter with some of the material I engaged, and intuitively followed some trails more than others. For example, I spend time exploring Brenda Fassie's 'Weekend Special' because it is familiar to my childhood and upbringing, and I needed to understand why it had stuck with me until now. In the Lebo Mathosa chapter, I spend time on her role in the music group Boom Shaka, and on South Africa's transition to democracy, because I was born during that time and understand myself to have been marked as a 'born free,' and enjoying democratic privileges in ways that the likes of Boom Shaka could also enjoy.. Bornat (2008) reminds

us that the way we structure data also relies on some kind of prior framework and theorising. So, in part, what I have included and not included also speaks to the alignment of the data with the scope of the research and to a certain extent, my subjectivities. Thus, some of the material is included because it speaks to the conversation I have on agency, freedom and desire.

My process involved a back-and-forth between music, videos and images, documentaries, blogs and newspaper articles, through which I did feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), which grows from critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is an approach to research that is dedicated to demystifying ideologies and power through an interdisciplinary and eclectic approach (van Dijk, 1995, 2004). The data that CDA is concerned with is semiotic, which comprises of the written, spoken and visual (van Dijk, 2004). FCDA is an intersectional social constructivist approach to research that considers representations of the world generally, and gender specifically, as linguistic and discursive (Tapionkaski, 2007). As a social constructivist approach, FCDA understands that knowledge of identities is socially constructed and re-produced through social interactions. Therefore, meanings are historically and culturally specific. FCDA not only considers the analysis of texts or thinks of text as only written form, but rather, by studying the linkages between text, social and cultural processes, it also reveals connections between power, language and ideology that are often hidden or taken for granted (Tapionkaski, 2007). By critically exploring these connections, FCDA also becomes deconstructive in that it reveals what lies beneath or beyond discourses (Lazar, 2007). Lazar (2007) suggests that FCDA is a nuanced and rich analysis of how power, discourse and ideology work in complex ways to sustain gender hierarchies and the totalising descriptors of femininities and masculinities.

In reading the material I engage with in this thesis, I think with theory, or 'plug' theory in, as Jackson and Mazzei (2017) suggest. Jackson and Mazzei (2017) speak about thinking with theory as a process that is unstable because there is no real formula for it. Theory is 'something that happens, paradoxically, in a moment that has already happened; something unpredictable, and always rethinkable and

redoable' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p.717). Rather than reflecting on theory as a method, theory is an approach to knowledge that is premised on a willingness to engage concepts, apply and re-articulate them in new and unique approaches that demonstrate thought and theory as multiple and creative. I find this quite provocative and resonant to my approach to this research. I cannot reduce my process of analysing the various sources of data, like audio-visuals, news articles, blogs and social media posts, that I relied on in this research to a mechanistic coding system. Of course, to a certain extent, I gathered the data and attempted to sort it thematically, paying attention to which sources could be grouped together according to similarities in the narrative they told, and the ways they related to the concepts of agency, freedom and desire. The thematic organising I did was especially helpful in guiding the structure of the analytical chapters, as well as keeping to the scope of this thesis. For example, in my engagement with the discographies of Fassie and Mathosa, I was able to see some themes emerge, such as humanity and Ubuntu, sensuality, and South African histories of violence. At the same time, because it was not possible to have access to or knowledge about the sources I consulted for the research, thematic coding was not always possible, in which case I plugged in theory spontaneously, re-configuring the initial thoughts and arguments I had made, thus giving the theory I had plugged into the material a nomadic character. I did not, and have not, stopped inquiring about rebellious femininities or Brenda Fassie or Lebo Mathosa, Khanyi Mbau and myself. With every new encounter, the concepts and theories related to the data become subject to further development and re-configuration. Where new data emerged after I had established its relationality with a concept that aided in theorisation, I have returned to those earlier established arguments and refined them to make way for something different. My method, as per the advancements of scholars like Jackson and Mazzei (2017), was not prescriptive or orderly all of the time. I adapted various methods and approaches to my qualitative inquiry, mimicking a dance that twists and turns, from the set choreography of thematic coding to an unstable, spontaneous process of discovery and theorisation that required improvisation and conversation between prior established

conceptualisations and theorisations. Jackson and Mazzei (2017) consider this form, or methods of analysis, as engaged in processes of becoming, and thus engaged in methodological processes of worlding. Worlding, as Haraway (2004) suggests, refers partly to imagination and re-creating realities in the current social world.

CHAPTER FIVE: BRENDA FASSIE: THEORISING INTERSECTIONAL REBELLION AND COMPLEX PRACTICES OF AGENCY

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What are you doing? You can't write me down. It will be like the rubbish all those other motherfuckers write (Brenda Fassie in Allen, 2014).

Reading 'Brenda': Brenda in a knowledge production archive

In the image above, Brenda sits strong and comfortably on her bed, with her head perched sensually on her hand while she blows cigarette smoke out of her nose.

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3 Image taken by Sally Shorkend during Brenda's 1992 interview with cultural journalist Charl Blignaut, *In Bed with Brenda*. The interview and image feature in Bongani Madondo's (2014) *I'm Not Your Weekend Special.*

This iconic photograph shows a very comfortable Brenda, a Brenda whose defiance is her comfort. Cultural journalist, Charl Blignaut, from the Vrye Weekblad Newspaper, interviewed and photographed Brenda in what is now known as the iconic 'tell-all' interview, entitled In Bed with Brenda *(*1992, 1997, 2014).[4] Brenda literally lies in her bed during this interview, when she asserts that we cannot write her down because it will always be 'rubbish.' By rubbishing writings of her life, Brenda asserts that news coverage of her career has often been sensationalised or essentialised, thus not truly capturing her essence which I unpack further later in this chapter. I, however, do not think my contribution is rubbish in the ways that sensational journalistic writing has extracted entertainment from Brenda's life. Many feminists, gender and sexuality scholars, cultural critics and cultural studies theorists, such as Xavier Livermon, Njabulo Ndebele, Charl Blignaut, Bongani Madondo, Pumla Gqola and Siphokazi Tau, have written about Brenda, and many more will take on the responsibility. Through Brenda Fassie's experience and representation, I consider how rebellion in constituted, as it complicates tradition and norms culturally endorsed in apartheid-township life. I engage the governance of women's sexuality – the erotic – and the ways women like Fassie are endorsed as an embodiment of femininity that is pleasurable, against the backdrop of heteropatriarchal and racist violence. My intention is not to romanticise Brenda's life and politics. I understand, as Allen (2014) and Mathibela (2022) point out, that Brenda lived in complexity and contradiction, often making her audience, friends, family and those who encountered her and her work feel and experience a wealth of varying things. 'Naughty imp, sophisticated seductress, petulant child' are some of the identities Brenda gave us (Allen 2014, p.120). Here, I focus specifically on Brenda as a figure of rebellion against heteropatriarchal standards, but also as embodying traditional and more acceptable forms of femininity at various points.

This chapter locates Brenda Fassie as a departure point from which to think about women's practices of agency, freedom and desire in ways that are not always

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[4] The interview was originally published in 1992, but the video recording of the interview features in Not a Bad Girl (1997) and a print version of the interview is featured in Madondo's (2014) book.

politically obvious. Previously, I clarified that I think of agency as a complex process of exercising power, even in repressive contexts, freedom as a state that is not only rights-based, and desire as knowledge on longings and hidden secrets. I explore how rebellious Black femininity, like Brenda's, finds opportunity to exercise desire, agency and freedom otherwise denied within traditionally patriarchal societies in Africa.

Like Siphokazi Tau's (2021) article exploring Brenda Fassie's audio-visual creative expression, I travel into the world of Brenda Fassie. However, I do not have the means to grasp the whole world of Brenda, because it is so vast. I call her Brenda because she feels familiar, something she strived to do through her art and her career, as I show here. I agree with Blignaut's (1997) assertion that writing about Brenda is personal. Central to this chapter is an exploration of Brenda's creative production and expression, which includes her performances of self under the apartheid regime. I also explore how she engages with (un)acceptable social constructions of femininities, both consciously and unconsciously. My intention is not to capture the fullness of the life and character of Brenda here because that is an impossibility, not only due to the length and scope of the doctoral dissertation, but also the layered and complex life she lived. Like Allen (2014), I also wonder why I chose to focus a part of my project on such an incomprehensible and layered person as Brenda. I suppose I am drawn to her complexity because it is a lesson, or reminder, of the complex ways Black African women, like myself, show up and move between space and time.

Through engagement with Fassie's lived and represented experience, captured in her documentary, Not a Bad Girl (1997), I describe Fassie, her experience and her environment. The documentary cuts across temporality by considering apartheid, and where and how it intersected with the politics of self-styling and respectability, femininity and the media. Not a Bad Girl (1997) also raises a much broader theoretical debate about imaginations of freedom, desire and agency as they pertain to the youth of South Africa, in the pasts, present and futures of the country. Brenda Fassie is located within a particular time-period of apartheid-segregation,

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and a racially, sexually and culturally conservative society. In this chapter, I pay attention to the apartheid context and Brenda Fassie's emergence within it, and specifically to some of the ways Fassie's art constructs the political reality of the time, while also providing an opportunity to read different types of femininity that emerge. I also draw attention to the gendered narratives that were constructed under apartheid, and how they are complicated by the kinds of rebellious femininity Brenda exhibits. Much of this contextualising is my analysis of Not a Bad Girl (1997), which locates Fassie's life as a protagonist, both in the struggle against apartheid, but also in the fight against GBV in the township. It is in this section that I show how women's agency, through their embodied femininity, exists even in a violent context.

In the next section, I describe her fashioning of the body and performances, which I think through as markers of freedom, desire and agency. I also reference a specific interview with Blignaut (2014), In Bed with Brenda, which was iconic and far-reaching, as it was staged as an intimate public that has major implications for how we think about women's sexuality, and how women themselves claim their sexuality through the erotic. I consider Fassie through three areas: some elements of her life-history, her fashion and her relationship with the media representations, and how these are connected to constitutions of the South African nation.

Locating Brenda Fassie in politics, Reading Brenda Fassie as politics

In this section, I look at the time and space that Brenda occupied when she was alive. In so doing, I pay attention to some of the apartheid history that Brenda directly collided and engaged with through her art and life-choices. The histories I unpack here are not exhaustive. Rather, I select histories that coincide with Brenda's public visibility, and her commentary in the moments I am able to locate her in. The sub-headings that are italicised in this section are my piecing together of Brenda is histories, politics and the ways she herself becomes political and politicised. I also reference women involved in resistance movements in South Africa under apartheid to demonstrate how women who are rebellious in more

politically obvious ways than Brenda are also relegated to particular standards of femininity. I do this to avoid exceptionalising Brenda, and reference women in the entertainment industry, like Miriam Makeba, who was known for transgressing musically and politically at the height of apartheid, although I do not spend too much time on this.

Not a Bad Girl (1997), which was directed by Chris Austin, is offered as an intimate account of Brenda's life-history, both in her own words as well as in the words of cultural historians, friends, fans and family of Brenda. Similar to Bongangi Madondo's (2014) book, I'm Not Your Weekend Special, Not a Bad Girl uses a range of narrative devices to capture the life and impact of Brenda. It is also worth noting that the title of the documentary is meant to subvert the marking of Brenda as simply 'bad' by showing also her complexity. I refer to both these sources as archival, which means, as Mbembe (2002) and Blouin (2004) remind us, that they do not preserve a single universal truth because they depend on the subjective experience of contributors and political context. Thus, Not a Bad Girl as an archival text is slanted towards particular aspects of Brenda's life. I look at how Not a Bad Girl slants Brenda's own re-telling of her life in particular ways. This section focuses on her political context at her time of emergence, as well as how she politicised her creative production, in terms of both state and gendered and sexuality politics.

Not a Bad Girl (1997) situates Brenda Fassie's upbringing, music career and performances within the context of the sexist and racist apartheid regime. Born in 1964, in Langa Township, located in Cape Town, Brenda grew up in a hostile political climate, where resistance against apartheid was bubbling and beginning to develop into a spectacularly violent part of South Africa's history. While apartheid violence and the conditions of colonisation in general span much longer than the 1980s, I consider the last two decades of apartheid as they pertain to the scope of the life-history of Brenda Fassie. Brenda enters public consciousness in the 1980s and gains popularity during a particularly difficult and traumatic time for

Black people in South Africa, but particularly in the township. The 1980s and 1990s is when Brenda is most popular for her art and her controversial life choices.

The documentary opens with a scene of Brenda in conversation with her older brother, Themba Kenny Fassie. Themba Fassie's (2014) essay, which features in Madondo's (2014) collection of essays on Brenda, also highlights that they had an especially close relationship, which may account for the opening of a documentary about Fassie with a conversation she had with her brother.

'Tell them where you have been', Brenda says to Themba.

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Early on Monday morning

Police arrest my brother

Just for work for a Black community

Monday afternoon,

Went to see my brother,

Policeman treated me like a donkey,

I say to policeman

'you've got a bad attitude'

oh no I'm no criminal

I'm a good Black woman

Brenda's performance of her single, Good Black Woman, released in 1989, follows Brenda's scene with her brother, and is a directorial choice that signposts the apartheid political context at the time. The documentary wants us to think about a particular time in South African history, and we are reminded that Themba was a political prisoner who had been actively engaged in protest, specifically the student uprisings of 1976. As a Cape Town High School learner at the time, Themba

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Fassie and his peers had organised themselves to stand in solidarity with the learners protesting against the government's decision to impose Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools from 1976. Themba had been imprisoned for his involvement, and he had been in jail prior to the shooting of Not a Bad Girl. That the documentary opens in such a historically charged way already suggests how to begin this chapter. With the reference of Brenda's life-history and music, I will have to begin with where we have been, as a newly developed nation, and as Black women. Adichie (2009) reminds us of the danger of a single story, emphasising the importance of understanding that every story is complex, and is remembered and shared as a matter of situated experience. The idea of a universal story is not only an impossibility, but also strips people of their dignity and humanity. Therefore, as I allude to parts of colonial and apartheid history here, I do not present it as fact, and also acknowledge the shortcomings in narrating a part of South Africa's history influenced by my own reading and understanding of it. The intention here is to 'find' and 'see' Brenda in the context of a particularly violent, racist and masculinist apartheid regime.

This opening scene also situates Brenda within the context of family, thus encouraging us to think more deeply about the family as a metaphor for governance, as I discussed in the literature review. The representational choice to situate Brenda within her family context at the very start of Not a Bad Girl does not simply try to show that Brenda had a good relationship with her family. Themba happens to be the older brother to Brenda, who has also memorialised Brenda's life consistently as the 'last-born' in the family (Bongani Madondo, 2014). While Themba was the 9th of 11 children, and he had older brothers, he had an especially close relationship with Brenda. This is particularly significant because, prior to democratisation in 1994, South Africa had not yet developed as a nation, given apartheid's system of divide and conquer (Webster & Pampallis, 2017). Afrikaner nationalism, as an exclusive, racist, white nationalism, emerged under apartheid, and later existed alongside an exclusive Black nationalism (Webster & Pampallis, 2017). These imagined communities existed oppositionally. Thus, family may have

been the single most important social organisation under apartheid. Collins (1998) argues that the family unit operates as a gendered system of social organisation.

The traditional family is imagined as monolithic, with a working father, a housewife and children (Collins, 1998), although if the father is absent, the authority is assigned to another male relative, which can be a brother/s or uncle (Khunou, 2009). Brenda's father passed away when she was a toddler (Madondo, 2014), leaving her to be raised by her single mother and siblings. Female-headed households, most of which are a result of migrant labouring fathers and husbands, and mortality, complicate the traditional family monolith. Not a Bad Girl presents a narrative of Brenda as a 'family girl' whose relationship with her brother moves her towards a creative production that disrupts the Black family, and the impossibility of the traditional family unit as a result of police brutality and migrant labour. Furthermore, Brenda's (1998) assertion that, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', a person's humanity depends on the humanity of others, positions her within a discourse of community. In this song, Brenda appeals to a sense of community and collective responsibility for building a socially cohesive state, and positions herself in the philosophy of Ubuntu discussed in Chapter Two. In this single, Brenda also invokes affective bonds of family by singing, 'brothers and sisters standing behind me all of the way. Oh it gives me hope'. Under a politically oppressive regime such as apartheid, particularly in the 1980s, Brenda's words place her both as an anti-apartheid activist, but also as a catalyst for reimagining a state of humanity through familial bonds that call on affective economies of care and compassion. Miller (2009) notes that, from around 1986, the political climate was focused more towards the making of 'the people's power,' emphasising unity in the struggle for a liberated and equal nation.

Active resistance, as well as international resistance, against apartheid in the 1980s followed from the momentous 1970s, animated by the Black consciousness movement (see Biko, 1978) and the 1976 Soweto student uprising (Longman & Brown, 2018). The rise and strengthening of Umkhonto WeSizwe (MK), the military wing of the ANC, also facilitated active resistance through its guerrilla warfare

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strategy. Between 1976 and 1987, MK bombed a number of the NP government facilities and civil infrastructure, and resistance against apartheid became increasingly militarised, in response to a number of repressive apartheid laws (Longman & Brown, 2018). By the 1980s, white and Black masculinities had grown increasingly militarised (Mankayi, 2010; Symons, 2020). Because of the increasing resistance against apartheid from majority populations in South Africa, the NP needed increased military force, resulting in conscription of all white men into the South African Defence Force (SADF) from the 1960s (Symons, 2020). As such, white soldiers were expected to dominate and subordinate Black South African men (Ratele, 2013). Therefore, being a soldier was both a means of proving they were masculine and loyal to the apartheid state, but also to dissuade any suspicions of their being non-heterosexual. This process depended on immediate family structures, which privileged male authority and superiority (Symons, 2020). Ratele (2013, p.254) asserts that militarised masculinities 'may be a response to others' violence, including violence from the state and other structures in society.' Black militarised masculinities may therefore have been a response to state repression and the violence enacted on them. The Black consciousness movement, which advocated for principles such as solidarity in times of adversity, self-reliance and Black self-awareness and actualisation, affirmed activists (Biko, 1978), and inspired active forms of resistance in the 1980s (Longman & Brown, 2018). The armed struggle also popularised ongoing and current violent masculinities (Symons, 2020), which I unpack later in relation to Brenda's contestation against such violence in the township.

The armed struggle against apartheid was not only lead by men. Women were on the frontlines, although the narrative and remembering of apartheid history often erases the participation of women (Modise & Curnow, 2000). Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Thenjiwe Mtintso and Thandi Modise are but few examples of militarised femininity in the context of apartheid (Modise & Curnow, 2000). Thandi Modise served as a commander in MK, and has been cited as having 'fought two wars – one against apartheid and another against the misogyny of many of her male comrades' (Modise & Curnow, 2000, p.36). Modise (2000) has described how she

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was often coerced into feeling ashamed for being a militarised woman, because she refused to remain outside of 'political life,' thus negating constructions of traditional femininity (Modise & Curnow, 2000). Her insistence on being an active member of public life was a form of rebellion against the notion that only men can fight and protect. It is easier to think of the military or (state-sanctioned) violence as male because the state also positions itself as a masculinised protector (Enloe, 1983, cited in Magadla, 2016). Women are expected to do care-work, specifically in the form of motherhood (Miller, 2009). However, imagery of militant mothers depicted women like Thandi Modise and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as both mothers and guerrilla women. This mother-activism, as Miller (2009) calls it, emphasises an affective bond and nurturing responsibility, while also expressing women's responsibility to actively participate in the fight for liberation without reducing them to their reproductive capacities. According to Pohlandt-McCormick (2000), Madikizela-Mandela lead a gang of young men, known as the Mandela United Football Club in Soweto, who would carry out violent attacks on people suspected to be state informants. Madikizela-Mandela was also alleged to have endorsed direct violence as a response to repression, which she has denied (see Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000). The obsession with mothering, and women's' perceived and compulsory nurturing capacities, requires even militant women to be referred to as 'mothers', to reproduce women within a nationalist trope (Hassim, 2014). Such militant women have often been called 'Mothers of the Nation' working alongside 'Fathers of the nation,' again invoking affective gendered language that insists on a traditional family unit. The married heterosexual couple became an important symbolic strategy (Hassim, 2014). One such 'mother of the nation' was Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and her husband, Nelson Mandela (Hassim, 2014). 'Nelson and Winnie thus became a political trope, the recurring image of the stable centre in a political vortex' (Hassim, 2014, p.59). It became clear who the 'parents' of a new nation would be in the emerging democratic dispensation.

Embodying rebellion in different yet connected ways from women like Madikizela-Mandela and Modise, is Brenda Fassie challenging policemen in her 'Good Black Woman,' detailed above. Brenda enters public consciousness during this trend of

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rebellious and militant Black femininities. Parallel to the rebellion of women like Madikizela-Mandela, are women like Miriam Makeba who, like Brenda, used both her music and political voice to resist the apartheid regime. Perhaps presenting as more dangerous to the apartheid state, Makeba's music was banned in the early 1960s and her passport was revoked, resulting in her living the rest of her life in exile (Ewens, 2008). By the 1980s, Makeba had international artist and activist status, with ties to international political spaces such as the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity (Ewens, 2008). In these international spaces, Makeba popularised African music, addressed the crisis of apartheid South Africa, and called for pan-Africanist solidarity in a bid to overturn the repressive regime, and simultaneously identify with transnational Black movements such as the civil-rights movements in the US (Feldstein, 2013). While she had been banned from South Africa, Makeba insisted on making a life for herself and her music, and continued to fight for the liberation of South Africa. Makeba's contribution to calls to end apartheid violence posed an unwelcome threat to European countries (Ewen, 2008), as she used her platform to destabilise the racist ethnocentricism and violent ideas of Africa in those European countries. She was therefore later also unwelcome in countries like France and England.

Brenda used her creative production to lament apartheid brutality and the arrest of Nelson Mandela in her 1989 song, 'My Black President'. The single was immediately banned under the FW de Klerk administration. Brenda's rebellion from the 1980s, although not violent like Winnie's, shows how rebellious femininities were diverse in their orientation and contestation during the height of apartheid. In the US, Black women who have been rebellious in similar ways to Brenda, also used their creativity to resist racism, but also sexist expectations of them. Nina Simone, for example, (born 1933) was an African-American singer and singer-activist, most politically vocal in her music in the civil rights movement in the US. Like Makeba and Brenda, her 'protest' music was often not received well by the racist regimes she lived under. What makes Brenda especially different in her use of creative production to contest and raise awareness about the apartheid struggle is that she was relatively young at the time of a violent political upheaval. Brenda

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emerged as rebellious, young and living under spectacularly and symbolically violent circumstances.

Legal scholar and decolonial African thinker, Tshepo Madlingozi (2020), refers to this period as the most revolutionary period in anti-colonial South African politics. The 1980s resistance against apartheid did not seek to include Black people into the existing apartheid policy. Rather, through making the country ungovernable and acting on the praxis of the 'people's power,' Black people were already co-constructing a South Africa that would recognize the full humanity of all its people (Madlingozi, 2020). The colonial fear of Black people, and of recognising Black people as fully and clearly human, was stoked by the racist Afrikaner nationalist doctrine of 'die swart gevaar,' which means 'the black danger' (Kunene, 2016). This was used to justify apartheid legislation and violence against Black people d (Kunene, 2016). Ramsden (2015) argues that 'swart gevaar' is actually more about whiteness and its fear of losing power and privilege. It is also this pillar of fear that motivated the NP to declare a state of emergency in 1985 and 1986, which resulted in the detainment of thousands of political activists, the banning of resistance movements, and the increased presence and violence of the SADF to restore 'order'. The armed struggle, however, did not cease, and it was during the 80s that the international community increased mobilisation to call for an urgent end to apartheid in South Africa (Longman & Brown, 2018). The NP was under increasing political pressure, as international sanctions had also been imposed and the economy had weakened. As a result of the now-ungovernable country and international response, the process of unbanning and releasing political prisoners like Nelson Mandela began in 1989. From the 1990s, South Africa embarked on a process of negotiating a transition to democracy, which culminated in the first democratic elections on 27 April, 1994. During this time in the 90s, Brenda continued to produce music, specifically speaking to township life and the vulnerability of women to GBV, and she inspired women to refuse to be silent about ongoing violence in the democratic dispensation.

Violence and gendered struggles in township life

> Brenda represents a lot of what townships are made up of at the moment (Shado Twala, in Not a Bad Girl, 1997).

Mokwena (1991) argues that the township youth of the apartheid regime, particularly from the mid-1970s, were instrumental in radicalising the fight against apartheid. Township youth were made up of courage, fire and zest, evidenced by the 1976 student Soweto uprisings, as well as the 1980s when youth made townships ungovernable through active resistance. Mokwena (1980) makes the point that increasing capitalist conditions that furthered inequality inspired the youth to fight for an equal and free South Africa. Kooijman's (2014) dissertation on the politics of youth during apartheid demonstrates the social and political organising of young people in Johannesburg townships as a response to the unequal capitalist conditions Mokwena (1991) referred to.

Townships in Johannesburg were faced with rent increases, as well as increased police brutality, which provoked the youth to respond with violence (Mokwena, 1991). Citing Herbest (1988), Kooijman's (2014) research also shows that physical violence was used to challenge the structural violence of racial capitalism in the 1980s. With the banning of political parties and imprisonment of political leaders from 1984, young people youth became even more 'ungovernable,' and less likely to engage with the apartheid state through peaceful means (Kooijman, 2014). These capitalist conditions also inspired a 'fervent' youth culture in the townships that many researchers and archivists look to as part of active resistance against the apartheid regime (Mokwena, 1991). However, this youth culture also translated to organised crime, resulting in the formation of youth gangs, particularly in Soweto, the biggest township in South Africa (Mokwena 1991). Mokwena (1991) points out that gang activity in the township had already existed from the 1950s, but tries to capture youth gang activity of the 1980s. Mokwena (1991) also writes specifically about gangs that affected Black women in the township from the 1980s. It was also in the 1980s and 90s when Brenda Fassie sang about life in the townships, and was named the 'Madonna of the Township'. However, her fame

and popularity did not mean she was unaware or indifferent to the particular gender struggles plaguing Black communities. In Not a Bad Girl, Brenda noted that, 'Women in this country have a hard time.'

Mokwena (1991) notes that the increase in violence in the township resulted in an increase in violence against women. For example, the Jackrollers were a gang operating in Soweto from 1988, known for the abduction and rape of girls, as well as car theft and bank robbery. Most notably, the Jackrollers abducted girls in the township, took them to a location and raped them, often taking turns to rape the same girl/s (Mokwena, 1991; Parker, 2012). However, the Jackrollers soon became less of a gang and more of an acceptable recreational activity for boys and men in the township. Jackrolling became fashionable and developed as a subculture of youth violence (Ibid). While violence against women is rooted in broader systemic issues, that does not render it a 'Black' problem, and its development as an accepted and understood subculture is related to the problem of hegemonic toxic masculinities within a toxic society that brutalised particular groups of people (Ibid). Mokwena (1991: para. 34) notes that the emergence of gangs and gang activities, such as jackrolling, are part of a 'Machismo culture based on espousing the attainment of masculinity and male dominance'. In response to this machismo culture, Brenda asserted:

I'm going to change it my way (Brenda Fassie in Not a Bad Girl, 1997).

According to Shado Twala, Brenda Fassie spoke and sang about things that bothered her. One of those things was jackrolling, which she also spoke about as an injustice in her documentary. Fassie's song Indaba Yami iStraight (My story or agenda is straightforward) lyrically stages a conversation between herself and perpetrators of jackrolling.

Hola gazi[5]

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[5] Direct translation for these lyrics is not possible because they will lose their meaning and I have opted not to do this. Throughout the thesis, I have provided translations for words or common phrases that are simpler to break down into English, but have refrained from this translation work

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Oh Charlie

Ha ha ha

Angazi…

Min'angazi
Angazikanjani
Uthi mangenze njani,uthi mangenze njani…

(Chorus)

(Ayi ayi he e he e…)
(Indaba yam'istraight)
(Ayifun'iruler)
(Kanti wen'unumber bani)
(Angisafuni niks) Ithin'indaba ithini ithi Pabap pabap pabap…

(Uphuma kanje, uphuma kanje) Uthi mina ngenze kanjani
(Uma uphuma kanje, uphuma kanje) Kanti uth'angenze mina kanjani mfwethu
Why mara ungithatha ngenkani hee?
Awungitshele, or zithini mfwethu…
Zithi hola, hola mpintshi

The above lyrics are not written in the form that the song is sung. I have selected the parts of Indaba Yami iStraight that speak directly to jackrolling. Where there are ellipses dots, it should be taken that there are lyrics and ad-libs that follow that are not included here. The bracketed lyrics indicate the voices of backing vocals. It is important to note that Fassie begins the song by performing familiarity and kinship. She begins the song by calling out 'Hola gazi! Hola Charlie' which is local township vocabulary referring to family, where 'Charlie' is often the name given to someone we know in the Black community. Charlie is akin to a mate, in English

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in longer and more complex vernacular texts. I have, however, narrativised and contextualised the lyrics to capture the essence and meaning of the song.

culture. Brenda is speaking to people she knows, identifying them as family and as brothers. She then goes on to say 'Mina angazi, angazi kanjani, ukuthi mangenze njani,' in frustration about not knowing what to do but that, 'indaba yami istraight, ayifuni ruler, kanti wena unumber bani? Angisafuni niks'. Brenda goes on to say that she means it when she says that she has had enough of the violence. Her agenda is straightforward (indaba yami istraight), she has had enough. In the last stanza of the lyrics above, she asks for the men in the community, or brothers, since she uses the term *mfwethu,* to explain why they abduct and murder her. Brenda gestures to kinship and uses it as a strategy to appeal to perpetrators of violence against women. She also speaks to *mpintshi,* which means friend, and places perpetrators of GBV as part of community once again. Brenda invokes the spirit of Ubuntu. Drawing on this etiquette of humanity, Brenda skilfully appeals to violent men to exercise care and kindness. Brenda not only draws on Ubuntu to appeal to violent men, but also to call up women to stand and speak as a collective, almost as family, against the violence inflicted on us. Indaba Yami iStraight becomes a collective anthem and, in videos that capture Brenda's live performance of the song, we can see crowds of Black women singing assertively, pointing their fingers at men to tell them that they have had enough.

Vincent Colby (in Not a Bad Girl, 1997) notes that the township was textured by a spirit of resistance from a 'generation of defiance' from the 1980s to 1990s. The spirit of defiance also intersected with the confrontational and re-imaginative nature of music in the 1980s. Schumman (2008) argues that music in the 1980s became less representational of apartheid and the struggle for liberation, and more confrontational, as a means to construct an alternative political and social reality and imaginary. In the township, specifically Soweto, Brenda Fassie rises and, as Twala and Colby note in Not a Bad Girl (1997), also sang and performed with a total disregard of the fear of the apartheid state and also traditions. While Fassie did speak to some of the experiences of marginalised people during apartheid, she was also deliberate in speaking specifically about injustices against Black women in the township, therefore also calling out Black communities. Through Fassie's Indaba Yami iStraight, women find their voice to speak (or, in this case, sing)

against GBV and confront who is identified as their social kin – Black men in their community. Indaba Yami iStraight also gives Black women an opportunity to express their frustration in less obvious but impactful ways. Fassie's discography becomes a way to challenge subcultures of violence against women in townships through entertainment, such as song and dance. I think this is important, particularly because of the spectacular forms of violence that Black women were vulnerable to. Given the violent attitudes the youth had taken up as a revolutionary contestation against apartheid, but also as a means of attaining certificates of masculinity, it is unlikely that women speaking against jackrolling in more organised ways would have felt or been safe. Fassie offered an opportunity to rebel against masculinity and violence by leveraging her own popularity to present a gendered and political matter. The impact of Indaba Yami iStraight can be understood as a form of political organising against GBV, but also as a form of assertive expression, which Brenda advocated for.

 Life is about expression … That's what I'm trying to do (Fassie in Not a Bad Girl, 1997).

