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Black women and trauma: finding healing through poetry after experiencing sexual violence

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Wits Centre for Diversity Studies
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Research Report

Title: Black Women and Trauma: Finding Healing Through Poetry after Experiencing Sexual Violence

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Pula!

Abstract

The historical construction of the Black female body as hypersexual, abnormal and unrapeable is rooted in racist colonial ideas that have over time become politicised and naturalised thus creating a society that is uniquely oppressive towards Black women. The high levels of sexual violence in South Africa is due to intersecting variables that go beyond the ideology that women living in certain bodies are readily available for sex and that men cannot be defined outside of their numerous sexual conquests. State sanctioned violence from the time of Apartheid has spilled over into every facet of public life in democratic South Africa and this violence is transferred into homes in the form of Gender Based Violence and Femicide. South Africa is a country founded on the trauma of Black people and the brunt of that trauma is carried by its women. The need for alternative forms of understanding, processing, making sense of and healing from this trauma has reached a crisis level and this paper offers poetry as a therapeutic tool that can be used by Black women to heal from the long term trauma caused by sexual violence.

This study is concerned with theories of colonisation, racism, misogyny, rape culture and patriarchy as systems of oppression. Through a Decolonial and Intersectional lens, the study will illuminate why it is that Black women are more vulnerable to sexual violence because of the bodies that they are in and the socioeconomic conditions that they are faced with. Decoloniality offers the opportunity to look beyond where we are right now with Black women being marginalised and silenced because of how they have been constructed and invented through the heterosexual male gaze. It offers the opportunity to reimagine and re-create a different society where self-definition is possible. Intersectionality being the second theoretical framework used provides a multidimensional view into the lives lived by Black South African women, which is often thought of as homogenous and singular.

Using methodologies such as Critical Discourse Analysis, Narrative Analysis and Thematic Analysis to analyse the poems chosen in this study brings us to the conclusion that indeed poetry can be used as a therapeutic tool by Black women to process, understand, make sense of and express the wounds caused by the trauma of sexual violence.

Drawing from the works of both published and unpublished authors of poetry such as Koleka Putuma and Amina Deka Asma, this study is an empathetic take on the unseen and often forgotten consequences of toxic masculinity and rape culture.

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

The purpose behind this study is to explore the ways in which poetry can be used as a therapeutic tool by Black women in South Africa who have experienced and survived sexual violence. In order for this to take place, a historical and political overview of the racialisation, objectification and normalisation of the raping of African women, needs to be understood in order to contextualise why the focus of this work is on Black women. Furthermore, this study will emphasise the potential power that poetry has to mobilise, restore and resist, by following the genealogy of past South African women who came to use poetry as a form of activism, collective catharsis, womanist action and consciousness. The research hopes to explore the ways poetry was previously used by African women for healing, both in public and political spaces and within private spaces and more importantly, how it can continue to do so.

One of the core reasons that sexual violence and the abuse and murder of Black women in this country is so rampant is because of how masculinity has been constructed. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the cultural dominance in society whereby 'real' men are physically strong and imposing, aggressive and outspoken. This masculinity can only exist in relation to the subordination of women and homosexual men (Schippers 2007, pp. 87). Homosexual men fail to live up to the ideal masculinity and are thus regarded as feminine and these oppressed masculinities and femininities are positioned at the bottom of the gender hierarchy (Schippers 2007, pp. 87).

An answer to the question: "how can Black women use poetry as a tool to heal from the personal and collective trauma of sexual violence?" does not exist. Whether or not a person has recovered from long-term trauma is not something that can be measured or calculated. Poetry is not being offered here as a remedy to victims and survivors of sexual violence, but rather as a platform that could possibly serve as an outlet to one or many.

1.1 Background/ Rationale

The colonisation of African land took place simultaneously with the colonisation of the Black woman's body. It was not only the forceful taking of land, the mass kidnapping and enslavement of people and the destruction of cultures, religions and societal structures, it was also the systematic raping of indigenous women whose bodies became the site where the battle for domination took place. The Black woman's body continues to be hyper-visible today

because of how it was constructed by European travellers and pseudo-scientific racism as animalistic, abnormal, unnatural, grotesque and oversexed (Mowatt, French and Malebranche, 2013: 650). The Black woman's body was and continues to be synonymous with sex. The meaning that has been attached to the big breasts, buttocks and thighs is that of a group of people whose desire for sex is uncontrollable, who are seductive and who are always available for sex.

The story of Sarah Baartman is the epitome of the objectification and sexualisation of the Black woman's body. Baartman was taken from the Cape colony in the 1800s to Europe where she was placed on display in London and Paris for paying customers. Like an animal in a zoo, Baartman's body, because of her large breasts, buttocks and elongated labia, became the centre of curiosity, ridicule, amusement and satisfaction for Europeans, especially for the white male gaze. Even in death Baartman continued to be dehumanised as her body parts were put on public display until 1974. These racist colonial ideas that determine which bodies are disposable and which ones are innocent and worthy of respect continue even in modern postcolonial society and the media is one of the institutions that reproduce these ideas through the language that they use when reporting on sexual crimes.

The end of structural and formal colonisation did not mean the end of systematic rape. The increase in rape and other sexual violations during times of war is a product of heightened hegemonic masculinity which has become militarized and is an extension of gender inequality and skewed power relations that existed before the conflict began (Henry, 2016: 45). Systematic rape during times of war and conflict is used as a tool to instil fear in the victims, their families and communities and to discourage any possible acts of resistance. It is the strategic plan of taking away the victim's agency, sense of self and will to survive. During times of war the moral and ethical fibres that hold society together become void. The non-ethics of war for the colonised body, the subjugated body becomes an everyday occurrence (Maldonado-Torres 2007) as systematic violence is experienced on a personal level for those whose degree of humanity has been declared inferior.

It is also a symbol of conquest, a 'prize' given to combatants by their commanders for their great work. Many times women and adolescent girls are kept as sex slaves: a trophy reminding the perpetrators of their victory. The colonial construction of the hypersexual Black woman has led to the idea that some bodies are impossible to rape thus making their rape permissible (Gqola 2015, pp. 5) as it does not cause any harm. This belief means that Black women are

silenced and not believed when they do decide to report the rape. What furthers this belief is the patriarchal logic that all women are sexually available all the time for the pleasure of the heterosexual man. This logic legitimises the heterosexual male gaze and sexual advances be it welcomed or unwelcomed (Gqola 2015, pp. 8).

1.1.1 The Research Problem

The research seeks to offer poetry as an unorthodox way of approaching healing in its various forms; emotionally, psychologically etc. The problem itself is the violence that is committed against those who are marginalised, this research does not attempt to offer a solution to this violence but instead looks at the ways poetry has been used historically by Black women to cope, process, resist and heal from it.

The South African constitution places men and women as equals in society, however, the reality is that women in this country continue to be marginalised. There seems to be a disconnection between what has been promised and what is actually being experienced. The core problem here is toxic masculinity and the way in which boys and men are socialised into embodying oppressive ideals. Domestic violence and rape used to be handled as something that is shameful that needed to be hidden but now the realisation is that it is a systemic issue that requires all sectors of society to act (Crenshaw 1991, pp. 1241). The reason why the question of race is important when talking about sexual violence is because of how race intersects with other aspects of the Black woman's life which make them especially vulnerable to violence (Crenshaw 1991, pp. 1242). Racism and sexism need to be looked at under the same lens- tackling these two aspects separately as either-or leads to an environment that makes it difficult for Black women to speak because their identity in its entirety is not prioritised.

1.1.2 Purpose of the study

Finding a way to move through the trauma, express it and reach the other side of it is the purpose of this study. Sexual violence will always be personal because as a Black woman myself, there will always be someone who I know who has been a victim of sexual violence or I will be the victim myself. Exploring poetry, not only as a therapeutic tool, but also as a way of documenting experiences is important as a way of memorialisation. Poetry, as a tool of memorialising narratives of those who are systematically silenced, can be healing as it brings a sense of sameness, unity and belonging among groups (Naidu 2006).

The nature of rape is that it isolates the victim from their body and also isolates them from others because of the shame and guilt that accompanies it. Poetry on the other hand involves both the writer and reader/listener thus having the potential to restore dignity as a collective.

1.1.3 Research Questions

- Does poetry have the potential to be used as a therapeutic tool by Black women?
- What signs of trauma do Black women often present with?
- How are Black women a vulnerable group in society?

1.1.4 Research Objectives

- Researching the scourge of Gender-Based Violence, Femicide and rape within the South African context as well as the broader history of violence in the country, so that insight can be gained into why sexual violence is a crisis and why it is necessary to continuously be searching for new ways to address the long-term collective trauma it causes.
- Researching dominant masculinity in relation to femininity and how that creates an environment where violence is expected, celebrated and normalised.
- Researching the reasons behind the culture of silence when it comes to sexual violence, the reasons behind it and the ways poetry can break that silence.
- Researching how it came to be that the Black female body became hypersexualised and constructed as rapeable.
- Researching how society can begin to re-imagine the Black female body by debunking racial myths and rape myths.

1.1.5 Definition of Key Terms

- **Black woman**- women of African descent and who are a part of the diaspora
- **Sexual violence**- is not limited to rape (forceful penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth using a body part or object) but also includes sexual harassment, compelled masturbation, forced exposure to pornography, human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

- **Trauma**- an injury to the mental and emotional wellbeing of a person. It can also be caused by an injury to the body.
- **Poetry**- written, spoken or sung narratives that are creative in nature.
- **Healing**- restoring mental, emotional and physical and spiritual health

1.6 Ethical Considerations

The poems that will be analysed are available to the public and thus authorisation will not be needed in order to access them. Human participants will not be required so ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee will not be needed.

1.7 Proposed Chapter Outline for the Study

- **Chapter One** introduces the study, the research questions, background to the study and the purpose of the study.
- **Chapter Two** is the literature review which will unpack themes of masculinity, sexual violence, racism, trauma and healing.
- **Chapter Three** looks at decoloniality and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks for the study.
- **Chapter Four** is dedicated to methodologies that will enable the analysis and discussion of the selected poetry.
- **Chapter Five** is the analysis and discussion of poems that speak to Black femininity, sexual violence, trauma and healing.
- **Chapter Six** is the conclusion, including limitations of the study and propositions for further research.

1.8 Conclusion

This research study is not purposed to find a particular answer to a particular question. It is not possible to measure whether or not Black women will find catharsis in poetry as a way of healing trauma caused by sexual violence. Rather it is a proposition; offering poetry as a tool for activism, empowerment, resistance and therapy as it is more accessible, relatable and culturally relevant to the average Black woman in South Africa. Violence manifests itself in different ways depending on the space and time. Often the focus is on creating solutions to

better understand and curb the violence. The idea is that once the assault is over, the violence is also over. The victim survivor needs to continue functioning in society and in their communities but how so when the basic human right to bodily autonomy, integrity and safety has been disregarded? Poetry is not the answer to the psychosocial prison that is trauma caused by sexual violence, however, it can assist in the individual and collective restoration and reconciliation with the Self through exploring memory, trauma, and healing on the terms of victims through the use of poetry.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2. Introduction

This chapter aims to illustrate the historical ways in which the objectification of the Black female body by colonialists created the perfect political, economic and gendered system that demonised and simultaneously sexualised the Black female body. It is a system that continues to place Black women in a position where they are most vulnerable to sexual violence in present-day South Africa. Gqola (2015) says that the construction of the African female body under the European male gaze was that of a grotesque and yet 'exotic' body. The large breasts, buttocks and labia of the African woman were perceived to be an indication of the African woman's insatiable desire for sex. This, says Gqola (2015) is what categorised these bodies as 'rapeable'; the idea that the Black woman is intentionally seductive and readily available for sex and therefore cannot be raped.

The chapter will further discuss theories of masculinity, misogyny, rape culture and rape to better understand the various factors involved that perpetuate the societal conditions that make it possible for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) to be endemic, creating an atmosphere of anxiety and trepidation in small communities and in the macro-society because the threat of violence- in one form or another- is constantly present.

The chapter further explores how poetry is accessible and culturally relevant and can offer a platform for Black women who are living with the trauma of having experienced sexual violence to express themselves. Poetry, thought of in this way as a therapeutic tool, can provide the opportunity for expression and vulnerability, which might not be available elsewhere.

Sexual violence, which includes rape, molestation, child sexual abuse, coercion, compelled-masturbation and exploitation in South Africa has been a crisis for years. Dominant ideologies of what sexual violence is and who it is whose experience can be thought of as legitimate, means that sexual violence is not a singularity and that there are intersecting variables that require a unique approach to thinking about sexual violence and the trauma caused by it when referring to Black women (Grogan 2013, pp. 174).

"*Wa thintha aba' fazi, wa thint' imbokodo*," which means "you strike a woman, you strike a rock," is an anti-apartheid slogan that became popular during the 1956 Women's March. Over 20 000 women, majority of them being Black, marched against the proposed law that would

see them being forced to carry passbooks, thus further taking away their right to freedom of movement. This slogan is a reflection of the ideology of the indestructible Black woman. Rocks do not cry, they do not budge; this paper argues that this does not have to be the way that Black women move in the world. This exploration of poetry as a therapeutic tool is an effort to allow Black women to give themselves permission to be something else other than a caregiver. Poetry can be used to express fear, hurt, confusion and hopelessness. Poetry grants the space for an individual or a group to communicate their rage, grief and disappointment, giving Black women the space to be vulnerable without feeling or being perceived as a failure (Crowther, Harrington & Shiperd 2010, pp. 473).

The trauma that this marginalised group live with is not acknowledged because of the strength and resilience that Black women have become known for (Crowther, Harrington & Shiperd 2010, pp. 469). Although the ideology of the 'strong Black women' has its roots in colonial times- used as a justification for slavery, torture and sexual violence- it has been adopted by the Black community as an ideal and a cultural aspiration (Crowther, Harrington & Shiperd, 2010 pp. 470). This ideology gives Black women authority within and outside their community, as they are perceived as the 'motherly' figure who never complains and serves all those around them, even at their expense.

Black women experience the violence before the assault takes place and fear is used to hold hostage the daily lives of women, queer people and feminine males by controlling their every movement and decision, leaving them in a constant state of anxiety (Dosekun 2007, pp. 90). This is what Gqola (2015) has dubbed "The Female Fear Factory." Masculinity is used in private and in public spaces to continuously intimidate those who they deem to be the subhuman. Foucault (1973) says that the body is not just a conscious being that holds knowledge and the capacity to reason, but that it is an active participant in a political field that is invested in power relations. He presents the question of how power is exercised, by what means and what the effects of the exercise of power are (Foucault 1773, pp. 77). Sexual violence is about exerting power over those whose identities have been constructed as sexually vulnerable (Dosekun 2007, pp. 90) therefore understanding the power relations between Black people and white people, between men and women is necessary- not just in debunking hegemonic ideas of masculinity and the ways it is expressed - but also in exploring ways that Black women can regain their sense of agency and power after experiencing sexual violence and how the use of poetry can assist with that.

