

The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa

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**25. The Cultural Politics of Female
Sexuality in South Africa**

Henriette Gunkel

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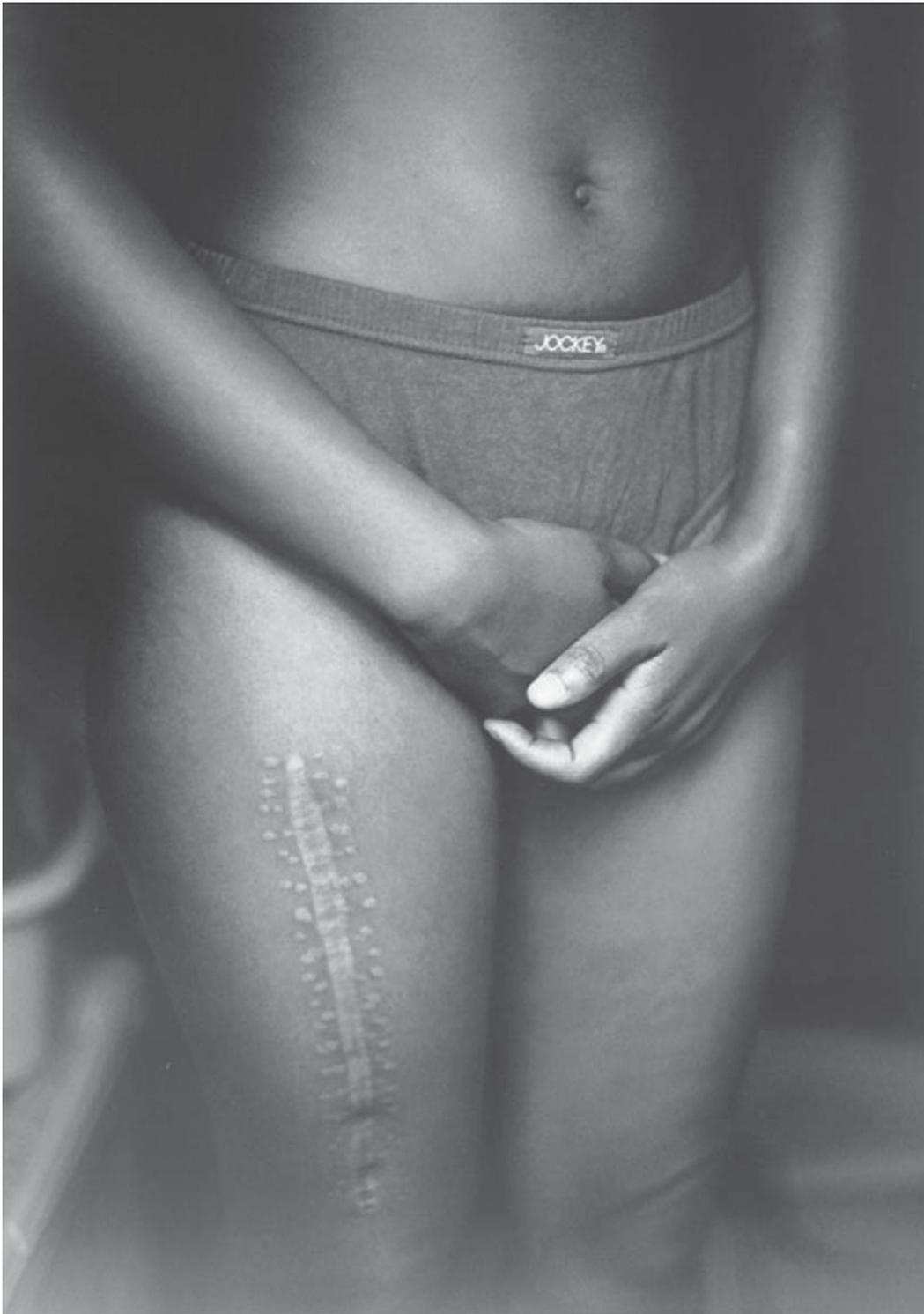
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To Zoliswa Nkonyana († 2006)
Für meine Eltern

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© Zanele Muholi

Figure 1 Zanele Muholi, 'Aftermath' (2004). "Many lesbians bear the scars of their difference, and those scars are often in places where they can't be seen . . ."

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“What do We See When We Look at Ourselves?”—Visual Dissidence Towards (Post)Colonial Sex/Gender Organisations Within Post-Apartheid South African Culture.” In: Rocchi, Jean-Paul (ed.) *Dissidences et Identités Plurielles*. Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy (2008), pp. 160–185.

‘Through the Post-Colonial Eyes: Images of Female Same-Sex Intimacy in Contemporary South Africa.’ In: Special Issue of the *Journal for Lesbian Studies*, Vol 13, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 77–87.

Introduction

I saw Zanele Muholi's image *Aftermath* (2004) for the first time when I was visiting the Month of Photography exhibition called *Is Everybody Comfortable?* at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town in 2005. Muholi's *Aftermath* had an outstanding effect on me (and other viewers), generating various, contradictory emotions. *Aftermath* shows the body of a black woman from just above the belly-button down to her knees. The woman is only wearing underpants bearing the label 'Jockey,' which can be read as a signifier of lesbian identity. Her hands, at the center of the picture, are clasped over her genitals. There are different possible readings of the image but Muholi guides the viewer by including a caption which states the following: "(m)any lesbians bear the scars of their difference, and those scars are often in places where they can't be seen." Just underneath the hands on the right thigh a big, long scar makes this violation of the body visible. The scar almost covers the entire thigh and it takes the viewer's attention away from the center of the picture, the hands covering the genitals. The eyes, however, return to the hands immediately once the viewer realizes that the scar is already healed, thus illustrating Muholi's comment on scars of difference that often "can't be seen." It is in that moment that the gesture of the hands becomes central. The gesture does not imply shyness, possibly due to the women's nakedness in front of the camera. Instead the gesture functions as a form of protection where the hands also express a certain fragility and vulnerability. So while the scar on the thigh is already healed the gesture of the hands implies a more recent violation of the body. And it is this reference to the violated lesbian body that uncompromisingly creates a sense of accusation, of vulnerability, agency, intimacy, discomfort, pain and anger, all at the same time.

Muholi's image *Period* (2003) also deals with the issue of hate crimes against lesbians. But unlike *Aftermath* in which the body is used as a signifier for a lesbian identity, it is here removed from the picture. *Period* shows a used sanitary pad on a plate framed by a knife on the right and a fork on the left. While the fork is in line with the pad, the knife is not as parallel, pointing rather, away from the pad. It is the knife that seems to be the disturbing symbol within the picture, the active part in it, the element that

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goes along the squiggled silver fork. It is a sharp knife, of those used to cut meat. It can be considered threatening and thus useable in an attack. *Period* is a still life, a composition or arrangement of inanimate objects, each with possible symbolic significance. It is reminiscent of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974–1979). Muholi's *Period* provokes what Walter Benjamin calls the visual "shock." It is this picture within the exhibition that has been perceived as most disturbing and evoking disgust. Not because of the connotation to hate crime as indicated by Muholi's strong subtext to the image: "the same blood that defines us as women, is the same blood which we shed in the attacks against us, while some make a meal of their hatred of us as women, as lesbians;" but rather because of the connotation to women's monthly period. The sanitary pad is a symbol for menstruation and thus for womanhood that girls enter with their first period. Womanhood is therefore closely linked to female sexuality as well as to women's culture. Muholi makes the link between menstruation and attack in the form of hate crime that leaves the woman behind, bleeding. She uses menstrual blood as a signifier for womanhood and female sexuality¹ while this same womanhood and a specific form of sexuality, namely lesbian sexuality, is the target in the attack against her.