There are consequences for being an expressive and assertive woman, as Sara Ahmed (2010, 2017) has continuously argued by theorising the figure of the feminist killjoy. The feminist killjoy is a woman who problematises sexist situations, and speaks up against a problem at the risk of being accused of being the problem (Ahmed 2010). Central to the figure of the feminist killjoy is that she infringes on the (patriarchal) right to happiness, and that happiness is often rooted in sexist and consumer capitalist ends. While Fassie and her interventions were (possibly) not deliberately or explicitly feminist, her discography and the collective experience it generates for Black women has feminist implications. Calling for an end to the violation and exploitation of women through song constitutes feminist work, which hooks (2000) defines as a movement to end sexism, oppression and sexist exploitation. Tau (2021) argues that hook's (2000) definition creates room for us to understand the feminist movement in multiplicities, and therefore not as discriminatory by design and practice. Indaba Yami iStraight is an articulation of feminist work against sexism and oppression in the township, but also assists

Black women singing the song to navigate its political consequence safely because its orator is Brenda Fassie – a celebrated popular culture figure, but also an ally in the fight against apartheid. Thus, the consequence of being marked as a feminist killjoy and therefore unseated – the metaphor that Ahmed (2010) uses for being erased – is negotiated safely through the township appraisal of Brenda.

Morality discourses and repression of sexuality

The apartheid regime's emphasis on separateness and difference extended to the sexual lives of South Africans. In particular, the Immorality Act functioned as the legislative mechanism to produce heteronormative whiteness and to punish any transgression of it, especially in the 1970s (Carolin, 2017), when apartheid South Africa was in the grips of a moral panic regarding sexuality, with a more visible presence of homosexuality, and romantic and sexual relationships among white men and Black women. Shefer and Foster's (2001) assertion that South Africa still lacks a positive language with which to discuss sex is attributed to legislated compulsory heteronormativity under apartheid state repression. Posel (2004) reminds us that, while other parts of the world, like the US (see Fine, 1988), were growing increasingly liberal and talking about sex in the latter part of the 20th century, South Africa's apartheid regime had censored and repressed (positive) sex-talk.

From the 1980s, the disproportionate obsession with young female sexuality in particular often constructed young women's sexuality in relation to danger, victimisation and vulnerability (Fine, 1988; Shefer *et al.*, 2015; Graham & Mphaphuli, 2018). The focus on young people's sexuality more generally was, and remains, tied to the HIV/AIDS epidemic that emerged in South Africa in the 1980s. The pathologisation of young, and especially female, sexuality is a consequence of the fear of HIV/AIDS, (non-normative) sexualities, and racist ideology that renders Black women especially vulnerable to control of their sex lives (Fine, 1988; Tamale, 2011). Graham and Mphaphuli (2018, p.1) note that, while it is important to understand the relationship between sexual risk behaviours of young people and HIV/AIDS, 'the unintended consequence has been that sex and sexuality

among poor, Black youth has been described as excessive and risky … as something to be fixed'. Therefore, there is a discourse of desire that is missing (Fine, 1988), and to date, a lack of engagement with the historical everyday sexual experiences, identifications and performances of gender and sexuality of young Black women under apartheid (Graham & Mphaphuli 2018).

Apartheid, sexuality and dis-ease

During this period, certain bodies, intimate identities, and their presentation became increasingly politicised, rather than the AIDS epidemic itself (Tsampiras, 2014). Referring to the Human Immunodeficiency-Virus as HIV, or AIDS or HIV/AIDS is evidence of local and global shifts in research around the bio-medical nature of the virus, and may signify where research was/is around HIV/AIDS. Under apartheid South Africa, it was commonly understood and named as AIDS. In remembering Brenda through and within a violent context, it is important to also consider the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country at the time, as it intersects with sexuality and morality debates. Because the first cases of AIDS were recorded in homosexual men, during a time when homosexuality, which at the time really referred to gay men, was declared illegal, the 1980s also yielded hegemonic homophobic sentiments (Reddy, Sandfort & Rispel, 2008). In 1982, South Africa recorded its first HIV/AIDS infections or 'cases' from two homosexual men (Gilbert & Walker, 2002; Tsampiras, 2012, 2014).

Tsampiras (2014) notes that the recording of these cases intersected with morality debates imbedded within the culturally conservative and intolerant nature of the apartheid state. The fact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, rather than as an imagined Western, and therefore far-removed, dis-ease, resulted in very specific ideations on sexualities, race and even body performance. Parker (2004, p.2) argues that HIV/AIDS is an ecological epidemic that involves a 'process of sense-making that incorporates ideological dimensions in the public sphere'. To engage with HIV/AIDS, and to have done research on the epidemic, almost always meant establishing ways to make sense of racialised, classed and gendered peoples and experiences (Parker, 2004; Tsampiras, 2019). Furthermore, in most parts of the

world, HIV/AIDS discourses and debates became saturated as with notions of diseases linked mostly to white gay men, therefore limiting or erasing the narratives of Black people and lesbian, intersex, and bisexual people (Epprecht, 2012; Tsampiras, 2014). Reddy and Sandfort (2009) argue that while homosexual people were pathologised in discourses on HIV/AIDS, they have been ignored in the treatment and prevention programmes and strategies. The erasure or lack of public consideration of Black LGBTQIA+ people and HIV during apartheid was strategic, to create a metanarrative of the impossibility of queer identities, and their unwantedness in conservative South Africa (Epprecht, 2012).

There were reports of violence against Black women with the intention of infecting them with HIV/AIDS under the apartheid regime. This confession was made by a former apartheid intelligence service employee in a documentary, Cold Case Hammarskjold, which has re-opened debate on the spread of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan African (Ankomah, 2019). The biological warfare waged against Black people, and Black women in particular, under apartheid is evidence of a very complex gendered and racial experience of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. When talk of the experiences of Black women and HIV does emerge in the earlier years of the epidemic, and even today, Black women are considered within the racist paradigm of Black femme promiscuity, under the trope of the prostitute. Tsampira (2019) notes that it is Black women in rural and township South Africa that are marked as the 'infecting prostitute'. The geo-local positionality of these Black women also indicates their economic and social class as poor. The political economy of HIV/AIDS developed into a suspicion of the poor and promiscuous. These classist, racist and misogynist ideations encouraged suspicion of sexually liberated Black women, and contributed to the suppression of women's sexuality.

For years, Brenda was suspected of being HIV positive, because she was lesbian but also because of how open she was about sex and her sex life (Ntreh, 2019). Having been with both men and women, and publicly proclaiming herself as sex-positive in an anti-sex country, Brenda presented as the dis-ease of both the nation and white heteronormativity. The Sunday Times reported that her post-mortem

report in 2004 revealed that she had been HIV+, but this was denied by her manager, Peter Snyman. In the sections that follow, I return to this point and expand on Brenda's sexuality as it intersects with apartheid history, media representations and her creative work.

McFadden (2003) notes that public debates, campaigns and responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic have been used to further the patriarchal and heterosexist policing of women's freedom and rights to sexual pleasure. It is no wonder that many African women fear the idea of pleasure and choice, and fail to make the connection between pleasure and power. The fear of pleasure coincides with the fear of contracting HIV/AIDS, but also with the fear of being 'marked' as the promiscuous Black woman or, as Tsampiras (2019) termed it, the 'infecting prostitute.' McFadden (2003) refers to these fears as socio-sexual anxiety, which was widespread in the 1980s, and disproportionately affected Black women. Brenda's self-presentation as care-free and provocative, and the multiple public relationships she was involved in, were not divorced from these socio-sexual anxieties. Through her music and performances, Brenda highlighted the nuances of these anxieties, while pushing back against the context of repression within which she found herself.

Under the guise of HIV/AIDS: Weekend Special, sex and sexuality

When Brenda Fassie was 16 years old, she left her birth home in Langa, and moved to Soweto, where she met and worked with a number of musicians. Renowned producer, Koloi Lebona, had scouted Brenda in her hometown, and she went to live with Lebona's family in Soweto to focus on strengthening her music career. In 1983, Brenda, who at this point was already affectionately known as MaBrr, came into public consciousness with her band Brenda and the Big Dudes. Her debut single, Weekend Special, where she sang about only being able to see a lover over the weekend, became the fastest-selling record of the time, outselling even international artists. Weekend Special resulted in her being dubbed the 'Madonna of the townships,' where she was compared to US pop artist, Madonna. However, like Selemela (2014, p.113), who stated, 'Honor thy heroes,

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child,' I think she is just Brenda Fassie, in her fullness and in full. Brenda also responded to her comparison to Madonna by saying, 'No, no, no sweety. Madonna is the Brenda of America' (Not a Bad Girl, 1997), therefore also subverting rhetoric that renders American influence hegemonic. Sobopha (2005) argues that Western-dominated histories of art have dictated a specific framework within which to represent Black women artists, with white (and male) artist seen as the genius, while Black and women artists are rendered subordinate and not cultural producers in their own right.

Brenda's spirit of political and cultural defiance was captured at the outset of her career. In Not a Bad Girl (1997), cultural historian, Vincent Colby argues that Fassie appealed to Black township youth because of her spirit of defiance. During the 1980s, Fassie was a teenager and, through her music, resisted apartheid alongside her peers. Both her personal life and discography simultaneously reject, complicate and reproduce societal norms. In particular, translations of select songs offer a reading of Fassie's art and personal life as directly and indirectly political. For example, Weekend Special is a commentary on the political context of the 1980s, where apartheid repression intersected with Black family life and the complex sexual relationships formed in the township.

It is very important to note that the chorus to Weekend Special is often sung differently, which directly impacts the narration of the story behind the song. I offer two interpretations of the song, specifically the chorus, in the sections that follow.

You don't come around
To see me in the week
You don't have a chance
To call me on the phone
You don't come around
To me see in the week
You don't have a chance
Call me on the phone, yeah

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[CHORUS]

But Friday night, yes, I know
I know I must be ready for you, just be waiting for you
Friday night, yes, I know
I know I must be ready for you, just be waiting for you
I'm no weekend, weekend special x4

That is all.

As a result of the forceful removal of men from their homes to work in mines and live in hostels, nuclear Black families were fractured. At times, it was women who worked in the city, while their families remained in their rural areas (Sibisi, 1977). This migrant labour system is what Brenda responded to with Weekend Special. Ronald Patrick Mazibuko (2000) explains that migrant labourers were nomadic workers who were moved around for seasonal and temporary work. Many of them were married men who left their families and homes in the homelands[6] in order to provide cheap labour in mine shafts. The separation of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela from Nelson Mandela, when he was politically imprisoned in 1963, also became a metaphor for the disruption of black families due to the migrant labour system (Hassim, 2014). The late Hugh Masekela laments the forced removal of men from their homes for cheap labour in his single, Stimela, which refers to a train.[7] MaBrr then released another hit single, titled Too Late for Mama, in 1989. In this song, Fassie sang about mothers dying from having to walk far and wide for food and water while nurturing their children. She was alluding to yet another consequence of the migrant labour system, which was absent partners and fathers. Many

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[6] These were specific areas of South Africa that were assigned to certain ethnic groups and were also self-governing. They were created to keep the Black population away from urban areas (The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission)

[7] I have transcribed and translated to English the lyrics of late musician, Hugh Masekela's *Stimela* in part: *This train carries young and old, African men who are conscripted to come and work on contract. In the gold-mines of Johannesburg and its surrounding metropolis, sixteen hours a day or more for almost no pay. Deep, deep, deep down in the belly of the earth.*

women were left having to play dual roles, even though they would never be recognised as figures of authority in their households (Mazibuko, 2000).

Khunou (2009) argues that the traditional values embodied by homelands and townships institutionalised male succession and authority, while favouring the submission and subservience of women. These traditional expectations have of course been undermined by oppressive conditions, such as the migrant labour system and the dual-responsibility placed on women, both historically and in the contemporary landscape. Fassie's Weekend Special and Too Late for Mama highlight these complexities in astute ways. Weekend Special may also give us certain impressions about the sex lives of the women who stayed while their husbands were working in the city. The most obvious interpretation of the song is that it is a complaint about missing a lover and only having access to them when they are not working.

We could assume that, in the time that the men are away, women are not engaged in sex or do not have any sexual options available to them. Most literature surrounding the sex lives of Black people under the migrant labour system focuses on the sexual experiences of men and their exposure to HIV/AIDS (see Jochelson, Mothibeli & Leger, 1991; Williams *et al.*, 2002; Nicholas *et al.*, 2016). The rise in migrant labour also resulted in a demand for transactional sex, usually without a condom, that contributed to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD), from the 1980s well into democracy. However, the men who carry this disease home to their wives in the homelands were absolved of any shame or fear of being outed and labelled as promiscuous. As already discussed, the imminent fear of being marked as the 'infecting prostitute' might deter women from having pleasurable sex lives outside of the boundaries of monogamy, but the same was not true for men (McFadden, 2003; Tsampiras 2019).

Through specific observation of Weekend Special and Fassie's performance of it, I assert that she also presents a liberated femininity that departs from a dependence on male presence, contrary to what would have been expected. The general assumption is that women would not be having sex, and that their

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everyday lives were difficult and miserable. However, Brenda Fassie does something interesting by seemingly celebrating this absence through her song and dance. Similarly, Tau (2021, p.28) notes that Weekend Special is a critique of monogamous relationships in the townships, suggesting 'that there is a type of womxn who is comfortable with being a "weekend special', one who is only in a relationship during the weekend, which Fassie states she is not'. Fassie introduced the idea that women can decide to move on with other lovers, either simultaneously or following a break-up, without feeling ashamed about it. It also articulated sexual desire for women that refused to conform to the representation of women as focused primarily on relationships (Shefer & Foster, 2001).

As mentioned earlier, the chorus of Weekend Special is at times misheard and sung rather as,

[Chorus]

I'm your weekend, weekend special
I'm your weekend, (daddy's home), weekend special
I'm your weekend (daddy's home)

Weekend Special has often been sung in different ways as a result of mishearing the word 'your' for 'no'. This is the phenomenon known as a mondegreen, referring to the mishearing of words. However, in the case of Weekend Special, it is unclear whether listeners mishear or deliberately modify the lyrics. In Not a Bad Girl (1997), Fassie performs Weekend Special live and is clearly heard chanting, 'I'm not your weekend special'. However, some fans, and even music directories that provide lyrics, such as Lyric Find, which works closely with Sony Music Publishing recorders, one of the biggest global music publishers, provide different lyrics for Weekend Special. There could be a number of reasons for this modification. One reasons could be to portray women as monogamous, and therefore waiting for when 'daddy's home.' But looking into the lyrics as 'I'm your weekend special, daddy's home' does something more complex than simply portray women as dependent on the presence of men. Brenda's work, specifically Weekend Special,

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consciously or unconsciously offers women listeners an opportunity to accept/celebrate/enjoy or reject and denounce being a part-time lover. Weekend Special also asks questions about various, shifting, paralleling and differing articulations of femininity and sexualities. Brenda may assert that she is not a weekend special, while another woman may say that she is. Gqola (2004, p.142) reminds us that, in Brenda's lyrics, a variety of subject positions can be found, thus making available 'unpredictable Black women personas. These personas and gendered narratives exist alongside each other, rather than oppositionally. Both gendered narratives are sung assertively and proudly, despite the challenges of migrant labour to which Brenda gestures. Weekend Special, as it emerged and was popularised from the 1980s to date, speaks to a gendered celebration of sexuality, which was often silenced in South African politics, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s.

In Bed With Brenda as the personal being made political

I'm a shocker. I like to create controversy. It's my trademark (Brenda Fassie, 1995).

This section considers specifically how Brenda occupied the public through media representations. I show how Brenda was represented by others and how she directed the way she was represented at various points in her career and life. Brenda's proclamation in an interview of herself as a 'shocker' who enjoys 'controversy' (Mail & Guardian, 1995) is indicative of the ways she claims agency over how she is represented. In this section, I explore the public representation of Brenda, particularly her sexuality. I consider how representations of Brenda reveal the ways in which her femininity was constructed as a cautionary tale to other women. Brenda does also resist rigid readings of her femininity by controlling the narrative in some instances. I pay close attention to some interviews and headlines related to Brenda, and how her personal and public personas are often collapsed into one another by the media, but also by her own efforts. I demonstrate the role of the media in narrativisng Brenda and women like her, in ways that stigmatise and stereotype women who do not subscribe to linear sexualities and conventional performances of gender. In so doing, this section seeks to explore the public

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imaginaries of the lives of women like Brenda. It also deepens our understanding of why Brenda received immense national attention, through a discussion of public representations of Brenda as entertainer, person and rebel.

Introducing Brenda's relationship with the media

Xavier Livermon's (2006, 2020) work on South African women in the music and entertainment industry chronicles Brenda Fassie as a performer both on and off stage. As Livermon and others have observed, Not a Bad Girl (1997) demonstrates Fassie in her private space, on stage and in the company of friends and lovers, to show us that she is a continuous performance. Fassie is considered rebellious precisely because she is what she performs on stage. Her politically charged music, and the passion in her voice and dance moves, is consistent with her bold, expressive and back-chatting character. Her private and public personas are almost inseparable, and encounters she had with the media are evidence of this (Livermon, 2006).

While Brenda engaged the media willingly and, to a certain extent, influenced it, the media also constructed and emphasised very particular narratives of her. Selemela (2014) notes that some of the media insisted on reporting Brenda only as 'bad,' 'messy' and 'moody' for supposedly not showing up to perform at some events she had been booked for, but Mathibela (2022) argues that it is problematic to write about Brenda as simply and only bad. Brenda may have lived by her own rules and said whatever she wanted to, but media representations of women have always been biased against women. The intention here is to not to show that Brenda was not rebellious in the broader context of a heteropatriarchal and conventional country. Rather, it is to show that some media reports of Brenda do not capture her as complex, but only construct her as 'bad' in relation to gendered expectations. I seek to show that Brenda as 'bad' is actually Brenda as free and insisting on her freedom, and of course this is not without limitations. I engage with Brenda's relationship with the media, both in terms of how she was written about in some newspaper headlines, and what Brenda actively wants the public to know. It is important how we think about Brenda, and to take note of how and what we

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remember. Media coverage is archival in nature, which means it does very important memory work, and my feminist inclination is to engage in some of that memory-work in ways that are ethical.

Media constructions of Brenda, gender and sexuality

Brenda enjoyed controversy, and she said this openly, but Mathibela (2022) notes that the media's scathing gaze upon Brenda's life, followed by vicious headline reporting, did not afford her some of the grace that any human being would need. Brenda's shortcomings and failures rarely enjoyed the privilege of privacy. Allen (2014) notes that the media tended to expose things Brenda would rather have hidden, and this had psycho-social effects on her. The Mail & Guardian (1997) offers a listing of some of the news headlines involving Brenda, which highlights how, in the 1980s, when she became well-known as a result of Weekend Special, newspapers reported on her in ways that reflected her musical success, but also aspects of her personal life.

Her wedding to Nhlanhla Mbambo in 1989 was a major media frenzy, with journalists and photographers present to capture the moment (Tjiya, 2021). Some of the infamous headlines surrounding Brenda that are profiled in The Mail and Guardian (1997), include 'Brenda and the Big Moods,' 'Diva with a messy Life' and 'Down and Out in Brenda's Hillbrow' (Selemela, 2014). Down and Out in Brenda's Hillbrow (1995) documents when Brenda woke up still high from a drug trip, next to her female lover, Poppy Sihlahla, who had died of a drug overdose in their rented Hillbrow hotel room (Mail & Guardian, 1995). Brenda divorced her husband in 1991, after which her relationship with drugs, specifically cocaine, began to become more apparent and became the subject of many newspapers (Selemela, 2014). Gqola (2004) argues that, although South Africa was a homophobic country, Brenda continued to capture the public imagination and favour because, although she later identified as lesbian, she had public 'high-profile' relationships with men, and was publicly engaged to several men. Brenda's refusal to keep her romantic life private can be viewed as her way of strategically presenting as unthreatening to the heteropatriarchal imagination (Gqola, 2004). Similarly,

scholars like Spivak (1994) argue that the margins can appropriate aspects of the centre in order to survive dominant systems. Because same-sex desire is exoticised, by publicly performing same-sex desire, the heterosexist gaze remains engaged, while the threat of homosexuality is invalidated (Gqola, 2004).

Brenda also made headlines for not showing up at performances that she was scheduled for in the townships, and her music was therefore boycotted in the early 1990s. Brenda was also in and out of rehabilitation in the 90s and early 2000s, as she struggled with drug and alcohol abuse (Allen, 2014). Her life in the 1990s was constructed as a downward spiral, blamed on what was described as her 'arrogance and living an erratic lifestyle' (Mail & Guardian, 1995). Having her life portrayed in newspapers as mostly chaotic creates a very dangerous narrative about women who are bold, expressive and candid like Brenda. The emphasis on Brenda's personal life, particularly her drug use and love life, became a breeding ground for patriarchal warnings against women's sense of freedom. The kinds of news headlines that dominated Brenda's narrative seem to serve the purpose of showing women an example of what it means to live a wayward life. Even the speculation over her HIV status at her time of death is indicative of the representational damage caused by the media. Ligaga (2017) reminds us of the moral narrative as a genre, within which newspapers and other forms of media report and represent women and femininity in ways that contain women's expression and agency, so as to show who and what a woman should, and should not, be like.

The moral narrative as genre refers to a familiar pattern and structuring of narrative across media forms. Central to the moral narrative is the construction of femininity embedded within a 'melodramatic' or sensationalising narrative form, that seeks to guide the reader towards a particular educational or moral lesson (Ligaga, 2017), and the process of moral self-identification (Ligaga, 2017). Ligaga (2017) believes the moral narrative is popular because of the popularity of media forms such as radio, (tabloid) newspapers, and digital medias such as social media. Across these media forms, is the insistence on narrating femininities in ways that yield moral

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debate, moral self-identification and a moral lesson.

To report women like Brenda as simply and only out of control, purely wild and chaotic is consistent with the moral genre. Similarly, Madikizela-Mandela, anti-apartheid political activist and ex-wife of former President Nelson Mandela, was also subject to the moral narrative throughout most of her life, and was also identified as Brenda's 'spirit animal' in Madondo's (2014) edited collection of essays. Sisonke Msimang (2021) recalls how Madikizela-Mandela, like Brenda, was often not afforded the privacy any other person would need, but was also stereotyped by the media within the racist and sexist context of South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. She was made out to be acting irrationally during the armed struggle, and shamed for having had an affair while still married to Nelson Mandela, as if masculinities had not already become militarised and violent, and as if Nelson Mandela was not imprisoned for most of their marriage. Brenda is sensationalised and oversimplified, and therefore brought into a polarising moral narrative that presents only salvation and damnation as the only possibilities, seldom engaging opportunities for agency in her narrative. Because women like Winnie and Brenda were not 'proper women', particularly where the privacy of their dating and sex lives are concerned, the moral narrative found in the headlines and stories detailing their lives tell us: Don't be like Brenda. Don't be like Winnie.

Agency and body performance

Brenda's work, particularly the interpretation, reproduction and collective nature of Weekend Special, poses important theoretical contributions to the idea of Black African women's practices of agency. Remembering Bakare-Yusuf's (2003) efforts to move away from deterministic ways of imagining and theorising African women's lives, I situate Weekend Special in a similar paradigm of power. As discussed in the foregrounding chapter, understanding women's choices in a paradigm that recognises both their capacity and limitations is central to my reading of agency (Davies, 1999; Bakare-Yusuf. 2003; Madhok, Philips & Wilson, 2013; Ligaga, 2019). Brenda and other women's varying identification and interpretation of Weekend Special speaks to the complex and nuanced exercises of agency.

The migrant labour system removes men from their homes, but the women who 'stay', faced with the absence of their lovers, can use their capacity to refuse part-time love (which would render them 'weekend specials') and/or venture into multiple relationships simultaneously, thus defying the institution of monogamy. Perhaps other women singing this song choose to remain in solitude – not distressed, nor open to non-monogamous set ups. An easier reading of Weekend Special is that women's refusal to only have access to their lovers on the weekend is because they are somehow only disadvantaged when their male counterparts are absent and unavailable. Thus, Weekend Special can easily be interpreted as a lamentation. However, this victim-agency binarism is disrupted through an interpretation of Weekend Special as a text of possibility, and varying heterogenous realities for Black women. The ambiguity of the interpretations of Weekend Special is the space of relative possibilities for women.

When Fassie performs Weekend Special, she seems to be in celebration, as if the message of the song is not inconsistent with her contagious smile and provocative dance moves. Perhaps her body presentation, style of dance and dress set up the reception of the song, allowing for women who reject and accept the notion of weekend special to celebrate in their positionality. In the Weekend Special music video, I take note of the following: it captures Fassie in a green and white jumpsuit with high slits on the sides that expose her thighs and legs. She is embodying herself as a sexy Black woman, swirling her hips on the floor while on her knees as if she were making love. The upbeat tempo that beckons the body to move vivaciously also does not signal the melancholic experience of being a 'weekend special'. Any observation of Brenda's live performances of Weekend Special, such as her 1985 concert at Ellis Park,[8] shows large crowds of mostly women, and some men, and lifting their hands rhythmically to a singing Brenda, who encourages them to dance to her music. Selemela's (2014, p.108) essay in Madondo's (2014) I'm Not Your Weekend Special, describes Brenda's debut single as 'unusual: its electricity. Haunting.' Nina Simone's music, particularly her 1964 single titled Don't

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[8] The live performance is available on YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoWQuI80ejo

Let Me Be Misunderstood has also been described as haunting (Johnson, 2019). Like Brenda's Weekend Special, Nina's Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood has operated as a Black anthem that continues to haunt the present (Johnson, 2019). Nina having come from the African-American context and Brenda from South Africa, the two meet in a transnational matrix of Black histories of violence and personal narratives embedded in their music. Black women across the diaspora have connected both their contexts and personal stories to their creative outputs, which transcend time and space.

Hauntology is an idea attributed to Derrida's philosophy of history (Gericke, 2012). Ghosts may be metaphorically understood as cultural artefacts, ideas and doctrines, that haunt the present (Fisher, 2012; Gericke, 2012). Ghosts refuse to be forgotten and, in existing in the present, their haunting 'can be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space' (Fisher, 2012, p.19). Gordon (2008, p.x) asserts that memories, echoes and murmurs of a social figure are 'ghostly matters' that haunt us. To be haunted refers to being tied to historical and social effects, rendering our subjectivities relational and embedded with a quality of timelessness (Gordon, 2008). Some ghosts continue to be relevant outside of the ontology of space and time, rendering them timeless. In Chapter Two, I noted that I do not think of time as linear, and clearly demarcating between past, present and future. Nina Simone's Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood is haunting specifically because she sings from a place of confronting a violent past, and reminding those who have experienced and perpetrated violence, and struggled with mental health, to live without shame.[9] Weekend Special also continues to haunt the gendered landscape within which this research operates, but it also reminds us of the disruption and oppression of Black people under apartheid, and of how and why the idea of traditional nuclear

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[9] Nina Simone was a musician who grew up under white supremecy and violence in the US, suffered an abusive relationship, and also became abusive to her own children as she struggled with mental health. Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood is often interpreted as a romantic song about apologising to a lover, but is actually about Nina acknowledging that she has harmed people she loves. The song is haunting because people with a similar experience and who consequently carry shame, are invited to confront it. See Johnson, M.E (2019). The Misunderstanding of Nina Simone. Afro Punk [online].

families remains elusive. The body is provoked to move in particular ways as a result of the electricity in Weekend Special, and Brenda's delivery and performance of it show that her politics were not simply oriented towards anti-apartheid resistance. Much like other women involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, like Madikizela-Mandela and Modise discussed earlier, Brenda's work also speaks to the intersecting experience of being a racialised, gendered and classed subject of oppression. Thus, her struggle for freedom, particularly under apartheid, also articulated gender struggles and gender politics. Fassie's politics also raised the possibility for women to life a life outside of men, irrespective of maleness and heteropatriarchy. Brenda encourages us to think about the women who stay when their partners leave. Cortes (2016, p.11) argues that the conditions of migration can open up new 'horizons of autonomy,' and it is Weekend Special that opened up these possibilities for Black women in South Africa.

In Not a Bad Girl (1997) veteran journalist remarks, Shado Twala remarks 'The women, they would love to look like Brenda and loved to dress like Brenda,' but to be 'like Brenda' would mean to be entangled in national suspicions of sexy and confident women, especially because of the panic around HIV/AIDS in the 1980s. It would mean to be engulfed in the figure of what Kalinga (2016) and Livermon (2020) refer to as the 'dangerous women,' within the trope of the jezebel, as a means to control and govern women's sense of autonomy. Kalinga (2016) defines the Black jezebel stereotype within feminist thought as one that hypersexualises and objectifies Black women. So-called dangerous women, jezebels and the 'infecting' prostitutes play into myths and stigmas around HIV/AIDS that disproportionately affect Black women. Having already been labelled and written about as the 'wild child' and 'outrageous' (Mail & Guardian, 1995, 1997), the jezebel trope was attached to Fassie, and also played into myths and stigmas around HIV/AIDS. Kalinga (2016) asserts that, by traditional and conservative African standards, Fassie was not a 'good girl'. At the same time, the binary constructed between bad and good girl is limiting, because it seeks to view women like Brenda from a particular standard of being 'good' or 'respectable' women. Lutwama-Rukundo (2016) refers to traditional African values as politics of

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respectability, which I unpacked in-depth in the literature review. Fassie did not abide by the politics of respectability that governed traditional femininities, and also did not comply with contemporary notions of what constituted successful or pleasant femininity, especially as they are re-entrenched by the responses to HIV/AIDS. Tagging her only as 'bad' shows that, for women, there is one way to be and that way is obedient to a politics of respectability. However, Brenda continuously disrupted gender norms by actively opening up her private life and space for public consumption.

Intimate publics in Brenda's construction of self to the media

Detaching Brenda's public and private life is difficult because, to a certain extent, her love for attention and public adoration resulted in her calling the media into her personal life (Allen, 2014; Blignaut, 2014; Mathibela, 2021), so there are complications for reading text on Brenda, and then reading Brenda as text. For example, in her most notable interview with Charl Blignaut in 1992, In Bed With Brenda, she shares that, on her way from a performance she called the media to alert them she was divorcing her then-husband, Nhlanhla Mbambo, because he had refused to give her money. I discuss this particular interview in detail, and will also provide an overview of the ways the media itself constructed and narrated Brenda. Alongside Brenda's interview with Blignaut, I discuss her interview with Lara Allen, as the interviews share similar aspects relating to Brenda's complicated relationship with the media, but also her sexuality.

In In Bed With Brenda (1992), Charl Blignaut interviewed Brenda in her home in a suburb near Soweto Township. She invited Blignaut not only into her home, but into her bedroom and, literally, into her bed. At the time of this interview, Blignaut was a journalist for the Vrye Weekblad, a progressive anti-apartheid newspaper. In Lara Allen's (2014) interview with Brenda in 1996, Brenda similarly invites PhD student Allen into her bedroom in her home in Berea, Johannesburg. Allen's work at the time was not as a journalist, but rather as a PhD student researching South African women in popular culture, which she believes made artists like Brenda more receptive to her, in comparison to journalists. The intimacy of these

interviews, as they happened in conventionally private spaces like the home and the bedroom, was staged as an intimate public. We are reminded of the work of theorists like Arendt (1998), Benhabib (1993), Berlant (2008, 2011), hooks (2000) and others, that the distinction between public and private worlds is a distortion, because the personal is political, as people's homes, families and lives are constantly mediated by 'nation-wide administration of housekeeping' (Arendt, 1998, p.28). In other words, the private lives of people have always been a national project. The bodies of women, in particular, while they have been traditionally contained in the home and away from political life and the (voter) 'polls,' as Arendt (1998) calls it, have always been a public affair. Fraser (1991) invites us to rethink the public sphere, arguing that an exclusive, single and comprehensive public does not exist, especially in egalitarian, multicultural societies such as South Africa. Thus, there are many publics and members of subordinated groups, such as queer folks, women, and people of colour, who form part of a counterpublic. Similarly, Berlant (2008) invites us to think about publics as intimate publics, referring to strangers being bonded into communities through affective ties, shared emotions and perspectives, where the public is about more than the individuality of public life (Berlant & Prosser, 2011).