2.2 Definition of Key Terms

This section of the chapter aims to explore the available and relevant literature on Black women, sexual violence, trauma and poetry as a therapeutic tool towards healing and release for violated women. Before that, key terms and concepts that are deployed in the study are defined:

2.2.1 Trauma

Trauma is an injury to the mind or the emotional wellbeing of a person and it can also be caused by an injury to the body (Crowther, Harrington and Shiperd 2010, pp. 469). Trauma alters the way that a person moves in the world, the way that they feel about themselves and what they think about themselves. It often leaves a person feeling vulnerable, powerless, confused, angry and afraid. It can also cause feelings of guilt and shame as a person could blame themselves for whatever event or recurring events that has left them in a traumatised state. Trauma in Black woman, especially those who are a part of the working class, expresses itself differently and it also disguises itself differently. The positioning of Black women in society means that many of them do not have time to deeply and intensely think about their experiences, emotions and thoughts because they are occupied with work and raising not only their children but the children of family members as well. The fast-paced consumer-driven world that we live in means that a person's health, more so their mental health, is not a priority. For many working class Black women, not working means the likelihood of not having enough food while their more privileged counterparts are financially secure. From this perspective, taking time to reflect on past and even current experiences is time that could have been used elsewhere. The association of Black people with struggle has been normalised and so the feelings of fatigue, anxiety and low moods experienced by this group goes unquestioned as it is perceived as a natural part of life.

Another reason why race needs to be taken into consideration when looking at trauma with regards to Black women is the way in which they have been constructed and how societal conditions further reproduce this view of them. The ideology of the 'strong Black woman' has created a situation whereby an entire section of a racial group has been forced to carry oppression gracefully. It is a cultural symbol of resilience, as if Black women have been put on a pedestal; that if they fail then the entire race is due to fail. If they are still strong then there is still hope for the entire race. This ideology carries with it a sense of pride, accomplishment and self-reliability (Crowther, Harrington and Shiperd 2010, pp. 460). It emphasises the role

of the Black woman as a healer, a leader, a respected member of the community, a sort-after council, a caretaker and a provider of endless emotional labour. This ideology is easily internalised and aspired to not only because of how central it is to identifying with Black womanhood but also because it is a positive stereotype in the midst of many negative stereotypes and portrayals of Black women. This ideology has imposed superhuman abilities onto Black women and this leads to them suppressing any negative memory and the trauma that has not been dealt with can show itself through binge eating, drug abuse and over working oneself, amongst other things. However, the 'strong Black woman' image can serve as a starting point to moving forward, within the scope of post-traumatic growth, from a traumatic experience but this does not happen all of the time. This ideology is silencing, harmful and in many ways denies Black women the opportunity to fully embrace all of the things that lead to a complete and emotionally and mentally healthy life.

2.2.2 Rape Culture

The Female Fear Factory is a term coined by Pumla Dineo Gqola (2015). This term refers to the cultural manufacturing of fear that holds the bodies of women, feminised subaltern masculinities and queer bodies hostage in public spaces. The fear of being groped, cat-called, or raped is used to control the decisions and therefore the actions of those who have been identified as sexually vulnerable. This speaks to the discourse that rape is about power and domination. The female fear factory traumatises before any physical assault has even taken place and this is because of the psychosocial affect of the constant paranoia, anxiety and feelings of hyper-visibility experienced by marginalised groups. It is the internalisation of the external environment, which is unsafe, racist and threatening that causes psychological and emotional harm (Reay 2015, pp. 13) furthermore women in society have been socialised to accept and expect to be sexually violated at some point in their lives (Gqola 2015). Rape culture has made it so that the onus is on women to always be vigilant, to avoid places such as night clubs and to learn self-defence techniques so as to not be assaulted. Rapists are often known to their victims so the instructions given to women on how to avoid the violent side of masculinity such as staying away from certain places and certain men (Gqola 2015) proves to be fruitless. It is easy to forget that we are dealing with real people and real trauma hence the importance of thinking about habitus and how the environment and social atmosphere can affect those who ask themselves on a daily basis on their way to work, to class or to a shop, "am I next?"

Psychosocial analysis combines the studies and findings of sociology with those of psychology, allowing researchers to see people not just as social actors and subjects but rather as individuals who contribute, experience and are affected by hierarchal social structures and social ills. Bourdieu (2000) speaks to the seriousness of emotion as it touches the organic part of our Being and reflects and expresses the habitus within which Black women exist- a habitus that turns one into an endangered species and exposes you to the risks of suffering. The exchanges that take place in the external habitus affects the internal environment, at times subconsciously. A woman who has large breasts or wide hips could begin wearing loose-fitting clothes because they are 'comfortable' or it could be the subconscious mind trying to protect them from the harm caused because of the sexualisation of their body by people in public spaces.

2.2.3 Gender Based Violence

"*I don't want to die with my hands up or legs open.*"

The quote above is a poem by theatre practitioner and award winning poet, Koleka Putuma. This single sentence is a summary of the crude reality facing Black women in South Africa. It is a terrifying realisation to come to; the realisation that your death could possibly be a violent and painful one at the hands of an intimate partner, a stranger or someone else that you know. Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a social ill that has devastating effects on families and communities. GBV is violence that is committed against people of a certain gender or gender identity (Leddy, Pulerwitz, Weiss & Yam 2019) in this case women and other vulnerable groups such as sex workers, transgender women and those who abuse drugs. This violence can be sexual, psychological, physical or verbal but for the sake of this study sexual violence will be the focus.

The Constitution (1996) declares equality between men and women, however, this is yet to materialise and we see this in the unequal power dynamics between men and women in heterosexual relationships. Studies suggest that one in three women will experience some form of Gender Based Violence in their lifetime (Leddy, Pulerwitz, Weiss & Yam 2019) with most experiencing it at the hands of their partner. When a woman is being dominated, her agency is taken from her and she is silenced making it almost impossible to negotiate condom use, the type of sex that she wants to have and when it is she wants to engage in sex. Many women remain in abusive relationships due to financial reasons (Leddy, Pulerwitz, Weiss & Yam 2019) and because of that reliance and dependency on their partner, it is easy to be coerced into doing things that place your health at risk.

Of the more than seven million people living with HIV in this country, over four million of them are women consisting mostly of adolescent girls and young women (UNAIDS 2019). These numbers stand as they do because of the high rate of sexual violence and GBV. This violence has invented a new kind of trauma, a trauma caused by the diagnosis of an incurable disease or other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD). Women living with HIV/AIDS who find themselves in abusive relationships struggle to access ART (Antiretroviral Treatment) or PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) as a way to prevent transmission of infection, because of the ways in which every aspect of their lives is controlled, including their health. Trauma functions the same way that dominoes function; when a single trauma is left untreated, it can lead to other traumatic experiences.

2.2.4 Poetry

Poetry has no meaning until meaning and function is applied to it. It has been and continues to be used as a tool of activism, documenting and recording experiences and narratives that otherwise would not have been written into history. Poetry as a form of expression is fluid; it is itself multidimensional and if used as a therapeutic tool could become a space where the different identities embodied by victims and survivors of sexual violence are not isolated from the other and treated as separate. Poetry can be used to create a sub-society within the broader society: a new space where norms and acceptability is determined by those in the space.

Audre Lorde in her essay *Poetry is not a Luxury* (2000) first published in 1985, sees poetry as a mirror; a way to look at one's Self intimately with honesty and scrutiny. Reconciliation with the Self, after being violently alienated from your body, sexuality and Being, can only happen if one faces themselves. Lorde (2000) speaks to the phrase 'the personal is the political' in her argument that to bring about social transformation in the external, there needs to be transformation in the internal so that "those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us" (Lorde 2000). An integral part of the scourge of sexual violence and violence against women is silence and poetry opposes that silence and rejects it.

When one considers the psychosocial impact that this very personal and invasive violence has, poetry becomes a space where possibilities arise (Lorde 2000). All of the suppressed, invalidated, infantilised, disregarded and unexamined feelings, emotions and experiences can be brought to the surface, exposed and an attempt at fully and truly living can be taken. A study conducted by Bayat and Mungai (2018) at the University of the Western Cape found that Black women in South Africa make up the largest group of those living with depression. This group

stands at the intersection where various social markers and social conditions meet and intersect, creating an environment that easily causes anxiety, depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Exposure to prolonged violence, poverty and Gender Based Violence all contribute to this reality.

This stark reality, means that poetry is not a luxury but it is a vital need for the survival of the Black woman (Lorde 2000). Poetry gives a name and a language to that which previously could not be articulated because the emotion and feeling was there but the language was not. The idea of Consciousness has been thought of as the measurement of humanity: "I think therefore I am," however Lorde introduces an idea that challenges the dominant philosophical ideology of what it means to *Be*. "I feel therefore I can be free" is the foundation of a philosophical thought that rejects men as the 'dominant' group in society- it is also a rejection of the European creation of Consciousness and Being.

Wakemen (2015) says that writing poetry is about reflection; making sense of an experience, attempting to understand how that experience has affected your life, how you view yourself and how you now see the world. It can be argued that poetry is subjective, however, if one is using it as a tool for therapy then it needs to be subjective because people exhibit trauma in different ways. African narratives have been shared orally throughout generations and so using spoken word poetry to express anger, pain, confusion and desires may come more naturally to Black women.

Taking into mind the philosophy of Ubuntu (I am because you are) the current western structure of therapy might not be as effective in this context because of its individualistic nature, whereas Africans rely on community for support. Poetry is a collective practice as there is an exchange that takes place between the writer and the reader/listener. It is the documenting of personal narratives that can provide insight into the effects of trauma caused by sexual violence on the relationships of a victim and the relationship they have with themselves.

Although healthcare and mental healthcare is a universal right, many people in the country do not have access to the services because of their socioeconomic conditions. Poetry used as a therapeutic tool stands in contrast with the more orthodox form of therapy. A person can arrive as they are in the world without having to camouflage certain parts of themselves; they can speak and write in their home languages, creating a healing space where a person's culture, religion, race, educational background and African spiritual beliefs are not only validated, but more importantly, are understood.

Lorde (2000) does not think of poetry as creative word play but sees it as something that begins as an emotion, becomes an idea which then transforms into action. Poetry in this sense becomes a platform for personal and political narratives to be shared and exchanged. It is a rebellion against the patriarchal, white-capitalist, anti-Black system that was created to obliterate feelings and emotions that desire safety, healing and freedom.

2.2.5 Sexual Violence

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 37 of 2007 outlines various sexual crimes; rape which is the forceful penetration of another person using any body part or object. Compelling an individual to rape or perform sexual acts on another also constitutes sexual violence (The South African Government 2021). The sexual grooming of children and people living with mental disabilities often takes place because of the trust given to caregivers or guardians by their victims, making them unsuspecting and unaware of the abuse that is taking place. Incest within this definitive framework is a sex crime, whether or not the act was consensual. Exposing children to pornography and forcefully exposing it to adults, as well as the use of children and non-consenting adults in pornographic material is a sexual crime.

However, sexual violence need not only be physical as verbal sexual abuse such as name calling, cat calling and online sexual harassment can also cause psychological and emotional harm.

2.2.6 Hegemonic masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that is considered the ideal aspiration and is accepted and praised by society (Connell & Messerschimdt 2005). Connell's take on hegemonic masculinity is that it cannot exist outside of male domination and that this is what legitimizes patriarchy; the subordination of one group or many by another group, organised along gender lines (Connell & Messerschimdt 2005). Through this lens, hegemonic masculinity can only be negative with expected characteristics being aggressiveness, multiple sexual conquests and bravado. It functions by excluding subaltern masculinities and femininity, gay men, feminine men and queer people. Hegemonic masculinity is not just structural and systematic, it is also cultural and present in social exchanges. The way that women and their bodies are spoken about; '*nka ho fa ngwana*' which translates to 'I could get you pregnant' and 'she's ripe' meaning that the woman is sexually mature or ready for sex, are just some of the phrases that are commonly used in every day conversations. This casual objectification and

sexualisation is an important part of rape culture and misogyny: the dehumanisation of the other.

In critique of Connell's take on masculinity, Yang (2020) argues against the lack of flexibility in Connell's definition of hegemony and hegemonic masculinity. There is room within the construction of manliness for progressiveness and the introduction of an egalitarian masculinity (Yang 2020, pp. 322). Culture is not rigid and what is considered hegemonic now is not set in stone. Subordinate masculinities that are living in the margins of society are not passive and they resist the expectation and imposition of hegemonic masculinity by dressing in clothes not intended for men for example and allying themselves with the feminist movement (Yang 2020) which also challenges and seeks to transform the current gender hierarchal order.

2.2.7 Healing

Trauma caused by natural disasters or accidents appears to be met with sympathy, understanding and validation while on the other hand, trauma intentionally caused by another is questioned and doubted (Delker, Salton, Mclean & Syed 2020, pp. 21). Trauma as a result of sexual violence is met with questions such as "where were you?", "why were you alone?" and "did you fight back?" reducing the severity of the incident by shifting focus from the violence itself to the victims supposed lack of proactivity when it comes to keeping safe.

Gender, race, ethnicity and social positioning all influences how those who come forward are perceived by the public and whether or not their trauma will be considered legitimate (Delker et al. 2020). It is important to acknowledge how social markers determine how a person experiences trauma, how likely they are to be believed when they speak out and whether or not therapeutic tools are accessible to them. Thought of along these lines, healing is not just the restoration of physical, emotional, mental and psychological wellbeing; holistic healing needs to move beyond the individual and take into consideration the collective history and continued oppression and exclusion of marginalised groups, specifically Black women. Knowledge of this informs the unique approach that needs to be taken when addressing trauma in Black women caused by sexual violence because of the construction of the jezebel character.

2.3. The Gravity of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in South Africa: Background and Context

Criminal violence and sexual violence are not unique to South Africa, however what makes the violence that occurs here stand out, be it in a micro-society environment such as a university campus or in the broader society, is the frequency, severity and the brutal nature of the violence. South Africa has some of the highest rates of femicide and Gender- Based Violence (GBV) in the world. Matsha and Oparinde (2021) argue that GBV is the extraordinary and extreme expression of the inequity that exists between men and women, a reflection of the skewed power dynamics between the two social groups and a clear indication of who the oppressor is and the who oppressed is.

