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Through the lens darkly: *the transfiguration of the Black African image in South Africa and Mali*

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University of the Witwatersrand

31 August 2023

A Masters by Research thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirments for a degree of MA in Media Studies

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of SLLS

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DEDICATION:

In loving memory of my dearest mother, Aadila Adele Scipione-Mbele.

A woman of unwavering faith and discipline, thank you for showing me that I am worthy of unconditional love, for always supporting and believing in my dreams, no matter how abstract or speculative, for teaching me that you learn from birth to the grave, for bringing joy and laughter to my life, and for being the pillar of our family. I will love you until the sun stops setting. You held my hand throughout life and until your last breaths. I pray God gives me the strength to be half the courageous and devoted woman you were. You will be forever missed “Ms Benetton.”

Inna lilahi wa inna lilahi rahjioon.

(1962 – 2022)

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To conclude, echoing sentiments that Snoop Dogg put eloquently: "Last but not least, I wanna thank me, I wanna thank me for believing in me, I wanna thank me for doing all this hard work, I wanna thank me for having no days off, I wanna thank me for, for never quitting…" (2019).

ABSTRACT

This study offers a critical exploration of the dynamic conceptualisation of Blackness and Africanness, through the functionality of studio portraiture, captured within the diverse socio-historical contexts of selected West and Southern African countries. The objective of this study manifests threefold. Firstly, I explore the theorisation of Blackness and Africanness as both fixed embodiments of the colonial matrix of power; secondly, portraiture as an emancipatory structure for ontological resistance; and thirdly, ways through which Black African photographers subvert colonial photography conventions and reappropriate the medium for self-fashioning and self-representation. Where complexities of race, identity and representation intersect, I illustrate ways through which Blackness is discursively produced through specific socio-historical, economic and political legacies of "modernity/coloniality" (Mignolo 2007: 155) and sustained by mechanisms of hegemonic contemporary social structures. This research considers the pursuance of studio portraiture photography, circumscribed to the representation of the Black African body, as a means to elaborate how Africanness and Blackness are embodied through the fluid and fugitive Black African image. Not to conflate Blackness with Africanness, I have decided to make use of the paradigm Archie Mafeje describes as "Africanity" (2008). Concerning the examination of the para-ontological existence of Blackness, Africanness and studio portraiture photography juncture, I situate this study in a transdisciplinary approach, engaging with glitch feminism and decoloniality. Moreover, to highlight the reconstruction and futurity of Blackness, I analyse overall sixteen studio portraiture photographs captured by colonial administrators, postcolonial Black African photographers and contemporary Black African photographers, through my reconstructed multimodal and multisite research approach advanced Critical Visual Methodology (Rose 2001). I explore these images towards the thematic discussion regarding ways to which the potentiality of the Black African image is configured through peculiarities of Anglophone and Francophone colonial pictorial conventions, the shift in ontological bounds, glitching the cosmic Black African image, and lastly, decoloniality functioning as an engine of potentiality. Irrevocably, this research investigates to the extent in which socio-historical conditions produce racial identity; to what extent do the ways by which the Black body obtain the potentiality for autonomy and embodied subjectivity, that are enacted through portraiture photography as a medium and mode for ontological means of resistance and ultimately, to what extent is resistance performed in hegemonic contemporary structures towards writing a visual history of liberation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through the analytical exploration of the Black African body and the "transformative visuality of the Black image" (Mbele 2018), the investigation towards the functionality of studio portraiture photography, within one former French colony, namely Mali, and one former British colony, namely South Africa, the aim of this research is delimited to three frames of inquiry.

Firstly, the dynamic conceptualisation of Blackness is perceived as both a discursive formation of coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013; Mignolo 2007; Grosfuguel 2009; Quijano 2007) and complex racial categorisation (Torres-Saillant 1998; Hernandez and Murray-Johnson 2015; Speight, Vera and Derrickson 1996). I contextualize the socio-historical and cultural constellations of studio portraiture photography through three specific temporal dimensions, that index historical periodisation and differential visual codes, reading methods as well as specific sociocultural prisms. The three temporal distinctions are explicitly listed as: 1) the colonial era, 2) the postcolonial era and 3) the contemporary era, wherein I clarify the general functionality of photography, with particular interest in studio portraiture, and the historicization of geopolitical and biopower assemblages. This research clarifies the dialectics of race and modernity which are embodied in African racial politics. I proceed to frame the Black African image as the visual representation of the Black body and the imaging of Blackness within the context of African socio-historical legacies that shape and inform my demarcated three distinct temporal categories.

Secondly, I suggest an alternative genealogy of the Black African image and metamorphic visuality and visualization of Blackness, through the re-appropriation of studio portraiture photography, as a liberatory medium for ontological defiance, within South Africa and Mali. In relation to the potentiality of existing within "worlds otherwise" (Yates 2020:2), I assert Blackness embodies and mobilizes the pivotal usage of studio portraiture as the Black African image, insofar as it is enclosed by ontological dimensions, subversive resistance frameworks and portraiture photography conventions, against colonial portraiture tropes and canons. I offer a nuanced interpretation of the Black African image within the historical trajectory of race; this is mapped through the colonial/ modernity stratifications of the Black body.

Thirdly, towards the enquiry to ways through which postcolonial and contemporary Black African photographers subvert colonial photography canons and reappropriate the medium for self-fashioning and self-representation, I implore the modality of portraiture studio photography. As a means to provincialize Blackness within the African locale, I briefly make use of the combative ontology of Africanity. This research ensures the clarification that does not conflate Blackness with "Africanness."[1] I actively utilise the paradigm that Archie Mafeje describes as "Africanity"[2] to situate the distinction between Africanness and the generality of Blackness. Where Blackness does not necessarily equate to Africanness, as there are non-Black settlers in Africa, Africanity responds to Blackness from an African perspective, devoid of African-Americanisation of the Black identity (Mafeje 2008: 41). Africanity has profound "political, ideological, cosmological and intellectual implications" towards the pursuit of endogeneity that

[1] I suggest the neologism "Africanness" to signify African identities.
[2] Mafeje, A., 2011. Africanity: a combative ontology. *The postcolonial turn*, pp.31-44.

is rooted in African conditions (Mafeje 2008: 32). For this reason, I pre-emptively define Blackness from the Global North perspective, yet return my discussion to the centralization of an African standpoint. This mode of inquiry offers my research clarity and insight into the historicization of Blackness from an African conceptualisation, that are located within particular contexts.

My selected texts provide a holistic conceptualisation of Blackness through contradicting and conflicting theorisations of the Black African image. The pathway to my argument that analyses various schemes pertaining to Blackness, situated in specific lenses, is a means to explore the manner in which these contentions interact with each other. I locate my selected texts in African contexts, yet highlight the disjuncture of Western notions of Blackness, vis-à-vis the approaches and contextualisations that impact experiences of Blackness in South Africa and Mali.

Within my literature review, I probe the role of epidermalization, wherein the "writing of difference on the skin of the other" (Hall 2016: 5) is forcibly inscribed on the Black body. The 'native' Other was constructed through processes of "racial formation," whereby differential physical features and somatic variations were essentialized, by hegemonic discourses. These discursive frames are rooted in the colonial project and Western model of modernity (Omi and Winant 2014: 105). Transcending the normative historical visual analysis, wherein the re-inscription of the colonial legacies is further perpetuated, my discussion chapters (6 – 9) re-read postcolonial and contemporary Black African photographers as agents that subvert the oppressive hegemonic operations of powers through the lens of decoloniality, glitch feminism and ontological strategies.

Chapter 1 discusses the role of Blackness, within the exploration of the experience(s) of being Black and politics of Black survival. Firstly, this chapter specifically contextualises my study by refining and providing insight to my research questions, rationale and the problem statement. Secondly, I critically examine the conceptualisation of Blackness as both a fixed embodiment of the colonial matrix of power and a mode for "para-ontological resistance" (Moten 2008: 1745). Where race is an indication beyond the physical characteristics of a human, it conversely demonstrates "moral character, intellectual capacity, even the capacity for 'civilised' behaviour" within the coloniality/ modernity nexus (Ewing 1994:112). Through this approach, I illustrate ways through which Blackness unbinds itself from the capture of the Other derived by the medium of photography. Sumathi Ramaswamy suggests that European modernity dominates and structures colonised populations through the "fundamental reshaping of modern and global visual culture," as well as the way in which colonial and postcolonial visual regimes are mutually constituted (2014: 11). To further locate the Black body and prospects of Black existence in normative society, I signal toward the discussion of futurity and fluidity that Blackness possesses, within colonial and post-colonial contexts. This inquest offers insight into the positionality of the subaltern[3] within decoloniality studies. Gramsci describes the subaltern, influenced by specific European socio-political and economic consequences of feudalism and

[3] The subaltern, also noted as the Black body, within the scope of this research, refers to subordination and/or subjugation of oppressed populations, in dominant society (Gramsci 1971).

dictatorship, as an oppressed person or group of people that is refused the involvement of creating local history and culture, by the hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class (1971). Resembling Gramsci's notion of a lower class (or rank within the social hierarchy), Gayatri Spivak defines the subaltern with consideration to gendered, colonial and post-colonial contexts, as well as their spaces of divergence and inversion (Louai 2012). Spivak further problematizes the "modern Western subject," as a vehicle to portray the misrepresentation of the "third world" subaltern subject, within contemporary hegemonic society (2012). [4]

To investigate the Black African image and visuality of Blackness, with consideration to the socio-historical and cultural function of studio portraiture photography that is circumscribed to the representation of the Black African body, **chapter 2** is structured into four sections: 1) Blackness delimited to ontological arrangements such as "onticide" (Warren 2017), social ontology and paraontology; 2) photography as a tool for ideological discourse; 3) the Black African image through conventions of colonial portraiture photography; 4) the materiality and aesthetic quality of photographs through the archive. The thematic discussion that follows investigates the socio-historical and cultural paradigms that produce and maintain racial identity; ways through which the Black African body performs the potentiality of autonomy, representation and agency; as well as a mechanism for ontological resistance and ultimately liberation. The literature review provides a comprehensive understanding to the foundations of normative photography, racial identity and ontology.

As a means to justify the way in which Black African identities are a fugitive and a fluid embodiment of the Black African image, **chapter 3** critically engages with the theoretical framework of decoloniality (Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2010; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Grosfoguel 2000) and glitch feminism (Russell 2020). This chapter questions postcolonial subjectivities, agency and racial identity against colonial forces of oppression. Both theoretical frameworks engross political imaginings against the notion of whiteness and Eurocentric paradigms. Despite this research not directly reviewing whiteness, I fundamentally read the lack of Blackness and African episteme. I simply suggest whiteness is an optic prism that frames Blackness and Africanness, through the Western lens of photography and ideology. I promote the assertion that whiteness and Eurocentrism maintains and establishes Black African identities are compounded ethnographic picturesque fragment of identity and being. The selected theoretical frameworks in this report seek to defy the Western canon of photography. These photographic conventions and visual codes arrange the Black African identity through racializing aesthetic practices which fabricate ontic phenomena to limited colonial ethnographic visions. This chapter questions whether it is possible to decolonise the dominant theoretical paradigms as a mode of re-

[4] The relevance of discussing subalternity and oppression, with accordance to the precarious Black body, facilitates the perception of the mutually constituted structures that establish the framing of the contemporary

examination, re-thinking and re-working from differential vantage points, whilst taking into account global histories.[5]

Through the usage of a mixed-method approach, **chapter 4** employs my adapted version of the multimodal and multisite research approach advanced by Critical Visual Methodologies (CVM) (Rose 2001) to analyse images from assorted photographers, by subsectioning them into their respective countries and the temporal distinctions this research proposes. The model I construct allows me to systematically engage with the selected images from differential modalities and multisites that relate to discursive analysis, visual analysis and semiotic analysis. This methodology section researches three aspects: the research design, the collection method and the analysis.

Chapters 5 to **chapter 9** dictate the discussion of findings located in this research report.

C**hapter 5** generates a CVM analysis of sixteen portraiture photographs of the Black African image. For the purpose of the colonial analysis, I will be selecting two images from each former colonial empire and expand on ways through which colonial photographers compose images for "clear ideological purposes" amidst the colonial imagination (Godby 2014: 100). In relation to the post-colonial photographers, I will be analysing two images from each photographer in their selected country. In reference to the contemporary photography section, I will be further examining two images from each photographer in their respective country, as a means to demonstrate ways through which these Black African photographers navigate and narrate their para-ontological position and reflexive re-presentation. The photographers I examine within South African colonialism are Samuel Baylis Barnard and James Gribble; whilst in Mali, the images are captured by Edmond Fortier. The postcolonial photographers analysed in South Africa are Richard Ndimande and Kitty Moodley, whilst for Mali I have selected Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibe. Richard Ndimande and Kitty Moodley photograph Black South Africans through the exploration of unique racial identity, agency and representation during Apartheid (Somers 2020). In the case of Mali, both photographers, especially Keïta, have been widely exhibited in Europe and America; they both prolifically documented the vivid sociality and cosmopolitan subjectivity of Malian society. Lastly, for the contemporary era, the photographer I have selected for South Africa is Zanele Muholi and for Mali is Fatoumata Diabate. This research makes use of both the qualitative and the quantitative research approaches. This thesis examines portraiture photography from the early twentieth century archives in West and South Africa, not only as certificates of historical periods and tokens of future realities, but as engines for temporality.

Through the deconstruction of colonial cultural coding, **chapter 6** provides an in-depth analysis of Black African identities by the selected Black African photographers that subvert and/ or affirm colonial visual canons, as a means to disrupt and/ or continue portraiture photography's Western histories. This chapter investigates how the use of ethnographic and anthropometric photography presents the Black body as a vehicle that illustrated "measurements it purportedly

[5] The theoretical paradigms exclusively focus on studio portraiture to interpret and the modae of conceptualising the Black African image.

gave ‘objective’ interpretations and records of the body as specimen or type” by means of pseudoscientific methods (Enwezor and Zaya 1997: 240). Towards the evaluation of the Black African image, I maintain the African personality galvanises a pivotal role in destabilizing the Global North’s imagining of colonial visual tropes and a justification for the Black African visuality. Additionally, I assert the selected photographers, within the postcolonial and decolonial periods, narrate and navigate their Black Africanness against the colonial wound through specific portraiture photography avenues.

Chapter 7 explores the juncture between decoloniality and the Black African image. Whereby the Black body is bound and captured[6] by the colonial matrix of power, I claim the Black African image transverses the representational modes of photography towards a decolonial turn and epistemic disobedience. The Black African image, through the lens of decoloniality, de-centres and re-centres ontological and epistemic grounds for the Black African body as a means for self-representation, self-fashioning and self-affirmation contrary to hegemonic society that seeks to diminish its being and existence through the colonial wound. This chapter investigates ways through which Black bodies eradicate ideologies valued in modernity and decolonise the medium of portraiture photography as a critical dialogue with legacies of colonial canons of photography and socio-visual spaces that they occupy. Ultimately, this chapter questions the actuality and potentiality of past and future renditions of the decolonial political imagination for studio portraiture.

As a means to decipher the ontological dimensions of Blackness, **chapter 8** pursues the grammar of being through and in contradiction to hegemonic systems. This chapter discusses the role of differential ontological paradigms relating to the Black body through conflicting worldviews offered by contemporary society. I explore the conceptualisation of Blackness as a non-ontology, Africanity, para-ontology and social ontology to contextualise the construction of the Black body by means of various literature that deconstruct the contestations and contradictions of its theorisation of ontology. Moreover, in the concluding remarks of this chapter, I offer an ontic and visual theory that is a summation of visuality and para-ontology through my developmental and primordial stage of conception.

Through the purposeful exploration of glitch feminism, **chapter 9** investigates the disidentification and identarian modes of being against the binarism of structural violence through portraiture photography. This chapter illuminates the arrangement of the Black body as cosmic and occupying a liminal spatio-temporality. The Black African body, through the framework of glitch feminism makes use of technological and mechanical terminology to elaborate on ways through which the Black African image corrupts, encrypts and ghosts algorithms of contemporary hegemonic society as a mode of subversive resistance.

Chapter 10 advances the limitations, critiques, and potential avenues for further research within this transdisciplinary study.

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[6] The use of the word “captured” is specific in that is indexes the capturing of an image and the literal enslavement of the Black body.

Chapter 11 presents the concluding remarks of this study. I demonstrate the ways through which the progression of my argument of the Black African image was analysed, explored and conceptualised, within South Africa and Mali. Lastly, this chapter settles with a brief discussion and review of this research's findings.

1.2. Problem Statement.

Arguably, as a means to destabilise the dogmatic notions of identity, there needs to be the circumvention of representation through portraiture photography of the Black African image. Where the genealogy of the Black African body is a nonperformance crucible of modernity, how does the Black African image usher the liberation to affirm the values of consent for Black African bodies to embody subjectivity? The scarce research as to how Black African Sub-Saharan photographers respond to the historical visual codes of coloniality needs more inquiry. Ultimately, how are iterations of the Black African image fractured and restructured through the quotidian to certify the presence of Black African personhood.

1.3. Rationale

Whereas portrait photography has always been entangled with "the global histories of technological, economic, and political innovation that were symptomatic of the early history of colonialism," I seek to highlight the disruptive mechanisms that Black African photographers utilise for liberation and decoloniality (Peffer 2013: 2). I deconstruct corporeality and relationality through portraiture photography towards the illustration of bio-political formations of the Black African body and racial identity. In hopes of contributing to the vast literature that explores the socio-historically formulated Black African body and Black political identity, I investigate the transformability of the Black African image through the acknowledgement of differential spatio-temporal and socio-political conditions. This research plans to share ways in which the various manifestations of Black African identities subvert and resist mechanisms of contemporary hegemonic society, through portraits captured by selected postcolonial and contemporary photographers. The appositional reading of photographic modes of being in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically South Africa and Mali, does not have adequate research. My selection for the two Sub-Saharan countries drew inspiration dually by the images of the postcolonial and contemporary photographers, as well as the historical discourse surrounding the Black African image. The juxtapositional reading of South Africa and Mali were specifically chosen due to their geopolitical and culturally distinct localities, wherein these countries do not share a major language nor ethnic group.

This research paper demonstrates the modes through which photographic portraiture is constructed and translated within dynamic sociocultural and historical contexts, as well as a means to challenge the historical conditions of photography in Africa. The possibility and potentiality to locate mode of the otherwise being for Black African futures excited me. I knew my research was required to uncover historical spectres that complicate the dichotomous rereading of the black African image and I had a vague set of theories I knew I could utilise. My research needed to inquire how symbolic definitions behind photographic portraiture could be

read in relation against the colonial archive. I provide ways through which the Black African image is immersed within the radical mode of photographic portraiture that subvert and rebel to be overwhelmed by future-past and contemporary forces of negation that structure Black African bodies within modernity. Where portraiture photography of freedom is interlinked in particular ways that end colonialism in conjunction with the introduction of African independence, I sought to question the relationship between modes of emancipation and photography, as well as the connection between futurity of the Black African body through studio portraiture. Moreover, my minor knowledge on decoloniality and glitch feminism enabled me with the resources for the rereading of colonial images, in the contemporary, as a means to reveal speculative deadlocks, though the insistence for the rejection of repeating the original message to present the reappropriation of visual codes towards the reinvention of the porous Black African image.

My decision to provide an appositional reading of photographic portraiture conventions in South Africa and Mali is intentional. It is a means to uncover the intricate nuances of photographic conventions and technologies, differential colonial legacies, as well as a vehicle for the analysis of the transfigurations of the Black African image through specific temporalities and geopolitical territories. By way of varied colonial governmentalities and modes of authority, South Africa and Mali present practices in which Anglophone and Francophone colonial administrators operated. As suggested in further chapters, Anglophone colonialist made use of indirect rule, whilst Francophone colonialist employed interventionalist governance. Moreover, Anglophone colonialism's prime objective was economic gain, whilst the Francophone was seemingly more interested in cultural currency. My analysis and discussion chapters reveal that despite socio-political differences, both colonial enterprises made use of similar photographic conventions relegated by pseudoscientific and ethnographic visual standardisation. Further to this, my interest in the juxtaposition of Anglophone and Francophone post-colonies parallel in visual aesthetics through specific usage of mis-en-scene and the self-fashioning of their sitters. Contrariwise, the contemporary Black African photographers present differential aesthesis, visual coding of embodied subjectivity and sociocultural discrepancies. Moreover, through my analysis of contemporary African photographers, they present anomalies in respect to their Black bodies, Black experience and the Black image. Ultimately, I investigate the nuances of political being as a Black body through contradictory yet analogous portraiture conventions, regardless of the distinct geopolitical localities in Africa. This study proposes the investigation of the distinctions of political and socio-cultural experiences of the Black body through the contradictory nature of newly independent Mali, during the 1960s, against the simultaneous oppression of apartheid witnessed in South Africa

This dissertation intends to contribute to African studies and Black studies, as well as confront the way in which the vast field of the history of photography is theorized. The hollow reverberations of colonial pictorial conventions, silenced within the normative echo chamber of modernity, open up a phantastical space wherein the imprecision and ambiguity of the Black African image is animated. The 16 portraits I selected aim to illustrate ways in which Black African identities seek to disrupt the inherently oppressive normative and hegemonic forms of visual representation. I seek to demonstrate the ways through which the Black African image is a complex assemblage of formal portraiture conventions and techniques that usher performative

nuances of visual codes that construct the liminal space for the expression and embodiment of Black Africanness through portraiture.

This study is unique in that I interrogate the re-configuration of the Black African image, in the democratic former British and French colonies, namely Mali and South Africa, through studio portraiture photography captured by seven post-colonial photographers and six contemporary photographers. I am drawn to what means the postcolonial and contemporary Black indigenous photographers reappropriate the apparatus of portraiture photography to express Blackness and African subjectivities beyond colonialism/ modernity states of being. The photographers, within postcolonial and contemporary periods, highlight ways through which Blackness and race is a fiction, yet a defining factor of reality. The chosen Black African photographers present the interconnected nature of photography and Blackness through new forms of possibility of being, as well as other wayward seeing beyond constraints and confines that Blackness is restricted to, within the violent hegemonic society. Through the construction of new myths and fictions of Blackness, unbound by hegemonic Western modernity, the images I have selected illustrate new mythologies and speculative phantasies, as well Black bodies being seen on their own terms that obtain imaginative and contrarian realities. I have specifically chosen these Black African photographers as a means to emphasise ways through which they summon Black presence against the zone of nonbeing that Blackness occupies, in Western modernity. The Black African images interrogate what is Black Africanness and to what extend are these two identity markers interlinked. Furthermore, I suggest that through my analysis and discussion chapters, there is a subjective impression of African life and being through various Black African photographers. Whereas colonial ‘native photography’ asserted a type of objective stance, the postcolonial and contemporary photographers issue a sense of embodied subjectivity through the cosmic corporeal. Returning to the selected images I examined in this research, I was particularly interested in the postcolonial imagery. I noticed that Sidibi and Keita were vernacular photographers that were transformed, through the Western gaze, as photographic artists. Moreso, I have always had a keen admiration for their meticulous composition and use of film photography. Regarding my selection for the South African postcolonial photographers, I stumbled upon their imagery when I was seeking photographs that mirrored Sidibi and Keita’s visual aesthetic. Further to this, these South African post-colonial photographers played a pivotal role in shaping portraiture in Apartheid South Africa. The way in which the postcolonial photographers moulded Black African subjectivity through clothing, mis-en-scene and compositional elements, provided such phantasmic qualities of photography despite the lack of professional training in photography. I could look at these images endlessly, scrutinising (with admiration) the technical precision, as well as the mood and movement they captured. With regards to my selection for contemporary photographers, I selected Zanele Muholi as my South African photographer. Despite that they are extremely popular in shaping South African visual culture and there being vast scholarship analysing their work, I am inspired by their commitment to raise queer black lived-experiences. Being a nonbinary Black photographer myself, I was drawn to their aesthetics and aesthesis of their portraits, as well as the mode of photographic themselves in elaborate costumes. Locating Fatoumata Diabate’s photographic oeuvre was challenging. I had only come across their work through a google search of “Mali Black Woman

Photographer 2000s." Though I am well-versed in photographic culture, there was a lack of contemporary Malian photographers – regardless of gender. Serendipitously stumbling across their work, I noticed their portraiture photography reflected similarities with Sidibi and Keita. This was to my delight as I had found the postcolonial Malian photographers before her. The selected Black African postcolonial and contemporary photographers illustrate ways through which photography is a medium for performative modes of expression, fugitivity and contestation. I suggest there is inadequate research following whether Black African photographers have a responsibility to reimagine Black Africanness or do these photographers function as vehicles of the transfiguration of the Black African image needs to be interrogated. The medium of photography promotes the challenging of "negative stereotypes and assumptions about Black people in ways that creates a counterimage" within postcolonial and contemporary worlds (Campt 2012: 5). Through the exploration of colonial images, I present ways through which primitive and exotic portrait images of indigenous Black populations are subverted and re-theorized within contemporary Africanity and African modes of existence. Photography may be seen as a form of knowledge production and therefore, I seek to provide further research into ways in which the Black body is transfigured, through portraiture photography, towards the manufacturing of decolonised indigenous epistemology. This dissertation proposes an epistemological shift from colonial and Western ethnographic conventions of photography to postcolonial and contemporary African photography captured by Black African photographers, as a means to re-establish the antecedence of the African living visual archive.

My emphasis on the three temporal distinctions, categorised as 'colonial,' 'postcolonial' and 'contemporary,' illustrate ways through which cultural and political markers are allocated. Whereas the colonial period makes direct reference to the era wherein Africa was colonised by Western enterprises, instigated by the Berlin Conference and Scramble for Africa. My second temporal indicator is the postcolonial era. The postcolonial era is imbibed with historical intricacies; where there is no official collapse of the colonial matrix of power in the contemporary, the postcolonial era specifically indicates the initiation of African independence from Western colonial forces in Mali, whilst the continued oppression of apartheid within South Africa. I delimit the postcolonial era directly after the epoch of colonialism; it aims to expose the strife for liberation through decolonial efforts and action. This postcolonial period gestures to the self-fashioning of the Black bodies willingly captured and demonstrate the postcolonial newly independent subjectivity through inclinations towards African diasporic culture such as through popular media, civil rights activism and posing with props that are modern symbolic objects. I highlight the distinction between postcolonial and contemporary periods cautiously as the line between both eras are blurred at a vague degree. As many scholars suggest, society is currently inhabiting a postcolonial chronology. The contemporary period differs from the postcolonial period as one chronophase refers to the introduction of independence whilst the latter exists in democratic eras. With respect to the contemporary period, I demonstrate the temporal characteristic of 'present time,' the now. The contemporary is apprehended as mechanisms that enforce the normative designation of the existing societal systems; it hides the inscription of hegemonic Western (also noted as "white-supremacist-capitalist-heteropatriarchy") discourses and seeks to fix the precarity of Blackness, through the socially developed and historically

embedded operations of power (Stanley 2017). Contemporary Black African photographers make use of differential visual codes and aesthetics, as well as approach the concept of Blackness through pluriversal lens. The contemporary period experiences multivalent structures of oppression and violence, whereas the postcolonial predominantly was consigned by the colonial enterprise. These temporal markers illustrate the secernate periods and ways through which the photographs I have selected are arranged. By way of demarcating the period distinctions, my study is presents innovative ways to consider the chronology and temporality with respect to South Africa and Mali.

This study is relevant by way of a nuanced insight towards the way in Black African identities are conceptualised, through portraiture photography, within a transdisciplinary lens. The transdisciplinary lens transverses the limiting dimension of theory that an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary scope provide. Though this study explores concepts relating to philosophy, history of art, political studies, and Black studies, to name a few, I have demonstrated the interconnectedness that the field of Media Studies offers for the construction of this study as transdisciplinary and original position.

I am interested to uncover the way in which Black African postcolonial and contemporary photographers generate Black Afrianness as infinite arrangements and containing multitudes. In hopes of illuminating the provocation to see Black African bodies differently through resisting spectatorship by foster black positionality, I tend to explore the simultaneous undermining and construction of spatiotemporal conditions galvanise the emergence of Black African body as an accumulation of interventions necessary for emancipation. Ultimately, I aspire to create original research that interrogates through which ways the Black African body uses acts of resistance against the binaries of the historical framing of Black Africanness articulate a sophisticated Black African identity.

1.4. Research questions:

1. By what means might the appositional reading of two Sub-Saharan regions define the visuality of the Black African body within differential temporalities and geopolitical spatialities?

2. To what degree do Black African bodies engage with historical photographic visual codes and contemporary pictorial modalities of representation in tandem with the navigation of modes for emancipation and strategies of subjugation?

3. How are the dialectics of race and coloniality embedded in the racialisation of aesthetic practices for the reproduction of a renewed genealogy of the Black African visuality through portraiture photography in Mali and South Africa?

1.5. Socio-historical context of selected West African and Southern African countries.

This segment provides background to the complex histories of my selected Sub-Saharan countries, in relation to their former British and French colonial legacies, as well as how sociopolitical conditions impact ways through which the Black African image is studied. I locate the generality of colonialism in African. Following this, I conduct exploration to the ways through which former British and French colonies complicate the anoriginal socio-histories of South Africa and Mali.

Firstly, it is pivotal to situate the loci of colonialism on the African continent. The "Scramble for Africa," was the official launch of the European Enlightenment and colonial expansion, originating from the Berlin Conference of 1884 - 1885 (Pakenham 2015). Secondly, it is nascent to confound how the selected Sub-Saharan African countries have diverse experiences with colonial projects specific to their region. Generally, the apposition of British and French colonial rule exposes parallel features, yet exculpate differential manners of governance. Where British colonial administrators promoted indirect rule, French colonial authorities eliminated chiefs and traditional leaders to protect French nationalism (Sharkey 2013: 155). British colonial authorities decentralised their colonies, whilst French colonial authorities purported their empire as a unified body (Cooper 2012: 51).

A way forward to the exploration of the transfiguration of the Black African image and Black African visuality, this chapter is contextualized into various subsections:

1) The socio-historical context of South Africa and Mali, bound by British and French colonial structures and postcolonial entities.
2) The historic functionality of the technological advancements of photography through South Africa and Mali.
3) The sociocultural-economic-political and historic legacies of colonialism and Western modernity. This subsection gathers context to ways in which the Black African body is ideologically formulated and reinscribed through biopolitical arrangements of racial and political identities.

1.5.1. British colonies.

Through the structure of indirect rule, during the 1900s, the British colonial mission began its exploration methods to which they could exploit and maximize resources of indigenous people in Africa (Chimee 2014: 19). The British colonial powers approached the indigenous Black African population through their local leaders and chiefs as a means to minimise oppositional tension to British rule (Falola 1999: 70). The acknowledgement of social rank (devoid of racial hierarchy) by colonial officials of African chiefs and royalty presented a fundamentally practical aim for constructing technologies of rule over indigenous African people (Reed 2018: 37).

Complicated by Dutch colonialism during 1562 and British colonialism in 1806, South Africa's colonial experience was problematized by two colonial powers (Terreblanche and Terreblanche

2002). The indigenous Black South African population witnessed dual colonial projects: firstly, the European colonialism and secondly, the post-colonial Apartheid regime initiated by the National Party in 1948 (Hart 2008). For the purpose of this research, I unearth the two-fold histories of British colonialism and Afrikaner nationalism, then gesture towards Black South African liberation movements. I disregard the Dutch colonial factor as it was not historically accurate and evident to the introduction of photographic technology to South Africa.

During the early nineteenth century, where the British contended political and social power in every domain of South African personhood, the assertion of Anglicanization of the white population caused friction between themselves and the Boers (Lapierre 2009: 21-22). The Liberal Party won the United Kingdom elections during 1906; this faction denounced Britain's policy in Africa and the two Boer states (the Transvaal and the Orange Freestate). Despite the two colonial divisions constantly in conflict, the Boers united with the two British colonies (Cape and Natal) to form the Union of South Africa enveloping all the territories in Southern Africa (Msila 2007). The merge of British and Afrikaner nationalisms saw the two colonial forces apply racial policies empowering the white race and disavowing the Black indigenous population (Sharkey 2013: 3). Founded in 1914, the National Party, promoted racist ideologies and Afrikaner nationalistic discourses, as well as equal rights for English and Afrikaner communities (Deegan 2005). The apartheid regime inaugurated the National Party in 1948. The NP constructed through and fostered by the myth of white racial superiority secured racial discrimination through racist ideologies that were installed in socio-political and economic domination (Dubow 1989:19). The discursive formation of white nationhood granted a "shared subjectivity towards geographical space" for the confoundment of an Anglo-Boer state (Foster 2003:660).

Conversely, during the period of apartheid, indigenous Black African nationalism was on the rise in South Africa. Two prominent African nationalist movements that organised against the white government were the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later known as the African National Congress, and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). The SANNC was founded during 1912, by John Langalibalele Dube; their primary concern was to usher rights and freedoms for all Black Africans and for them to be brought together as one people, towards the arrangement of a "dynamic and unified movement that would challenge the white government" (South African History Online. a n.d.). Renamed to the African National Congress (ANC), in 1923, the nationalist formation influenced the resistance against and elimination of the official apartheid regime, during the 1940s, that forced racial segregation and discrimination (Augustyn n.d.). Separating from the ANC, owing to their belief that the ANC was "too moderate in its approach to the struggle against apartheid and criticized those who endorsed the ANC's Freedom Charter," the Pan-Africanist Congress was founded in 1959, by Robert Mmangaliso Sobukwe (Maaba 2001: 420 - 421). Whereas the ANC invoked "multi-culturalism," the PAC adopted "Africanism" as a means to overthrow the oppressive apartheid regime (Fatton 1986: 3). From 1960 to 1990, the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress were banned by the apartheid government; this led them to operate underground and outside of South African (Suttner 2008). As a means to combat the white government's censorship, the ANC formed a military organization, known as Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) in 1961. Umkhonto

we Sizwe performed acts of sabotage against the National Party (Cherry 2012). Additionally, the PAC formed its own armed-wing, during the 1960s, known as Poqo; this movement aimed to overthrow the racist National Party through violently aggressive sabotage techniques - towards a socialist African state (South African History Online n.d.). Moreover, during this period, the galvanisation of Black Consciousness ideation gained momentum. During 1967, Black students mobilized and constructed the University Christian Movement (UCM) and two years later spurred the emergence of the South African Students Organization (SASO), by Steven Biko. Before the introduction of SASO, Black university students belonged to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). The predominant reason for the breakaway from NUSAS was due to the fact that Black students felt as though white students aimed at controlling the movement (Maaba 2001: 431). The philosophical grounds expressed by SASO were "exclusively non-white organization" and introduced "its own ethico-political understanding of history" (Fatton 1986: 64-65). SASO was a revolutionary national student political organisation that fought for national liberation and acted as a "catalysts of collective action and schools of political formation and contributed to the erosion of the apartheid social order" in South Africa (Badat 1999: ii). The SASO manifesto, adopted in 1971, was the first actual document that spurred the Black Consciousness Movement ideals, as a means for the liberation and emancipation for the Black population from apartheid's coloniality (Badat 1999: 85). The Black Consciousness Movement "represented the unifying thread of Black resistance in the 1970's," as well as sought the "integration of Black people into South African politics," which was beyond assimilation into established norms motivated by white Western societal structures (Maaba 2001: 70). The Black Consciousness Movement essentially was an enunciation of Black existence as it forwarded the material and ontological grounds of Black livelihood and sociality (Nolutshungu 1982: 171). Baruch Hirson argues that the pivotal themes of Black Consciousness (BC) was noted as a "doctrine of 'self-discovery' and self-realisation," towards the construction of their own value systems and worldview (1979: 296).