In Brenda's interviews 'in bed' with Blignaut and Allen, she created affective ties through an intimate public with not only her interviewees as strangers, but also with those of us who would go on to read Brenda in the final publication of the interviews. I think that this is very significant, because during her interview, she confessed to Allen that often, no one took her seriously even when she was sharing something of importance. There is something about the intimate space Brenda created for the strangers interviewing her in her bed, that not only tells us something about the individuality of Brenda, but also about the lack of social and political consideration of women more generally. Brenda calls us into her bed so that we can share these assumed affective ties, but also so that she can actively demonstrate the intimate public of her home.

In her interview with Blignaut, Brenda's home was crowded, and she explained

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that she enjoyed being around people, and kept her home 'open' to anyone who may need assistance. Her home, in a suburb close to Soweto at the time of this interview in 1992, always has its gate open – literally. It was only in the In Bed With Brenda interview that this was revealed and captured by Blignaut. Mathibela (2022) notes that, while Brenda was made hypervisible in the media, the media 'unsaw' her, and did not recognise that, while she was 'wild', she was also soft and attuned to the needs of others, often helping and housing homeless people, and generously assisting friends and strangers. In Not a Bad Girl (1997), Brenda also proclaims that she had 'never been looked into,' which necessitated a sort of 'tell-all' interview style with Blignaut and, later, Allen (2014). Blignaut asserted that there was no way of interviewing Brenda, you could only experience her. However, it would be problematic to romanticise Brenda simply because she allowed 'us' into her home. While these intimate interviews told us something that the media often did not, Brenda also confirmed some of the headlines around her drug use during these interviews. For example, Allen observed that, during her time with Brenda, she noticed that Brenda was high, and possibly drunk too. Brenda herself admitted to being 'a mess' to Allen (2014) during the interview. During this period in the 90s, Brenda had been struggling with drug and alcohol abuse, as mentioned earlier. Thus, Brenda was not solely a victim of a racist and sexist media, driven by a stereotypical moral narrative, but was also an agent in the creation of the circumstances surrounding her media representation.

We are always in bed with Brenda. Feeling with her. Singing with her. Sexing with her. Politicising with her. By bringing us closer, and emphasising her love for community and the township, she also showed her relationship with Ubuntu, often positioning herself as an agent of the praxis and, whether consciously or not, securing her place as the nation's sweetheart, despite her unconventional ways. Brenda spoke the language people wanted to hear. Black people. Black women and Black children.

Selemela (2014) notes that Brenda made up her own rules and spoke candidly. She also said some rather controversial things about some of her friends in the

music industry, like Yvonne Chaka Chaka, who was also a bridesmaid at Brenda's wedding. During her interview with Blignaut (1997, 2014), Brenda said that Yvonne Chaka Chaka cannot sing and screams in her songs, going on to say that 'she (Yvonne) thinks she's white … Call Brenda Fassie, I'll tell you who I fucked last night' (Blignaut, 2014, p.79). This was similar to pop music icon, Madonna, who emerged in conservative and racist 1980s America, and who also blurred the line between public and private life by speaking publicly about sex as health and creating graphic music videos (Gaugler, 2000). The following are quotes from Brenda's In Bed with Brenda (1997, 2014) interview, which I cite from the Not a Bad Girl (1997) documentary. In the aforementioned interview, Brenda speaks candidly about her life, particularly her sex life.

I sing when I make love.

I fuck.

I drink Hansa.

I made him cum 85 times.

Sex in Public

Brenda has been considered obscene because of the things she would say, particularly in relation to her sexuality. In her interview with Blignaut, she very openly spoke about her sex life and her lifestyle as a party-going alcohol drinker. In writing this section, I am reminded of Sisonke Msimang's (2021) attempts at a feminist writing of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, without being invasive of her private matters such as who she has loved and slept with during her political activism. Msimang (2021) points out that Madikizela-Mandela was often vilified and slut-shamed because of the lovers she had while her husband, Nelson Mandela, was politically imprisoned under apartheid. While women like Madikizela-Mandela and Brenda are public figures, with Brenda having been much more open about her love life, I do not wish to make it my imperative to speak about the particulars of her love life in the extractivist and sensational ways that

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the media have. Rather, I make reference to Brenda's love life with the intention of teasing out the complex and complicated notion of sexualities in a heteronormative context like South Africa.

'Galz just loooove me!' At the 'In Bed with Brenda' shoot.
PHOTO BY SALLY SHORKEND

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[10] Image taken by Sally Shorkend during Brenda's 1992 interview with cultural journalist Charl Blignaut, In Bed with Brenda. The interview and image feature in Bongani Madondo's (2014) I'm Not Your Weekend Special

Brenda's sexuality was always of public interest because she had relationships with both men and women, and narrated her experiences in these relationships differently. In her 1992 interview with Blignaut, Brenda staged the interview on her bed and called out to a group of women to join her on the bed, as pictured above. She identified one of the girls as her girlfriend, and remarked "Galz just loooove me". Brenda sits in the centre wearing what looks like a set of silk pyjamas. Her legs are parted wide open, while three girls beside and behind her touch her over her crotch area, back-hip area and shoulder. They also all touch each other, and pose in what seems like under garments – sensually, as though they would all start making love to Brenda in front of us.

In the same interview, she remarked that men want to 'fuck' her, because she 'sings when I make love,' and further remarked that 'I made him cum 85 times,' referring to one of the men she had slept with. In her interview with Allen in her Berea home in 1996, a few years after the Blignaut interview, she invited Allen to join her in her bedroom, where Brenda was with her lover, a man, in bed. In her interview with Blignaut, Brenda said that the term 'lesbian' was not one she was necessarily aware of or concerned about. Rather, Brenda asserted that it is simply what she 'has done', gesturing to her sexual life as a non-political event. Gaugler (2000) reminds us that Madonna's perspective was similar, in that she insisted that women did not have to be 'one thing' but could shift towards other possibilities. Njabulo Ndebele (1996) remembered Brenda's interview with Drum magazine in 1987 where she spoke about her love-life and was asked specifically about her 'lesbian fling' experience. In this interview, Ndebele (1996) notes, Brenda distanced herself from being labelled as lesbian by calling it an experiment, and stated that she was simply curious about what it would be like to have sex with another woman, which Ndebele (1996) postulates was Brenda's way of maintaining public and self-respect. hooks (1995, p.30) notes that mainstream culture reads Black female sexuality in accordance with politics of respectability, which Black women play into because we 'do not often feel we have the "freedom" to act in rebellious ways in regards to sexuality without being punished'

"I wipe the toilet paper on both sides!"

During a 1999 concert, Brenda used the analogy of using toilet paper to proclaim her non-heterosexuality. She confessed to having had romantic relationships with two of her band members, male and female, at different times (Selemela, 2014), but in the early 2000s before her death in 2004, she openly called herself a lesbian and proclaimed that she had grown tired of men (Stein, 2014). Matebeni and Msibi (2015) remind us that language, naming and words are deeply political. To identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or LGBT, has a range of political implications, and this was particularly during the 1990s. Matebeni (2017) remembers the 1990s as a time during which white gay men dominated LGBT activism, and the existence of Black lesbian woman was disruptive to both white gay hegemony and the Black African space (2017). In fact, Black lesbian activists who were visible and occupied space, like Bev Ditsie, were often met with vitriol and death threats (Matebeni, 2017). In 1994, through constitutional recognition of the LGBT community, such identities were made more visible, although were still socially and culturally erased. I suggest that Brenda's reluctance to name herself as lesbian was related to a fear of being shunned by society.

However, I also become curious about whether Brenda's earlier refusal to label herself as lesbian may also have been linked more to her practice of desire, which cannot always be limited to naming. As mentioned, I would not want to speculate on such a deeply personal and political matter, and Brenda did later choose to identify herself as lesbian, but I do want to raise the possibility that Brenda taught us, or reminded us about, the repression of women's sexuality, and the possibility of practicing sexuality on the premise of pleasure. While Brenda had sex with both men and women earlier in her career, and later identified herself as lesbian, she understood, whether consciously or unconsciously, that engaging sexually was for her pleasure, and that pleasure was her fundamental human right, as McFadden (2003) would argue. Rather than theorising Brenda's sex life, I invite us to learn from it the potential of freedom in sexual pleasures, even when we cannot name them.

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Fashion-ing and performing the South African nation

How did Brenda Fassie win the hearts of an otherwise conservative South Africa when she was considered rebellious, foul-mouthed and sexually provocative? How did she negotiate simultaneously being the township sweetheart and the wild child? How did she negotiate these femininities? Here, I explore Brenda's use and choice of clothing in performances of national significance, to re-situate herself as the darling child of the nation, alongside her rebellious performances. Motsemme (2003) distinguishes between dress and adornment by citing Entwistle (2000), who argues that dress refers to covering the body, and adornment to the aesthetic practice of altering the body. I thus use adornment to refer to the aesthetic value of the body as a choice made by people to construct themselves and the space around them. Tau (2021) has argued that Brenda was able to manoeuvre between traditional and rebellious femininities through her music, as I have also demonstrated through Weekend Special. Brenda was also able to connect with the Black African community by singing in Zulu and Xhosa, while also making use of colloquial township lingo. Brenda also used fashion to negotiate her positionality as both a good and bad girl.

According to Jozi Magazine (online) (2018):

> If it was a trend, Brenda wore it. If it was taboo, she was on it. And if it was demure, she disrupted it. MaBrr could outperform her peers in tight leather or rock up in Sissy Boy jeans and Kangol caps in Hillbrow. Whether in a bright miniskirt or a disco dress paired with her famed braided hairdos, Brenda's style, like her music and persona, knew no bounds.

Brenda's fashion changed during the three decades of her career, and is described best as eclectic, unpredictable, daring and bold. It is not possible to mention and describe all of Fassie's outfits that earned her a spot as one of Africa's fashion icons since the 1980s, according to several newspapers and magazines (see Mashamba, 2021). Fashion, how we style the body, communicates a narrative and asserts certain positionalities. Here, I undertake to describe some of the ways that Brenda's fashion communicated complex and contradictory gendered narratives

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and assumptions about her sexuality and, by extension, the sexualities of other Black women who undertake to look like her. Brenda was not shy to dress in ways that Lutwama-Rukondo (2016) would refer to as skimpy fashion. Brenda also performed in bathing suits, in sequined bralettes, fish nets and tights. In the music video of Indaba Yami iStraight, Brenda captures young women in the night-life wearing booty shorts and Botsotsos, crop tops and heels dancing to the song. Brenda herself wears a sexy black bralette.

When Brenda released Vuli Ndlela in 1997, a song about paving the way for a wedding and celebration, the song became a national treasure, with many playing it at their weddings, parties and taverns. Vuli Ndlela also resonated with the political moment of the time. South Africa had just transitioned to democracy, with its first democratic elections having been held in 1994. For Brenda, the period of the early-mid 1990s was marred by her drug addiction and infamous news headlines, as discussed earlier, and she had already been marked as a 'wild child'. Below is a photograph taken from Brenda's live performance of Vuli Ndlela at the 2001 KORA All Africa Music Awards, hosted in South Africa (YouTube, 2020). Brenda won in the category of Judges Choice for an African artist whose music impacted the world and media industry. I analyse this picture in the context of the performance and political moment, but also Brenda's negotiation with the nation.

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After receiving her award, Brenda jumped onto the KORA awards stage in school uniform, to sing Vuli Ndlela. Brenda was deliberate about her choice of dress, and presented herself as an image of the past, with the school uniform commemorating the 1976 student uprisings in Soweto, and the student movement against apartheid more generally. This performance took place in 2001, seven years into the new democratic dispensation and nation-building process. Brenda's choice to dress in this school uniform suspended her rebellious nature and turned the nation's attention towards a nostalgic and euphoric affective economy. Brenda appeared as the ghost of apartheid, but also as the possibilities that exist in the present and future for South Africans. That she was female and Black, doing what she loved, was presented as evidence of how anti-apartheid resistance cleared a way for younger generations, as gestured in the lyrics and titling of Brenda's song, Vuli Ndlela. This ideal of Vuli Ndlela, which was also adapted by the ANC in its campaign for the 1999 elections, is consistent with the idea of children born in 1994

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[11]Photograph of Brenda's live performance at the KORA All Africa Music Awards hosted in South Africa in 2001. Photo sourced as a screenshot from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZyuHEL2npo

onwards as having been 'born free' of apartheid oppression (Nkrumah, 2021). Born frees exist 'freely' in post-apartheid South Africa because their sociopolitical context is one without official boundaries on, for example, which school they can attend, which public toilets they can use, who they can interact with (Mattes, 2012; Nkrumah, 2021), in contrast to their parents and grandparents. Of course, this conception and notion of the born free has been complicated in more recent years with the number of structural issues that continue to limit young people's freedom. This is a discussion I return to in the following chapters. Brenda, by adorning herself in school uniform, also functioned as a reminder of the emerging 'born frees,' and encouraged celebration of this newfound freedom.

Navigating the 'family' as 'nation'

mid belting Vul'indlela

Brenda leaves the stage

to hand a box to the Black president

the bodyguards

mistake her body

backspace

approach

as danger

backspace

unpredictable

google:

Why Did Brenda Fassie give Nelson Mandela a banana for his birthday? (Koleka Putuma (2021, p.18)

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Nelson Mandela became the first Black President of South Africa in 1994. At the KORA Awards of 2001, he was no longer in office and was then the former president Mandela, or uTata, as he was called. Former president uTata Mandela attended the 2001 KORA Awards (I will return to the significance of naming the president uTata). During Brenda's performance, she not only used the uniform to commemorate student activism under apartheid, but also positioned herself as a child. Her hair was styled in pigtails, her face was in a permanent, smug smile, and her dance moves on stage were jolly and childlike. Her choice in dress and performance strategically placed her as a child, rather than a wayward drug-taking woman. During her performance, Brenda opened up a small black case, as Koleka Putuma (2021) describes in the poem above, and approached a body-guarded Nelson Mandela to hand him a banana. Putuma (2021) asks why Brenda gave the former president a banana. I suggest that there may be many reasons, but only Brenda knew why. Based on how Brenda styled her Vuli Ndlela performance, I believe Brenda may have been playing into her childlikeness by acting out a familiar scene of children opening a lunchbox and sharing it with their friends on a playground. The banana could also represent a baton, with Brenda handing over a baton of leadership and guidance to the president. However, Nelson Mandela was not just the former president; uTata (father), as he became affectionately known, forms an important naming and meaning-making process that recognises both his masculinity and his status as a father in the literal and nationally and politically symbolic sense. Although Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Nelson Mandela had already divorced by 2001, Winnie was still referred to as uMama, as discussed earlier in this chapter. By the time of the KORA awards, Nelson Mandela had married Graça Machel. In the Vuli Ndlela performance, we see the ideal family: a father as the head of the nation, a mother as the nurturer of the nation, and the children requesting and following guidance.

Before Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990, after having been imprisoned for 27 years, there had been many calls to release him and other political prisoners. In the 1990s, Brenda released her song My Black President, which she performed in African beaded accessories draped around her neck and

arms. She also wore a head wrap paired with a crop top and mini skirt with yellow and green detailing, which are the official colours of the ANC, the oldest and leading liberation party on the continent, and the party that Mandela eventually became president under. The top image of Brenda below depicts her in the described attire, and is taken from her music video for My Black President, and is also the cover photo for the song. In this image, while Brenda paid homage to traditional aesthetics African women often adorn themselves in, she was undoubtedly sexy, with the revealed cleavage, stomach and short skirt. In the bottom image below, from a live performance in 2001, Brenda wears orange Xhosa traditional attire. In this performance, she is again performing Vuli Ndlela and dances off stage to help Nelson Mandela up so they can sing and dance together. In this performance, we see Graça Machel, Mandela's wife and the former first lady of South Africa, dance with her husband. The couple and their rebellious child are pictured at the advent of a new South African nation. In many of her performances in the 90s and early 2000s, Brenda wore traditional attire specific to South African ethnic groups. I have not been able to include them all.
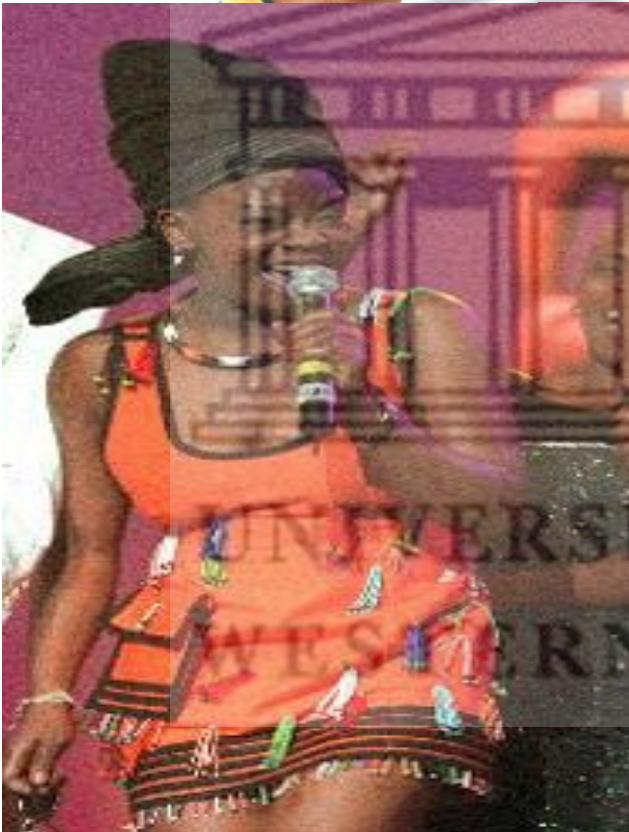
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[12] The top image of Brenda is from her music video shoot for My Black President, available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRkSi3tJDlE . Below, Brenda is pictured at the 2001 KORA awards. Image sourced from https://news101mzansi.wordpress.com/2014/07/29/competiton-brenda-fassie-talent-search-can-you-sing-like-mabrr/

Brenda's reliance on nostalgia and culture in her style of dress resembles the politics of what the nation is understood to be. While Brenda may have simply found African traditional attires appealing, I argue that there is greater political nuance. According to Mupotsa (2011) and Gouws (2005), culture and tradition are inextricably linked with how nation is understood. Mupotsa (2011) asserts that what is referred to as 'culture' often implicates contentious issues around being a woman, and how women dress and occupy space in a compulsory atmosphere of respectability. Brenda's choices to dress in school uniform, and later in traditional attire, satisfy the standards set for traditional femininities. However, Brenda also worked within this paradigm of respectability to repel and complicate it through how she revealed her body, and how she danced. Brenda was and will always be sexy, while simultaneously 'cultured' and aware of how women are expected to dress and present. These contentious issues are often mediated in imagined communities, such as the nation (Anderson, 1991; McClintock, 1997). The nation as imagined community draws on what Wakefield, Kalinauskaite and Hopkins (2016) consider to be familial imagery; the meanings attached to nation are closely related to the idea of family, as already discussed. The fracturing of the nuclear Black family under apartheid, through violence and the migrant labour system, as well as Brenda's own fracturing of her family unit, influenced the kinds of family-based language and imagery that are embedded in the nation-building process from the 1990s. Brenda got us thinking about this family and how children may exist freely, while also negotiating their belonging, in a traditional and conservative South Africa.

CONCLUSION

Through the works, life and representation of Brenda, this chapter demonstrated that histories, politics and femininities are complex. At the onset of her career, Brenda showed how deeply affected she and other Black people had been by apartheid repression, violence and the politically engineered disintegration of Black communities and the Black family unit. While Brenda is often positioned as having contributed to the fight for liberation under apartheid through her music, she also spoke to the gendered and sexual politics of South Africa. Hers was a

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politically oblique method of offering women opportunities to use their erotic as agency and political action.

 While Brenda was not considered conventional or compliant, this chapter demonstrates how her agency, through her art and personal life, opened space for various forms of femininity to articulate themselves. Brenda's life, while it has been polarised as 'bad,' defied convention, and itself contested binaries that insist on rigid and monolithic ontologies. Brenda was only 'bad' because she was not 'good' in terms of the expected gender performance, making her wholly rebellious. Brenda's music, its collectivity and interpretations of it have represented diverse femininities. When Brenda emerged in the 1980s, she did so explosively and rebelliously, allowing women to mis/interpret Weekend Special as they saw fit. While some women interpreted it as a lament, others have interpreted and sung it as celebratory, allowing us to imagine the sexual lives of women as not always and only heteronormative or monogamous.

The rebellion is in the fact that we do not stay in a single state of rebellion or tradition. We shape-shift, and that is what makes women like Brenda dangerous and unstable for the moral narrative genre within which she was captured. Brenda can be a 'good Black woman' and a Weekend Special, at different moments. Ordinary women relating to Brenda as more than an entertainer are thus able to relate to this shifting between femininities. What makes this an example of rebellious femininity is that you cannot capture or lock Brenda into a binary. As demonstrated throughout the chapter, Brenda was rebellious in her style of performance, and her public declarations of things considered taboo, like her sexuality. At the same time, Brenda continuously located herself within the context of family and community, where she embodied the dutiful daughter and sister, through which she could speak to her community about peace and relinquishing control over women's bodies. The media reported narrowly on her love affairs with men and women, drug use and fashion, without offering a critical lens to view her performativity as leaning towards a politics of sexual pleasure, power and entitlement to freedom. Brenda was a world of possibility, manoeuvring between a

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repressive state and a repressive Black African space, in terms of gender, race and sexuality. She presented us with the complexity of what it means to be a Black woman, which resonated with many Black women. While I understand rebellion as different from tradition/al, it departs from it, therefore constituted and constituting it, working beside, paralleling, co-constructing and co-creating. We move between these rebellious and traditional femininities, sometimes without being able to differentiate which femininity emerges at a given time. The media's portrayal of Brenda failed to capture this complexity in the same ways our societies fail to do.

Brenda was also overtly political through calling out jackrolling, or gang rape, as we have come to know it. She covertly leveraged herself as a 'celebrity' to mediate some gender expectations. She continuously invoked familial imagery and language, for example, by calling on 'brothers' and 'sisters' to work together and end violence against women. Simultaneously, she presented as sexy, seductive, expressive and assertive. Whether consciously or not, Brenda offered women who wanted to be like her, as Shado Twala has argued, an avenue within which to rebel and still remain somewhat 'safe'. It created a 'If Brenda can do it, so can I' logic, which Brenda also enabled through invoking the nuclear Black family. Brenda's positioning of Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel during public performances also sent out a message: rebellious women can still belong and insist on belonging, even within a conventional family structure or nation. Brenda portrayed herself, at different times, as a grown agentic woman and, at others, as an expressive and assertive child in a conservative family, thus teaching and inspiring us to exist desirably, claiming our agency even in a complex and rigid nation. There is space for rebellious women in the imagined community but, as Brenda demonstrated, this comes at the cost of being stigmatised. This chapter showed how this polarisation of 'good' and 'bad' women, or 'respectable' and 'wild' women, is complicated and limited. Artists and activists like Brenda open up alternative possibilities and disrupt this gendered polarisation.

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CHAPTER SIX: DISRUPTING WITH BOOM SHAKA AND DREAMING OF LEBO MATHOSA AS A PRACTICE OF FREEDOM

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Above is an image of Lebo Mathosa (1977 - 2006) at the MTV 100th Live concert in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2005, where she headlined one of her last international shows. She wears a short white fur coat over a bedazzled bra, paired with sexy fishnet stockings that draw our attention to her long legs, while her hand rests sensually on her hip with her head tilted back. Her signature platinum blonde hair completes the look. In the words of Magadla (2018), Lebo looks 'timeless' and reminds us that she was indeed living in multiple temporalities and realities. This chapter is a continuation of the discussion of the complex ways that rebellious women like Brenda Fassie remain linked to women of younger generations, occupying different spaces and times; Lebo Mathosa falls along this homology of rebellious femininity, while at the same time departing and disidentifying from the life and art of Brenda through her own process of individuation. This is an argument that others, like Livermon (2020), have advanced. In Chapter Three, I discussed Munoz's (1999) concept of disidentification as subversion, resistance and claiming identities rebelliously. However, when I say Lebo's performance style and persona depart from Brenda's, I do not collapse the two women into a homogenous narrative. I show here that, while Brenda and Lebo may be read as similar, they are also very different. Thus, I focus this chapter on Lebo's legacy and its relationship with freedom and agency for Black woman in a young democracy. This chapter situates Lebo as a link between a past and present that remains haunted and textured by Brenda, apartheid and the struggle for and with freedom. What is unavoidable in this chapter is a discussion of the kwaito music band, Boom Shaka, that Lebo Mathosa joined, and through which she was first publicly introduced to us. It is of particular significance to consider Boom Shaka, and the kwaito music genre within which it operates, in the context of South Africa's transition and early years of democracy. In reading the posturing and reception of Boom Shaka, I extrapolate on the national culture and its construction of acceptable gender performance. It is in these contexts, which I refer to as genre and moment, where Lebo 'prepared' us for her rebellious individuation. In finding Lebo, I avoid getting lost in a biographical account of her life, and rather focus on

the ways we can 'find' her in the context within which she lived and navigated, which was the first decade of democracy in South Africa.

In terms of methodological considerations, unlike in the Brenda chapter, which was afforded a documentary where Brenda spoke for herself and shared parts of her personal life, this chapter does not enjoy the luxury of such an archival resource. While a biopic named Dream: The Lebo Mathosa Story attempted to cinematically represent Lebo's life, it is not entirely reliable. While this biopic does provide some biographical aspects, it also nudges audiences to remember Lebo as not heterosexual. I am sceptical about referring to it, but will occasionally use it to contextualise and give some background to Lebo's life. I also draw on select parts of Lebo's vast discography, and follow the trail of her published interviews online. In this chapter, I conduct audio-visual analysis of some live performances and music videos to unpack them in relation to choices about adornment and hyper-feminine embodiment. Livermon's (2012, 2020) work on music, gender and performance in Africa is particularly useful here, as it raises provocations around the sexual style of Lebo's performance. I engage in an especially close reading of Livermon's chapter on Lebo Mathosa as a 'dangerous woman,' and situate this within a homology of rebellion that both continues and departs/disidentifies from Brenda Fassie. Livermon's (2012, 2020) arguments resonate with many of my own. I say Livermon echoes my thoughts, and not the other way around, only because I had drawn some of the conclusions from the data prior to my focused engagement with Livermon's work. For readers that are familiar with the prolific work of Livermon, our similar arguments are both coincidental, and perhaps also a result of the way Lebo wanted to be read and understood.

Lebo Mathosa in genre and in moment: engaging freedom, genre and the making of the South African nation

<u>Boom Shaka at the dawn of democracy</u>

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> Short skirts, head-hand gyrating, provocative dance moves, simulating sex acts on
> stage – they did it all – expressing freedoms previously denied to many women,
> with wild abandon (Pillay & Herimbi 2019).

Pictured above are Lebo Mathosa (lead singer) and Thembi Seete (rapper),
dancing intimately on stage for a sea of young people in the newly democratic
South Africa. In 1993, together with Theo Nhlengethwa and Junior Sokhele, they
formed a kwaito music band known as Boom Shaka. In 1994, Boom Shaka
released its single It's About Time, loudly announcing itself, and ushering in a
'boom' in a confident post-apartheid youth looking forward to freedom. Xaso (2020)

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14 Image of Boom Shaka members, Lebo Mathosa on the left and Thembi Seete on the right.
Sourced from https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2012-06-21-how-will-the-youth-of-2012-be-defined/

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argues that, when Boom Shaka started making music and performing, there was no precedent for making music in a free country; thus, Boom Shaka were constitutional pioneers in so far as they used the formal freedoms of democracy to express themselves and the ambitions of young people at the time.

(Chorus, Lebo Mathosa)

It's about time to listen to Boom Shaka

It's about time to listen to Boom

Shaka Boom

Shaka Boom

Shaka Boom

Boom

Boom

The 'boom', gesturing to an explosion, that is repeated in the chorus of It's About Time, and also in the name of the band, points to two main things. First, while the song is simply titled It's About Time, the actual song goes on to instruct that 'it's about time to listen to Boom Shaka.' The 'time' or 'moment' that this song refers to is the transition to and actualisation of democracy in South Africa, from the 1990s. Enthusiastic and deliberate body movements that demanded attention accompanied the repetition of 'boom' in the song. Second, 'to listen to Boom Shaka', calls on listeners to look at and listen specifically to Boom Shaka, which at the time was comprised of two teenage girls, Lebo Mathosa and Thembi Seete, and two young men, Theo Nhlengethwa and Junior Sokhele. Boom Shaka was the youth and, as Xaso (2020) argues, people often forget just how young these performers were. As the first kwaito group, Boom Shaka was also the first music movement that black South African youth claimed as their own (Impey, 2001; Xaso, 2020). They wanted to be heard and seen, and parents to teenagers and young adults looked on in concern as their children related to both the music and

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style of Boom Shaka (Xaso, 2020). Disengaging from apartheid and portraying themselves as stylish, wealthy and sexually unrestrained on television, music videos and during live performances, Boom Shaka appealed to a post-apartheid youth desiring the freedom promised to them (Impey, 2001; Pillay & Herimbi, 2019; Xaso, 2020). Mathosa and Seete were grinding, gyrating and twerking before anyone gave it a name (Stofile, 2017). It is no wonder that Xaso (2020, p.256) refers to Boom Shaka as 'the constitutional pioneers,' for they truly embodied what they imagined freedom to look like for them. In the image inserted above, we see Lebo and Thembi dancing intimately with one another, the way that lovers do just before sharing a passionate kiss.

While Boom Shaka's fame mostly relied on the image and voices of Lebo and Thembi, it was Lebo who was the best-known of the female performers (Impey, 2001; Xaso, 2020). This is primarily because Lebo was the songwriter and singer for Boom Shaka, and because Thembi was reportedly more reserved than her band mate (Impey, 2001; Xaso, 2020). Furthermore, due to her confidence, love for the media's attention and open bisexuality, Lebo was often compared to Brenda Fassie (Gqola, 2004; Livermon, 2020). In fact, Brenda also recognised Lebo as a younger version of her, and served as her mentor. The biopic on Lebo predominantly focuses on her as a solo artist, and barely makes mention of her role as a member of Boom Shaka. I think it is important to think of Lebo as having been part of a collective, and also compared with women similar to her, like Brenda. However, to avoid homogenous readings of women, I suggest we also reflect on the ways that Lebo disidentified herself: first, from Boom Shake while she was still well within it and the kwaito music genre, and second, from Brenda Fassie and the 'bad girl' tag, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Working within dominant publics to visibilse marginalised identities and transform heterosexist cultures is what Munoz (1999) referred to as disidentification. Livermon (2020) suggests that disidentification is a strategy that not only resists the hegemonic codes that exclude oppressed people, but also involves identification, and a negotiation with identification and subjectification.

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Disidentification, then, is similar to my reading of rebellion as resistance, generative, co-constructive and re-constitutive, rather than simply a binary opposite to obedience, as discussed in the Chapter Three. The process of disidentification opens opportunities for worlding, which Haraway (2004) and Harding (1992) state can open up possibilities for how we live.

For just a moment, anything seemed possible (Steingo, 2016, p.2)

I locate Lebo within the idea of a 'moment,' the transition to a post-apartheid democratic state that promised possibilities that would come with freedom from a previously racist regime. I also locate Lebo within a particular genre, a familiar pattern and structuring of narrative (Ligaga, 2017).

Lebo Mathosa was born in 1977 in Daveyton Township, Ekurhuleni, in the east of Johannesburg; thus, her formative years were still spent under the apartheid regime. The 1990s, when Lebo was a teenager, saw a turn in the country's trajectory. At this time, Lebo was singing in various competitions in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, and the township (Livermon, 2020). Music producer and founder of Boom Shaka, Don Laka, recruited her in 1993, and she became the vocalist for the kwaito group (Livermon, 2020). Meanwhile, the NP, ANC, and other parties and interest groups began a process of negotiations (Minty, 1993). FW de Klerk, the NP's president at the time, had transformed the political landscape, as he officially unbanned political parties such as the ANC, and released political leaders such as Nelson Mandela (Minty, 1993). The atmosphere during this time was one of euphoria and the promise of freedom, as South Africa began to transition to democracy.