Femicide is the killing of women by their intimate partners and it is the leading cause of female murders in the country, reaching numbers that are more than double that of the global average (Mathews, Jewkes and Abrahams 2015, pp. 107). Social media and the digitalisation of communication, civil organisation, work, demonstrations and activism has made participating in public discourse easier and has made leaders in government and the private sector more accessible to the public. Social interaction and public discourse take place in the digital community and it has served as a platform for victims to come forward and talk about their experience with sexual violence and in some cases name their alleged perpetrators. The frequency and intensity at which these narratives are being shared and the instantaneous spreading of information gives the false idea that GBV and femicide is a social issue that arose with the new dispensation in 1994.

The violence we are witnessing and living through as a collective has its roots in colonisation and Apartheid (van der Merwe 2013). Apartheid functioned because of the degree of violence used to enforce racial hierarchies in every facet of society. The state-sanctioned violence was expressed in various forms; physical violence through the use of military intervention and incarceration, and psychological violence through the humiliating daily occurrences that corroded one's personhood and dignity, such as the use of separate public facilities.

Van der Merwe (2013) says that violence is a way of communicating an intended message, it is a language that conveys meanings of control and superiority, thus illustrating the different power dynamics among social groups. If violence is thought of as a tool of communication then it is embedded in the fabric that makes up our shared culture as a society because it is language that constructs our reality (Fairclough 1992). When the Apartheid state launched attacks against the African National Congress (ANC), the ANC and its supporters would respond to this claim on dominance with the necklacing of suspected informers and traitors to

the liberation movement (van der Merwe 2013, pp. 67) as a form of resistance. The acts committed by the actors of these polarised political systems could be regarded as normal during times of war, however the end of Apartheid and its associated political violence, did not solve the problem of interpersonal violence because the conditions that previously allowed for it to fester have not changed.

The creation of townships and hostels in urban areas, as well as the continued marginalisation of rural areas led to the emergence of demarcated poverty-stricken spaces that become 'hotspots' where unemployment, drug abuse and violent crime is rife (Mathews, Jewkes and Abrahams 2015, pp. 107). Lack of service delivery and economic opportunities, then and now, forces people to compete amongst themselves for basic resources and employment.

Outside of the political and social history of South Africa, violent crime and GBV is reflective of the fractured and displaced masculinity of the Black man. The migrant labour system disrupted the African family structure and the accepted and expected gender roles changed as women became the head of their households (Mathews *et al*. 2015) and Black male labourers became subjugated under white men. The difficulty is reconciling opposing identities: the emasculation of Black men by whiteness and the patriarchal expectation of male dominance within private spaces and material wealth.

Gender-Based Violence could be thought of as the extreme attempt by the perpetrator to regain a sense of power and control in their lives (Mathews *et al.* 2015) a way to escape the insecurities and hopelessness of township life by exerting their will on their intimate partners. Gender-Based Violence is not the exception to the rule but is rather the transference of rampant public violence to the nuclear space where the violence is less visible.

The extent to which Gender-Based Violence has been normalised, defended and excused means that there is no space that a woman can occupy and not be reminded that her body is not safe and it is not entirely hers (Gqola 2015, pp. 79).

In 2008 a young woman by the name of Nwabisa Ngcukana was sexually assaulted by taxi drivers at Noord Taxi Rank in Johannesburg (Eye Witness News 2008). Ngcukana was stripped naked, verbally assaulted, groped and fondled by a group of men who sort to punish her for wearing a miniskirt. The violence is dual because on the one hand it can be random and spontaneous whilst other times, such as in intimate relationships, it is frequent and can be expected. Gqola's (2015) 'Female Fear Factory' describes the ever present trepidation and paranoia that women carry as they move in the world, be it in taxi ranks, supermarkets or the

work place. It is the complete takeover of the woman's psychosocial Being. The constant threat of sexual violence and rape and hyper-masculine acts of intimidation "regulates women's movement, sexuality and behaviour (Gqola 2015, pp. 79).

Ngcukana's naked body was used to humiliate her, shifting shame and guilt onto her. One becomes alienated from their body because they have been alienated from their agency and bodily autonomy. The fear of rape says Gqola (2015) is stirred and instilled within girls from a young age. They are warned of wearing short dresses, walking alone at night and speaking to strangers. The Female Fear Factory is part of the socialisation of young girls, further cementing it as a daily part of life.

In 2019 a young woman by the name of Uyinene Mrwetyana -still a teenager newly out of high school and experiencing for the first time the excitement and thrill of university - was brutally raped and murdered inside a post office. The perpetrator, Luyanda Botha, contacted her a few weeks after she had gone to the post office to enquire about her parcel, telling her that it had arrived. When Uyinene arrived he attacked her and over-powered her (News 24 2020).

Uyinene had gone to the post office to collect a package that had been sent to her. She had gone to the place many go to have their IDs certified and post valuable possessions across the country. The establishment is in no way threatening or dangerous and yet a perpetrator managed to turn it into a crime scene. Shortly following the news of her murder, hundreds of students from the University of Cape Town, activists, civil groups and members of the general public took to the streets of Cape Town in protest of the rampant rape and femicide women in the country are faced with every day.

The story of Uyinene brings to mind the ways in which spaces are not neutral. Be it a taxi rank or a post office, these spaces are patriarchal which means that power is always being contested for as these spaces are politicised and gendered. Furthermore what this illustrates is the danger of rape myths which work to create the image of the perfect victim and the perfect perpetrator. The notion that it is only 'bad girls' who stay out late at night, who drink and are dressed in revealing clothes are the ones inviting the violence is a false one which perpetuates rape culture by placing the responsibility of not being violated on the woman. Sexual violence has been racialised and classed creating an environment where some victims are more believable than others and some perpetrators are found to be less guilty than others in the court of public opinion.

The brutal rape and murder of Anene Booysen, a 17 year old Coloured girl from the impoverished town of Bredasdorp, made news headlines in 2013 and quickly became highly publicised. The way in which the story was reported in the media and the news showed the many ways in which sexual assault and rape is deeply gendered, classist and racist. The "heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class and attractive white woman" is the ideal victim as she is the perfect symbol of innocence and purity and thus, Godliness (Jewkes, 2004, cited in Gilchrist, 2010, p. 375).

Booysen, who is Coloured, comes from a disadvantaged background and was out at a pub drinking with her friends the night that the assault took place, is portrayed as having been culpable in her own attack. A 'good girl' would not have been drinking and would not have been out late at night. Media reports focused on the social ills of Bredasdorp- a town overcome by alcoholism, poverty, unemployment and abusive and violent men who have been emasculated, who are angry, lack role models and possibly could have been victims of abuse as children (Boonzaier 2017, pp. 475). One headline read "*rape, murder turning society into uncaring jungle*" – and it is this sort of language, as well as the emphasis of the socioeconomic conditions in Bredasdorp, that perpetuate the stereotype of the 'drunken Coloured' and the Black man as the symbol of uncontrollable danger and anger.

Colonisation and Apartheid, systems that worked to reproduce and maintain white supremacy and the subjugation of the other (Boonzaier 2017, pp. 471) created the perfect conditions for the social ills experienced in Bredasdorp, and in many towns like it across South Africa, to exist. However, this historical fact was disregarded in the media reports. Booysen's mother said that her daughter was a quiet girl who left school in grade seven so that she could work and support the family. She was also a volunteer for the Fynbos Wildfire Service. These small details which were often overlooked may seem insignificant but what they show is that Booysen's life had depth and complexities just like anybody else's. Instead her short life was watered down to that of a school dropout, a drunk and a dismembered body.

The injuries that she had sustained were described in detail repeatedly in the media and like Baartman, she had been reduced to simply a body without a face. There is no dignity for Black women and Women of Colour, even in death they continue to be reduced and made a spectacle. Intersectionality becomes more important as it allows for Black women to take ownership of their narratives and to tell them in their entirety.

What we are confronted with here is the stark reality that a person's socioeconomic background influences how they are perceived and received by society. Uyinene's murder sparked unquestioned outrage while Anene's murder, equally as brutal and unjust, was reduced to being the consequences of a drunken night out. Gqola (2015) reminds us that "women are raped in all manner of dress and undress," that regardless of the time, location or sobriety of the victim, rape continues to be about power and control, not seduction and erotic behaviour.

Systems of oppression such as patriarchy and white supremacy enforce a culture of silence onto those being dominated, where silence protects you from retaliation and ostracisation. Decoloniality can be many things outside of the 'undoing of colonial and Apartheid belief systems and structures' and so on. Resistance, be it in the form of protest, song, poetry, or speeches, is an important part of the decolonial project as it defies the imposition of suffering in silence.

2.4 Conclusion

Hegemonic masculinity (which can be directly linked to rape culture and the female fear factory) is toxic because of how it can only be considered legitimate when it is dominating others. The idea that men can only be men if they are subjugating another group is harmful not only to women, children and subaltern masculinities, but it is also harmful to the very same men who live up to this ideal. They are discouraged from expressing fragility and vulnerability as this is considered to be signs of weakness, however, the possibility for change is there because of the ever present resistance from the periphery of society to this dominant masculinity.

The popular Sesotho radio station, Lesedi FM recently launched a new show segment called Bua Monna, which means 'speak man'. On this show men can safely speak about the trauma, abuse, disappointments and struggles that they have had to face. This show presents a different side to masculinity, a side that is not aggressive and intimidating but a side that is able to express emotions that are often only reserved for women and feminine men. Culture and belief systems are not permanent and are susceptible to change and perhaps this kind of masculinity can eventually become hegemonic.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework: Decoloniality and Intersectionality

3. Introduction

The abnormal rate at which sexual violence takes place in South Africa is indicative of a colonial legacy where the conquering of the land took place in relation to the conquering of the African female body (Coetzee and du Toit 2017, pp. 3). The imperialist Cecil John Rhodes wrote in 1877 that 'Africa is still lying ready for us [and] it is our duty to take it… more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses' (Meredith 2007).

The land was pillaged for material wealth and gain while the bodies and sexualities of the indigenous women were abused and exploited to assert racial and sexual domination over the Africans. The latter was the cultural and psychosocial conquest of the African people; the destruction of their familial and social structures, the eradication of their traditions, art, cultures, religions and languages. The exploitation of the African female body went as far as the slave owners forcefully impregnating them to do away with the 'black gene' thus increasing the Anglo-Saxon race over time.

Decoloniality would be the critical debunking and undoing of colonial and Apartheid ideas that present Black women as unrapeable. It would include the undoing of the culture of silence, shaming and blaming of victims (Delker *et al*. 2020). It will be presented in this chapter why decolonising the way we perceive Black bodies and the Black female body, as well as the way that we think about sexual violence and trauma, is necessary to understand why sexual violence against Black women in South Africa is a crisis, why this particular group's experiences need to be looked at through a historical and political lens and why poetry has been presented as a therapeutic tool.

Intersectionality as the second theoretical framework provides perspective and the ability to gain insight into the layered lives that Black women live. Through this lens, various intersecting social factors can be identified and contextualised, giving insight into why Black women are more sexually vulnerable than other women. Intersectionality requires and allows for a look at therapy, healing and the understanding of trauma outside of the western paradigm, making poetry an appealing option for making sense of and healing from trauma caused by sexual violence within a racist, gendered and colonial context.

3.1 The Colonisation of the Black Woman's Body

The end of colonisation as a global economic and political structure did not mean the simultaneous ending of the ways in which the violent conquest and domination of nations has constructed Western ideas of knowledge, religion, morality, common sense and beauty as the legitimate way of being. Colonisation is a process whereby one nation or empire conquers another nation or a people, thus bringing them under their sovereignty and rule and making them a part of the colonial empire (Maldonado-Torres 2007, pp. 243).

The colonisation of the Americas and later Africa by European countries led to a global interdependent economic system that was founded on the largest and cruellest mass enslavement in history. It was the forceful taking of resources and land of the colonised, destruction of their cultures, social structures, belief systems, art, religion and social relations and knowledge. Although this system has been removed, coloniality outlives it as it is kept alive through those who control the production of knowledge, it is kept alive in the way academics are assessed, in the self-image of people, the justice system and in who it is that is considered intelligent (Maldonado-Torres 2007).

Quijano (1992) says that the coloniality of power by Europeans has its roots in the scepticism of the Conquistadors over whether or not the Native Americans had souls or knew God. The questioning of their humanity was in fact the negation of it. This is the point where the othering and racialisation of indigenous people began. The scepticism over the presence of a soul in the latter positioned them in an inferior position and attributed to them a degree of humanity that was more animal-like than human; while on the other hand, white Europeans considered themselves as having souls, thus making them complete human beings (Maldonado-Torres 2007).

During the scramble for Africa in the 1800s, sex was used by the European colonisers as a way to exert their power over the land and over the women. Fanon (1965) states that in the colonial fantasy, the indigenous women embody the land and so to possess her is to possess the land. It emasculated the men and traumatised the women thus turning sex into a tool of oppression. This way we can say that the battle for domination took place on the Black woman's body and this gross violation was justified because of how the body was constructed by European travellers and scientists as animalistic, abnormal, unnatural, grotesque and oversexed (Mowatt, French and Malebranche, 2013: 650).

The story of Sarah Baartman is the epitome of the objectification and sexualisation of the Black woman's body. Baartman was taken from the Cape colony in the 1800s to Europe where she was placed on display in London and Paris for paying customers. Like an animal in a zoo, Baartman's body, because of her large breasts, buttocks and elongated labia, became the centre of ridicule, amusement and satisfaction for Europeans, specifically for the white male gaze. Even in death Baartman continued to be dehumanised as her body parts were put on public display until 1974.

The personification of the African continent as the unknown and yet alluring and untouched virgin who possesses treasure that was awaiting 'Man' to rule her and give her purpose, meant that the land and the bodies of African women were one and the same with both needing to be subdued, controlled and commodified. Colonialism itself, including its Apartheid expression in South Africa was a kind of systemic and structural rape whose foremost victims became Black women and children.

The modern world was founded on a dichotomy of human and non-human, of man and of woman (Lugones 2010). Black women were seen as wild creatures, hypersexual and uncontrollable and they were only assigned gender after becoming the sexualised native under the European male gaze. The colonised were constructed as non-human and therefore non-woman and non-man. As a way to separate the sex roles, colonised people became male and female. Assigning 'female' to the Black woman was not an act of humanisation but rather the creation of an evil femininity that was thought of as seductive, immoral and went as far as thinking of colonised females in relation to Satan and at times as being mounted by Satan (Lugones 2020, pp. 745).

Following this logic, a societal structure developed that saw the white middle class, Christian and heterosexual man as being human and thus being male; only a human can be ascribed a gender (Lugones 2010). White women on the other hand were positioned below the white man in a subaltern position on the human-nonhuman spectrum, where their role was in upholding white supremacy, being the representation of purity, femininity and beauty for the white community. It can be argued that their most important duty was reproduction- the continuation of the white race and that of the heterosexual nuclear family.