Ultimately, whilst the racist and oppressive regime of colonisation, later the apartheid state, forcibly hindered the progress of the Black indigenous population, there were African nationalist movements that countered their hegemony.

1.5.2. French colonies

This section explores the histories of French colonialism in Mali. Despite the French colonial empire establishing a trading port on the West African coast from 1659, their engagement in West Africa did not progress until the late 19th century (Ali 2018: 115). Centred around the so-called *mission civilisatrice*, translating to the civilizing mission, French colonial authorities' goal was to promote French culture and language, alongside "rationalist and libertarian values deriving from the Enlightenment and French Revolution" (Sharkey 2013: 155). The French colonial administrators placed emphasis on a version of colonization that sought to "improve their subjects standard of living through rational development" or what the French referred to as *mise en valeur* (Conklin 1989: 60). Additionally, French colonial policy advocated assimilation and association to their discursive ideologies of culture (Sharkey 2013: 156). In West Africa,

during 1945, Francophone Africans were preparing for a concerted effort to enforce pressure on the French legislators to revise and "rewrite the constitution of the new Fourth Republic in a way that provided meaningful citizenship in a Greater France to the people of the colonies" (Cooper 2012: 41). Multiple African leaders regarded the constitution of 1946 as deficient since it did not provide all Francophone Africans the same rights as the European settlers, as well as the colonial territories still maintained minority representation in the French National Assembly (Ginio 2006: 21). The disillusioned juxtaposition of the French nation and the Union suggested that the French state was not a nation. Whereas the state held distinct discourses, the Union presented the president, the legislature, and the judiciary which presided over complicated components similar to that of colonial empires (Chafer 2007: 444). What Mahmood Mamdani (2004: 26) describes as "decentralized despotisms," France enforced the notion that African tribal chiefs were the embodiment of authentic authority – however, through this marker of alleged authenticity, it produced various intra-wars on imperial ideologies between tribes. This in turn made France as an imperial entity that represented itself as a beacon of civilization whilst "regulating access to its summits while celebrating the integrity of its components" (Cooper 2012: 45). Between 1946 and 1962, French leaders demonstrated various organizational activities to maintain the policy as a "unitary but differentiated entity" (Cooper 2005: 16).

Mali formerly belonged to three dominant empires: the Ghana Empire, Mali Empire, and Songhay Empire (Ali 2018: 118). The Mali Empire was founded by Sundiata Keita, during 1230, on the upper Niger River and subsequently reached its height in the fourteenth century under the rule of Mansa Musa. As the largest empire in West Africa, it profoundly influenced and impacted the socio-cultural dynamic of the region through language, customs and laws (Cartwright 2018). With the fall of prominent Malian empires, it saw the introduction of French colonialism. The French colonial authorities began their exploration and colonization of Mali in 1892 (Middleton 1997: 3). Mali, during this period, was known as Soudan François (French Sudan) and by 1893, the French colonial administrators assigned a civilian governor to rule over this territory, belonging to Francophone West Africa (Lea and Rowe 2001: 276–277). French Sudan was "administered as part of the Federation of French West Africa" and supplied labour to France's colonial territories (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005: 2). France's Fundamental Law, also referred to as *Loi Cadre,* was successful in permitting the Territorial Assembly authority regarding local affairs, during 1956 (Ali 2018: 119).

After gaining independence from France in 1960, the Malian society moved towards goals of decolonisation. Though, through the newly elected government, hosting unpopular socialist ideology, similar to China and the USSR, restricted movement and participation in generalised Western ideas (Konaré and Konaré 1981: 163). During the mid-1960s, the Malian socialist government formed a militia to monitor and regulate the biopolitical and moral conformity of the nation (Diawara 2003: 11). Despite colonialism expanding throughout French West Africa and later the socialist government (reads as: totalitarian dictatorships), there was a resurrection of African nationalism. Against the militant occupation of the socialist government, the youth of Mali would defy these policies, by violating policies and participating in conventionally Western aesthetics, which thus created the movement: Milice Populaire, that would ultimately overthrow this socialist regime (Meillassoux 1968: 137).

1.6. Construction of the Black African body through modernity/ colonialism

This segment deals with the sociocultural-economic-political and historical legacies of colonialism and Western modernity, as a means to present insight to ways in which Black African identities are confounded and discursively produced through the reiteration of biopolitical and biopower strategies as racialised and politicalised identities. There are two specific approaches to the theorisation of race: firstly, the biological realism and secondly, social constructivist. Biological realism presents the concept of race within physiological and somatic features. Biological realism suggests "races are natural kinds" and are constitutive properties of natural sciences, a form of anatomical and superficial division proffers an alleged difference (Haslanger 2008: 60). Physiognomic features and somatic variations are essentialised through discursive hegemonic structures which are rooted in the colonial project and Enlightenment. This ideological claim subsequently forwards the Western model of modernity and recommends that the 'native' Other is constructed by procedures of "racial formation" (Omi and Winant 2014: 105). The universalisation of racial taxonomy of difference are products that relate to ideologies that declare that the oppressed Black African bodies are embodiments of the colonial project and its hegemonic Western discourses (Brace 2005: 4). Conversely, the social constructivist approach proposes that race is not a biologically determined codification of identity, but a socio-cultural and historical conceptualisation of difference (Foster 2004:1663). The social constructivist approach to race rejects that the phenotypic expressions that suggest a person is defined by one's genes, but through the theorisation that race is shaped by "macro and micro social processes, and that it has structurally and culturally defined parameters" (Brunsma 2002: 115). Through this modernity/ coloniality prism approach to a racialised subject, I forward that race is delimited to and informed by anatomical definitions and social constructivist lenses.

Composed by the colonial matrix of power, the Black African body is the materialisation of violence, oppression and racialized of Enlightenment's optic prisms. The notion of modernity and universalism, superseding the epoch of western civilisation, is a narrative of teleology. Formed through and maintained by the advent of imperial expansion and the colonial project, Black African identities are a conversant with biopolitical means and structural vectors of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 25). As asserted by Partha Chatterjee (1993), colonialism was an ideological and structural system that was an iteration of the European Enlightenment values and forcibly driven by principles of Western modernity. The pacification and socio-political fundamentalism of relentless certitude within the indefinite colonial wound. The normativity of coloniality for Black African typography archives ideological normalcy while inscribing the construction through and by the formation of a racial hierarchy. Such as processes of modernisation materially advanced the colonial project, despite persecuting Black African nations. Key factors in the ideological structure of modernisation and Western modernity are advanced schemas of urbanisation, imperialism, industrialisation and importantly, colonialism (King 2015). The constellation of Enlightenment, as a component of post-feudal Europe, illustrated a vital shift in ontological idiosyncrasies and epistemological characteristics. To list a few characteristics, there was the rejection of theological foundations of Christianity and feudal

restrictions towards scientific empiricism; the introduction of secularism that was a virtuous priority for humanism and the valorisation of principles such as rationality, individualism and autonomy as favourable mentality for the modern subject in the modern state (Gray 2008: 186). Further to this, Anthony Giddens suggests that there are four main institutional and structural components to Western modernity, namely (1) capitalism, (2) industrialism, (3) coordinated administrative power fixating on surveillance and (4) military power (1990). Stuart Hall, David Held and Anthony McGrew advocate for each institutional complex of modernity, that Giddens (1990) allots, should be considered as a spatio-temporal realm of "contestation or conflict" (1992: 33). Additionally, colonialism and colonisation ultimately define, organise and arrange Black African populations, as a means to transform "non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs" (Mudimbe 1988: 191). V. Y. Mudimbe observes "during this period both imperialism and anthropology took shape, allowing the reification of the primitive" (1998: 192). Though advancing Western society, the enterprise of Enlightenment and modernity disguised the horrific consequences of colonialism that hindered and oppressed the Black experience and being (Cruz-Martínez 2017). As a pivotal process for the European model of modernity and Enlightenment, Western populations became modern subjects whilst subaltern peoples were sites of oppression, wherein aspirations of "rational emancipation" were prescribed concurrently with the justification of "irrational praxis of violence" (Dussel 1995: 136). Similarly, Fred Moten claims that colonialism is an "irreducible condition of global modernity" (2017: 198). Through means of unilateral progression advocated by Western modernity, multiple hierarchies of the West were able to gradually impose discourses of inequality and counter-development for subaltern populations (Grosfuguel 2009: 32). The construction of the dichotomous representation of the "the West and the Rest," under the worldwide expansion of the colonial project and imperialist market, illustrated the "West" as the civilised Europeans, whilst the "Rest" denoted the 'primitive' subaltern nations (Hall 1996: 86-87). Subramanian Shankar claims that the asymmetrical vectors of power constructed by the "colonialist praxis of Western rationality, Western civilization and Western modernity" essentialised and naturalised discursive frames of episteme and ontology as normative hegemonic systems of society (2001: 140). Further to this, imperialism and colonisation were guises for neo-colonialism and globalisation, wherein Western hegemony concealed mechanisms of contemporary society as universalised conventions, neutral stances, and normative systems (Grosfoguel 2007: 213). The Enlightenment historical period was the source of "domination and totalitarianism in the West" (Held 1993: 14). The distinction between Black and white races, during the Enlightenment period, were simplified to the "nature" versus "culture" debate. Whereas white people were seen as maintaining culture and civilisation, Black people were naturalized and essentialized to primitivism and a lack culture that were delimited to exist in nature only. "Blackness" and "primitivism" became interchangeable, as they were reduced to their apparent essence (Hall 1997: 245).

Returning to the ideology of Black South Africanness as a racial and political identity, I highlight the role of the Black Consciousness movement as a means of shifting the conjecture of Blackness as a non-biological identity. The manifestation of Black South Africanness as a political identity, specifically within the domain of the socio-historical illustrate a shared experience of racism and oppression towards the "pragmatic alliance of different groups,"

informed by the racialised and segregation laws of the apartheid state (Andrews 2016: 10). The segregation and dispossession laws of the South African apartheid state carved the population into "white" and "non-white" identities, wherein "non-white" were people of colour, such as Africans, Indians and Coloured, whilst "white" was reserved for Europeans and Boers (Adhikari 2005). As Hlumelo Biko states, in *Africa Re-imagined,* the term 'Bantu' was the term for indigenous people, whilst 'non-white' was the "blanket classification for South Africans of colour" (2019: 60). Despite these structural and systematic fragmentations of identity, the Black Consciousness movement advanced a unified conception of Blackness imparting as an "emancipatory politics" of being (MacDonald 2010: 16). Through the rejection and contention of the essentialised racial categorisations, implemented by the National Party run apartheid state, the advocacy of the Black Consciousness movement promoted a unified movement of Black people, through shared political identity of shared oppression (Farred 1992).

1.7. Photographic technologies in West and Southern Africa

With specific consideration to the functionality of the camera and portraiture photography, I locate the social and historical contextualisation wherein the construction of Black African body, as well as the medium of photography, function through the diverse colonial histories of selected West African and Southern African countries. This section will be categorized by colonial, postcolonial and contemporary periodisation of photography within South Africa and Mali. As suggested by Christraud Geary, it is vital to comprehend the historical context of the medium and the "symbolic meaning in particular cultural settings" as a means to determine the functionality of images and photography (2003: 54).

The introduction of portraiture photography, during the colonial period, took form as a daguerreotype, which was a photograph printed upon a metal plate. Soon after its introduction in France, during 1839, the daguerreotype entered African shores when "the Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt, Pasha Mehmet Ali, was taught how to produce them by a French painter Horace Vernet, who was a resident in Cairo at the time" (Haney 2010: 13) During 1841, in London, the very first daguerreotype portrait studio opened at the Royal Polytechnic Institution (Plunkett 2003: 57). When printing photographs on metal plates became outdated, there was a shift to printing on paper which was established through the albumen print and the carte-de-visite (Finkel 1984: 5). The carte-de-visite, also referred to as "visiting cards," were standard 2½ x 4-inch format cards created by Andre Adolphe Disderi and circulated in France during 1854 (Broadhead 2008: 826).

Situating my thesis in how portraiture photography was introduced to the African continent by European missionaries and colonial administrators, I illustrate ways through which this praxis developed an inclination to make a visible primitive Africa. The camera became a technological and ideological apparatus for establishing colonial concepts of African history and in turn constructing the othered Black African body through European notions of Darwinism. Sumathi Ramaswamy suggests that the Global North's encounter with and domination over the subaltern populations produced the "fundamental reshaping of modern and global visual culture" (2014: 11). Images of Africans were constructed as a means to fix identity and "find visual evidence for

social, cultural or racial alterity in order to bolster the instrumental power of colonial state apparatuses" (Rizzo 2013: 265). Photographs by colonial administrators were produced on the side-lines of the European empires yet "affirm and consolidate colonial worldviews" (Thomas and Green 2014: 7).

Studio photography enacted the role of imagining African futures during periods of decolonisation and post-colonial independence (Vokes and Newbury 2018: 2). The interrelationship between studio photography and the individual self-representation is intertwined with the location of photography in relation to national and international political programs. Therefore, delimiting this thesis to the individual level is restrictive. The shared aesthetic and imaginative dimension of modernisation connects to the large construction of technologies and self-fashioning which is imbued in various photographic projects of this era, as well as how these images are circulated and staged (Larkin 2016: 48).

With the post-war order coming into fruition, Africa and its diaspora were the subject of "world photographies" (Vokes and Newbury 2008: 3a). World photographies entails bringing to fore "a socially and economically developed future, and ultimately political self- determination," as well as "new organs of world government," that accompanied a global circulation of photographs towards its future realities (Vokes and Newbury 2008: 3b). The contestations of the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union pursued photography as a means to bring newly independent African nations into the international visions of modernity (Nash 2009). As Vokes and Newburg suggest in their study, photographic projects were interlinked with "modern selfhood" and "colonial development, anticolonial struggle and post-independence nation building, as well as more recent national development planning" (2008: 8). Influenced by Simon Njami's conceptualisation of African photographers making use of photography to depart from the Global North's "monopoly of seeing," I suggest photography is an ideological technology for imagining new futures for Black African photographers (2012: 12). As more people were able to pay for photographic portraits, during the 1930s, Christraud Geary argues that photography became popularly vernacularized in West and Central Africa (2013: 84). There were various factors that complicated the process of democratising the medium such as "technological evolutions (making cameras more affordable and easier to manipulate), labour migration (increasing Africans' spending power), as well as colonial policies concerning the transmission of skills from Europeans to Africans" (Feyder 2014: 230).

Photography functions as a performative practice as well as a mode for "expression and contestation" (Thomas and Green 2014: 6). Where Okwui Enwezor argues that photography exposed and counteracted "the sanitized, propagandistic images working in the government's favour, or to fashion an oppositional artistic practice of self- representation," I claim portraiture photography initiated the production of autonomy and agency for Black African photographers and participants (1996: 191). I assert that postcolonial and contemporary studio portraits by Black African photographers "instrumentalized representation of indigenous peoples" (Thomas and Green 2014: 6).

1.6.1. Colonial period

The functionality of portrait photography, insofar as the Black African body is visually represented by the colonial administration, was to postulate essentialist imaginings of the indigenous populations as "uncivilized primitive natives" (Kemp and Vinson 2000:141). Additionally, through the usage of specific visual tropes, the indigenous Black body was naturalized as the native 'savage' Other. Situating my thesis in how portraiture photography was introduced to the African continent by European missionaries and colonial administrators, I illustrate ways through which this praxis initiated the exclusionary and structurally violent representation of the Black body. The camera assumed the technological and ideological apparatus for establishing colonial concepts of African history and sequentially constructing the Othered Black African body through European notions of previously theorized evolutionary stages. The role of photographic portraiture in Mali and South Africa, specifically the daguerreotype and carte-de-visite, during the colonial period, was to reduced both a corporeal and ontological feature that involved viewing Black African identities as dispensable and precarious.

Initially, the first production of the portraiture photograph took form as an image printed upon a metal plate that took form as the daguerreotype. The circulation of the daguerreotype was institutionalised in France during 1826 (Barger and White 2000). The daguerreotype was predominantly used for capturing formal family portraits. Later, when the daguerreotype became an outdated form of photography, as printing on metal plates was increasingly expensive and too technical, the introduction of printing on paper through the albumen print and carte-de-viste was the popular form of photography (Benjamin, 2005: 507). The development of industrialisation and urbanisation heavily impacted photographic technological processes (Vatov 2018: 83). The carte-de-visite, also referred to as "visiting cards," circulated in France during 1854. Carte-de-visite resemble current postcards, in that they specify information about the giver, such as names and address of the giftee (Vatov 2018: 83). Despite daguerreotypes, albumen and carte-de-visite being mediums utilised by colonial administrators and Western society to capture portraits of their families and white celebrities (Plunkett 2003: 61), these photographic mediums alternatively chronicled pseudoscientific and ethnographic diacritics of the subaltern other (Edwards 2002). The vast consumption of carte-de-visite photographs grew the prevailing "cardomania" in the West during the period of 1850s and 1870s (Schneider 2013: 57). The carte-de-visite celebrated visions of white generations, whilst conversely demonising and exoticising the indigenous Black populations through ethnographic images (Bunyan 2013). Culturally and historically ingrained in the colonial and postcolonial hegemonic structure, the Black body was a "manifestation of racialized visual regimes and oppressive political systems, towards the social identity restriction and biopolitical regulation" (Mbele 2018: 9). Where the asymmetrical power dynamic of portraiture photography operated in favour of white nationhood domination, the indigenous Black population were delimited and essentialized to representations of dehumanised and "uncivilised primitive natives" (Kemp and Vinson 2000:141). The dissemination of the carte-de-visite contributed towards the "Atlantic visualscape" wherein a spatio-temporal dynamic of the circulation of photographs and photographic reproductions travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to Europeans for their imaginings of Africa (Schneider 2018). The Atlantic

visualscape was a “contact-zone,” wherein the West transplant and shift formerly distinctive aesthetics of the Black African image through a visual economy and image worlds of trade (Schneider 2013: 36). Ultimately, this claim purports the conceptualisation that production and dissemination of the Black African image were multi-vector circulation among colonial Europe.

The daguerreotype arrived at the shores of South African in 1846 (Bull and Denfield 1970). Through the advancement of technologies and increasing urbanisation, the daguerreotype became expensive and outdated, which was replaced with the carte-de-visite. The carte-de-visite became popular in South Africa from 1861 onwards, as a medium mainly used for commercial and socialisation means (Stevenson 2001). Specifically in South Africa there were various unidentified photographers, predominantly due “non-commercial and less visible roles” that provided various problem locating these colonial photographers, which is why I made use of well-known ethnographic photographers during the colonial period (Hardijzer 2018). I examine one image from Barnard and Gibble for the South African portion of my analysis.

Barnard was born in England and trained as a photographer. Coming from a family of wealth, which was weakened by the industrial revolution, he travelled and settled in Cape Town, South Africa, during the 1860s. Destroyed by a fire, his studio was reopened in 1870s (Bull and Denfield 1970: 187). Additionally born in England, Gibble was an artisan turned photographer. Shortly after his arrival to Paarl, South Africa he gained mentorship under Barnard as a photography assistant (Bull & Denfield 1970).

Photographic technology was introduced to Mali, in 1889, within fifty years after its inception (Keller 2021: 45). Due to its political dexterity, photography was employed by the French Geographical Society (Pakenham 1991: 164). Owing to “photography’s unparalleled indexical accuracy,” the use of was used for scientific recordings, additionally utilisation by Christian missionaries, as well as military personnel alike to document the socio-cultural alterity of the West Africa (Keller 2021: 45). During the early decades of the twentieth century, indigenous people of French-Sudan (now Mali), were introduced to photography through the contextualisation of colonial research, as well as for the purpose of identification photographs, as prescribed by the French administration and their army forces (Keller 2021: 65). With the arrival of electricity, localised to Mali, there was an outstanding development in photography which drastically altered the advancement from the box-camera formats to medium format photograph (Nimis 2013: 135). Identification photos were employed by the French colonial government as a means for surveillance tactics and bio-political regulation (Keller 2013: 3680. Echoing similarities with South Africa, the various unidentified photographers were due to “non-commercial and less visible roles,” hence my use of well-known ethnographic photographers during the colonial period (Hardijzer 2018). Edmond Fortier was a French documentary photographer, editor and ethnographer; he published over three thousand five hundred postcards of French West Africa (Moreau 2015: 15). I examine two images from Fortier for the Malian portion of my analysis

1.7.2. Postcolonial period

This section deconstructs the role of photographic conventions against the normative colonial conventions during the postcolonial periods in South Africa and Mali. Firstly, it is vital to deconstruct the locality and contextuality of portraiture before positioning the specifies of South African and Malian postcolonial photography histories. Portraits were dually photographed in indoor studios and make-shift environmental 'studios.' Despite referring to specific images seemingly captured in studio settings, 'the studio' in postcolonial African contexts provide differential perspectives. Whereas the studio space, rather "interior photography" was mainly captured outdoors for the purpose of adequate lighting; therefore, the studio may be conceptualised as a space of contestation between "mobility and emplacement" (Peffer 2013: 8). There was a desire to consume local, yet distinctively global commodities as a means of self-fashioning and re-presentation towards the re-invention of socio-cultural modes of being. As James Ferguson proports, "performative competence" allows the photographed subject to demonstrate their idealised and desired personhood, self-awareness and urban sensibilities through visual modes of communication (1999: 221). Studio photographic portraiture was a "negotiation and articulation of individuality" and sociality through cultural awareness (Brielmaier 2013: 282). Echoing sentiments by Ferguson, I express that the strategies of self-construction of postcolonial portraits were intrinsically linked to both the entanglement localism and cosmopolitanism, in that they are positioned within a socio-political and economic juncture (1999: 230). Though the colonial gaze was the predominant lens in which Black African identites were visualised, Black African elites made use of the medium for "representation and self-portrayal" and permitted their photographs to "purposefully circulate in the Atlantic Visualscape," as a means to disseminate their discursive identity across global spatio-temporalities (Schneider 2010: 135). Through this photographic circulation, Black African elites and urban populations were able to emphasise and construct "a counter-history communicated visually" throughout the Atlantic visualscape and attempt to disrupt colonial archives (Askren 2009). Portraiture photography, through the post-colonial optic prism allowed the production of "cultural intermediaries within the libidinal and visual economy" binding the African continent and the Atlantic geopolitical spatiality (Peffer 2013:1).

South Africa saw the two-fold imaginings of Western and apartheid violent discourses of the Black African body. Black South African photographers, such as Santu Mofokeng, Kitty Moodley and Richard Ndimande challenged the stereotypical images of the indigenous population through self-fashioning tropes and re-presentation of the Black South African identity. Mali, on the other hand, saw a boom in postcolonial diasporic aesthetics and creation of Malian identity through the emergence of independence and the introduction to aesthetics of the American civil rights movement. With specific attention to Malick Sidibe and Seydou Keita, I illustrate ways through which these photographers envisaged postcolonial subjectivities and the turbulence of youth and the emanation of national independence identities, whilst concurrently influenced by African American metropolitan contemporaneity.

The functionality of portrait photography, insofar as the Black South African body is visually represented by the structural domination of apartheid was twofold: firstly, as a means to

propagate the ‘uncivilised and native’ imaginings and secondly, a way to document the institutionalisation the Black racial and political identity. The first function of portraiture photography, originating from colonial ethnographic and anthropological photographs, postulated the photographing of the ‘native’ through naturalized and essentialized techniques which rendered the Black African identity to ‘tribal’ and ‘traditional’ through attire and props to reiterate previously institutionalized racial ideologies of colonialism and modernity (Enwezor 1997: 28). The second functionality of portrait photography, as implemented by the apartheid state, was illustrated by the passbook, also referred to as the “dompas” (stupid pass). The apartheid government juristicted the “personal history and movements of every African worker” through the introduction of 1952 pass laws, specifically in relation to the Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act (Breckenridge 2005:85). This identification document was a form of “internal passport without which a citizen of colour could not move about or work anywhere in the country” (Lapierre 2009: 95), as well as a system that proposed the stabilization of a specific racial identity within a biometrically indexed directory (Edwards and Hecht 2010: 625). The passbook contained detailed information about the owner, such as their ethnic grouping, sex, age, place of residence, details of employment and list of previous jobs, accompanied by a bust portrait photograph (Eke and Obika 2018: 8). The passbook, in agreement with the multitude of segregation laws invoked by the South African apartheid regime, was “deeply imbricated in intensive programs of state surveillance” and “saw a radical intensification of attempts to control and limit the movements” of the Black South African citizens (Bajorek 2020: 238). Furthermore, this condition of state surveillance was a mode to regulate the precarious economic and political phenomena and sociality, as well as a strategy to restrict subjectivity and agency of the Black indigenous population. Against the colonial and postcolonial hegemonic visual regimes, I briefly examine Santu Mfokeng’s *The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1950* collection and provide an in depth analysis of noteworthy photography by Richard Ndimande and Kitty Moodley to explore the potentiality of Blackness para-ontology against the normative account. Santu Mofokeng selected and organized a private collection of various family studio portraits shot, in colonial and postcolonial South Africa between 1890 and 1950, of the indigenous Black elite and working class (Mofokeng 1996: 54-57). *The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1950* reimagines a counter-narrative and visual archive for the indigenous Black bodies against the intended disavowal of modern subjectivities and naturalize the Black body propagated by the colonial administrators and apartheid state (Powell 1997). Conversely, Richard Nzimande began capturing Black and white vernacular photography portraits of Black South African citizens from 1968, whilst in the same breath, Kitty Moodley began shooting photographs during 1972. Richard Ndimande’s photographs of Black South Africans explored Black Africanness through unique political identity, agency and representation during apartheid (Somers 2020). Kitty Moodley was an anti-apartheid activist and photographer that sought to highlight the amalgamation of tribal and contemporary culture within the Black South African community. Moreover, Ndimande and Moodley’s vernacular studio portraiture provided judgement and narrated the Black political identity through personhood and agency. By these means, Ndimande and Moodley highlighted by which performativity of modern postcolonial subjectivities, was through the use of self-fashioning, mise-en-scene and body politic.

During the 1940s and 1950s, there was a growing monopoly on colonial professionals and local photographers in Bamako, Mali; the first Malian photographers were mainly tailors, nurses, teachers and colonial soldiers (Nimis 1998: 29–31). During this postcolonial period, citizens of Mali utilised the medium of portraiture photography to "visually express, emphasise, and memorialise" pivotal achievements during the course of their lifetime, as well as embellish their sociocultural and political identities (Keller 2021: 109). With the growing urbanisation, after World War II and gaining independence, Mali adopted socialism as their political affiliation in 1960. The population increased and there was a rapid interest in portraiture photography. Portraiture photography served as a medium for the population to engage with "personal, social, and political venue" across various "social class to express their agency, self-determination, and self-creation" (Keller 2013: 367). The medium and mode of photography offered Black African photographers and sitters alike, the act of "an influential figure on social and political life" as well as "respond[ed] to the socio-political changes that they were experiencing in monumental ways" (Bajorek 2020: 6). The cultural dynamics in Mali, during the period of democratisation, issued a new set of technological advances in photography. Various social identities were animated through portrait photography, as the age of independence emerged, there was the introduction of individual and social agency, such as the Zazous (Malian dandies), Kamalenbaw (playboys), Grins (rebels against traditional societies) and popular culture caricatures (Diawara 2003, 174). The two photographers I have chosen to examine the postcolonial emergence of photography in Mali are Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibe. According to Candace Keller, these two photographers are identified as "visual griots" (2013: 364). The term "visual griot," within the Malian context, refers to photographers that revive and curate "archives of images that document political, social, and personal changes and events" as well as "creators and preservers of individual and collective identities" (Keller 2013: 364). Their black and white vernacular portraiture photographs demonstrate ways through which issues regarding Malian identity, nationhood and memory are embodied against Francophone colonial rule towards postcolonial independence of Mali. These two Black African photographers prolifically documented the vivid sociality and cosmopolitan subjectivity of Malian society. Both photographers have been widely exhibited in Europe and America. Their portraiture photographs provide provocative insight to the modernisation processes during a period of colonial transition to independence despite introduction of Western metropolitan values into Malian cultural society (Paoletti and Biro 201:182-199). Further to this, Sidibe and Keita's portrait photographs illustrate an intersection between Malian postcolonial youth in Bamako and civil-rights American counterculture. This dialectic identity produced a discussion of the diasporic Black African image and sociocultural Malian aesthetic, towards defining a nation "beyond the national boundary and united Black youth through a common habitus of Black pride, civil rights, and self-determination" (Diawara 2003: 254).

1.7.3. Contemporary period

I maintain that studio photography acquires an explicitly political regime with the connection to the struggle with independence and the end of colonial rule. Where portraiture photography was

entangled with political dexterity of the colonial matrix of power and colonial administration, I suggest that the ways of independence and liberation struggles are imbued with technologies of photography within the contemporary era. Black African photographers are constantly in the motion of "conjuring new narratives of Black possibility" (Eshun 2021: 1). These photographs seek to resist and defy the hegemonic narrative of Western society, through the evolving conversation surrounding Blackness as a racial marker, ontology and episteme (Johnson 2019: 1). There is a sense of binary abstraction, whereby the imaginary of whiteness is within the misalignment of unlearning and encrypting new scoptic regimes of the Black body and African complexities. Epistemological and ontological fractures vitalise the restructuring of portraiture photography practices to uncast the Eurocentric cosmology of modernity. For example, Muholi expresses Black queer sensibilities in South Africa, whilst Diabate reignites postcolonial visual griot legacies, as well as explores the peculiarities in mythical and folklore of Malian culture.

With explicit detail to the dawn of democracy and the twenty-seven years after the democratic post-apartheid elections, I draw attention to the photographic portraiture captured by Zanele Muholi. Originating from Umlazi, Durban, Zanele Muholi is a contemporary Black South African photographer that is known as a "digital activist, humanitarian and photographer" (Stevenson n.d.). Through self-reflective approach, Muholi rewrites visual history, through their bold self-portraits to intimate portrait photographs of Black LGBTQIA+ people and self-portraits, as a means to explore complexities of race, agency, representation and subjectivity (Skidmore n.d.). Muholi's portraits "imagine communities that involve different kinds of belonging, and alternative futures" for Black South African and queer identities (van der Vlies 2012: 3). Muholi's images challenge normativity and subvert the white phenomena of the queer identity. Muholi incites the exploration of the body politic that articulates the collective condition in relation to legacies of colonialism and apartheid within a South African context. They reignite markers of individuation, whilst forwarding markers of collective strategies of survival through narrating the Black South African queer experiences of material and structural violence, as a means to disrupt the historical legacies of photographic modes of expression and the genealogy of western photography.

I assemble images from Fatoumata Diabate's oeuvre that engage with and reconfigure elements of folklore, sociocultural dynamics and legacies of historical certificates of time. Firstly, Diabate makes use of ceremonial pageantry throughout her series of "Man as Animal," The use of improvisation to construct other worldly imaginaries for her subject is evident in her demonstration in her use of quotidian objects to represent folklore and mythical beings. Her consent to submerge the hybridity and exclusivity of discovering a priori imposition of regular improvisation is evident through her use of everyday objects that are transfigured into speculative fiction apparatus. Secondly, as a means to pay homage to Malian Black photographers, practicing the 1950s and 1960s, particularly Malick Sidibe and Seydou Keita, Fatoumata Diabate envisions a travelling instillation of studio portraits throughout Mali. Her use of subjects is primarily on bystander participation, and she makes use of specific mis-en-scene and props, as well as post- production editing techniques that memorialise both the Malian "visual-griot" photographic practice, as well as the participants she captures. Diabate's use of a mobile studio questions the temporality and determined spatiality of the seemingly fixed studio

space; additionally, this studio method highlights the mobility of Malian photographers during the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, I suggest that Diabate's 'street studio' highlights the desires of her photographed participants and their modern subjectivities despite the pop-up shoot not being planned or scheduled.

These Black African photographers, through the medium of portraiture photography, are a testimony to Black African representation against the pacification and absence of the Black African body within Western hegemonic society. Through the "lexicon of resistance and agency" as modes to "manifold occurrences of freedom in zones of non-being and Black death," Black African contemporary photographers demonstrate the complexities of re-presentation and the Black African identity through modalities that annunciate the futurity of the Black body through portraiture photography (Kapadia 2019: 34). The mirror of Black sociality refracts and reflects portraits of Black existence and the Black African imagery through a myriad of "speculative self-reflexive practices" to reimagine Black African futures. The Black African image considers the heterogeneity of visualities and rejection of the normative colonial imagery through liberation tools for subversive resistance. Black African contemporary photographers elicit the provocation to re-see Black African identities through differential scoptic lenses that were previously denied to them. These Black African photographers demonstrate their consent to non-performance against hegemonic society that has been imposed on them as a way through which normativity is disavowed and situated on the periphery that defies modes of description.

Confounded by the Western dichotomy between being/ non-bring, real/ myth and primitive/ civilised, the articulation of new realities and nuanced lived experiences of the Black African body by Muholi and Diabate conjure Black Africa as a place of becoming and potentiality. They reclaim their Black African and queer identities through multiplicities and myriad of representations.

1.8. Summary

This chapter presented ways through which portraiture photography of Black bodies is a mirror that reflects Black African identities in South Africa and Mali, through historical, socio-cultural and political contextualisations. The juxtaposition of racial identity markers and historical spectres present ramifications of the contemporary and the re-emergence of colonial legacies that are predicaments of modernity and the Western model of Enlightenment. Through my exploration of the historicization of the Black body through biopolitical and biopower legacies, I claimed that the accumulation and classification of Africa, in relation to Western impulses, is deficient and lacking, which allegedly prompted the justification of missionaries' salvation projects as well as establish racist pseudoscientific theories. Whereas I provided insight to the ways in which the Black body is biopolitical formulated, I offered research questions that probed to which extent are future projects and liberatory potentialities of the Black African image circumscribed through portraiture photography.

Wherein the discussion of this chapter followed the exploration of socio-historical legacies and political contexts of South Africa and Mali, through social movements, the political climate, as

well as the historic functionality in both countries, it additionally contextualised the conceptualisations, ambitions, and research structure of this thesis. For the purpose of the chapter, I delineated the histography to South African and Mali towards the contextualisations of portraiture photography, insofar as it relates to the Black body in conjunction to the Black African image. Though it is key to preface the dynamic conditionalities that inform the Black African image, I placed emphasis and central attention towards my investigation of Black African identities as the future-orientated materialisation of epistemic production and being.

The contradictory nature between the Black African body's aspiration for inclusion, yet battle with exclusionary forces, within the system of hegemonic society is complex. This dialectic enacts a transformation wherein modes of being, for Black bodies are scrutinised under normative sociopolitical operations of power through material conditions of studio photography. Moreover, studio portraiture is a technological apparatus and medium of social arrangement, whereby I argue that Black African bodies are bound within the nexus of absence and the copresence of contradictory legacies of modernity; this confounds Black bodies by the performativity of racial identity. Ultimately the Black body is a site of "the materialisation of the political imagination" through the gaze and apprehension of Western society (Preciado 2013: 139). The following chapters suggest that the Black African image recomposes and intersects the idiosyncratic mechanisms of contemporaneity through a complex entanglement of emphatic tensions between the visibility/ invisibility dialectic. Establishing the compostiong of Black African political and sociocultural contexts allows me to deconstruct the embodied visuality of studio portraiture, wherein postcolonial and contemporary eras present an other-way of seeing the Black African body through the pictorial representation of the Black African image beyond the confines and constraints of modernity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: BUFFERING THE BLACK BODY

Expanding on my argument of Black Africanness as a mode for the potentiality of existence, within expansive worlds, in European hegemonic society, this literature review highlights three vital themes towards holistically conceptualizing the historical and contemporary debates regarding the experience(s) of being Black African and politics of Black African existence. As a means towards the reconfiguration of Blackness as emancipatory structure for para-ontological resistance, this literature review is sectioned into four topics: 1) Blackness bound by ontological dimensions; 2) photography as a tool for ideological discourse; 3) the Black image through conventions of colonial portraiture photography. I advance the interpretation of the Black African image through the oppositional reading of studio portraiture photography within the lexicon of racialised politics. I introduce the topic of colonial tropes of portraiture photography and the ideological position of the Black African body to demonstrate ways through which the colonial wound and legacies of modernity form and perpetuate violent stereotypes. Though ideological discourses and colonial conventions of portraiture photography and analysing the Black African image are intertwined. The secernment of ideological visuality vis-a-vis colonial portraiture cannons, I am able to highlight the intricacies of visual reproduction and provide alternative and futuritive visions of the Black African image. Furthermore, this chapter provides an overview of the aesthetics of portraiture photography towards the incursion of how generative modes of the Black African image are structured within the context of contemporary societal hierarchies.