The promise of freedom and euphoria culminated in the first democratic elections in 1994, which saw the ANC voted into power, followed by the inauguration of the first Black president, Nelson Mandela. While this was ground-breaking for a country with a violently racialised past, transition and democratisation processes have often failed to consider gender, and more specifically women and their role during transitions (Waylen, 1994; Seidman, 1999), and this was also true in South

Africa. The transition to democracy came as a result of struggle against specifically racist apartheid oppression, which often overshadowed the intersectional nature of this oppression. Many scholars, such as Zine Magubane (2010), Nomboniso Gasa (2007) and Shireen Hassim (2014), have asserted that under apartheid, women tended to organise around their Blackness and not their gender, since apartheid was premised on racial discrimination. Some women, like leading anti-apartheid activist, Frene Ginwala, rejected feminist concerns that raised gender inequality as needing to be addressed within the anti-apartheid struggle (Seidman, 1999). Women like Ginwala did not seek to specifically address gendered concerns at the time, out of fear that 'to do so might undermine the struggle for racial justice by creating division and rancour' (The Nairobi Conference, 1985, cited in Seidman, 1999, p.287). I suggest that these sentiments should not be read as individual to women like Ginwala, but rather as articulating broader narratives surrounding the transition to democracy and the recognition of women's particular struggles. As a result, as Gasa (2007) and Hassim (2002) assert, very few women in the anti-apartheid struggle would have defined themselves as feminist. Yet, Gasa (2007), like Ahmed (2000), asks what is a feminist and who decides? hooks (2000) suggests that feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. At the Malibongwe women's conference in 1990, which brought together women who had been exiled for their political activity, the 'woman question' was debated (Meintjies, 1996). It was at this conference, which coincided with the national negotiations for democratisation, that it was decided among the women's organisations, women's trade unions and representatives that gender needed to be part of the national democratic project (Meintjies, 1996).

At the time of transition, South African women politicised gender by refining and expanding their terms of inclusion in the emerging democratic dispensation (Hill, 2004). As a result of their active participation and co-responsibility in the struggle for liberation, women would not continue to silence and suspend their gender struggle (Moodley, 1994, cited in Hill, 2004). One strategy women used to secure a 'place' for gender struggles in democratic South Africa was to ensure women's participation and representation in the new political community, and specifically

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parliament. The Women's National Coalition, formed in 1992, organised more than 80 women's organisations to lobby for a range of political, legal, social and economic rights for women. As a result, the South African constitution enshrines gender, racial and sexual equality as fundamental human rights. Gender equality was limited to formal equality and 'high', organisational politics, such as parliamentary representation, constitutional rights and corporate work inclusion (Hassim, 2002). However, women's politicisation of social and cultural gender equality within the private sphere was less recognised (Hassim, 2002). Women also lobbied for their domestic lives to be made easier through the establishment of day-care for children while mothers were at work (Seidman, 1999). Post-apartheid youth would ideally enjoy the liberties afforded to them as a result of the advancements made by the ANC and women's movement negotiating for a 'free' South Africa. While these were progressive political achievements for a country haunted by a spectacularly violent past, women's interests are heterogenous, because of differences in class, ethnicity, sexuality, geography and life experiences (Hill, 2004), meaning that some women's interests and ideas of freedom may not have been accounted for during the transition.

Seidman (1999) asks: what are women's interests and how should they be incorporated into the state? Gqola (2007) reminds us that labelling South Africa as a rainbow nation, and boasting a strong constitution, is aspirational and does not reflect the thoughts or needs and priorities of the majority of South Africans. The constitution narrates South Africa as just and free for all, but this is not the case in reality. I became especially curious about how young women like Lebo Mathosa and Thembi Seete were accounted for in the actualisation of freedoms enshrined in the constitution and moral image of South Africa as a rainbow, which I will return to later. Central to this chapter is a consideration of how women like Lebo Mathosa negotiated freedom in 'informal' contexts, such as popular culture.

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Freedom: Kwaito, Boom Shaka, Lebo Mathosa and the 'new' democratic dispensation

Kwaito music emerged around the same time as the transition to democracy in the mid-1990s as popular culture more broadly expressed transformations in the social and cultural landscape of the country (Impey, 2001). An aspirational Black urban youth developed kwaito music as a declaration of freedom, and a call to celebrate a new South Africa, and consequently a new reality (Steingo, 2016). At its inception, it echoed the national euphoria of a post-apartheid South Africa (Steingo, 2016). Kwaito songs like Trompies' Celebrate and Boom Shaka's It's About Time were national anthems, expressing the freedoms afforded by a democratic state and progressive constitution (Steingo, 2016). However, soon after the first democratic elections and the installation of the ANC as the ruling party, the euphoria of the transition was plagued by continuing socio-economic inequalities (Segalo, 2015). The post-apartheid state, although articulating the ideals of reconciliation and unity, struggled to address massive socio-economic challenges and structural violence (Segalo, 2015; Steingo, 2016), which have continued and been exacerbated up to the present day. For example, it has been noted that, at the time of transition and through the process of negotiations, white people did not relinquish economic power, and remained owners of property and land acquired through domination and exploitation under colonial and apartheid rule (Steingo, 2016). The gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen, with the unemployment rate disproportionately affecting Black people and youth (Segalo, 2015; Steingo, 2016). Violence and gender discrimination, poverty and racism have also continued to thrive (Segalo, 2015; Gqola, 2007).

Kwaito music was a contested genre, because it was often accused of being apolitical and disconnected from the socio-economic challenges and structural violences that plagued its listeners. Impey (2001) has suggested that kwaito music and youth were not constrained by the need to make political comments in their music, in the ways that music written and produced under apartheid was used to articulate ideas related to the struggle for freedom. Valela (2020), who blogs about

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cultural politics, also argues that often, artists are only looked at through an overtly political lens, thus limiting the potential of popular music. Similarly, Steingo (2016) highlights debates in ethnomusicology surrounding the 'usefulness' of music in drawing attention to social, cultural, political etc. matters. He argues that, while some philosophers of music contest the notion of 'music for the sake of music', musical autonomy can and does exist and 'is not so much an illusion that hides reality than it is a way of doubling reality' (Steingo, 2016, p.xi).

Asserting Steingo's (2016) argument for the recognition of music as doubling reality, Livermon argues that kwaito music shows us how music establishes 'new orders of time' (2020, p.2). He refers to some kwaito music singers of the 1990s, such as Ismael, whose hit single Waar Was Jy?, which is Afrikaans for 'where were you?', not only provokes a memory of a particularly violent past, but also gestures to a time different from the past by refocusing listeners on the present and its possibilities. Waar Was Jy captures listeners in multiple realities. Listening to kwaito songs like Celebrate in contemporary South Africa creates a nostalgia for the hope and euphoria at the time of transition (Steingo, 2016). Now, in a moment of political despair, kwaito is more relevant than ever because of its imaginative and multiplying capacity. I argue that, while kwaito music was entangled with the celebration of new-found freedom, the kind of freedom kwaito and its listeners refer to is the freedom to self-express, and of imagination and possibility.

The freedom to which Pillay and Herimbi (2019) speak, in their article on Boom Shaka, is not limited to the formal freedoms achieved by the women's movement and its focus on gender equality. Lebo and Thembi, by virtue of their sexy body performances and sense of dress, model how young women identifying with kwaito can be in control of the meanings attached to their feminine sexuality (Impey, 2001). The skimpy fashioning of their bodies operated as an aesthetic of freedom, whereby young women take up self-expressions that are traditionally considered unacceptable and carry the weight of shame, but are re-signified by women as a claim to freedom and agency. One of the research objectives outlined in the introduction chapter was to understand what makes certain women contentious,

and looking at how women's fashioning is entangled with respectability politics, but also how musical creations can stir controversy in a heteronormative South Africa, begins to answer that objective. I have argued elsewhere (see Mazibuko, 2022) that agency can also be sexual/sexualised self-expression, even within oppressive contexts and male-dominated spaces like music and entertainment industries, and I will return to this argument in more detail. While I refer to sexual self-expressions as 'hypersexual', Livermon (2020) refers to these as sensual-sexual. Impey (2001) argues that kwaito has generally sexually objectified women, but proposes that women in kwaito, like Lebo and Thembi, have been able to self-express and self-represent, even through sexualised modes. However, other theorists, like Blose (2012), contend that kwaito represents women in pornographic and hypersexual ways, and that women in kwaito participate in their own exploitation. Livermon disagrees, arguing that it is a problematic assumption that dominates understandings of women like Lebo, portraying her as 'somehow conniving with hegemonic representations of women' (2020, p.137). Thus, it is evident that there is continuous debate surrounding the situatedness and cultural ideations of women in kwaito and, consequently, women listeners.

Therefore, following what I think Steingo (2016) seeks to achieve in his writings on kwaito music, I challenge the assertion that kwaito music lacked political gravitas. As kwaito music, lyrics and performances represent men and women in particular ways, the genre becomes political as it speaks to broader gender relations and cultural ideas surrounding gender. Blose argues specifically that kwaito music has been guilty of objectifying women through its lyrics and that, while it poses as depoliticised, it must be scrutinised for sanctioning cultural messages that endorse GBV and the hypersexualisation of women. Impey has also shown how some kwaito lyrics endorse the objectification of women's bodies, such as Bob Mabena's song, Bantwana, which lyrically stages a conversation between men and women, where the men's chorus boasts about the material wealth of men and men wanting to kiss and touch a woman, while the women's chorus implies that 'young black women are willing to trade their bodies for the privilege of being associated with stylish men who flaunt cash, cars and cell phones' (2001, p.47). Pointing to various

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other men and women kwaito artists, Blose (2012) asserts that kwaito music continues to position men as the consumers of women's bodies.

Complex readings of women's freedoms and agency in music and dance

Blose (2012) does acknowledge that some women participate in their exploitation through kwaito music potentially for monetary gains, but because the genre does not attempt to directly advance gender equality, even the voluntary participation of these women remains flat. Impey (2001) contends that sexually perverse kwaito lyrics, like those of Bob Mabena's Bantwana, are one extreme of the kwaito spectrum, which portray women as readily available to sexually appease men. In the same way, Blose's scrutiny of kwaito, because of its potential to sanction GBV and the homogenisation of Black women as hypersexual, is also one extreme of the genre's spectrum. Speaking about Boom Shaka, Blose (2012) argues that the two-man, two-woman band did not gain the media and public's attention because of their sexually provocative presentation, but rather because of their entitlement to make music the way they wanted. An example of this is their kwaito rendition of the South African national anthem, Nkosi Sikelela, which I will return to as an important moment in the national discourse about respectability. It is interesting that Blose (2012) and McClary (1999, cited in Blose, 2012) point to Boom Shaka as important mostly for the controversy the band sparked regarding music and performance, rather than Lebo and Thembi's appearance. I say this because earlier in her research, Blose (2012: p. 52) singles out Chomee, another female kwaito artist, and Lebo Mathosa, as having 'burst into the music scene and remained infamous for their dress code'. Lebo 'burst onto the music scene' with Thembi as Boom Shaka. You cannot think of Lebo's emergence without thinking about Thembi, and consequently Boom Shaka, and the almost invisible nature of the two male band members, Theo Nhlengethwa and Junior Sokhela (Ndabeni & Mthembu, 2018). Ndabeni and Mthembu state that Boom Shaka is 'curiously' remembered as girl band.

The complicated, contradictory and overlapping argument specifically about Lebo Mathosa and Boom Shaka in kwaito that Blose (2012) presents reveals the

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multiple ways in which we can read the power positions of women. It also shows that Boom Shaka and Lebo Mathosa, in particular, occupy multiple realities, which include post-apartheid euphoria, shifts in township youth cultures and, perhaps less examined, shifts in young Black women's self-expression of agency. Steingo (2016, p.viii) asserts that kwaito music multiplies realities, 'experiments with thresholds of knowledge and challenges the partitions that structure contemporary South African life'. Impey (2001), Xaso (2020) and I observe that the women band members, Lebo and Thembi, have drawn media attention and public scrutiny. Like the image inserted at the start of this chapter, headlines and news coverage of the band almost exclusively showed Lebo and Thembi, emphasising their outfits and dance moves. Ndabeni (2018) draws our attention to the fact that, unlike other kwaito songs that feature women as 'extras' and 'highlights' while men take centre stage, Boom Shaka is a display of women's centrality in the male-dominated kwaito genre. Lebo and Thembi were not 'background humour' to their male band members, but instead owned their music and performance (Ndabeni 2018, p.VI). Perhaps excusing Boom Shaka as doing 'more' than presenting as sexually provocative and raising 'temperatures,' as Blose (2012) would say, shows exactly how Boom Shaka managed to use their youthfulness and the kwaito music genre to detach from hegemonic meanings attached to women's sexualised self-expression. Ndabeni (2018) argues for the importance of always examining our reactions to Black women's bodies, and being sensitive to the ways they may be triggered by histories of surveillance.

The surveillance of women's bodies is entangled with a complicated history of colonialism (Livermon, 2020). For example, the hyper-sexualisation of and mysticism around Sarah Baartman, and other Black women, has set a particular precedent for the continued surveillance of Black women's bodies. In England and Europe. Baartman was made into a spectacle, hyper-sexualised and carnivalised because of the Western obsession with the African female form (Holmes, 2007; Abrahams & Omsis, 2011). Even in my conceptualisation of the Black female form, I consider the female form as a colonial project that dehumanises Black women and our humanity, through over-emphasis and mystifying of the (Black) corporeal

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and neurological body. In Baartman's time in England, England had grown obsessed with buttocks, the 'figure' and how it was most animated in the bodies of African women like her (Holmes, 2007). Hobson (2005) notes that, in both England and France, Baartman was over-exposed in exhibitions or 'freak shows' that marvelled at her protruding buttocks, which were medically diagnosed as a disability specific to Baartman and termed 'steatopygia'. It was in this colonial context that Baartman, and consequently other African women, 'came to symbolize both the presumed ugliness and heightened sexuality of the African race during her era' (Hobson, 2005, p.1).

In my article (Mazibuko, 2022) on African women's forms of dance and popular culture, I engage more with the issue of respectability, and how Black women across the diaspora negotiate it. Pitcan, Marwid and Boyd (2018) offer a definition of respectability as 'a representational strategy employed by African-American women to reject and undo Western portrayals of Black women as hypersexual' (Mazibuko, 2022, p.5). While the iconography of Baartman appealed to the Western obsession with the buttocks, it also cemented ideas of African people as ugly, shameful and mystical, therefore reproducing economies of shame and trauma (Hobson, 2005). However, this history of hypersexualisation and shame should not be read as deterministic of Black women's performances of sexiness. Many things can be true at once. While it is true that Black women are involuntarily commodified and hypersexualised, Black women also sexualise themselves as a practice of agency and freedom. Kwaito, and specifically Boom Shaka, operate as the terrain for women's political contestation of coerced sexualisation. While it is true that kwaito music has presented women as sexual objects, it is also true that some women have presented themselves in this way as an expression of freedom.

I have become increasingly interested in the verbalisation of women as sexual objects in popular music genres in contemporary South Africa, and the kinds of kinaesthetic movements and moments of joy and pleasure that can emerge as a result. For example, I recently wrote about how young women find opportunity to express their freedom even within problematic, sexist contexts and music dance

genres, like kwaito and amapiano (Mazibuko, 2022). Amampiano is a newer genre that fuses the sounds of house music, kwaito, and jazz and prominently features the sound of the piano. A song titled Nasi iStocko went viral in 2018, when a video was taken of five young Black women, aged between 18 and 19 years, dancing to this song, wearing shorts, revealing tops, high heels, with their buttocks sticking out while they sway them from left to right. This type of dance movement is contemporarily known as twerking, but has a long history and is named differently across various African cultures (see Halliday, 2020; Kitata, 2020). For the purposes of brevity, and to avoid repetition of that article, I will not get into the politics of the erasure of indigenous kinaesthetic movements. The song that these five young women dance to in the video had the lyrics 'Nasi iStocko, John Vuli Gate,' which is slang Zulu and means, 'here comes the stock' (referring to women as sexual commodities), and calls for a fictional character named John to open the gate in order to let the women in. This is a song about the consumption of the bodies of women who are marked desirable and, in this case, are young and in provocative clothing (Mazibuko, 2022).

The dance interpretation of this song was the twerk, which went viral and resulted in several videos of women of all ages across South Africa and Africa dancing to John Vuli Gate, and doing the twerk. The young women in the original video of what became known as the 'John Vuli Gate challenge' had asserted in various interviews and social media platforms that they were aware of the sexual implication of the song they were dancing to, but also had the freedom to dance and express their kinaesthetic freedom and sensory pleasures (Mgidi, 2020). In this way, women's freedoms and capacity to exercise agency are not completely and only determined by their context (Mazibuko, 2022). This is not to say that hetero-sexist claims that shame women, like the John Vuli Gate girls or Boom Shaka, cease to exist. As mentioned in Chapter Three, a postfeminist sensibility is one that recognises that cultural contexts are deeply entangled with capitalism, commodity and consumer culture, but seek also to sift through this entanglement to find where possibilities of freedom and agency exist. In Chapter Two, I spoke to Haraway's (1988) notion of vision, and how our situated knowledges are arranged

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and ordered by the way we see, what, and how we see. Merging that notion of vision, and my reading of postfeminist sensibility as recognising that cultural contexts are infiltrated by capitalism, I also recognise that, like the women who cultivated a collective joy and pleasure from dancing in ways considered provocative and to a sexually objectifying song, freedoms are made possible, and that claiming freedom is necessarily a political act. At the same time, the memory of the women of Boom Shaka as gyrating and in provocative sexy forms of dress as discussed throughout this chapter is pervasive and almost always considered unrespectable. While the specific example I make with the John Vuli Gate song and dance interpretations is recent, it shows how Black women's bodies and expressions of pleasure and freedom in music and dance remain contentious and difficult to read as liberatory, because of the gaze through which Black women are seen.

The critique of kwaito music as apolitical, because it expresses social and material aspirations while ignoring the socio-economic conditions of its listeners, suggests that the everyday material conditions of people are not political. It also implies that oppressed people cannot relate to art outside of their oppression, thus leaning towards determinism. This limited scope of what is political also fails to recognise women's self-expressions and self-identifications in cultural products that are obviously sexist as political expressions of freedom. Apartheid music expressed a struggle for freedom, while kwaito confronted the struggle of freedom, while enabling young people to embody their understandings of freedom, and shift and mould into other genres, like amapiano, that come with their own set of revelations relating to sexualities, representation and gender. Steingo (2016, p.2) raises a provocation to which I orient and situate Lebo Mathosa in this chapter:

> Dealing with freedom is hard … How does one struggle, not for freedom, but with freedom, in freedom and perhaps against freedom?

Pumla Gqola (2004, 2007) reminds us of the aspirations of freedom held in the passing of South Africa's constitution in 1996, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 'Rainbow Children of God' image of a South African collective identity in the post-

apartheid era. The rainbow is used as a representation of unity despite difference, and follows from the ANC's doctrine of non-racialism (McLean, 2019). The rainbow nation, as well as the constitution, functions as a hope for how we should be, and how we should treat one another (Gqola, 2007). However, Gqola (2007) argues that the democratic dispensation did not bring real transformation. Chissano (2015) argued that the absence of white people in conversations on social cohesion and integration undermined the rainbow and stalled transformation. Similarly, Segalo (2015) is suspicious of the notion that South Africa is a 'free' society, because of the number of socio-economic issues that disproportionately affect Black and women and poor and young people.

Gqola (2007) asserts that freedom is undermined because of the insistence on what she terms the cult of femininity, which is the theoretical and embodied context from which I draw the imagery of the nation as the family. Gqola (2007) asserts that, while the post-apartheid era boasts increased representation of women in parliament, corporate and business sectors, women's participation in these sectors is not part of a transformative and gender-equitable landscape. Gqola (2007) highlights several things that are problematic in the 'empowerment of women' talks in post-apartheid South Africa, among them that empowerment is classed, and does not include the upward mobility and empowerment of poor women (see also Hames, 2006). More alarmingly, 'empowered women', i.e. 'working' women, are still consistently pressured into proving themselves as hyper-feminine in their public lives in order to navigate safely. The cult of femininity is compulsory femininity that pressures women into articulating themselves as respectable and obedient to specific cultural codes that articulate women as only mothers, wives and caregivers. Empowered women, or employed women, and women working in 'high' office, are not empowered in their private lives and must succumb to rigid scripts of femininity in their homes and the 'streets' (Gqola, 2007). So-called empowered women are also not safe in the streets or even in their homes, as evidenced by the escalating rates of GBV in the post-apartheid state.

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Yuval Davis (1995) reminds us that women's citizenship is dualistic in nature, because women are both included and excluded in some aspects of the nation. Whereas some women in post-apartheid South Africa are empowered to work, they are required to prove themselves to be as competent as men in the workplace, while submissive in the home and the spaces in between. Because of the disingenuous usage and application of empowerment, women are still bullied back into the confines of the home, and are required to take up less space when they are 'in-between' the home and places of work. The cult of femininity forces women to 'stay out' of the public world, while reinforcing the dominance of men in the workplace, in politics and in the family, and reminding young people of the gendered roles that they are meant to assimilate into. This cult of femininity is sanctioned by the traditional family which, despite masquerading as a private affair, is publicly and nationally assertive. Collins (1998) reminds us that the traditional family is monolithic and has the working husband, a housewife and obedient children, the latter two of which remain under the authority of the man. Deviance from this social organisation results in corrective violence and shame.

Boom Shaka in the nation and its anthem

> Stylishly clad in the deepest blue velvet suits over lacy bras and flimsy white blouses – held in place by at least one button – Boom Shaka's Thembi and Lebo (had) walked to the front of the large Civic Theatre stage and then stopped, each raising a clenched fist in the air. A pounding beat kicked in, sending a sensual wave of motion down the girl's lithe bodies, and so began their house beat homage to a tune that, they say, represents their freedom to sing whatever songs they choose in a liberated nation; and acknowledgement of those who have fought for their freedom (McClary ,1991, p.149 in Blose, 2012, p.55).

In their 1998 album, Words of Wisdom, Boom Shaka offered the nation a bold re-make of one of the highest articulations of the call for unity and national identity: the South African national anthem (Steingo, 2008; Blose, 2012). Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika (God Bless Africa) which was originally composed by Enoch Sontonga in the 1800s, sings as a prayer to God for the salvation of an oppressed and divided country under colonial and apartheid rule, but also for a continent deeply violated

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by colonial domination (Steingo, 2008). In the post-apartheid national anthem, the original song has been extended to include a mix of Xhosa, Sotho, Afrikaans and English in an attempt to embody the reconciliatory rainbow nation (Steingo, 2008). In so doing, this language mash-up aimed to signal unity and freedom for all in the democratic dispensation. Boom Shaka re-created the national anthem into a kwaito/house dance version (McClaryn, 1991; Steingo, 2008; Blose, 2012; Xaso, 2020). In their live performance of it at the 1998 South African Music Awards (SAMAs), Boom Shaka dance rhythmically to their upbeat kwaito single. Their rendition and performance resulted in both a media frenzy and national outcry. Steingo (2008), Xaso (2020) and Zwane (2021) profiled some of the national responses to Boom Shaka's rendition of Nkosi Sikelela, including Bheziziwe Peterson's (2003, p.206) condemnation of this performance as a 'horror of horrors' because 'national anthems are no dancing matter'. Because the national anthem is religiously and 'nationalistically' charged, it is understood as a sacred text to be sung and performed in 'respectable' ways (Steingo, 2008, p.103). The anthem is sung during events like political rallies, national sporting events, and even in schools during events of importance.

Xaso (2020) notes that there have been many remakes of the national anthem, across varying genres, but some genres are considered more respectable than others, which gestures to the perceived chaos and meaninglessness of kwaito music and performances. Boom Shaka asserted that adapting the national anthem on their own terms was an act of making the anthem more relatable to young people. Zwane (2021), like Steingo (2008) and Xaso (2020), asserts that Boom Shaka's kwaito take of Nkosi Sikelela is an important contribution to youth culture, and a testament to the freedoms promised in the transition to democracy. This argument is consistent with Blose's (2012) assertion that, while Boom Shaka displayed and became controversial as a result of their 'boldly sexualized representations', their contribution was not limited to this. It is interesting, however, that McClaryn's description of Boom Shaka's performance of the national anthem at the 1998 SAMAs (cited in Blose, 2012), much like many in the media, focus more on describing Lebo and Thembi's fashioning and dance moves. Thus, it

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seems that much of Boom Shaka's controversy was a result of the gender performances of its female band members, because the people who were doing the gyrating and twerking were Lebo and Thembi. Nelson Mandela, the president of the country and uTata during the reign of Boom Shaka, had on numerous occasions condemned Boom Shaka's style of dance and performance (Owen, 2013). As both the first Black president of a newly democratic state, but also as the 'father of the nation' and authoritative voice mimicking that of a parent, Mandela's disapproval of Boom Shaka reinforced the power dynamic between disobedient children and strict and conservative parents. In his Mail & Guardian article, Zwane (2021) notes that Boom Shaka 'challenged the parental authority in the home and community,' encouraged by the 'social conservatism of the colonial-apartheid system (that) had seeped into people's homes'. This means that Boom Shaka symbolically challenged the adult authority that is very entangled with colonial, patriarchal Euro-western regimes of power and authority.

What remains less explicitly explored is that, while the transgression of parental authority embodied by figures like Nelson Mandela happens across the line of race, and in this case the Blackness of Boom Shaka, the transgression is also gendered and biased in favour of boys and men. Lebo and Thembi, as foci of the controversial dance moves and style of dress, also transgress specific parenting styles that girl children are subject to. There is a plethora of literature exploring the socialisation of Black girls and boys through heteronormative parenting, education and social discourse more broadly. Johnson (2013) asserts that Black girls are socialised to be both strong and respectable in order to align with acceptable articulations of Black femininity, and also to assume their role as caretakers. Lebo and Thembi disidentified with both conservative Blackness and conservative femininities simultaneously. Lebo's process of disidentification is most observable in her solo music career, which took off in the early 2000s when she was in her early 20s.

The iconicity of Lebo Mathosa, disidentification and representation

Lebo's dream as point of departure

As discussed in detail earlier, kwaito emerged as a liberatory project for black urban youth. Rooted in hedonism, and material and social aspirations as an aesthetic of freedom, young people at the time found expression in the genre. Lebo, while a performer, was also a young woman and strategically inserted herself within a genre that permitted the construction of her gender behaviour as untraditional. Livermon (2020, p.123) asserts that 'Lebo strategically deployed the aesthetics of kwaito to become a "dangerous woman" by challenging popular conventions about appropriate femininity through both her onstage performance and her offstage persona.' I enjoy Livermon's (2020) use of the notion of dangerous women, and I consider how Lebo appropriated kwaito and the genre of freedom in a political moment to forge an alternative reality and imaginary for Black women.

Lebo departed from Boom Shaka to pursue her solo music career in 2000. Her first solo album, Dream, is argued to not have received the critical and scholarly attention that it should have (Valela, 2020), although it received awards for Best Dance album at the SAMAs. However, I focus on this solo album as a reflection of Lebo's process of disidentification. I show that Dream, through strategic use of familiarity, ambiguity and imagination, is Lebo's way of showing up as connected but different from any political and cultural subjectivities previously associated with her. Dream is an album that fused many musical genres, ranging from kwaito, RnB, Jazz, and dance to hip-hop. The use of multiple genres in a single album is in itself an act of rebellion, as Lebo refused to be confined to a singular self-expression and self-representation. By making use of various genres and various vocal ranges, Lebo taught listeners to free their imagination by utilising any and all resources available to them. In Dream, Lebo clearly let us know that she was more than kwaito, more than Boom Shaka, and more than Brenda's protégé. Valela (2020) argues that Lebo stylistically moulded her vocal range for each genre she sang on the album, and thus never really sounds as a single thing. She was

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complex, unpredictable and open to the potential of creative worlds to free the imagination. Unbundled from the political, Lebo disidentified with Brenda and kwaito, and taught us to 'play' and situates 'playing' as imaginative and generative of freedom. Emma Thompson (2022: para. 3) argues that 'A big part of play, for me, is imagination – something we all have to some degree, and which might be seen as defining our species.'

Lebo plays around with genre, sound and her voice to pull us into a fantasy. Livescu (2003) suggests that, while fantasy commonly refers to imaginations of the improbable, it is actually a way of knowing, being and worlding. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, worlding is living as though the possibilities for living are infinite. When we are worlding, it means that we keep moving and going in the direction of endless stories of ourselves and the world, and are continuously developing other ways of thinking, seeing and doing (Hawaway, 2004). I think that playing is an example of worlding, discovering and encountering knowledge which, as Livescu (2003) points out, encompasses knowledge about the world, sensorial knowledge and self-knowledge. Therefore, play is pedagogical. Lebo's Dream engages us as a pedagogical text about genre, imagination and freedom, which departs from the historical constraints on playfulness created by the colonial and apartheid regimes. Six years into democracy, and since the emergence of Boom Shaka, Lebo produced her solo album Dream as an imaginative text where she insisted on her entitlement to play with her self-expression. Apart from breaking with historical musical conventions, Lebo also broke with gendered and racialised conventions. By insisting on playing in her solo album, Lebo complicated socialisation practices of young girls that deny them the opportunity to play and imagine.

There have been various studies regarding what is known as the adultification of girl children. For instance, Abrams' (2017) research on motherhood considers the experiences of mothers from when they were children themselves, up until they had their own children. Testimonies from the women Abrams (2017) interviewed reveal the historical and even current pressures for girl children to accustom

themselves to the role of caregivers from an early age. From cooking to cleaning and taking care of younger children in the home, girl children have consistently been disproportionately roped into adulthood and denied the opportunity to play like their male counterparts. This might in part explain why men make up the majority of professionals and materially successful people in the world. Men are given room to play and to imagine themselves as who and what they want to be. The often-unmonitored imagination of young boys may also have a direct correlation with adult men constantly objectifying women, imagining themselves with attractive women, or as wealthy or famous. Lebo's Dream should be received also as an invitation for women to 'play', to allow themselves to imagine and for society to make space for this process.

The first single on the Dream album is titled Ntozabantu, loosely translated to refer to 'People's belongings,' although I do not think that translation captures the meaning of the song. Below are the lyrics, in a mix of isiZulu and isiXhosa. No direct translations of the song are available or possible, because I feel an English translation for this song would not at all capture the message. I do, however, explain what Lebo refers to. Nonwane (2012) explains that, in Ntozabantu, Lebo reprimands listeners for gossiping about the lives of others. Lebo warns that:

Zaphela izinto zabantu[15]

Ma be fika bethi nxonxoza vula bo

Uzophela izinto zabantu

Ma be fika bethi nik' uya nika

Kunini bethi wevulele

Uzophaphama nini sekunjalo

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[15] Direct translation for these lyrics are not possible because they will lose their meaning and I have opted not to do this.

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Be kutheni ukhuluma ngabantu bo

Indaba zabantu azenzwa njalo

Ezakho zikhulunywa ubani na

Zinakwe nguwe wena wedwa

Lebo goes on to appeal to a less cruel world by using blood as a metaphor for the extent of ruin and damage that gossip causes (Nonwane, 2012). She also strategically deploys the national morality of the Ubuntu phrase, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (a person is a person through other people), to appeal to a society where people are allowed to simply be. Nonwane (2012) notes that Ntozabantu operates as an extension of newspaper headlines that spread gossip about Lebo, particularly around her sexuality, which I will discuss further later. As such, this single can also be received as Lebo's expression of melancholy (Nonwane 2012). Because blood-shed is used to describe the damage that gossip mongering causes, I can understand Nonwane's (2012) argument.