The colonial positioning of white women was one that was ambivalent; their role and place in society was constructed in relation to the invention of the dangerous and uncontrollable Black man (Gouws, du Toit and Coetzee 2020). The image of the untouched and uncontaminated

white symbol of femininity was accompanied with the imposition of passivity, silence and the embodying of a type of fragility that justified violence towards Black men, who were seen as sexual predators who wanted to take what belonged to the white man by polluting the sanctity of whiteness. The control of white women's sexuality played an important role in maintaining white supremacy- ideologically their devotion to the white man was their only claim to true whiteness- hence the importance of prohibiting sexual relationships across racial lines (Gouws *et al*. 2020).

The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949 and the Population Registration and Immorality Acts of 1950 were the Apartheid government's way of criminalising any potential threat to the survival of the white race. The creation of the innocent and fragile white women, who can only be protected by being controlled and subdued, undermines the role that their silence plays in the violence faced by Black people. This identity stands in contrast to the sexually deviant identity of Black women and the sexually dangerous identity of Black men. When negotiating their position in society both as white and as women, the white female often chooses to remain invisible and silent (Gouws *et al*. 2020) making them complicit in the continued dominance of white hetero-patriarchy.

This categorising and polarising of human being versus slave, of man versus woman and of conqueror versus the subject of the conqueror's sexual fantasies, has constructed the kind of society where there are two realities that Grosfoguel (2016) has termed the Zone of Being and the Zone of Non-Being.

Society is organised in a hierarchal manner where there is a divide that determines who is human and who is not. Those who exist above the divide, in the Zone of Being, have their humanity acknowledged and validated (Grosfoguel 2016, pp. 13). Those who exist in this zone are complete, they are conscious, rational and are the epitome of intellectual and racial ideals. They are granted spirituality, individuality, civil rights, women's rights (Grosfoguel 2016, pp. 10) and in this way every aspect of their lives is designed to re-affirm this humanity. Although aspects of one's identity overlap and intersect, those who live in this zone enjoy racial privilege thus mitigating any oppression that they may face. They are visible.

In the Zone of non-Being however, those who exist below the divide are rendered as subhuman because they lack rationality, intelligence and consciousness, the capacity to reason and more terrifyingly, they do not have a God. The oppression faced by those who live in this zone is

worsened by their race (Grosfoguel 2016, pp. 12) thus contributing to the myth that Black and brown people are child-like and need to be dominated and led for their sake.

Because of how gender and race intersect, Black women can only exist in the Zone of non-Being under the current patriarchal, Western-centric, Christian-centric, capitalist-modern colonial system (Grosfoguel 2016). In this zone, one's humanity is denied and one is constructed as the Other existing only in relation to the 'I' who is the white, heterosexual, Christian, middle class male; the real person. The othering of the Black woman places her as the object that provides physical, sexual and emotional labour.

It can be argued that the Black woman falls beneath the classification of non-Being because of the violence that they face. The colonised Black woman's body is read as being 'rapeable' and 'killable' because of its racialisation, sexualisation and objectification and the impact thereof. This particular form of non-Being places Black women outside of the protection of the law, it places them on the border of what is a safe society and an unsafe society and it also places them out of sight.

Gender has never been excluded from the development of citizenship and in fact citizenship has been constructed along unequal gender lines (Franzway & Moulding 2018). In the Athenian nation-state, considered to be the advent of the modern understanding of democracy, gender was a criteria of citizenship. Only the 'free' man could be afforded citizenry and neither women nor enslaved people were considered members of the state (Franzway & Moulding 2018). Although the idea of citizenship and its requirements have changed, it continues to be a space where sexual politics are contested. The legal inclusion of women as citizens has not negated the ways in which their role as active participants in their nation state continues to be undermined and excluded because they remain subaltern in relation to men regardless of their status as citizens.

The on-going struggle is that of a citizenship which is extended in its full to women, children and the queer community. This would require a move away from political, cultural, economic and legal systems being male dominated and therefore patriarchal in nature. It can be argued that the legitimisation of women's citizenship cannot take place outside of a society which is safe and protects women as valuable members of society. Currently as it stands, they are neither citizens protected by the law but they are also not outsiders: they are located in what can be thought of as 'no man's land'. They are neither here nor there.

During the first week of South Africa's first lockdown as a response to the Covid19 pandemic in 2020, the South African Police Service received over 2 300 calls related to gender based violence. By mid-June 21 women and children had been killed by intimate partners (Amnesty International 2021). Women in this country are not safe in public spaces nor are they safe in the private space of their homes. Decoloniality goes beyond thinking about and looking at the Black woman's body differently. It goes beyond becoming aware of the multiple histories and current ideologies that make the violence they face and trauma they experience unique.

Decoloniality cannot happen solely in the mind on an intellectual level, it also needs to be visible through people's lived experiences. Black women being believed when they report rape and sexual violence, women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community feeling safe both in public and private spaces, is lived decoloniality. Hence the importance of exploring alternative ways, such as poetry, that Black women can turn to, to cope with and heal from their trauma.

3.2 The Different Faces of Power

The oppression of women because of their gender is but one example of racism. Racism is the global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the lines of human, however, the dominant use of race as a social marker of the 'inferior' has created an environment where other forms of racism are not acknowledged as such, thus invalidating the lived experiences of those who have been oppressed.

The positioning of women, more so Black women, in the Zone of non-Being is because of their gender and this alienation is aggravated by their race as the two social markers are inseparable (Grosfoguel 2016, pp. 10). The construction of the colonised other included the creation of a racialized and sexualised female other, making other markers such as ethnicity, culture and religion justification for exploitation and abuse and not just colour. The colonisation and demonization of the other took place not just because of the colour of their skin but also because of their religious practices, the languages that they spoke and the gods that they prayed to, while the construction of the evil femininity of indigenous women established a gendered hierarchy and a mechanism to control their sexuality.

The colonisation of the Americas and later of the African continent did not take place simply because of the racialisation of the indigenous people but also because of the sexualisation of the indigenous women. Race, gender and sex come together to form a matrix of power where humanity is fought over (Bertolt 2018). The invention of a white patriarchal and heterosexual hierarchy led to the triple oppression of Black women who were placed at the bottom of the

social scale after white men, white women and Black men (Bertolt 2018, pp. 9). In post-colonial Africa this ideology of superiority continues to present itself through the desire of the formerly enslaved Black man to enjoy the Black woman's body without resistance. This stems from the dehumanisation and infantilising of the Black man by the colonialist and the humiliation that they faced in front of the Black woman when the latter became the possession of the colonist (Bertolt 2018).

The coloniality of gender created systems that are based on the control, surveillance and domination of women in private spaces and in the public arena (Bertolt 2018). In pre-colonial African societies, hierarchies were not established along biological lines and gender binaries but were rather more complex and nuanced than the European biblical approach that saw the white women's role as being her sexual availability and maintenance of the family. The coloniality of the Being took place through processes of animalisation and therefore dehumanisation, while the coloniality of gender took place through processes of sexualisation and exploitation of the indigenous woman's body.

What is then experienced by these bodies in post-colonial societies is what Maldonado-Torres (2007) refers to as daily deaths that occur. Death not in the literal sense but in the hyperawareness of one's race and gender and how that determines how a person moves in the world as a homogenised and subjugated being in every aspect of their lives, be it in educational, traditional, linguistic or political structures. Power here is the continuation of these 'deaths' despite the ending of formal systems of colonialism and dawn of African independence.

The African Democratic Christian Party (ACDP) is founded on and governed by biblical principles and religious beliefs. One of their core policies is that of restricting and banning termination of pregnancies (IOL News 2021). One could argue that this approach to leadership and politics is patriarchal in nature as it does not take into account the agency and bodily autonomy of the pregnant woman. The family structure, which the ACDP says is the foundation of a functional society, revolves first around the man and then the woman, whose responsibility it is to ensure the success of the household and the children through their performance of motherhood (Bertolt 2018, pp. 12). This ideology of what family is and what it should look like affirms compulsory heterosexuality while simultaneously negating women and homosexuality and this is a colonial legacy.

3.3 Decoloniality of the Body and Mind

In many ways decoloniality can be thought of as a continuous process of transcendence. Transcending the ways in which Black women have been stripped of their identity, dignity, individuality and agency to decide how they want their bodies to be seen, when they want their bodies to be seen and who it is that gets to see their bodies.

Decoloniality is the undoing of coloniality as a long lasting legacy of colonisation and complete decolonisation is a formidable task. However, the aspiration to Become the Self leads to new knowledge being acquired (Alcoff 2020, pp. 202) providing the opportunity to see one's self differently and to see the world differently. This is not merely theory but rather an historical and sociological account of the lived realities of thousands of women in South Africa. Because of this, decoloniality cannot only be limited to the undoing of the ways in which society thinks about, relates to, treats, interacts and responds to Black female bodies. It needs to be the very personal repairing of society's perception of Black women, the repairing of how the Black woman thinks of herself, how she moves and exists in the world, how she understands her desires, needs and rights.

Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* says that Black people will never have the opportunity to descend into hell because they experience hell on a daily basis. This is what Maldonado-Torres (2007) calls the Coloniality of Being, where every aspect of the Black person's life is affected and influenced by the racialisation of their bodies. During times of war the ethical and moral fibre of society is destroyed, the social contract that ensures safety and security for all, becomes null and void. The non-ethics of war such as purging, mass murder, torture and systematic rape is what both Fanon (1965) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) say is the everyday experience of Black people, where they are left vulnerable, exposed, disposable.

Conflict-related sexual violence is one of the most devastating war crimes committed against the non-combatants in the population. It instils fear in the women and children, who are often the most vulnerable. Conflict related sexual violence severs the community's relations with one another, intimidates and deters the opposition, causes long-term psychological trauma and leads to widespread displacement (Woldetsadik 2018). The fear, anxiety, trauma and uncertainty felt by women living in war-torn areas, is the same anxiety, fear and uncertainty that thousands of women live with even in countries where there is peace, specifically in South Africa.

The Coloniality of Being is reflected in how Black women are forced to police the manner in which they speak; they have to self-regulate their behaviour in public so as to not come across

as ‘loud’ or ghetto, they take into consideration the shape of their hips and torso so as to not draw attention to themselves because of how they are sexualised. Black women police the level of tolerance and irritability and even the amount of intelligence they show when navigating life in a society that is in the grips of a dangerous patriarchal system. This external construction of who they are becomes embodied and internalised and shapes how Black women see themselves, what they think they are capable of. Black women are not afforded dignity and humanity simply because they are *Beings* but they are rather granted these rights based on how they respond to the colonisation of their *Being*.

The positioning of Black women in the Zone of non-Being means that the opportunity to invent themselves was never there to begin with. Fanon (1965) speaks to the realisation that meaning has already been attached to one’s body and mind before one is even born. Fanon presents the idea that if a man must be Black, then he must do so in relation to the white man (1965, pp. 82) for everything that he does and thinks is in relation to and for the pleasure of the white man. The same argument can be applied to the unequal power relations that stand between men and women. Black women arrive in this world with the expectation of their constant sexual availability already placed on them. This ‘sexual availability’ has been assumed and prescribed. Like Fanon and his Blackness, the bodies of Black women carry with them centuries of narratives, triumphs, defeats and history.

Black people are not afforded individuality and when Nwabisa Ngcukana walked in the taxi rank in 2008 (mentioned in chapter two), she walked with her entire race, her ancestors. Her body and the history it encompasses meant that that taxi rank easily turned into what would previously have been a slave auction, where enslaved African people would be paraded around naked or not, humiliated and graded based on the appearance of their teeth, their skin tone or any special skillset that they may have had. The assault against Ngcukana illustrates how patriarchal and hyper-masculine ideals do not remain intellectual but can instead surpass that form and enter into spaces, turning those spaces into danger zones for the feminine and vulnerable, with the taxi rank being one such space.

Sexual violence is a societal plague that needs the attention and effort of every member and group in society to overcome it. When these assaults take place, they do not happen in a vacuum but are rather fuelled by normalised myths about what rape is and what it is not. At grass root level, it can almost be said that sex is thought of as something that is done *to* women and not something that is done *with* a woman. This is where the problem begins. A true attempt at

transcendence would also need to involve the interrogation of the current state of masculinity and the ways that it is toxic, destructive and counter-productive. Investing in the healing of the trauma carried by Black women would be futile if the collective patriarchal community, and their views on what makes a man and where a woman's place should be, where to be left unchallenged.

Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity presented a dominant male that was aggressive, showed very little emotion except for anger, had many sexual conquests, and was physically strong and always in control. This way of thinking about hegemonic masculinity limits it to simply being a negative identity that not only legitimizes patriarchy but also gives it authority and upholds it. However, Yang (2020) argues that there is progressive potential within hegemonic masculinity to become something other than what it has been wildly accepted as.

Hegemonic masculinity is the "culturally exalted form of masculinity (Yang 2020, pp. 320) as gay men, Black men and other men of colour are feminised and not considered 'real' men. The inequality that exists between men and women is not just because of their pre-assigned gender roles but because of the power dynamics that arise from those roles. The system of patriarchy and toxic masculinity are relational and so the legitimisation of one form of masculinity can only happen in relation to the subordination of other masculinities.

Although most men do not embody this overly aggressive hegemonic masculinity, they still benefit from it and enjoy male privilege. The demonization of Black men as sexual predators leaves the white middle class man as the gatekeeper of masculinity. This exclusion of what is thought of as subordinated masculinities because of sexuality, race and class, breeds ground for economic exclusion, political and cultural exclusion. Yang in her paper *What's Hegemonic about Hegemonic Masculinity? Legitimation and Beyond* offers new ideas on how masculinity can be fluid, reinvented and decolonised.

Misogyny cannot be left out of the equation when discussing hegemonic masculinity. As already established above, where there is a thesis there will be an antithesis. Misogyny is a direct result of hegemonic masculinity's othering of women and the question becomes: can masculinity exist outside of the oppression of women, Black men, men of colour and members of the LGBTQIA+ community? Can masculinity exist outside of white supremacy? Yang calls attention to the resistance coming from the margins where subordinated masculinities have been placed. These other masculinities force hegemonic masculinity to re-shape and hybridize by demanding inclusion and transformation.

The assumption is that other masculinities and women, more so Black women, are passive and submissive. Following the logic of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity is the only recognised masculinity and it is one that is sexist, homophobic and misogynistic (Yang 2020, pp. 323). This form of masculinity has come to be seen as inherently evil and looking at it through this singular lens means that any opportunity to step back and interrogate other masculinities, and how they can be used to challenge stereotypes, is lost. The violent form of masculinity does not have to be the hegemonic form.