2.1. Blackness bound by ontological dimensions.

This section explores blackness within social ontology, non-ontology, para-ontology and Africanity, as a means to illustrate the ways through which portraiture photography live as lifeforms that discuss the mortality of the Black African image. I question how blackness is transmuted within differential ontic theoretical grounds. I offer various manifestations that Black African identities occupy. Through the exploration of the colonial matrix of power and decolonial projects, I proffer ways through which the Black African image is located and reconfigured by ontological dimensions within economic, political and social contextualisation.

Departing from the conceptualisation of the Black African body constructed through and by the processes of hegemonic social orders and bio-political positionality, I claim Black African identities construct a “new ontology,” that occupies modes of being from the anteriority of Western modernity. The multiple theoretical frameworks provide tensions and negotiations of Blackness through differential manifestations and worldviews in contemporary hegemonic society. Demonstrated through particular markers and performances of visibility within the frame of recognition, Black identities are designated to specific practices of ontological existence.

2.1.1. Social Ontology

The social ontological perspective claims that the Black body is the materialization of violence, oppression and racialized Western ideology through the construction of the colonial matrix of power. It is a site of biopolitical formations and structural forces, created with the advent of imperial expansion and the colonial project (Ndlovu- Gatsheni 2013: 25). As a means to comprehend the extensive theorisation of social ontology, it is vital to frame the structural and ontological foundations that construct the Black body and Black being. Whereby ontology considers the personhood and worldview of existence, social ontology reflects on the act of being and the performativity of existence as conditional to social phenomena and socio-structural models (Al-Amoudi 2007: 5). This formation of social phenomena can be conceptualized through Ferdinand de Saussure's notion of semiology, wherein all social practices can be examined semiologically (Saussure 2011). Social ontology seeks to differentiate between the hegemonic society against those belonging to precarious bodies. As suggested by Judith Butler, precarious bodies are articulated through bio-political productions that are predisposed to subjugation and oppressive social manifestations and political regimes (2009: 12). To be recognised, by the normative systems that produce the frame of recognition, is to exist ontologically in the contemporary society. Without structural recognition, the ontological insecurity and unviability of socio-political existence is heightened for precarious bodies. The act of existing and performativity of existence suggest ontological relations are dependent on social factors and frames of recognition (Epstein 2016). The conditions for recognisability and the act of recognition, can be considered as a conceptual basis, through which the differential perception of precariousness enforces the struggle to ontologically exist (Bhandar 2011). Additionally, the nascence of hegemonic multi-vector procedures of power are forcibly foisted upon precarious bodies and result in the manufacturing of epistemological frames that coordinate norms and rituals of existence and being (Butler 2004: 43). Precarity, as theorized by Judith Butler illustrates the "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks" (2009: 25). Moreover, precarious bodies are susceptible to conditions of injurability, as well as differential allocation of grievability and rely on institutionalized forms of apprehension of recognizability (Motakef 2019). Therefore, precarious bodies are dependent on the social and political norms, imposed by the dominant discourse, "that facilitate recognisability" to be viewed as human (Butler 2009). Moya Llyod promotes asymmetrical vectors of power determine eligibility for existence, as a means to frame contemporary society through hegemonic epistemological structures, modes of knowledge production and social order (1999: 195). Gurur Ertem suggests precariousness is an enduring element of human nature, expressed as a "general feature of embodied life," whereby all life is inherently seen as vulnerable and susceptible to harm (2017). Conversely, Butler articulates precarity as historically constructed modes of vulnerability, along with the predisposed conditions of violence and harm, for bio-politically formulated bodies that exist on the peripheries of the frame of the hegemonic contemporary (1990). The apposition of grievability and the normative systems of the contemporary highlight ways in which operations of power dictate the differential distribution of precariousness and validity of life (Butler 2016).

2.1.2. Paraontology

Through its formation, para-ontology is a "transfigurative transitivity which unmakes ontology" (Bey 2017: 286). Para-ontological modes of Blackness illustrate the potentiality of being as the "general possibility of the otherwise" (Chandler 2009: 351). Where para-ontology is expressed in relation to Blackness, it is a future-orientated and fugitive identity that is constantly disturbing the hegemonic societal systems to exist ontologically. Fred Moten suggests the para-ontological dimension of Blackness escapes and resists the hegemonic and universal ontology (Moten 2008: 187). By way of the reconstruction of the Black racial identity, through sociality and social lives, paraontology seeks to eclipse the contemporary white supremist patriarchal cis-heteronormative kyriarchy that persistently seek to oppress Black bodies' lived-experience through the examination of discursive racial ideologies (Moten 2008:180). Fred Moten expresses the transformability of Blackness through negation, where Black bodies operate in "the refusal of that which has been refused" by hegemonic societies as an act of preservation through differentiation (2018: xii). Where Fred Moten advocates for blackness as a "refusal of refusal," black life rejects that which has been refused onto them through fugitive publics, impromptu and improvisational techniques of black sociality. The accumulation and constitutive properties of blackness illustrate the black body's preservative nature that operates on the plane of refusal that which has been refused onto them. Blackness occupies liminal topographies yet generative characteristics. It is a pre-formance for the performance of refusal of refusal. Blackness as a non-performance crucible of modernity yet acts on the freedom to perform refusal. To defy yet affirm norms emphasise the value of consent that is striped by hegemonic society. This state of refusal of refusal shares significant similarities with Munoz's disidentification. Disidentification responds to the rejection of hegemonic identity interpolations and the formation of identities through the political act of disrupting the identificatory activity. Disidentification and the refusal of the refused indicate the rejection of hegemonic ascription of identity. Moten's conception of the 'undercommons' is a practice and condition for refusal against the ubiquity of colonial violence. Where blackness transcends generality, black bodies are architects of rebuilding their destiny through "originary displacement" (Chandler 200). The act of refusal and disidentification proffers the ability to consent what has been imposed upon black bodies through the negation and disavowal of normativity through performative repetition that falls on the purview of devices that defy modes of description. Moreover, by way of the technological grammar offered by Glitch Feminism and decoloniality, I suggest the Black African image resists the programming of the colonial matrix through encrypting and ghosting legacies for black bodies to disidentify. Through the de-racialisation of the Black body, the Black body obtains the consent to be fugitive whilst maintaining a level of fluidity. Through the transformative force of paraontology as non-performance is the crucible for mourning modernity/ coloniality, it mobilises the consent to affirm or negate norms while allotting value on consent and the improvisation of existing through sociality. These modes of description are paradoxically experienced by displacement. The ongoing lived experience of improvisation operates in the refusal of phantasical normalcy. To become and exist as a black body is the act of refusing to assume a subject, rather it is to become nothing. Not within the afro-pessimistic non-ontology, conversely nothing is not an absence or a lack of life, but the richness and multiplicity out of which life is formulated. Blackness is a transferrable substance that translates the enactment of the Black African identity

and sociality for the denial of hegemonic universality. Through the refusal of representation forwarded by hegemonic society, para-ontological modes of Black existence construct a new subjectivity and representation amassed by performativity through the act of becoming by means of the "sociality of Blackness" and generative forms of improvisation (Harris 2012:53). The sociality of Blackness observes the Black racial identity as a "sign and scene of futurity" whereby its configuration is fugitive and not delimited by systems and structures of contemporary white supremist patriarchal cis-heteronormative kyriarchy (Feldman 2021: 10). Blackness is para-ontological because the lived experience of Black people transcends "the designation of Blackness as social death" (Brar 2013: 29). Blackness is in constant escape; it is in pursuit of "its own ontological ground, its own phenomenological features, its own basis as an epistemology" (Brar 2013: 234). Fred Moten suggest the paraontological essence of Blackness slips and resists the hegemonic and universal ontology (2008: 187). Blackness, much like queerness, is where Moten claims that the "temporal dimensionality is manifest not only as a projection into the future but also as a projection of a certain futurity into and onto the present and past" (Moten 2017: 192). Jose Munoz suggests queerness appropriates a form of *disindentification* whereby marginalised bodies enact their identity and self-representation through futurity and rejecting normative society. Blackness is "anoriginal displacement of ontology," wherein "ontology's anti- and ante foundation," and the irreversible disruption of ontology's spatio-temporality is performed (Moten 2013: 738–739). Moten proposes the differential avowal that Black people and Blackness presents a "paraontological differentiation" (2007: xii). Alexander Weheliye, following Moten's assertion, claims that it is vital "to disarticulate Blackness from Black people," as categorisation of race is not a "given natural and/or cultural phenomenon," conversely it is "an assemblage of forces that must continuously re/produce Black subjects as nonhuman" (2008: 333). Paraontology confounds philosophy through the act of disturbance that is mutually productive of improvisational generation. Moten asserts that the sociality of Blackness and the ongoing improvisation of lived-experience operates in the refusal of hegemonic society. Essentially, "Blackness" is not an inherent or intrinsic to Black people. Black bodies morph their identities with Blackness through Black sociality. Delineations of ontology is transgressive and "transitivity unmakes" universalised ontology through paraontological prisms (Bey 2017: 287). Moreover, Blackness can transcend performativity, within the contemporary domain, when considered as a lived-experience and material way of knowing. Blackness can occupy modes of representation, as forms of resistance, that are no longer restricted to the gaze of the contemporary hegemonic structures but seen within specific spatial and temporal contexts (Aaron 2004). Paraontology animates the corrosive negation of Blackness as a radical rearrangement of their worldview as a potentiality of futurity.

2.1.3. Non-ontology

The theorization of Blackness in hegemonic society exists to not exist within the scope of non-ontological dynamics. I discuss non-ontology within the Afro-pessimist framework for the purpose of further contextualising Blackness and "onticide"[7]. Building upon the notion that the

[7] Calvin Warren claims Blackness is exterminated through the double-death of anti-Black ontological contraventions as "onticide" (2013: 11).

Black body is formed through hegemonic bio-political conditions of European modernisation, Blackness is defined in relation to whiteness and the consequences of contemporary modernity. Jared Sexton suggests that whilst Blackness is considered not self-constituting though whiteness grasps the capacity to simultaneously produce and deny the Black racial discourse, within hegemonic society (2011). The term 'Black' for Afro-pessimists does not refer to an ethnic self-identification, but to a "specific structural position within civil society and its socio-economic, as well as its cultural and psychic systems" (Weier 2014: 420). Furthermore, Calvin Warren claims that the double colonization of spatio-temporalities demands limitations over ontology, where the act of being is bound by access to normalities and practices of dominant society which suggests Blackness is constructed as a non-ontology (2013: 6). Afro-pessimists assert Blackness is the "product and property of political ontology" that appears as the violent "technology and discourse" to subjugate and annihilate Black African existence (Warren 2017: 222). Blackness is a political ontology separating the Slave from the dominant social order in a "constitutive way" (Sexton 2011: 23). According to afro-pessimists, Black social life is not a normative social life as it is restricted by "codes of state and civil society, of citizen and subject, of nation and culture, of people and place, of history and heritage and of all the things that colonial society has in common with the colonized;" they propose Black social life is lived through social death (Sexton 2011: 28 - 29). Social death is defined as a life exposed to violence, injurability and denied humanity (Patterson 2018: 38) - similar to what Judith Butler deems as precarious life as discussed in previous sections. Where Fanon suggests the possibility of the impossibility is available only through "the savage struggle" and the "convolutions of death," he claims that the Black essence only gains freedom through the necessity of violence in the revolutionary struggle (2008: 179-180). Historically structured through civil society, Black people were deemed as neither citizens or humans constituting their non-ontological status (Weier 2014: 420). Where Aimé Césaire refers to "colonisation = "thingification" (2001: 142–3), I suggest Blackness, within a non-ontological or Afro-pessimistic perspective, is reduced to a thing, an object unworthy of a personhood.

2.1.4. Africanity as a combative ontology

To not to conflate Blackness with "Africanness," I have decided to make use of the paradigm Archie Mafeje that describes as "Africanity" (2008). Africanity is a "combative ontology" that claims "political, ideological, cosmological and intellectual implications" to the inquest for endogeneity rooted in African conditions (Mafeje 2008: 32). Blackness does not necessarily equate to "Africanness," as there are non-Black settlers in Africa. Africanity responds to Blackness from an African perspective devoid of African-Americanisation of Blackness and Afrocentricity (Mafeje 2008: 41). Afrocentricity, as suggested by Clenora Hudson-Weems, is an "intellectual perspective deriving its name from the centrality of African people and phenomena in the interpretation of data" (2007: 29). Hudson-Weems offers the concept of Afrocentricity as a "paradigm, a framework, and a dynamic" that seeks to uncover a "self-conscious awareness of the need for centering" for African episteme (2007: 30). Further to this, Conversely to Afrocentricity, Hudson-Weems additionally claims that the concept of Africanity is "essentially the way African people live according to customs, traditions, and mores of their society," which supersedes the ability to "follow African styles, and modes of living, and practice African religion" and allows for the "re-centering of African minds in a way that brings about a liberating

consciousness" (2007: 30). Where Black Americans "can't reappropriate Africa," Africanity suggests Blackness and Africanness can't be "nurtured outside of Africa" (Mafeje 2008: 39). Africanity is a way of thinking and developing histories from a perspective that privileges Black Africans as an inception of African subjectivities and so forth. Afrocentric implies a Westernization and globalization of African conceptualisations (Mafeje 2008: 34). As Tendayi Sithole illustrates, Africanity is a "form of African subjectivity" and a contestation against Western epistemology and ontology that hinders the growth of the African being and existence; additionally, it is not a reactive discourse but and "affirmation of African subjectivity" (2014: vi). Archie Mafeje promotes that "Africanity is an assertion of identity that has been denied" in relation to the Black African body's existence and mode of being in hegemonic and normative society (2000). It is an intellectual tradition that responds to the role of Africans with a genuine understanding of heritage to develop theories and paradigms that assist Africans to combat foreign hegemony and domination (Martin, Martin and West 1999). Additionally, Mafeje suggests that epistemological conditions of ontological states frames Africanity that circumvents knowledge and being from coloniality (2000). Further to this, Africanity is a "generality to all of the customs, traditions, and traits of people in Africa and the diaspora," as well as a mode for being and identity expressed through the modality as self-writing towards epistemological and ontological autonomy and agency of the African subject (Asante 1998: 19). Self-writing is a concept developed by Achille Mbembe, wherein African subjects construct their own histories from their locale and decolonised episteme. As Mbembe so aptly describes modes of "African self-writing" (2002: 239), this research explores a fugitive and futuritive mode of becoming through portraiture photography in Mali and South Africa captured by Black African photographers. Building upon the paradigm of self-writing, I claim that Mafeje offers Africanity as the creation of a new evolved identity that emerges from the African subject (2000: 67). Africanity is neither fundamentalist nor purist in its discourse, rather it is "concerned with African subjectivity qua subjection" (Sithole 2014: 152).

2.2. Photography as a tool for ideological discourse

I investigate ways through which photography functions as both a "cultural site of subjugation and a technology of liberation" (Raiford 2012:311). Photographic portraiture "displaces, rather than represents, the individual," whilst it "codifies the person in relation to other frames of reference and other hierarchies of significance" which ultimately seek to re-present personhood and epistemological frames of reference (Clarke 1992: 1). According to Brenda Croft, the camera is the "most abusive of colonial weapons" (2013: 28). Where photography is the production of images that "furnishes a ruling ideology" (Sontag 1973: 140), I explore the ways through which specific bodies, namely the Black African body, are deconstructed through visuality and epidermalization. Though photographic portraiture presents the illusion and ventriloquist visuality of "semantic neutrality," where there is no objective reading of the Black African image (Peffer 2013: 6), social identities culturally furnished and historically contingent

(Dawson 1994: 203). When analysing images, it is key to consider verisimilitude and realism[8]. Anthropological archives are not considered historically neutral locations but "living collections" that have been "shaped by the process and procedures of institutions that curate them and the researchers who use them" (Morton and Edwards 2009: 9). With acknowledgement to the constructed reality photographs depict, I interrogate ways in which colonial photographers perpetuate stereotypical narratives of the 'native.' Portraiture photography surpasses its ability to "record, not merely depict, that which exists in the material" (Raiford 2009:113), it addittionally conceals yet affirms specific representation of cultural conditions wherein "objects are intentionally produced" (Flusser 2013:33). Sumathi Ramaswamy suggests that the Global North's encounter with and domination over the subaltern populations produces the "fundamental reshaping of modern and global visual culture" (2014: 11). The construction of the "regime of truth" correlates to the discursive formation of the knowledge/ power nexus whereby truth is created through hegemonic power relations (Foucault 1980: 131). Stuart Hall summarises Foucault's conception of the modern subject as an individual which is "produced within discourse;" they are "endowed with consciousness, an autonomous and stable entity and the core of the self" (1997: 55). Foucault suggests the modern subject should be historicised through discourse and representation (1980: 115). To contextualize a photograph's meaning it is essential to consider the "photographic production" as well as the "social context" wherein the image was manufactured (Hall 1997: 79). Photography is generally accepted as an "inherently objective medium of representation" (Hall 1997: 81) but this conception of photography is devoid of the creator's intention, values and ethics (Hall 1997: 76). Roland Barthes (1981: 87) and Susan Sontag's (2001: 16) descriptions of the photographs as a "certificate of presence" and "both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence" define the dominant photographic paradox. The camera produced "visual facts" that suggested photography acquired a "truth-value" (Hall 1997: 83). The functionality of photography is as a mode of "inscription and imprinting" marks a specific moment in the temporality of a society (Vokes 2012: 73). The photographic image's claim to "representational legitimacy" through its seemingly objective reflection of society and lived experience of people (Hall 1997: 87). Photography is a way of visioning the world mediated by the image-taker, as well as the consequence of the repeated decisions made by the photographer between possible images (Vokes 2012: 46). Photography as a modern technology was created alongside the philosophy of positivism in the 1830s. The emergence of the two ushered in the relation between scientific and technological advancements and the medium of photography (Berger 1982: 99). The spectacle of the other, as Stuart Hall suggests, is the differentiation between the West and the Global South. It illustrates ways through which European imperialism and colonial tropes initiate stereotyping and the construction of marking difference to construct Otherness and specific repertoires of representation (Hall 1997: 225). The reductionist approach to understanding difference constructs binary oppositions; this diminishes distinctions into a rigid divisive structure (Hall 1997: 235). The "racialized regime of representation," as Stuart Hall asserts, is inherently linked to stereotyping, the construction of otherness and fetishism (1997:

[8] Realism is when "fiction constructs a world we recognise as our own," whilst verisimilitude is neither reality or fiction but what the dominant cultures believe to be the case, as it is the normative perception of reality (Hall 1997: 360).

257). Stereotyping maintains the social and symbolic order in society; it establishes and cultivates a "symbolic frontier" between the normal and the other, as well as facilitates the normal into an imagined community (Hall 1997: 258). Power is not only exercised through economic and political means, through the regime of representation obtains the ability to advance symbolic power. Symbolic power illustrates ways through which hegemonic societies are able to control cultural, ideological and symbolic terms to "represent someone or something" within a specific regime of representation through discursive and hegemonic power (Hall 1997: 259). Ariella Azoulay argues that photography forms "a single political ontology," moderated by what she describes as photography's "civil contact" and "civil imagination" (2012: 288).

Photographic studios, as Liam Buckley suggest, are "sites of aesthetic reproduction central to the conviviality of life" and thus are a modality of ontological self-fashioning (2013: 308). As a means to further expand upon ways through which portrait photography has been used as an ideological tool, I frame the Black African image as a representation of the Black African body and the visuality of Blackness. The Black Africa body, captured by the various colonial administrators, encloses the Black African image through discursive visual tropes which maintain the stereotyping of 'the native' (Kama 2014:12). Situating my research within the ways in which portraiture photography was introduced to the African continent, by European missionaries and colonial administrators, I present ways through which this praxis developed an inclination to make a visible primitive Africa. Photographic portraiture was an integral mode of "European exploration, conquest and colonization" in the African continent (Sharkey 2001: 180). The camera became a technological and ideological apparatus for establishing colonial concepts of African history and in turn constructing the othered Black African body through European notions of previous evolutionary stages. Colonial photography is situated in oppressive regimes of standardized imagery of anthropological, forensic and medical photography (Hight and Sampson 2002; Pinney 2011). These images of 'natives' were constructed as a means to fix identity and "find visual evidence for social, cultural or racial alterity in order to bolster the instrumental power of colonial state apparatuses" (Rizzo 2013: 265).). Colonial administrators employed the instrumental usage of portraiture photography, as a mode and medium to reinforce racialized visual regimes and political systems, towards the hierarchical domination upon the Black body (Enwezor 1995:24). European colonists employed portrait photography as a means to justify missionaries' salvation projects and prove racist pseudoscientific theories, which impart heightened the violently exploitative labour of indigenous Black population (Harris 2012). Towards the ideological construction of white racial superiority, colonial pseudoscience and imperialist subjectivity made use of phrenological and biological disparities to mutually construct the Black body as "primitive and savage" whilst reinforcing whiteness as civilized through photographs (Saint-Aubin 2005:31-32). Towards the construction of Black African subjects, colonial photographers would compose images for "clear ideological purposes" amidst the colonial imagination (Godby 2014: 100). The ideological formation of white racial superiority, colonial/ modernity hegemony and imperialist embodiment achieved phrenological and biological discrepancies to simultaneously create the Black African body as 'primitive' and 'needing salvation' in addition to exalting whiteness as the pinnacle of civilisation through portraiture photographs (Saint-Aubin 2005:31-32). Diane Lewis (1973) argues that there are

three predominant ideological bases for racism: the division between the culture of that belonging to the colonizer and the colonized; the exploitation of this separation to the advantage of the colonialist and lastly, the cementing of these theoretical differences as fact. Placing emphasis on the role and usage of portraiture photography in relation to these three criteria, it is evident that colonialists utilized photography to manufacture these racist ideologies towards their hegemonic discourse. Colonial images were constructed as a means to fix identity and "find visual evidence for social, cultural or racial alterity in order to bolster the instrumental power of colonial state apparatuses" (Rizzo 2013: 265

The differentiation between popular and scientific anthropological discourse was complicit in legitimizing and substantiating the European model of modernity and imperialism (Greenhalgh 1988: 109). Homi Bhabha suggests that a pivotal factor of colonial discourse is its "dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness" (1983: 18). The "colonial negro" views the Black body parallel to the inscription of the coloniser (Hall 1996: 18). With the introduction of photography, from the Victorian scientific anthropological period, the imagery has been considered as "deeply flawed," as it not only promoted overtones of pseudo-scientific racism but additionally its "stages and artificial nature" (Vokes 2012: 4). Portraiture photography was a means to symbolize differential power in subaltern colonies, as well as usher it into the "visible order" (Peffer 2009: 242). Affiliated with imperial governmentality, administrative photography served as a "truth witness to missionary work, surveillance and policing of Western-style progress" (Buckley 2010; 147). Anthropology shaped and constructed critical intransigence, as well as visual regimes through which the Western society "apprehended, consumed, and interpreted" Africa as a site of "scientific inquiry and popular entertainment" (Enwezor and Zaya 1997: 17). With the rise of the proliferation of ethnographic and anthropological photography, the discursive power of European society advanced its own merits whilst contemptuously denigrated the personhood of subalterns (Bell 2008: 10). Physiognomy, was the anthropological explanation of the Black body's constitution, which explored the correlation between specific facial and bodily features to indicate mental and moral attributes (Street 1992: 130). Moreover, the usage of phrenology and biological disparities mutually manufactured the Black body as 'primitive,' whilst reinforced the conceptualisation of whiteness as superior and civilized (Saint-Aubin 2005:31-32). By use of specific camera placement and lens angle, relationship between the position of the photographer and the subject, as well as the 'natural' environmental backdrop of the studio to enhance the subaltern's 'authenticity,' ethnographic photography gained authority and solidified its scientific foundations (Enwezor and Zaya 1997: 25-26). Colonial administrative portraiture photography was constructed by definitive visual codes and conventions as a means to fix the naturalized and exotic Black body (Ponzanesi 2005: 165). Through the exploration of the aesthetic I explore ways through which "commercial photographers were known to construct an 'authentic' scene" through the use of additional tableaux, traditional "props" and accessories to appeal to the European market (Croft 2013: 24). Colonized peoples were photographed wearing excessive traditional attire to appeal to Victorian prejudices of African cultures.

Edward Said claims that the differentiation of cultures was the product of colonial discursive methods and practices that are still evident in hierarchies of postcolonial cultures (1993: 17). Homi Bhabha suggests that such hierarchies signified colonial archetypes and stereotypes

wherein the colonial subject, or subaltern, are bound by the colonizer's "pleasure of seeing," which enables them to distinguish and remove themselves from the Other (1994: 109). Through the use of ethnographic and anthropometric photography, the Black African body was captured as a vehicle for "providing measurements it purportedly gave 'objective' interpretations and records of the body as specimen or type" by means of pseudoscientific methods (Enwezor and Zaya 1997: 24). Further to this, Bhabha writes "not Self and Other but the 'otherness' of the self-inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity" when discussing the alienated self-image of the Black body (Bhabha 1994: 63).

The term "African photography," for the purpose of this research, maintains the re-thinking and fracturing of the predisposed notions of conventional Western portrait photography, towards the understanding of the aesthetic, materiality, visuality and personhood of indigenous Black photographers. Whereby the Black body is the manifestation of the socio-political and economic corollary of coloniality/ modernity and colonialism (Frosh 2013: 1), the Black African image structures agency, subjectivity and representation through portraiture for Black African bodies. One way through which Black African photographers subvert and re-appropriate studio portraiture conventions is by aberrantly succumbing to "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1990: 15). Strategic essentialism, though presenting itself as an apparent less authentic form of decoloniality of becoming, suggests subaltern populations intentionally affirm the stereotypes of their marginalization as a means to disrupt or subvert the hegemonic societal norms that oppress them. The rereading of colonial images in the contemporary reveal speculative deadlocks though the insistence for the rejection of repeating the original message. The reappropriation of visual codes by Black African artists forward the reinvention of the porous Black African image. As an ideological tool, I suggest that the Black African body makes use of strategic essentialism as a means for self-fashioning and reconstruction of their oppressed identity. Moreover, as Michelle Raheja purports, "visual sovereignty" advocates for marginalised identities to "contribute to, borrow from, critique, and reconfigure" hegemonic chronicles of their culture (2015: 25-34). Through visual sovereignty, I claim the Black African body secures their Africanity and paraontology, whilst making use of strategic essentialism as a means for visibility and engendering precarity in dominant society. Though the disavowal of what is valorised by sociocultural values of modernity, the Black African body blurs the colonial Black African image through the anticipation of infinite formlessness it invades. Black Africanness forges notions of a new Black Africa through the displacement of normativity cantered by coloniality.

2.4. Materiality and aesthetic quality of photographs in the archive

As a means to investigate the materiality and aesthetic quality of photographs, I consider the archive. For the purpose of this thesis, I examine the digital archive of colonial images, as well as websites and Instagram accounts of postcolonial and contemporary photographers. Where the "archive is a repository for the future," I proffer ways through which social media and websites

mimic archival practices (Harding 2002: 51). Photographs can function as sites and modes of resistance to the dominant ideologies determined by the state. Towards the investigation of politics of becoming through photographic archive, I suggest deconstructing the purpose of colonial archives and their materiality; moreover, I propose websites and Instagram accounts of postcolonial and contemporary photographers as a means of self-representation and documentary as a site of futurity, whilst additionally maintaining normative structures. Where photography enacts a "critical role in articulating Black people's complex relationship to cultural identity and national belonging," I suggest postcolonial and contemporary photographs make use of photography to reflexively represent their current positionality (Campt 2012: 5). The materiality as well as the aesthetic quality of these images highlight the production, technologies, medium used and what these mechanisms contribute to how images are read.

The archive is conceptualized as a "tool of raciality" (Silva 2009: 224). As a means to understand the conceptualisation of the archive, it is necessary to comprehend the institutions that it furnished. Colonial archives were created from the viewpoint of the colonizing European nation, as a site of the imagination and establishments to construct histories that sought to conceal and reproduce the superstructure power of the state (Stoler 2002: 97). Colonial archives function as a means for power relations to be inscribed and complex technologies of superiority (Stoler 2002: 87). Characterized by the contradictive duality, colonial archives denied access to subaltern populations as "producers of knowledge" and the "freedom through the archives that produce them as property," whilst simultaneously central to the archive as "producers of economic value" (Aljoe et al. 2015: 260). Where colonized people were the main source of information to the construction of the archive, they were concurrently disavowed from the production of knowledge and access to property nor financial worth.

Following Jacques Derrida's argument that "there is no political power without control of the archive," colonial ethnographic work is based on who has the power to create knowledge and maintain it through hegemony (Derrida 1995: 4). The archive is a "system of statements," and "rules of practice," that form the specific regularities of normativity (Foucault 1972: 79 - 134). For Thomas Richards, the archive is "material and figurative," it is a technology of global domination of information and a circuit were alleged facts are produced and sustained (1993: 11) As a means to comprehend the neocolonial present of the African countries I have selected, it is vital to work with records and archives reflecting the "dominance of European settler colonialism" (De Leeuw, 2012: 275).

2.5. Summary of literature review

This chapter presented an overview of how the research of the Black African image and the Black body elicit the expansive ways that enable the past and speculative positions that create future realities. I have explored the contestations and contradictions of differential ontological

positions whereby Blackness is formed biopolitically, whilst presenting the notion of a non-ontology, a combative ontology and conversely a para-ontology. I claimed that the contestation between coloniality/ modernity and the ability for Blackness to evade ontological consignment is limited as a nexus between the space the Black body occupies is obfuscated by participating in sociocultural and political contexts that are created by and maintained through biopolitical realities that are intertwined within discursive and material violence of society. This chapter has explored the politics of becoming through photographic archive of the 'native.' I exclaimed that it is vital to deconstruct the purpose of colonial archives and their materiality. Additionally, I offered the invest of websites and Instagram accounts as living-archives for self-representation and mode of documentary as a site of futurity, whilst additionally maintaining normative structures. I issued ways through which the Black African body is deconstructed through visuality and epidermalization.

The discussion omitting from ontological prisms introduces differential philosophical debates. Afro-pessimism is a limited conceptualisation of Blackness as it "reduces the concept to an exceptional group of people" (Bar 2012: 29), whereas there is a para-ontological difference between the concept of Blackness and the people who constitute Black sociality (Moten 2008: 1744). I suggest that Blackness, through the lens of paraontology, generates a visual ontology or para- videretology[9]. Para-videretology argues that the imbibed aspect of videre (rather visuality) and visual coding, specifically situated within portraiture photography for the purpose of this research, is tantamount to the nature of being through the potentiality of otherwise worlds. The word para operates as a prefix that illustrates the ability to reimagine beyond the normative. The origin of the word 'videre' is defined as "to see" in Latin (Collins Dictionary n.d). My use of videre, relates to the scoptic regime of visuality which elicits ways through which images demonstrate visual codifications. Lastly, regarding my understanding of ontology, as elaborated in the literature review, explores the concept of being within the metaphysical and the material world. It may be shaped through social factors and operations of biopower; it has the ability to be consigned as a non-ontology that experiences onticide; it dictates a modality that informs African states of being and in finality, it may be perceived as a generative quality of Blackness and Black existence through sociality and improvised anarchic-social entanglements. Para-videretology articulates a future-orientated programme, based on the possibilities and potentialities that visuality offers. Para-videretology proports a metaphysical form of radical potentialities through actions of disidetification as a strategy for survival and a worldview.[10] Though I offer this basic conceptualisation of para-videretology, due to the idea being in the primordial stages of conception and development, I will not be making use of it within my discussion chapters, rather it functiuons as a rhizome of the conceptualisations demonstrated in my literature review.

Lastly, I presented how the Black body disavows or affirms colonial tropes of portraiture photography through pictorial and mis-en-scene modes of visualisation and ideological positions. Blackness exists within a spatio-temporality that simultaneously indexes embeddedness yet

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[9] The term 'para- videretology,' my own conceptualisation, is the combination of words 'para,' 'videre' and 'ontology.'

[10] This developmental concept borrows theorisations from queer theory and paraontology.

displacement of the Black body. Where I explored the discursive ideology of the camera, as well as the atrophic Western concept of the archive, I claim the living-archive of ‘natives’ is a testament and akin to the production and sustenance of knowledge by the lived-experience from the margins. Lastly, this chapter also speculated how the hegemonic structure of contemporary society configures the Black African image, through specific assertions which shape discourses. I suggested that the various forms the Black African image and its interdependent relationships with hegemonic society contribute to either the creation of other-worlds or are consigned to the visuality of the Black body through coloniality. I claim photographs are a discursive mode for social arrangement that must be scrutinised under normative socio-political operations of hegemonic society. Where the application of normative photography conventions mirror ideologies of the coloniality/modernity nexus through the prism of Enlightenment, I have unmapped a unique genealogy of the Black African image.

3. FRAMEWORK: TOKENS OF FUTURE REALITIES

Situating this research within a transdisciplinary approach, I consider the framing of decolonialism and glitch feminism in relation to the Black African image, as a means to deconstruct the colonial matrix of power as a mode to re-see and rethink the Black racial identity and different historical-temporal subjectivities. This section will discuss the intricacies of decoloniality and glitch feminism as pivotal instruments towards my analysis of the Black African image. Glitch feminism and decoloniality approach the production of episteme and ontology, of Black bodies, by thinking through and construction with the margins. The 'margins' in this sense relates to knowledge systems that are created by subaltern bodies through their own indigenous epistemic modes of thinking and being. Both frameworks approach the architecture of the corporeal through liminality and transmuting the heteronormative algorithm through disruptive strategies. For glitch feminism, the body 'glitches,' it 'ghosts' and it 'encrypts;' whereas decolonial strategies call for border thinking, epistemic turn and delinking. What these conceptual frames have in common is the active practice of refusing, deconstructing and reconstructing hegemonic society to assemble transmodern and otherwise corporealities. These frameworks seek to decentre then recentre episteme, ontology and structures against the 'programming' of the colonial matrix of power. The survival strategies deployed seek to resist binaries and the essentialism of gender, race and identity. Both frameworks deconstruct historical legacies that are maintained by and oppress through normativity. Glitch feminism and decoloniality centralise marginalised voices and 'corrupt' hierarchical power relations. Though glitch feminism predominantly functions as an online theorisation of liberation strategies, decoloniality is not limited to online or AFK (away from keyboard) survival stratums. In both frameworks, there is a practice and aesthesis of the potentiality to establish worlds otherwise.