Muholi's images in the exhibition, entitled *Visual Sexuality: Only Half the Picture*, all deal with issues of black women's sexuality. Similar to the images *Aftermath* and *Period*, her work de-romanticizes sexual pleasure by pointing out practices and commodities that transgress normative perceptions of (hetero)sexuality; this is achieved by introducing strap-ons, breast-wrapping and dental dams, for example. Accordingly, the responses of the media to Muholi's exhibition, which was first staged in Johannesburg in 2004, mainly reflected on the political dimension of the work and its impact on questions of lesbian and gay rights in the country. Gail Smith for example argued that Muholi's "photographs are not artistically or technically brilliant—and some are downright disturbing, but the exhibition, and the response to it, show some movement towards addressing the staggering absence of 'out and proud' lesbians in South African society" (2006, 90). In her article *Is Anybody Comfortable?* Nonkululeko Godana similarly highlights how the political project is central to this exhibition by contextualizing the work, and *Aftermath* in particular, as a direct translation of Muholi's activism into documentary photography. Godana states that Muholi has been documenting violence against lesbians over the last years in Gauteng townships and she informs the reader that *Aftermath* was taken two days after the woman in the image had been raped by a male "friend" aiming to show her that she is not a man (2006, 91). In the conversation with Godana, Muholi explains that the subject in the image "called me a couple of hours after the incident with no one to confide in. She already has a scar from a past incident, yet received new emotional scars from her rape" (Muholi in Godana 2006, 91).

Muholi usually invites the audience who attends her exhibitions to write down comments and reactions to the images. She has also shown her images in the streets of Johannesburg and has made a short documentary about it, titled *Enraged by a Picture*, which was produced for Out in Africa, the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in South Africa, in 2005. Muholi included some of the responses to her work in the documentary. Some members of the audience were in distress, some overtly expressed homophobia, and some commentators went even further by expressing strong anger and directly threatening the artist: “you need a smack” and “you must be hung,” while one painted a penis with big balls saying, “I believe this is art, but then this would also be art” (GALA—AM 3106). However, there was also strong positive feedback that viewed the images as “eye-opening” and “mentally stimulating,” and that welcomed the space that could be opened through these kind of debates on sexuality: “. . . excellent. I think it’s about time people stopped being so ashamed about human sexuality. For centuries women have been ‘desexualized’ and, I just feel that people need to embrace their sexual identities” (GALA—AM 3106).

The responses to the exhibition in general, and the image *Aftermath* in particular, made me realize once again how contested the question of sexual rights is in contemporary South Africa. In 1996 South Africa became the first and only country in the world to explicitly incorporate the rights of lesbians and gay men into its constitution by prohibiting, among other things, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Since then a visibility of discussion and proclamation of sexual identities has increasingly emerged. However, fifteen years into democracy the public discourse of homosexuality in South Africa still remains controversial and contested—as is evident in the responses to Muholi’s images on black lesbians’ sexuality. While some viewers celebrate the new sexual identities that Muholi represents in her work others respond to it by being overtly homophobic. Why is the reaction to her work so divided? What is at stake in her work and how is this linked to the formation of new sexual identities in South Africa? If South Africa is being celebrated for the rights it gives non-heteronormative sexualities, how come homophobia continues to grow and continues to proliferate and affect the lives of so many?

The image *Aftermath* in particular starkly reveals the tension between the constitutional rights in post-apartheid South Africa and the living reality of (black) lesbians in the country by bringing to light the complexity of sexuality and identity in this country. This volume focuses on this tension between sexual rights on the one side and the violence against lesbians as portrayed in *Aftermath* on the other. I am interested in the question of how this tension is articulated within the postcolonial nation state. How did the constitution and its incorporation of sexual rights come to being and what are the arguments against it? The latter question turns the focus to the actual act of homophobia: which identity categories are constituted and contested in the act of violence? To what extent does the question of rights

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bring up not only the issue of sexual identities but also of gender relations? In fact, to what extent is the violence against lesbians, as visible for example in Muholi's *Aftermath*, linked to the modernization of gender roles in metropolitan South African?

By addressing these questions this book project is centered around, and seeks to account for, the sexual politics that have emerged out of post-apartheid South Africa. In doing so the book investigates the contested meanings of same-sex intimacy, in particular female same-sex intimacy, in this country. I am interested in the cultural and historical representations of female same-sex intimacy outside the axes of lesbian and gay cultures and politics. This book considers the ways in which historical and cultural representations and practices of female same-sex intimacy in South Africa do not intersect with, in some cases even actively resist, globalized lesbian identity politics and cultural practices and their underlying gender organizations.

The responses to Muholi's exhibition and the image *Aftermath* further reveal how race and gender operate in the construction of post-apartheid homophobia. One common response to Muholi's exhibition is that her images of the black female body are either degrading for all (black) women or alternatively, are demeaning for the community, the nation or the race, as one of the visitors wrote in Muholi's response book at the exhibition: "It is truly unacceptable for you to undermine our race's especially black portraying nudity and sexual explicit content images as if they are the only one who are involved these inhuman activities. After all Black was African and proud of its roots and cultures until you inflicted pain and trash to our community. Get a life you people" (GALA—AM 3106). Another visitor similarly expressed her anger about the 'nature' of the images: "yes, art is an African thing. However, when degrading of women's (make that black woman) bodies, it is no longer a question of art and beauty but of discrimination—the nation cries" (GALA—AM 3106). This intersection of sexuality and race in conjunction with 'the nation' within post-apartheid homophobia marks one of the key discussions throughout the pages of this book.

According to artist and curator Gabi Ngcobo, Muholi, however, acknowledges the gaze and challenges its biased nature (2006, 5). Ngcobo highlights the questions that Muholi poses in her work: the title of one of Muholi's works "What don't you see when you look at me?" was further developed through Muholi's question "What do we see when we look at ourselves?" (Ngcobo 2006, 5). With her work Muholi reclaims, to borrow Ngcobo's words, "the (visual) culture that was historically denied" (2006, 4). Pumla Dineo Gqola argues in her essay on Muholi's images that "the work is less about making Black lesbians visible than it is about engaging with the regimes that have used these women's hypervisibility as a way to violate them" (2006, 84). According to Gqola, black lesbian bodies were never invisible in society, but were in fact "highly visible manifestations of

the undesirable” (2006, 83) expressed, for example, through hate crimes such as those visible in the image *Aftermath*. Very similar to Ngcobo, Gqola is not only interested in the question of *what* Muholi makes visible but in *how* she makes it visible.

Despite their differences, the position of the two scholars, Ngcobo and Gqola, and the position of the respondents in the exhibition space, they all raise the question of representation² and its historical relevance/implication within the (South) African context. The responses to Muholi’s exhibition are concerned with the representation of the black female body and so raise questions about who is representing whom, under which conditions, and with which purpose? Linked to this is the question of who has the right to look? And despite their differences the positive and negative responses to Muholi’s images encourage the viewer to think about (historical and cultural) representations of black women’s bodies, particularly in relation to sexuality.