What has been called the new age masculinity is the form of masculinity that openly embraces feminine expressions through clothing, vulnerability and sharing of emotions. British singer/songwriter Harry Styles is an example of an individual defying the traditional idea of manliness (Vogue 2020). Styles often wears dresses, women's blouses and jewellery, fusing the feminine and the masculine in a way that resists gender binaries. Styles as a white man who is famous and well off has the privilege of performing his sexuality and gender as he pleases and be applauded for it.

The decolonising of hegemonic masculinity necessitates its decentralisation so that the marginalised masculinities can form part of the norm. Decolonisation is the resistance against oppression and the reinvention of oneself and of a collective. What is needed most is a new social imagination that can begin the foundations of a post-patriarchal world.

There is room for patriarchy to be dismantled. Men suffocate as well under this system as they are expected to not show any fear or any signs of anxiety (Anderson 2018, pp. 243). Much like white supremacy, hegemonic masculinity requires men to suppress a significant part of their humanity, making it easier to take away the humanity of others. Not all men benefit equally from patriarchy. Those who show no insecurities, who are drawn to hyper - masculine career paths such as the military and those who are prepared to be violent when necessary are seen as the bench mark of correct masculinity.

Every kind of transformation that is effective cannot take place outside of deep collective and individual introspection. Spaces become hostile territories when the conversations that are exchanged there, and the behaviour that is accepted and encouraged, leads to the point where these spaces become 'safe' for hegemonic masculinity to thrive unchallenged. One such space is a football locker room. Solomon (2018) refers to this type of space as a *heterotopia* because of how toxic masculinity is normalised and left to rampage. This competitive and tough definition of masculinity is what is behind the cognitive dissonance that takes place when one

man is sexually assaulted by another. It is difficult for the ideal man to fathom how another man could be victimised when they are meant to be the dominant. Spaces that foster the kind of talk that leads to violent and predatory behaviour (Solomon 2018, pp. 142) need to be reimagined so that they can become spaces where consent, rape culture, emotions and manhood is discussed.

Masculinity cannot be abolished or destroyed but the social meaning attached to it can be changed. Connell (2012) claims that this new age masculinity is meant to restructure the hierarchal gender order and reinvent and reintroduce the parts of masculinity which they want to become the norm. A masculinity that favours peace-making over war-making, a masculinity that is not threatened by feminism and gay rights movements but is instead empowered by them, is the form of masculinity that has the potential to bring about social change and contribute to movements around social justice and gender equality.

3.4 Intersectionality: Classism, Race, Sexuality and Gender in the context of Sexual Violence

In order to understand the lives that Black women live, we need to understand how intersecting aspects of their identities, such as class or sexuality, shape the structural, political and representational violence mitted out against them (Crenshaw 1991, pp. 1244). Intersectionality shows how oppression never exists because of a single factor but rather operates by suppressing multiple identities so as to preserve the 'sanctity' of whiteness. Intersectionality argues against the additive (i.e Black + Lesbian + Woman+ working class) approach to understanding oppression. Crenshaw (1991) says that this approach separates and isolates various identities of a person instead of viewing them as a complete Whole. When a Black person is being oppressed, the commonly accepted reasoning is that it's because of their race. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework and when applied to research offers us the opportunity to experience the multidimensionality of Black women and the discrimination that they face outside of their race.

Gender based violence in South Africa cannot be addressed until the culture of silence ends. The rhetoric of domestic violence being a private matter or a family matter shames women into remaining silent because of the fear of bringing shame to their family (Crenshaw 1991, pp. 1253). The argument that feminism is destroying Black communities and interfering with the family structure, is one made with the intention to alienate and further shame those calling for change and accountability. This patriarchal discourse at its extreme creates the idea that Black

feminists are betraying their race. The abuse being spoken about and brought to light is considered to be more shameful, undignified and embarrassing than the abuse itself.

Before South Africa became a constitutional democracy in 1994, rape statistics in what was then the homelands, were not well reported so what seems like a spike in cases of sexual violence post 1994, is just a continuation of a social ill that already existed (Vetton, 2011). In 1993 spousal rape became criminalised when the Prevention of Family Violence Act became enacted and this gave women the opportunity to see justice served even if the crime was committed in the intimate spaces of their home.

When talking about abuse, rape and sexual violence, one realises that some groups of people are more vulnerable and are more likely to find themselves becoming victims without adequate access to healthcare facilities, counselling and assistance from the judicial system because of their positionality in society. The basic understanding of feminism as a movement can be simplified to economic, social and political equality between men and women. However, this feminist ideology is dated and exclusionary as it places groups of people on a binary: that of men and women.

Within the framework of this form of feminism, Black women and Women of Colour are left out. Gender-non conforming people, transgender people, people living with disabilities, lesbian and gay people are also left out of the discourse. None of these identities can be thought of separately because they all fall outside of the white, heterosexual, able-bodied norm, which has become the normalised and naturalised way of Being. These particular groups of people fall outside of sexual and gender boundaries and they are forced to live life on the margins.

Women and those whose bodies have been feminised, are constantly facing the threat of violence because of their identity, however, even in the spaces to which they have been relegated, even among their own, they still face violence. One cannot look at sexual violence and ignore the kind of bodies this violence is being acted out on. To be a gay Black man is to be in conflict with the patriarchy. The history of colonisation and Apartheid makes your Blackness hyper-visible and in the South African context this is translated through the high youth unemployment rates and inaccessibility to higher education because of poverty. The conflict occurs when the same patriarchy that benefits you as a man, also invites violence because of your sexuality that is regarded as unAfrican, anti-Black and unnatural.

Patriarchy is deeply embedded in culture and one of the driving narratives of this ideology is that a man is only *a true* man if he is with a woman: a woman who is submissive and always

sexually available to them. If this is the dominant construction of a man in schools, religious communities and homes, what happens when that man comes across a woman who he finds attractive but is not sexually available to him? "Corrective' rape is used by heterosexual men to punish lesbian women for challenging gender norms and majority of the victims are Black lesbians living in townships (Mwambene and Wheal, 2015: 58). 'Corrective rape' happens because heterosexual men view women's bodies as something that belongs to them and are therefore entitled to have access to whenever they want. Myths around why rape and sexual assault takes place is one of many factors that silence victims and one of these myths is that homosexuality and lesbianism are a threat to the nuclear family, which is believed to be the foundation of society.

Black women, Women of Colour and members of the LGBTQIA+ community who live in rural areas, informal settlements and townships are more likely to be victims of homophobic, transphobic and gendered assault. They are more likely to not receive justice and continue experiencing discrimination and all of this is because of the socioeconomic environments that they find themselves in. To be poor is to be invisible. To be a poor Black woman who is not heterosexual is to be rendered non-existent.

An integral part of subjugation is erasure and the subjugation of indigenous people did well to intentionally erase multitudes of cultures, traditions, identities and history. Black people are perceived as homogenous and that is why the approach to combating sexual violence and treating trauma is so narrow and singular. This false homogenous perception is reflective of the 'single story'. The simplified construction of Black women as either motherly, the loose and seductive jezebel or just always angry leads to them being given fixed identities that are not of their own making. Ngozi-Adichie (2009) speaks to the dangers of only seeing people through a single lens; that of poverty, Blackness, gender and so on. People may go through the same events but they will not experience them in the same manner nor will they be affected by it in the same way, hence the importance of intersectionality and conducting research that is guided by and focused on the narrative of the individual.

3.5. Conclusion

Decoloniality as one of the two chosen theoretical frameworks for this research report does not only allow for the undoing of colonial constructs of Black femininity and Black female sexuality, it also introduces the opportunity to re-present and represent the multitude identities of Black women in a manner that is not sexualised and where they are not objectified.

Intersectionality as the second theoretical framework serves the function of illustrating why it is Black women are more vulnerable to sexual violence. This is because of historical, political and economic systems that have created an environment where Black women face multiple oppressions because of their race, their gender and their socio-economic positions and where this oppression is justified. Decoloniality and Intersectionality provide different lenses through which race, identity, gender and sexuality can be viewed outside of the colonial and male gaze.

Chapter Four

Methodology

4. Introduction

The following chapter will be discussing the relevance of Narrative Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and Thematic Analysis in the studying of poetry as the documentation, presenting and re-presenting of narratives surrounding the sexual violence experienced by Black women in South Africa and the personal, social and political effects thereof.

These research methods have been chosen by the researcher because of how their structure humanises the text that is to be analysed by recognising and acknowledging the writers as experts on their lives and lived experiences. Narrative Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis is a people-centred approach to conducting research, applying meaning to the research and understanding it. The former establishes the narrator as a credible and valuable source of information and knowledge production while the latter provides the tools to read and make sense of both the overt and the hidden meanings, symbols and messages conveyed by the text.

Humanising research, by focusing on the narrator's stories and acknowledging them as experts on their own lives, means that methodology cannot only be thought of as a structured and impersonal way of collecting and interpreting data. Methodologies such as Narrative Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis offers researchers the opportunity to connect with the producers of the texts in a meaningful way that shifts the position of the researcher from that of a person in power, to that of an individual sharing in the experiences of another in order to inform the research work. Methodology here creates a space where the research is intimately and personally connected to the narrators, creating an opportunity for the researcher to arrive as they are and exist in the world without being dictated by the expected separation between researcher, the focus of their research and the narrators of the content being analysed.

4.1 Narrative Analysis

Narrative research speaks to the heart of this paper as an experience-centred research method. Narrative analysis is hermeneutic as it recognises stories as carrying meaning and history. The stories being shared are not events that occur only in the external. These events are also experienced on a psychosocial level, in the conscious and sub-conscious minds, of those who went through a significant event (Squire 2008).

Poetry is in essence a form of storytelling that allows the speaker to share their narrative in their voice and in a way it becomes an act of taking back power that was wrongfully stripped from them through the violence that they experienced. The narrative is being told from the perspective of the victim, changing the power dynamics as the one who is often silenced is now the one who is speaking.

Narrative analysis is cognisant of the fluidity, uncertainty and complex structure of everyday life. What an individual now thinks of an experience that they went through, may be in contradiction to what they used to think and feel at the time that it took place. Using a method that is rigid and structured could lead to narratives being altered with certain parts being completely omitted in an effort to deliver the necessary results that fit into these structures. The flexible and thematic approach used in narrative analysis is what makes it the right tool to use when the experiences that are being shared are intersectional and the people experiencing these events are themselves intersectional and multidimensional (Squire 2008).

Narrative analysis offers researchers the opportunity to break the superficial wall that separates the researcher from the subject. It is an interactive approach that humanises both parties because meaning is not only found in the narrator's words but also in the words of the researcher. It is a reminder that academia can be accessible, relatable, relevant and non - elitist. With this method, the exchange between the researcher and narrator is where meaningfulness is found and this exchanging of experiences is in fact the co-creation of a narrative. The worlds and lives of the speaker and hearer or the writer and reader intersect (Squire 2008) because both are products of society, making these found similarities and familiarities inevitable.

The fluidity of narrative analysis allows it to be re-shaped to accommodate the various religions, cultures and spiritual beliefs that people follow. It creates a space where an individual can come as they are and be received as a whole, much like the spaces poetry can create. The flexibility of the method offers an alternative type of research that is not limited to scholarly articles written by European thinkers.

Music, documentaries, fiction, unpublished material and poetry are legitimate sources of past, present and future knowledge (Squire 2008). People do not live in isolation. They are shaped by their political beliefs, by socially accepted responses to trauma, by moralities and internalised ideologies. These various factors all influence how a person experiences an event, and the way in which the narrative is told is also influenced by the collective consciousness of a community. When the reader reads the poem or the hearer hears it, they are not only hearing

about the different truths of the speaker but also those of the broader society. Bruner (1990) tells us that humans as a species are innately *homo narrans* which means that telling stories is a social activity that strengthens relations by maintaining sociality.

Narrative analysis creates a platform where marginalised women can represent themselves and re-present themselves as active participants in their lives. Representation uses images, words, sounds, colours and smells to produce and communicate meaning and those who are doing the representing are the ones who control the narrative. The production of knowledge and of meaning that is attached to signs such as poems, takes place within the shared network of consciousness that creates society's culture (Hall 1997). Hall speaks of three approaches to representation; reflective, intentional and constructionist. I argue that in the context of this paper, poetry being used as a therapeutic tool to process and heal from trauma related to sexual violence is reflective, intentional and constructionist and this will be further discussed in the next chapter

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method gives the researcher tools that enables them to not only interpret what texts (including colours, images and sounds etc) are saying but to also look beyond the surface level message and find meaning that is hidden in these texts, that could either be discriminatory and alienating or educational and uniting. Halliday (1978) sees language as serving different functions each with its own purpose:

Language is representational and can be used to represent the personal attitudes and experiences of individuals. It can also be used to demonstrate ideologies, political views, moralities and belief systems that are not subjective but collective. In this way it is constructionist and has the capacity to sway public view and change narratives in order to manipulate the truth. Language is always political, be it consciously or subconsciously, it is never neutral (Fiske 1994) as it is a space where power, influence and the capacity to direct public discourse is contested for.

Steve Biko in his 1978 *I Write What I Like*, says that the strongest weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Keeping this in mind, Fairclough (1992) emphasises the role of CDA not just as a methodology but also as an active social actor whose duty is to expose the ways in which language, in its various forms, can be used to exert power by marginalising, criminalising and victimising some groups while praising and protecting others. CDA is not neutral and is intentional in its seeking out of hidden biases, harmful stereotypes

and oppressive ideologies, contributing to a more just society in a tangible way that goes beyond the scopes of the university space. CDA is a call to action; to not only listen to the narratives being shared but to engage with them in a meaningful, critical and empathetic manner. Doing this allows for learning to take place and by reading in between the lines more knowledge is gained. Fairclough uses the following guidelines when applying CDA to the interpreting of a text and the use of language:

- Vocabulary:

Language is political. It is ideological and is informed by the interconnected and interdependent conscious social network. The words themselves are just as intentional and constructionist in their conveying of meaning. The words are chosen and positioned carefully within the language being used and the naming of events or people influences how these events or people are viewed. For example, in a newspaper article reporting on the legalisation of sex work, the naming of the characters in the story as either sex workers or prostitutes determines whether or not they are received by the public as working class citizens contributing legitimately to the economy, or as immoral deviants whose 'lifestyle' is a threat to the moral fibre of any self-respecting and dignified society. The word 'prostitute' describes a criminal act and in the same breath a different kind of criminal who uses their body and sensuality to commit that crime.

- Mood and modality:

Emotion is a strong deciding factor when it comes to the thought and decision-making processes of people. The ability to be emotive, to evoke particular emotions in people, is a form of social capital. Emotions affect how a person thinks thus affecting how they act and what they believe. When looking at music as a text, its ability and capacity to convey emotion, to psychologically affect people in such a way that they feel the same thing and share the same desire.