3.1. Decoloniality

Whereas colonialism refers to the materialization and physical manifestation of the Western modernisation project, decolonization is the process of "confronting, unthinking, and undoing hidden and disclosed" European epistemic and ontological domination (Kaunda and Hewitt 2015:2). Before progressing to the wider discussion concerning the theoretical framework of the decolonial project, I examine the terms "modernity/coloniality," "decolonialism" and "decoloniality."

Through the critical analysis by what means various Africa countries initiated decolonisation and were granted independence from European colonists, these structures present different processes and procedures yet they hold similar facets (Keller 1995: 157. There were multiple reasons as to what virtues caused this outcome – namely World War II, the Cold War and the struggle for African nationalism (Kent 2000). Riddled with crisis and contradictions, accounts of decolonisation highlighted a post-war imperial context and a "locally authored anti-colonial or nationalist script" (Allman 2013: 226). World War II and the Cold War were prominent moments whereby African colonies "re-examined their relationship with European masters" (Keller 1995: 157). As Frantz Fanon claims, decolonisation is "the creation of new humans" (Fanon 1961:.2).

Whereas Europe was experiencing degradation during the post-war years, African colonies and nations were regaining their sovereignty and tantamount of leverage (Money 2018: 9). The development of a national identity was for the purpose of creating a unified nation through the common struggle against the colonial regime by means of dynamic imaginings of a new society and political independence (Anderson 1991:199-201). Binary power dynamics between native and settler, established through and by colonialism, caused 'conflict' (rather conditions of oppression and experiences of asymmetrical operations of power) between European colonisers and African colonies.

For the purpose of discussing decolonisation, within the African countries that I have selected to research, I provide insight into the general procedures that catapulted decolonisation and introduced independence to French and British colonies. Frederick Cooper suggests that decolonisation was not a simple dividing moment of "a neat before from a clear after" but various processes and operations for liberation (2012: 39). Ideas of development and citizenship formed two of the predominant discourses that framed the authority that Britain and France based "their post-war legitimacy" and "guided their post-war policy" (Cooper 2012: 43). Literature and debates regarding decolonisation, as well as the postcolonial state and unrest in Africa colonies present bondage between the precious resources, the rise of identity politics and African nationalism, as well as the insurrection of difficulties regarding the sovereignty of authority (Turner 2007, Englebert 2009, Mbembe 2003; Young 2004). These facets gave rise to conceptualisation of state failure through the contextualisation of African ethno-nationalist difficulties that undermined the nation-building project (Abubakar 2010: 54).

As discussed in previous sections, the Western model of modernity and the European process of modernisation construct and conceal the oppressive systems of contemporary society through the colonial matrix of power (or coloniality of power); moreover, the "modernity/coloniality" nexus conveys ways through which the operations of hegemonic domination is inherently intertwined at a structural and systematic level (Mignolo 2008:17). "Modernity/ coloniality" highlights the sociohistorical legacies of colonialism through the remains of European ontologies and epistemologies (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Beyond the limits of colonial administrators, coloniality defines the enduring power dynamics that were created as a result of colonialism; this impacts ways through which culture is characterised, "intersubjective relations" are determined and modes of knowledge production (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 24). Therefore, coloniality may be viewed as an "uninterrupted practice of colonialism" (Moraña, Dussel and Jáuregui, 2008: 10). Coloniality disguises colonial continuity through means of "naturalising, institutionalising and normalising subjection" of subaltern populations (Sithole 2014: 95). Coloniality exists within three specific dimensions: coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being (Escobar 2004:210). Coloniality of power illustrates a "global hegemonic model" of domination, wherein bodies are bio-politically arranged according to Western neoliberal-capitalist labour operations of power (Escobar 2004:218). Coloniality of power arranges societies into homogenous nation-states as a means to exhort authority over all aspects of life, as expressed by Quijano, "to impose its colonial dominance over all the regions and populations of the planet, incorporating them into its world system and its specific model of power" (2000: 540). Coloniality of power espouses astriction between "social regulation" and "social

emancipation" (Santos 2007: 29). Moreover, coloniality of power restricts peripheral histories outside the bounds of "canonical hegemony" asserted by Western modernity (Sithole 2014: 62). Coloniality of knowledge focuses upon the ways in which the Western model of modernity, through modernisation processes of European enlightenment, dominate epistemological domains of knowledge production and modes of thinking (Quijano 2007: 169). Eurocentric modernity compels the epistemicide of subaltern modes of knowledge (de Sousa Santos 2015: 42). Epistemicide dictates ways through which Western Enlightenment maintains universal epistemologies, the delegitimization of indigenous knowledge and propels "the decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror" (Nyamnjoh 2012: 129). Moreover, epistemicide propagated by the modernity is apprized by the "binarism and hierachisation" that maintain the "imbalances of power and the colonial legacy intact" (Sithole 2014: 68). Coloniality of knowledge enforces the ideological perspective that knowledge(s) created by subaltern and colonised nations are inferior, owing to their epistemologies being outside of the Eurocentric model of modernity (Sithole 2014: 74). As suggested by Boidin et al., knowledge that does not adhere to the European hegemonic epistemologies and geography of reason do not qualify as legitimate knowledge, through the lens of modernity/ colonialism (2011). Coloniality of being expresses ways through which identity, subjectivity and ontological dimensions are restricted to the subaltern's specific neo-colonial and colonial experience (King 1977). Additionally, coloniality of being emphasizes the persisting mental legacies of colonial epistemic regimes (Vinayaraj 2016: 37). The addition of coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge equates to the coloniality of being (Sithole 2014: 76). As suggested by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, the genealogy of coloniality forms a linkage between ontology and power, as well as the bond between being and colonization (2007). Furthermore, coloniality of being ushers the Black African subject as an object of the colonial regime. This is amplified by Maldonado-Torres argument stating that "coloniality of being could become one possible way to theorise the basic fundamentals of the pathologies of imperial power and the persistence of coloniality" (2004: 44). Coloniality *qua* modernity institutionalise epistemic violence, against subaltern and colonised nations, through various means that erasure indigenous knowledge and "othering by means of racialisation and subalternization" (Walsh 2007: 231), as well as power exercised through hegemonic structural violence that is an agent of domination, in the dearth of the literal colonial management. Decolonisation is not a synonym for decoloniality; whereas decolonisation refers to the process of uprooting physical manifestations of colonial administration (Hack 2008: 255–257), decoloniality acknowledges that all forms of oppression are mutually formed through socially developed and historically embedded operations of power – towards the reconstruction of indigenous forms of knowledge and alternative ways of being (de Sousa Santos 2007: 68-69). The decolonial framework deconstructs operations of oppression inherent to the modernity/coloniality, towards a "decolonial turn" to the inquisition of mechanisms that enable the potentiality of liberation from structures of the colonial matrix of power (Grosfoguel 2008). Borrowing the concept of *liberation*, as opposed to emancipation, as Dussel presents the notion of "the political and economic decolonization and the epistemological decolonization" (2003: 3). Where the conceptualisation of emancipation is linked to Western Enlightenment, I propose the use of the term decolonial liberation. Further to this, liberation grew out of the "process of de-

centering the universal emancipating claims in the projects grounded in the liberal and socialist traditions of the European enlightenment" (Dussel 2000: 473). Mignolo advocates "epistemic de-linking and epistemic disobedience" from the integrally violent ontological and epistemic systems of the contemporary Western society, through unveiling coloniality/ modernity and give precedence to the lived-experience of indigenous positionality through localised geopolitical and biopolitical frameworks (2011:45). Further to this Mignolo claims decoloniality and the decolonial turn construct a "pluriversal epistemology of the future; an epistemology that delinks from the tyranny of abstract universals" (Mignolo 2007: 159). This decolonial turn illustrates that Western epistemology needs to be "confronted and a different thought constructed and positioned from 'Other' histories and subjectivities" as a means to construct knowledge and ways of being from the peripheries (Walsh 2007: 226). Through the struggle against exploitation and dehumanisation, the decolonial turn and epistemic disobedience galvanizes "chronologies of new epistemologies of new epistemes or new paradigms" (Mignolo 2011: 274). In order for epistemic de-linking and epistemic disobedience to occur there must be decolonization of the "mind" as Thiongo suggests, as well as decolonisation of the "imaginary" recommended by Gruzinski, and as suggested by Walter Mignolo (2007: 452). The decolonial turn, epistemic disobedience and de-linking methodology are politics of disruption, liberation and unpacking of lived experience encapsulated by racialization and Western modernity. Another "utopian project" to eclipse the Western model of modernity, as proposed by decolonial studies, is transmodernity (Dussel 2001). As opposed to a singular modernity centralized to the Eurocentric model of modernity, there is a "multiplicity of decolonial critical responses" to Eurocentric coloniality/ modernity from subaltern and previously colonised people around the world (Grosfoguel 2008: 17). Transmodernity argues a concept of "diversality as a universal project" to the issues of modernity through the production and reintroduction of subaltern epistemologies (Mignolo 2002: 260). Ultimately, the decolonial framework asserts the reconfiguration of the linear historiography, offered by the Western paradigm of modernity, for the "radical re-framing" of previously colonised populations as a tool for "enunciation" (Mignolo 2009: 162). Decoloniality strives to deconstruct and destroy the "monolithic modernity" of Western hegemony (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 261).

Decoloniality offers forging otherwise notions of the 'native' that displaces the centrality of normative ontology and universal episteme. The degenerative and regenerative production of epistemology through portraiture photography by way of disturbance and resiistsance is routinely improvised in itself through the epistemic turn. Noted in upcoming chapters, decoloniality is deployed by postcolonial and contemporary photographers as theory as praxis and praxis as theory unknowingly or intentionally through their practice. Portraiture photography, within contemporaneity, mutates, restructures and revives ways of being through the praxis of decoloniality in opposition to the concrete transmutations of systematic and material violence by means of proposing theoretical analysis' in apposition with the praxis of possibility of being, episteme and construction of counterworlds.

3.2. Glitch Feminism

The literary composition of glitch feminism, by Legacy Russell, suggests glitch Feminism is a "creative and political exploration" of ways through which the internet, as a tool and material, may be used to expand or glitch the composition of the binary body (2020). For the purpose of this thesis, I explore glitch feminism through the lens of Blackness. Glitch feminism suggests Blackness and queerness is manifested as a realm of potentiality, as well as a performative act of disrupting normative systems towards otherwise-being through technology and online domain (Russell 2020). Glitch feminism employs strategies of survival, possibility and becoming, that depict the hybridity of the invisible and unthinkable through potentialities, self-representation and potentiality of being.

Glitch feminism, similar to cyberfeminism (Braidotti 1996 and Plant 1997), is a form of feminism constructed for the digital era; it "acknowledges the value of visuality, and the revolutionary role that digital practice has in expanding the construction, deconstruction, and re-presentation of the female-identifying corpus" (Russell 2013: 1). Cyberfeminism explores the contrasting philosophical questions of technology and proposes a new type of feminism (Hall 1996: 147). Futuristic technology allows users to transcend the physical world, or away from keyboard (AFK) realm to a democratised online space (URL) (Haraway 1985: 173). Influenced by tenets of postmodernism, cyberfeminism aims to demonstrate ways through which the female body transgresses the dichotomous gender notion through the use of cyberspace, the internet, and technology (Braidotti 1996: 241). It proposes a post-human ideology for female bodies as an "artificially reconstructed body" suggested by the *Post-Human* catalogue featured in the exhibition at Deichtorhalle (1993). The virtual realm is considered as a prosthesis and extension of the physical body (Galloway 1998: 3). Following Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg, cyberfeminism initiates the possibility of transcending limiting ideologies of the dichotomous male and female body into a renewed world of humans and machines (1985: 173). The metaphor of the cyborg is a means of comprehending and navigating ways through which ontology is situated in the techno-scientific world and challenges the definition of human beings. Haraway proposes blurring the lines between the gender binary and eliminating the validity of essentialist, as well as naturalist conception of the human condition (1991). Further to this, from a second wave feminist critique, cyberfeminism claims not to give validity to "negative space created by patriarchy," but to reveal "the always already feminine space of technology" (Pouskari: 2004: 396). Where technology is seen as fundamentally a female object, Sadie Plant claims women are intelligent machines, and that the computation is feminine (1997: 19). Cyberspace permits persons to lose their gender whilst simultaneously gaining varied identities (Paniagua 2012: 247). Returning to Haraway's conceptualisation of the cyborg, it is considered a "creature in a post-gender world" (1991: 150). The cyber space allows the potentiality of the reimagination and immigration of bodies from the real word (AFK) to the online realm (URL) (Galloway 1998: 6). The anonymous nature of the internet allows genderbending, gender shifting and cross-expressing. Cross-expressing, as theorised by Kira Hall, suggests the way in which bodies have the ability to reassign and switch between genders within the online space (1996: 151). Ultimately, cyberfeminism is concerned with ways in which the female body traverses with machines, new technology and the cyber space. Glitch feminism explores marginalised bodies

from an intersectional feminist view, where the matrix of domination perpetuates oppression and sustains privilege for various interlocking identities (Collins 1990: 554); cyberfeminism predominantly explores women's bodies from a view of whiteness and trans-exclusionary discourses (Nakamura, L. and Lovink 2005: 60-65).

Glitch feminism is sectioned into various interlinking topics, specifically: 1) glitch refuses, 2) glitch is cosmic, 3) glitch throws shade, 4) glitch ghosts, 5) glitch is error, 6) glitch encrypts, 7) glitch is anti-body, 8) glitch is skin, 9) glitch is virus, 10) glitch mobilizes, 11) glitch remix and 11) glitch survives. For the purpose of this thesis, I give insight to only a few of these sections, as well as demonstrate ways in which glitch feminism empowers marginalised bodies to employ online material to exist in the normative systems that perpetuate patriarchal, sexist, racist, and hegemonic cultural stratification.

A glitch is a sudden malfunction or fault in a system. Through this lens, glitch feminism may be considered an act of refusal or non-performativity to the system of contemporary society. The body is seen as refusing to conform to "the canon of white cisgender heteronormativity" and poses as a threat to the social order (Russell 2020: 30). Where glitch feminism galvanises online platforms to become "fugitive from the mainstream," it engages with the disidentification of the cosmic body from normative binary systems towards the creation of space for subaltern and marginalised bodies to exist. Glitch feminism constructs ways for the body to rupture contemporary societal power structures. The glitch constructs "a fissure within which new possibilities of being and becoming manifest" (Russell 2020: 20). As a means to embrace malfunction, the body transcends societal power structures. The glitch becomes a catalyst; it opens new pathways and permits the appropriation of original directions (Russell 2020: 33). Specifically, through the digital space, marginalised bodies may manufacture their own identities and their own subjectivities. Therefore, the glitch is "a participatory action that challenges the status quo" (Russell 2020:20). The cyberspace is a realm whereby the body is in the process of becoming which is similar to Simone de Beauvoir conception of the body becoming a woman, as opposed to being predestined by biological facets of human nature (1949). Additionally, it echoes sentiments of Judith Butler, wherein she claims that the female-identifying body is bio-politically created and it is imperative for the female body to surpass these socio-cultural impositions through the construction of their own identity (1986: 37). Moreover, the feminist discourse in glitch feminism "problematizes the construct of the body," as it highlights the socio-historical arrangement of gender (Russell 2020: 36). Returning to the process of becoming, the internet is considered an arena wherein the body is able to form its own entity. The body starts in abstraction and through various socio-cultural and political processes journeys towards becoming (Russell 2020: 114).

The body is assigned a cosmic corporeal; the glitch dematerializes the body and eclipses its limitations, to produce space for other potential realities (Russell 2020: 42). To exemplify "the digital as an aesthetic," it obscures the differentiation between body and technology (Russell 2020:43). Towards deconstructing the gender binary, glitch feminism enables the "restructuring of the possibilities for action" (Lazzarato 2014: 18). The body enacts a fluidity and constantly displaces itself from its original form. As noted in Simon Crawley's *BlackPentacostal Breath*

(2017), he images a theological landscape, wherein Blackness and queerness are a performative act of being. Crawley claims the possibility of worlds otherwise for Black queers is to generate potentialities of alternative modes of existence through the enactment of 'breathing' as a disruptive force against contemporary hegemonic society (2017). Crawley establishes breath and the act of breathing as a technology for challenging the epistemological and ontological fundamentals that are generated and regulated by the Western model of modernity, for the contemporary postcolonial society (Crawley 2017). My reasoning for mentioning *BlackPentecostal Breath* is as a gateway for the introduction to the ways in which glitch feminism mobilises technological apparatuses such as the mode of breathing in and giving life to marginalised bodies through the analogy for the cosmic body, that "shakes us [glitch feminists] into an awareness of our bodies and being" (Russell 2021: 96).

Whereby the glitch ghosts, I suggest the term 'ghosting' manifests twofold. Ghosting is defined as abruptly ending contact with someone without reasoning or warning (Freedman, Powell and Williams 2019: 908). Conversely, ghosting may be considered in terms of the hauntological theorisation, whereby the glitch ghosts through literal phantasmic forms and spectres that exist in the liminality of temporality. In both instances, ghosting actively disturbs the normative presence of the contemporaneity of the present social structures. Haunting and the invocations of apparitions from the past are simultaneously sustained by what exists in the material world vis-as-vis what exists in the metaphysical world, wherein the ghostly figuration of temporality haunts the immediate present and anticipated future. Glitch feminism seeks to ghost the binary by means of ending the relationship between the discourse of the body and gender as a construct. Towards ghosting the binary body, glitch feminists seek to dissolve identities and create "boundaries that delineate where we begin and end," in hopes of corrupting surveillance capitalism (Russell 2020: 59). By means of ghosting, there is a "generative void" that creates capacity for differential alternatives (Russell 2020: 61). Through being dynamic and fluid, an "absence of self-ownership" and an embrace of a cosmic materiality is embodied (Russell 2020: 61). As a means to challenge the neoliberal capitalist society, glitch feminists reject the economy and the gender binary (Russell 2020: 61).

Glitch feminists embrace the notion of being an error. An error is to "surrender to becoming unknown, unrecognizable, unnamed" towards disidentifying with mechanisms of the contemporary hegemonic society (Russell 2020: 65). Embodying an error instructs the potentiality of redefining and reclaiming the act of naming as well as language utilised (Russell 2020: 66). As purported by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, language embodies values by which ontology is formed; it carries culture and sociality (1986: 16). Moreover, glitch feminism rejects "the violent act of naming" by hegemonic society, which aims to consign the marginalised body to a taxonomy category of social identification (Russell 2020: 115)

By way of considering the cosmic body as an encryption, Legacy Russell purports a metaphor of computer programming. She suggests the normative and binary body is rendered as plaintext, whilst the glitched and queer body is modelled as ciphertext (2020: 71). Encryption affords a tool for privacy, where encoding content constructs ways for "radical production" (Russell 2020: 71). The deterritorialization of the body demands a departure from the gender binary and realisation

that the materiality of the body is dynamic (Russell 2020: 70). Legibility of bodies demands standard socio-cultural coding. Similar to concepts asserted by Judith Butler, the legibility and recognisability of a body is dependent on socio-cultural legacies of the hegemonic society. A body is only deemed legible if it adheres to social norms and bio-political formations of dominant power structures, otherwise the body is noted as precarious (Butler 2009: 4). Returning to glitch feminism, the cosmic body seeks to resist "normative programming" that is consigned by precariousness (Russell 2020: 71).

The glitch is anti-body, whereby it is a tactical strategy to resist the mechanisms of the coercive socio-cultural architecture (Russell 2020: 76). In accordance with Lynn Hershman Leeson's conceptualisation of the "anti-body", the cosmic-glitch body has the ability to morph and modify; it escapes non-existence and extinction through unending motion and traversing temporality and memory (2011). Through the deployment of the imaginary "a computational strategy of survival," glitch feminism suggests the "re-imagining of neoteric realities" (Russell 2020: 80).

A virus is a program formed through malicious code and poses a threat to the functionality of the machine and its economy. It triggers a slow responsiveness and unpredictability of the computer for the user through "endless buffering, crashing, damaging, deleting, reformatting" (Russell 2020: 93). This slow responsiveness transforms temporality and alters the relationship between machine and person. The glitch triggers errors in the social system that perpetuates disturbances in the socio-economic stratification. Glitch feminists personify the virus as a mode of resistance; they disturb the normal functionality of society through corrupting and infecting binary systems (Russell 2020: 94). For glitch feminists, through deconstructing normative systems they are able to construct a new temporality and spatiality to exist beyond marginalisation. Similar to the framework of decolonisation, whereby a decolonial turn and border-line thinking is encouraged for liberation from the colonial/ modern systems of the contemporary, glitch feminism ushers a break away from normative systems to a world of otherwise potentiality. The glitch is a tool for "socio-cultural malware" (Russell 2020: 95). It supports the decay of hegemonic society and guides a non-performance that directs towards the unknown self-constitutive.

The internet realm becomes a "collective congregation of marginalized voices and bodies" when away from keyboard (AFK) or offline reality fails to do so (Russell 2020: 102). According to Debra Spitulnik, the subaltern public spheres are instrumental in subverting the oppressive matrix of power instituted by media corporations and public debate (2002). Functioning as counter-publics to the dominant hegemonic discourses, subaltern public spheres present ways in which marginalised bodies are able to self-represent and regain their agency (Mpho 2015: 89). By means of sharing content created by marginalised groups online, this becomes a "living archive of a living history" for worlds otherwise and potentiality of existence (Russell 2020: 103). Through mobilizing the online realm and services of these subaltern public spheres, glitch feminism remains fugitive (Russell 2020: 104).

To remix is to be transformed from its original state through deleting, modifying and editing pieces (Markham 2016). Remixing explores ways to innovate the existing text and construct intertextuality. As a technology of survival, remixing is an act of "self-determination;" it is the

rebirthed of an emancipatory sphere that constructs original modes of being through radical action (Russell 2020: 107). Owing to the deployment of the internet and mechanisms of technology, there is an opportunity for subaltern bodies to perform fugitivity (Russell 2020: 108). Glitch feminists create "fissures in the social and cultural algorithm" towards constructing their own reality devoid of hegemonic discourse (Russell 2020: 116).

3.3. Summary

Decoloniality illustrates ways through which the Western paradigm of Enlightenment and modernity need to be critically assessed and deconstructed towards the dialogue of de-Westernisation, as well as indigenous modes of knowledge production. Through the use of the decolonial turn, border thinking and epistemic disobedience, decoloniality explains ways through which indigenous, predominantly Black bodies in the scope of this research, make use of corporeal politics and geopolitics as a mode for liberation and the creation of transmodern societies. The epistemic shift of knowledge and ontological systems are challenged by decoloniality to denounce universality and highlight the importance of the locus of enunciation through locality and biopolitical regimes. By way of constructing an alternative to Western modernity, decoloniality attends to the diverse project of transmodernity to denaturalise the totalising single reality of Western modernity.

Glitch feminism suggests the cosmic body exists in the liminal. Temporality discontinues histography through which the past/ present has not yet caught up to; it can be summoned in the future that can significantly change the past. It triggers errors in the social system that disrupt the socio-economic and political stratification. The glitch pushes back against algorithms of the mainstream to construct new realities and potentialities for marginalized bodies. The internet is a subversive tool and radical technology to escape the temporalities of hegemonic discourse. Subaltern public spheres construct spatiality for marginalized folks to have a living archive of lived-history. The glitch allows cosmic bodies to remain fugitive and fluid. Cosmic bodies reject the gender binary, as well as surveillance capital by remixing and ghosting. Both remixing and ghosting highlight ways for glitch feminists to reject historical processing and corrupt hegemonic society through the online domain and technology.

Ultimately, both frameworks illuminate the use of survival strategies through artistic and practical modes of subversive resistance and liberation tactics for the construction of re-writing, alongside re-seeing the Black African image and the Black body through global histories from geopolitical and biopolitical formations of episteme. There is an attempt to radically reframe the experience of Black bodies through decentring them from the peripheries, to the conceptualisation of expansive systems of hegemonic society.

4. RE-SEEING AFRICA THROUGH PORTRAITURE: METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, I have selected four images between the colonial and contemporary periods respectfully, and eight for the postcolonial era. The reasoning behind my choice relates to my conception of illustrating various representations of Blackness through specific images. I try to introduce various representations as the postcolonial period experienced insurgencies and differential practice of decolonialism throughout the particular periods that I have chosen to analyse. Through a mixed method approach between qualitative and quantitative means, I illustrate ways through which this study is guided. This chapter demonstrates the description of the mixed method orientation, the sampling, research methodology through the multimodal and multisite framework of Critical Visual Methodology. This research is an extended case study with photographic portraiture from colonial, postcolonial and contemporary South African and Mali contexts created by Black African photographers. Through the means of Critical Visual Methodology, I undertake critical steps to evaluate the sixteen images as a means to interpreting visual texts and the sociocultural contextualisations of the Black African image.

4.1. Research methods: Methodology

This study makes use of critical visual methodology, which forwards a multi-site and multi-modal approach to research methods, modes of data collection and data analysis. In this section I discuss the specificities of my chosen research method, as well as the particularises of my data selection. I demonstrate ways through which CVM is deployed to deconstruct the images I have chosen towards my discussion sections. Moreover, this research methodology is a transdisciplinary visual research and forwards the analysis of historical traces visible in photographs, as well as ways in which visual culture impacts the understanding of sociocultural discourses through communicative contexts.

4.2. Research methods

The research method employed by this study is transdisciplinary and conducts a holistic visual analysis. This section delves into the intricacies of the qualitative research approach.

4.2.1. Qualitative research approach

Quantitative research demonstrates the interpretation of sociocultural dynamics through subjective and descriptive means (Bryman 2012: 622). Data collection and analysis, within qualitative method, is dependent on socio-cultural and situational contexts as a means to identify dominant themes and characteristics implicit in the targeted subject of research (Sgier 2012: 19). Furthermore, through the acknowledgement of positionality, reflexivity and multivalent lived-realities, qualitative research uncovers ways through which subjectivity has an impression on

data collection and data analysis (Pascoe 2022: 176). Whilst qualitative data explores material realities, the complication of data findings are not seemingly objective and lack empirical confirmation of data (Mason 2002). Qualitative research encompasses "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" through means of considering "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3). Ultimately, through the use of qualitative methods the findings focuses on subjectivity and the positionality of the researcher.

4.3. Critical Visual Methodology

This study makes use of CVM, as forwarded by Gillian Rose (2000), through the analysis of qualitative and quantitative methodology as a mode for determining social circumstances and effects of visual objects. The critical visual methodology approach is utilised in this research to assess ways through which the photographic portraits are created and through what production of historical legacies affect their audiencing; the aesthetic features imbued in the specific images; as well as a means to conduct a semiological analysis. CVM explores visual texts through a multidisciplinary mode of research, lending from but not limited to semiology, content analysis, psychoanalysis and discourse analysis, as a means to look beyond the focus on the image, but its production and decoding by its audiences (Rose 2002:14). CVM considers visual culture as sociocultural practices which articulate meaning, negotiation and production towards the analysis of visual texts (Gullipse and Toybee 2006:122). CVM is a broad framework illustrating how images are created and the way in which they are in the constant production of meaning. CVM proffers a multisite and multimodal analysis which explores a criterion for the critical readings of images (Hart 2008: 77). There are three modalities of each of the three sites which offer interrogation of the visual objects. The three modalities CVM explores are: technological, compositional and social, whereas the three sites are: the image itself, audiencing and production within specific sociohistorical and cultural contexts (Rose 2016: 14- 22).

The technological modality explores the technique and technological machinery or methods deployed to construct a visual object (Rose 2002). This modality explores the specific tools and mechanisms, as well as the functionality of how a visual text is encoded, disseminated, circulated and decoded. The compositional modality characterises and categorises images through intertextuality and genre, wherein visual texts share similar conventions and codes. The compositional modality examines ways through which visual foundations are arranged, organised and decoded through the grammar of visual literacy such as elements of design. Visual construction, by way of formal elements of design, analyses the mode through which colour, form, line, symbolic elements and focal point produce a visual text (Evans and Thomas 2012). Lasty, the social modality places the visual text, as a symbolic object, through historical, political and sociocultural contextualisations (Nesbitt Hills 2011). Symbolic forms are culturally specific expressions and practices which are shaped through social conventions within a particular semiotic structure (Thompson 1990: 129).

Within the three modalities, there are three further sites that impact the way in which images are analysed and deconstructed. As a means to define how the three modalities contribute critically towards interpreting a visual text, it is vital to explore them in relation to their intersection to the

three sites of meaning production: the image itself, the site of audiencing and the site of production. The image itself analyses the visual text as a "material artefact" wherein the creation of visual forms a "social arrangements and organisation forms" that encode as well as decode meaning for the specific audience (Lievrouw 2011: 7). Through the connection of the image itself and the social modality, the "cultural context of consumption," CVM proffers researchers with an in-depth understanding of how "images embody and express cultural values and contradictions" (Schroeder 2006: 303). As a means to interpreting the image itself, there are specific genres, narratives through visual content that marry the methods of discussing sociohistorical and cultural contexts which construct a holistic understanding of the symbolic objects presented, as seen in the compositional and social modality (Phillips and McQuarrie 2004). Largely dependent on the compositional modality, the image itself decodes visual elements such as deciphering the visual codes contained within it, such as formal elements of design, of line, focal point, light, tone and contrast (Machin and Ledin 2018). With specific attention to the compositional modality and the image itself, it examines ways through which visuality effects the reading of a text. Visuality refers to a particular way to which "visual images tutor us" through specific forms "of subjectivity" (Rose 2002: 104), as well as the mode in which "vision is constructed" through multiple frames. As Foster suggests, "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein" (Foster, 1988a: ix). Moreover, through the means of visuality, there is a scopic regime that shape the audience's ways of seeing through culturally coded and constructed structures. The site of production investigates technical and mechanical elements of construction of the visual text, the sociocultural circumstances, as well as the systematic contextualisations (Allor 1988). Where the site of production intersects the technological modality, this explores the mechanical means in which the visual text was manufactured. Furthermore, where the site of production and compositional modality align, questions of genre arise. Genre categorises texts through specific types which though not "wholly separate," often instigate interpretation with description of a variety of intertextual visual content (Baxandall, 1987). The last site of CVM is the site of audiencing. The site of audiencing gestures to the varied usage and consumption of media texts by a specific audience, through mediated decoding of media technologies and visual grammar. The site of audiencing lends itself to the audience theory receptions as forwarded by Stuart Hall. Hall claims there are three main ways in which a text is read by the audience: dominant or preferred reading, oppositional reading and negotiated reading (2003). Additionally, the site of audiencing incites the question of the gaze and how the gaze is performed by the viewer.

With specific attention to CVM, I make use of social semiology. Where semiology refers to the construction of reality through signs, social semiology claims the construction of signs is reliant of the sociocultural contexts that determine and shape meaning-making (Halliday 1978: 192). Operated through quantitative and qualitative research methods, my predominant mode of methodology is a visual content analysis and thematic analysis. A visual content analysis generates data through the analytic investigation of visual subject matter, mis-en-scene, formal element compositions, as well as the diverse contexts wherein interpretation is produced, mediated, decoded and disseminated (Lister and Wells 2001: 34). By means of a thematic analysis, informed by key aspects discussed in the literature review and framework chapters, I

present ways through which there are unified and differential discourses that arise within the discussion chapters that follow.

4.4. Research design

The photographs that were selected are based on my own judgement and present the most impact for the aim of my research. By use of a purposeful sample, the photographs utilised, in the analysis of this research, are not representative of the photographs maintained throughout the categorised eras I have developed as a whole. The same size included sixteen visual texts.

The selection criteria for the samples were:

1. The photograph was captured in Mali or South Africa.
2. The photography is a photographic portrait of a Black African body.
3. The photograph is monochromatic.
4. The photograph is categorised as either colonial, postcolonial or contemporary period.
5. The photographer is Black and from Africa, specifically Mali and South Africa.

Selected upon the qualifying criteria, the sample material was analysed through visual content analysis, semiotic analysis and thematic analysis. Figure 4.3.2. presents a table that illustrates the population constraints of the sample photographs. With regards to the quantitative method, I account for the portrait genre, mis-en-scene, form of portrait and nonverbal communication as a means to produce an empirical statistic of each categorisation and popularity. Additionally, through my prefer analysis methods, I uncover patterns that present the Black African image as either or simultaneously subverting yet affirming colonial conventions of photography, as well as ways through which postcolonial and contemporary photographers respectfully create para-ontological domains for the sociality of Black Africanness. Despite there being multiple South African and Malian photographers within the contemporary era, such as Andile Buka, Sabelo Mlangeni and Noncedo Charmaine, I specifically selected Zanele Muholi and Fatoumata Diabate's photographs as their approach to Blackness and "Africanness" are intertwined with sociocultural and historical legacies of their locality, as well as these photographers actively seek

to disrupt the heteronormative hegemonic Western society. Moreover, my selection of the postcolonial and colonial photographs were predominantly chosen on the basis of the Black bodies nonverbal communication and the self-fashioning (or lack thereof) within the photographic frame.

Figure 4.3.3. presents a table that illustrates ways through which the chosen photographs were structured in grid form by period or era of production, photographer's name or anonymity and platform of retrieval, as a means to establish the categorisation of research material. The photographs I analyse were accessed and selected from multiple online archives, websites and social media platforms. The images selected from the colonial and postcolonial era were sourced through a Google search of the respective photographer; whilst the images from the contemporary era were located through the photographers' personal website or social media accounts.

As a means to order the compositional modality, seen in figure 4.3.2, I constructed a coding table that highlights the specified genre of portrait photography through vernacular, studio, location and artwork. This coding table allows for the classification of the Black African image through groupings that share visual codes and features. Vernacular photography elicits the quotidian through the lived-experience of the subject photographed within their domesticated states (Murray 2013: 180.). Studio photography typically defines a form of photography wherein the subject is shot within a curated space through artificial lighting, particular backdrops and model's posing in a planned manner (Child 2013). Location portraiture photography, as the genre title suggests, are images captured in an outdoor site-specific setting (Hurter 2004). Lastly, ethnographic portraiture details Western modernity's application of pseudoscientific means to taxonomify and document subaltern (and usually indigenous) populations as other and primitive (Scherer 1995: 202.). Through these specific genres of portraiture photography, the visuality and representation of the Black African image transverses and transmutes the multiple readings of the Black body.

Through the categorisation of portrait form and nonverbal communication, as illustrated in figure 4.3.3. and 4.3.4., I present ways through pose and body language establish particular photographic conventions of the photographed Black body which subvert, affirm or re-appropriate colonial tropes of photography. With attention to the gaze of the sitter, I demonstrated how Black bodies maintain or lack agency and subjectivity within the portraits. The gaze primarily considers by who is doing the looking and whether the subject looks back.

For the purpose of contextualising the mis-en-scene elements of the compositional modality, I constructed a table that illustrates the various attributes and visual codes located within the portraitures, as demonstrated in figure 4.3.5. Mis-en-scene typically refers to the arrangement of setting, scenery and stage, that include medium, costume, props, lighting, as well as location, found within the photographic frame (Giles 2021: 90.).

4.5. Black bodies through monochrome

For the purpose of this research, all the images I have selected are monochromatic. This aesthetic choice of Black and white was driven by multivalent aspects. Firstly, as a means to show uniformity between the images selected, I ensured all the images were monochromatic. Secondly, Black and white photographs illicit a sense of objectivity and truth (Buxton 1998). The photographic convention of monochromatic images is intrinsically intertwined with photo-documentation and the colonial tropes of ethnography. Both suggest a sense of objectivity and thus create a reality that is in actuality a fiction. Thirdly, the effect of monochromatic photographs forces the viewer to focus on the content of the images, devoid of the intrusion and distraction of a colour palette. The tension between the deep contrasts and bright highlights place emphasis on the composition and structural elements presented by the image, as well as the image artistically relies on the tonal variations, texture and forms that construct the image. Despite the contemporary artistic photographs lacking colour, through their arrangement of technical elements, the images produce a fantastical and otherworldly locality as an objective truth. Moreover, these contemporary photographs, through the deployment of Black and white colour scheme, transcend reality towards an abstraction.