Kuzobe kube nini sibulalana sodwa[16]
umuntu ng muntu ufana nawe,
yekela ucithi gazi labantu linjalo lifana nelakho

Lebo poses an important and heavy message over an upbeat track that compels one to dance. Nonwane (2012) argues that the energetic nature of the composition, alongside serious subject matter, convince us to actually stay out of people's business. The song is catchy, concise, clear, jolly and haunting simultaneously. In this song – its contradictory message, sound and kinaesthetic impact –there is evidence of Lebo's insistence on dreaming in the creative on this album. Therefore, I also read Ntozabantu as Lebo's plea for a society to open up space for imagination.

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[16] Loosely translated in English: 'for how much longer are we going to kill each other?'

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Lebo's choice to 'begin' Dream in this way is also strategic. A close listen to the album, and to the sequencing/organisation of the songs and genres, reveals Lebo's sensitivity to a kwaito youth's attachment to the genre, and its entanglement with pleasure-seeking in newly democratic South Africa. Lebo navigates this attachment by appealing to it early on in the album, through a kwaito and dance single, Ntozabantu, then departing from it and branching into other genres. Ntozabantu also won a SAMA for best dance single (Nonwane, 2012; Valela, 2020). Her second single, titled Celebrate, shows that Lebo is well aware of the country's violent history, and calls on us to 'put our past behind and celebrate'. This single leans more towards a soulful and jazz genre. As cultural critique and blogger Valela (2020) notes, Lebo's voice skilfully shape-shifts throughout the album; the rest of the singles on this body of work move between hip-hop beats, as heard in her Baby Baby, to American RnB in Fall in Love with Me, to trance-like and electronic sounds in First Time Lalala and My Love. I have listened to Lebo almost all my life, but admittedly, was probably too young to make any significant transnational connections. During my focused listen to her body of work, I came to realise that Lebo's Dream also reveals the extent to which she imagined her influence in the global. Lebo positions the Dream album in direct conversation with American musical influence through her singles, Fall in Love with Me, which sounds strikingly similar to American RnB artist, Tevin Campbell's, I'm Ready. As a 90s born-and-bred South African girl, I grew up listening to my parents' music, which was mostly American RnB and soul music, South African jazz and pop. Tevin Campbell's memorable melody in I'm Ready is one I immediately picked up on and was reminded of in Lebo's Fall in Love with Me. I'm Ready was a popular RnB song released in 1994, and ranked number 2 on the Billboard Hot R&B and Hip-Hop songs of 1994 (Rhino, 2019). An observation of the comments thread on the YouTube upload of the single shows that people have associated I'm Ready with good childhood memories, and have described it as feel-good music. By making the choice to sample this song, Lebo created familiarity and invoked the same fondness from listeners and lovers of I'm Ready. In My Love, Lebo references Madonna's 1984 song, Material Girl. Lebo sings,

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You know I'm a material girl

'cause we live in material world

If you can't raise my interest

then I have to let you be

This is the chorus to Material Girl, where Madonna spoke about men putting in the effort through material means to appeal to her.

Lebo later sings,

You make me feel shiny and new like a virgin touched for the first time

These lyrics come from another Madonna single, Like a Virgin, from her 1984 album of the same name. Madonna's reference to a virgin in the song is ambiguous, because she appeals to women who are still virgins, and to those who are not but still hold the desire to find someone special who will make them feel 'shiny and new' (Balsamo *et al.*, n.d). I do not provide an exhaustive analysis of these lyrics, but rather seek to show how Lebo situated herself in a lineage of rebellious women like Madonna and Brenda Fassie. In My Love, Lebo plays on the existing narratives that liken her to Brenda, who was likened to Madonna, by referencing one of the most controversial albums Madonna ever released, because it was sexually explicit and expressed ambitions and desires of women historically considered taboo (Balsamo *et al.*, n.d). The ambiguity of Madonna's 'like a virgin' is seen also in Lebo's My Love. Lebo, however, does not seem to be speaking about only a 'boy' that can make you feel special. Rather, Lebo refers consistently to the subject of her passion as 'my love,' which could refer to either a person – whose gender or sexuality may not be in the fold of heteronormativity – or something non-human, like music. Lebo allows us to imagine for ourselves what it means to be touched like a virgin, and by whom or what.

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Finding Lebo in sex-talk, sexuality and nation-building

Cock (2003) reminds us that the post-apartheid constitution, which was officially passed in 1996, was the first in the world to formally prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation. Nyanzi (2021) also contends that, in comparison to other African countries like Uganda, South Africa continues to boast a constitution that protects the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. Matebeni (2016) reminds us that, prior to the South African constitution, LGBTQIA+ people were criminalised for their choice in lovers and sexuality. The repression of positive sex talk and sexuality was discussed in Chapter Five, as it pertained to the 1980s and the emergence of Brenda Fassie. In that chapter, I also unpacked the ways that same-sex sexualities were linked with disease like HIV/AIDS, and promiscuity (see Posel, 2015) which drove very dangerous narratives for LGBTQIA+ people. Livermon (2012) warns that, while the constitution secures the political and legal rights of those he terms queer, freedom for queer people remained largely limited to the legal, political and economic in post-apartheid South Africa. Matebeni (2017) argues that, while the category 'queer' relates to sexual or gender identities that are not heteronormative, queer is also a form of destabilising normativities. Henceforth, where queer is used, I refer to non-normative genders and sexualities, as well as forms of being that are ambiguous or fluid. Livermon (2012) points specifically to the issues around the visibility and belonging of black queers in post-apartheid urban areas such as the township. The post-apartheid nation is portrayed as the rainbow nation, to show that the nation was united in difference, and this was important for purposes of stability during the transition. The beginning of the transition to democracy from 1990 also coincided with the initiation of Joburg Pride, the first LGBTQIA+ march in South Africa and Africa, during a time where queer people enjoyed no legal and political rights. The LGBTQIA+ community has historically used a rainbow as their flag to symbolise solidarity (McLean, 2019). In creating a 'new' and democratic nation, and the conferring of legal rights to any gender identity and sexual orientation without discrimination, the rainbow nation would also come to represent the equality of queer people in South Africa

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(McLean, 2019). However, the rainbow nation has continuously excluded and violated queer people.

One of the main challenges queer people face in the post-apartheid dispensation is that 'black subjectivity is performed and imagined as heteronormative in the public sphere' (Livermon, 2012, p.299). In other words, Black subjectivities are only constructed as heteronormative, which then means that families, communities and the nation are not constructed to recognise queer Black people. Reddy, Monro and Matebeni (2011) note that to be queer in Africa means to be caught in and regulated by what Judith Butler (1990) terms a 'heterosexual matrix'. This is consistent with Blose's (2012) assertion that women like Lebo Mathosa were desired by men because of their skimpy dress sense and provocative style of dance, limiting the possibility that Lebo would have been seen to appeal to a lesbian audience. Livermon (2020) also argues that there is an unacknowledged same-sex desire in Mathosa's performances, where she appeals to queer men and queer women by centring herself as the one receiving pleasure. Lebo used men's bodies as spectacle, as she ground up against them and controlled them (Livermon, 2020), practicing assertive and unpredictable femininity. In so doing, Lebo and her male performance muses are open to desire from both men and women. Livermon (2012) notes that Lebo also suggested that her performances were for the consumption of gay and lesbian fans.

Posel (2015) reminds us that increasing public discourse, representation, imagery and film on sex and sexuality marked post-apartheid South Africa, although this had more to do with sexual violence like child rapes, as a way of articulating a sense of moral crisis. Lebo's performance of sex acts in public would have frustrated the moral angst discussed above, as she reclaimed her sexuality and queer sexual desires and sensibilities. Lebo also performed at LGBTQIA+ events, and socialised in black queer spaces, which made the public increasingly suspicious that she was a lesbian (Livermon, 2012). Lebo's responses to speculations about her sexuality early on in her career require a contextual consideration of the politics surrounding sexuality in the early years of democracy.

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Lebo denied that she was lesbian on a few occasions (Livermon, 2012, 2020). In 2002, headlines expressed that she had confirmed her sexuality as a lesbian woman (City Press, 2002 in News24, 2002; Valentyn, 2006). The City Press (2002 cited in News24, 2002) reported that, at the SAMAs, Lebo was allegedly involved in what is described as a 'cat fight' with actress Hlubi Mboya. It was reported that Mboya, who is a South African actress and was also a friend to Lebo, greeted choreographer and rumoured lover to Lebo, Sibongile Ngubane, to which Lebo responded aggressively in a jealous rage (Valentyn, 2006). When asked for comment on the incident, Lebo responded by saying:

> You know we gays, just like ordinary people, talk too much and are also loud (News24,
> 2002; Valentyn, 2006).

Later, Lebo recalled the above statement, and called the City Press newspaper to state:

> I lost my virginity to a man when I was 14. How can I be lesbian? (News24, 2002).

Shortly after this, she sat down for an interview on a television show Below The Belt, [17] hosted by South African drag performer Baroness Coral von Reefanhausen. Below The Belt was a show about sex, pop culture, gay nightlife and topics considered taboo (Livermon, 2020). In this interview, Baroness' opening question to Lebo was about what she had 'read' in the newspapers about Lebo's catfight with Mboya. Here, Lebo openly denied that such an incident took place at all, and went on to say that she enjoyed the media's attention and speculations nonetheless. Lebo was then also asked about her time with Boom Shaka, and specifically her sexy dance style, to which Lebo responded:

> sexy numbers, showing off the ass and the titties that I don't have … [laughs].
> That's the thing. Men want to see that [goes into a softer, dramatic whisper-like
> tone] … and even women want to see that. When you're on that stage they
> (women) want to see that sexy part of you.

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[17] The interview is available for viewing on YouTube. The full citation is as follows: Below The Belt, Lebo Mathosa. YouTube. Posted 2009. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yw92xDKrUeg

The above responses that Lebo gave regarding her sexuality are not only contradictory, but also ambiguous. Lebo's sexuality was of interest to the media, primarily because she kept her private life private, unlike her predecessor, Brenda (Livermon, 2020). Blignaut (2012) also notes that people often described Lebo as shy and reserved in-person. She maintained that her public and private personas were distinct, and that audiences would not know who the 'real' Lebo was; thus, she would never openly reveal who she was dating or sleeping with (Livermon, 2020). Livermon (2012, p.299) notes that, in the early 2000s, which is around the time Lebo had launched her solo career and suspicions that she was lesbian increased, gay and lesbian identities within Black communities were challenged by the desire for a notion of freedom that is inclusive of forms of belonging 'to family, community, culture, nation and race'. While universal citizenship is enshrined in the constitution, raising belonging as a construct reveals the limits of these formal citizenships (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009; Van Zyl, 2015). As a result of the myth of the impossibility of queerness as Black, racially and culturally, Black queers faced, and continue to face, rejection from their families and communities in ways that white queers and heterosexual people do not (Livermon, 2012). A friend to Lebo Mathosa was quoted saying that 'there was a lot of pressure on her as an artist. She didn't want to disappoint her fans,' explaining Lebo as having been 'afraid' of being too open about her sexuality (Valentyn, 2006). Lebo was aware that Black communities did not recognise or welcome queer people, amid a history and ongoing issue of violence against queer people in South Africa.

In their The Triangle Project Human Rights Report (2013), Lee, Lynch and Clayton (2013) show that homophobic violence in South Africa has drastically increased in the post-apartheid state, arguing that homophobic violence is sanctioned by patriarchal power to reinforce the heteronormative social order. Lee, Lynch and Clayton (2013) provide select case studies of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who were tortured, humiliated and murdered on the grounds of their sexuality, which not only contravenes constitutional rights, but also reinforces national heteronormative and patriarchal matrixes of power. Black lesbian women, especially those from the township, have been particularly

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vulnerable to corrective rape, 'the sexual assault of a lesbian with the intention of "correcting" her sexual orientation' (Lahiri, 2011, p.121). Matebeni (2018) argues that the targeting of Black lesbians specifically challenged understandings of rape in South Africa. While all women are vulnerable to rape, because Black lesbian women often openly challenge racial, gender, sexual and cultural conventions, they occupy a different space in society that may make them disproportionately vulnerable to violence. Therefore, the post-apartheid freedoms apparently made available to everyone were, in fact, limited. South African visual artist and activist Zanele Muholi has also curated exhibitions of photographs, sculptures and videos of Black lesbian women (2013). In a YouTube video posted by Human Rights Watch,[18] Muholi shares how the corrective rapes and murders of lesbian women in post-apartheid South Africa both 'strained,' but also 'binds,' the LGBTQIA+ community. Muholi (2013) also visits some of the townships, like Kwa-Themba township in the East Rand, where she details how brutally Black queer women were murdered, and the importance of documenting these histories. The often-grotesque forms of torture and murders of Black lesbian women emphasises the extent of hate and unwantedness they face. Added to these spectacular forms of violence, same- sex marriage was also still illegal prior to the 2006 Civil Union Act, which eventually legalised same sex-marriages. The denial of queer love as institutionalised family reveals that the South African nation continued to organise itself as heteronormative, and thus sanctioned only cultural productions of the family as nuclear. As Matebeni (2018) says, 'violence is revolting' and coerces the LGBTQIA+ community to watch this violence in horror and fear. The possibilities of freedom for queer people like Lebo in the post-apartheid state were limited, in ways that freedom for heterosexual people was and still is not. In light of homophobic and transphobic violence that continues to plague the South African landscape, I suggest a reading of Lebo's denial and discretion regarding her sexuality as a safety and survival tactic, in the ways Livermon (2012, 2020) also suggests. Citing Butler's (cited in Livermon, 2012) concept of freedom as being

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[18] Zanele Muholi, Visual Artist. YouTube Video. (2013).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aiufq04dp0

able to live 'liveable lives', I too argue that Black queers have long been denied this, despite being in a 'free country'.

At the same time, Lebo leveraged the public's interest in her personal life to keep audiences interested, but also to strategically generate conversation about the possibilities for women's sexualities. By gesturing to both men and women desiring her naked body during her performances, Lebo intentionally created a non-binary sexual orientation. In the Below The Belt interview, Baroness asked about Lebo's body piercings, and specifically enquired about her tongue piercings, and what she could do with it. Lebo stuck her tongue out, flaunting her piercing, while swirling her tongue around in circular and sensual motions. The Baroness then responded by asserting that Lebo must enjoy oral sex, to which Lebo agrees. However, when asked whether she prefers circumcised or uncircumcised penises, Lebo shyly refused to respond. However, she then says 'it (oral sex) could be with "it"'. Lebo and The Baroness share a laugh, as if they shared an understanding of what 'it' was. 'It,' as an ambiguous 'something' that facilitates oral sex, is gender-neutral, and negates the idea that Lebo is engaged only in penetrative and oral sex with a penis. When asked if 'it' is something artificial, Lebo giggled and shook her head, and prompted audiences to go and think about it. Lebo had playfully 'come out' as bisexual through this interview (Livermon, 2012), and concluded by describing herself as a 'double adapter,' which functions as a metaphor for her bisexuality. Livermon (2012) suggests that, because Lebo had situated herself as a 'double adapter,' thus attracted to men and women, her announcement did not gain the kind of public discussion that earlier assertions of her being named as lesbian did. In 2004, just two years after her catfight, denial and contradictory statements regarding her sexuality, Lebo confirmed that she was bisexual during a radio interview (Livermon, 2012).

Livermon (2012) notes that Black queer people had started to increasingly identity with bisexuality in the early 2000s. Lebo had been asked whether she was lesbian and denied it but, following from a reading with her interview on Below The Belt, this is probably also because she was actually bisexual, in addition to her sexuality

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actually being none of anyone's business. Bisexuality is an identity that can be taken up by people who did not previously identify with any other label, like Lebo. Livermon (2020) also suggests that we consider that Lebo understood herself as bisexual, portraying herself as a 'double adapter' to reveal her sexual fluidity, and as entitled to multiple queer desires. On the other hand, as Livermon (2020) also suggests, it is possible that Lebo's self-identification as bisexual also helped her to navigate the sexist and violent post-apartheid context, while also giving her the room to explore her desires.

> If we understand that Black (queer) women must navigate the twin forms of state and societal surveillance, then double adapting might also refer to the ways that Black queer women must always take on different performances in different situations; be nonstatic and adaptable, shift personas and performances to ensure safety; have access to state resources; and avoid criminalization. In essence double adapting might refer to the complex ways Black (queer) women's labor draws on guile, adaptability and perseverance (Livermon, 2020, p.145).

While I can understand the need to adapt strategies of survival, we must still be critical of the context of our 'freedom' in post-apartheid South Africa. I think it is perfectly fine for Lebo to have insisted that she would not perform a 'fixed' sexuality, even if she had not come out as bisexual. Her queered performance style, queer audience and queer people that she inspired, however, continue to struggle for survival, rather than living fully and without fear, which is the definition of freedom itself.

Lebo's dangerous dress and Kwezi's khanga[19]

Lebo Mathosa as a member of Boom Shaka, and Lebo Mathosa as a solo music artist, have been known as a sexy and stylish woman due to her dress sense and style of performance. Furthermore, Lebo received various awards in affirmation of her dress sense and sexiness, including the FHM Magazine Sexiest Woman of the

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[19] An East African fabric worn around the body, mostly by women. Pictured later below for reference future in this section is how some women wear the Khanga. The image is sourced from Paullete Sinclair cited on https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-rear-view-of-masai-women-wearing-the-traditional-shawls-called-kangas-79310847.html

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Year title, and the Style award for Best Dressed Woman in 2001 (Valentyn, 2006). Rather than simply doing an audio-visual analysis of some of Lebo's performances and outfits, I really want to pay attention to how Lebo's choice of dress links with rape cultures, national sentiments of women's bodies, and women's style of dress in the mid-2000s, particularly as it relates to the Kwezi-Zuma rape case. The context of Lebo Mathosa's style of dress is of course not new. However, I want to emphasise readings of women's choice in dress in contexts that are not in popular culture, but rather in the ubiquitous experiences of women like Kwezi, who was raped by a public figure, Jacob Zuma, former deputy president of South Africa, who eventually became president, father of the nation, and 'ubaba,' as he has affectionately been called.

In 2004, pictures of Lebo Mathosa performing in a miniskirt without underwear appeared and circulated on the internet (Livermon 2020). Today, those images are not available online, and I would not have included them here because of the way that they have been used to humiliate and shame Lebo and other ordinary woman dressing in similar ways. Livermon (2020) reminds us that, during this time in South Africa, the surveillance of women's dress had become increasingly explicit, criminalised and linked to discourses on sexual violence. However, this can be said for many other African countries, such as Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda (see Hubbard & Tjombe, 2013; Tamale, 2016). Hubbard and Tjombe (2013) have argued that, generally, miniskirts or the exposure of the body, specifically of the female body, have been considered 'unAfrican,' while Makoni (2011) argues that tradition is invoked as a means to shame women in miniskirts. Paradoxically, women exposing their bodies for traditions, such as the Swaziland reed dance, are embraced and considered noble. This dance is an annual festival where bare-breasted girls are presented to the ruling monarch, King Mswati, who selects a wife from the group (Asserson, 2016).

Women wearing miniskirts have been threatened with arrest for 'public indecency' in countries like Namibia (Hubbard & Tjombe, 2013), where the enforcement of the law was gender discriminatory, because it did not include the arrest of men

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urinating in public. While wearing miniskirts in South Africa was not legally criminalised, it was socially sanctioned as a punishable offence. In Uganda, The Anti-pornography Act of 2014 was passed to regulate women's bodies and how they were dressed, and plans to pass this law date as far back as 2005, when Nsaba Buturo, the Minister of Ethics and Integrity at the time, stated that miniskirts were a vice that had begun to distract men (Tamale, 2016). Hubbard and Tjombe (2013) note that the state and culturally sanctioned surveillance of women's dress directly contravenes the constitutional right to freedom of expression, since dress is a form of expression.

From the early 2000's in South Africa, women wearing miniskirts, with or without underwear, were accused of inviting sexual attention, and consequently sexual violence (Livermon, 2020). Vincent (2009) highlights that South African police records suggest that the practice of humiliating and violating women in miniskirts became common, and was documented from around the year 2000. While the surveillance of women's bodies is not new, the arrogantly public nature of discourses and attitudes surrounding miniskirts speaks to the discursive construction of the female body in public space. Vincent (2009) argues that debates on the miniskirt as 'unAfrican' were predicated on the view that revealing clothing like miniskirts were a result of Western cultural imperialism. This might account for the upsurge in violence against women in miniskirts early in democracy (Vincent, 2009). In an attempt to unshackle from colonial and apartheid rule, the misrecognition of women's freedom of expression as Western resulted in violent gender relations.

Livermon (2020) recalls how, in South African taxi ranks, particularly in Johannesburg, where the taxi drivers are majority male, women wearing miniskirts were frequently physically targeted and assaulted, with the narrative that the miniskirt implied that women were inviting sexual attention (Hubbard & Tjombe, 2003; Livermon, 2020). Makoni (2011: p. 342) reminds us that the most common form of public transport in African urban centres is un-metered taxis, and taxi ranks are a popular public location that many frequent, where 'inscriptions of public

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remarks or commentary about pertinent social and political issues' are passed. In countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Nigeria, amongst others, women have been verbally, physically and sexually assaulted for wearing miniskirts, tights skirts and other forms of clothing considered too revealing and sexually provocative (Makoni, 2011). The violence against women in miniskirts continued and escalated over the years. On the 17th of February, 2008, it was reported that four women were stripped, paraded naked and verbally abused by taxi drivers at Noord Street taxi rank in Johannesburg (Vincent, 2009). Perpetrators of this violence argued that exposing the body by wearing miniskirts was an enticement and invitation for sexual attention (Makoni, 2011; Tamale, 2016; Livermon, 2020). However, the escalating violence against women in miniskirts was not uncontested. In 2008 and 2012, South African women mobilised to stage miniskirt protests against harassment (see Sreeraman 2008; BBC News Africa, 2012; Radebe & Bank, 2016). Women who pushed back against harassment stressed the importance of not only recognising fashion as a form of expression, but also the need for the recognition of women's bodily autonomy. State-sanctioned moral panics over women's dress in Africa are evidence that specific notions of womanhood mediate national identities (Tamale, 2016).

In 2005, Fezeka Kuzwayo, who was initially called Kwezi to protect her identity, officially opened a case of rape against deputy president Jacob Zuma (Gqola, 2015). Mmatshilo Motsei (2007), in her book, Kanga and the Kangaroo Court, reflects on the Kwezi-Zuma rape trial, and interrogates the unofficial court of the public which tried and crucified Fezeka Kuzwayo, the victim-survivor, by advocating for people to 'burn the bitch!' Gqola (2015) argues that this trial, which happened very early in our democracy, took place both inside the court, as well outside, in the court of public opinion. This court of public opinion is described as 'a space that included the kangaroo-style courts that Motsei addresses' (Gqola, 2015, p.101). During the trial, Kwezi testified that she had visited the friend of her late father and went to bed with a khanga wrapped around her (Tlhabi, 2017). A khanga is a colourful East African fabric that women wrap around their bodies and

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use to wrap babies in (Pather, 2016).[20] During the rape trial, Zuma gave the khanga new meaning, arguing that the khanga that Kwezi wore was a sexual invitation, thus complicating the narrative that it is 'Western' clothing like miniskirts that are provocative. In 2008, Kwezi wrote her poem, I am Khanga (cited in Pather, 2016), where she embodies the fabric, and how its meaning and her body were violated. She also draws our attention to the paradox of the khanga as distinctly African, but also as the grounds upon which her rape was justified.

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[20] See also Pather, Ra'eesa (2016). 'The kanga, womanhood and how Zuma's 2006 rape trial changed the meaning of the fabric' in the Mail & Guardian. Accessed on: https://mg.co.za/article/2016-08-10-the-khanga-womxnhood-and-how-zumas-2006-rape-trial-changed-its-meaning

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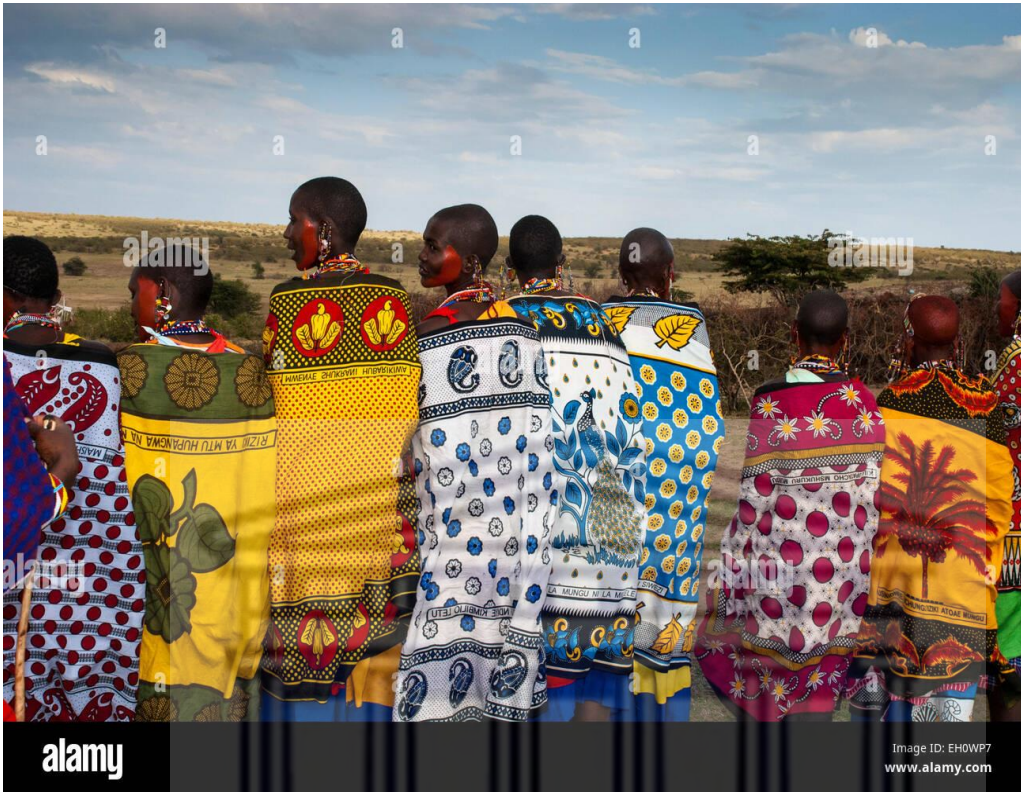
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I am Khanga[22]

I wrap myself around the curvaceous bodies of women all over Africa

I am the perfect nightdress on those hot African nights

The ideal attire for household chores

I secure babies happily on their mother's backs

Am the perfect gift for new bride and new mother alike

Armed with proverbs, I am vehicle for communication between women

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[21] The image is sourced from Paullete Sinclair: https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-rear-view-of-masai-women-wearing-the-traditional-shawls-called-kangas-79310847.html

[22] In Pather, R. (2016). 'The kanga, womanhood and how Zuma's 2006 rape trial changed the meaning of the fabric' in the Mail & Guardian. Accessed on: https://mg.co.za/article/2016-08-10-the-khanga-womxnhood-and-how-zumas-2006-rape-trial-changed-its-meaning

I exist for the comfort and convenience of a woman

But no no no make no mistake …

I am not here to please a man

And I certainly am not a seductress

Please don't use me as an excuse to rape

Don't hide behind me when you choose to abuse

You see

That's what he said my Malume

The man who called himself my daddy's best friend

Shared a cell with him on [Robben] Island for ten whole years

He said I wanted it

That my khanga said it

That with it I lured him to my bed

That with it I want you is what I said

But what about the NO I uttered with my mouth

Not once but twice

And the please no I said with my body

What about the tear that ran down my face as I lay stiff with shock

In what sick world is that sex

In what sick world is that consent

The same world where the rapist becomes the victim

The same world where I become the bitch that must burn

The same world where I am forced into exile because I spoke out?

This is NOT my world

I reject that world

My world is a world where fathers protect and don't rape

My world is a world where a woman can speak out

Without fear for her safety

My world is a world where no one, but no one is above the law

My world is a world where sex is pleasurable not painful

This is also my home

The khanga was to Zuma what the miniskirt was to male taxi drivers and other misogynistic men. Against the backdrop of a democratic South Africa, where everyone has equal legal rights, South African women are subject to rigid moral codes and gender performance standards, with threats of punishment for any form of 'deviance' or evidence of being 'improper'. The victim-blaming of women for their choice in dress was again brought to the forefront in 2016, during a silent protest held by four Black women, reminding us to #RememberKwezi. On the 6th of August 2016, four Black young women student activists, and members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) political party, held a silent protest during former President Jacob Zuma's speech at the Independent Electoral Briefing on the election results in Pretoria (see Nicholson, 2016). This moment was televised live across the country. Zuma continued to deliver his speech, despite the silent protestors that stood in front of him. One of the placards these women held read 'Khanga,' alongside 'Remember Kwezi.' Pictured in the image below are two of the protestors, Naledi Chirwa on the left and Simamkele Dlakavu on the right, standing in front of Jacob Zuma, who at the time was the president of South Africa, as he addressed the nation from his podium marked with the words 'South Africa' and 'IEC'. The photographer was clever in capturing this moment in this way, and in choosing to write about the silent protest with this particular photograph as the headline. By centring the words 'IEC' and 'South Africa', alongside 'Khanga' and

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'Remember Kwezi', we are reminded that, in a democratic country where all South Africans have the right to vote, women are still not free, despite constitutional rights that enshrine our entitlement to freedom and equality. Thus, this image highlights the paradox between theory and practice. In their silence, the protestors are positioned as rebellious daughters, provoking the nation to not only remember Kwezi, but also to highlight the rape myth associated with the khanga, the miniskirt and other forms of 'revealing' dress. They show that democracy is violent for women, despite what it stands for. During this time, Lebo Mathosa continued to claim space in the very same ways other women were discouraged from doing, through threats of violence.

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In 2005, Lebo shot a music video for her song Siyaziwisa, in Moreleta Park, Pretoria.[24] In the video, Lebo's athleticism and perfect choreography take centre stage, as she performs in the streets of the township among ordinary people. The

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[23] Image taken by Greg Nicolson (2016), accessed on https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-08-08-rememberkhwezi-it-worked-like-a-beautiful-theatre-piece/
[24] Lighting cameraman of the music video, Zank Frappe, posted the video from his showreel on YouTube. Accessed on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70zGvuhYebU

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message of this song is centred on having a good time, with Lebo rhetorically asking, 'or kanjani'? meaning, 'or what'? in a matter-of fact style of speech. Part of the lyrics of this song are Lebo encouraging women to show 'umzimba namabele wakho' because 'sifikile iskhathi'. Lebo asserts that women are in their full rights to 'show' their bodies off, because it is a matter of time, gesturing to not only her predominantly young female fans, but also possibly to changes in the political landscape that render available freedoms previously not allowed (Posel, 2015). Despite the public and grotesque forms of violence against women in 'provocative' forms of dress at the time, Lebo pushed back by asserting that there is no better time than now for women to freely show their bodies. In 2006, Lebo's album entitled Drama Queen featured two of her most popular songs, Dangerous and I love music. As with her Dream album, Lebo played with genre as she experimented with reggae sounds in Dangerous, while turning to RnB and house in I love Music. In Dangerous, Lebo declared that she is a woman who is 'living dangerous'. With the release of this album, Lebo's dress also became more daring, as she experimented more with barely-there dresses, like the one pictured below during the 2006 SAMAs. Lebo's album and increasingly revealing style of dress paralleled the Kwezi-Zuma rape trial. Livermon (2020) reminds us that Lebo asserted that, while people could see her naked body, it was hers and not theirs. Lebo presented this way, and inspired more women to do this same, against the backdrop of violence. Lebo asserted that, while men can see her body, our bodies, they are not theirs. Women are in control. Lebo was forward thinking, pulling women in younger generations towards an understanding of themselves as also in control.