Thinking back to the 2015, and more so the 2016 Fees Must Fall student protests, the singing of struggle songs that were used during Apartheid created an atmosphere of courage, desperation and anger; a psychosocial experience of belonging and oneness, not just with the movement and the people involved in it, but also with the ideology of Black Consciousness (Biko 1978) and Black emancipation. The mood and modality of a text play an important part in the creating, telling and memorialising of a narrative.

- Interactional control features and Topicality:

Interactional control features refer to the different parts of the narrative, how they correlate with one another and come together to communicate the full picture from different perspectives. The order in which the different parts of the narrative are told is indicative of the parts the speaker or writer deems important and wants to be internalised by the audience. Topicality is the central message that is being communicated and focused on. It is the main person, event or ideology that the narrative is speaking to.

On the 25th of May 2020 a former police officer kneeled on the neck of an unarmed and handcuffed Black man in Minneapolis, USA for more than nine minutes (BBC News 2021). Derek Chauvin, the former police officer, was convicted on murder and manslaughter charges for the murder of George Floyd. While lying face-down on the ground, with the knee of Derek Chauvin pressing down into his neck, George Floyd repeated the now chilling phrase "I can't breathe" over twenty times ((BBC News 2021).

These three words were shouted, written and seen at protests and on all social media platforms, as the case caused worldwide outrage and protests over police brutality and institutionalised and state-sanctioned racism in the USA. The words "I can't breathe" do not only bring to mind the unnecessary death of George Floyd but it also alludes to the way in which the American justice system continues to suffocate Black men and other men of colour. It is still rooted in anti-Black and white supremacist ideas that see law enforcement as a way to discipline, control and instil fear in the criminal i.e. the Black man. The topicality of these three words make them engraved in the collective memory of people all over the world.

- Politeness and Presuppositions

  Politeness here refers not to mannerism but rather the politics of likeability. How texts are presented, through the use of particular words, phrases and the order in which they are presented can create a palatable and comfortable image of the speaker. On the other hand, a speaker or writer who is intentionally political, controversial and challenges the status quo will be perceived and received by the audience as hostile and divisive and less likeable. Strategic politeness is indicative of particular social and power relations (Kress and Hodge 1979).

  Presuppositions are the assumptions made by the speaker or writer that are not stated explicitly but speaks to implicit ideologies that are taken for granted as common sense and are backgrounded (Fairclough 1995). For example, at an anti -Gender-Based Violence and Femicide protest a placard written "hands off our bodies" suggests that the bodies and

agency of women is currently being violated and not protected, implicitly speaking to a broader social issue.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis much like Narrative Analysis is a qualitative research method that is flexible, diverse, complex and nuanced (Braun and Clarke 2006). Its lack of a rigid structure is often critiqued, however, it is this fluidity that makes it useful in the analysis of poetry. Thematic Analysis is independent of theoretical and epistemological frameworks, allowing the researcher as an active member of society to interpret the data based on the knowledge that they have as well as making epistemological and other assumptions (Braun *et al*. 2006).

This research method is used to identify recurring patterns within the data collected so that it can be analysed and interpreted. It provides a richer and more detailed results by revealing various themes, which often relate and intersect, within a single research topic. The role of the researcher when using this method is critical as the onus is them to 'uncover' what may be implicit themes and decide which themes are of interest that reflect reality and which ones can be used to unpack what is backgrounded within the idea of what reality is.

The poems that are to be analysed and discussed in the following chapter will not only be speaking to sexual violence but also to identity politics, sexuality, the embodiment of racial and gendered stereotypes, the expression of trauma and generational trauma and the desire to heal. Thematic Analysis can be used across multiple theoretical studies making it an essential research tool with regards to this topic which cuts across multiple schools of thought such as sociology, diversity studies and literature. It is left to the researcher's judgement to determine which elements of the data collected are to be coded as themes, not based on the number of times that particular element occurs within the data (be it two sentences or 50% of the data) but rather on the importance and relevance of that element to the entirety of the study (Braun and Clarke 2006).

This method will be used at a latent level, where by the themes in the poems will not only be described and interpreted within the context of already existing data but will be identified by the researcher with the knowledge that there are underlying assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies that have not been explicitly stated in the poems (Braun and Clarke 2006, pp. 13) and it is at this point where the analytical tools provided by Critical Discourse Analysis will be useful.

4.4. How the Analysed Poems were Collected

4.5. Conclusion

The overarching theme of this research topic and thus of the poetry is sexual violence, however, within that broad umbrella theme there are sub-themes such as race, trauma and healing, each one distinct and unique but all linking back to the main theme. The sub-themes give structure to what could otherwise be a large and complex theme; the creation of sub-themes makes it easier to interpret the data by categorising it and simplifying it (Braun and Clarke 2006, 22).

The decision to use these particular methodologies was arrived at because of their relevance to the study and their flexible structure which places the narrator as the expert producer of legitimate knowledge based on their lived experiences.

Chapter Five

Analysis and Discussion

5. Introduction

The poems that are to be analysed and discussed will not only be speaking to the multiple experiences lived by Black women, often marked by discrimination and violence, but they will also be challenging the stereotypical ways in which Black women have been portrayed and thus marginalised.

The hatred of blackness coupled with the degradation of women means that the violence that they face is not only unique but also intergenerational as it is rooted in colonial ideologies (Phifer 2017) and perpetuated by the current white supremacist socio-political and socio-economic system. Black women have been negatively constructed as animalistic, sexually perverse, superhuman and yet subhuman, ugly and unintelligent (Phifer 2007, pp. 7). These poems, written by Black South African women, present a different narrative of a group that is often spoken over and spoken for. They speak to their resilience and the ability of Black women to survive and thrive within spaces that suffocate them, showing that there is more to Black women than their trauma.

Representation is not just about connecting meaning to language and culture, it is also about power (Hall 1997). Those who are in a position of power, through social and economic capital, are able to control the portrayal of those who fall outside of the sphere of power and are on the periphery of society. From this perspective the writing and sharing of poetry is a form of resisting and correcting the misrepresentation of a group that is both hyper-visible and invisible.

Representation functions through the shared collective memory of society; an image, a sound, a text and even a particular smell brings forth a memory to the conscious mind and attached to that memory is meaning (Hall 1997). The reflective approach to representation works as a mirror, reflecting what already exists in the real world. The poems that are to be analysed and discussed do not only mirror the experiences of the speaker but also the reality of the broader society. When one speaks they do not speak on their own, they speak from a place that is culturally and politically motivated, hence the meanings attached to the poetry is understood by the reader in one way or another. The actions that we choose to take; whether we speak or

choose not to speak, whether we read or choose not to read and whether or not we concern ourselves with the Other is all motivated by who we are (Moya 2011, pp. 2). The writers of the poems found below focus on issues concerning racialisation and gender inequality because that is where they are located: at the centre of these oppressive systems.

The intentional approach to representation is one where the speaker communicates their private thoughts and is deliberate in imposing their personal meaning and experience of the world through language (Hall 1997, pp. 25). However, the speaker's intentions when it comes to the meanings attached to their text is never entirely their own because language does not function in isolation but can only operate within a social context. The narratives told in these poems may be the personal accounts of the speaker or their personal views regarding sexual violence and the oppression of Black women, but they will also be speaking to the shared societal issue of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

The third approach to representation is constructionist. Events, concepts and signs do not inherently possess meaning, it is society through indoctrination and socialization that attaches meaning to objects and people (Hall 1997). The material world and the symbolic world are not the same. For example; a woman wearing a khanga is not saying that they are sexually available. It is the external sexualisation of that woman that creates the false idea that they are offering sex. The constructionist approach creates the opportunity for the speaker to construct a different identity of the Black woman that is marked by self-empowerment and the ability to overcome social hardships.

Ultimately representation is about identity and identity goes beyond how individuals subjectively identify themselves as being raceless or genderless (Moya 2011). Identity is understood to be how one looks out onto the world based on where they are situated and regardless of how they make sense of the Self, external identification cannot be avoided because of social categories such as race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Identity is not fixed and can be moulded and re-moulded as people's situatedness changes and meanings attached to various social markers also change.

Although a group of people may share in identifying themselves as belonging to a particular social category, their experiences will not be homogenous. For example, the lived reality of African Americans will not be the same as that of Black South Africans because of historical and cultural differences and because the former are a minority where they are situated, while the latter are the majority. Identity is complex and is constantly being negotiated as social

relations shift. This negotiation allows for the re-imagining of who we are and who others are and can be. It allows for the reconstruction of minority identities that have been limited by dominant Eurocentric ideas of what it means to *Be* (Moya 2011).

Using Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, the researcher will debunk the direct and implicit meanings within the narratives, speaking from the position of a Black South African woman to interpret what it is the poems are telling us about ourselves as a society and what it is they are calling for us to do as actors and spectators within the structure.

It is at this point that the researcher would like to provide a trigger warning because of the content of the following poems.

5.1 I Was… (Amina Deka Asma 2020)

I was 11 – it was my uncle
I was 14 – it was a family friend.
I was 17 – he was my boyfriend.

Those are the times that my brain has allowed me to recall.
I know that there were many more but I have no recollection of them.
Unless you'd like me to list the molestation as well?

I was 4 – it was my mother's boyfriend.
It never really ended.
Even after my mother died.
Thank goodness he also died.

I was 8 – it was a family friend.
He would molest me every few months that he came to visit.

I was 9 – he worked at my mother's hair salon.
He told me that he wanted to "have sex" with me and that he craved me.

I was 10 – it was my uncle.
The one who raped me at 11.

I was 14 – it was a family friend.
The one who raped me at 14.

I was 17 – it was my boyfriend.
The one who raped me at 17.

I met Amina in my journalism class when we were both students at Rhodes University but it is only in 2017 when we found ourselves in the radio journalism class that we got to know each other better and eventually became good friends. Amina is a poet, a podcast producer and a *Sangoma* in training. As someone who also writes poetry and occasionally performs it, I came to appreciate the way that she would deliver her work at the many open-mic nights that we attended: always direct, raw, unfiltered and vulnerable. This is clear to see in the above poem.

I asked Amina why she felt inclined to only write the poem in 2020 when the abuse had taken place so many years ago and her response was that the surge in domestic violence cases that took place during the first Covid19 lockdown was the trigger. Before this she did not have the words to describe her experiences but now was the right time to write, to tell her story, to give it truth and to validate her experiences. Sharing this poem is an important part of that validation because for so long she had kept these stories to herself. Having been triggered by everything that was happening during the first hard lockdown reminded her that she too was a victim and had been hurt by people and men who were meant to protect her and respect her. The poem is not just a testimony to everything that she has been through and survived but it was also a declaration that she may have experienced trauma but she is not the trauma.

When I saw Amina in her *Sangoma* beads, I was not surprised. I find it fitting that she has been called to be a healer, an intercessor. It seems like a natural progression from being a healer through poetry and the spoken word to becoming a healer through African spirituality.

The social codes of patriarchy are those of male dominance in every aspect of society, both in public and private spaces and it is this dominance that legitimizes masculinity (Wood & Jewkes 1997). Dominance through sexual entitlement and ownership of girls, children and women as well as other men has been culturally sanctioned, normalising the idea that men can have sex whenever they want, with whomever they please. This is evidenced in the sentence "He told me that he wanted to ""*have sex*" *with me and that he craved me*" (Asma 2020). Outside of the

sexualisation of children, there seems to be no understanding of consent and what constitutes sexual violence (Wood & Jewkes 1997) more so when the violence takes place within the context of a romantic relationship.

The narrative shared here confirms what is already publically known; that child rape is often perpetrated by family members, family friends and members of the community and is rarely perpetrated by a stranger (Yesufu 2020). It is this familiarity that fuels the silence surrounding sexual violence within families because of the nature of the relationship with the perpetrator.

The dominant reoccurring theme in the above poem is molestation and child rape that took place several times for more than a decade and was committed by multiple perpetrators who were known to the victim, however, it is the speaker's vulnerability that is the underlying overarching theme as the abuse began when they were a child. Poverty, crime, dysfunctional family structures, child neglect, economic and social insecurity as well as the police and criminal justice system's shortcomings all contribute to the vulnerability of children (Yesufu 2020, pp. 7).

The 'virgin cure', a myth that became widespread during the peak of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the late 90s and early 2000s, is what sparked the current child rape epidemic South Africa is facing. The myth that having sex with an infant, a child or a young girl would cure HIV/AIDS led to the spread of the virus and communities were left devastated and traumatised.

The researcher is of the opinion that the experiences that the speaker shares demonstrates a different form of vulnerability; one that is empowering as the speaker reclaims their voice.

5.2 Every Three Hours (Koleka Putuma 2019)

…danger zones disguised as safe spaces.
safe spaces with murderers.
murderers who are husband material.
schools with paedophiles.
paedophiles with degrees in working with children.
lecture halls with molesters.
terminals with predators.

construction sites with men old enough to understand 'NO!'
churches with men who use your prayers for safety to get you on your knees
with your arms raised.

[every 3 hours, one of us does not make it]

this country hangs our dignity at half-mast.
waves our bodies as lessons to be learnt.
as moments that should teach us something.
as modules. tests. experiments.

my existence is not for your teaching
to dislocate my mother's throat six feet under
and compensate her grief with scholarships and amended policies.
policies that have gathered dust before they have even been drafted.

this country buries us before we are born.
calls us by our obituaries before it calls us
by our names.

Koleka Putuma is an award winning poet, writer and theatre practitioner whose debut collection of poems, *Collective Amnesia* was published in 2017 and has since then been translated into Spanish, German, Swedish, Danish, Dutch and Portuguese. It is currently being prescribed for study at tertiary level in South African universities and at Gothenburg University in Sweden.

The book speaks to the experiences of growing up Black in post-Apartheid South Africa. It speaks of the many ways society has chosen to forget the atrocities of Apartheid even though the economic and social systems of that regime are still visible today. It is an ode to young Black queer women who are constantly having to negotiate their existence in relation to their families, their churches and their societies. We see this in the poem titled *No Easter Sunday for Queers* which she later turned into a stage production. The poem highlights the complexity of queer life and begins with bullet points:

- *And Easter Sunday will still come around every year for this Jesus ~~you we~~ I speak of*

- *And why is it that there is no Easter Sunday for queer bodies*

- *When lesbians are crucified like Christ?* (Putuma 2017).

This poem and the one that is about to be analysed and discussed, show Putuma's creative ability to tear wide open topics of conversation that are difficult and often considered taboo, bringing them to the forefront of public discourse.

Putuma does not hesitate to make known the severity of Femicide in South Africa. The title of the poem, "Every Three Hours," speaks to the chilling reality that an average of seven women are murdered daily (South African Police Service 2019/2020) some whose names and faces we know and others who will never be known. The speaker does not attempt to make palatable the fact that many women will be met with a violent death at the hands of an intimate partner but instead shocks the reader; a reminder that society cannot be comfortable in the face of GBV just because it has been normalised to the point where we have been desensitized.