4.6. Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research process and design of the study in relation to the multimodal and multisite framework of CVM. The delineation of the samples and scope of the study were outlined. Moreover, I illustrated, through tables and figures, how the research design is constructed and executed. Eighteen visual texts are the latitude of the study, and the qualitative and quantitative design presents definitions and tables that describe modes of mise-en-scene, nonverbal communication, and the form/ angle of the portrait. The photographs I have selected, despite appearing casual are highly disciplined, carefully observed and constructed with meticulous exactitude and attention to strategic arrangement.

5. ANALYSIS

This chapter examines eighteen visual texts are through a multimodal and multisite research design I have constructed. I offer a visual analysis through the research design that presents a multimodal model for deconstructing visual texts, in order to comprehend the ways through which the medium of photography is applied and mobalised in studio portraiture to represent and construct Blackness. The exploration pertaining to the phantasy of otherness examines the Black African image through visual codes and a discursive analysis, as a means to unravel the value of authority, subjectivity and whether these photographs negate or affirm colonial tropes.

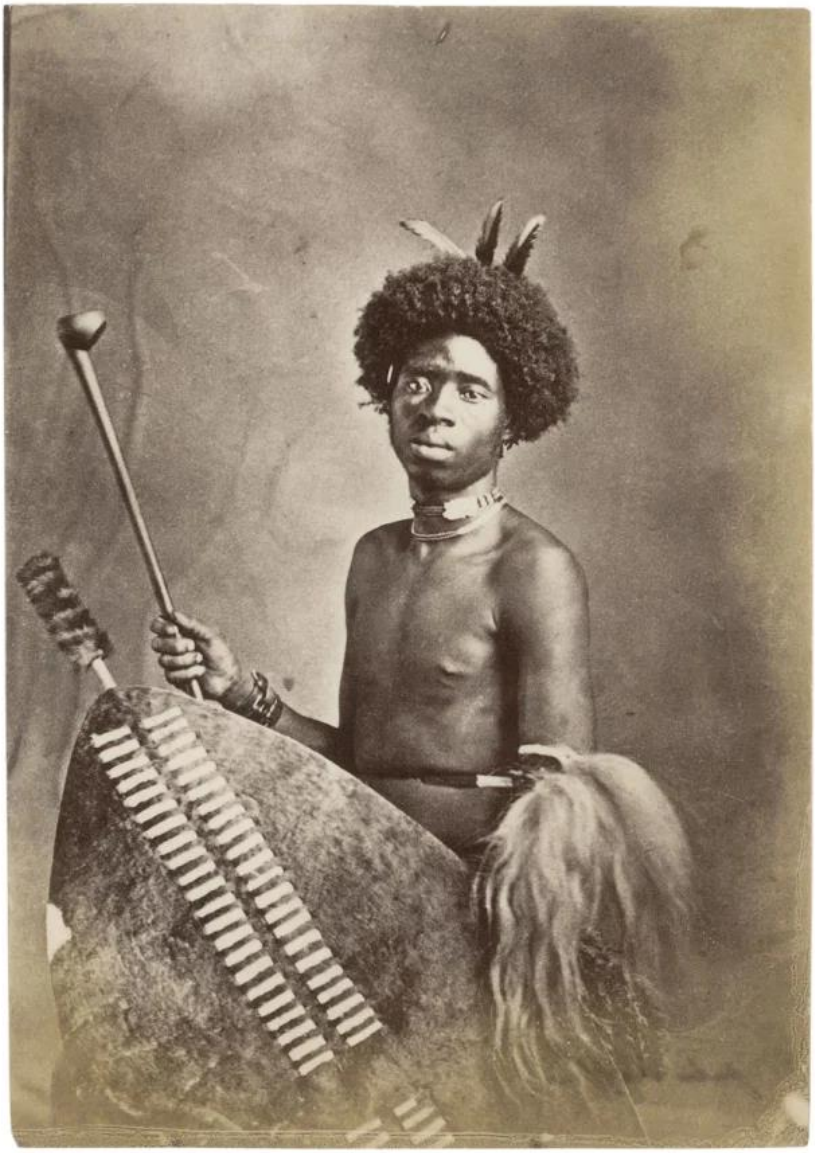
5.1. Colonial



A. James Gribble (South African, 1863-1943), inscribed:
Kaffer woman
South Africa, late nineteenth century
Albumen print

Figure 5.1.1.

Captured by James Gribble, in colonial South Africa, during the late 19th century, figure 5.1.1. illustrates an image of a Black woman, captioned as "Kaffir woman." Through her glimmering eyes, a lifetime of assumingly housework or as a house slave, the Black woman presented is the focal point of this image. The decontextualised bokeh blur background brings to fore a light dusty gradient, whilst her darkened body stands out against the hazy backdrop. The leading lines of her Victorian dress contour her body and the reflecting detailed floral buttons and a large broch like button around the collar enhance the attention to her heart-shaped face. The negative space that creates balance and harmony of the image, through the simplicity of centrality, places prominence on her figure. Moreover, the absence of props and the decontextualised plain background places prominence on the presence of her Black body and her physiological features. Through the use of natural light of assumingly a window lit portrait, I suggest the production of this image additionally made use of a lamp or external light as her face is side lit and there is a sparkle in her eyes. Her hair is neatly parted in the centre, and it is combed back which illustrates the symmetry of her facial features and light balance dividing her face into an equilibrium. The Black woman is posed within a frontal bust composition. The condition of her posture echoes Victorian portrait conventions for white Europeans, wherein her stature is rigid, engaged yet radiating confidence. The texture of this photograph varies, though presenting a clean and smooth finish, it moreover illustrates chemical burns and light leaks, as a result of the photograph development process, which add an extra tactility to the image – somewhat hazy and faded quality. The photographic image is produced through a transferal of the image to an albumen print which illustrates a sharp foreground and blurred background. Viewed through a Western colonial gaze, I suggest this portrait was made use of as a 'before' and 'after' representation of the Black indigenous population as 'primitive' to the newly salvaged 'civilised.' This image of salvation is projected through her fashioning in Westernised dress and specifically chosen posture. This photograph not only forms as an ethnographic document, but rather as a means for the encouragement and promotion of the forced adaption of Western modernity values imposed upon Black bodies in Africa. Lastly, this photograph promotes a manufactured and involuntary imagining of the Black African body for European audiences. Curated in *The Distance and Desire: poetics and politics* (2013) exhibition, by the Walther collection, this portrait photograph is featured alongside various other colonial and postcolonial portraits of the indigenous Black population in Africa.



Samuel Baylis Barnard (English, 1841-1916), inscribed: Zulu Kaffir

South Africa, late nineteenth century

Albumen print

Walther Collection

Figure 5.1.2

Captured by Samuel Baylis Barnard, during the late nineteenth century, in colonial South Africa, Figure 5.1.2. presents a studio photography and ethnographic-archival portrait of an unnamed Black body of an adult male, inscribed to as *"Zulu Kaffir."* Situated slightly off-centre of the frame, in front of a plain white studio backdrop, is an upper-body semi-frontal portrait of a seated young Black man with a bare torso costumed in various traditionally "African props." In an action pose, the adult Black male holds a traditional animal-hide-made shield in one arm and a wooden knobkerrie in the other. The cloudy grey tonal background highlights his props and body to the focal point of the image. The Black male has his shoulders rolled back; his pose is non-confrontational, yet his posture is rigid. His jaw is softened, and while he stares directly at the viewer, his heavy-lidded stare is nonthreatening. The use of props, usually imposed by colonial photographers for the consumption by European audiences, highlights his exoticism and colonial difference. Produced by means of photographic image transferral to albumen print, the Black and white has a slightly grainy pencil-like finish. This image was originally viewed through the colonial Western gaze, whereby the Black body was archived and recorded through research documents for ethnographic means, as well as entertainment voyeuristic purposes for European audiences in the form of postcards. This image was curated in *The Distance and Desire: poetics and politics* (2013) exhibition by the Walther collection beside other colonial and postcolonial portraits of the indigenous Black population in Africa.



Étude No 82; Femme Malinké

1910

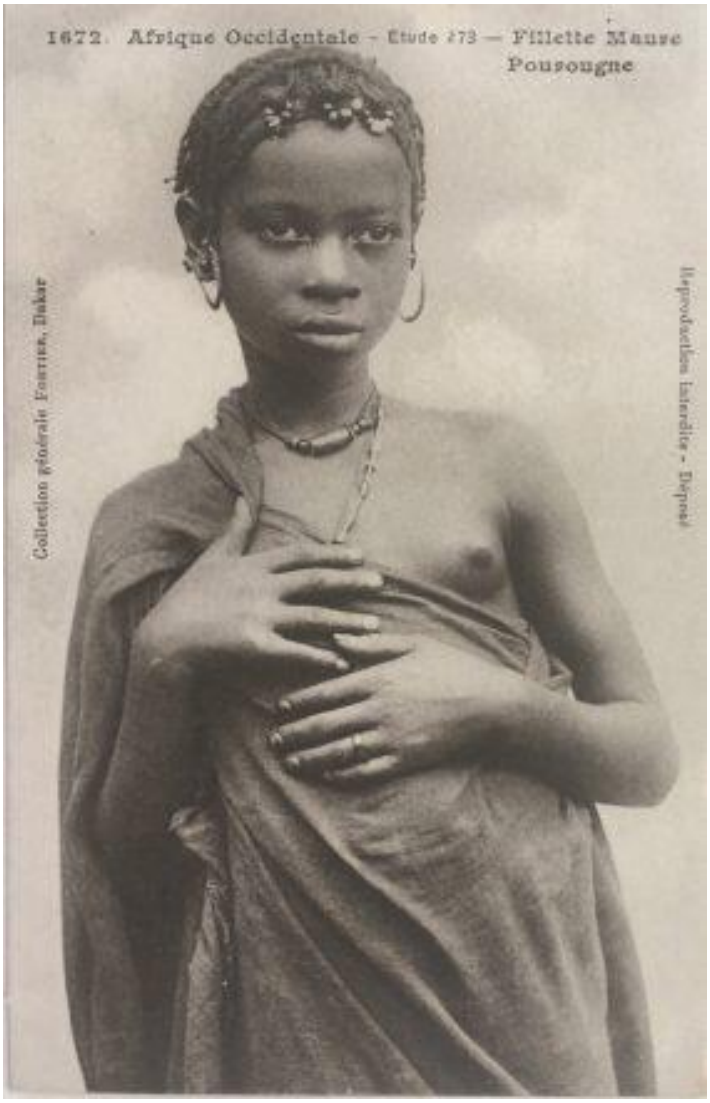
François-Edmond Fortier

Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive—Gift of Leonard A. Lauder

Collotype on card stock

Figure 5.1.3

Photographed by Edmond Fortier, during 1910 in colonial Mali*,* Figure 5.1.3. illustrates an on-location photograph and ethnographic-archival portrait of an unnamed Black woman, inscribed as "'Femme Malinké." Occupying the centre of the frame is a frontal half body of a Black woman with her left arm resting across her waist. Wearing a Black and white striped cloth around her waist and abdomen, as well as a twisted white cloth draped across her body, reposing on her right shoulder, her breasts exposed. Her isolated figure, from the background field, by the selective focus, brings forward her darkened body. Moreover, the blurred bokeh gradient of grey background accentuates her body and the chiaroscuro on her face highlights her physiological features. The Black woman is captured at eye level. She stares directly at the viewer with a piercing stare. Her facial expression is blank, and her lips are closed gently. Her shoulders are not slumped forward nor backward and she possesses a relaxed posture. Wearing a beaded necklace and her hair is fashioned in an ornate manner, this mise-en-scene presents the Black woman's nativity and her African subjectivity. Produced by means of photographic image transferral to collotype on card stock, the Black and white (though presenting sepia tinted qualities) image has a slightly grainy pencil-like finish and grey tonal variation. The weathered materiality of the image is affected by the rectangular sticky brown residue on the right of the photograph and the multiple round stamp prints. Additionally, this photograph has fine red print in the right top corner inscribed as Afrique Occidentale. Seeing as this image is a carte-de-visite, the image was circulated throughout Europe and seen through anthropological and ethnographic colonial gaze. This in turn created colonial difference between the European audience and the African subjects, as well as it highlights the colonial voyeuristic gaze by European spectators. This image is found in the digital archive of Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive and is curated by Museum of Fine Arts Boston alongside other colonial artifacts and images.



Afrique Occidentale – Étude 273 – Fillette Maure Pourougne.

1906

Edmond Fortier

https://edmondfortier.org.br/postal/05-05-cgf-ii-1672/

Figure 5.1.4

Photographed by Edmond Fortier, during 1906, in colonial Mali, Figure 5.1.4 is a frontal half full body portrait of a Black girl inscribed as “Fillette Maure Pourougne.” Translated from French this title refers to a young Moorish girl. From the etymology of Wolof, “Pourougne or puru-ny”, relates to “red ones” or Moorish red ones from West African tribes (Montiel 1950: 174). Situated at the centre of the frame is a Black girl posed in a Venus pudica stance. Similar to Western portrait conventions of paintings of Venus, the girl covers her breasts with her hands whilst reclining. Her shoulders lean back, her neck is elongated, and her chin is tilted downwards. Photographed at eye level, her face is frontal, yet she stares upward, and her gaze is averted from the viewer. Through her closed lips, she communicates a composed facial expression and sexual vulnerability. Decontextualised from her surroundings, the girl is captured in a photographic studio with a plain white background and artificial lighting. The mise-en-scene, predominantly noted by her mode of presentation, being an ornate braided hairstyle, necklaces, hoop earrings, pagne wrap around cloth covering her body, highlights the ethnographic conventions for the European civilising mission as well as emphasises her African subjectivity. Produced by means of photographic image transferral to carte-de-visite, the low contrast Black and white image produces a grainy texture yet presents smooth grey tonal variations. Additionally, in fine Black print, at the top vertical right and left corner, as well as the top trimming, is a brief description of the image; these texts further frame her face. This photograph belongs to the Edmond Fortier collected and is curated on his website alongside various ethnographic and anthropological portraits of the Black indigenous population throughout West Africa.

5.2. Postcolonial



Woman with radio

1978

Kitty Moodley

Figure 5.2.1

Photographed by Singarum Jeevaruthnam Moodley, during 1978 apartheid South Africa, Figure 5.2.1. depicts an unnamed Black woman captioned “Woman with radio.” Located at the centre of the frame, in front of a white wall between the parting of two draped dark curtains, is an unnamed Black woman posing alongside a tall wooden stool with a radio placed on it. Her left arm rests on the dial of the radio, whilst her right arm is folded beneath her breast embracing a small clutch purse. Her white ornate hat and white t-shirt brings her figure into focus and allows her to assume the focal point of the image. This studio and vernacular photograph present a full-body frontal angle of a Black woman holding a semi-contrapposto pose; her left leg is forward, and she rests her weight on her back leg. The Black woman exhibits a tamed yet surprised facial expression, where her mouth is open, and her eyebrows are raised. Fully dressed in popular Western fashion, she wears an ornate white hat, plaid pleated skirt, white open collar t-shirt, brogues and a white bracelet. Her outfit indicates her postcolonial sensibility and attention to modern popular fashion during the 1970s. Moreover, the usage of the radio as a prop illustrates modernisation and technological advancements during postcolonial temporality. Further to this, it illustrates the subject’s awareness to modern technology in self-fashioning. This photograph was commissioned by the sitter and possibly recorded in a family album or as a personal keepsake. The use of props and self-expression through clothing, propagates her urban social status and her Black sociality for the purpose of archiving her representation and agency. Photographed on medium format with artificial lighting, the Black and white photograph demonstrates a glossy texture and soft tonal grey variations. This image is curated in the *Who I Am: Rediscovered Portraits from Apartheid South Africa (The Walther Collection Project Space, New York, United States)* exhibit alongside multiple portrait photographs capture by Moodley in his “Kitty’s Studio” in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, during 1972-1984.



Two women, one wearing traditional attire

1981

Moodley

Figure 5.2.2

Captured by Singarum Jeevaruthnam Moodley, in his Kitty's Studio in Pietermaritzburg, during 1981, in postcolonial Apartheid South Africa*,* Figure 5.2.2 presents a studio photography and vernacular portrait of two unnamed Black women, captioned as "Two women, one wearing traditional attire." Framed by the negative space produced by the wide angle shot, the two Black women are placed in front of a plain curtain background and stand on a floral print carpet. Despite both women situated at the centre of the frame, assuming the focal point of the image, the woman wearing a white t-shirt becomes the predominant focus, as she is highlighted against the grey tonal variations of the image. This portrait photograph portrays a full-body frontal angle of the two Black women holding relaxed yet engaged postures; the woman on the left embraces a sassy pose with her hand resting on her hip, whilst the woman on the right has her arms placed neatly by her sides. Both Black women exhibit solemn facial expressions with their assertive gazes staring directly at the viewer. The two Black women wear varied costumes. The woman on the left dons an A-line pleated skirt that reaches below her knees, a polo neck and a waist coast. Her hair is short, and she wears strappy high heels. In contrast to the woman on the right, this woman wears a white t-shirt with beaded necklaces crossed around her chest, a boxy skirt decorated with a pattern down the centre, as well as a piece of fabric around her right knee and she is barefoot. Her traditional attire either belongs to the isiZulu or isiXhosa heritage as those are the dominant African cultures in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The juxtaposition between the modern postcolonial fashion and the traditional attire illustrates the duality of African subjectivity and self-expression, against the hegemonic apartheid South African account of Black identity. The woman on the left is fully clothed in Western fashion, which may be an indication to the modern urban South African subjectivities, whilst the woman on the right wears traditional attire which may lay claim to her pride in her heritage. This photograph was commissioned by the sitters and possibly recorded in a family album or for a loved one. Furthermore, the act of documenting their postcolonial subjectivity in apartheid South Africa illustrates their Black social life and purpose of preserving their self-expression. The silky gradation of the Black and white photograph presents a glossy texture and smooth materiality. This vernacular and studio photograph, captured in a professional photographic studio is curated in *Who I Am: Rediscovered Portraits from Apartheid South Africa (The Walther Collection Project Space, New York, United States)* exhibited alongside various portrait photographs shot within Moodley's "Kitty's Studio" in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, during 1972 to 1984.



Kitty Moodley

Untitled 29 July 1976

figure 5.2.3

Captured on Black and white film, in Ndimande and Sons Studio by Richard Ndimande, in Enhlalakahle, South Africa, during 1976, figure 5.2.3 exhibits a portrait photograph of two unnamed Black women. Captioned "*Untitled 29 July 1976,*" the photograph illustrates two Black women, situated at the centre of the frame, wearing traditional attire. The two Black women, standing rigidly with their arms at their sides, are placed in front of a plain wall with Black

curtains peering at the corners. Situated at the centre of the frame, their ornate traditional costumes and darkened figures become the focal point of the image. The close crop of the image eliminates the limited background and allows the viewer to focus on the two women. The portrait photograph presents a full-body frontal angle of the two Black women; their posture is stiff yet calm. Their shoulders are relaxed, their legs parted and arms at their side. The two women stand with their legs apart in a triangular pose, as well as hold sticks in their left hands and a scrunchy like object in their right hands. Their gaze is piercing and stares directly at the viewer. Both women hold stern facial expressions, and their body language communicates self-assurance. Wearing identical traditional clothing, assumingly belonging to the isiNdebele culture owing to it being one of the predominant cultures found in the Kwa-Zulu Natal region, the two Black women wear neck braces, beaded crowns, beaded necklace around their necks and shoulders, Black shawls, plain long tunics cinched around the waist by a white belt, material and beads around their calves, as well as modern sneakers. Despite wearing identical traditional attire, their similar sneakers illustrate the duality of modern yet customary subjectivities. By means of expressing identical cultural attire, the two Black women illustrate their pride in their heritage, as well as their potential kinship and/ or friendship. This photograph was potentially archived in their family album and purposefully commissioned by the sitters. Photographed by means of Rollei dual lens camera and developed using silver gelatin on resin-coated paper, the varied Black and white tonal gradation produces a clean and velvety texture and materiality. This vernacular and studio photograph, captured in a professional photographic studio archives and documents sociality of Blackness against the hegemonic apartheid regime's representation of the Black population as homogenous and colonially oppressed. Curated by the Guardian news website in the article *Portraits from apartheid-era South Africa - in pictures,* this image belongs to a catalogue of varied photographed by Richard Ndimande in his Ndimande and Sons studio during 1970 to 1979.

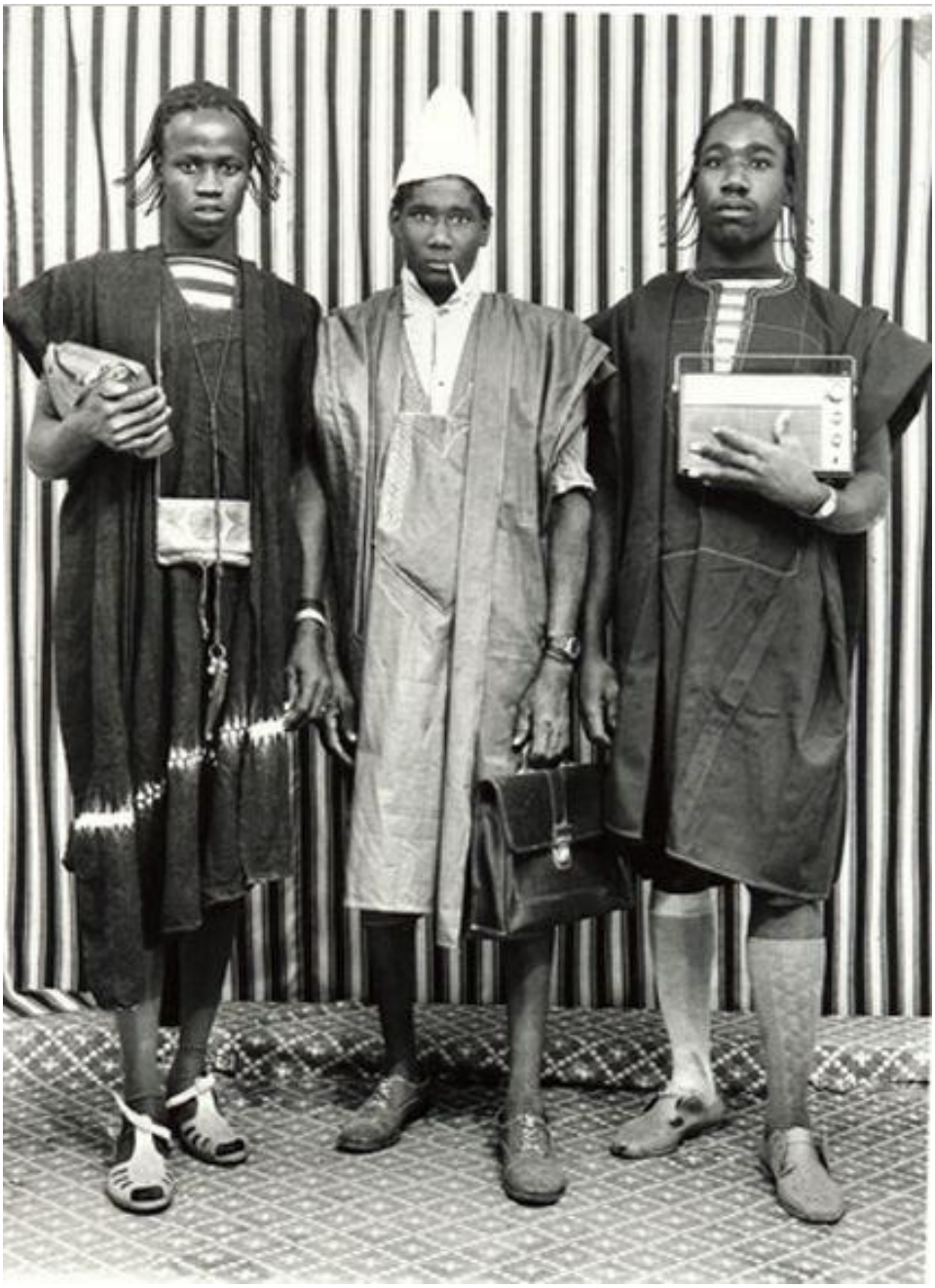


Richard Ndimande

Untitled 20 May 1976

Figure 5.2.4

Photographed by Richard Ndimande, in apartheid South Africa during 1976, on Black and white film, figure 5.2.4 presents two unnamed women with the caption: Untitled 20 May 1976. Placed at the centre of the image, in front of a plain wall with Black curtains slightly visible at the corners, are two Black women standing rigidly with their arms at their sides. One poses with her legs open in a triangular stance, whilst the other with her legs closed and knees touching. Framed by the negative white space of the background, their stark white polo necks and the plain backdrop makes the two women stand out. Photographed through a frontal angle, the standing full-body portrait of the two Black women presents the women's composure as relaxed, yet engaged; additionally, despite them wearing sunglasses they directly stare at the viewer, with a confrontational gaze. Their body language exhorts confidence. Both women's mouths are closed, their jaws are clenched, and they don an emotionless facial expression, staring directly at camera. The two Black women wear identical clothing but different flat shoes; self-fashioned through trendy Western clothing, specifically white polo-necks, bold sunglasses, varied lengthened Black pleated skirts and brogues and sandals. Despite wearing similar costume, the woman on the right wears clothing that are more modest than the woman on the left; her skirt is longer, and her top is baggy. The aspect of dressing more modestly may suggest that she is older and potentially be the older sister or mother of the woman on the left. Their clothing signal towards school uniform whilst additionally gesturing to diasporic USA civil rights aesthetic. Through their expression of similar fashion, the Black women highlight the creation of the postcolonial modern urban South African subjectivities, as well as kinship and/ or friendship. This image was potentially commissioned by the sitters and showcased in a family album. Developed through silver gelatin on resin-coated paper, the soft Black and white tonal variations create a smooth texture and glossy materiality to the portrait. Captured in a professional photographic studio, this vernacular and studio photograph was a means to document the social life of the political Black identity, against representation propagated by the apartheid regime. Within the context of the photograph being captured, 1976 within South African politics was turbulent with student uprisings; I claim their school uniform-esque outfits motion towards a solidarity with the student uprisings. Further to this, I suggest that the two Black women illustrate kinship through the proximity of their composition; perhaps this is a mother/ daughter or older/ younger sibling photograph. This image was curated in the Guardian news website on *Portraits from apartheid-era South Africa - in pictures* post illustrating various other images captured by Richard Ndimande within 1970 to 1979.



Malick Sidibé
Les Trois Berger Peuls
gelatin silver print
11 x 14 inches

1976

Figure 5.2.5

Figure 5.2.5 constructs an intimate and enigmatic tableau that narrates a story of masculinity, postcolonial subjectivity and friendship. Captured by Malick Sidibe, during 1976, on Black and white film, in Malick Studio, there are three unnamed Black men, captioned “Les Trois Berger Peuls,” translating to The Three Fulani Shepherds. The enclosed space of the studio is a pivotal technical device as it enables Sidibe to portray the intimacy of relationships between the clients and to place himself in close proximity to the photographed men. Cropping in tightly and focusing on the men juxtaposed against the simple, yet decorative background, allows the figures to interpenetrate with their surroundings. The three Black men stand in front of a striped Black and white backdrop and are positioned in frontal, full body, contrapposto formation upon a floral diamond patterned floor. Despite all three men holding a contrapposto pose, whereby their figures are poised in such a way that their weight rests on their engaged back leg whilst the free front leg is slightly bend at the knee, the position of their arms differ. The men on the margins hold props in their oppositional arms closely to their chests, whilst the centre man has his arms resting by his side and holding a work briefcase in his right arm. The three Black men are arranged according to the shade of their outfits and their arms are positioned in a way that forms a symmetrical arrangement. Whereas the man placed at the centre of the image wears the lightest coloured traditional outfit, the men wearing darker outfits stand on the margins. Additionally, the men on margins hold props in oppositional hands thus framing the man at the centre. The three Black men’s posture is rigid with their shoulders pushed backward and straightened. Although their pose is casual, it still parallels stiff postures. The men hold varied gazes. Two men have determined gazes confronting the viewer whilst the other’s gaze is beyond the frame with a blank stare. With regards to their facial expression, the centre man and the man to the left assert confident and defiant appearances, whilst the man on the right discloses a dull and passive emotion. The use of the stripped Black and white background constructs the limitation of negative space that the stripes displace the depth contouring the three men. Further to this, the vertical lines are dominant facets of the image construction; they place emphasis on the stability of the image, as well as allow the viewers’ eye to progress from the top to bottom of the photograph. The focal point of the image is well-defined. With the strategic composition of the men, their outfits and hand arrangements, the striped background makes figures more prominent and highlights their presence. The background and foreground interpenetrate due to conflicting patterns and darkened foreground. The lighting in this image is assumed to be artificial owing to specific aspects; I suggest the light source is from the centre and a slight lighting from the right, as their faces are illuminated and there is a brief shadow leaning to the left by the men’s legs. The three men all wear traditional Malian tunics, also known as boubou and differential shoes and socks; additionally, the man placed at the centre wears a monumental pointed white hat. Their outfits echo their unified identity and brotherhood. Similar to the concept defined by Candace Keller, the men exhibit Beyada which refers to a sense of family and togetherness, as well as Fedaya, noticeably through their individuality and claim to different Western objects. Despite their collective identity, the men possess differential props relating to Western modernity and postcoloniality. The man on the left holds a radio; radios usually signify a sense of increasing availability to technology. The man in the centre has a cigarette pursed between his lips and holds a leather briefcase in his right hand; the signification of a cigarette echoes sentiments of Westernisation and masculinity, whilst the briefcase illustrates the immediate growth of

urbanisation and the influx of capitalist productivity. Lastly, the man on the right holds what seems to be a purse against his chest; the purse, though not directly a demonstration of modernity, presents a fascination with Western fashion and the postcolonial sensibilities of emerging Western style. This image was commissioned by the sitters and archived in a family album as a means to highlight the men's playful consumption of popular Western visual culture, whilst embodying pride in their traditional outfits. Captured on medium format film, the photograph presents grey tonal variations, overexposed sections and a smooth materiality. This image belongs to the Artnet catalogue and is printed on gelatin paper, ranging from 11 x 14 inches in size. The image is curated amongst other photographs captured by Malick Sidibe and fellow artists in an online gallery auction space.



Malick Sidibé

Django Tire le Premier, 1971

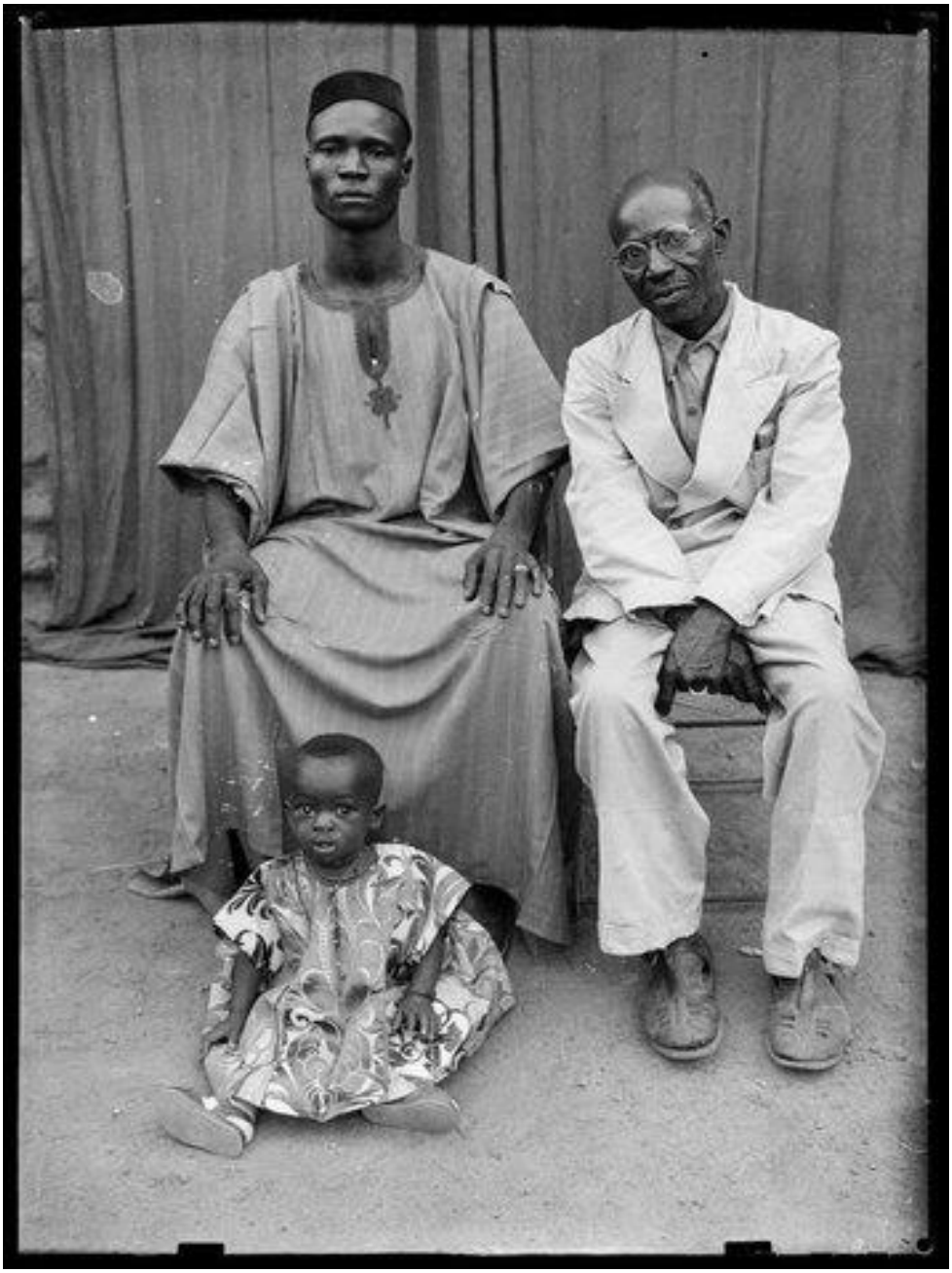
Galerie Magnin-A, Paris

figure 5.2.6

Photographed by Malick Sidibe, in his Studio Malick, during 1971, on Black and white film, figure 5.2.6 presents a vernacular studio portrait of an unnamed Black man. Captioned “Django

Tire le Premier," the Black man assumes the identity of a spaghetti Western character, as illustrated in the Django film. The film, originally filmed in Italian, presents a spaghetti Western action that focuses on the heroic cowboy Django. Despite Django being played by a white actor, the unnamed Black man mimics his outfit in the photograph. The use of the character Django embodied by the Black man illustrates ways through which films are reservoirs of memory. In the original film Django, the synopsis follows a vengeful cowboy that seeks to take action against the Klu Klux Klan. This film was set during the American cilvil war and union period wherein Black folks were enslaved by white people. Through the imaging of the Black man as Django it subverts the historical periodisation of Blackness intrinsically linked to slavery and produces the sentiment of a fictional reality as motifs of anti-racism. Through this, the Black man in costume as a cowboy outlaw subverts the historically accurate stereotypes of Black people during the civil war period and constructs an imaginary symbolic order. This image produces a counterfactual reality. Though this image may seem casual, it is made with exactitude whereby every element is constructed strategically. The Black man is placed at the centre of the frame; the negative white space around him frames his figure, as well as decontextualises the studio space. Despite the partial view of the draped dark curtain, the viewer is transported to the man's imagery as a cowboy character. Sidibe is disinterested in constructing truth in his images, rather the participant's freedom and self-fashioning. The Black man stands in a semi-contrapposto stance upon a polka-dot floor. This posture is commanding and engaged. His facial expression is determined, his mouth is closed, and his eyebrows slightly raised and scrunched together. With his hands raised in front of his chest, the Black man holds two toy guns at the viewer. Though the man points the toy pistols at the camera, his grip on the guns is unsteady and not directly aimed at the viewer. The act of him directing the barrel of the gun at the camera has a visual effect when audiencing this image; it suggests the viewer is the target, the viewer is the 'bad' guy or opponent that Django is confronted with, as well as the notion that the Black man is engaging with the viewer and his gaze stares back. The use of the toy guns, as well as the cowboy hat, formal shirt and jacket, glittering glimpse of his belt buckle, as well as his moustache reinforce the character he assumes. This vernacular, studio portrait of the unnamed Black man is a full body frontal portrait; his legs are spread open and thus form a triangular composition. This triangular composition allows the viewers gaze to focus his hands holding the guns and face. The artificial lighting arrangement of this image is front lit, as there are no shadows on his face, as well as there being overexposed and high contrast elements. His use of costume and props illustrate how dressing up was not limited to the youth, but anyone that wanted to construct a fantasy or idealised portrayal of themselves. The texture of this image is smooth tactility and glossy, as it was printed on gelatin paper. His sense of self-fashioning calls to attention his postcolonial subjectivity in the newly democratic Mali and affinity to universalised Western pop culture characters. His outfit highlights the documentation of Black African sociality against the static notion of "Africanness" primarily linked to traditional attire and more towards Western pop culture. Moreover, this image was commissioned by the sitter and archived in a family album as a means to highlight the man's playful consumption of popular universalised popular visual culture by the west. As the caption of this image suggests, the man has reappropriated the spaghetti Western movie's costume with a Malian influence. This Black and white medium format photograph presents grey tonal variations, overexposed bright fragments and a clean

materiality. This image belongs to the catalogue and is printed on gelatin paper, ranging from 11 x 14 inches in size. The image is curated amongst other photographs captured by Malick Sidibe and fellow artists in an online gallery auction space.