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CONCLUSION

The transition to democracy brought with it the promise of freedom, which played out in very specific ways among young people and popular culture during the transitional period and into the early democratic years, and kwaito music was central to the embodiment of this ownership of freedom. Boom Shaka was particularly central in the imagination of freedom, with the female band members, Lebo Mathosa and Thembi Seete, drawing most of the public attention. Of course, women's bodies have always been a spectacle and under surveillance, which would explain Lebo and Thembi's centrality in Boom Shaka. However, it was also how they danced and styled themselves outside of the politics of respectability that caught people's attention and, at times, earned them scrutiny. Within the context of the collective that was Boom Shaka, Lebo had already been differentiated and singled out as the foci, in comparison to the dominant representation of women in kwaito as enhancers of the performances of male artists. Transitioning to her solo career, Lebo strategically used the nation's familiarity with Boom Shaka to show up as connected but different from any political and cultural subjectivities previously associated with her. Lebo embodied her entitlement to freedom through her music, where she rebelled against genre restrictions through play. Also, by presenting in dress marked as sexually provocative, while endorsing women's ownership over their own bodies through song against the backdrop of active violence against women, Lebo pushed back against restrictions on freedom that were endorsed by male leaders. Through the ambiguity she constructed around her sexuality, Lebo also demonstrated that the freedoms given to us that should not operate in binaries. This chapter has demonstrated, through Lebo Mathosa, some of the struggles *with* freedom that Black women are engaged in, particularly in terms of the partiality of freedoms in post-apartheid South Africa. To rebel against the partiality of freedom, in some of the ways that Lebo did, also means to rebel against the granting of legal freedoms without cultural and social freedoms.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: CONTEMPORARY REBELLIOUS FEMININITIES

> It wouldn't be far-fetched to think that Khanyi Mbau will one day be a case study or the subject of a doctoral thesis. You might be rolling your eyes wondering why anyone would think that … (Modise, 2022).

In response to Modise's (2022) assertion above, I am reminded of one of Foucault's (1982, p.779) most memorable phrases:

> What we have to do with banal facts is to discover – or try to discover – which specific and perhaps original problem is connected with them.

In the previous analytical chapters, I demonstrated how Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa are connected in terms of their complex self-expressions, which I read as rebellious. However, these chapters also showed how they can be differentiated, and therefore speaks also to the heterogeneity of rebellious femininities. Brenda and Lebo parallel and co-construct themselves in ways understood as rebellious, within contexts that are otherwise socially constructed to read gender in neat and rigid binaries. In this chapter, I consider women who emerge in an additional generation of rebellious women. I consider how some contemporary women, like the South African actress, presenter and television personality, Khanyi Mbau, reference themselves, and are referenced by others like Blignaut (2016), as existing on a continuum with Brenda and Lebo, and are made possible as a result of this lineage.

> I find it difficult to think about a Babes Wodumo[26] or a Khanyi Mbau if there weren't a Lebo Mathosa and before her a Brenda Fassie (Blignaut, 2016).

Like Blignaut (2016), I find it difficult to resist the connection between Khanyi Mbau and women like Brenda and Lebo. In this chapter, I suggest that women like Brenda and Lebo have provided some contemporary women with examples of what possibilities exist for their own self-expression and re-articulation of femininity. While connected, some of these contemporary women, like Khanyi, also defamiliarise and disidentify with the kinds of rebellion exhibited by their

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[26] Babes Wodumo is a South African musician. I will not focus on her here.

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predecessors, and are also more entangled with a material and consumer culture in neo-liberal post-apartheid South Africa. I mainly think through Khanyi Mbau as she emerges in 2005. Although I begin by situating her within the context of the mid-2000s, which was just over a decade into democracy, I also focus on her in more recent years and currently, as she relates to some women self-expressing in similar ways. I do not unpack too much of the experiences and choices that Khanyi makes. I do, however, contextualise and explore some of her experiences in relation to developments in South Africa's dominant gender expectations and narratives. I read Khanyi's positionality alongside representations of femininities endorsed in post-apartheid television as a form of mass communication and popular culture, like the soap opera form.

Khanyi departs from being a cinematic representation of female villain characters, like Doobsie from South Africa's soap opera Muvhango, and takes on a femininity that is considered shameful in her real life. I suggest that part of the controversy surrounding Khanyi is related to the hidden fears and desires she reveals of the post-apartheid South African nation. Controversy surrounding her also emanates from rigid gender binaries that render certain women, rebellious women, as deviating from cultural gender norms, and thus engaged in disidentification. The lives of Khanyi, Brenda and Lebo intersect in interesting ways in relation to women's claims on economic position and security. I then move from the specificity of Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi, to the general, as I situate myself, and some women termed slay queens, who present themselves similarly. I discuss the figure of what is contemporarily known as the slay queen, while exploring the queer origins of the term and its appropriation by Black women. In discussing Khanyi, I reference her biography, Bitch, Please: I'm Khanyi Mbau, authored by Lesley Mofokeng (2012), for context and some of Khanyi's perspectives and experiences; some of her interviews; her representation on some television shows, since this the context Khanyi mostly finds herself in; and photographs and my observation of social media posts, with a specific reference to some posts on Twitter. My observations also show that, similar to Brenda, Khanyi's personal and public personas have been difficult to separate, although, like Lebo, Khanyi makes an effort to control

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the narrative and representation of herself through speaking out on the platforms she curates and has access to. I arrive at the conclusion that there is no wrong or right way to be rebellious women, like there is no wrong or right way to relate and claim relationality with women like Brenda and Lebo. While impactful in their own revered ways, as I have shown in previous chapters, they are also not the standard. What becomes a bit clearer in this chapter, which I suggest be read as an incomplete attempt at trying to make sense of a continuously unfolding and shifting rebellion, is that some articulations of rebellious femininities are more or less tolerable than others in the current public imaginary.

Remembering Khanyi Mbau in fiction and binary in post-apartheid South Africa

In this section, I situate Khanyi within the time, space and imaginary that she emerged and was represented. I consider a history of South African television, including the soap opera and reality TV genres, which coincide with Khanyi's public persona, and intersect with gender expectations and gender norms presented as both fiction and representational at the inception of democracy. Khanyi's personal life choices intersect with fiction in South African television, but in ways that show that the expansion of popular imaginaries through television, and Khanyi's roles as a shameful, gold-digging woman, are prevalent discourses and attitudes surrounding women like her. I also demonstrate, through posts on Twitter, the ways that shame circulates in popular culture to cement women's identities as monolithic and desirable only in ways understood as respectable. Working against the assumed and compulsory linearity of women's expression of their identities, I show how Khanyi complicates binaries through her constant reinvention and rejection of the slut-shaming that she has been subject to over the years. In so doing, I highlight the multiple femininities Khanyi has embodied, shifted between and moulded herself into at different points of her life, thus complicating gendered binaries that would only read her in the negative.

Khanyi Mbau was born in Soweto in 1985. In her formative years, she aspired to a life as a creative, and landed small roles in local children's television programmes (Mofokeng, 2012). In 2005, 19-year-old Khanyi's major break in the entertainment

industry came when she was cast as Doobsie on South African TV soapie, Muvhango. For South African audiences that are familiar with this soapie, and for those that are not, you should be reminded that Doobsie was a villain known for being manipulative, attention-seeking, domineering and 'man-snatching.' Television soapies, because they are relatively new to South Africa, as I will discuss in detail later, are important because they reveal the desires, fears and sentiments of the nation. I must have been around 12 or 13 years old at the time, and Muvhango was a daily family favourite. One of the most scandalous episodes I remember watching was of the love triangle between the characters Doobsie, Edward and Thandaza. I remember clearly how Thandaza was the sweet, innocent and likeable female character, while Doobsie played the direct opposite. At the centre of this binary was Edward, who both women wanted to marry. Edward proposed to Thandaza, but on their wedding day, both dubious Doobsie and tender Thandaza showed up in wedding dresses at the church. *Ha!* I cannot remember clearly how this next part happened, but Edward ended up marrying Doobsie, although he could never really let go of Thandaza. Eventually, Edward did marry Thandaza. As I reflect on this episode, I am also remembering how my mother shouted 'Usile Doobsie!' which, in English, was the condemnation of Doobsie, while consoling Thandaza with an 'ag shame'. I mention this because, even though I was 12, I remember also feeling like Doobsie had been unfair and that Thandaza had been wronged by her, not by Edward. I never really thought about Edward, whether he was wrong or not. I was focused on these two different women, who was wrong and who was wronged, and who I needed to hate, or love to hate.

Before Khanyi, 39-year-old Lindiwe Chibi played the character of Doobsie, before Chibi was shot in the head by her boyfriend in 2005. Chibi survived, and spent time trying to heal the wounds she had sustained from the shooting. However, during this time, she was diagnosed with pneumonia and subsequently died from complications. Chibi was often described as 'Doobsie' herself in real-life, and was considered an exceptional actress (see News24, 2007; Mail & Guardian, 2007). Muvhango's executive producer, Duma ka Ndlovu, shared that the character was written specifically for Chibi as there were some similarities between the two.

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During her time on Muvhango, the public knew Chibi as 'Doobsie'. A Google search of either Lindiwe Chibi or 'Doobsie' yields a result of Chibi being referred to as 'Doobsie,' or images of her on TV playing the character (see Maphumulo, 2007; Mail & Guardian Staff Reporter, 2007). During the time that Chibi was recovering from being shot, Khanyi Mbau inherited a TV character (Doobsie) that held strong national sentiment, but also did not allow a distinction between actress and character. Duma Ka Ndlovu (Mail & Guardian, 2007) confirmed that audiences continue to refer to Doobsie as Lindiwe Chibi, despite Khanyi Mbau taking on the role and, later, Khabonina Ngwenya. In fact, one article in Opera News (2021) memorialises Chibi's 'Doobsie' as one of the most memorable female villains in (post-apartheid) South African television. Her appeal largely owed to her interpretation of a character 'that every woman who grew up in the township could relate to,' gesturing to the assumed familiarity with mistresses like Doobsie (Ndlovu in Mail & Guardian, 2007). The TVSA Website confirmed that Muvhango's highest ratings are from viewers in townships and villages. Motsaathebe's (2009) work shows that Muvhango was the second-most-watched locally produced show in South Africa, with the first being another soap opera called Generations.

Khanyi was 19 years old during the time she stood in for Chibi as Doobsie. This is also around the time that she married 49-year-old South African millionaire, Mandla Mthembu. When Khanyi stepped in to play Doobsie, she understood that she now 'belonged to the public,' and that her personal life would consequently be under scrutiny because, as she admits in her biographical book, Doobsie had a 'cult following' (Mofokeng, 2012, p.208). Khanyi Mbau was cast as the 'second' Doobsie, but also as the nation's 'gold-digger' because of her relationships with an older wealthy man at the time (Mofokeng, 2012). Madondo (2012) recalls how Khanyi was consistently labelled as a gold-digger because she was involved with a man 30 years her senior. Later, Khanyi had a public affair with a white, rich and older married man by the name of Theunis Crous (Mofokeng, 2012). During her marriage to Mandla, the relationship became physically, mentally and emotionally abusive, which I will return to later (Mofokeng, 2012). I must admit that my earliest memory of Khanyi was also of her being the young wife of a rich old millionaire. I

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also remember how she was called a gold-digger and home-wrecker for dating older, wealthy, and sometimes married men, like Theunis Crous. I vaguely remember her as Doobsie. This is important because Khanyi's life as an actress, and consequently as a 'working' and respectable woman, is superseded by the emphasis of Khanyi in real life as a cautionary tale. In a reality television show about Khanyi Mbau's life, Mbau Reloaded: Always Rise (2021), directed by Khanyi herself, the first episode begins with Khanyi Mbau introducing herself, looking sternly into the camera to say, 'I'm an actress. A lot of people forget this but I am an actress. I have a calling. I am a writer, producer, musician, mother'. In her biography, Lesley Mofokeng (2012) also reminds us that Khanyi was an actress before her personal life took centre stage and was used as an example of a shameful femininity, to which I will return later in this chapter.

Panashe Chigumadzi's Small Deaths (2016) presents a fictional character named Khanyi who is a journalist and post-graduate student navigating her life in Cape Town. This Khanyi makes it a point to differentiate herself from Khanyi Mbau, who she describes as 'the Khanyi Mbau of Muvhango's-Doobsie-turned-BEE-tycoon's-floozy-turned-reformed-actress-presenter-singer-and-best-selling-author-of-tell-all-memoir fame,' while likening herself to a different Khanyi who she describes as 'thee Khanyi Dhlomo of First-Black-news-anchor-turned-Magazine-Editor-turned-Harvard-MBA-grad-who-turned-to-launch-her-own-Media-Empire-Fame' (Chigumadzi 2016, p.153). Chiguamudzi (2016), whether intentionally or not, also shows how Khanyi Mbau has reinvented herself over the years, all while positioning her in a binary. Chiguamudzi (2016) shows how women constantly reinvent themselves, irrespective of whether their femininity is constructed in binary terms. Thandaza, Doobsie's rival in Muvhango, would be Chigumadzi's Khanyi Dhlomo, as the successful, reputable businesswoman. Chigumadzi (2016) demonstrates the polarisation of Black women in post-apartheid South Africa, which renders women like Khanyi Mbau less respectable or impactful than woman with middle-class education and accomplishments, thereby revealing the master narratives that are constructed as lenses to read women's lives. In the image below, Khanyi Mbau captured in her home in Johannesburg in 2012. This is around

the time that she faced public scrutiny for her relationship with an older wealthy man. Behind her hangs a self-portrait where she is shown sitting on a throne and postured as royalty. She stands in front of the portrait in a red dress, with her hand slightly and cheekily covering her mouth, as if she were saying 'Oops'! Khanyi wants us to note that there is an interpretation of her, there is her, and then there is us looking at her, and we are unsure of who to focus on or how to read her. Her posturing in this image is a complex strategy of both challenging binaries, and also calling attention to multiplicities and the capacity to shift identities. Khanyi uses a literally rigid frame, since photographs capture moments in stillness, but she uses the rigidity of a photograph to depict various possibilities. In some ways, Khanyi's use of art, photography and her body makes me think of Munoz's (1999) description of disidentification within oppressive and rigid contexts, as I have discussed earlier. I consider Khanyi's photo, the pose and the framing of it in her home, as symbolic of the heteronormative and sexist context of South Africa that she finds herself. In the photo, Khanyi shows us her awareness of the context, but also how she rebelliously claims her identity as a Black woman worthy of recognition and visibility, like that of royal persons.

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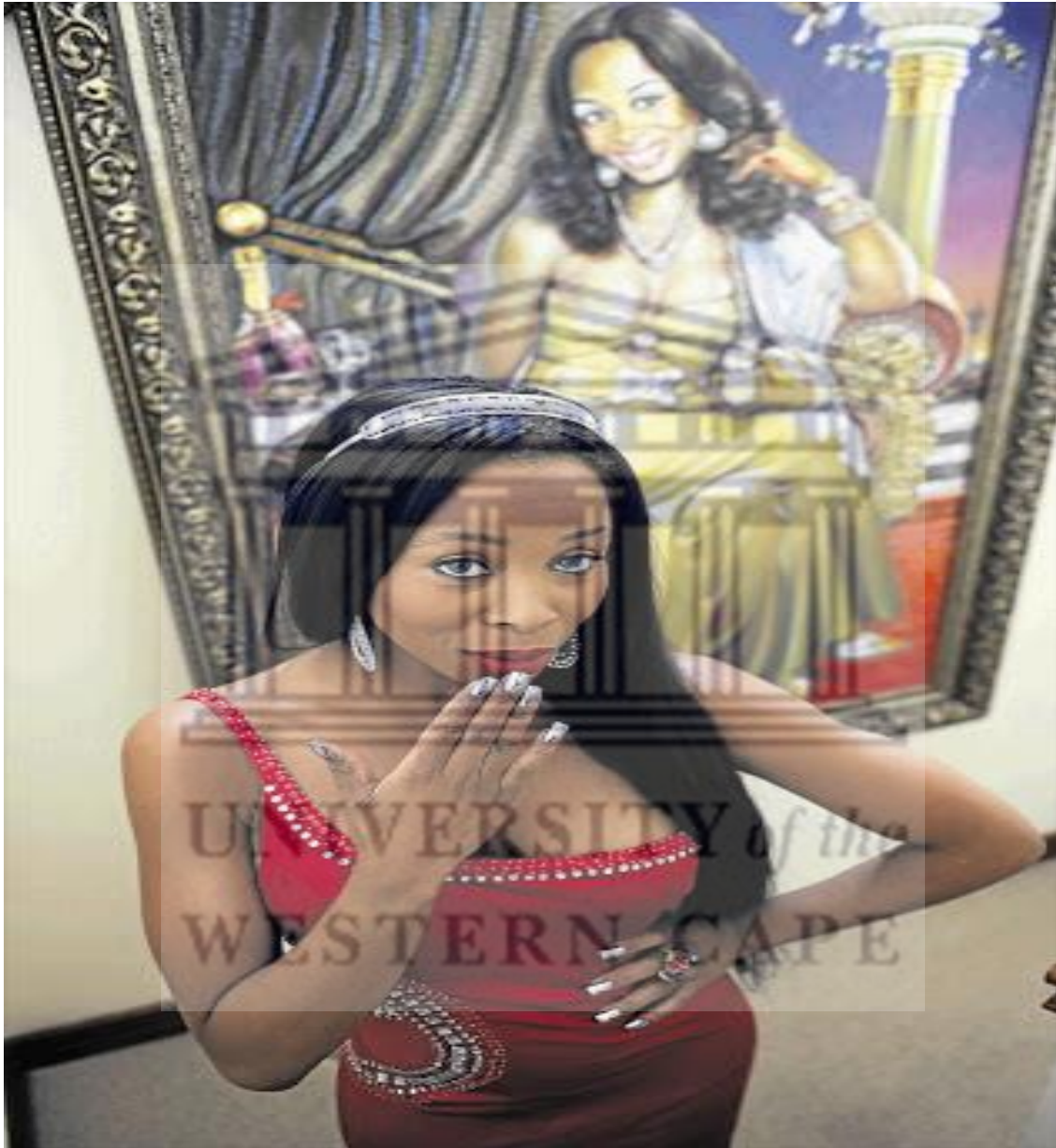
Television and popular gender representations in post-apartheid South Africa

I discuss television and representation, not only because it is the context through which Khanyi Mbau was introduced to the public, but also because it is an increasingly significant form of mass communication, especially in democratic South Africa. Ives (2007) reminds us that television in South Africa is a recent thing, given its arrival in the country in the mid-1970s. She also reminds us that, during this time, under the apartheid regime, television was an apparatus of propaganda, which endorsed racism and violence. Smit (2016) contends that, between the first broadcast in 1976 and now, television has been highly political and complex in South Africa. During the early years of democracy, television played a role in narrating and imagining the new rainbow nation (Barnett, 1998; Ives, 2007; Smit 2007), and the increase in local television productions expanded the South African popular culture space, which had previously mostly been made up of radio, music and lives performance. Today, South African television remains characterised by separated audiences, with some channels and shows appealing to a Black population, and others to an Afrikaans population (Smit, 2016). Motsaathebe (2008) contends that television between 1999-2008 also played a role in the construction of gender stereotypes. Focusing specifically on televised soap operas with a Black viewership, which Mahlatse (2008) reminds us were previously only available in audio format, Motsaathebe (2008) and Mahlatse (2008) explain how these soapies portray sexuality, gender roles, performance and expectation, and how viewers relate to these depictions. While soapies like Generations attempted to portray women, like the character Karabo Mokoena, as businesswomen, and thus able to occupy the positions of men, these characters were balanced by a need to depend on men for business advice (Motsaathebe 2008). Neophytou (2012) also shows that some soap operas do attempt to represent femininities as multiple, complex and intersecting, but that these representations continue to fall prey to their situatedness in a heteronormative model that emphasises certain femininities as 'good' and others as 'bad'.

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Muvhango first aired in 1997, and is a soap opera based on the customs and traditions of the Venda, which is a South African ethnic group. The name of the soap opera means 'conflict,' which I want to think about in terms of how it endorsed gender binaries and a politics of respectability. The driving storyline in Muvhango is around the polygamous marriage of protagonist, Mashudu, and his two wives. He was married to both wives but under different officiating constituencies: he is married to a Venda woman under customary law, and a Tswana woman under civil law. The conflict that ensues is one of both cultural difference and the male succession of Mashudu's estate. After Mashudu's death, his sons, Edward and Azwindini, both navigate love triangles and polygamous marriages. In the narratives of both Edward and Azwindini, Muvhango introduces two women in polarities: Doobsie-Edward-Thandaza, and Vele-Azwindini-Susan. Vele, like Doobsie, is the rebellious, conniving partner.

It is interesting to me that not much attention has been paid to the cultural narrative being constructed by setting up the relationships of men with multiple partners in very specific ways on television in the mid-2000s, and there is scant attention paid to the representation of female 'villains' in South African soap operas and how they intersect with socially endorsed gender performances. Motsaathebe (2009) shares how some viewers of these shows have claimed that the names of some of the characters from local soap operas became nicknames and descriptors of family members, friends and acquaintances. Thus, the portrayal of women on television operated as a mirror for some of the existing social constructions of women in society. If you were conniving, manipulative or perceived to be controlling, you would have been called 'a Doobsie' or a 'Vele'. This shows how soap opera narratives are often intertwined with the narratives of viewers. Mahlatse (2018) contends that soap operas can resemble daily life but, because they are predicated on fantasy and the suspension of disbelief, they are also dramatised and exaggerated in ways that may distort reality. By feeding on some fears that present themselves in real life, soap operas also manage to settle some anxieties, while satisfying the needs and desires of viewers (Mahlatse, 2018). This is

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achieved through the act of watching, engaging and paralleling the fantasy with real life, whether consciously or not.

It is also important to note that love has been central to the making of television more generally in the post-apartheid landscape. As a result of the traumatic and violent apartheid regime, which was replaced with a unifying democratic dispensation predicated on the idea of being connected, television was used as a way to forge local intimacies and familial bonds (Smit, 2016). Smit (2016) further asserts that television is a medium of intimacy, mass communication and national culture, which is central for the imagination of the nation and a shared sense of togetherness in the post-apartheid era. Hence, many of the soap operas, like Muvhango and Generations, also played on the theme of love, where women characters were usually involved in romantic relationships, navigating domestic space and struggling for domestic inclusivity (Smit, 2016; Mahlatse, 2018). Because television is a home viewing context, it suggests ideas of intimacy and togetherness, where the post-apartheid nation also depends on the togetherness of the family (Smit, 2016). It is therefore unsurprising that gendered representations are often polarised, generating public moral debate and reinforcing specific values related to the sanctity of the traditional family. Television acts to confirm convictions on gendered and sexual relationships (Mahlatse, 2018), and the representation of gender and sexuality on television, specifically in soap operas, is usually within a heteronormative discourse (Neophytou, 2012). While characters like Doobsie were represented as deviating from the traditional femininities endorsed in the everyday social life, she was also loved and celebrated. Thus, there has been a popular public imaginary and representation of women whose femininity was not considered traditional or acceptable.

Reading shame and representation in the complex matrix of fiction and reality

The fiction of women like Doobsie and Vele is just that: fiction. In reality, women like Khanyi are not given the grace and compassion that their fictional characters receive. Apart from Chibi's exceptional performance in the role of Doobsie, the character also demonstrated complexity by showing up as both scheming and

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tender, although what was emphasised was that she was a villain (Mofokeng, 2012). Previously unknown, or at least less popular, in the public life prior to Muvhango, Khanyi was a young Black woman in a new democratic South Africa stepping into a role considered a national key treasure, but was simultaneously shamed for dating older and wealthy men (Mofokeng, 2012). Because television had become so central to the national understanding of gender and sexuality, among other things, certain opinions on femininities and masculinities also became more pronounced. Holland (1967) explains that the willing suspense of disbelief is a process that audiences of film, television and theatre undergo to momentarily accept the fantastical context of the performance. Suspending disbelief is important in order to set audiences in the narrative, and also for their own enjoyment and entertainment. This belief in the performance is considered a poetic faith (Holland, 1967). People are then 'tricked' into believing and accepting certain ideas and representations of people, like Doobsie. Audiences make the decision to manoeuvre between the fantasy or 'unrealness' of the art and reality, thus rendering what they watch mostly imaginative and unreal, or it could be a denial of the possible reality of what they watch. In real life, Doobsies do exist but, because they are not always for entertainment purposes and violate the suspension of disbelief, they are subject to slut-shaming. Slut shaming refers to making women feel guilty for their sexuality, engaging in any number of relationships (especially simultaneously) and for general behavious that are not in adherence to cultural gender norms that are so often polarised and polarising (Noe, 2016).

Neophytou (2012) asserts that soap operas are able to represent femininities in complex ways. By thinking of femininities in the heteronormative gender binary model, certain 'conventions' or 'types' of femininities can be extracted. These conventions include the 'good girl', 'wife', 'strong woman', 'mother' and 'villainess' (Neophytou, 2012). Similarly, the tropes of jezebel, mother, wife have been theorised by scholars like West (1995) and Roos (2002). Women hold various identities simultaneously, although they are often subject to being identified in accordance to their proximity to Connell's (1987) emphasised femininities, which

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exist both on and off screen. This results in personal and social tensions (Neophytou, 2012). For example, while Khanyi was called a gold-digger, Doobsie was a villain; the latter was more tolerable as fiction, but also created tensions when translated into the real lives of some women like Khanyi. Granted, Doobsie was not necessarily in a relationship of disparate age and wealth like Khanyi, but she did represent a threat to the binaries on femininity. Variations on rebellious femininities like Doobsie's have included figures such as the gold-digger. Khanyi and Mandla were known as the queen and king of bling because of their excessive spending and conspicuous consumption, but it was also their age difference that raised public concern. Madondo (2012) further notes that gold-diggers have always been described as women who extract material benefits from a man, and that societal readings of such women lack nuance, almost always feeding into other descriptors of gendered shame, such as 'whore', 'ho' and 'slut' (Moodley & Ebrahim, 2019; Wamoyi *et al.*, 2019). Khanyi contends that labelling her a gold-digger for having been married to a wealthy man was awkward because they were married and had a child, which Mandla had a responsibility to provide for financially.

Characters that are villains in terms of their femininity are portrayed as strong, determined and sexy, but are also presented as morally bankrupt, in direct comparison to women understood to be 'good girls', 'wives' and 'mothers' (Neophytou, 2012). Doobsie, although constructed and described as a villain who is predatory and dangerous, was also compliant to the male desire of access to multiple women and their bodies. Edward remained the centre of attention for two women and, despite his sexual encounters with both, i.e. his infidelity, he remained wanted by both women. Although Edward married Doobsie at the first wedding, he continues his relationship with Thandaza, and eventually leaves Doobsie to marry her. We are reminded here that Doobsies never win, in one way or another. Neophytou (2012) asserts that heteronormativity constructs men as rightfully sexually active, while placing shame on women like Doobsie, who are portrayed as and known for being the scheming, predatory mistress, although on several occasions, Edward had willingly chosen to be with her. Mahlatse's (2018)

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research, on the impact of Muvhango on young people's perceptions of romantic relationships and the identities of women within them, demonstrates how Doobsie is remembered as a specific 'type' of woman. One of the students interviewed in Mahlatse's (2018, p.61) research remembers 'a side chick called Doobsie,' while emphasizing how 'the side chick will tell you straight up that I'm going to snatch him away'. This demonstrates that, while Doobsie is memorialised as a mistress, she was not simply a victim in her relationship with Edward, but also had agency. While Doobsie represented a rebellious form of femininity, she was also one of the most talked about and celebrated characters of the show. Doobsie is an on-screen fantasy, and therefore a product of the willing suspension of disbelief (Holland, 1967).

The social media platform, Twitter, was launched in 2006 (Meyer, 2020), around the time Khanyi was gaining the traditional media's attention for playing Doobsie, and for her personal relationship. What makes Twitter different from traditional media is that it has a variety of content creators, most of which are ordinary people tweeting to and among one another online. Based on my observation of tweets yielded from a search using the key words, 'Khanyi Mbau,' 'gold digger,' 'Muvhango,' I found that the earliest available tweets date back to 2009, and continue into 2022. I note a tweet by a female Twitter user (18 March, 2019) that emerged as one of the top results when I used the keywords, which read as follows: 'No really Khanyi Mbau was a visionary an icon truly ahead of the game they told her she was too young to play Doobsie on Muvhango and people became enamoured with her'. At least ten years prior, a tweet was posted by a male Twitter user (12 October, 2009): 'KASI[28] SLANG UPDATED: Khanyi Mbau-means gold digger. Pulling a Khanyi Mbau (gold-digging).' On the same day, another male Twitter user responded by asking '*Origin could be from Khanye (Khanyi?) West's "Golddigger", eh?*'

The recent (2019) tweet above, suggesting that Khanyi was ahead of her time by playing the character of the villainous and seductive Doobsie, shows how Khanyi

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[28] Kasi refers to the local, and specifically townships, in South Africa.

was strategic in playing a character like that, because she may have been pre-empting her life in particular ways that she was not ashamed of, even when she was polarised as the woman we should not strive to be: a sexy, assertive, gold-digging woman.

The gold-digger is a figure spoken of and popularised in the contemporary global space by American hip-hop rapper Kanye West's song, 'Gold digger,' released in 2005. The tweets referenced above refer to the connection between the label of gold-digger and Kanye West's song, where his lyrics proclaim, 'Now I ain't saying she a gold digger. But she ain't messing with no broke nigga[29]'. The gold-digger is almost always considered to be a woman trying to exploit the wealth of men (Thompson, 2016). Historically, the term originates from the North American context, and has been popularised in a variety of contexts, ranging from cultural to legal institutions, and has even come to describe women who are in the process of a divorce and stand to receive financial compensation from the dissolution of the marriage (Thompson, 2016). The use of the term gold-digger to refer to almost all women at some point is a source of frustration to many. A female Twitter user lamented (19 December, 2011) the obsession with policing and shaming women by asking, 'Jezebels, Khanyi Mbau, gold-digging…have we not moved on?' Two other Twitter users responded to this tweet by adding on the list of femininities used as cautionary tales by including 'Women with issues' and 'Broken women [have we not moved on?]'. Another asked 'why do people call Khanyi Mbau Gold digger? I mean she was married to the man' (Twitter user, 22 February, 2012). This is the same assertion that Khanyi has made.

From 2009, during the time of these tweets and the popularisation of labelling Khanyi a gold-digger, she was going through a divorce from Mandla, who had become abusive. This was also around the time that Khanyi entered into a public relationship with a white and wealthy married man, Theunis who, like Mandla, was

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[29] The term 'nigger' is a historically derogatory term or racial slur referring to Black people. 'Nigga', which is spelt and pronounced differently from the racial slur, is reclaimed and usually featured in hip-hop songs as a term of endearment (see Sinclair, S. (2017). You can't say that! A semantic and Historical Analysis of *Nigger* and *Nigga.* Thesis. New York University.

decades older than Khanyi. One twitter user tweeted about this so-called love triangle (16 November, 2021), 'I remember when Khanyi Mbau used to chow [slang for sex] Primrose Crous's husband, Theunis Crouse…and they would go on to twar [a Twitter fight] for months kuleApp. I think the year was in 2011 or so…' Even in 2021, Khanyi's identity as a mistress and gold-digger remains. Below is a photo from a South African blog in 2010, The Tiger's Story. Here, a picture of Khanyi and Theunis's family portrait are displayed side-by-side. Khanyi is barely dressed in this photo and poses seductively, looking into the camera with her buttocks sticking out. On the right is a family portrait, where Theunis, visibly old with grey hair, is centred, with two children on his lap and his wife, Primrose, by his side. The author's selection of these photos gestures towards the narrative at the time. Khanyi was the promiscuous, gold-digging home-wrecker, while Primrose was the wronged wife and devoted mother. I am reminded of Doobsie-Edward-Thandaza, as the fictional Khanyi-Theunis-Primrose. South Africa is not shocked by these kinds of romantic and sexual relationships, but insists on branding Khanyi as exceptionally shameful.

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[30] This image was sourced from The Tiger's Story. (2010). Blog. Accessed on:
http://thetigersstory.blogspot.com/2010/07/khanyi-mbau-boyfriend-crisis-mr-crous.html

Tolman (2018) notes that shaming women like Khanyi Mbau is done as a way of regulating prescribed femininity. Zembe *et al.* (2013) contend that women engaged in sexual and romantic relationships with older and wealthy men are often labelled as prostitutes. Bindman (1997) reminds us that the term 'prostitutes' has connotations of immorality and shamefulness, as it defines women who are considered deviant and thus excluded from mainstream society. Women who are called gold-diggers are interpreted as prostitutes. Tolman (2018) argues that marking certain women as 'sluts', and I include the labels of gold-diggers and prostitutes, is an attempt to disconnect women from one another through shame. Slut-shaming is what Tolman (2018) calls a crisis of connection.