COMPLICATING THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST LESBIANS

Muholi’s work, as well as the wide-ranging responses to her images, highlight the fact that homophobia is, as Jodi O’Brien argues, not a monolithic concept that operates outside parameters of cultural and historical context (2008, 497). I want to take up this argument by pointing to a series of related incidents that forced women’s organizations in South Africa to join forces with LGBTIQ communities. I mention this alliance because it cannot be taken for granted. During the last couple of years a serious amount of new studies have emerged that deal with the issue of violence against women. However, these studies almost entirely ignore violence against lesbians. At the same time, lesbians are experiencing violence not only as a form of gender-based violence but also as a form of homophobia. This neglect of the issue of sexual orientation—and thus heteronormativity—within both academic research and activism became too apparent to ignore and led to an increased personal interest in the experiences of hate crime towards lesbians and women within same-sex relationships in South Africa.

In February 2006, 19-year-old Zoliswa Nkonyana was stabbed and stoned to death for being a lesbian near her home in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. In July 2007 Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Massoa were shot and allegedly raped in Soweto, Johannesburg. Two weeks after the Soweto murders 23-year-old Thokozane Qwabe was stoned to death in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal. In April 2008 Eudy Simelane, former mid-fielder for the national women’s football team Banyana Banyana, was allegedly raped and stabbed to death in KwaThema, Gauteng. A year later, in June 2009, 37-year-old Girly ‘S’gelane’ Nkosi was stabbed by two men in KwaThema and passed away a couple of days later due to internal bleeding. All of these women identified as lesbians.

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These are not isolated incidents; these are only some of the more widely publicized events that need to be seen in the context of similar public violent attacks. In July 2007, for example, 25-year-old Zandile Mpanza was attacked by four men in Durban as a result of her non-compliance with a ban which stipulates that women are not allowed to wear trousers in Umlazi's T-section. She was stripped naked and forced to walk through the streets. Her assailants destroyed her home and belongings and she was forced to move out of the township.³ In February 2008, 25-year-old Nwabisa Ngcukana was sexually assaulted by taxi drivers at the Noord Street taxi rank in the Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD) for wearing a mini-skirt. In this incident some taxi drivers poured alcohol over Nwabisa's face, while others inserted their fingers into her vagina. The taxi drivers said that they were teaching her a lesson. A few days after the incident around 600 commuters marched to the Johannesburg CBD in protest. Confronted by protesters dressed in mini-skirts, the taxi drivers 'stripped naked in retaliation' and sang the song 'Awuleth' umshini wami,⁴ a song made famous (again) by supporters of current South African President, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, during his rape trial in 2005–2006, which I introduce in more detail in the following chapter.

In the same month of February 2008 a racist video, produced in the Free State, appeared in public. This time four white male students at the University of Free State thought they could control old black women's (and men's) bodies by forcing them to drink alcohol before making them 'run a race, play rugby and then kneel and eat meat that had been urinated upon.' This incident took place in the context of violent protests of white students against the university's hostel integration policy.

All of these examples show an attempt to restore the gender regime that endorses men being in a dominant position while occupying public space—a space that, as the book shows, represents access to economic resources that are not necessarily gendered, sexualized or racialized. By raising the question of "what do emotions do?" rather than "what are emotions?" Sara Ahmed (2004) provides us with the tools to understand public acts of violence, such as the ones described above, as affectively *sticking* the imagined community of men together through the emotion of hate which, as a consequence, marks this violence as (culturally) legitimate.⁵ The publicity of the incidents refers to the sense of men's entitlement to women's bodies; this, in conjunction with a sense of impunity, is translatable into a notion of 'we are getting away with it.' The incidences therefore demonstrate the need to complicate the issue of homophobia and to expose violence against lesbians as not only an act of hate crime based on sexuality. This becomes even more pressing in light of the recent court case against one of Simelane's murderers. The accused who decided to co-operate with the state and, as a result, had his case removed from a collective representation in court, argued that the attack against Simelane was initiated around her cell phone and not around her sexual orientation. In fact he was not even aware of the

fact that Simelane identified as lesbian, a testimony that was reflected in the judgment. This shows that some of the cases that involved the murder of lesbians have not yet been unmasked as actual acts of homophobia.⁶

Homophobia in contemporary South Africa hence needs to be contextualized in the broader culture of violence that links gender-based violence, homophobia and racism. Beverly Palesa Ditsie recognized this complexity during her struggle for gay rights at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. She states this in relation to a speech given by the late Simon Nkoli, one of the black gay icons of the country, in her documentary *Simon and I* (2001) in which she pays tribute to his life and to her relationship with him:

The speech [Simon Nkoli] made when he said I am black, I am gay, I cannot put my struggles as a primary or secondary struggle, they are all one. And I stood there, looked around and realized “Oh my god!” It was an epiphany for me. I realized what he meant. That not only am I black and gay but I am also a woman. And they are all one struggle for my freedom. (Ditsie in *Simon and I* 2001)

While I introduce Ditsie and Nkoli in great detail in Chapter 2 in this book, at this point I want to extract this quote and write a theoretical introduction around it. The quote underlines the fact that homophobia in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa cannot be separated from discussions around gender and race and by doing so refers back directly to the responses to Muholi’s exhibition. Ditsie realizes that her oppression was/is not one-dimensional; she cannot separate her homosexual identity from her identity as a woman and as a black person. This indicates that her homosexuality is not necessarily more important than race or gender. And in fact in her documentary Ditsie describes the different levels of violence that she experiences as a lesbian, as a black person and as a woman. These acts are inter-linked. Ditsie is unable to divide up her identity and decide why a particular act of discrimination is being committed against her. However, as this book argues, particularly in Chapter 2, in the context of South Africa (as well as in the global context at that time) the reactions against homophobia were separated for a long time from any wider critique of hegemonic structures, such as institutionalized racism. This book, particularly Chapter 2, looks at the ways in which ‘raciality’ becomes silenced within gay and lesbian discourses and practices through mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Muholi’s work as well as the wide-ranging responses to her images, Ditsie’s quote, and the different incidences of hate crime, however, urge us to complicate the notion of homophobia while avoiding a ‘universal understanding’ of the concept. We need to rethink the historical use of homophobia and answer the questions of who was historically and is in contemporary society the target of homophobic discourse. Likewise, we need to respond to the question of who were/are constituted as perpetrators. Which subject formations are initiated within the discourse of homophobia?

In this introduction, and throughout the book, I want to approach the question of how to handle homophobia and especially the increasing violence against lesbians in contemporary South Africa. My aim is thereby not so much to explain homophobia as such, particularly the supposedly increasing violence against black lesbians. My aim is rather to develop an understanding of homophobia as a discursive formation—by taking into account that the discourse “reveals its own form of violence,” discursive and material, as Karl Bryant and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz (2008) argue. By doing so this book highlights the “importance of complexity as an analytical lens in general and the necessity of problematizing existing discourses of homophobia in general” (O’Brien 2008, 496).