Seydou Kieta

Untitled

1952/1955

(Placed under groups/ family portraits)

Figure 5.2.7

This is a photograph of kinship and patriarchal generational prosperity. Captured on Black and

white medium format film, by Seydou Keita, between 1952 to 1955, Figure 5.2.7 presents two unnamed Black men and a Black infant, captioned as “Untitled.” Placed in front of a dark curtain backdrop, the two unnamed Black men and child occupy the centre of the frame. The two men differ drastically in age and thus may be interpretated as a generational family portrait. The composition of the figures’ arrangement is a pyramidal formation. The delicate daylight creates soft painterly grey tonal variations in the portrait. Despite the image demonstrating sharp detail, the sfumato of the proportional grey tones create a soft yet precise contour of the figures. The outdoor vernacular portrait presents itself as a studio portrait with natural lighting. Though many photographers in Mali during this time period referred to their portraits as “studio” the dynamic nature of the studio presents itself as an outdoor location photograph due to sufficient lighting and backdrop (reference). The younger man wears a traditional outfit associated with Saudi Arabian Muslims, namely a Thawb dress and a Kufi cotton hat. The older man conversely dons a crisp white Western white suit, darker toned button-up shirt and pleated closed-toe sandals. The infant, echoing similar traditional outfit to their father presumingly, wears a traditional dress, socks and sandals. Both men wear wedding bands on their left hand. This raises the question as to why their wives are not pictured in the photograph. This image signifies patriarchal lineage and development. Despite the gender of the infant being unknown, it is pressuminlgy a male child as the two other figures in the portrait are male presenting. The men express differential attitudes through their posture, gaze and facial expression. Though the younger man demonstrates confidence and defiance, through his determined facial expression, his gaze directly confronting the viewer, as well as his domineering presence, the older man alludes to his attitude as submissive; this is illustrated through his slouched posture, his gaze slightly averted from the viewer, almost peering at the viewer from behind his spectacles, and his overall demeanour being docile. The older man is seated in a full body frontal position, though his facial composition is a ¾ angle and his body faces the camera. The younger man has a confrontation gaze and a domineering presence. His jaw is clenched, and his gaze is directly challenging the viewer. The photograph is not cropped, this is evident in the Black border surrounding the image. The deep focus in the image allows the foreground and the background to be in focus. Despite both foreground and background being in focus, owing to the tonal variations of the image, the muted background receded whilst the foreground is the prominent element of the image. Though the dark draped cloth background decontextualises the figures, the slight glance of the brick behind the cloth reminds the viewer that this image was captured outdoors. Further to this, the gravel ground where the infant rests and the men’s feet lay moreover reinforces that the photograph was captured on location and not in a studio indoors. The juxtaposing outfits worn by the two men and the infant illustrate a conflict between introduction of postcoloniality, there is a tension between what is defined as traditional whilst what is determined as modernity and how do these opposing visualities illustrate postcolonial Mali. The younger man holds a pose that mimics royal African patrons, whereby his hands rest lightly on his knees and his posture is rigid. Conversely, the older man’s posture is submissive and does not illustrate any formation of power nor status. The infant rests by his father’s feet and thus is an extension of his dominance. The comparison of the older man and the younger man’s attitude present tension between status of the elder whilst dominance of the younger generation. Though both men wear wedding bands, their wives are not present in the photograph. The patriarchal facet of this photograph illustrates

the heteronormative and gendered culture of Mali. Whereas photography was a novelty and expensive, the photograph illustrates the importance of the male figures whilst omits the significance of the woman. The image expresses varied grey tonal variations; there are stark bright highlights illustrated on the faces of the figures, whilst their clothing present dull grey tones and deep grey contrasts. Further to this, the highlights and the underexposed element of the monochromatic image allows the photograph to attain a glossy and polished tactility and materiality. The faces of the figures are glowing whilst their outfits and their surroundings are dimly lit. The layout of the image is composed as a pyramidal composition. Whereby the two Black men are arranged within the outline of an imaginary triangle and their heads form the top of the triangle. This composition illustrates a form of stability and draws attention to the faces of the figures. The image not only documents the patriarchal figures of the family but navigates the division between past and present. The importance of location in this image reflects the quotidian aspect of vernacular photography. The image is captured on location, though still considered a studio portrait; moreover, capturing the bodies outdoors records the everyday life in ordinary spaces. This image is a study of patriarchal lineage in which posture and pose emphasise the proximity of the family bonds amongst the male relatives in the genealogy of this family. Figure 5.2.7 was curated in the *Pigozzi Collection, Geneva* website presenting various other images captured by Seydou Keita, in his studio in Mali, during the 1950s and 1960s.



© Seydou Keita

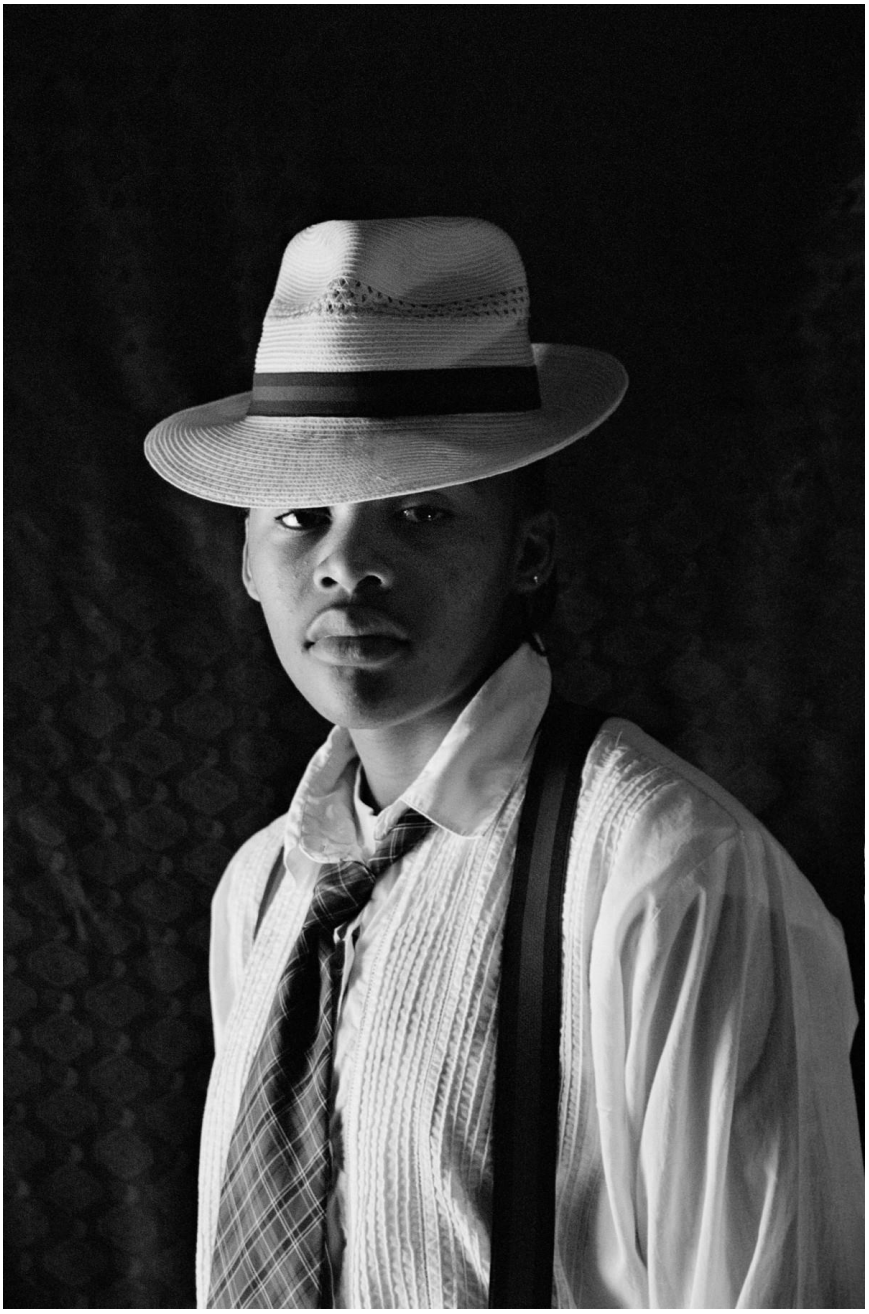
“Untitled”, 1959

/ SKPEAC/ photo courtesy of CAAC - The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva

Figure 5.2.8

Photographed by Seydou Keita, on Black and white film, figure 5.2.8 presents a monochromatic on-location, but seen as a studio genre portrait of an unnamed youthful Black man captioned as "*Untitled."* Occupying the centre of the frame, captured through a medium, hip-level shot angle, is a seated upper body portrait of a young Black man. Whereby the man is seated at a ¾ angle position, his body is diagonally facing the left whilst his head and torse are forward-facing. The man holds a flower grasped between his fingers, whilst his right elbow is slightly bend, allowing the flower to be framed just below his shoulder and levelled by his heart. The proximity between the flower and his body is not determined but seeing as his wrist rests on his chest, it could be established that it is in close vicinity to his torso. The layout of the Black man against the deviated floral-patterned background contours his figure. The negative space surrounding his figure, constructed by the fine-detailed backdrop allow his body to be separated and in juxtaposition against the background. The deep focus, in arrangement with the depth of field, allows the entire details of the image to be in focus. The man's brilliant white suit glows against the background and his darkened figure assumes the focus point of the image. The juxtaposition of his blazing white suit jacket and his darkened and high contrast justify the focal point. Though this image was captured outdoors, the use of natural lighting is jarring. The limited proportions of grey tones, deep contrasts and overexposed highlights are present through the man's outfit, his figure and the background, thus creating a form of chiaroscuro. It is evident that the image is not cropped as the Black border illustrates this is the way the image was captured, further to this, the bright white vignette of the image frames the man's figure. Wearing a formal white suit jacket, the man has a fountain pen perched on top of a floral pocket square, thick-rimmed spectacles and a neatly fastened tie. He is well-groomed and his appearance is elegant yet simple. His appearance, similar to the Zazous or Grin clubs in Mali, echo sentiments of the African elite and the upper urban class. The Black man stares directly at the viewer, yet his gaze is soft and delicate. His lips are turned upwards to form a smile, and his facial expression is relaxed. Moreover, much like his attitude, his posture is engaged yet calm. He radiates a sense of serenity, contentment and regality. This photograph documents the man's social standing or allegiance to the Zazous or grin club, self-expression, and a mode to create an aspirational version of himself. Clearly, this image was commissioned by the sitter, either to show his identity as a Zazous or grin, as well as a means to document his aspirations and personhood, through the functionality of Black sociality and postcolonial subjectivity. This image was curated in the *Pigozzi Collection, Geneva* website presenting various other images captured by Seydou Keita, in his studio in Mali, during the 1950s and 1960s.

5.3. Contemporary



Zanele Muholi

Marcel Kutumela, Alexandra, Johannesburg, 2008

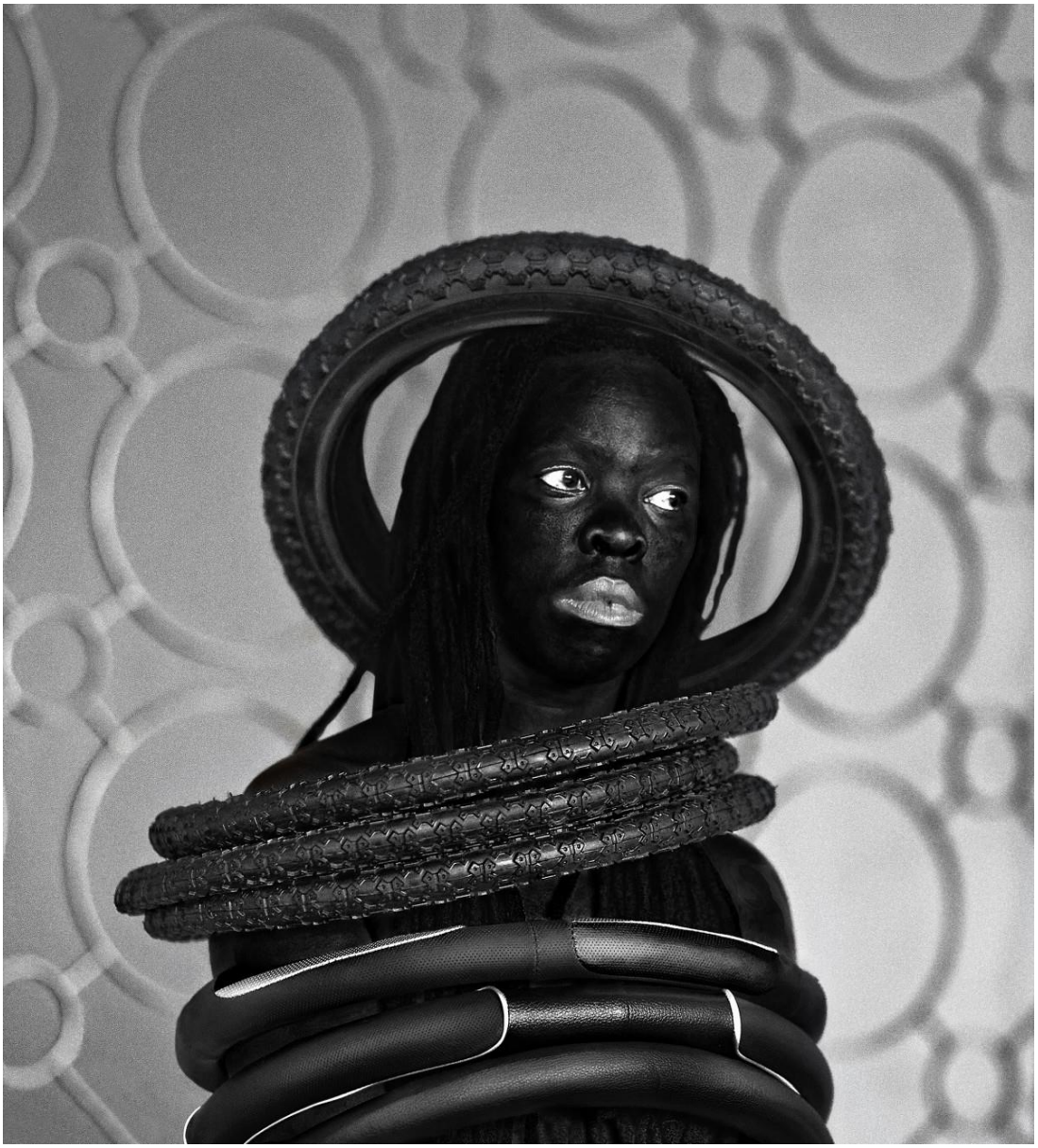
Figure 5.3.1

Placed at the centre of the frame is a person called Marcel Kutumela, as figure Figure 5.3.1. It is unclear whether they are a transman or lesbian woman, but seeing as their chosen name is

Marcel, I assume they are a transman, but with the intention not to assume their gender, I will refer to Marcel through gender neutral "they/ them" pronouns in the singular. The image belongs to a series called Faces and Phases. The series echoes ethnographic colonial taxonomy, but for the purpose of analysing this image, I claim it to be a form of social documentary photography. Photographed by Zanele Muholi, in 2008, on Black and white digital print, Figure x illustrates a person, unclear whether they are a transman or lesbian woman, named Marcel Kutumela. Placed at the centre of the image features a Black queer person, wearing an unbuttoned collar formal shirt with a loosely fastened plaid tie, a straw fedora and dark suspenders. Their outfit either assumes the identity of a transman or masc-lesbian (lesbian that prefers to identify with masculine tropes of expression). Situated in front of a circular patterned gradient backdrop, their crisp white shirt and bright figure comes to fore, whilst the background recedes backwards. The tonal variations and deep contrasts found in the image highlight their figure, whilst allows the background to frame them. Their crisp white clothes and the highlight on their facial features make them the focal point. The dramatic chiaroscuro highlights their illuminated outfit and face whilst dark background withdraws into the negative space. Marcel is placed at the centre of the vertical frame, their face is at a ⅔ face angle, whilst their body position is frontal. Through the use of Rembrandt lighting, their facial features are highlighted through window lighting. The make-shift studio makes use of a cloth background and daylight lighting. Though this is not considered a formal "studio" space, but a temporality of liminality: it allows the participant a safe space to express their identity, as well as a space that is quotidian. Muholi makes use of the quotidian through the everyday location and position of their participant. Their lips are gently closed, and their face is relaxed. Their gaze, looking outside of the frame illustrates that the viewer is privileged to share a private moment, expression or emotion with the participant. Marcel is placed at the centre of the vertical frame, their face is at a ⅔ face angle, which elongates the neck and makes the face shape, especially where the jaw is defined, whilst their body position is frontal with their shoulders are tilted on a diagonal axis suggesting Marcel is standing in a natural contrapposto pose. With attention to the Marcel's outfit, as well as their placement in the frame of the image, they assume the focal point of the photograph. The act of naming Marcel is in complete juxtaposition to colonial conventions of photography wherein the participant (rather "subject" delimited to colonial discourse) is unnamed. The act of naming here illustrates their individuality and agency. Regardless of this image and the photographs of this series seemingly assuming colonial tropes of ethnographic photography conventions, the person in the image is given a name and the image is not captioned based on their ethnicity or location wherein the photograph was captured.

Their sense of self-fashioning calls to attention their sense of identity as either a masc-lesbian or a transman, in contemporary South Africa. Their outfit highlights the documentation of Black queer sociality and quotidian life against the static notion of heteronormative Africanness primarily linked to traditional gendered and sexual conformity and norms, and more towards queer Black culture. This image was captured by Muholi for their living archive of Black queer quotidian life against discursive and material violence. This series seeks to make visible Black queers in South Africa – predominantly within the white cube/ gallery space where underprivileged Black south Africans aren't represented or visible. Marcel creates their own

masculine character and fashions an otherwise worldly view of masculinity through self-expression and donning a hybrid identity of Blackness and queerness in this photograph. Captured with a digital camera, the photograph presents grey tonal variations, overexposed sections and deep contrast, to create a smooth materiality. This image belongs to the artist and is curated in a post by Stevenson gallery on their website post. The photograph is exhibited alongside other portraits captured by Muholi in their Faces and Phases series across various national and international art galleries, as well as a photo-book. This image belongs to the Faces and Phases series created by Zanele Muholi during the early 2006. They are Black and white digital portraits of Black queer (predominantly lesbian women and transmen) in Johannesburg townships are large format and belong to a series of over 240 images. They echo ethnographic conventions of photography yet queering this aesthetic and subjectivity. The images question in/visibility of marginalised Black queer identities. These images resist iconographic modes of portraiture, as they represent various and a multitude of queer representation, beyond the fixity of colonial and contemporary society norms. Though they resemble ethnographic images they reject colonial taxonomy, through contemporary visual culture. The images address discourses of racial, gendered and sexualised difference. Despite their similarities in pose and mimic indexical visual conventions, none of them are iconographic and present individuality whilst constructing a shared community of experience through differentiation. There is limited information about the participants, which allows the viewer to reimagine previously defined social categorisations of the individuals. This series is a living archive of quotidian life through social documentary photography. It exemplifies the lived experience of everyday life of queer Black South African people. These images are an example of subversive resistance – add more. They represent the personhood of Black queers against the violence (material and discursive) perpetrated by heteronormative society. The images assert the desire of Black queer experience that is framed by the violence of contemporary and history legacies against Black queers. “Faces” represents the people seen in the images, whilst “phases” illustrate the differential queer identities (sexuality and gender experience) presented through the Black and white portraits. The images demonstrate a sense of agency and subjectivity of the participants that is denied and erased through heteronormative society. The images provoke, defy and confront societal norms of being. Moreover, these images are created from an insider’s perspective that seeks to “commemorate and celebrate” the living archive and histories of Black queers.



Ziphelele, Parktown, 2016

Silver gelatin print

Image and paper size: 60 x 55.8cm

Edition of 8 + 2AP

Figure 5.3.2

This photograph was created whilst Zanele identified as a lesbian woman, currently they identify as a queer nonbinary person. Initially, this photograph was meant to illustrate neck-lacing (a term

defining a person being burnt alive by a lit tire on their neck usually) of lesbian woman, but it still echoes the sentiment of queer bodies being literally burnt alive and murdered as they do not conform to societies norms/ fall outside of the heteronormative society.

The Black body, in Figure 5.3.2. in the frame is named Ziphelele. Holding the focal point of the image, Ziphelele's Blackened face, bright white eyes and light grey lips are the predominant features. The white wall behind Ziphelele recedes backwards and their darkened figure becomes the main aspect of the frame. The patterns on the white background fade from a light grey to dark grey, suggesting they are standing at a diagonal perspective against the wall. They are situated behind a circular patterned wall. Though their face is tilted away from the viewer, their body and head position are at a ¾ angle. Ziphelele is located at the centre of the frame, wearing multiple bicycle tires and tubes around their neck, torso and head. The juxtaposition of her brilliant white eyes against her purposefully darkened skin assumes the focal point of the image. The tire tubes have accents of white and the tires have a rough pattern. The juxtaposition of the smooth tube versus the zigzag tire pattern adds tactility to the image. The use of artificial studio lighting is noted by the centre of their forehead and nose being highlighted, as well as the details of the tires and tubes being illuminated. This artificial lighting is additionally demonstrated through the selective darkening and highlighting of certain sections of the figure, as studio lights illuminate certain sections of the figure whilst allowing other parts to fade into Black. I claim that Muholi made use of a magnum reflector on the left and frontal centre lighting at the as this is seen through the partial lighting on the face and the brightening of the details of the tires. The use of costume and props are vital to deciphering the meaning behind this self-portrait. The bicycle tires and tubes wrap around their body tightly, almost trapping and a form of bondage enclosing their body. These tires signify the violent act of necklacing, as well as imply that their existence is encircle and besieged by a pugnacious force that is suggested to be heteronormativity through reading the context of this image. Ziphelele's facial expression is complex; their lips are closed, and their face is relaxed yet their countenance is intentional. On one hand it suggests that they are focused and purposefully gazing outside of the frame or more importantly, they intentionally are looking away from the viewer, whilst it also claims to their longing for something or contemplation about their imminent mortality and death. The tyres around her head for a type of halo; this signifies the death of queerness and sainthood of Black queers. Necklacing is a form of torture enacted by Black townships, particularly during apartheid, against informants for the racist government, but is still prevalent against immigrants and queer people. The question of Blackface in her context further interrogates beauty standards and colourism. This image belongs to a longstanding series by Muholi labeled *Somnyama Ngonyama* which translates from isiZulu to mean "Hail the Dark Lioness." A notable attribute of this series, wherein Muholi performs as different alter egos and characters, is the darkened skin which is contrasted against their brightened eyes and lightened lips. This caption gestures toward the quote by Chinua Achebe, from his novel: Things Fall Apart, which states "until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter." Through the specific use of this quote, I suggest it summarises the way through which Muholi recreates and reconstructs the historical narrative of Black queer bodies within a South African context. Muholi demands inquisition into the use of bondage. Bondage through material terms, as illustrated in their image of Ziphelele embraced by tires, as well as

symbolically the use of bondage against freedom that queer Black's experience. Ziphelele means "it is complete" or "last one," the use of this caption, within the context of queer death and violence, may be interpreted as the Dark Lioness being martyred, they are the last of the queers, alternatively it may be read as queer bodies (not just the person featured) are destined for a violent death. Queer death demonstrates what is grievable and the precarity of their existence. Ziphelele is an illustration of the act of survival. No matter how she is dying, her existence is testament to their life and their queer existence. Muholi thus "queers" death and "queers" precarity and the destiny for sainthood and sacrificial lamb of sorts. Muholi uses their body as a vehicle to illustrate Black love, Black pain and Black existence, towards highlighting dimensions of gendered, racialised and sexual difference. The title of the work is written in isiZulu. Ziphelele means "it is complete" or the "last" which signifies in this image that they are the last queer or that their martyrdom is the death of the last queer person. This notion of martyrdom is implicit in the use of the seemingly halo iconography above Ziphelele's head, made from tyres. Returning to the discussion regarding her martyrdom and sainthood which is further illustrated through this religious iconography. Muholi's image highlight the act of survival through the mode of naming their participants and self-portraits. The person in the photograph, be it themselves or a Black queer person, is given agency and identity through their name. Though the sexual identity is implicit with the context of the series, the photograph illustrates the person self-fashioning their identity through their subjectivity and agency.

I claim this image is an intertextual reference to images of saints. The background that contours their body echoes stained glass, their gaze is averted similar to saints in iconoclastic images and the use of the tire halo illustrates a sense of veneration and sainthood. This image raises questions of queer sainthood and martyrdom whilst simultaneously suggesting that there is an afterlife and sanctified holy person for other queers to pray to for protection, guidance and other qualities related to saint's pleading with God. Where Ziphelele is a saint, it is implied that they dually occupy the status of a martyr. A martyr is denoted as "a witness" in Greek (Collins n.d). Following this reasoning, Ziphelele has endured trauma, pain and ultimately murdered for their beliefs; additionally the term martryr indicates that the person voluntarily suffered death and were sacrificed theirself for the greater good. With consideraytion to this notion, I claim Muholi's body, as Ziphelele, is a vehicle for Black queer existance that was sacrificed on behalf on future and existing Black queer bodies against the heretronormative queerphobic society. Though this Black African image reflects visual codes relating to Catholicism, I am not claiming that Muholi is either catholic but believes in an afterlife for queer Black bodies. Ziphelele tranverses temporality as a saint wherein they occupy a state of indeterminacy by being dead in the material world yet live vicariously in the spiritual world



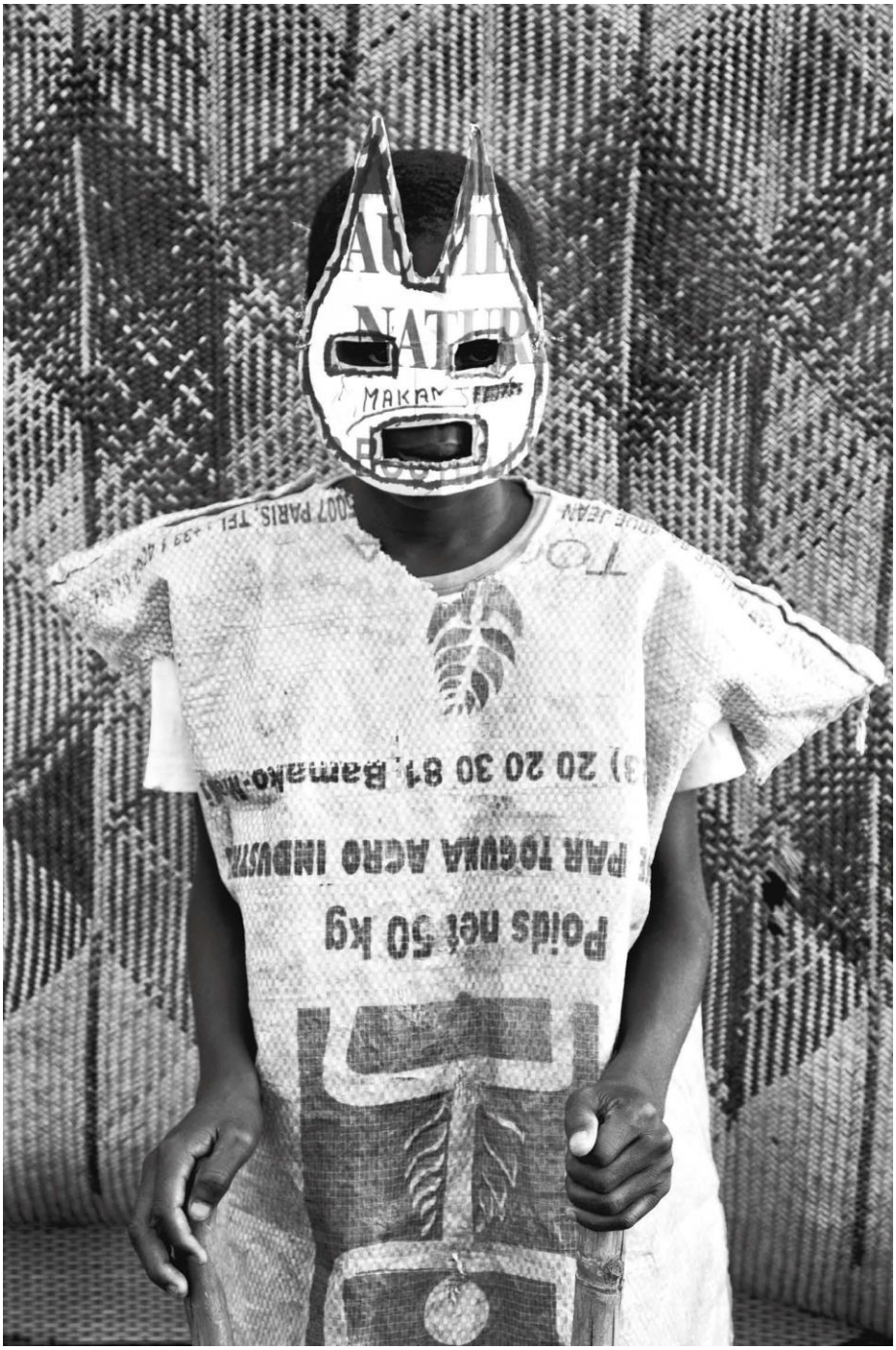
Fatoumata Diabaté – Studio Photo de al Rue – Photographic studio of the street

Le Studio Photo de la Rue, Somone, Sénégal.

Figure 5.3.3

Captured by Fatoumata Diabate, in contemporary Mali, during 2014, figure 5.3.3 illustrates a playful portrait of two unnamed Black girls captioned as “Studio Photo de al Rue.” Photographed on a digital camera and edited to Black and white, presents an environmental, vernacular studio portrait, as suggested by the title of the image, translating to “Street studio” yet is still classified as a studio portrait regardless of the contradiction regarding its location. Occupying the center of the tightly cropped photograph is two Black girls standing in front of a plastic-like stripped Black and white background. Their muddy feet, covered in beach sand, stand on the backdrop that extends to the floor. Captured through a frontal angled, is a full body portrait of two girls. The girls stand in adjacent proximity to each other, signifying a close relationship, either as sisters or friends. The stripped background contours their figures. The dominant linear lines allows the movement of the viewer’s eye scans the image from the top to the bottom of the frame. The negative space created by the stripes displace the depth of the image between the girls and the backdrop. The darkened figures stand out in juxtaposition to their overexposed background. Furthermore, their white swimming goggles place emphasis on their darker faces. Though this image was captured outdoors it still makes use of artificial lighting. The lighting, as I estimate, is front lit and both sides are lit too. There are no shadows on the figures which would occur with daylight natural lighting. Owing to the deep contrasts and overexposed highlights this image has a glossy and polished tactility. The girls wear ordinary clothes, the girl on the right wears dark coloured shorts, plain tee and small hooped earrings, whilst the girl on the left wears a white skirt and a dark tank top. The girls have differential hairstyles; the girl on the right has a fringe and the girl on the left has braids. Both girls maintain their natural hair. The posture of the two girls varies. The girl on the right is relaxed, her front knee is bent, and her shoulders are slightly pushed back, and she delicately holds the flower basket; she exudes confidence yet a calm demeanour. The girl on the left has an apprehensive attitude; she clutches onto the flower basket closely to her torso; her shoulders are slouched forward, and she stands rigidly. Both girls stand with their legs parted, thus forming a triangular stance. This stance, coupled with the stripped background enforces a sense of stability, not only in the image composition but the girls’ confidence and self-assurance. The girls hold a relaxed yet engaged posture. Though both girls wear swimming goggles which obscures their vision of the viewer, their direction and gaze confront the viewer. The girl on the right smiles, perking her cheeks and revealing some teeth. The girl on the left however has a contorted grimace and her facial expression is less friendly and slightly more aloof. The girl on the right alludes to a sense of comfort whilst the girl on the left expresses a sense of command. The juxtaposition between the incohesive props points to two varying expressions. The first expression of the props alludes to the girls returning from swimming and they happen to be wearing their swimming goggles, whereas the flower baskets are decorative props. The second expression of the props suggest a sense of absurdity, child-like fantasy, and playfulness. In relation to Blackness, girls create fantasy world and props that aren’t usually associated with both props. They create an otherwise worldly expression of their childhood and their playfulness. This image removes the static notion of Blackness being intrinsically captured through suffering or poverty; the children construct a whimsical world through their expression in ordinary clothing and props. The aspect of the

quotidian is highlighted through their clothing, as well as the unusual use of everyday items, within this vernacular portrait. This image belongs to the Fatoumata Diabate archive and is curated on her website post titled "*Studio Photo de al Rue."* The image is exhibited alongside other portraits captured by Diabate, in her street studio series, throughout 2014.