The poem challenges a dominant rape myth that creates a particular image of a predator. Rapists are often thought of as monsters and strangers who hide in dark corners and are always violent and unknown to the victim (Gqola 2015). Putuma tells us that educated men, men who are too 'civilised' to commit such crimes, are also dangerous. Godly men who wear religious clothes are capable of using people's faith to take advantage of them.

There are spaces in society such as schools and churches that have been constructed as safe where one does not expect to find violence and because of that molesters, paedophiles and rapists move around with ease. Gqola (2015) tells us that there is no perfect predator, that the image of a Black poor man may be the 'face' of rape because of racist colonial stereotypes, but what this does is silence those who have been violated at the hands of prominent men. The murder of Reeva Steenkamp by her then boyfriend, Paralympic gold medallist Oscar Pistorius, in 2013 is but one example that dispels this myth.

"*This country hangs our dignity at half mast. Waves our bodies as lessons to be learnt*" (Putuma 2019). These two lines bring to mind the story of Tshegofatso Pule, a young woman whose body was found hanging from a tree in June 2020. Tshegofatso was heavily pregnant at the time of her murder (Eye Witness News 2021) and her then boyfriend is the alleged mastermind

behind her killing. The display of her lifeless pregnant body, reminiscent of the display of Sarah Baartman's body, was a warning to other women that "*this country buries us before we are born*" (Putuma 2019). Black people are born with meaning already attached to their bodies and blackness (Fanon 1965) and are characterised by intellectual defects, genetic inferiority, animalistic behaviour and sexual deviance. In a heterosexist and gendered framework, Black women are born already vulnerable to violence and are taught to expect and accept that at one point or another they will be victimised. The opportunity to invent oneself is removed and instead a Black female identity is constructed through the male gaze.

There is a continued theme of hopelessness in this poem. One that mocks the policies and opportunities presented to women as a way to bring about gender equality. Fanon (1965) upon analysing how he has been dissected and fixed by white eyes comes to the realisation that he is "…hated, despised and detested" by an entire race based on his outward appearance. It can be argued that Black women are hated, despised and detested by an entire social group (men) not only because of their race but also because of their gender. Affirmative action policies and other attempts at gender equality do not address this hatred and the consequences thereof. The poem speaks to an urgent need for radical and collective action not just from civil society but from government as well.

5.3 I am Khanga (Fezekile Khuzwayo 2008)

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

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'

Trying to find information about Fezekile Khuzwayo proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated. All if not most of the articles available online talk about her as Zuma's rape accuser and yet she lived a full life that stretched beyond simply being "the bitch that must burn," the former president's alleged victim.

Khuzwayo was the daughter of anti-Apartheid struggle stalwart Judson Khuzwayo, who was imprisoned alongside Zuma for ten years on Robben Island. Having grown up in exile with her mother she was alienated from the country of her birth and further alienated from her body after having being raped and abused by members of the underground ANC movement (Daily Maverick 2016). It is difficult to think about and write about Khwezi, as she became publically known to protect her identity from Jacob Zuma's supporters who harassed her, spat on her and eventually burned down her house, forcing her and her mother into exile in the Netherlands.

I was ten years old in 2006 when the rape trial began. My knowledge and understanding of rape and sexual violence was limited then but I knew that there was something wrong and unsettling with the ANC Women's League message of "we will protect Zuma with our breasts and buttocks." Limited as my knowledge was, I knew that rape was wrong and that women should support other women. Fezekile knew, like all women know, that her accusation would be met with disbelief but I do not think she ever thought she would end up having to flee for her life. The above poem was written in 2008 after Zuma's acquittal and she performed it in

the Netherlands, dressed in a khanga (News 24 2016) a cloth dress popularly worn by African women along the eastern parts of the continent. She was a feminist, an HIV/AIDS activist an advocate and a friend. Her courage was met with further violence, treachery and betrayal. Her passing in 2016 in Kwa-Zulu Natal (her and her mother had returned to South Africa in 2011) was a chilling reminder of the onslaught of injustice that she faced and the way in which the justice system and society at large continues to fail victims and survivors of rape. Her life was stained by tragedy but even now as an ancestor, she continues to offer hope to feminists, activists and survivors alike.

It would be difficult and near impossible to analyse and discuss this poem written by the late Fezekile Khuzwayo without speaking of the story and the events that eventually led to the creation of this particular poem. In April 2006 the former president of South Africa Jacob Zuma, who at the time was the Deputy President, appeared in court to defend himself against a charge of rape laid by Fezekile Khuzwayo (Mare` & Waetjen 2009). The case was followed closely by both local and international news and became heavily politicised and publicised not only because of who the accused was but also because of the circumstances within which the alleged rape took place.

Khuzwayo begins the poem by speaking of the khanga, a cloth dress commonly worn by African women along the east of the continent; the dress became central to the case as it was used by the defence to argue Khuzwayo's willingness and desire to engage in sexual relations with Zuma. Historically the khanga has been used by East African women as a social and political tool of communication among themselves (Birch & Lutomia 2017). Messages or *jina* printed on the cloth used to make the dress allows women to participate in public discourse regarding what is often considered private matters or matters for the family. Their bodies become a site where their emotions, beliefs, religion and political stances can be expressed without speaking (Birch & Lutomia 2017, pp. 42) and in this way the khanga serves as a record of the history of Swahili speaking women in certain parts of the continent and the ways they have used this traditional dress as a form of protest against patriarchal norms.

"*Please don't not use me as an excuse to rape*, "*don't hide behind me when you choose to abuse*" is the speaker's response to the claim made by Zuma during the 2006 trial: Zuma claimed that Khuzwayo was in a state of sexual arousal because of the khanga she was wearing and therefore it was his duty, as a Zulu man, to satisfy her needs as it would have been unwise to leave her in that state (Mare` & Waetjen 2009, pp. 57).

Culture in this case was introduced as the defining factor between consensual sex and rape. From this perspective, what had taken place could not legally be thought of as a violation because according to the cultural wisdom that Zuma says he grew up with and adhered to, a man had to act in a certain way in the presence of a woman in a certain state, lest he risk being arrested or accused of rape for not doing what is expected of him (Mare` & Waetjen 2009). Using his culture to position Khuzwayo as a hypersexual seductress who used the khanga to lure him to bed constructed him as a victim to the typical 'jezebel' nature of young Black women and his masculinity was used against him.

'Jezebel' is a racial trope that specifically applies to Black women, characterising them as immoral, wicked and seductive thus making them impossible to rape and simultaneously worthy of being sold and purchased, objectified and destroyed (Lomax 2018).

The speaker in the poem poses the questions "*in what sick world is that sex*", "*in what sick world is that consent*" after explaining that she had said "no" twice and that her body was stiff from shock while the alleged rape took place. Zuma's stance on culture and sex brought to the public domain private ideologies of what sex is and what rape is; culturally speaking women hold an inferior position in relation to men, however, sexual rights and women's rights are protected by the constitution. This case shone a light on the conflicting contrast between cultural beliefs and practices and what can be considered the modern and Eurocentric beliefs and practices that regard gender equality as a basic human right (Mare` & Waetjen 2009).

Using the Zulu culture as a justification for the events that took place on the night of 2nd of November 2005, Zuma legitimised his actions and validated the widely held idea that real men have sex with women; sex being something that is done to a woman and not with a woman (Mare` & Waetjen 2009, pp. 58). Zuma alleges to have offered to pay *lobola* for Khuzwayo, something that would have been culturally accepted as the morally correct thing to do, further placing him as an upright traditional man who would be showing a great deal of respect to the Khuzwayo family by making their daughter an honourable woman and not just someone who had had 'sex' with a married man. This cast further doubt on whether or not a crime had been committed and gained even greater support for Zuma from the court of public opinion. This offer to pay *lobola* illustrated the belief that issues that are of a sexual nature and female sexuality should be dealt with privately as they are a family matter.

Khuzwayo was punished by Zuma's supporters and became the "bitch that must burn" (crowds of his supporters gathered outside of the court would chant "burn the bitch" and went on to

burn photographs of her) as her accusation was regarded as a betrayal to the Zulu culture and a calculated plan to discredit and ruin the reputation of a good man.

The themes in this poem and in the entirety of the case are of those victim-blaming, unequal power relations between men and women that is sanctioned by African culture and the false idea of what rape is and what sex is. The khanga, which is an African dress of female modesty and respectability, was sexualised and transformed into a tool of seduction (Robins 2008) which undermined African masculinity by first communicating Khuzwayo's desire to engage in sex and then later saying that what took place was not consensual.

Sexual ambiguity that takes place within the context of unequal power relations was not taken into consideration by the presiding judge Willem van der Merwe because the alleged rape did not take place within the expected and accepted confinements of what rape is thought to be, because Khuzwayo was not bruised, her clothes were not torn, she was not hysterical and she remained at the accused's house after the alleged incident took place (Robins 2008, pp. 419).

The acquittal of Zuma re-enforced the patriarchal and misogynistic belief that women are prone to fabricating rape allegations and the belief that female sexuality is a threat to the African man and African community (Robins 2008). The acquittal and more so the treatment of Khuzwayo only served to further silence victims of sexual violence who otherwise might have come forward. The rejection of a world where these beliefs are a norm by the speaker towards the end of the poem is a signal of resistance even in the face of violent masculinity. Although Khuzwayo was forced to flee the country because of threats made to her life by Zuma supporters, she ends the poem by saying "*this is also my home*," a final declaration that women belong in our society and that victims of sexual violence should not be ostracised and punished but rather protected and believed.

5.4 Adam's Ribs (Natalia Molebatsi 2009)

I turn off the way the story is begun

With me at the edge of all ending

Always on my back,

And constantly by his side

From behind this lie I break out as liquid

As the bones of my flesh

So my daughters can know that how they drape

Or undress their lives, does not ask for Adam's

violation,

Nor should warrant his approval

I want to teach my daughters

That they are hopes of dreams

That lie awake at night willing

The woman who has to be seen and heard

A lie told so long bends us into poor

Less, asking-for-it whores who mean Yes!,

While screaming No!

A lie held so high teaches

Our sons that from the descendants of Adam

Comes a woman to be utilised

My daughters will unfold as thoughts

Set free, like sea waves,

They will not be scared to be curators of humanity

knowing the distance between love and fear

And will love themselves

So they can feel when they are loved so good

They will not be captives behind the cage of

Adam's ribs

His fear will not be lifted by their morning of flight

Natalia Molebatsi stands out among the chosen poets in this study because she is also a song writer and musician and has found a way to fuse her poetry with her music. She has shared a

stage with the likes of another renowned South African poet and playwright, Lebo Mashile as well as Alice Walker and Simphiwe Dana. Molebatsi is from Tembisa in Johannesburg and where she is from is voiced in her work as she speaks about love and loss, the politics of existing in this place at this moment in time. The overarching theme in her poems are that of the reality and lives of women. Her work has been published in New Coin and Scrutiny 2 among other poetry collections and anthologies. She has performed and facilitated creative writing workshops in Senegal, Zimbabwe, Palestine and Kenya to name a few countries.

Although the poem does not speak about the experiences of the author, it does provide insight into the pivotal role played by religion in the demonising not only of woman but of their bodies and sexuality as well, aiding in the justification of their abuse.

The poem speaks to the combined use of religion (specifically Christianity) racism and misogyny in the construction of the subhuman Black female and how the construction of that identity has created a reality where Black women's sexuality has been distorted and weaponised to invent the false idea that they cannot be raped. What the poem does is call attention to the way in which religion as a belief system and statehood legitimised the inferior positioning of women in society and in the home. In the first stanza Molebatsi speaks to the Biblical character of Eve being the origin of the downfall of Man, she speaks of herself as being "*the edge of all ending*" as Eve's actions cast all women in the role of perpetual temptress whose body became the 'devil's gateway' to humanity (Polinska 2000).

The image of the naked Eve is considered to be physically and intellectually weak as it is the incomplete and mutilated form of the male body (Polinska 2000, pp. 48) and it is this bodily weakness that makes the woman susceptible to immorality and failure to protect the sexuality of the man (Polinska 2000). Within this context Adam sinned because he was seduced and enticed by Eve and this removes the connection between him and his sin; and this is what Molebatsi (2009) refers to as the lie told for so long that women have become …"*asking-for-it whores who mean Yes!, While screaming No!*"

In continuation of the narrative of the immoral and seductive female body, the perpetrator becomes a passive agent while the woman is the active actor in their violation. Biblically men and women are dichotomous; with the former being fertile and thus providing life and soul while the latter simply provides the body for the offspring (Polinska 2000, pp. 50). In her poem Molebatsi states that this idea is a continuation of the lie taught in churches and communities that …"*from the descendants of Adam Comes a woman to be utilised*" (Molebatsi 2009)

because man is made to rule by nature and women are by nature meant to obey (Polinska 2000, pp. 50).

The Biblical figure of Jezebel is that of a wicked and deceitful women and when racialized, the Black jezebel trope becomes a character whose nakedness represents a Black femininity and sexuality that is deviant (Lomax 2018). From what can be considered the criminalisation of Eve comes the colonial creation of the Black venus who became personified in the form of Sarah Baartman (Lomax 2018, pp. 16). Baartman's body is an extension of the naked Black female body and was reduced to "a repulsively alluring pile of excess, a "titillating curiosity, a collage of buttocks and anatomy" (Lomax 2018).

This idea of the Black female body having excess sexual anatomy transformed that body into one whose primary function is sex; sex slaves (during colonisation), prostitution, ho's, sluts baby mama's and *difebe* became the identities attached to these bodies, identities created by the white male gaze. In contrast, the naked white female body, 'white venus' from ancient Roman mythology is the goddess of love and fertility, signifying a more desirable and normative female form, a greater beauty in the mixture of red and white in the fair skin (Lomax 2018, pp. 18).

Although existing in contrast with one another both the Black and white female bodies were constructed under the white male gaze, each to serve a particular purpose. The former to justify the raping and maiming of the enslaved women and the latter to be subservient reproducers and home makers. This identity of the Black 'sexual savage' has become internalised and continues to be commodified and that is evident in the hyper-sexualised portrayal of Black women in music videos and movies.

Towards the end of her poem Molebatsi begins to speak of love; love when directed at oneself becomes a tool of liberation so that the future daughters "*will not be captives behind the cage of Adam's ribs*" (Molebatsi 2009). Love becomes the site where Eve and her descendants find within themselves the courage to come up from underneath male oppression and domination. It is not an emotion of weakness but rather one that leads to a revolutionary act.

5.5 Untitled (Siphokazi Jonas 2021)

A man in the street

With a knee as heavy as history

On his neck calls out for his mother.

While another man took his breath

With all the weight of the law behind him.