HOMOPHOBIA

In a special issue on *Rethorizing Homophobias* in the *Journal Sexualities* guest editors Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz define homophobia as a “conceptual tool and a discursive resource for individuals and collectivities to name and respond to their oppression” (2008, 387). The two scholars briefly trace the history of the term ‘homophobia’ as coined in the 1970s by George Weinberg with the intention to challenge what David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz call “the normalizing mechanisms of state power to name its sexual subjects” (2005, 1): it is not the ‘homosexual’ that should be considered as the problem, Weinberg argues, but instead “the individuals’ and society’s negative reactions to homosexuality and homosexuals” (Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz 2008, 388). Since then ‘homophobia’ was conceptualized, particularly through psychology, with various subcategories emerging, e.g. ‘internalized homophobia.’ With their definition Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz point to homophobia as a discursive framework utilized in the surveillance of various populations (not only homosexual but also heterosexual), a framework that allows the inclusion of other concepts such as ‘heterosexism,’ ‘heteronormativity’ but also ‘homonormativity’ (2008, 390). The authors therefore exceed the construction of homophobia as a narrowly psychological and individualistic concept in constant demand for more criminal proceedings and laws by not only placing it on a social and institutional as well as interactional level but, more importantly for the context of this book, by linking homophobia to racism and by doing so critiquing a common usage of homophobia:

Homophobia thus becomes a shorthand to demand a set of rights without necessarily studying the full impact of those demands. The outcomes of such demands (and the discursive frameworks they draw on) are varied, but may produce exclusions, in part by solidifying images of what constitute gay and lesbian populations. In addition, such discourses may shore up ideas about what constitutes ‘homophobes,’

including putatively homophobic cultures, or those most likely to contain internalized homophobia. (2008, 391)

The question of what constitutes ‘homophobes’ is central for this book project and is discussed in great length in relation to apartheid as well as post-apartheid politics. While not denying the very material consequences of homophobic violence, Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz motivate to focus on “homophobia as a conceptual tool and discursive resource [that] itself engenders sets of effects” (2008, 392) by addressing the relationship of homophobia to axes of difference. O’Brien similarly raises the question of whether “there are additional features (e.g. economic class, ethnicity, gender non-conformity, religion) that make certain groups and individuals more or less likely to be the targets of so-called homophobic violence and discrimination” (2008, 498). Moreover, Bryant in his analysis of the psychiatric diagnosis of *Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood* (GIDC) in the US-American context provocatively argues that “homophobia and antihomophobia may work together to produce ‘homonormative’ gay subjects” (2008, 455). And in fact, in recent years scholars have increasingly pointed to the use of homophobia, and concurrently the mobilization of gay rights, in anti-immigration discourse within European and North American discourses of nationalism (Yeğenoğlu 1998; Puar 2007; Haritaworn 2008; Gunkel and Pitcher 2008). Concomitantly with a mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identities in the West which is informed by gay liberalism and, in particular homonationalism, gay rights are being increasingly associated with the West while Islam is constituted as homophobic and thus outside the discourse of ‘human rights.’ Gay rights (and human rights more generally) are mobilized in anti-immigration discourse as well as in recent military interventions, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, while (white) lesbian and gay men claim their membership of the national communities through the construction of the homophobic Muslim. Within the geopolitics of war on terror homophobia therefore is simultaneously nationalized and racialized (Gunkel and Pitcher 2008). The complicity of queer but also feminist organizations in Europe and the US with right-wing discourses/politics of national and global consequence does not contradict but in fact underlines this analysis. Jin Haritaworn, therefore, highlights how the assimilation of certain forms of (white) gay subject into social citizenship has not only occurred against the backdrop of the war on terror, but has moreover served as a mode of its legitimation, reinscribing gay and queer identity as white and gender-conforming within the parameters of the nation (in Gunkel and Pitcher 2008).

Adjacent to the question of what constitutes a homophobe and which individuals, communities and nations are more homophobic than others, is therefore the question of what constitutes a homosexual—a process that Bryant calls “creating homosexuals”—hence the question of homonormativity. Vidal-Ortiz, in particular, points to productions of homonormativity

within discourses of homophobia as well as the use of homophobia as a link to the invisibility of whiteness in hegemonic frameworks of gayness (Bryant and Vidal-Ortiz 2008, 392). Similarly O'Brien argues that homonormativity, as shown in the production of homophobia, is constituted along other axes of difference, proliferating "a culturally specific way of being queer that is enough in 'sync' with existing gender, class, racial and cultural norms as to be considered 'acceptable'" (2008, 501). O'Brien refers to Lisa Duggan's conceptualization of 'new homonormativity' that, as Duggan argues, upholds and sustains heteronormative assumptions and institutions "while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumptions" (Duggan in Bryant 2008, 455). The question of homonormativity, and linked to this mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion on the basis of gender and race, will be explored in detail in Chapter 2 in this volume in which I discuss the history of the gay movements in South Africa, a movement that eventually succeeded through the implementation of gay rights in the post-apartheid constitution.

In this book I am interested in these mechanisms of homophobia and by taking this up I will explore the question of how homophobia is mobilized as a distinctive marker between different racialized groups in the post/apartheid South African context. As we will see in the following chapters the discourse of homophobia in South Africa has shifted dramatically. During apartheid homosexuality was considered as a white problem only, which is reflected in the 'pink is white' phrase in the title of Chapter 2. Chapter 1, however, discusses how post-apartheid homophobia is informed by the populist notion of homosexuality as un-African which seems to reduce homophobia to black communities while hinting to similar and, at the same time, culturally specific mechanisms at play. While apartheid and post-apartheid homophobia seem fundamentally different in relation to discourses of homophobia, in this book I argue that the different discourses are not as contradictory as they seem. By pointing to the history of colonialism and apartheid I examine the construction of homophobia as rooted in whiteness, and analyse how postcolonial nation states such as South Africa reproduce homophobia narratives (Vidal-Ortiz 2008, 476). This book develops the argument that racialized violence as well as anti-queer violence as discursive frameworks both utilize the surveillance of the population—both in the past as well as in the present.

INTERSECTIONALITY

In Europe we are often readily prepared to develop a voyeuristic, popular cultural view on cases of gender-based violence such as those described in the previous section when they occur in countries like South Africa (or, respectively, when they occur in migrant communities in Europe/US-America). This perception needs to be understood as continuous with the colonial gaze that portrays South Africa, and in fact the entire African continent, as

barbaric that gets out of control once left alone by the colonizing–civilizing forces of the West. This gaze continues to (re-)hypersexualize the African body through discourse; this is also achieved by linking sexuality to current discourses of HIV and AIDS on the African continent. Furthermore, post-apartheid homophobia, linked to populist notions of homosexuality as un-African to which this book turns in the following chapter in great detail, leads to a perpetuation of the perception of South Africa/Africa/black communities in general, as being more homophobic than others (meaning white communities).⁷ Until today, Africa as a continent serves as a reference point in the negotiation of a European, white identity. These current politics of difference widely ignore that discourses of sexuality in contemporary South Africa are still heavily informed by colonial discourses of sexuality and, linked to that, discourses of race. As I argue throughout the pages of this book, colonialism constituted race as a sexualized category, and sexuality a racialized category. Racialized bodies are reproduced through (hetero)sexuality; the discourse of race is hence corporealized in each single human body. Also, in Europe conceptions of sexuality are coined/affected by the colonial past. Colonial legacies are inscribed deeply in notions of desire for the (black) *Other* and are to be found everywhere. In fact, whiteness is negotiated around black sexuality described by Antje Schuhmann in her title “White on White via the Black Body” (2008). White identity formations continue to guarantee systems of white privilege and entitlement, including sexual entitlement.