Fatoumata Diabate

L'homme en animal, Sans tirte, Bamako, 2012

Figure 5.3.4

Captured by Fatoumata Diabate, during 2012, figure 5.3.4, captioned “Untitled” illustrates a vernacular, on-location studio portrait, in contemporary Mali. The monochromatic photograph was captured on a digital camera and edited to Black and white in postproduction. Figure x illustrates a Black boy wearing a cardboard mask in front of a woven straw mat. Occupying the centre, of the tightly cropped frame, is a Black boy wearing a cardboard mask and a fertilizer bag, with the sides cut out for arm holes. The mask demonstrates sharp horns or ears made from cardboard with a thick Black outline, drawn on with marker. The outfit and use of props illustrate a closeness to the symbolic heritage of the Bambara, specifically Kore, society and culture. There is no attempt to hide the manufacturer text and thus further illustrates the everydayness of the items used. The image makes use of artificial lighting and natural lighting. Whereby the image is captured using daylight, it additionally makes use of studio lights as there are no visible shadows on the figure which would usually result with the utilisation of daylight. The combination of the stark daylight and possible artificial lighting are demonstrated through the deep contrasts and overexposed highlights. However, I do suggest the blunt contrast and overexposure is a result of the lighting, the image’s tonal variations could have been also edited through postproduction. The darkened woven straw mat, operating as a backdrop, allows the brilliant white mask and clothing prop to gain significance as the focal point. The use of everyday times that are transformed into ritual significant objects illustrate the quotidian and vernacular. The reappropriation of a cardboard box, straw mat and a fertilizer bag, both shop-bought vessels still having their manufacturer text, illustrate ways through which the quotidian infiltrates artistic portraits and the playfulness of the boy, as well as the reinvention of oral and traditional culture. The series is significant in understanding the use of zoomorphic masks, that resemble animals, and the ideology of Africanness naturalised to non-cultural and non-ontological status. What does it mean to be a man as well as an animal? How are these two elements intertwined? Firstly, the caption “man as an animal” reinforces the notion of Africanness intrinsically bound by “primitive” and “savage” tropes as propagated by Western modernity and salvation efforts. Secondly, in terms of Mande culture and Kore society, the use of an animal illustrates the interconnectedness of cosmic will and a high power towards self-sacrifice and a renewed ontological status. Both statements illustrate the power of context – where one element may suggest pre-modern as derogatory, the second element proposes ways through which traditional culture is essentially assured by African oral history. Through my research of different Malian Kore masks, the mask the boy wears shares resemblance to a Bambara Kore Sukura mask. Bambara kore masks are representative of animal (kore), Sukura (hyena) and Bambara (location-specific culture in Mali) masks worn by young boy initiates. The initiation offers the symbolic death and rebirth into Kore society, a form of testing courage and the ability to gain knowledge to adulthood, which relate to symbols of “fire and masculinity” (Colleyn and Farrell 2001: 29). The kore society perform “elaborate self-sacrifice, death, and resurrection ceremonies” as a means to gain closeness to the Kore, whom is the "father of the rain and thunder" towards the "displacement of the self" (Colleyn and Farrell 2001: 29; Zahan 128; Zuesse: 152). The displacement of self ultimately lends the initiate to separate their body, ego and mind towards a high power which allows them to gain insight to the knowledge of adulthood and growth with their inner cosmic will (Walby 1995:666). The hyena (Sukura) mask, in particular, symbolises human folly and imperfect knowledge. The hyena is representative of

“dirty habits, trickiness, and nastiness” thus the mask illustrates the rebirth of the youngest initiates of Kore to a higher ontological status (Straube 1955: 2). Further to this the significance of the kore is a rite that seeks to "educate the community about responsible behavior" (McNaughton 1988: 154). The Sukura mask has a stylised flat face, sharp horns or ears and embodies objects relating to vessels of power. The masks have a zoomorphic quality. The use of the hyena illustrates ways through which initiates should avoid urged bad habits and character traits in their life, as presented by the hyena figure. Kore concerns the “circumcision and initiation of male youths into adulthood” through the rites passage from youth. (Petridis 2011: 53). Furthermore, the hyena suggests the fallibility of “human wisdom,” as well as “potent sorcery and all earthly knowledge” (McNaughton 1988: 153; Rinder 1998: 72). Moreover, towards the formation of the neophyte to a “complete moral being,” whereby his male attributes and his femaleness are challenged (Roberts 1995: 74). The way in which Blackness is reinvented through ordinary objects, illustrates the ability to recreate an otherwise worldly representation of the boy’s personhood. Blackness is extended beyond the imagery of static tradition but through the use of modern objects relating to home and the vernacular. Furthermore, this image lends itself to the oral tradition and historical legacies of pre-modern Mali, yet through the use of modern packaging objects. This image is a medium shot, hip level and frontal photograph of a boy masquerading as an initiate for the Kore society. His facial expression is obscured by the mask he wears yet his gaze is evident. He stares directly at the viewer; his gaze is confrontational and commanding. He holds a sugarcane in his right hand which allows him to lean forward towards the photographer. His left hand presents his open palm and seemingly in an action position. His neck is extended, and his shoulders are pushed as forward as the cane and his posture allows. This image subverts the notion of Blackness and “Africanness” being essentialised and naturalised though the self-reflexive approach by Diabate and the recreation of tradition through modern objects. This leads into the discussion whether the boy illustrates his contemporary post-colonial subjectivities through modern apparatuses and how does this impact the imagination of “Africanness” and “Westernness.” This image was accessed on Fatoumata Diabate’s website, and it is curated through various European galleries. The viewing position of the image being in a Western gallery and on an online platform complicates the reading of the image and who the intended audience happens to be. The context of a text influences our reading and interpretation of it, as suggested by Stuart Hall.

5.4. Summary

Referencing the qualitative data analysis through the multimodal and multisite model, the Black African image (sixteen portraits) is discussed together with the quantitative analysis. In the qualitative research collection, the research findings organise, summarises and deconstructs the data to identify patterns through representation, colonial tropes of portraiture, ontology and the construction of the Black African image. The numerical tables reflect patterns in the data findings through empirical means as a way of illustrating the methodological and objective variables featured were assessed in a form of categorisations. Through my adaption of CVM, I

offer discursive, visual and semiotic analyses to suggest an alternative genealogy of the Black African image and the transformative visuality of the Black body.

In relation to the postcolonial photographers, I illustrated the dynamic impact of post-war fashion within a series of ethnographic and vernacular photographs to demonstrate “a new consciousness and political self-confidence” (Rabine 2010: 311. The contemporary photographers demonstrate differential photographic techniques and subject matter, yet they both critically engage with Black African image as an emancipatory projection for ontological resistance, through the re-appropriation of portraiture photography.

6. COLONIAL PICTURESQUE: PECULIARITIES OF ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE TERRITORIES

6.1. Colonial era:

Through the analysis of colonial portraits located in Mali and South Africa respectively, there are visual devices and encoding share similarities. Whereas both South African images are contradictory representations of Black Africanness, they share an element of fashioning the Black body for the Western gaze. The two images analysed for the Mali portion of the colonial images both share the aspect of nudity, exotism and fetish of the Black woman body. Though both colonies exercised differential operations of power, yet their photographic sensibilities and tropes are seemingly identical. This chapter questions in what way Black bodies within the African continent have been narrated and whether there is the potentiality to subvert these colonial visualities through portraiture photography.

In figure 5.1.2 the Black body is read in relation to the pre-modern, rather traditional, weapons he wields. The animal skin shield and sharp spear indicate the Black body fixed within a specific pre-modern or seemingly primitive temporality. The assignment of the subaltern Other to a distant time reveals the "denial of coevalness" whereby the "denial of coevalness is a political act, not just a discursive fact" (Fabian 2014: 153). Read in juxtaposition to modernity and Enlightenment during this period in Europe, the Black man is considered static and bound within a specific time that is 'out of time.'[11]As Mark Sealy suggests, Black bodies are located at the margins of history; the Black body is delimited to "racial time" (2016).[12] The importance of re-reading colonial photographs beyond their original context and towards a historically entrenched context, is as a means to shift the interpretation of the noble savage that is represented through the colonial Black image, beyond the primitive, savage and pseudo-scientific discourses. I reconfigure the differential historical narratives of the colonial Black body through temporalities that mould our perception of the colonial Black image. The portrayal of Black bodies, through colonial imagery, underpin the violent legacies of modernity and modernisation, as well as the warped visuality of the Black image. Figure 5.1.2, presents a portrait of a man from the assumingly from the amaZulu ethnicity, as proposed by the caption, regardless of the amalgamation of 'traditional' African attire and mis-en-scene observed. Towards the problematization of the disproportionate (mis)use of the traditional attire juxtaposed against the performative elements of the symbolic objects, I illustrate ways through which his costume-like outfit and props function as tools for the construction of the ethnographic imaginings of the colonial gaze regarding the Black image and Black body. With emphasis on the ethnicity of the Black body captured in figure 5.1.2, the portrait of the amaZulu culture was predominantly

[11] By 'out of time' I suggest that the hegemonic Western period saw itself as universal and subaltern cultures were not seen as belonging to the same spatio-temporal realm.

[12]). Racial time deliberates "a photograph's function as a sign within the historical conditions" and signified a differential yet indispensable "colonial temporality at work" within photographic images (Sealy 2016: 5).

fetishised and mystified through the rebellion of Shaka Zulu against colonial forces in KwaZulu Natal (Landau 2002). Furthermore, as Lynn Warren suggests, African bodies were essentialised and naturalised through the fixitivity of the Black race as the native other, whereby colonial photographers made use of "boxes of tribal props" to enhance the Black body's anomaly and colonial difference to Western civilisation, such as by means of the traditionalization of the body though attire and misuse of symbolic objects (2005: 35). Whereby figure 5.1.2 employs no distinguishable cultural markers, his identification and relation to the amaZulu ethnicity is typified and reduced to props of assumingly traditional Africanness through the construction of the noble savage and his locality and cultural association is dislocated. These props and grandiose attire highlight the "spectacle of ethnic curiosity" for Western audiences (Kama 2014: 22). Further to this, the use of the shield, fashioned from animal skins, doubly reinforcing the animalistic and pre-modern modality of Black Africanness delimited to the noble savage from the Western modernity outlook, irrespective of the traditional use by AmaZulu tribe.

With attention to the specificity of the visual construction of the image and the mis-en-scene, or rather lack thereof, the Black body is positioned in front of a plain background in figure 5.1.2 and figure 5.1.2. The decontextualization and staging of the Black body, in colonial portraits, highlights the embodied displacement yet fixitivity of the spatio-temporal dimensions reiterated in ethnographic photography (McQuire 1997). Moreover, the use of plain decontextualised backdrops stress the physiological and ethnographic particularities of Black bodies through ostensibly standardised taxonomy and categorical features (Lugo-Ortiz 2021: 330). The visual encoding of Blackness intrinsically linked to primitivity and naturalization is through the act of placing of the isolated body in an environmental setting, as seen in figure 5.1.3. The purpose of nature and environmental settings, as noted in figure 5.1.3, inscribe the generalisation of Blackness being pre-modern or lacking culture and being closer to nature as a sign of deficient modern sensibilities (Khan 2003). Moreover, Blackness is generated by the edifice of modernity as pre-modern and seemingly requiring salvation. As noted in figure 5.1.1., the woman pictured is adorned in Western attire, yet the caption of the image is a slur and subhuman categorisation of Black bodies. At first sight, the Black woman may be considered belonging to the *Black photo album* series curated by Santu Mofokeng through her Black African elite garb and her gaze, yet the caption of the image reinscribes her lack of agency and designation to illegibility and precariousness. Though the image subverts conventional colonial ethnographic images, it dually affirms the colonial enterprise of oppressing Black African populations as sub-human. The question remains as to who was this commissioned for and who is the audience? Simply put, the caption suggests this is for the Western white gaze yet her attitude and self-fashioning contests and rejects the static construction of Blackness. Though, it is key to suggest the photograph could also be the projection of Western salvation imaginings – claiming the Black woman photographed is no longer primitive, yet she is not civilised within the Western ontological framework either. Rhoda Rosen suggests that the Black body is confined to "racial types" wherein the camera is an instrument of fixing the Black body to barbaric discourses, as well as a functionality for control and regulation of representation of Black Africanness (1992).

All of the portraits located in the colonial category in this research are captioned as their ethnicity or locality of where the image was photographed. The function of unarming the Black body in colonial portraiture brings to fore pertinent questions regarding the grammar of naming and subjectivity as a functionality of personhood. Whereby none of the subjects are named, I inquire into what extent their categorisation of humanity and humanness is delimited to their precarity and mode of "illegibility" as sub-human or even nonhuman (Butler 2009). The act of retaining the Black body's anonymity and referring to the person through their props or ethnicity highlight the attempt to typify and taxonomize the African subject for pseudoscientific functionalities and mystifying the distinctness of their personhood, individuality, and agency (Hight and Sampson 2013: 21).

Figure 5.1.1, figure 5.1.2 and figure 5.1.3 place emphasis on the ethnographic element of colonial photography through stance, gaze and props. As suggested by Rhoda Rosen, "the frontal pose, the isolated body and the sharpness of focus, posture and gesture" are pivotal elements to construction of colonial portraits (1992:5). Through the use of these specific visual devices, the Black body is essentialized to their colonial difference and embodied Otherness. The purpose of the visual strategies mentioned additionally bring to fore the physical anomalies of the Black body for Western audiences. Moreover, a key facet to comprehending the voyeuristic pleasure, of the colonial gaze is the phenomena of ethnic novelty to the extent of perpetrating material and symbolic violence against the Black body. The Black body is confined to a discourse of "static, fixed and uncivilised" culture (Bhabha, 1999:370). Photography is a mode and medium for the instrumental function of "furthering certain historicist fictions, charting and inscribing a visual palimpsest of the West's perceptions about Otherness" onto the Black body; whereby the Black body becomes a vehicle for Western racists ideologies ((Enwezor and Zaya 1997: 21).

Figure 5.1.3 and figure 5.1.4 present two Black females, a woman and young girl respectively, as naked. I employ the word 'naked' as opposed to 'nude' owing to the notion that nakedness implies an unprotected or vulnerable unclothed body, whilst nude indicates a sense of demure and active attempt at artful lack of clothing. The two women pictured are defined by their sexuality, primitivity and lack of modesty as Black women. A type of sexual exploitation and pornography for voyeuristic Western audiences, whereby the women become "the epitome of the collective unconscious fantasy and equally of the primordial fear of the Other" (Ponzanesi 2005: 176). The naked Black female body is reduced to "aestheticized exotic" features and "the pornographic look" that is devoid of agency and subjectivity, whilst intrinsically demotivated to primitive status (Ponzanesi 2005: 174). Though figure 1.5.4. presents a young girl naked, she exudes a sense of nudity concurrently, as her pose and gaze are similar to the Western canon of Venus paintings. Her reclining body, Venus pudica pose, whilst attempting to cover her breasts with her hands illustrate a modality of sexual vulnerability illustrated in Western paintings of goddesses. Whereas women typically painted in the Western canon of art are either goddesses or prostitutes (Boysen 2016), this raises questions as to whether figure 1.5.4 presents the young girl as demure or sexually deviant; is she naked or nude? Either way, her body is fetishised and exoticized based of her Black race. Wherein in figure 5.1.3 presents a Black woman situated in a decontextualized outdoor setting, specific distance between the photographer and sitter, as well as the particular camera angle, Ewenzor and Zaya claim that "ethnographic authority employs in

solidifying its scientific foundation: camera placement and lens angle, the position of the photographer in relationship to the subject, and the 'natural' environment selected by the photographer to enact the subject's authenticity" (1997: 25-26). The colonial conventions of ethnographic portraiture which capture this Black woman adhere and affirm colonial ideologies through visual codification.

Figure 5.1.3 and figure 5.1.4 are both carte-de-visite postcards. The functionality of postcards and Blackness is placed at a juncture of personhood, audiencing, circulation as well as ownership. Postcards were printed in the "tens of millions" during the nineteenth century to "sate Europe's appetite for exotic, colonized people as specimens of curiosity inciting a lurid benevolence" (Enwezor and Zaya 1997: 17). I assert the purpose of Western audiences possessing postcards of Black bodies draws parallels to the ownership of colonial administrators and Black flesh. The images on postcards gained "popularization… among European audiences in the early twentieth century served to justify colonialism" (Keller 2021: 46). Maintaining and circulating an image highlights ways through which bodies are read and transformed, as well as a logic of ownership through memorabilia, which still perpetrates a conception of possessing a Black body. The act of obtaining a keepsake with a specific image lends itself to the argument to what extent does the viewer hold authority to the image or to what extent does the viewer transmute their sensibility of memory and what is being remembered. Postcards signify memories of memories and preform as modes of "re-membering"as a means to assemble "the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha, 1994: 63). Moreover, postcards are a commodity for circulation. I suggest this contributes to the imaginings of the Black body as a conceptualisation of fungibility and dispensability. The Black body is intended for depletion and therefore, I contend that the consideration of Black flesh as a commodity for consumption contributes to a form of cannibalism. Further to this, Mark Sealy suggests postcards are a violent commodification of Black pain (2018: 107). Additionally, postcards establish the nonconsensual circulation of the Black body. As Frank Wilderson suggests, Blackness is "possessed, accumulated and, fungible object" (2003: 186). Western audiences consider the Black body as a digestible; it is deconstructed into fragments and dismembered for ownership through the Black African image. Lastly, the possession of a postcard highlights the fragmented and framed Black image for white-supremist normative Western society.

As seen throughout the colonial portraits, the Black body is enclosed to a history of mentality through the photographic image. When considering this historical mentality, I move to the discussion regarding who is framed and for what purpose. As Judith Butler discusses in "On precarity," the body is read in relation to frames of recognition, which belong to the photographic frame but social structure and sociocultural borders of legibility and bodies being "constituted through selective means" through "operations of power" (2009: 1). Regardless, these images shift the epistemic dynamic of singularity and fixity of the Black body and reimagine the possibilities of autonomy of reclaiming their bodies for their own site of audiencing and agency. As noted in figure 5.1.1 – 5.1.4., the Black body lacks any formation of agency; the Black body is homogenised and reduced to the epidermalization of their skin tone. All three figures highlight ways through which Black Africanness rejects Western modernisation and thus obtains a status of precarity and illegibility. As suggested by Octavio Zaya and Ewenzor Owkui, the Black

African image "remains a territory of Western imagination, often crudely constructed as an aberrant human domain or as a comical screen upon which the visuals of such imagination can be projected" (1997: 18).

Moreover, the colonial Black image frames the Black body through visual regimes that produce and sustain infantilised yet equally barbaric discourses; this irony of dichotomous representations of the Black body by Western hegemony exposes the conflicting ideologies of modernity, as seen in figure 5.1.1. Further to this, "photography worked in collusion with ethnography and anthropology to both frame and undermine our knowledge of Africa" through specific visual tropes and codification as a mean to delimit Africa to primitive classification (Ewenzor and Zaya 1997: 26).

6.2. Postcolonial

Figure 5.2.1 illustrates three Fulani Shepherds; their names are omitted and they are defined by their ethnicity and occupation. This mirrors colonial tropes of typifying figures by their physical features and locality, a form of general descriptor, as opposed to giving them the grammar of naming and articulation. These men are identified as shepherds. Through the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, these Black men illustrate their postcolonial and modernity subjectivity, as well as autonomy and agency, by means of possessing modern objects and asserting their dignity as traditional laborers. The colonial act of essentialising Black bodies to their categorisation is "imbricated in the syntax and morphology of structural violence" (Wilderson III 2009: 119). The act of naming brings to fore the "vocalizations of identity" as a mode for "self-expression for their self-made subjectivity in colonial settings" (Newell 2013: 1). The act of naming is "the best way to perpetuate the memory" (Araujo 2020: 330). In colonial portraits, Figure 5.1.1 – figure 5.1.4 present portraits that are ambiguously named after their classification and not their given names. Moreover, all the photos in the postcolonial period, besides Figure 5.2.6 are unnamed. Where majority of the postcolonial portraits are captioned "untitled," I suggest the sole reasoning behind this is due to the site of audiencing and the gaze. Where postcolonial photographers were commissioned by customers for keepsakes, family narratives, cherished memories and capturing the desires of the sitters, these images functioned as a personal archive. When the site of audiencing is transfigured into a gallery space, these personal portraits are gazed and viewed as artworks, despite this not being their original functionality. The gaze within the art gallery space commodifies the personal experiences of the subjects photographed into objects, wherein the viewer's desires are projected. The site of audiencing brings to fore questions of the private versus private space, as well as how the memories and names of sitters are displaced into nameless faces with postcolonial aspirations. Historically originating these portraits in specific geopolitical dimensions present the desire for self-fashioning through visual representation which is disavowed within the recontextualised spatiality. These images function as testament to a specific geopolitical and spatio-temporal context that the current audience view with a seemingly voyeuristic gaze. Through the consideration of sites of audiencing conditions, I highlight ways through which the Black African postcolonial image emerged and proffers the inquest to public and private sovereignty. These

postcolonial “untitled” images do not conjure memories for the current viewers, nor do they signify any personal affective or nostalgic value to them; they only convey aesthetic pleasure as photographic objects. Initially these photographs were commissioned images that served as a “haptic repository of re/collection” (Campt 2017). Renditions of absence and invisibility mutually share yet disavow modalities with renditions of presence and visibility through the selected postcolonial portraits that are displayed in hegemonic spatiality. These portraits, in their original context, performed as sites of becoming and being, wherein the recontextualization of the Black bodies are constructed as aesthetic objects. The gallery space erases the personal histories of the sitter; it additionally disavows the valorised desires of the photographed subjects and blurs the vision of presence and absence through the obfuscated temporality that anticipates the hypervisibility/ invisibility convergence by obscuring the opaque Black African subjectivity. The artistic market and visual economy these postcolonial images fluctuate between liminal spatialities of personal possessions and authorship against the projected gaze of public spectatorship. The decontextualization and recontextualization of these portraits implies a shift in interpretation from their original sociocultural and historical context. Whereas colonial portraits actively sought to erase, objectify and negate the subjectivities of the indigenous population, postcolonial captions are unintentional and for the artistic sake of naming an artwork. Figure 5.2.6 presents a Black man captioned as “Django.” The Black man is unnamed but identified as the main character in the spaghetti Western titled: *Django*. The man assumes an identity under the formation of the pop culture character. Though he is recognised as “Django,” the actuality that he is unidentified by his given name, highlights the colonial photographic convention of designating Black bodies through anonymity. Similarly, figure 5.2.4 illustrates an image captioned ‘untitled’ whereby a Black man is presented. His name, though being omitted, signalling colonial conventions of photography, presents contestation through his functionality of self-fashioning. His Black body, despite being nameless, still gestures to a form of agency and subjectivity through his clothing and props which identify him to the Zazous or grin community. As a means to avoid typification, figure 5.2.2 and figure 5.2.8 demonstrate Black men through their own “self-writing” of bodies and re-presentation (Mbembe 2008). With regards to figure 5.2.1.3 and figure 5.2.1.2 the captions highlight either the object the Black body poses with or places emphasis on the differential clothing the women wear. Figure 5.2.1 demonstrates a woman with a radio; her body is read in relation to the object she is present with. Figure 5.2.2 highlights the differential allocation of modern versus traditional in the caption, whereby the caption does not read ‘two women’ but goes on further to place emphasis on the woman wearing traditional attire.

Though figure 5.2.4 illustrates the Fulani Shepard’s’ postcolonial subjectivities through the juxtaposition of their traditional outfits and use of modern symbolic objects, it could also be read considering colonial transformation efforts and their subjectivity is disavowed through the re-inscription of native ethnographic photography as a pre-modern narrative. As the caption of this image suggests, the men reappropriated the Malian traditions against with modernity and urbanisation influential economy. The men create their own characters and fashions an otherwise worldly expectation of what is traditional, or pre-modern, and what is defined as postcolonial or of the Western (primarily urbanised and metropolitan) costume as a mode of self-expression and

donning a hybrid identity in this vernacular photograph. Towards the construction of the Black body as native, by colonial photographers, there was often a juxtaposition of "before and after" civilisation and attempts of salvation, for the purpose of determining a racial hierarchy (Hartmann, Silvester and Hayes 1999: 23). The modern objects illustrate a new civilised subjectivity for the Black men wearing traditional clothing.

Figure 5.2.6 is placed in front of a decontextualised background which affirms colonial conventions of photography. The studio, in this context, becomes a realm of imaginary, whereby the audience, as well as the Black body within an embodied postcolonial subjectivity, can project their fantasies. The studio space escapes temporality and transcends spatiality, despite being a room in the photographer's studio.

Figure 5.2.7 is a generational portrait of two men and a toddler. The two men hold differential poses and postures. The older man's posture signals colonial portrait conventions wherein the subject is submissive; he does not stare directly at the camera, this posture is not engaged or assert, as well as his general attitude is seemingly passive in juxtaposition the younger Black male. The younger Black man's posture is assertive and commanding; his shoulders are squared; his gaze confronts the viewer, and his posture is monumental to effect. The posture of the younger man mirrors portraits of African royalty, specifically in Mali, wherein the "subject is seated, roughly eye-level or slightly elevated from the viewer, legs slightly apart and hands resting on the knees or thighs" (Owens 2015: 12). The photograph, figure 5.2.7, illustrates tension and contestation; where the older man affirms colonial portraiture tropes, the younger man asserts authority not usually noted in such photographs. The older man in figure 5.2.7 affirms the colonial conventions of "technology of docility," where the Black body is consigned to subservient and passive modes of existence (Yancy 2005: 261).

Figure 5.2.4 illustrates further tension, much like in figure 5.2.5 and figure 5.2.3, wherein there is a distinct juxtaposition between traditional and modern clothing. This phenomenon can be deciphered through two dimensions. Firstly, through colonial conventions: the photograph illustrates a comparison of what is 'pre-modern' versus the 'modern' African subject. Conversely, these images illustrate ways through which each Black body asserts their own self-fashioning. These images tend towards unlocking the Black image from the fixity of static primitive temporality of colonial discourses. Black African photographers, especially during the postcolonial period, made it their mission to "vacillate between glamorizing the sitters and uncritically reflecting their projections and desires," noted by the self-fashioning of the subjects and their embodied subjectivity (Ewenzor and Zaya 1997: 33).

6.3. Contemporary

Figure 5.3.1 belongs to Muholi's *Faces and Phases* series, though traversing the ethnographic colonial portraiture conventions, the images escape iconography yet create a repetition of queer collectivity. This in turn, creates a sonic quality of movement and rhythmic essence, a form of tessellation, against the normative banal algorithm that seeks to exclude Black queer bodies. Following Tina Campt's conceptualisation, in *Listening to Images*, photographs emit a sonic

quality through "practices of stasis and fugitivity" (2017: 65). Further to this, in Fred Moten's literature, *In the break: the aesthetics of the Black radical tradition*, he describes photographs as a sonic-visual "mixtape," wherein in photographs demonstrate a sense of "phonic materiality" and ensue an "oscillation between recognition and abjection" (2003: 17). These individual images of Black queer experience and life form a lyrical arrangement of collective identities, which ultimately construct a musical score, a typology of a pulsing renewed symphony of Blackness. Similarly, in figure 5.3.2, captured by Muholi, they manifest a sameness, yet differential frequency through their series of the *Somnyama Ngonyama.* Through their repetition of self-portraits, in various locations and settings, enact a type of rhythmic beating and throbbing choreography through photography; thus, producing a harmony of queer Blackness as precarious, fleeting yet proud through their identity. Through both photographs, Muholi is a conductor of visual-sonic melodies of Black queer experience within a post-apartheid South African context in opposition to the violent white noise of hegemonic Western visualities. In figure 5.3.2, Muholi subverts perceptions of blackface.[13] Their skin is digitally enhanced to look as darkened and as black as possible. They claim that they exaggerate the darkness of their skin tone as a means to reclaim their Blackness (Muholi n.d). Muholi darkens their skin tone towards reclaiming their Blackness from the historicity of minstrel characters. Though it may seem ironic or a form of satire, Muholi darkens their skin tone to highlight the beauty of embellished Blackness, as well as highlight the visibility of Black-pain and Black-love.

Figure 5.3.1 illustrates a transman or lesbian woman within an ethnographic mugshot colonial convention of photography. Though the positionality of this figure affirms ethnographic tropes, it simultaneously subverts it through specific dimensions. Despite the sitter, rather as Muholi prefers to their subjects as 'participants', echoes colonial conventions of photography such as being captured in a ¾ frontal image and their facial features are highlighted, it conversely enunciates the name of the person. Similarly, to figure 5.3.1, the Black body in figure 5.3.2. is named. The grammar of naming subverts colonial portrait conventions. Moreover, figure 5.3.2 Muholi captions the image as *Ziphelele*, in their mother tongue, being isiZulu. This highlights the importance of language. How does the use of language impact ways through which this work is read? Firstly, Ziphelele is a name of a person, both male and female, and secondly, the connotations associated with their name complicates the reading of the image. Through the use of naming and enunciation, the photograph assumes a completely different meaning. The Black bodies embody the grammar of enunciation through naming. The act of naming increases the possibility of legibility and mournability whereby a name gives rise to the agency and individuality of the body, as well as the annunciation into being. Though figure 5.3.3 and figure 5.3.4 are unnamed Black bodies, which adhere to colonial tropes of photography; the series, in which the images belong, suggest a sense of autonomy and subjectivity which colonial portraits lack.

[13] Blackface originates from Northern American culture during segregation wherein white people painted their face Black, emphasised their lips with white paint and enacted caricatures (racialised stereotypes) of Black people.

The portrait, in figure 5.3.1, disavows ethnographic conventions through the gaze of the participant; Marcel denies the one-way gaze as prevalent in ethnographic photography by gazing back and confronting the viewer. The image engages with the asymmetrical production of knowledge and pre-established epistemic configuration of visuality. Whereas in colonial portraits the Black body assumes a submissive and diverted gaze (Cobb 2015), Marcel confronts the viewer. The viewer is invited not only to look at the photograph but look with the participant in the image. Though figure 5.3.2 illustrates the Black body looking away from the camera, it presents a differential reading of the gaze from colonial conventions. Ziphelele's gaze, though diverted, privies the viewer from what they are gazing towards. There is a sense of mystery with their stare, whereas in colonial portraits, it alludes to passivity. Where Ziphelele is photographed in front of a decontextualised background, I offer a conflicting reading of this visual device. Firstly, it rejects colonial conventions where the subject gestures towards a grasp of autonomy and agency through their gaze. Secondly, it affirms colonial tropes of photography, wherein the 'native' is captured through a frontal or ¾ angle portrait and the Black body is isolated in front of a plain studio background (Rosen 199: 5).

Whereby colonial portraits sought to typify and taxonomise Black bodies to a singularity and homogeneity, whereby these portraits reinscribed a function to "capture generic traits and features" (Garb 2011: 18), Marcel, in figure 5.3.1, highlights their individuality and sense of autonomy in the portrait. Colonial portraits denied heterogeneity and the capacity for the Black body to gaze back, but Marcel's portrait subverts all conventional epistemic tropes, despite adhering to visual codes of formal ethnographic portraiture. Muholi ensures their participants maintain a autonomous identity, as opposed to a submissive and subservient subject. Further to this, figure 5.3.1 demonstrates ways through which Muholi ensues Blackness to function as a phenotypical reality, wherein expansive forms of potentiality construct multifarious collectivity that is imagined and put into practice through Black queerness in townships.

Where the Black girls' bodies are unnamed in figure 5.3.3., this affirms colonial tropes of photography, though conversely their pose and gaze present a tension in the reading of the image. Their nonverbal communication alludes to a sense of self-fashioning and assertive morale that is not present in the Black bodies captured in colonial portraits. The modality of self-fashioning in this image brings to fore questions of speculative fiction. Their props are incoherent and offers an otherworldly perspective. Conversely the misuse of props in the image signal to the 'box of tribal' fantasies in the colonial framework. Notably, I will discuss the role of speculative fiction in chapter 9, within the framework of glitch feminism. The girls make use of objects that do not seem to make sense together and it shares similarities with the amalgamation of different symbolic objects in colonial portraits. Though the misuse of objects allocates similar dimensions to colonial portraits, the girls in this portrait have self-presented themselves and the props weren't imposed upon their figures. Moreover, the girls have agency and contemporary modern subjectivities, where colonial portraits were devoid of both facets.

Figure 5.3.3 obscures the reading of the Black body through various dynamics of conceptual frames. Where the boy wears mythical attire linked to 'pre-modern' ideological constructs of the African identity, his use of quotidian objects complicates how the reading of colonial imaginaries

of primitivity is juxtaposed against modern subjectivities. Muholi, in figure 5.3.3 and Diabate, in figure 5.3.3., illustrate the de-articulation of the quotidian nature of photography through their specific uses of props and settings, which ultimately places emphasis on the productive powers of the construction of a new Black identity through the transformative potential of the ordinary. The ordinary, in all the figures present in the contemporary period, demonstrate ways through which the ordinary is transformed and reformulated against the stasis of colonial imagery.

For the purpose of this research, I suggest that though the boy in figure 5.3.3., wears seemingly traditional props and adorned in an apparent traditional outfit, his visuality is delivered in contradiction to colonial visualities. Though his Black body is read as pre-modern and primitive, the use of modern objects complicates how the Black body is considered. This portrait belongs to *Man as animal* series. It affirms colonial conventions of Blackness being intrinsically bound by naturalisation through the language emphasising the animalistic or primitivity of Black bodies formulated by modernity/ coloniality. Conversely, his pose and gaze subvert the passive and submissive taxonomy of colonial portraiture. Though the series' caption reinscribes to the notion of Black bodies being manufactured as primitive and savage, the Black boy destabilizes the mysticism and folklore of Blackness and Africanness through the oral histories and mythology of African traditions through his autonomy and embodied subjectivity. Despite figure 5.3.4 being delimited to the *Man as animal* series which highlights the naturalisation of the Black body through language, the Black boy rejects consignment to primitive typification by way of visual codes.

6.4. Summary:

The visualisation of racialised subjects is bound by colonial photographic conventions, wherein the Black body is bound by "racial time," the temporality of Blackness is static and at the exteriority of universal logic of histography. Racial time, as suggested by Mark Sealy, is "to signify a different but essential colonial temporality at work within a photograph," in relation to "visual and structural complexities" illustrated within the image's sociopolitical construction (2016: 5). Western regimes of scopic violence permeates the Black body through asymmetrical balances of power, through the prism of the colonial gaze. This dehumanising legacy of colonialism legitimises the ontological and epistemic violence that is forced upon and retained by the Black body through 'native photography.' The colonial photograph of the Black body became an "essential tool to further scientific observation and to fulfil voyeuristic yearnings" (Peffer-Engels 1997: 10). As noted in figure 5.1.1 – 5.1.3, Blackness is considered backwards and thus ripe for subjugation through the use of specific visual configurations. Moreover, Western ideologies seek to legitimise "the process where one culture subordinates another" through structural and symbolic violence (Spurr 1993:4). As argued by Olu Oguibe, photographic apparatus and the medium of photography was a decidedly ideologically positioned tool on the side of incursion' (2002: 566). Lastly, photographic portraits by colonial administrators supported ideologies of human physicality and social evolutionary discourses (Maxwell 2008). Further to this, Newell suggests that conditions which "participated in the production of their own conflicted identities through the simultaneous endorsement and critical

reformation of colonial modernity" illustrate ways through which postcolonial and contemporary Black body subjects are in constant contestation and tension with adopting their own modernity whilst still affirming Western modernity (2013: 1).

Galvanising discursive frames of precarity and legibility, as presented in figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2, I demonstrated how sociohistorical legacies, whereby hegemonic ideologies legitimise recognisability, construct conceptualisations of grievability which complicates representation, for the Black queer body. Photography functions as both a "medium of mystification and a tool for animating a new set of visual codes for representing and reading Africa" (Thomas and Green 2014: 4). Figure 5.3.1 – figure 5.3.4 demonstrate ways through which demystifying the Black subject and conditions of Black existence that disenfranchised Black personhood, as a means to create a transformative episteme. The Black African image through the contemporary lens illustrates the photographic practice of capturing the Black body as transformative, wherein the re-presentation of Black sociality and experience is expressed through the visual scopic regime.