> A crisis of connection framework invites us to consider that slut shaming is a form of everyday violence and violence experienced by adolescent girls. It is pervasive and terrorising; it can happen to anyone at any time, often without rhyme or reason. To shame is to use disconnection as a means of violence and damage, to cast an individual out of community and/or to induce her to cast doubt on herself (Tolman, 2018, p.8).

Similarly, Ahmed (2004) argues that shame turns the self against itself, to attribute what is said about the self as bad as emerging from an inherent corruption. The shaming of young women, which Khanyi was at the time, at 19-20 years of age, is an injustice, because young women are not only entitled to explore the world's possibilities, but also are often not given the space to because of respectability politics (Ahmed, 2004). Tolman refers specifically to young women's embodied sexuality, sensuality and choices in this regard as having been 'dressed up as desirable but ultimately devalued, denied and punished' (Tolman, 2018, p.7). In 2012, while Khanyi was involved with Theunis Crous, nude images of her were leaked online. Until this day, it is unknown who leaked these images, but they emerged at a time when there was frenzied talk of her being a gold-digger, therefore further cementing the notion that she was morally out of line. A Twitter user (4 November, 2011) tweeted that they 'just saw these leaked Khanyi Mbau nude pics…Not at all surprised! Been a long time coming! Drama queen!' This suggests that Khanyi deserved to have her privacy invaded because of her public

affairs with men, and serves as a reminder of the kinds of femininities that carry punishment because they challenge gender norms. While I am not referring to Khanyi's presentation as sexy in this chapter, I do think Tolman's arguments can be extended to the slut-shaming young women face when involved with older men, because they are punished and cast out just the same as young women marked as 'inappropriate' because of how they dress or behave (Tolman, 2018). Tolman (2018) also contends that slut-shaming is leveraged as a way to single women out, confining them to a category that they cannot escape. Khanyi presents an opportunity to think about the complications of concrete 'acquired' identities like the gold-digger, by consistently reinventing herself through, which I show is her way of (re)connecting from being cast out as a gold-digger, while also challenging the very practices of shaming.

Intersections between post-apartheid desire and Khanyi's complex reinvention as feminist praxis

job (2021) explores the notion of animal-human configurations and how they may reveal hidden desires and foster compassion, deconstructing the hierarchical relationships between humans, animals, 'God' and objects. Similarly, Mel Chen (2012) explores the boundaries between humans and what is considered inanimate, of less significance in relation to humans and human sensibilities. I discussed in Chapter Three how our sensibilities become affective when we consider the ways our bodies are entangled and arranged with all scales of life and matter (Massumi, 1995; Clough, 2008). Engaging the ways that our bodies are open to the environment and extended beyond their neurological form and what our consciousness can tell us means we engage in posthumanism (Hayles, 2004; Poster, 2006). This shows that there are varying ways to make sense of our cultural lives that do not always work within the conventional signifiers of meaning-making. I relate their models of destabilising binaries and boundaries between humans, animals and objects to make sense of the slut-shaming Khanyi experiences in post-apartheid South Africa. job (2021) uses performance to represent human-animal forms and relations, and observes the hidden secrets,

which she considers to be desire, that are invoked from these representations. Similarly, hooks (1992) shows that what is brought to the surface is often the hidden, unconscious fantasies and desires. However, hooks (1992) thinks specifically about desire for 'the Other' (Black people), in which white people 'eat' the Other in a range of ways, such as white people seeking to contact Black people, and develop and explore relationships with them. In these connections, she suggests that we look at what is the hidden desire, the secret, attached to white people's attempt at getting closer to Black people. hooks (1992) then points out that desires are not always safe, because white people, for example, desire to have sex with Black women because of the desire to prove whether they are innately 'more sexual' or 'wild' during sex, thus reinscribing white supremacist myths about Black women's sexualities.

job (2021) describes her dance solo works that she uses to engage and uncover desire. I am drawn to one in particular, And Then… In And Then…, job (2021) interprets the bodily movements and image of the praying mantis into a dance performance. The praying mantis is an insect that the Khoi-San people of Southern Africa regard as a symbol of good luck, which is a form of power often also associated with stability, speed and clarity. Paradoxically, the body movements of a praying mantis are imbalanced because its legs shake and it moves towards its destination in an 'indirect, circuitous fashion' (job, 2021, p.72). The insect creates the illusion that it is weak and vulnerable as a result. job (2021) likens the shakiness of the praying mantis to the general psychological and emotional behaviours of South Africa, which she describes as nervous and uneasy. However, unlike the praying mantis, South Africans are 'generally impatient and most of the time respond to situations in direct, predictable ways that may even be aggressive' (job, 2021, p.72). In its shakiness, perceived imbalance, and constant walking in circles, the insect still gets to where it needs. As job embodies the shakiness of the praying mantis in an 80-minute dance routine, some audience members are 'moved' in ways that help them make various self-actualisations about their lives, and the nervous conditions to which their desires surrender. With the praying

mantis in mind, I explore what it is about Khanyi that 'shakes' so much of the South African nation that it prompts aggression.

The praying mantis, and job's (2021) interpretation of it, plays on the notion of power in ways that may not always be legible, but require our compassion. If we are to surrender to being shaky, unpredictable and circuitous, we may reveal both the state of South Africa, and the desires which Khanyi unveils, as unpopular and sometimes problematic as they may be, especially in relation to capitalism. If we refer to Khanyi as a gold-digger, we also must think about gold in relation to its symbolism and proximity to a desire for financial comfort. job (2021) reminds us of the broad definition of mining that involves a process of digging in dark, unknown territory with the hopes of finding something valuable. Historically, this is a process that Black men in South Africa have been coerced into through the migrant labour system. It is hard work to mine, as it involves disrupting solid foundations, and the extension of this is that it is also hard work to be a gold-digger in the ways Khanyi has been portrayed. To dig into foundations that lay the grounds for what is acceptable and not for women, in search of something that they find valuable, is hard work. In digging, we find not only what is valuable, but also what is a hidden desire. Some desires or secrets are hidden because of a lack of compassion, which refers to a 'sensitivity to the multiple approaches of life and the plural lives that inhabit and intersect different positions on its spectrum' (job, 2021, p.72).

I am not convinced that the public scrutiny of Khanyi as a gold-digger was really out of concern for her livelihood and safety, so much as a display of power and wealth emphasised as only available to a select few, despite the 'freedom for all' that democratic South Africa was meant to come with. I do not discuss the exploitative mechanisms in the neo-liberal South African state and how they manipulate people into low economic class positions here. Rather, I am focusing on a broader promise of freedom and equality, expressed in financial and economic terms, and the compromise of this promise. In so doing, I engage possible hidden secrets surrounding the figure of the gold-digger. It is general knowledge that South Africa is a country riddled with inequality, as a legacy of the

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apartheid regime and poor governance. The lifestyles of wealthy and/or educated Black South Africans have consequently been viewed as empowering and alienating at the same time (Morwe, 2014). Morwe (2014) points out that the emergence of a Black elite 'after' regimes of deprivation and dispossession is often placed within a binary of empowered or perverted, and lacking regard for the poor majority in the post-apartheid state. Khanyi, while 'wealthy' by virtue of having a wealthy husband, is caught between these perceptions, but is also simultaneously caught up in certain gender expectations.

> She contains multitudes of personalities, as anyone who symbolizes a nation's secrets and dreams must (Mofokeng 2012, p.15).

Madondo (2012) points out that every 'type' of woman desires to be able to provide for their needs and wants. The Doobsies, the 'good girls' and 'strong women' alike, all occupy the same space and share common desires. To single some women out for this is pretentious. However, more generally, Black young people in post-apartheid South Africa hold specific class aspirations, which is why the typology of 'Black Excellence' holds as much significance as it does. The Historical and Current Events Dictionary (2022) defines Black Excellence as the 'high level of achievement, success, or ability demonstrated by an individual black person or Black people in general'. I am uncertain of where this excellence begins and ends, and whether it includes women like Khanyi. Khanyi's story, while not without its dangers, reflects the broader ambitions of many Black South Africans previously denied the material wealth of our white counterparts (Madondo, 2012). Television can also operate as a medium of socialisation, and articulate material desires (Ives 2007). Televised displays of wealth and consumption have only increased, and Ives (2007) observes that television had become increasingly obsessed with portraying a Black middle class, their conspicuous consumption and individuality. Taking into consideration the class ambitions of some South Africans under the democratic dispensation, the posturing of Johannesburg as the City of Gold holds the same mystique as 'The American Dream;' within this, the 'gold-digger' tag is appropriate for *anyone* digging, working for and desiring economic security.

And that's the thing that grates our nerves about Mbau. She is an ordinary girl who exposes our ordinariness while willing us to dream, costume-play or idealise ourselves as beings we can only dream about: Cinderellas, princes in shining armour and so on (Madondo, 2012).

Khanyi's audacity, in both the past and present, reveals the uncomfortable desire for women to be disconnected from one another by operating outside of compassion and within regimes of shame. In Chapter Seven, I discussed how Lebo referred to herself as a material girl in her song, My Love. Lebo coded the desire for wealth and wealthy partnership earlier than Khanyi, but because it was 'hidden' in song, it went unnoticed and unscrutinised. As Madondo (2012) asserts, Khanyi was the material girl in plain sight, revealing the hidden desires of a disgruntled nation. When we buy into certain expressions of femininity as shameful and participate in the shaming, we cast one another out and are disconnected (Tolman, 2018). I have noted several social media posts from women casting Khanyi out, and effectively shaming others occupying similar positions not considered respectable. However, based on my observations, it was and continues to be mostly men who do the slut shaming. In 2010 (1 December), a female Twitter user tweeted, '"God blessed me by finding a rich man"- Khanyi Mbau!!! Wow this girl has no morals I swear!!! If I was her mom I would actually be ASHAMED'. Another woman on Twitter said '#twothingsthatdontmix Khanyi Mbau & decency/motherhood/love/getting/fully/dressed/morals/vision/elegance/classy/nor mality/MONEY' (3 October 2010). These tweets emerged only a few months into Khanyi's relationship with Mandla, but Khanyi has shown us over her years in the public eye that she is not monolithic or unidimensional or even predictable, as I will discuss in the following sections.

Intersections between reinventions as feminist praxis and technology

When I began this work, what I did not find on Khanyi was the multiple identities she has, and the many reinventions of self that she has journeyed through. Like Madondo (2012), I found Khanyi the gold-digger and the jezebel constantly in

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contrast with Khanyi the wife, the mother, the artist. In this section, I explore Khanyi's usage of reinvention at various points of her public life, and how she exhibits the power of giving herself room to shift into different things when needed, rather than being confined by the scripts handed to her in our societies. In this case, reinvention is not only rebellious, but is also erotic. If we are to understand Lorde's (1978) erotic as the claim of our full creative life force, we can see that reinvention is part and parcel of that.

> You are not indebted to who you were three years ago (Khanyi Mbau, 2021 in Mbau Reloaded: Always Rise).

I am reminded of Foucault's (1988) theory of 'technologies of the self' that I discussed in Chapter Three, which is a process where we use devices ranging from written, digital, mechanical and otherwise to socially construct personal identities. Countering the suspension of disbelief in television like the soap opera is the emergence of reality television as a confessional genre. Aslama and Pantii (2006) assert that this confessional culture, which involves sharing individual feelings and revelations, has become central and of interest to television viewers and media scholars. Promoting self-disclosure through the use of the monologue to direct the truth of the subject creates the impression of authenticity, but also promotes a shift in television from mass representational medium to a first-person medium of addressing multitudes of individuals (Aslama & Pantii, 2006). In her reality TV show available on Showmax, Mbau Reloaded: Always Rise (2021), Khanyi redirects the focus to other aspects of her life. The title of the show is meant to counter the narratives of Khanyi's downfall following from her divorce and disengagement with older, wealthier men. Khanyi lists her 13-year-old daughter, Khanukani Mbau, as both cast and co-director in the description of the reality show. Throughout the season, she draws specific attention to her life as a mother, and we are made aware that Khanyi has not seen or spent time with her daughter in a few months due to work commitments. One of the scenes captures mother and daughter in conversation about the matter, and Khanyi eventually apologises for being absent, commits to doing better and asserts that she and her daughter will

move on from this momentary disconnection in a bid to negate shame. In Young, Famous and African (2022), a reality TV show on Netflix that features Khanyi Mbau and other young wealthy Africans, Khanyi actively flaunts her wealth by emphasising that she lives in and frequents the richest square mile in Africa, Sandton, and owns various luxury cars. Khanyi also shares how her teenage daughter lives in her own apartment, paid for by Khanyi, and in so doing draws her own parenting parameters, gesturing at those who challenge her parenting by insisting it is not appropriate mothering. Khanyi insists that she lives her life, as an individual and mother, in ways that make sense to her and fulfil her. She is complex and will continuously reinvent herself in the ways that she desires.

Entertainment journalist Kedibone Modise (2022) recently wrote,

> …her longevity and the manner she has managed to reinvent herself over the nearly two decades of her fame is no small feat.

In the very first episode of Mbau Reloaded: Always Rise (2021), Khanyi describes herself as an enigma, difficult to read, complex and nuanced. She is on the phone with an unidentified man as she does her shopping, but she does not reveal his identity, and her production team muffles his name whenever she did use it to ensure his identity was protected. After this phone call, Khanyi's emphasises to viewers that he is 'just a friend' because 'she knows you guys', gesturing to her past, while situating herself as a different version of Khanyi. It has been over a decade since her infamous relationship and titling as a gold-digger. Even when she was cast to play Lebo Mathosa in a musical tribute at the state theatre in 2012, that was not enough to distract the public from her gold-digger status (Madondo, 2012). However, she has asserted that she was the wife to a wealthy man, thus unsettling narratives of the jezebel and gold-digging woman. Emphasising her role as a wife complicates her reading as a young woman involved in a transactional relationship. Being a wife meant that she should be 'respectable,' but her youthfulness and the wealth of her partner brought her under public moral scrutiny. In the newer (2022) reality show mentioned earlier, Young, Famous and African,

Khanyi addresses the public attacks she faced. She speaks specifically to being called a gold-digger because of her past with older and wealthy men.

In her biography, Khanyi shares how she had struggled with her husband as he became increasingly violent and publicly unfaithful, as he began having affairs with other women (Mofokeng, 2012). She also explained how she had been blindsided by her marriage and neglected her craft of acting. Following her separation from Mandla, and her relationship with Theunis, Khanyi had become only a distant memory as Doobsie, a role she was written out of within one year because she had grown inconsistent in performance and delivery. In her biography, Khanyi admits two things. The first is that she loved her husband, and the second is that he did provide her with a luxurious life. The couple's displays of wealth also earned them public attention and, for Khanyi, it earned her public moral scrutiny. An example of their conspicuous consumption was purchasing matching Lamborghinis which they flaunted to the media. while in matching designer clothes. At the time the biography was authored, Khanyi was 27 year's old.

In a 2019 podcast interview, available on YouTube, with a South African radio personality MacG, Khanyi is asked about her relationship with Mandla and whether she was in love with him. Podcasts are audio files capturing topical conversations between people (Jham *et al.*, 2008). They are uploaded on various online platforms for access and listening at a time most convenient for the listener, and have been able to reach wide audiences because listeners do not have to link to a specific location to listen to the conversation. Podcasts can also be accessed on cellphones, making it easier to follow a conversation, even when busy. In Khanyi's interview with MacG, she admits that she only realised later on in her adult life, when the marriage ended, that Mandla had used money to reel her into their relationship, all while exploiting her own financial aspirations. In this interview, she very clearly says that she did not love him, but viewed him rather as a figure of success and a hero. However, she also states that she was not embarrassed for dating wealthy and older men. She was a rich wife and the nation's gold-digger simultaneously.

Khanyi has since put in a lot of work to revive her career as an actress, writer and producer. Since 2012, she has starred in several television shows, such as Ashes to Ashes (2015), Abomama (2018) and Uzalo (2018); films like Happiness is a Four Letter Word (2016) and Red Room (2019); the ShowMax telenovela, The Wife (2021); and Netflix's Young, Famous and African (2022). She has also done work in radio as a presenter on prime-time shows on Metro FM, one of the oldest and most established local radio stations. I also think it is important to highlight how Khanyi continues to take on acting roles that speak to how she has been represented and interpreted, but also how she occupies positionalities other than that of the extravagant gold-digger. For example, in Happiness is A Four Letter Word (2016), she plays the character Zaza who is married to a wealthy man. They have two children together, but he never has time for her, and she has an affair with another man. This narrative of Khanyi's personal life is of course very familiar to us at this point. In the show, Abomama (2018), Khanyi plays Tshidi who, along with three other women, are devout Christian women and respected in their community in Soweto. This group of women turns their stokvel into a money-laundering scheme, which Tshidi encourages and is enthused about. Again, the theme of being money-driven is played out, while also emphasising the respectability of the church, and women in the church in particular. While depicting these characters as fiction, Khanyi is actually working in her craft and leverages the attention and shame accrued to her past. Therefore, there is a link between her role and actual life as a hard-working actress and producer, and how this connection relates to her reinvention and longevity since her marriage to Mandla Mthembu. Khanyi has spoken about the value of working in previous years, and asserted that, while depending financially on wealthy men is a short cut to some form of security, this is not always sustainable because older wealthy men can be violent and manipulative, although others are wealthy and genuine.

I do not want to divert too much into a discussion on the power relations between these older, wealthy men and younger women. This is because often, these debates continue to work solely as cautionary tales for women, like in the works of Jackie Phamotse (2017). Selisho (2019) has also argued that Phamotse's work is

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largely myopic and works within a paradigm of shame, rather than that of compassion and nuanced interpretation. Zembe *et al.* (2013) make a similar assertion. Of course, relationships where there is a significant age gap do have dangers (see Leclerc-Madlala, 2008; George *et al.*, 2019), among them the possibility of violence, given power inequalities (Hoss & Blokland 2018). As in the case of Khanyi, whose marriage became violent, men like Mandla are not allowed to be abusive towards women simply because they are financially superior. It is wrong to argue that women involved with older, wealthier men should do so with the knowledge that these men are inherently abusive, or will abuse them, rather than addressing and reprimanding the perpetrators of this abuse. Khanyi has attested to this abuse, and so has Jackie Phamotse (2017) who was once also involved with older, wealthy men. However, even in the event of abuse, the women are victim-blamed for having entered those relationships in the first place. The point here is not to avoid the potential dangers involved in relationships between older men and younger women, but to highlight that not all women are actually involved in relationships as a transaction to exploit wealth men. By collapsing all these kinds of relationships as simply transactional, Zembe *et al.* (2013) believe we neglect to consider that monetary exchange in sexual and romantic relationships can also be a symbol of love. Not every woman involved with wealthier and older men is trading sex for money. These relationships are not always 'transactional sex' or sex work, a term which arose to counter the morally entangled term of prostitution (Bindman, 1997). Sex work is defined as a profession, rendering it an income-generating activity, and should be considered as any other economic activity. Transactional sex is usually described as a relationship where sex is exchanged for money and material goods, and usually occurs between young women and older men (Zembe, 2011).

Like Thompson (2016), I do not suggest that women should or should not exploit wealthy men, but rather argue that women's reasons for getting involved with their partners should not be questioned, especially since men's reasons are not questioned either. In any case, women's desire for financial security from men is not new, or morally dubious. As discussed in Chapter Five, Brenda revealed

publicly that she decided to divorce her husband at the time, Nhlanhla Mbambo, because he would not give her money, even though she had her own. Secondly, I think it also important to acknowledge the ways that older wealthy men associating with young women sets up an unequal power relation that is shielded by the over-arching tendency of slut-shaming the women. These old men have been termed 'blessers' to 'blessees' or 'gold-diggers' (Frieslaar & Masango, 2021), but there is no public condemnation of their role in the unequal dynamic.

The immediate reading of Khanyi's relationship with Mandla as purely transactional shows that women who do not adhere to the acceptable and sanctioned gendered performance will be shamed and placed into a limiting category. The lack of complexity of women's lives is dangerous because it creates meta-narratives of morality that produce figures like the gold-digger and prostitute, even though these women, like Khanyi, are also simultaneously mothers and wives, as well as other identities, such as actress and entrepreneur. Below is an image of Khanyi Mbau and her ex-husband Mandla Mthembu, in matching outfits. Behind the couple, we see their matching yellow sports cars. In the next image, Khanyi captures herself sitting with legs open on a yellow sports car. It is 2019, and Khanyi has completely reinvented herself as an actress, producer, presenter and entrepreneur. She posted this image on Twitter and captioned it, 'What was will always be #IAMKHANYI' (25 July, 2019). Khanyi is gesturing to her past, that has generally been considered shameful, while situating herself as different and independent by deliberately posing alone. She also sits on the vehicle, marking her territory and assertively claiming her past without shame. In 2021, Khanyi eventually purchased her own yellow car, but not a Lamborghini this time. Although the photo below illustrates Khanyi sitting on a Lamborghini, this image was staged and is not the car she purchased. Instead Khanyi purchased a yellow Porsche sports car, which she gestures to her past, while also focusing the attention on her present and future, differentiated by her new yellow car brand.

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[31] Photographed by Simphiwe Nkwali (2007) cited in Motsepe, C. (2010). Mandla kicked out of motel as he fails to pay. The Sowetan. Accessed on: https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2010-04-21-mandla-kicked-out-of-motel-as-he-fails-to-pay/

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The recent image of Khanyi sitting on a yellow car above reminds me of the image of Brenda Fassie below.

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[33] Photographed by Brett Ellof cited in Madondo, B. (2014). *I'm Not Your Weekend Special.* Picador Africa

Brenda stands with her legs open, with her back to the camera. She tilts her face back to cheekily face the camera while she leans towards her red sports car. Similar to the image of Khanyi, she also wears long snake-skin boots. Both women posture themselves as completely in control. In Brenda's interview with Blignaut, In Bed with Brenda, Blignaut describes also this red sports car as top of the range. In Not a Bad Girl, there are a few scenes that follow Brenda as she drives around the township in her luxury car, and asserts that she is not afraid of driving in the township because she was part of the community and therefore always made to feel safe. We see how onlookers identify Brenda because of the red car because it is exclusive, especially at a time when Black people were still under repressive apartheid rule, and the Black middle class was scarce in the early transitional years. It is also evident that Brenda and the car excite people as they gather around her in admiration. Similarly, Khanyi's biography details how road users often cheered her on when she first drove her yellow sports car, which had been bought by her husband at the time (Mofokeng, 2012). Khanyi reflects on her experience of driving in downtown Johannesburg, and how taxi drivers and passengers would stare, with some hooting and whistling at her. It is clear that Black wealthy women – whether independent or sponsored or both – are not a new phenomenon. However, it is also clear that certain Black wealthy women are considered more inspirational than others, because Brenda was not scrutinised for her luxury branding through an expensive sports car, whereas Khanyi was subject to shame, because she was involved with an older and wealthy man. This leads me back to my earlier assertion about desiring prosperity. Based on differences in the reception to Brenda's conspicuous consumption and Khanyi's, which is mostly viewed as 'sponsored', it becomes important to engage the possibility that there are perceived moral limitations to women's acquisition of wealth. There is a 'good' way and a 'bad way' to prosperity, although it all remains lodged in classism and sexism, since the figure of the gold-digger is gendered. Some economic disparities are more tolerable than others.

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Is this what a slay queen looks like?

> Each generation takes us closer to the light. We are the direct generation after Lebo, we were entirely influenced by her. How we think, how we dress, what music we listen to, how we expose ourselves (Khanyi Mbau in Blignaut, 2016).

In this section, I consider how Khanyi Mbau is linked to a contemporary femininity termed the slay queen, which I first introduced in Chapter Two. I seek to link Khanyi Mbau's past with the contemporary slay queen, while drawing attention to the ways that Khanyi is seen as the ancestor of slay queens in more recent years, as I will discuss. I also show that the ways slay queens are often described and misrepresented are not new, because we have witnessed this through women like Khanyi identifying and performing their femininity in similar ways before. This section also links the terminology of slay queen to queer ballroom culture, from which the figure is appropriated. I then re-locate myself within these contemporary articulations of femininity, drawing on the strategies used by women like Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi, as premised in the introductory chapter.

In more recent years, Khanyi has also been known for her skin-lightening journey. You will note differences in her complexion from the first image of Khanyi in this chapter, and the more recent image of her sitting on a yellow car. There is a plethora of literature written on Khanyi's skin-lightening, and how it intersects with histories of racism, colourism and gender discrimination (see Jacobs, 2016; Motshoadiba & Senokoane 2020). Khanyi is also known for other body modifications through plastic surgery. I do not discuss that here. Rather, I am interested in linking Khanyi's representation as a gold-digger with contemporary figures known as 'slay queens' in popular culture. Scholarly literature on what is understood as the figure of the slay queen is not yet wide, because it is a recent phenomenon. I rely on cultural blog posts, news articles and opinion pieces to construct a relationship between slay queens, self-expression and shame.

Kaundo Selisho (2019), a lifestyle journalist, recently wrote that the term 'slay queen' has been used inappropriately to insult women, rather than its intended affirmation of them. Selisho (2019) reminds us of a specific episode of the South

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African talk show, The Big Debate, that aired in March of 2019. In The Big Debate, Redi Tlhabi hosts and moderates debates in a round table format on topical issues related to South African politics, culture and lifestyle. In the episode that Selisho refers to, Khanyi Mbau was part of the audience. Redi Tlhabi (cited in Selisho, 2019) asked Khanyi to comment on the fact that, 'whether you accept it or not, you are seen as the original slay queen'. Khanyi responded by saying,

> The whole idea of saying I'm an ancestor or the original slay queen is really sad because I come from a generation of go-getters. Women that believe they want to make it. But then we live in a society where those in power want to take advantage of that because they have the resources and they see the hunger in young women such as myself (Selisho, 2019).

Selisho (2019) points out how women identified as slay queens have been understood as contemporary gold-diggers, in the same way that Khanyi was identified in the early-late 2000s. In Khanyi's response to the assertion that she is the 'original slay queen', she concedes to the dominant meaning-making of slay queens as derogatory, while also suggesting that the term gets lost in translation. Selisho (2019) reminds us that 'slay' is an instructional term that has its origins in the LTGBTQIA+ community, and the ballroom drag culture. Hobson (2014) provides a history of ballroom as an LGBTQIA+ subculture, whose constituents have mainly been Black and Hispanic people in the context of the US. The ballroom culture is shaped by performances, music, fashion, and various gendered and sexual identities, through which ties of kinship in the LGBTQIA+ community are forged (Hobson, 2014; Feigel, 2018). Ballroom culture is sometimes known as 'house culture,' where the 'houses' are family-oriented collectives that compete in various categories during the balls. Among the categories in ballroom culture are dance, fashion runway categories, lip-sync battle and 'realness' (Feigel, 2018). The realness category involves members of the ball dressing up and embodying themselves in a style that makes them 'pass' as heteronormative women and men. Jennie Livingstone's (1990) documentary, Paris is Burning, has played a role in popularising ballroom culture in the mainstream by also depicting the LGBTQIA+ community's participation in the various categories (Hobson, 2014).

In thinking of Livingstone's (1990) Paris is Burning, I am reminded of a recent series, Pose (2018-2021) created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, and Steven Canals. Pose is set in the 1980s in the US, and depicts ballroom culture and the struggles of the LGBTQIA+ community. I am particularly drawn to the 'realness' categories on Pose, and the cultural labour involved in aesthetically and behaviourally 'passing' in the category. The character of Elektra Abundance, who has her own 'house' known as 'House of Abundance, is hailed throughout the seasons of Pose as 'the queen', especially in the realness categories that perform femininity. Elektra is a transgender woman who is tall, dark-skinned, majestic and has impeccable fashion sense. As women like Elektra compete in the categories of realness, we hear the audience cheer 'yaaas!', 'Slay'! Long manicured nails, professional makeup, well-styled hair and wigs, and the swaying of hips in absolute confidence are the response to the assertion to 'slay, queen,' as those competing against and with Elektra are identified and affirmed as royalty. In ballroom culture, slaying refers to 'killing it', or 'doing well,' according to the Slang Dictionary (2018). In particular, one is said to be slaying when their hair, makeup, outfit and attitude are well constructed and flawless (Slang Dictionary, 2018). RuPaul's Drag Race, as a televised version of the ballroom culture, is also cited as a show that contributed to the popularisation of 'slay' in 2009. Slay has become mainstream and appropriated by heterosexual women but also, unfortunately, patriarchal models of shame, which I will unpack.

US musician, Beyoncé's music has been cited as popularising the instruction to slay, particularly in her 2016 album, Lemonade, which included a single, Formation, in which she instructs us to 'slay, trick or you get eliminated'. Kehrer (2018) notes that Beyoncé draws on the language of ballroom culture, where it would usually be the master of ceremonies at a ball that would encourage the houses competing in the various categories to 'slay' or they lose, but that she uses queer slang without crediting its origin, while profiting from the song. In Formation, Beyoncé goes on to instruct, 'ladies, now let's get in formation,' to which the response has been 'yas, queen! Slay' by female audiences (Slang Dictionary, 2018). 'Slay,' and the aesthetic of slaying, have crossed over into non-queer Black

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and women's spaces. For some Black women specifically, it was appropriated in affirming ways, whereas for those subscribing to patriarchal logics of reading affirmative and confidently self-expressive women, the term 'slay' has been given shameful meaning.

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Similar to Pose's Eleketra, pictured above, and the general labour involved in dressing up well and 'passing', in recent years there has been increasing visibility of women fashioning themselves in makeup, hair extensions, manicured long nails, trendy clothes, confidence and assertion in South Africa, and more so on social

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[34] A Shutterstock image of Mother Elektra slaying during a ball in Pose, sourced from Tourjee, D. (2018). Pose shines a revolutionary light on trans lives. Time. Accessed on: https://time.com/5296664/ryan-murphy-pose/

media platforms. Dosekun (2020) refers to these women as spectacularly feminine, capturing them as hyper-visible and drawing the eye. Dosekun also argues that women dressing up and styling themselves carefully is a transnational trend that is not new in Africa generally. However, she thinks of these spectacular femininities within the context of Nigeria as distinct from other forms of beautiful self-styling. In South Africa, we refer to this form of femininity as slaying, or to be a slay queen.

I unfortunately do not include images of women who style themselves in the ways described above, out of ethical concern for their safety. Some women have responded to these displays of slaying affirmatively. However, many others, such as men and some women, have misappropriated the instruction to slay, and redefined it as an adjective to describe women who 'look good' as slay queens (with the removal of the comma in 'slay, queen'). The assumption is that women who do their makeup and wear vibrant and trendy clothes are either engaged in transactional sex, or involved with wealthy, older men, like Khanyi once was (Selisho, 2019). Moreover, by insinuating that slay queens are inherently and can only be engaged in transactional relationships, it is also suggested that transactional relationships are wrong (Selisho, 2019).

The affirmative instruction of slay has been colonised back into the regime of shame that constructed the gold-digger. Slay queens therefore serve dual roles in the South African imaginary. First, they are women operating in the affirmative invitation to self-express in ways that we desire, while also encouraging us to be the best version of ourselves in every aspect (Selisho, 2019). These are the qualities appropriated from queer slay. However, the marking of certain women as slay queens as derogatory is based on the perceived impossibility of women with a certain appearance and behaviour being smart or educated or employed and financially self-sufficient. It is suggested that the slay queen is in binary opposition to an independent, self-sufficient and respectable woman.