This neo-colonial discourse of sexuality is not only visible in mainstream popular culture but also within queer communities. One example is the often racist exclusion of non-white people from queer spaces. Another example is the academic exclusion and/or exoticization of non-Western scholars at conferences and institutions. Both examples are reflected on in a recent anthology entitled *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality* (2008), edited by Adi Kuntsman and Esperanza Miyake. As a result, queer theory is often linked to European and US-American informed scholarship that display an attitude/perception of the West as most liberating and therefore as a reference point of development and progress to all other countries/societies:

The elite institutions from which queer theory advances complement the paternalistic activist wisdom of lesbian and gay organizers in the United States who judge the level of progress another country is making in the arena of lesbian and gay rights by the uniquely US trajectories of Stonewall, coming out, and identity-based civil rights. Of course, it is always the US standard that these other countries must live up to and, naturally the United States is always the leader in this race for gay utopia. (Barnard 2004, 7)

The West as the reference point of modernity/development is therefore also mobilized in sexuality studies. In her paper “Is Queer Theory Always

Already American?” Joanna Mizielińska hence criticizes the dominance of Northern American (and I would add European) scholarship within queer theory and argues that it is “in fact amazing how dependent we are on it, how seduced, how influenced by debates of American history of sexuality” (2006). Speaking from her Polish background Mizielińska deconstructs any homogenizing self-conception of queer theory in the West. Moreover, she refuses any attempt of academic queer theorists to reduce her and her scholarly work to the position of representing the *authentic* female/lesbian voice from the margin. Instead, she demands to be recognized as a theorist and thus declines to accept the hegemonic academic position that continuously sets up the equation of theory as Western.

It is, therefore, not very surprising that lesbian and gay studies and queer theory for a long time ignored cross-cultural and transnational formations of same-sex intimacy and sexuality beyond European and North American borders. It is only recently that the importance of locality, race and post-coloniality entered the arena of queer epistemology, particularly through a *queer of color critique* and *queer diaspora critique*, emerging out of US-America-based and to a lesser extent UK-based scholarship. In addition, in recent years a number of publications emerged that focus on postcolonial politics of sexuality in non-Western contexts, such as Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America. Since the mid 1990s, for example, there has been a growing focus on homosexual identities in Southern Africa. This emerging body of work, however, discusses—from different angles—primarily male gay identity politics and textual and cultural representations of male same-sex desire in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho,⁸ while historical and cultural representations of female same-sex intimacy in these countries remain at the margin. One exception is the recently published book *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives* (2005), edited by Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa which is the only book, to my knowledge, that focuses entirely on female same-sex sexuality in the African context.

At the same time, the interdisciplinary field of African Studies, and postcolonial inquiries more generally, often neglect same-sex desire and homophobia. Also, while there is a huge body of work on the apartheid regime, regarding South Africa’s history of colonialism and the discourses of race that gave these different regimes some sort of legitimacy (at least from the European perspective) there is hardly any acknowledgement of the role sexuality plays within the race regimes.⁹ My focus on forms of female same-sex intimacy in South African history and cultures therefore provides new insights and understanding not only in relation to gender but also of sexuality and race as disparate constituents of subjectivity. This book therefore critically assembles different theories by foregrounding a politics of intersectionality. Current global politics informed by sexuality—such as the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity, the geopolitics of war on terror, queer liberalism, among others—demands, as Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz argue, a set of tools of analysis “ever vigilant to the fact that

sexuality is intersectional” (2005, 1). Intersectionality, or the way in which the differentiated operations of different systems of power, notably race, gender, and class, in addition to sexuality, are interwoven and mutually dependent on each other, is used throughout the book in order to situate notions of homophobia but also different and asymmetric developments of and within various female same-sex cultures and lesbian identities.

In the 1980s black feminists and Third World feminists theorized intersectionality and made groundbreaking interventions into feminist scholarship by arguing against a unified women’s position and by stressing the ways in which gender is always and already marked by other axes of difference that are interwoven and mutually dependent on each other. Several years into its mainstreaming, intersectionality as a theory, a methodology and as a form of critical practice has been increasingly criticized, in particular through a *queer of color critique*, *queer diaspora critique*, through *disability* and *transgender studies*¹⁰ pointing to the limitations of the concept. A key concern here is the handling and understanding of ‘sections’ and (identity) ‘categories’ as constituted in relation to, and in negotiation with, each other—as the very term ‘intersectional’ implies. As Umut Erel, Jin Haritaworn, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Christian Klesse (2008) argue, too often intersectional discussions fall back into an additive form—alluded to as an ‘embarrassing etc.,’ to borrow from Judith Butler—which not only excludes the multiply minorized, as the authors point out, but stabilizes rather than transcends and deconstructs ‘sections’/‘categories.’ In order to function, intersectionality assumes entities with particular components, thus risking the reaffirmation of the critiqued attributions through the act of naming (Puar 2008). Rather than productively destabilizing identity categories they tend to get reproduced and in this process some categories are being prioritized over others. Erel et al., for example, observe an increasing neglect of ‘class’ within intersectional analyses, arguing that class as such is considered increasingly old-fashioned. While many intersectional analyses are limited to the axes of gender, ethnicity and sexuality (2008, 270), other categories are ignored altogether: “power relations around disability or transphobia are rarely even considered ‘intersectional’—even in queer and LGBT discourses” (Erel et al. 2008, 270). Gabriele Dietze, Elahe Haschemi Yekani and Beatrice Michaelis (2008), in turn, argue that gender studies widely ignored sexuality as a category of analysis by outsourcing it nearly entirely to queer theory. The authors argue that it is due to the fact that queer perspectives have found no decisive access/entry point into feminist gender studies that sexuality has no permanent place within the research paradigm of intersectionality. As a result, intersectionality provides the theoretical possibility of (further) warranting the invisibility of whiteness and heteronormativity within mainstreamed feminisms (Dietze, Haschemi Yekani and Michaelis 2008, 107). Linked to this argument is the concern that a mainstreaming of intersectionality risks being incorporated as a tool for ‘diversity management’ and liberal multiculturalism, hence becoming a

crucial tool of governmentality and disciplinary techniques. So while some individuals have benefited from this development, it has generally remained within what Jasbir Puar (2007) calls ‘politics of exceptionalism.’ Erel et al. argue that, consequently, intersectionality provides few tools to intervene in current political backlashes, such as the war on terror, “which problematically occurs in the name of women’s and gay rights” (2008, 272).

In order to destabilize identity categories, while not denying, more generally, a politics of ‘strategic essentialism’ (a term coined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), scholars have therefore increasingly emphasized a shift from *inter* to *trans*, hence a shift from notions of ‘intersectionality’ to ‘transsectionality’ or ‘transexions’¹¹ as it allows “various dimensions of social experience—[to] cut across or *transsect* one another” (Harper et al. 1997, 2). In the article *Queer Times, Queer Assemblages* (2005), Puar instead proposes a move from ‘intersectionality’ to ‘assemblages’ as a form of critical practice. Puar understands ‘assemblages’ in a Deleuzian sense, as “dispersed but mutually implicated networks, [that] draws together enunciation and dissolution, causality and effects” (2005, 127). According to Puar, assemblages prioritize encounter and movement over positioning and location—which reflects on one of her key critiques of intersectionality, that is, the tendency to “reify intersectionality into forms of standpoint epistemology” (Puar in Pitcher and Gunkel 2008). Puar conceptualizes the use of assemblages as a possibility to describe the reciprocal conditionality between different forms of hegemonic and marginalized positions in a ‘postidentitarian’ era by considering categories “as events, actions, and encounters between numerous bodies, rather than as simply entities and attributes of subjects” (Puar in Pitcher and Gunkel 2008). Assemblages therefore have “no finality, no end or order” while “the law of any assemblage is created from its connections” (Colebroock 2002, xx) which means that assemblages, as a concept, escapes the mechanisms of intersectionality by resisting the production of separate entities/categories. At the same time, Puar and other scholars who formulate an ‘intersectional representational critique’ find it difficult to entirely replace intersectional readings. This is reflected in her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007) in which Puar works with both concepts; in the first half with the concept ‘assemblages’ and in the second with ‘intersectionality,’ a theoretical encounter that Puar calls a “curious and instructive tension” (Puar in Pitcher and Gunkel 2008). As Puar points out, assemblages are hence not inhospitable to intersectionality.