She answered from beyond the grave, and

Her voice shattered into a thousand bodies protesting

around the world.

#BlackLivesMatter is a chorus of mothers

Shouting: Let my baby breathe!

To be a woman in South Africa is to call for your mother who calls for her mother

Who calls for her mother,

Until all the women in your bloodline run out of breath.

It is to protest with your entire existence,

Wondering why you only matter

When you are a thousand bodies in the streets-

Until some man decides

To take your life, on your knees

With the law around your neck

And you can't breathe.

Siphokazi Jonas is a poet, writer and performer that has made her mark locally and internationally. She holds an MA in English Literature and a BA in Drama and English from Cape Town University. She has been able to use the world of academia to channel her creativity. She has been nominated for and been awarded too many accolades to mention but her most recent achievement was her attendance at the 2021 State of the Nation Address where she delivered a poem titled *What does not Sink*. She has participated in international events including the Poet at Poetry Africa Festival and the Lviv International Book Forum in Ukraine. Her work, although relevant to South Africa, is understood on the international stage because

of how she is able to weave together universal experiences and make them personal for each individual, as she does with the poem that is to be analysed.

This poem was chosen because of how it weaves together global experiences and personalises them. Jonas draws similarities between the murder of George Floyd and his helplessness to the murdering and helplessness of South African women. It speaks to a culture of intentionally inflicted pain and institutional violence.

The overall theme of the poem is that of the violence committed against Black people being a universal occurrence that is neither coincidental nor an isolated event. The slow and painful murder of George Floyd, an African American man, by former police officer Derek Chauvin, a white man, could take place because of the history of colonisation and slavery in America (Bazian 2020, pp. 124). The colonisation of the Americas could only take place through the genocide of the indigenous people and the colonial enterprise of global conquest could only happen through the enslavement of African people.

This centuries-long process of abuse, murder, torture, rape, forced emotional, sexual, mental and physical labour naturalised the dehumanisation of Black people and people of colour (POC) and the legality of these actions meant that institutions of government were founded on the belief that Black people and POC were not only intellectually and physically inferior but were also less than human.

The murder of George Floyd is a manifestation of the racial state and state violence; coloniality that arises in the form of the police system (Bazian 2020, pp. 124) and this is what Siphokazi Jonas speaks to when she says "*with a knee as heavy as history*." The actions of Derek Chauvin were not the actions of a single man but that of an entire legal institution that justifies the criminalisation of Black men and so Chauvin committed this crime with "*the weight of the law behind him*" (Jonas 2021).

"*Being a Black man in America is like being a woman in South Africa*"- unknown

The above quote speaks to the anxiety shared globally by Black people in America and in South Africa. This anxiety is caused by the knowledge that on any given day one may not return home in one piece or at all because of your race and gender. The poem compares Floyd's literal inability to breathe (because of Chauvin's knee pressing down on his neck for almost ten minutes) to the suffocating fear experienced by South African women because of the everyday possibility of being sexually assaulted, of having some man take your life on your knees (Jonas

2021). The law 'around the necks' of women points to the failure of the justice system to protect women from GBV and Femicide and to successfully persecute perpetrators.

Generational trauma and emotional and psychological pain is a recurring theme in the poem and this is seen in how Floyd crying out for his mother is linked to the way women of each generation calls for their mother (Jonas 2021). This is what Manda (2014) calls multiple-woundedness where trauma is rooted in multiple sources and is not just experienced at the individual level but also at state level. Historical trauma such as colonisation and slavery in America and colonisation and Apartheid in South Africa, is transmitted in memory through the psychosocial. Legacies of mass human rights abuses at state level affect the daily lives of people through mass incarceration, xenophobia, sexual violence and gang violence (Benjamin & Fourie 2019).

Unresolved pain and the poverty-stricken environment many previously disadvantaged groups find themselves in, creates a cycle of continued violence; where victims of state violence become perpetrators themselves (Benjamin & Fourie 2019, pp. 4). This is the beginning of intergenerational trauma where the experiences of the previous generation become the experiences on the current generation. No one is spared and this is why Jonas emphasises on the Black man's and Black woman's inability to breathe because of the grip the state has around their necks.

"…*A thousand bodies protesting around the world*" in response to the murder of George Floyd is placed in contrast with the "*thousand bodies*" of murdered women in South Africa. The emotion evoked here is that of collective outrage; a thousand bodies in protest against the thousands of Black bodies systematically murdered in countries founded on their oppression. This illustrates that resistance and social change will often come from those who are pushed to the periphery of society.

5.7 Plucked (Ogone Mokobe 2019)

Low-hanging fruit plucked from their branches

by hands that do not bother with consent.

He aggressively bites into you, ravaging your most tender parts.

Juices and chunks of you flow down his chin, his neck

and leaves a stain on his shirt that is difficult to ignore.

He wipes his mouth clean with the back of his hand and throws the half eaten fruit to the ground.

He walks away,

to the next low-hanging fruit with bits of you stuck in his beard,

in his teeth.

Even when you are dead they will interrogate your corpse,

asking you if you are sure he did what your body is telling them he did.

The next low-hanging fruit has already been picked.

This poem was an assignment given to me by then psychologist in 2019. I wrote it about ten minutes before I was about to leave for the appointment even though I had known about it for about two weeks. I had been avoiding sitting down with myself and having this difficult conversation. That is what poetry is isn't it? A conversation with yourself that you choose to share with others. Writing is the equivalent of sitting in a confessional except that the person in there with you is *you* and there is no point in doing it unless you are going to be honest. Reading it out to my psychologist was challenging; vulnerability is always challenging. To my dismay, that was not the end of the assignment. She asked me to change the ending of the poem and so I added the following lines:

But the seeds are still there.

Your seeds are still there and will give rise to forests.

I deliberately left out these lines because they offer hope and that is not what I felt at the time that I wrote it. I felt defeated. I had forgotten all about the domestic worker who had molested me as a child. Why would a simple game between a child and their caretaker be a core memory? The memories came back vividly during the 2016 #RUReferenceList anti-rape protest that took place at Rhodes University, where I was a student at the time. I was too involved in the protest for my mind to continue suppressing these events. They came back to me as a dream and I woke up startled and I somehow knew that it was not a dream. I was back in my mother's living room, sitting under a blanket with our domestic worker, a blanket that covered my hand that was in her pants and covered her hand that was in my pants. I was seven or eight.

I write when I cannot speak but I am in desperate need of air. Her name was Malefu, loosely translated it means 'mother of funerals.' Perhaps when she was born there had been a death in her family, regardless the name is befitting.

I use the analogy of low-hanging fruit to create the imagery of how vulnerable groups, specifically children, in society can be easily taken advantage of and abused simply by existing. The anonymity of the person responsible for the 'plucking' (the abuse and violation) speaks to the way in which perpetrators can be faceless, nameless and come from anywhere in society.

The Children's Institute released a report in 2016 stating that one in three children or youths is a victim of sexual violence and physical abuse before they turn 18 with most of the violence being experienced by girl children. These statistics speak to an epidemic that has long been a crisis and continues to be because of the high level of violence in our communities that have desensitised children and their families (du Toit & Weber 2018). Patriarchy has created a hierarchy where children are at the bottom of human importance; dominated by the adults in their lives.

The poem calls attention to the lack of adherence to socially accepted moral codes as the perpetrator walks around while "*Juices and chunks of you flow down his chin, his neck"* without feelings of guilt or remorse because of how normalised violence has become. Poor access to social services, high unemployment rates, inequality and social exclusion all contribute to the vulnerability of children (du Toit & Weber 2018, pp. 3) and it is this structural violence that leads to direct violence where physical harm is inflicted. The line "*even when you are dead they will interrogate your corpse,*

asking you if you are sure he did what your body is telling them he did" speaks to the secondary victimisation faced by survivors. The validity of your story will be questioned, even after death, because of widely believed rape myths and victim blaming. This being some of the reasons why victims do not come forward.

"*The next low-hanging fruit has already been picked*" is indicative of the cycle of abuse that seems to have no end. Women who survived emotional, sexual or physical abuse as children has been a key determinant of whether they later became victims of violence again (du Toit & Weber 2018). When the physical abuse of children is not taken seriously because of the lack of resources and the belief that it is not in fact a violation, increased trauma and abuse is the outcome (du Toit & Weber 2018, pp. 2). The analogy of low-hanging fruit illustrates the defencelessness and helplessness of children in society. Post-traumatic stress disorder,

depression, cognitive and behavioural problems as well as increased risk of suicide are the consequences of the abuse (du Toit & Weber 2018).

5.8 Conclusion

The poems analysed and discussed in this chapter using Thematic Analysis, Narrative Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis have shown how sexual violence and abuse are not isolated acts but are political, cultural and gendered. Themes of desperation, outrage, hopelessness and resistance are repeated throughout and speak to a collective anxiety, shared trauma and refusal to remain silent.

What these poems illustrate is that poetry can be used as a tool of memorialisation, expression, storytelling, activism and catharsis. All of the narratives that were shared were different and were shared using different methods of analogy and metaphors, however, they all showed undeniable evidence of the threat of rape culture, misogyny, dominant masculinity and patriarchy. Moreover they show how it is possible for there to be a community where Black women can come as they are and heal on their own terms.

Conclusion

On the night of the 17th of April 2016 an anti-rape protest began at Rhodes University and the catalyst for this protest was a list of names released on social media titled RU Reference List, which later became the name of the protest (Jimlongo 2018). The list was made up of the names of alleged rapists, many of whom had been reported to the university and where met with little to no punishment. At the time I was a second year student at Rhodes University and had spent the previous year going through a political awakening. What made the #RUReferenceList Protest terrifying is how it catapulted victims and survivors to the forefront of the movement, giving a face- faces that I saw every day on campus- to the rape statistics we were all aware of.

As the protest continued during the week activists, most of whom being Black women, removed their clothes and their naked bodies which are often the scene of the crime became visible and conveyed a very audible message (Jimlongo 2018). This congregation of naked Black female bodies destabilised the university space, which is a space of privilege, a formerly whites-only space and a space that is meant to be safe because of its proximity to privilege, whiteness and prestige.

These bodies communicated a different reality where rape culture is rampant, where perpetrators are other students and where the management of the institution does not do enough to protect those who come forward after being sexually violated and to punish those responsible (Jimlongo 2018, pp. 8). When women strip down and use their bodies as tools of resistance and defiance it is because they have reached the end of their politics. It is the final stand, the final rejection of an abnormal patriarchal system which has led to the need for abnormal politics of resistance when 'formal' and usual processes of dialogue and disruption have failed.

I was always going to end up here, with this topic and this desire to transcend trauma and to no longer be defined by it. Poetry can be thought of as immortalising the suffering of people, not only remembering the sorrows but also keeping them alive as a way of bearing witness and testimony to those who have been silenced (Eze 2014). Storytelling in this form is about empathy and empathy is how we relate to others (Eze 2014, pp. 285) a reminder that the personal is the political and that we should all be concerned with the struggles of others. The inability to speak and to express oneself means that you are not in control of your own life and are forced to use the language of another (Keating 1992). This study recognises that Black

women have voices but are systematically silenced. It also recognises the need for these voices to be given a platform to speak freely and to be heard.

As a Black South African woman who writes prose and poetry and has been at the receiving end of sexual violence, this study is a re-discovery and re-presentation of the Self through the reading and writing of historical, political, cultural and religious histories that have come to shape the world that we live in. It is an attempt at reaching out, through the use of academia, to those who look like me and whose names are difficult to pronounce like mine to create a community where healing and restoration is possible.

As the researcher I am biased because I have a vested interest in the collective physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual restoration of Black women in South Africa. However, my proximity to the topic of the study is not a disadvantage as my societal positioning gives me a unique perspective from which to write from. The use of poetry by Black women as a therapeutic tool to heal from the trauma caused by sexual violence cannot be measured or calculated, however, the ability to speak on traumatic events and to share those experiences, those that are personal and those that have been witnessed, is where healing begins.

The literature review achieved its purpose in presenting both historical and present political, economic and racialized ideologies that have led to the construction of a Black female body that is commodified, vulnerable to violence and at the same time invisible. The theories of hegemonic masculinity, GBV and rape culture that were explored have illustrated how the issue of sexual violence, and the lack of justice victims receive, is because of shared societal beliefs that justify the actions of perpetrators and alienate victims, shaming them into silence.

Decoloniality and Intersectionality as the chosen theoretical frameworks provided a lens through which it could be understood how the Black female body was externally created through the white male gaze, alongside the demonization of the Black male sexuality. What this shows is how it is no accident or coincidence the position that Black women in South Africa find themselves in today.

The multiple oppressions that they face, the disbelief that they are met with when reporting their victimisation and the lack of access that they have to legal services and mental health care facilities means that they are stuck in what can be thought of as a trauma loop. It is first the trauma of being sexualised and objectified, followed by the trauma of being violated and then finally the trauma of not being believed and having justice denied. However, the given identity

of ‘hyper-sexuality’ can be rejected and undone and a new identity, one that is not rooted in inherent inferiority, can be created by Black women themselves.

The methodologies used in the research report (Thematic Analysis, Narrative Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis) were chosen because of their flexibility and the manner in which they centre the speaker as a legitimate expert on their lived experiences. Furthermore these methodologies enable the researcher to participate in the storytelling of the subject, in this case the poets and their poems, thus allowing a more personal approach to conducting research and viewing participants as people first and not simply sources of information.

Critical Discourse Analysis is deliberate in its emancipatory role when it comes to analysing and debunking texts (Haig 2004). CDA is ideologically motivated and is therefore at risk of reading messages *into* texts instead of *out* of texts. It can be argued that the focus on an academia that is invested in social change means that knowledge production and factual analysis is no longer a priority and that those who follow this research method are inherently bias and seek out objectionable signs within signifiers (Haig 2004). I believe that academic work that is motivated by social change and gender justice is necessary for the decolonisation of university spaces and the tangible transformation of social attitudes and society.

The poems that were analysed were selected firstly because they were written by Black South African women but also because of their content. All of the poems speak about sexual violence, however, they also speak of institutional failures to prevent violence against women and children and to achieve justice for them. They speak to the helplessness and hopelessness that this creates, to the outrage that it brings forth and to the universal refusal to remain silent. Healing is found in the sharing of these experiences and in ending the culture of silence associated with rape culture.

Further studies into alternative therapeutic tools to address trauma caused by sexual violence within Black women need to be conducted, not only because sexual violence is a continuing plague in our society but because the experiences of victims and survivors are not homogenous and there is not a universal method that can be used to achieve individual and collective healing. Poetry is shown in this study to be a useful therapeutic tool for Black women who have experienced sexual violence as it provides the opportunity for them to speak in an unfiltered voice where emotion, vulnerability and empathy is encouraged and not condemned, where their experiences are not only believed but validated and brought to light.

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