In Chapter Three, I discuss my own experience of being called a 'slay queen'. In the image of myself below, I am sitting with my favourite cocktail at one of my

favourite cocktail bars in Johannesburg. My off-the-shoulder top slides down my broad shoulders, and has a plunging v-neckline. My cleavage is out. My manicured hands hold my Long Island cocktail, as I take a sip. Following the straw from the base of the glass to its tip, you see my face. I have eyelashes that are probably 5 kilometres long (always), and a full face of makeup. A long jet-black, bone-straight wig hangs down the side of my right shoulder. However, unlike Khanyi Mbau, Lebo Mathosa and Brenda Fassie, I am not slender. Selisho (2019) reminds us that part of the 'markers' of slay queens also include being slender and specifically having an hourglass figure.

"Are you married to a Minister?"

"What do you do?"

These words stay with me because they always escape the mouths of people who wonder too much about women's business. I have included other stories about people's wonder about my femininity in the second chapter, as my point of departure into the research. Because of my choices in appearance and presentation, I often am subject to questions concerning my line of work, to determine how 'respectable' I am. Also, from the discussion on Khanyi Mbau's representation and reinvention practices, I am aware of the meanings ascribed to women like her, like me, that seek only to relate us to men and access to men's assumed wealth. Additionally, while I present mostly in terms of fashioning and adorning my body, similar to women defined as slay queens in derogatory ways, I am also read as a potential wife to someone. I am not sure why that is, and perhaps it is because I am fat and therefore look old enough to be married. Nonetheless, what I look like is still tied to an assumption that a wealthy man sponsors my lifestyle, how I choose to look and represent myself. Provoking and irritating these gendered regimes of power, but most importantly, claiming my embodied power and full creative life force, as Lorde (1978) encourages to do as an exercise of the erotic, I think of myself as an academic slay queen.

[35]*Academic slay queen*

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Returning to myself at this point of the research, which I began with personal short stories in Chapter Three, helps me understand a few things regarding representation and respectability. If we appropriate 'slay' in the affirmative queer context from which it originates to also describe someone as a slay queen, which I personally do, it is an affirming identity because it infuses several aspects of who we are and could be as women. I can conclude now that to be a slay queen means that I can be fashionable, beautiful, feel and look good, be intelligent, ambitious and hard-working all at once is important for the actualisation of the erotic. I also occupy a middle-class position and desire financial freedom. Unfortunately, this reinscribes the capitalist model of labour and exploitation for the provision of our needs, but we also cannot ignore the economic desires people have in contexts that are becoming increasingly difficult to survive in. A return to the meaning and intention of slay as grounded in queer community practice is important for our (Black women's) reclamation of the slay queen identity. It also means that we can claim women like Lebo Mathosa as slay queens. As evidenced in Chapter Six, I show how Lebo dressed in ways understood as provocative, but was also a pioneer in the world of music rights, because she was the first Black woman to negotiate to own her music rights, before her untimely death (Livermon, 2020). Brenda was not conventionally beautiful, which she acknowledges when she shares that people, especially some journalists, have called her ugly (Madondo, 2014), but she was very stylish and deliberate about altering her outfits for different performances, occasions and effects, as discussed in Chapter Five. She was also one of the best-selling artists of her time (Madondo, 2014). These women did well for themselves and slayed, or 'killed it,' and have since inspired us to slay in our own unique yet connected ways.

Therefore, as I reclaim the slay queen identity, I also note that how I fashion and adorn my body, how I claim ownership over my beauty, my ambitions and the work that I do and am involved with, and the various aspects of my life to which I commit to growing and improving, are not going to look the same as Khanyi Mbau's version of slaying her life. Neither is this going to look the same as Lebo Mathosa's version of slaying, or Brenda's. By making reference to Brenda and Lebo as slaying, I

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position the cultural labour of holistic self-expression, of slaying, as not new, and certainly not exclusive to the last five to ten years in South Africa. Slaying as epistemic offers an opportunity to harness our creative life force, as Lorde (1978) has called us to do, while also negating the binarisms put in place to read us legibly as 'good' or 'bad' women. In so doing, the model of shame that disconnects us is frustrated by a rebellious epistemology of reading women as complex, nuanced and shifting (Tolman, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The short and ongoing life of Khanyi reveals the gender-binaried and sexist representations of women that have been endorsed in popular culture forms like television and fiction. Khanyi emerged in public consciousness not just as Doobsie, the fictitious villain in Muvhango, but as a real-life figure who, along with being young, was also flamboyant, flashy, married young and publicly visible in these positionalities. The public curiosity around Khanyi's life emanated from her romantic relationship with Mandla Mthembu, because he was older and wealthy. The representational shift of Khanyi from actress to gold-digger is one that I have demonstrated works within a model of shame that seeks to cast certain women out as a reminder of what happens to women who do not work within acceptable gender performances. Slut-shaming also works to disconnect women from one another, with the consequences of reinscribing binaries that we ourselves do not fit neatly and solidly in. Positioning Khanyi only as a national cautionary tale has ignored the various other positionalities that Khanyi, and women in general, shift between. Khanyi's reinvention as an actress, presenter and entrepreneur, as well as her emphasis on her identity as a mother, work to counter the hegemonic narrative of the shameful gold-digger. At the same time, Khanyi's proximity to wealth and conspicuous consumption is not entirely new, as I have shown with Brenda Fassie's expensive assets. However, the scrutiny given to Khanyi is related directly to the shame that is attached to her past as a young and wealthy wife during a time when the promise of freedom in democratic South Africa was and remains contested by inequality and poverty. The desires or the hidden

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secrets, which I call open secrets, of the nation have always included freedom in all forms, such as the freedom of expression and financial freedom. In Khanyi's pursuit of freedoms enshrined in the constitution, she engaged in a number of things simultaneously, which I insist should not be read as shameful. Khanyi was married to a wealthy man, and admitted that her financial comfort at the time was provided by him. However, she was also a skilled artist in the entertainment industry, which she returned to after her divorce. We are reminded by Khanyi that she emerged from the influence of a history of assertive, confident and 'go-getting' women like Brenda Fassie and Lebo Mathosa. By using the word 'go-getter', Khanyi also signals that working for financial freedom does not ever have to concede to standards that dictate what respectable work is. In the queer ballroom culture instruction to 'Slay, Queen!', there is no wrong or right way of expressing your best self. Working in the affirmative tradition of ballroom culture to appreciate ourselves as Slay Queens means recognising the context from which 'slay' comes. Using slay to read our efforts of expressing ourselves, understanding our contexts, life-histories, reinventing ourselves through compassion and working towards the actualisations of our freedoms is a form of reclaiming our full life-force without shame.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I reflect on some of the questions I posed in the introduction. However, rather than responding to each question that was helpful in guiding the structure of each chapter, I revise these questions so that they become reflective, rather than directive. I return to the main guiding question for this research, which asked what we can learn from reading the biographies, and theory related to these biographies, of women like Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau. This concluding chapter also provides some key insights into how femininities can be articulated as rebellious, what this means and what we learn about freedom, agency and desire. I also reflect on some broader concerns relating to the South African nation that have been revealed through the exploration of the lives of Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau. As stated earlier, these conclusions are drawn from a multi-modal process of constructing and reading partial biographies in and through theory, and also through my own experience. In the methodology, I argue for a choreographic approach, which I have done specifically in relation to the reading and construction of the biographies of Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi. This research relied on a creative and complex dance between various biographical sources such as music, visuals, news articles and social media discourses. There was also a dance between biography, political context, space, time, individuality and collectives. The specificity of the interlocutors may be read more as a diffraction, where the individual lives of Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi can help us to think about ourselves, and other women claiming rebellious femininity, more generally.

What do the biographies of Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau tell us about freedom, desire and agency in South Africa in recent history and currently?

In Chapter Five**,** journeying through the life of Brenda revealed how she not only occupied multiple shifting femininities simultaneously, but also used her music to inspire and encourage her listeners to reimagine femininities beyond the

restrictions of respectability and particular versions of femininity. Her performance of Weekend Special, for example, both inspires kinaesthetic memories of celebration, while simultaneously noting the possibilities that exist for women whose male partners are working away from home as migrant labourers. Halliday (2020) reminds us that kinaesthetic memories are bodily and sensory movements that remind us of a time, history and affect. Similarly, in Chapter Six, I describe how Lebo used kinaesthetic memory to remind us of our entitlement to freedom from apartheid repression, through imagination and playfulness in her music and dance songs like Ntozabantu. For Brenda, the kinaesthetic memory that she highlights is through Weekend Special, which points to repressive apartheid laws, but also the capacity for women to still dance and express their femininity in ways they desire. The descriptions of Brenda's Weekend Special as haunting and electrifying (Madondo, 2014) also demonstrate a particular post-feminist sensibility, in which the affects produced in and through popular culture are revealed (Gill, 2020). We cannot help but to dance to Brenda, because she communicates in ways that are beyond the song itself. She is haunting and opens up a hauntological perspective, not allowing herself or her work to be forgotten, and inviting us to look again and to look into.

Brenda's Weekend Special asks us to consider that alternate and multiple possibilities exist for Black women when their husbands are away. Rather than dominant assumptions, which suggest that these women are not romantically engaged and are strictly monogamous, Brenda opens up room to think about agency in the ways that Bakare-Yusuf (2003) suggests. i.e. as 'power to' and 'power over', denoting capacity and limitations and, in this case, capacities and limitations framed by the migrant labour system, the absence of men and the impossibility of monogamy. Brenda reveals a host of possible femininities in the context of absent men, but also of women's desire and agency in general, through which we sing and dance along in pursuit of our own truths. You can be a weekend special or not, or you could not care to be either, and that is ok. Of course, Brenda strategically juxtaposes this narrative by presenting as a Good Black Woman, speaking against a police officer who arrested her brother. In order to avoid being

mistreated or violated, Brenda introduces herself as a Good Black Woman and, for a moment, we forget about the Weekend Special. Brenda shows us how to manoeuvre between situation and context, while still exercising agency. I imagine that when Brenda shifts between the multiple femininities that she embodies publicly, she is also resisting and using different strategies for each situation to disidentify from the hegemonic publics (Munoz, 1999).

In analysing her music as text, as well as its reception, I have been able to learn about women and apartheid as agentic and desiring beings despite their context, the circumstances of their marriages, and the gender norms imposed on women. Throughout the chapter, I demonstrated Brenda's complication of agency as a central theme. The reading of agency, even in contexts that would deem it impossible, means reading through nuance and beneath the surface. Reading beneath the surfaces of Brenda's music, lyrics, videos, interviews and performances means reading against the backdrop of the context and atmosphere within which she existed. Similarly, reading beneath the surface of the representations, art productions and media discourses of women like Lebo and Khanyi have revealed several possibilities for negotiation rebellious femininities. Brenda emerged and was popularised under a violent apartheid regime characterised by active resistance, militarised masculinities and intensified police brutality, the repression of sexuality and the emergence of the HIV/AIDs epidemic, as well as more visible constructions of women as 'infecting prostitutes' (Tsampiras, 2010). The repression of sexualities and the HIV/AIDS epidemic brought with it many suspicions regarding women like Brenda, and the women who stayed when their husbands left for work. Against Brenda's public modelling of herself as sexually liberated, while coding various possibilities for other women's sexualities simultaneously, she was aware of the repression of sexualities and the marking of women as 'improper,' or worse, as the 'infecting prostitutes' from whom their husbands contract HIV/AIDS.

Brenda was also caught in the transition to democracy, where notions of reconciliation, togetherness and the 'family' were advanced as a form of redress.

This notion of family and togetherness underpins the concept of Ubuntu, as discussed consistently throughout the thesis. Brenda appeals to family in her music as a unifying entity capable of not only dismantling apartheid, but also of ending violence against women in the township. She leveraged her public fame to speak out against some topical issues like gang rape, by appealing to perpetrators and community as family and as brothers. She also represented herself familiarly in early democratic South Africa, the post-1994 period, by fashioning herself in traditional attire and school uniforms, as a way of re-situating herself as the nation's daughter, after her struggles with drug abuse. Lebo also does some work to appeal to the concept of humanity and treating each other well on the basis of Ubuntu in her music, all while swaying her hips and gyrating to the seductive sounds of her song Ntozabantu. Unlike Brenda, Lebo challenged the authority of parenthood by using song and dance that was both provocative and commemorative of South African history and nation-building processes, such as Boom Shaka's remixed dance version of the national anthem. Women like Khanyi Mbau, however, do not leverage any national sentiments about family and Ubuntu in their rebellion, but rather draw boundaries, through which she asserts that her life decisions are part of her living out her desires, as well as the nation's.

Brenda's life, paralleling some key historical moments, demonstrated how she manoeuvred through her context, and embodied rebellion as intersectional and situated. While speaking to apartheid violence and brutality in her works, like Good Black Woman, Brenda also revealed her desires to the public and engaged the media, mostly because she wanted to be known as a certain kind of woman. By giving the media access to her private affairs, Brenda refused the secrecy expected of women like her. She declared, through her own performances and public practices, that there are Black women who like sex, who enjoy drinking beer, who smoke and speak loudly, women who desire the relationships that they desire, whether with men or women or both. At the same time, media representations of Brenda failed to account for her as complex and nuanced, by only showing her as 'bad' or 'wild,' to remind us, especially Black women, that to be like Brenda would

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mean to go against the classed, raced and gendered scripts aimed at maintaining a heteronormative capitalist society.

Her iconic interview, In Bed with Brenda (1992), shows us Brenda's public performance of desire, especially sexually, but also a desire to be given attention, to be written about, especially at a time when Black women were often ignored as historical producers. Brenda's denial of being lesbian in 1992 was consistent with the repressive laws against queer people, and the violence enacted on queer bodies at the time. Brenda alludes to not being 'free' to disclose her sexuality as lesbian but, early in democracy, when LGBTQIA+ people were given equal constitutional rights, Brenda re-introduced herself as lesbian. Similarly, Lebo Mathosa's sexuality was always a matter of public interest, as demonstrated in this thesis, and she initially denied being bisexual. Later referring to herself as a 'double adapter', Lebo continued to ambiguously perform herself as not-heteronormative. We know, of course, that Lebo meant that she was bisexual when she called herself a double adapter, but this naming of herself also signposted the broader homophobic context of the 2000s, with queer people in South Africa facing violence and murders. In this regard, both Brenda and Lebo showed an awareness of the heteronormative and homophobic violence surrounding them, and they both used their ambiguity to appeal to more than the dominant heteronormative publics. Brenda and Lebo used strategies of survival and resistance, all while curating themselves in ways that were rebellious but widely adored by their audiences. They showed us disidentification in practice. While both Brenda and Lebo expressed their sexuality more openly within democratic South Africa, they also drew our attention to the meanings and limitations of freedom. While they were similar, and used similar survival, resistance and re-construction practices for the embodiment of their femininity, Lebo also actively defamilarised herself from Brenda and her music group, Boom Shaka, as a practice of freedom. Freedom is then imagined as a state or conditions under which certain desires and practices of agency can be made apparent, rather than coded and ambiguous. Because freedom produces affects like euphoria, it is no wonder some marginalised people feel that they can live as they had always desired.

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Chapter Six broadly reveals the very limitations of freedom for Black women in post-apartheid South Africa, by situating freedom and kwaito music as genres of the post-apartheid state. The kwaito music group Boom Shaka, which featured Lebo Mathosa as the lead vocalist and Thembi Seete as the rapper, imagined and claimed freedom as a new right, which was interpreted by the kwaito music genre and more vibrant, sexy styles of dress. The centrality of Boom Shaka during the country's transition to democracy owed to its youthful character, because the band members were teenagers, and consequently influenced many young people at the time. As Xaso (2020) explains, Boom Shaka quickly became a band that young people, especially young Black women, resonated with, because of their declarations of freedom in songs like It's About time, the ways Thembi and Lebo gyrated and swirled their hips on stage, and the shorts and colourful hair they wore. Boom Shaka became an expression of freedom that gave other young people room to imagine their own version of freedom, following from a repressive and violent history under apartheid. The band, and especially the women in it, inspired a confident post-apartheid youth, and Lebo Mathosa was singled out as the poster girl for freedom. One such practice of freedom was Boom Shaka's kwaito version of the national anthem, for which the group received criticism. Still, many young people continued to listen to this version – as do I, actually. Boom Shaka were considered to be constitutional pioneers, daring to exercise their full legal rights to expression (Xaso, 2020). However, they were not without scrutiny and public critique from scholars like Bhekizizwe Peterson (2003), and from Nelson Mandela. Boom Shaka's history is riddled with both contempt and youthful affirmation. At play is the figuration of this band, particularly Lebo and Thembi, as children of the post-apartheid South African nation, whose guardians, Nelson Mandela and their actual parents, look on in distaste and exercise their hierarchal powers in the family to reprimand and rebuke. Therefore, this struggle demonstrated a struggle with freedom, which is of course unique from the struggles for freedom under apartheid.

Departing from the restrictions of musical and performance genres under apartheid, kwaito and Boom Shaka made music that appealed to their desires, their sense of confidence and freedom in the new South Africa. To struggle with

freedom means to struggle with the boundaries of freedom (Steingo, 2016). I think it is also important to note how Boom Shaka and its perceived controversy shows us the extent to which young women's bodies, in particular, are disproportionately surveilled and limited. This is a point that I demonstrate also in the last analytical chapter, when I discuss Khanyi Mbau and the surveillance of her life choices.

Leveraging the fame of an already disruptive Boom Shaka, in 2000, Lebo departed from the collective to differentiate herself in her solo career. Lebo's refusal to be confined to a single musical genre and sound marked her own way of rebelling against musical conventions. She pushed against being labelled solely as a kwaito artist, and delved into other genres like RnB, reggae and house music in each album. Lebo's way of imagining her self-expression was vast and relied on many sources; hence, her first solo album, Dream, inspires us to imagine beyond disciplinary bounds. Freedom is also the potential of the imagination, the power to dream and imagine beyond worlds we currently live. Lebo also became the first Black woman to own the rights to her music, demonstrating her understanding of freedom in relation to women's economic freedom and empowerment. These are rights previously denied to us under colonial and apartheid regimes. By insisting that she had both a public and a private persona, Lebo also asserted that she was in control of her narrative, because she gave out what she wanted to. Lebo also differentiated herself from Brenda, whose public and private personas were collapsed into one. This is what makes Lebo particularly a dangerous woman (Livermon, 2020). To me, dangerous women are rebellious women whose gender performance cannot be captured into a single state and cannot be said to be either 'good' or 'bad,' rather existing in the spaces between, pushing, pulling, repelling and confirming femininities in their multiple and shifting forms. Brenda certainly rebelled in complex ways that pushed, pulled, repelled, confirmed and complicated. However, what made Lebo dangerous was the fact that she kept parts of her life private, letting us know that she was in control of what we know about her.

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Finally, Lebo's style of dress, and calls to 'show your body' in her music in 2005, happened against the backdrop of violence enacted on women for 'showing their bodies' in the form of mini-skirts in public spaces like taxi ranks. The existence of this violence, along with affirmation from women like Lebo encouraging skimpy fashion, revealed two main things. The first is that freedom for women is limited, because our choices in social and cultural spaces are still very much regulated and judged, in ways that men are not. Secondly, that women like Lebo, who occupied public imagination, also used their position to reiterate the claims to freedom that women have. While the violence against women in skimpy fashion continues, Lebo continued to wear more and more revealing clothes, up to her untimely death in 2006.

This study, and this particular chapter, raised the image of the khanga, the cloth worn by Kwezi, the woman who opened a case of rape against former president, Jacob Zuma. Given the public nature of the trial, and the national debate it stirred up, Lebo's situatedness and back-speak nearly went unnoticed. She never did publicly speak out against rape or comment specifically on the Kwezi-Zuma trial, but a reading of her styling and prompts for women to dress how they want, at the same time as this trial, point to a much bigger concern. The khanga, because it is only a cloth wrapped around the body that separates the body from public spectacle, was used in the trial to slut-shame Kwezi, although it is a common and acceptable form of dress among African women. Lebo's appearance in gold-chained dresses, through which you see her underwear and body clearly, are disruptive in a context that shames and violates women dressed in similar ways. In this chapter, we can see how dangerous or rebellious women like Lebo are rebellious precisely because they refuse for freedoms to be given in partiality, and therefore exercise them against a limiting and limited context of freedom. By becoming more and more skimpy in her fashion, at a time when violence against women increased and formed part of our national memory, Lebo rebelled in a politically oblique way against the conventions that govern our bodies in post-apartheid, 'free' South Africa.

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Continuing with the insistence of freedom, some of Khanyi Mbau's life and representation provides an opportunity to see more of the atmosphere of the 'free' post-apartheid South Africa for some Black women. In the chapter on Khanyi Mbau and contemporary rebellious femininities, I continue from Brenda and Lebo's life, to think about Khanyi Mbau as she emerged as an actress in 2005. It is in this chapter that I demonstrate how, in Khanyi's life as a popular culture icon, her work as an actress is overshadowed by national obsessions with surveilling and shaming young Black women. Television is relatively new to South Africa, and has been central to nation-building discourse. Part of the representational work of post-apartheid television, and the soap opera in particular, is to depict gender relations, and viewers are invited to not only watch for entertainment, but also pass their views on the representations that they see. Khanyi Mbau took on a nationally recognised villain, Doobsie, on Muvhango in 2005. The character of Doobsie was depicted in binary opposition to her rival, Thandaza, who was much quieter and less conniving. Khanyi Mbau entered into this narrative when she played Doobsie, but also received public scrutiny and shame for being a 19-year-old married to a wealthy man 30 years her senior. Overshadowing her career, the image of Khanyi as the nation's gold-digger superseded any other representation of her. As a result of the conspicuous consumption afforded by her wealthy lovers, Khanyi became the target of morality debates geared only towards women. In this chapter, I reveal the various other positionalities of Khanyi that complicate her reading as simply a gold-digger. I also discuss what it means to use the term 'gold-digger' in an economically deprived post-apartheid state that promised economic freedom to all people, but has failed to deliver.

Exploring some aspects of Khanyi's life reveal how unforgiving South Africa is towards young Black women. As Tolman (2018) suggests, slut-shaming women for whatever choices they make is a crisis of connection that does the most harm in our communities as Black women and feminists. Secondly, Khanyi Mbau's labelling as a gold-digger reveals the desires of a disgruntled post-apartheid nation, more than it does any perceived moral decision on Khanyi's part. There is also an issue in conflating young women coupled with older, wealthier men as

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being sex workers. I argue in the chapter that I am aware of the dangers of age-disparate relationships between men and women, which Khanyi also testified to. However, I also argue that I am aware of the ways that women in these relationships are shamed and singled out as not having 'respectable' work to earn financial security. When Khanyi dissociated from age-disparate relationships and their material benefits from around 2012, and returned to focusing on her career and raising her child, the shadow of their past continues to linger because of the broader colonial and sexist tradition of placing women in binaries.

Khanyi draws on the lives of Brenda and Lebo, labelling them 'go-getters', women who worked to achieve the lives that they had, and used this inspiration to reinvent herself as an actress and presenter. She has since been involved with various films and soap operas, while also publicly emphasising her life as a mother. Therefore, while specifically operating in the entertainment industries, women like Brenda and Lebo have been appropriated by some contemporary women for their display of ownership of themselves, their bodies and the pursuit of dreams that they held and eventually lived out. Women described as slay queens, because of their hyper-feminine or spectacularly feminine appearance (Dosekun, 2020), are often also categorised as gold-diggers, whose appearance and performance of wealth is perceived to be as a result of transactional sex. Women cannot be stylish and intelligent simultaneously, out of fear of being termed a slay queen. How we desire to live our lives is gatekept by the promise of shame. However, in this chapter, I return to the history of queer ballroom culture, where 'slay' has historically been used as an instruction to do your best, as the 'queen' you are. Hence, it is 'slay, queen!', rather than a descriptor of a shameful identity. By re-appropriating the figure of the slay queen in the affirmative, I acknowledge its queer origins and history.

In this chapter, I journey through the process of looking back to the lives of Brenda and Lebo, as a feminist ancestry from which to sense-make the lives of contemporary women like Khanyi Mbau and myself. I explicitly bring attention to my own personhood and situated embodiment, and position myself in a time-space

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that is current to me, while exploring women who have been inspirational to contemporary forms of femininity, or at least played a role in their increased public visibility in times past. I conclude that rebellious femininities exist in multiplicities, and at the centre of their articulation and visibility, is the fact that they are not traditional or proper in the ways I have described throughout this research. It also means that there is no 'proper' way to be feminine or to draw from the lives of other women, how they presented us with some possibilities of freedom, how they dared us to dream and how they prompted our desires. This chapter demonstrates what possibilities there are for women in their everyday lives, by drawing from public icons like Brenda and Lebo. These figures offer a way to see how the world is organised, how my own world is organised, and how we might be able to reinvent the publics we frequent. Most importantly, the contested performances of these figures shift the public imaginary, opening up alternative possibilities that emerge as a result of thinking-with these figures. I assert that, while Brenda and Lebo were popular culture and publicly consumed in that way, they were also Black women whose lives were seldom seen as 'real' because of their context as entertainers. This thesis provides some articulations of desire, freedom and agency in a contemporary post-apartheid state, as they have been inspired and shaped by predecessors like Brenda and Lebo.

Final notes on rebellious femininities and nationalism

In Chapter Three, I begin with a discussion on rebellious femininities, and suggest a reading of femininities as rebellious that is not dichotomous and reactionary to power. Borrowing from Gqola's (2013) notion of renegades, Mupotsa's (2017) work on undutiful daughters, and Ahmed's (2010, 2017) conceptualisation of the feminist killjoy, I suggest that rebellious femininities are engaged in a creative process of defamiliarising themselves – ourselves – from the shackles of a hetero-patriarchal social script. I also speak to femininities being nomadic, borrowing from the work of Braidotti (2011) to show that we are continuously shifting and becoming. Munoz (1999) asserts that disidentification, a strategy specific to queers of colour, although I find it also to be useful in the general scope of this research,

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speaks to claiming identities rebelliously, even when they are socially constructed as unacceptable. Disidentification is also about subversion and resistance that is nomadic, but Munoz (1999) insisted that disidentifications be able to shift and change for every unique situation. Rebellious femininities, then, are not only embodied irritations to the current heterosexist regime, but also co-construct, re-articulate and claim erotic power, while disidentifying from the heterosexist context of the country and its national culture. Rebellion is engaged in subversion, imagination, co-construction and (re)creation simultaneously.

At the concluding stage of this research, I return to the understanding of rebellious femininity that I began with, by including how it has shifted. Rebellious femininities exist in multiplicities, as the term suggests. There are many variations, all of which can be read as fundamentally subverting hegemonic gender expectations and performances. While traditional or proper or respectable femininities are different from femininities endorsed as improper and disreputable, rebellious femininities do not work to satisfy this binary. Neither do rebellious femininities work to cast out or shame femininities that are traditional. Rebellious femininities, by virtue of the existence of Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa, Khanyi Mbau and some contemporary Black women like me and slay queens, are not new, and did not exist as a particular reaction to gender norms and gender expectations. Rather, rebellious femininities have existed in their own right, but have been read within the gender binary that would rather render rebellious femininities as bad, or use them as cautionary tales, as with women like Brenda and Khanyi. However, as Livermon (2020) asserts, dangerous women are women who are unpredictable in their femininity, and difficult to capture because they show up as complex, nuanced and fluidly moving between various positionalities. Having taken up Mupotsa's (2017) proposal to read difference and read *from* difference, because it offers us creative ways within which to re- and co-construct inclusive spaces, this thesis has shown that rebellious femininities are heterogenous, nomadic, and thus complex and contradictory. By analysing the specific space and times of the women I cite as representative of broader gender struggles, I have elucidated differences in their

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context, situation, public attention and their public performances of self. Reading from these differences produced the general conclusion that rebellious femininities are connected but different. Brenda's rebellion is different from Lebo's, and Khanyi's is different from both, but there is a thread that helps me read these women in a scope of rebellious femininities.

One of the threads that connect rebellious women is the fact that their femininities will never fit the mould of Ebila's (2015) 'proper woman'. At the same time, rebellious femininities do not exist to prove the legitimacy of good or bad femininities. Ligaga's (2017) moral narrative genre is a way to structure knowledge to guide the reader to a moral lesson. In Chapter Seven, I showed the ways that Khanyi has been narrated in some public and popular discourses as a cautionary tale. Women who are not clearly legible within the moral narrative genre are placed in the 'bad woman' category, because they challenge linear logics that construct gender and sexuality in particular ways. Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau have subverted linear logics, while co-constructing femininities across binarisms, rendering even traditional women visible. If traditional femininities are imagined in relation to motherhood, being dutiful wives and being domestic, Khanyi Mbau occupies such a position, alongside that of the gold-digger. The tendency to easily read her as only being one and not the other arises from a national moral narrative. By thinking of her as rebellious, we consider how she occupied multiple positionalities that have been socially constructed as contradictory but are, in fact, a more realistic representation of the ways other Black women actually live our lives. Therefore, rebellious femininities can also be constitutive of aspects considered to be traditional, like motherhood, without adopting a totalising narrative of a woman's identity.

Some of the historical moments discussed in this thesis reveal how the moral narrative genre continues to shape the nation or the imagined community (McClintock, 1997). Having thought about the family unit as representing the nation, I have shown how femininities have been imagined in public life based on private, familial hierarchical contexts. Building nationalism necessarily relies on a

sense of belonging for each family member, or citizen. When women like Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi become as hyper-visible as they are, public debate begins because these are women that most Black women have been warned against (Stofile, 2017; Ndabeni, 2018; Xaso, 2020; Msimang, 2021). Public ally taking on the roles of misbehaving daughters destabilises the nuclear family unit, and threatens the heteronormative reproduction that is at the centre of nationalism (Spivak, 2009). Women like Brenda, Lebo and Khanyi are templates for what we should not become, because of the consequences, which include violence, and being cast out of family, community and essentially the nation. The violence enacted on women because of perceived skimpy forms of dress, or even other clothes perceived to be revealing, like the khanga, produces moral narratives that seek to correct women's behaviour while endorsing social and cultural claims to our bodies. In previous chapters, I discussed the cultural claim to women's bodies (Gouws, 2013), as reflected in men like former president Jacob Zuma, who sexually violate women, and justify it because the women were 'inappropriately' dressed. The shame and violence aimed at women like Khanyi, Dosekun's (2020) hyper-feminine women, and successful Black women like slay queens, is based on sexist morality debates rather than on knowledge of these self-expressions, and what they can tell us about our own selves. Refusing binarisms of gender expectations has exposed the limited democratic rights afforded Black women and LGBTQIA+ people, as only a certain type of woman is seen as legible, respectable and belonging to the democratic nation.

Rebellious femininities are productive because they demonstrate the possibility of living within the full force of one's imagination, one's entitlement to freedom, and one's desires to self-actualise and self-express in ways that serve and affirm one's personhood. Rebellious femininities are not withheld, restricted or captured by strict gender binarisms, but are an expression of freedom, desire and agency as complex and nuanced. Rebellious femininities are also courageous because they exist in societies that shame, violate and cast out what threatens hegemonic power. In being rebellious, we also expose the sexist, racist and material

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conditions of the democratic state, in search of our full social, democratic and cultural rights in the nation. Rebellious femininities also strategically navigate and challenge violence. This research has thus shown that rebellious femininities are not simply unproductive, 'dangerous' or 'bad' in the ways that women like Brenda Fassie, Lebo Mathosa and Khanyi Mbau have been described. It is, in fact, a myth that these women's femininities yield no real power or positive influence for other women. As evidenced by my own narrative, and the narratives of some other women whom have related positively to the women figures concerned in this research, when the biographies of rebellious women are read in feminist, reflective, reflexive and contextual ways, politically oblique communities of rebellious women, slay queens, 'bad girls' are made more visible and humanized. Lorde's (1982) antidote for the biomythography, as discussed in the introduction, has been helpful in sense-making and engaging myth through the consideration of biographies, story-telling and political context in this regard.

In terms of future research connected to this thesis, I would hope to continue contributing in this area of popular culture, representation, femininities, nation and shame. I would also hope that more lenses, theories and tools of analysis emerge to make sense of contemporary articulations of femininity, especially because of their increasing entanglement with technology in the form of social media. Because of their potential to disrupt constraining, subjugating symbolic terrains, and open up alternative imaginaries of ways of living gender, I hope that there is increasing interest in work on rebellious femininities.

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