This book reflects on these current debates and interventions by assembling intersectionality theory with queer theory and postcolonial theory. By doing so, this book expects a productive destabilization of some of the (identity) categories that are prevalent in this project, while allowing a critical engagement with intersectionality. This means thinking sexuality as intersectional: I understand sexuality as always already racialized and race as always sexually marked; sexuality and race are therefore not disparate

components of subjectivity—gender, class, and other classificatory inscriptions are similarly determined and determining (Barnard 2004, 2). In his focus on transnational contexts with a specific focus on South Africa, Ian Barnard, for similar reasons, calls for a *queer race theory* in order to describe the “enigmatic intersections of these possibilities where race itself becomes/is queer” (2004, 18). Having said this, I am aware of the fact that queer theory is contested in the South African context, as in African contexts more generally. Thus far it has hardly been theorized in specific local contexts. This might also be due to the fact that the term ‘queer,’ as a way of ‘self-identification’ as well as a critical practice, is not widely appropriated. This book acknowledges the fact that the term *queer* has not been used widely throughout the history of and scholarship on homosexuality and non-normative sexualities in South Africa. The use of the terms ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ throughout the book is therefore intentional. By doing so I am not ignoring the complexity and variety of sexualities and genders that exist(ed) throughout South African cultures and communities which would be reflected in terms like ‘LGBTI’ and/or ‘queer.’ My use of the terms ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay,’ rather, reflects on, while critically engaging with, the mainstreaming of the (white) gay community in South Africa that, as an effect, reintroduces an essentialist framework that finds expression in a gay/straight divide and, as such, needs to be contextualized as a key site for the production of homonormativity that functions as an exclusion of the work and politics of, for example, same-sex, intersexed and transgendered communities in this country.

However, while the term ‘queer’ is not widespread, queer theory is nevertheless useful as a theory to work with as it enables us to deconstruct the map of dichotomies where heterosexuality/homosexuality and male/female stand as contradictory entities, as described above. Queer theory helps us to look beyond heteronormativity as well as homonormativity while including questions of race and postcoloniality. Queer theory further provides us with the possibility of understanding gender differently, as already racialized, sexualized and localized.¹² I argue therefore that we cannot afford *not* to apply queer theory as a tool of analysis despite recent efforts to exclude it from sexualities research in the African context, as done by Marc Epprecht, for example. In his recent book *Heterosexual Africa?* Epprecht concludes “that it is important to acknowledge but not to promote queer theory as a research strategy in Africa” (2008, 16). Although his critique of queer theory as a predominantly white and US-based theory is, to a certain extent, valid, I find his overall description of queer theory somewhat problematic. Just because queer theory has its historical background in the US-American queer movement in the 1990s does not mean that the theoretical framework itself is always chained to the concepts used in that context. As shown above, there are in fact a number of scholars that define their research as ‘queer’ who continuously challenge ‘Western’ concepts and their use in essentialist ways. I find it therefore difficult to consciously

exclude and extract queer theory from research on sexuality in the African context, and vice versa. As Barnard argues in his call for a *queer race theory*,¹³ it is about resisting “conceding queer theory to whiteness,” so as “not to remarginalize queer critics who do work on race” (2004, 6–7). As highlighted within current debates on intersectionality in conjuncture with queer theory, queer theory already has a racial politics. Also, because Epprecht’s critique is applicable to any other academic discipline/theory and particularly to the broader field of sexuality studies, including Lesbian and Gay Studies, where Epprecht seems to position himself and his research, I want to highlight Barnard’s point in which he stresses that it is important “to intervene into this politics and point to what I see as cultural texts that already make such interventions” (2004, 6).

Rather than establishing/developing an *African queer theory*, as suggested by Notisha Massaquoi (2008) this book promotes the introduction of queer thinking into a foremost gay/lesbian politics in South Africa. By pointing to the need for a more complex intersectional analysis that is informed by queer theory as well as postcolonial theory, I understand this book as being not only concerned with the South African context, although it deals in particular with South Africa. As the following two chapters show, the history and legacy of colonialism is important in contemporary conceptualizations of sexualities and homophobia in this country—a colonial legacy that also continues to influence (queer) politics in the West. Discourses of sexuality in the West and discourses of sexuality in South Africa are entangled. As I argue, particularly in Chapters 1, 2 and 4, Western politics of, and interventions into, discourses of defiant sexualities have been historically influencing politics in South Africa and continue to do so. This book reflects on the effects that gay activist histories in Europe and North America have on other countries, most certainly in the history of South Africa. And, of course, as this is not only one-dimensional and one directional, research emerging out of South Africa on South Africa can intervene and transcend racialized sexual subjectivity in the West. So why not continue to challenge queer theory from a South African research position?

On this note I want to provide further clarity on the use of some of the terms/concepts employed throughout the book. I use the term ‘West’ and ‘Western’ as a combined understanding of ‘European’ and ‘US-American,’ as a concept, a temporal and spatial concept, that is informed by the history of colonialism and modernity. My use of ‘the West’ is not a geographical construct but a temporal concept and image that produces power/knowledge over ‘the West’ as distinct from ‘the Rest.’ My use therefore refers to what Stuart Hall calls a “very common and influential discourse, helping to shape the public perception and attitudes down to the present” (1992, 59).

I am, furthermore, using the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ as political categories and by doing so I am following the South African liberation movement’s politicization of the terms that do not reflect apartheid’s categorization of

race as classified in the *Population Registration Act* of 1950, a law that will be discussed in the following chapter. The concept ‘post-apartheid’ seems more contested. While the concept is useful in order to mark a historically precise moment, that is, the official end of the apartheid regime with the first democratic elections in 1994—it tends to, at the same time, imply a contrast between the past and present as absolute with 1994 as the year that marks the radical break. This is not the case. As many scholars have pointed out, 1994 did not mark a politics of discontinuity. While the legacies and dynamics of the anti-apartheid movement (politically, institutionally and discursively) have widely collapsed—replaced by a politics of waiting/hoping for change¹⁴—and while we witness the emergence of a black middle-class, the majority of black people remain in poor living conditions; black rural South Africans in particular still live in extreme poverty. Also, while there is a growing visibility of poor white people—one of the main reasons for this is the break in state subsidizations of precarious job positions that white people inhabited, thus making the impossible pairing of ‘white’ and ‘poor,’ in the sense of apartheid politics, possible—the majority of white people in South Africa remain in their ‘comfort zone,’ a condition that, I argue, enables a continuity of white supremacy. As such, there are significant continuities—social, economic and indeed political—beyond 1994 and the formal end of apartheid as policy/rule; hence the term ‘post-apartheid’ as an index of this historical break, while emphasizing the continuities.

A GENEALOGY OF SEXUALITY AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF METHODS

In order to bring to light the multiplicity of images and subject positions which are possibly opposed to Western constructions of sexual identities, the research demands a multiplicity of methods and is situated in the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. The political aims of the book project influence the choice of material and data while employing particular tools of analysis. In this introduction I have used two key concepts of analysis that are directly interlinked without further exploration: sexuality and discourse. Sexuality, as a multi-layered notion that is intimately entangled with gender as the social meaning of sexual differences, is used as a lens and grid of analysis to look at existing post/colonial gender arrangements on the one hand, and processes of constituting race as a precondition for biopolitical strategies of power/knowledge on the other. As Michel Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality. Vol.1, An Introduction* (1987b), sexuality, in general, was invented in Europe at the turn of the 20th century. Sexuality became a medical discourse and sexual acts were transformed through complex discursive practices into stable notions of identity. By locating the discursive practices that constitute sexuality at the end of the 19th century, Foucault understands sexuality as being not outside of history. Instead he

argues that it is produced through and within history. By doing so Foucault denaturalizes sexuality.

Central to Foucault's analysis of sexuality is a specific conceptualization of discourse, which states that "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (1987b, 100). Foucault theorizes discourse as being a spiral, a spiral that consists, at a particular historical moment, of interconnected and related knots of statements and practices that influence and change each other and form a certain set of knowledge. For Foucault it is knowledge that highlights the relation between discursive and non-discursive factors, the body of text and the accompanying institutions. In his method of genealogy, as different to his archaeology,¹⁵ Foucault introduces the concept of the apparatus:¹⁶ a heterogeneous ensemble that includes "discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy, etc." (1980a, 194). The apparatus is the net that links the discursive and non-discursive practices of knowledge/power. The apparatus constitutes knowledge as being the 'truth' and thus knowledge becomes the representative of truth (see, for example, Grosz 1994). Particular knowledge that is accepted as being 'self-evident' is in fact the effect of an apparatus that tends to naturalize power relations (Finzsch 2005). As this book argues, it is not only sexuality, but also the colonial gaze that was given the character of scientific truth (Finzsch 2005). Foucault is concerned with the production and establishment of truth in different societies and historical moments and its effect on the subject. In order to understand processes of colonialism, and its interrelationship with the history of sexuality, an analysis is necessary between dominant and marginal, institutionalized and informal processes that produce the subject positions of gendered and racialized individuals and collectives.

The political implications of the term 'homosexuality,' as described by Foucault, is the main reason why I have decided to focus on female same-sex intimacy rather than on 'lesbianism' in this book. The term 'lesbian,' as we came to understand it in the West, refers to the discursively produced concept and knowledge of sexuality which originated in the 19th century in order to exercise power and police heteronormativity. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. In order to understand post-apartheid politics of sexuality and the contested meaning of female same-sex intimacy in this country we need to look beyond this discursive framework. This brings me to the second reason behind the focus on the term 'same-sex intimacy' rather than on 'lesbianism': same-sex practices are understood differently in different historical cultural contexts and are not necessarily labeled and contextualized as 'homosexual.' This is an important point for this book as it is looking at the specific South African cultural and historical context. To focus on the concept of 'intimacy' instead of 'lesbianism' allows me to describe the historical dis/continuities of female same-sex sexual cultures.

Foucault's genealogical framework focuses on three epochs: the present, the past and the future. Foucault understands the present as an entry point, as a moment of critique from which to start the discourse analysis. This means that the present is the point of departure from which to initiate a journey back into the past in order to identify and contextualize the discourses that constitute the particular moment in contemporary society. By doing this Foucault identifies the future as an era of potential change. For this book the point of departure is the discourse of homosexuality in contemporary, post-apartheid South Africa in which some groups and individuals claim that homosexuality is un-African and hence discursively contest the constitutional rights of gay and lesbian people guaranteed by the post-apartheid government. In order to historicize and contextualize this discourse, which led to the construction of normative sexual categories, especially heterosexuality, an analysis of the emergence of these discourses is crucial. In this process contradictions are likely to appear. However, as Zackie Achmat argues, this is highly relevant for a genealogical project since "contradiction, antagonism, rupture and discontinuity, together with power and resistance are concepts central to discourse analysis. [. . .] The purpose of analysis is precisely to 'map the irregularities of the discursive formation'" (1993, 14).

This genealogical approach defines the body of texts that are the object of research. It influences the choice of material and data. This book combines diverse critical theories influenced by political and social movements, such as: the black consciousness movement, cultural activists, feminisms/womanisms, lesbian and gay movements and poststructuralists—all of which have different implications in different contexts/times. This book hence draws on history, cultural artifacts and theory which underlines the importance of an interdisciplinary dialogue that has the possibility to trace, cross and transgress a number of boundaries by pulling together a number of traditions, as Kopano Ratele (2001a, 20) argues. In the tradition of cultural studies this book focuses predominantly on cultural artifacts such as popular images, art pieces, documentaries, websites and literature. Most artifacts are contemporary material. As the following chapter points out, the first attempt to organize the lesbian and gay community in South Africa took place in the 1960s and then again in the 1980s. Particularly GALA, the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action,¹⁷ situated at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, has provided me with a very impressive cultural archive of South African gay and lesbian history. At GALA I was able to follow the historical traces of social and political activism by viewing images, minutes of meetings, agendas and constitutions of several groups, newsletters, flyers, magazines, interviews and reports from demonstrations and prides—texts that are not always considered as 'typical academic material.' It is therefore not surprising that GALA attracts a whole range of scholars that work on gay life in South Africa. A large majority of these scholars contribute their research material to the archive once the work is published. This is also my aim.

In the archive the history of gay men is documented in far more detail than the history of lesbians. One of the reasons is that male gay subcultures in South Africa (as in many other countries in the world) are far more public and economically supported. As a consequence we can find material about male same-sex cultures back to the time of the two world wars in which diverse subcultures emerged worldwide. While we cannot always find evidence of female same-sex cultures in the same time period, we can nevertheless find indications of female same-sex desires. So while some sources are easy to find within the archives, libraries, artwork and literature, other questions remain difficult to answer. Representations of female same-sex relationships during the apartheid era and before are especially difficult to trace, particularly when it comes to black women. Most narratives are recent documents representing predominantly lesbian subjectivities. Personal writings from the apartheid era are rare, as are narratives on women who have intimate relationships with other women without identifying themselves as lesbians. Another striking problem in rediscovering the historical and cultural past of female same-sex intimacy and sexuality is that the small body of texts that does exist has, for the most part, the intention of constructing a Western/European view on a sexualized and racialized African *Other*, as documented in travel writings, in the work from early anthropologists, sexologists, as well as psychologists. Unfortunately, contemporary scholars continue to refer to these texts rather uncritically without contextualizing them (Murray and Roscoe 1998; Arnfred 2004; among others), which underlines the need for (South) African scholars, particularly lesbians, to rewrite history in order to deconstruct the regimes of knowledge. This lack of historical but also contemporary sources makes it necessary for me to include an ethnographic element within my research. This approach would follow Maria Tamboukou's lines of thought, expressed as follows:

Genealogical and ethnographic practices have, I suggest, the possibility of being used in the 'form of meaningful differentiability', in the sense that any single practice, be it genealogical or ethnographic, could be seen [. . .] operating in relation to the other practices within the same analytical [. . .] context. (2003, 211)

Tamboukou uses ethnography in order to trace the 'different, heterogeneous elements, discourses, and practices' that constitute the lives of the women she is interested in. Ethnographic practice must be thus considered as a tool to produce another type of text that can be analyzed in relation to genealogical practices, as part of discourse. This amounts in what Halberstam calls a 'queer methodology,'¹⁸ an "approach that can combine information culled from people with information culled from texts" (1998, 12). By combining a cultural studies approach that uses textual criticism, and ethnographic research I aim to consider all materials as texts that need to be positioned within historical but also cultural contexts. My methods

therefore include semi-structured interviews, the analysis of conversations and secondary analysis of interview material found in archives such as GALA. In the summer of 2005 I conducted a two-hour-long interview with Beverly Palesa Ditsie in Johannesburg. Ditsie has been politically active throughout the 1990s and continues to be as a cultural activist. Although she has been something of an icon, especially for black lesbians, in South Africa, her view is widely ignored in a whole range of publications on the gay history of this country. I wanted to include her perspective and I asked her about her view on the lesbian and gay movements and the politics of rights in the country. The interview material is included in this book, particularly in Chapter 2 and marked by the name 'Beverly Ditsie' in brackets after the quote.

This book further analyzes different materials that reflect on 'mummy-baby' relationships. It introduces life history materials from a study undertaken by Tanya Chan Sam, published in the book *Defiant Desire* (1995). Particular attention is paid to 'Bongie's' narrative in the book, that I combine with my own interview material. In 2005 I interviewed ten women who have been involved in 'mummy-baby' relationships at one stage in their lives. Seven interviews took place in Johannesburg, one in Soweto, one in Cape Town and one in Tshwane. The interviews are, of course, not representative of all interpretations of what 'mummy-baby' relationships personally can mean, but they serve my interest in the contested meanings of female same-sex intimacy in South Africa's history and cultures. I started the interviews among some of my friends in Johannesburg. The majority of the individuals interviewed are active members of the dyke community, all of them very clear in defining their sexual subjectivity. This is one reason why the interviews are not very representative, especially when it comes to the question of which role these same-sex relationships play for the individual process of 'becoming sexual.' Two of the interviewed women define themselves as straight, while two understand themselves as bisexual and five others identified as lesbian at the time of the interviews. One woman was (again, at the time of the interview) in the process of negotiating her lesbian identity in relation to her religious, Christian, belief that teaches her that homosexuality is a sin. The number of interviews is small and geographically limited to communities in the broader Johannesburg and the broader Durban area, where the interviewees grew up. All women grew up in black communities, most of them in black townships. While one of the individuals interviewed was the mother of another interviewee, all other women were part of the age group similar to my own. They were between 26 and 32-years-old at the time of the interviews.

While I started talking about my research interest in 'mummy-baby' relationships to friends and acquaintances I was surprised how many narratives of 'mummy-baby' relationships I heard as a response. Some agreed to an interview immediately, while others pointed me to friends of theirs: it was an example of the snowball method. In the end I talked to three women

that I did not know beforehand whereas one of them was a spontaneous interaction during an excursion with mutual friends. All of the interviewees agreed that I use their real names. I decided, however, to use a pseudonym for each of them since this gives them the opportunity to change their mind retrospectively. In the context of this book it is more important to be able to differentiate between the different subjects while reading their stories, rather than being able to trace the interviewees' entire identities. The interview material is mainly incorporated in Chapter 4 in this volume. I decided to give the interviews some space in the book by quoting the interview material at length. The lengthy use of the interview material allows the reader to have a sense of the intimacy that is being expressed within the interviews. In saying this I am not talking about the intimacy between the interviewer and the interviewees, but about the intimacy within the 'mummy-baby' relationships that the interviewee experienced during their adolescence and which are recounted within the interview situation.

Having acknowledged some of the gaps in my methodological approach in relation to the interviews I undertook, I want to mention that further research is needed into different generations of 'mummy-baby' relationships, as it would be interesting to compare the diversity of concepts and forms of female same-sex intimacy and friendships in different South African regions and societies.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In order to understand the cultural politics surrounding female same-sex intimacy in post-apartheid South Africa, this book explores the tension between sexual subjectivity and rights on the one side, and a growing visibility of homophobia, as reflected in Muholi's image *Aftermath* on the other. The book is organized into four main chapters in order to be able to develop and explore the key issues articulated in this tension. Following the introduction, the first chapter concentrates on the question of how this tension is expressed by focusing on the politics articulated in verbal expressions of homophobia within the post-apartheid nation-state. This chapter hence explores the complexity of post-apartheid homophobia that seems to link sexuality to culture and tradition, arguing, for example, that *homosexuality is un-African*. The chapter analyses this discourse of homosexuality in contemporary South Africa by exploring the (historical and contemporary) meaning of sexuality and its political implications. The interest of the research at this point is thus not so much to locate a 'lesbian' identity or a 'homosexual' identity within the pre-colonial African context but rather to demonstrate the conditions of emergence for a decolonized heterosexual African identity proposed by claims such as homosexuality is un-African. It explores genealogies of sexualities in an effort to understand the discursive investment in gender and sexuality as technologies of (bio)

power—while keeping in mind the fact that racism is the very conditioning of biopower.

In order to understand contemporary discourses of sexual subjectivities and rights it is crucial to establish the historical context out of which the sexual orientation clause in the post-apartheid constitution emerged. What is the history of the lesbian and gay movement in this country? And how did this history merge with anti-apartheid politics that gave way to this constitution? The second chapter of the book provides a brief introduction to the history of the gay rights movement in South Africa and explores the extent to which the movement engaged with constructions of sexuality that underwrote apartheid. The chapter hence analyzes the movement's alliances with other social and political movements on the national and international level, while exploring carefully the politics of inclusion and exclusion at play within the different gay communities. It kick-starts the debate of whether the constitution really has made such a profound difference to all people who identify as gay in post-apartheid South Africa, as some scholars have argued (Croucher 2002; Van Zyl 2005; Hoard 2005), by including a debate around the limitations of (human) rights.

In the third chapter the book then turns to the central aspect of Muholi's image *Aftermath*: the physical violence of homophobia. Lesbian sexuality—and non-heteronormative sexuality more generally—is perceived as threatening to heteronormativity, as a wide range of scholars have pointed out.¹⁹ But what exactly is constituted and contested within the act of violence? Up to this point the book focuses on the meaning of sexuality in the colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid context and its importance for the race regime. This chapter then turns to the technologies of homophobia that marked the body in the image *Aftermath*. According to statistics a significant number of rapes in South Africa are gang rapes; I argue that gang rape signifies a moment of male bonding in the act of violence. This chapter explores the relationship between gender and sexuality expressed in acts of hate crime by focusing on homosociality as a theory of masculinity. This is crucial in order to understand the politically motivated investment into the discursive production of non-normative sexualities. While male homosociality refers to male bonding networks as a space where the gender regime is constituted and continuously contested, the chapter also explores the potential of female homosocial structures as a means to subvert this gender regime.

The conceptualization of female homosociality leads directly into the fourth chapter that brings together the key issues that are expressed in the tension between sexual rights and the act of hate crime as a means of policing female sexuality. The chapter offers an overview of historical and contemporary forms of female same-sex cultures—such as 'women marriages,' ancestral wives and 'mummy-baby' relationships—before it focuses more specifically on the interviews that I conducted on 'mummy-baby' relationships. By focusing on 'mummy-baby' relationships as particular institutions

of female same-sex intimacy and by contextualizing these relationships in the historical and cultural discourse of sexual cultures and cultures of intimacy the chapter explores the contested meanings of female same-sex intimacy. The fourth chapter hence explores the question of whether different forms of same-sex intimacy intersect with or resist lesbian identity politics and cultural practices in the West. It discusses the tensions between non-lesbian same-sex intimacy and metropolitan lesbianism and elaborates on the extent to which these forms of intimacy are in fact further marginalized by a post-apartheid constitution that seems to reinforce a homosexual/heterosexual binarized identity that every person becomes assignable to in one way or the other. By doing so the book explores the possible continuity of colonial sex/gender organizations within post-apartheid homophobia that is constituted in opposition to culturally specific forms of sex/gender organizations, as summarized in the concluding chapter of the book. The final chapter also highlights the social and political implications of the book. It explores the implications for queer theory but also for the political practice in South Africa—and outside of it.