7. ENGINES OF DECOLONIALITY

Undoing and rereading the portraiture photographic archive as a means to narrate and navigate the ability of the Black African image to exist and engage with the act of existence, I make use of the decolonial framework. Whereas colonial conventions of photography have rendered the Black African image through a specific phantasy of Otherness, I conduct a pluriversal re-reading through provincialized African modes of visual culture and symbolic prisms of decoloniality. Whereas the application of portraiture photography mirrors racist ideologies of colonialism/ modernity, I un-map this transgressive genealogy through resistance strategies of decoloniality, through modes such as border thinking, epistemic disobedience and decolonial turn. The colonial period denied and obfuscated the ability for a decoloniality analysis and therefore I solely decode the postcolonial and contemporary photographs. This chapter emphasises the importance of decoloniality as a theory as praxis and a praxis as theory (Walsh 2012: 11), in such that the posture, attitude and action of liberatory technologies are intertwined through acts of resistance and refusal to be consigned. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the Black African image through the aesthetic and aesthesis, as a means to determine the ways through which biopolitical formations manifest themselves through the acts of the decolonial turn, epistemic disobedience and border-thinking. Where normativity is a violent regulatory scheme which restraints the Black image, decoloniality seeks to revise the system and produce ways of being that within the paradigm of transmodernity.

7.1. Colonial era:

None of the colonial portrait photographs elicit the use of the decoloniality paradigm. Relegated to colonial ideologies and discursive frames of nonbeing, the colonial portraits present Black Africanness with no ability to escape such borders through decoloniality prisms. Where decoloniality provides the mechanisms for marginalised bodies, particularly Black bodies within this study, to transcend the colonial matrix of power, the colonial images are bound and intrinsically aligned to colonial episteme and epistemic violence.

7.2. Postcolonial era

Adam Amkpa argues that the “postcolonial desires” of Black bodies, during liberation from colonialism or apartheid, conjecture “the act of imagining, living, and negotiating a social reality based on democracy, cultural pluralism and social justice,” whilst additionally performing as an “act of refusal to assume the passive, static, essentialist” identity (2004: 100). These attributes highlight a quasi-formal citizenship of governmentality, as well as to stimulate an uninterrupted enactment of becoming for Black bodies in Africa. In simple terms, Amkpa claims Black African bodies, within the postcolonial era, are in the perpetual act of performing their identity in relation to citizenship as a generative mode of being.

Figure 5.2.6 illustrates the way through which universal pop culture is transformed through the African diaspora in Mali. This image depicts the white character of Django as a Black man; he

makes use of the studio space as a means to project his imagination as a spaghetti Western cowboy through his Malian rendition. Though not being vehemently against universalism, this image reflects the power of transmodernity. Similarly, figure 5.2.1, figure 5.2.3 and figure 5.2.7 illustrate the ways through which Black African bodies appropriate universalism towards transmodernity. Transmodernity, borrowing from Walter Mignolo's conceptualisation, is in relation to the theorisation that the modern epoch is "diversality as a universal project" (2000). Through this lens of transmodernity, I present how these three figures transfigure universalism towards a pluriversal and multi-vector episteme from indigenous African societies. Moreover, figure 5.2.8 and figure 5.2.3 illustrates a way through which modernity may be viewed through the paradigm of a third space as suggested by Homi Bhabha. Where decoloniality seeks to produce and establish a transmodernity, I suggest this relates to Bhabha's conception of cultural hybridity and the third space. Hans Peter Hahn claims that the third space, through the model of Bhabha's hybridity, is "a societal frame that compels the actors to create new cultural forms under the impact of colonial power" (Hahn 2012: 35). The use of the modern clothing and radio present in figure 5.2.1 and the radio, cigarette, briefcase and other noticeable props are symbolic objects in figure 5.2.5, project an urban subjectivity. These symbolic objects are considered as "markers of achievement (a diploma or certificate), affiliation (a Bible, for example), financial accomplishment (a radio or cassette player that displays disposable income beyond basic needs), or connections with urban life" (Cameron 2013: 153).

Figure 5.2.1 – figure 5.2.4 present the way in which Black indigenous bodies were manufactured and outlined by the radical reframing of apartheid legacies. These photographs allocate the means in which Black bodies constructed their own subjectivity against the backdrop of apartheid 'colonialism.' Apartheid sought to "exclude identities, experiences, histories, ideas and desires of Black people from its (artificial or fictitious) construction of a white South African nation state" (Gowine 2006: 49). The photographs captured within the postcolonial South African context illustrate the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Black African identity, against the imagining and projects which aimed to create the Blackness as pre-modern and primitive by the apartheid state. These portraits exemplify the ways through which Black African bodies engage with modern urbanisation whilst simultaneously holding onto their heritage. This transgressive mode of racial representation disempowers the white nationalism, white nationhood and their white fictitious identity, which depicted Blackness as the Other and an aberration. Particularly in figure 5.2.3, the portrait presents two Black women, I suggest they are siblings or mother and daughter; illustrate diasporic African American aesthetics through dress, whilst simultaneously demonstrate South African geopolitical indicators. Their outfits gesture towards school uniforms and share similarities to USA civil rights aesthetic. I claim this photograph is an act of defiance against the apartheid regime and the student uprising which occurred in Kwa-Zulu Natal during the period this image was taken.

Figure 5.2.3 and figure 5.2.7 are complex images when juxtaposed against each other. Firstly, figure 5.2.7 is a patriarchal generational photograph, whereas figure 5.2.3 demonstrates a matriarchal portrait. In relation to decoloniality, these portraits share complimentary yet differential aspects of delinking and the position of gazing or audeincing. Firstly, figure 5.2.7 presents three male generations: toddler, father, and grandfather. This image offers the viewing of

general generational enshrining of manhood and patriarchal vectors of power within a nuclear family. Conversely, figure 5.2.3 pictures two women figures, assumingly a mother and daughter. The position of viewing for this image is suggested for a male gaze. I highlight the urbanisation of the Black working class, wherein Black men were required to leave their hometowns, such as the location of the portrait studio, towards the inner-city as a way to make ends meet for their family (Hyslop 1995: 51). Through the lens of heightened urbanisation during apartheid, I suggest the figure of two women is for a male relative that is working in the city.

Echoing Santu Mofokeng's *Black photo album*, figure 5.2.8 invests tension of neocolonialism. Conversely, suggesting the black body and the Zazous collective are tokens of neocolonialism simplifies and reduces the postcolonial subjectivity and his future projection of self-fashioning to western ideologies. Though this Black man presents a counterculture of Malian identity, he concurrently illustrates that tradition and modernity are nonlinear. His projection of agency is a differential way of engaging with modernity whilst concomitantly representing Malian counterculture. The Black African body here advocates the notion of transmodernity and delinking from universal societal norms whilst still participating within the Western culture. Zazous, or Malian dandies, as Malick Sidibe exclaimed, were "high class young adults who had lived in Paris or visited Europe. They were taxi drivers, businessmen, [and] managers…" (2003). The Zazous, as illustrated in this portrait, were interested in constructing a modern subject that modifies Western desires whilst concomitantly transmuting Malian culture and subjectivity.

7.3. Contemporary:

Throughout the analysis of contemporary photographs, by Black African photographers, there is a potential to dismantle and recreate the universalised cultural imagery of their respective and intersecting identities. Moreover, these Black photographers, notwithstanding their differential localities in Africa, bring to fore the multi-valent subjectivities and fluidity of Blackness and Africanness, in spite of the hegemonizing force of the colonial matrix of power and Western oppressive projections.

Figure 5.3.1 reimagines ethnographic portraits as a means to reconstruct and reinvent the colonial convention of photography. As mentioned in chapter 6, through subverting colonial tropes, this portrait photograph illustrates the ability for Black bodies to delink from the colonial matrix of power. Figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2 are an illustration of subversive resistance through defying, provoking, and confronting social norms that are enforce by the project of modernity. Moreover, though Muholi's positionality as an insider, they gain insight to the collective Black queer identity; there is a self-reflexive stance that decoloniality advocates. Both figure 5.3.1.1 and figure 5.3.2 propagate an esteem of self-determination wherein there is a fortitude to create visual systems of being that delink from the norm. These two portrait photographs additionally practice the praxis of epistemic disobedience through the reconfiguration of the white cube gallery space. Through decolonising the gallery space, there are questions that arise such as how to reconstitute what belongs in the white cube, why are these images typically excluded and underrepresented, as well as to what extent are images of Black queer bodies introduced from the

margins of the white cube. The white cube or gallery, as I have mentioned in chapter 6, is a space for political intervention and imagination, thus introducing Black queer bodies in the spatial realm of the Western institution of the gallery privileges marginalised bodies through a disruptive force and disruptive performance of existence by being exhibited. Lastly, through Nicolas Mizoeff's conception of the "countervisuality" I contend that this space and place of the art gallery is a form of testimony of lived-experience and agency for the Black queer bodies photographed devoid from voyeurism instead as as "right to look" and a "right to be real" (2011).

Figure 5.3.2 introduces the de-centering and re-centering narrative of societal norms regarding sainthood, Black queer bodies and the ability for life after death. This image, through the Blacknening of the skin and the iconographic depiction destabilises conditions for the white gaze through epistemic disobedience, as a means to delink and transfiguring or reforming gender, race and sexuality. I claim this act of threatening heteronormative societal roles, Muholi decolonises the metaphysics of being through the configuration of sainthood and the utopian afterlife of Black queers. Muholi disrupts the epistemic means in which Black queer South African identities are created, which allows them to be seen on their own terms through subjective historical narratives and probes the Catholic mode of saintly afterlife.

Imbued with potentiality, figure 5.3.3 illustrates the ways through which Diabate pays homage and tribute to the visual griots of Mali, namely Malick Sidibe and Seydou Keita, through reinterpreting the style of portraiture photography they emulated. Figure 5.3.3 shares similarities in visual codes with figure 5.2.1 through the stripped backdrop and the use of props in the image. Expanding on the participation between the photographer and random civilians, Diabate constructs a street studio that engages with breaking down the stereotype of the sanitised studio photography being captured in an enclosed room, as well as the notion of unpaying bystanders to have their portrait captured. Diabate is able to tell the participants' story through her own narration style. I suggest this lends to the decoloniality structure wherein episteme is constructed on the ground level from the indigenous population to rewrite histories and re-see Black Africanness as envisioned by visual griots towards futurity. This series navigates and subverts the spatiality of the studio to the street as an act of defiance and epistemic disobedience.

7.4. Summary

Whereas "wounded morphology of social following a wounded morphology of the individual" as suggested by Elisabeth Freeman (2010: 12) in relation to the violence afflicted on the queer body, I suggest this presents complexities of embodied subjectivity and violence plagued the Black body, whilst the grammar of decoloniality irradicates epistemicide that is engendered by the "colonial wound" (Mignolo 2009: 3).

From figure 5.3.1. to figure 5.3.4., these images summon Black Africanness as possessing the ability and multiplicity, as a means to refuse invisibility and to refuse to comply with hegemonic societal structures. Arguably these images "destabilise dogmatic notions of identity as fixed traits: demonstrating identities are constructs embedded in performativity" (Goniwe 2017: 188).

Throughout this chapter, I have made it evident that decoloniality seeks to create new worlds whilst simultaneously resisting the present. I claim Blackness as a history of disruption, discontinuities as a means to examine the potentiality of the future in relation to the past; a form of apprehending the past to reimagine the future.

8. ANOMALIES OF ONTOLOGY

This chapter discusses the differential ontological stances purported by social ontology, non-ontology (political ontology through afro-pessimism), para-ontology and Africanity. Conceptually different I crucially note the fundamental incompatibility of the four ontologies I examine. Whereby the prefix of ontology provides insight to the lineage of the conceptual frameworks, I highlight ways through which each ontology roots itself in relation to the specific images selected. In and in spite of the varying discourses of ontology, I suggest each framework provides invaluable insight to ways through which the Black body is identified, conceptualised and embodied. This mode of inquiry lays foundations on which the Black African body is realised through differential ontological discourses.

8.1. Colonial:

Highlighted in figure 5.1.1 and figure 5.1.2 wherein both Black bodies are defined by slurs, the word Kaffir, or Kaffer, is a pejorative to categorise Black people through racist terminology. The derogatory term: 'kaffir' is "derived from Arabic meaning 'infidel' or non-believer," which colonialists employed to territorialise native Black bodies as the other (Maart 2014:3). The expression amplifies the Western hegemonic paradigm to exclude Black bodies as human, rather demoted to subhuman. Despite the woman in figure 5.1.1 wearing modern clothing and in juxtaposition, the man in figure 5.1.2 dons apparently traditional clothing, they are both considered kaffirs. This illustrates, that regardless of the clothing or attempts at salvation of the Black body, their figure will always be located at the exteriority of Western society. The word kaffir reinscribes the notion of Blackness being bound by onticide dynamics, whereby being Black is subhuman. Whereas "some bodies are racialised as superior and other bodies are racialised as inferior" (Grosfoguel 2014:4); this notion contributes to the Fanonian theorisation of who is legible in the "zone of being" and the "zone of nonbeing" (1952/1967: 8). Colonial images function as a cultural ridicule, a type of titillation and caricature of Black bodies, wherein differentiation of race impounds the ethnic phenomenon of the subaltern, despite visual codes of dress. Therefore, Blackness is a "presence [that] is a form of absence," wherein ontologically it ceases to exist and is located in a ulterior of Western reason and thought (Wilderson III 2008:98).

All the colonial photographs, Figure 5.1.1 to Figure 5.1.4 illustrate the Black African body delimited to a non-ontology. Non-ontology suggests "a negative axis of being" wherein Blackness and the Black body are predicated on "ontology's necessary exclusion" (Warren 2006). The Black body in these images is contained by a biopolitical "regime of terror," wherein the subject is denied an ontological status and obtains a status of "the zone of non-being" (Warren 2010; Fanon 1960). Their subjectivity remains in a domain of subhuman and therefore refused a body politic in the colonial era, wherein the paradigm of modernity is the hegemonic structure. According to Ann Cooper Albright, the Black body is "remote" and the subservient "other" and thus rejected from having an ontology (2010: 62). The site of non-being, permitting by Frantz Fanon, refers to the social and psychological state of ontology that is forced upon Black bodies by hegemonic culture, whereby these Black bodies are denied full recognisability

and legibility. The state of non-being further characterised the lack of agency, self-determination and autonomy experienced by Black bodies, owing to material and discursive violence perpetrated by the colonial matrix of power and presents the "colonial wound" (Mignolo 2007). Moreover, in the state of the non-ontology and zone of non-being, the Black body as Blackness are "unthinkable, innominate, and paradoxical," whereby Blackness "*exists to not exist"* (Warren 2006). The Black body undergoes a "ontological calcification," whereby the epistemic violence of whiteness and modernity constructs a historical process of becoming for the Black body and through these "various transformations in the phenomenological mode of appearing perverse" and unable to hold an ontology (Yancy 2005: 40 – 41). Where all the colonial portraits are denied ontological status, I propose the Black bodies pictured are deemed as a thing, an object and not a subject; as Aimé Césaire refers to "colonisation = "thingification" (2001: 142–3), I claim the Black bodies pictured are a thing, an object for Western consumption.

Moreover, besides claiming non-ontology, these Black bodies obtain a social ontology. Wherein social ontology explores the differentiation between the hegemonic society and those belonging to precarious bodies, these Black bodies are precarious and obtain a illegible and lack of grievability. These Black bodies lack the "conditions that are im/possible to apprehend life" (Butler 2009: 2). To problematise social ontology further, normative configuring of ontology construct an "epistemological problem" for the apprehension of life, wherein certain bodies are deemed legible and grievable, whilst others are precarious and lack recognisability (Butler 2009: 3). These images reflect ways through which Black (marginalised) bodies are predisposed to norms and socio-political organisations that are historically developed to shift dynamics of precarity (2009: 2-3).

8.2. Postcolonial

Through the use of photographing postcolonial South African subjects (Figure 5.2.1 – figure 5.2.4), the act of having a picture taken and owning a photograph, presents complexities in the experience of social ontology. I suggest, that through the vehicle of vernacular photographic studios, the consent for a Black body to have their portrait taken was considered a humanising experience, as well as an act of preserving their presence and asserting their visibility during the apartheid regime. The apartheid regime narrated Black bodies as inferior and at the fringe of normative white society (Seidman 1999), whilst these portraits assert a counternarrative of Black existence by means of affirmation in and through negation. The mode of portraiture photography functions as an autobiography, whereby it is "a modicum of control in the depiction" against the oppressive apartheid surveillance and censorship of Black indigenous bodies (Fought 2016: 2). Further to this, though the passbook photographed Black bodies for the purpose of surveillance and censorship measures, by way of engaging in vernacular portraiture photography, Black bodies proclaimed their acquiesce to individuation and disavowed singularity as Black South African citizens. The apartheid regime was a dehumanising and oppressive system that championed a social ontology that diminished the agency, sovereignty and subjectivity of indigenous Black South Africans (Price 1991), yet the ability and consent for Black bodies to be seen on their own terms professed a reclamation of citizenship which apartheid system denied.

Figure 5.2.1, figure 5.2.3, figure 5.2.6 and figure 5.2.7 illustrate ways through which these postcolonial Black subjectivities and Blackness embody Africanity as a combative ontology. Through specific use of traditional clothing, these photographs imagine ways through which "African people live according to customs, traditions, and mores of their society" (Asante 2004: 30).

In relation to non-ontology, within the lens of Afro-pessimism, figure 5.2.7 presents the older Black man in the photograph adhering to a submissive quality of existing. The act of the older man being delimited to subservient fashioning illustrates ways through which his ontology is framed in relation to the violent system of modernity. Despite an element of self-fashioning through his choice of clothing, his nonverbal communication elicits an expression of passive and non-embodiment; his African subjectivity is "in the sense of ontology is non-existent" (Sithole 2016: 13). Where Tendai Sithole suggests the "African subject who is denied of ontology to think from the limits of being" I claim that the older Black man in figure 5.2.7. demonstrates a lack of self-empowerment and self-articulation that the younger man in the image presents, despite his agency to dress his body by his choosing (2016: 44). The outfit the older man has chosen further raises questions whether he is choosing to adhere to the modernity discourse, which therefore suggests he is blindly affirming the non-ontology of Blackness bound to the control and power exercised by Western modernity or whether the outfit symbolises his agency to embody the postcolonial agency of self-fashioning.

Figure 5.2.4 places emphasis on the distinction between a "woman" and a "woman in traditional outfit." Through the explicit differentiation, this highlights the modernity discourse of Blackness either assimilating to Western traditions or only claiming visibility by their self-fashioning. This different allocation of precarity illustrates how the "modern" woman is normalised whilst the "woman in traditional outfit" is emphasised to establish asymmetrical ontological distribution. The "woman in traditional outfit" is accentuated as a means to illustrate her non-belonging and non-existence within the universal logic of modernity. As Forrest Kentwell echoes the sentiments I raise, he suggests "because Blackness does not have a way to world or orientation other than a relation to Whiteness," the Black body either assimilates to the hegemonic grand narrative of universal ontology or is denied their access to their own ontological standard (2017: 6). Figure 5.2.3. illustrates how selective allotment of recognisabiity is allocated to Black bodies that either affirm modernity or whiteness praxis or those Black bodies that remain precarious owing to their rejection of the normative, such as Okwui Enwezor proclaims that the "fixed meaning of Blackness as an ideology of authenticity, or whiteness as a surplus enjoyment of superiority (1999: 389). Figure 5.2.3 and figure 5.2.4 both illustrate the transgressive organization of social existence through political institutions through Bantustans and traditional attire, as their portrait is captured in Durban yet their ethnicities are not AmaZulu, rather seemingly Ndebele and Xhosa.

Figure 5.2.5 adheres to the social norms if Afrocentric nativism of the socialist government of Mali during the 1960s. The juxtaposition of modern symbolic objects and traditional attire highlight the contradictory nature of social ontology that affirms yet subverts universal ontology. Where the men in figure 5.2.5 present an admiration to urban subjectivities through symbolic

objects. Arjun Appadurai suggests that “telephones and cars signal technological modernity” (1997: 5) as illustrated in figure 5.2.1, figure 5.2.5. and figure 5.2.7. These symbolic objects, such as the cigarette, leather briefcase and radio, illustrate ways through which postcolonial subjectivities are intrinsically intertwined with the notion of Western progress through national consciousness yet these Black subjects still assert their traditional identities. The images highlighted, figure 5.2.6. and figure 5.2.4 present the ideology forwarded by Partha Chatterjee known as “our modernity.” Where modernity is seen as primarily a Western concept, the indigenous tribes had their practice of modernity infiltrated by Western ideals, whereby “the same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity” (Chatterjee 1997: 20). Moreover, these images document the sociality of Blackness, against the static notion of Africanness primarily linked to traditional attire with the juxtaposition of notifiable Western props. This in turn records the conflicting notions of postcoloniality linked to modernity against the preconceived notion of pre-modern tradition. These images illustrate the complexities of social ontology in relation to the apposition between tradition and modernity, as well as how these bodies are “both created by human actions and attitudes but at the same time has an epistemically objective existence and is part of the natural world” (Searle 2006:12).

Figure 5.2.6. presents a portrait of a Black men dressed in cowboy or spaghetti Western outfit. This representation of the Black body signifies Blackness through the ontological prism of social ontology as well as para-ontology. Whereby the Black man self-fashions himself within an imaginary world constructed by the expansive space of the studio and a speculative fiction paradigm, this signals to the para-ontology praxis that ontology of Blackness is a glorious invocation as a site of possibility, embodied personhood and predicated on reaching beyond the normative, as well as inserts himself into a film that demonstrates Django as a white character. As Fred Moten suggests, Blackness through paraontological terms demonstrates the sociality of Blackness, separated from the Black body, to construct a new realm of possibility for the Black identity to flourish (2013: 242). Further to this, through the Black “Django’s” construction of identity through the mimicry and appropriation of Western pop culture, he presents a hybrid identity that paraontology recognises (Bhabha). The “diasporic aesthetic” is illustrated in figure 5.2.6 through the intertextual reference to the movie *Django*, during nationwide shifts in Mali, and makes use of Django as a form of self-representation. This Black man illustrates ways through which the illusion of race for a specific character is metaphorical and a theatrical portrayal. Through this theatrical portrayal of Django, the Black man, highlights the presence and immortalisation of fragments of reality and cinematic fiction. This Black man reimagines and reinvisions himself as Django; a man that represents victory against the racist confederates, a man of revenge yet instilling justice and a hero. Metaphorically, this image may symbolise Malian independence as the victors against French colonialism, but that is my own inferred and contested claim. The Black man does not necessarily stand for his country’s liberation, but the in-depth reading of the image may provide this assertion as an inferred message. Moreover, through inserting this Black man into the narrative of the spaghetti Western alters the reading of Django. This Black man envisions himself as the main character and thus the studio space is reconstructed as a space for insurging aspirations. Through these assertions of self-representation and self-definition, this Black images gestures towards paraontological realms through the

sociality of Blackness through reimaging worlds wherein Blackness functions as a construction of other worldly potentiality. Through the act of mimicry (Bhabha), figure 5.2.6 presents the opportunity to subvert hegemonic systems of representation to create his own ideation of a Black Malian Django.

Despite the two men pictured in figure 5.2.5. presenting differential self-fashioning, I suggest through social ontology they represent the attitude and posture of the Malian sociocultural categorisations. Their sense of self-writing through dress present modern subjectivities in opposition to traditional pride. Brian Epstein suggests "causal relations and the explanation of social phenomena" is the dominant prism of social ontology. These Black men reflect the social phenomena present in Mali during the insurrection of independence from Francophone colonialism (Keller 2016: 147). The conflicting attitudes between glorifying Pan-African ideals and African socialism in adversity to the mounting influence of Western urbanisation is illustrates through their mode of dress.

Figure 5.2.8. presents a Zazous (Malian dandy). Through the performativity of his existence is dependent on particular social factors. Through the social ontology lens, this Black Zazous presents the discourse of urbanisation, modernisation and impact of his identity gesturing to the African elite. This Black man distinguishes himself from the other identities in Mali through self-fashioning and collectivity of identity to a counterculture of aesthetic, as well as suggesting this Black man has a differential ideology to the common Malian population. Through social ontology view, this Black man illustrates the social phenomena that produce and maintain his identity as belonging to a specific class, gender and episteme. Social ontology, within the sense of identity construction and counterculture allegiance presents the purview that it is "accounting for the social in naturalistic or individualistic terms" (Epstein 2016: 151). Alternatively, through the para-ontological this image illustrated the potentiality of self-fashioning and an imagined community of the Zazous counterculture. The Black man demonstrates an idealised image of himself through specific props and mis-en-scene which raised interrogation about his identity and embodied postcolonial subjectivity. As the "question that concerns identity and identification, but one that is also relational whereby the Black subject evolves, asserting both belonging and difference" as his individuation through outfit and pose simultaneously reflect a collective identity.

Figure 5.2.1. illustrates the performativity of urban Black identity against the backdrop of apartheid. Where the apartheid regime hindered and excluded the Black identity from functioning within normative society, figure 5.2.1 and figure 5.2.4 illustrate ways through which Blackness is transmuted through the construction of social phenomena of the Black social ontology. Further to this, figure 5.2.4 illustrates ways through which the Black woman bodies in the photograph make use of diasporic culture, relating to their dress gesturing USA civil rights, though committed to the project of rebellion against the bantu education. The Black figures in 5.2.4. demonstrate the sociopolitical conflict of the youth uprisings in Langa yet identify with the aesthetics of USA civil rights. The dual sociocultural and political influence of SA and USA social phenomena signals to their identity construction shaped by and through social forces. Further to this, from the lens of para-ontology, the Black women illustrate the notion of

collective mourning and solidarity through embodied subjectivity to the resistance movement. Their portrait is not only a site of Black sociality but a portrait of Black resistance against the oppressive laws of apartheid colonialism.

Figure 5.2.2 and figure 5.2.3 illuminate the social performativity of traditional aesthetics against the apartheid regime's inclination to oppress and diminish the subjectivity of Black bodies. Though the figures dress in traditional clothes which could imply their affiliation and pride in their culture, it conversely signals to the stereotypical imagery propagated by apartheid of Black people being linked to tradition and primitivity. Though their attempt at self-fashioning is a crucial point of inquiry, it invertedly indicates the dominant social and political power that shaped social norms of apartheid colonialism.

8.3. Contemporary

Photographed in contemporary South Africa, figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2. through the lens of para-ontology, accentuate the precarious position of the Black-queer through delivering the crucial disruption and slippage for the potentiality of their Black African queer bodies to attain their aspirations to overcome subalternity and marginality. I briefly define Blackness and queerness as separate categorisations of social difference and precarity, then proceed to explore their mutually constituted discourse of precarity, through sociohistorical and political conditions. The interconnected production and performativity of Blackness and queerness are constantly in the contradictory processes of construction yet deconstruction; affirmation yet disaffirmation; rejection yet acceptation of manifestations relating to the contemporary (Johnson 2003). Nonetheless, racial performativity informs processes by which bodies gain social value and grieavibility (Johnson 2003). Queerness transcendences the contextualisations of contemporary society as a temporal arrangement of "being and a doing" for the future. Queerness, like Blackness, is manifested as a realm of potentiality, as well as a performative act of disidenitifcation and otherwise-being (Muñoz 2009). Queerness unpacks the analytic dimensions and practical lived-experience of bodies that disidentify and thrive on sites where meaning is rendered ambiguous (Edelman 2004). Whereas figure 5.3.1 functions to radically reframe the Black queer body as normative and having access to grievability, figure 5.3.2 presents the complexities of the metaphysics of religion, the afterlife and the violent present which Black queer bodies experience. Queering the Black social ontology and para-ontology identifies the potentiality of being, whereby a modality of non-being, similar to that of non-ontology, does not exist in the present tense (Muñoz 2009). Therefore, Blackness, in the similar frame of queerness, ensues strategies of survival, possibilities and be-coming, that illustrate the admixture of the precarity, the unthinkable and unimaginable by way of potentialities that imagine self-representation and disidentification (Spargo 2000).

Figure 5.3.1 illustrates the ways through which vernacular and ordinary spaces are transvalued into studio spaces. This specific image, similar to figure 5.3.3 appropriates the use of the quotidian space of the street studio as a transformative nature to the normative conception of the studio.

Figure 5.3.2. reappropriates the ethnographic portraiture conventions to facilitate Black queer 'types' or a malleable taxonomy of queer Black bodies in their homes located in townships. As mentioned in chapter 6, though these monochromatic portraits of Black queer bodies assemble as a nomenclature of Black queer life, they reject iconography and fixitivity. Building upon chapter 6 and the particularities of colonial portraiture conventions, I claim Muholi demonstrates ways through which Blackness rejects social hegemonic culture and functions as subversive resistance through paraontological terms, whereas Black Africanness is "a testament to the fact that objects can and do resist" against normative schemas (Moten 2003: 1).

Figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2. demonstrate the embodiment of Blackness through the specific prism of grievability and precarity as described by Judith Butler (2009). Butler articulates precarity as historically constructed modes of vulnerability, along with the predisposed conditions of violence and harm, for bio-politically formed bodies that exist outside the frame of recognition (1990). Precariousness demonstrates the oppressive nature of governmentality, originating from socio-political conditions, that constructs the differential proneness to violence and suffering (Butler 2009). The precarity of specific lives, such as the juncture of queerness and Blackness, as expressed in Muholi's portraits, are rendered more vulnerable to social and structural violence, including material tribulations and metaphysical consequences, within the existing societal structures (Lloyd 2015). Where figure 5.3.1 is allocated within a portrait series of Black queer portraits in their township homes, figure 5.3.2. is a self-portrait of the injurability and material violence Black queer bodies endure. By way of gesturing this section to grievability and injurability, I suggest both images reflect the specifically allocated precarity and state of precarious these bodies challenge in post-apartheid South Africa. Despite the South African constitution accepting queer bodies, there are social realities of violence that impact their liveability. Black queer bodies, as demonstrated by figure 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 dictate multivalent sites of precariousness: firstly, the structural violence of heteronormative society, secondly the legacies of apartheid and thirdly, material queerphobia expressed by inhabitants of townships. Through accentuating the problematization of selective grievance and the ideology of precarity, implemented unwillingly against oppressed and marginalised bodies, I proffer that the differential distribution of precarity is a clear consequence of the asymmetrical circulation of norms. As Judith Butler proclaims, the ontic foundations, in conjunction with the reiteration of normative epistemological structures, determine the frames of recognisability (2004). To be ontologically visible through recognisability is to be within the frame of recognition and thus within the plane of ontological existence in contemporary universalised society; thus, without the ability to have recognisability with social structures is to be ontologically vulnerable and the unviability of sociocultural and political being and becoming are amplified for precarious Black bodies (Neilson and Rossiter 2008). The recognition-recognisability nexus typifies the asymmetrical power dynamics regarding hegemonic normativity and practices that establish who is eligible for existence in contemporary society (Lloyd 2015).

Figure 5.3.2 illustrates catholic iconoclasm and indexes religious artwork. With specific attention to their gaze, pose and use of the halo, I claim that Ziphelele is a saint. The meaning behind the

word or name Ziphelele is either “it is complete” or the “last one.” In relation to this caption and the religious iconoclasm, I suggest that there has been a prophesy fulfilled. They may appear to be the last queer saint, conversely their life is complete and through this their prophesy to be ordained as a saint is complete. This image complicates the reading of ontology. Firstly, it may be considered within the prism of para-ontology iinsofar as the image reflects the saint within an otherwise world of the afterlife. The afterlife becomes the undercommons for Black sociality and Blackness to gain futurity. Moreover, the fact that there is a Black queer saint signals that there is a future-orientated spatio-temporal realm where Black queerness is venerated and exists in peace. I make use of the word “peace” to that extent as the conception of heaven is associated with an afterlife of no suffering and joy. conversely, this image additionally reflects the pain and suffering the martyr Ziphelele had to experience to experience sainthood as a saint is a posthumous title. These echoes motifs of non-ontology, wherein Blackness is associated with Black death and Black pain. Though I reinforce my claim that this image more so mimics the possibility of Blackness to firstly gain recognition and apprehension in a world that is not restricted to social hegemonic operations of power and secondly, the Black body has traversed the pain and suffering experienced on earth towards a realm of joy and lack of agony and violence of all formations. Whilst in their theatrical rendition of the vile act of necklacing is demonstrated artistically by Muholi in figure 5.3.2., this image reflects: firstly, through the title or name of the subject that they are the martyr for the queers as the last queer person persecuted, and secondly, the act of necklacing was predominantly used in apartheid against alleged and perceived ‘spies’ thus implying queer Black bodies are imposters and not welcome to normative Black spaces. Further to this, the act of necklacing evokes violence against queerness, wherein the security and comfort of normativity is considered a threat, yet Black queers are in fact the precarious bodies that are under threat. This image of Ziphelele demonstrates the grievability of the Black queers’ experience, being and death. This sentiment of Black death links closely to non-ontological realms of afro-pessimism, which assumes Black death and Black suffering are “the humiliated, incarcerated, mutilated, and terrorized Black body that serves as the vestibule for the democracy” (Calvin 2015). Grievabillity positions bio-political precarity, as well as limits and allows certain visibility and existence, within the dominant discourse. The precarity of specific lives, such as the juncture of queerness and Blackness, are rendered more vulnerable to social and structural violence, including material harms and metaphysical consequences, in the existing frame of the contemporary (Lloyd 2015). To counter my argument that this is an image of non-ontology and Black queer social death, it is simultaneously an image of para-ontological life and existence; Ziphelele has suffered and now they are within a utopia devoid of hegemonic forces. This is an image of death and suffering but hope and tranquility too; it signals the antinomies of the Black queer personhood within normative society and death being the only escape for a liveable life. Through the prism of non-ontology, Ziphelele is within the imminence of death, violence and pain which is transformed as indexical suffering to a utopian paradise for Black queers. Figure 5.3.2 signifies trauma that is densely laden with apartheid legacies and ghosts that act as a specter.

Returning to figure 5.3.1, Black queer body reside in economically destitute localities, whereby queerphobia is heightened in townships (Salo, Ribas, Lopes and Zamboni 2010: 299). Through

this argument, I have presented ways through which Muholi's portraits perform as the refusal, eruption and anoriginality against oppressive colonial/ modernity power operations which seek to hinder and render nonhuman. that haunt contemporary society.

8.4. Summary

Ruth Behar defines the performance of "being" and performativity of "becoming" are acts that are conductors to ontological existence, within the hegemonic society (1993). This chapter explored ways through which anomalies is ontology are depicted through the Black African image. Through the technological grammar offered by para-ontology, I suggest the Black African image resists the programming of the colonial matrix through encrypting and ghosting legacies for Black African bodies to disidentify. Through the de-racialisation of the Black body, the Black body obtains the consent to be fugitive whilst maintaining a level of fluidity. Blackness is a socio-political and cultural transfiguration aimed towards a future-oriented enterprise that sought to escape the past, while simultaneously reconstituted through coloniality's hauntological conditions through ontology.

9. GLITCHING THE BLACK AFRICAN IMAGE

The nascent articulation that forecloses and essentialises sociocultural, as well as political engagement that illustrates the ways through which the Black African image renders the impossibility as possible and the unimaginable as future imaginaries. Where Glitch feminism disavows the gender binary (Russell 2021: 60), I suggest Blackness disavows the dialectic relationship between whiteness and the Black body. The Black Africa image insurges the circumventing of a new (rather alterative and profound) re-reading of the corporeal experience of Black bodies (Spillers 2003: 205). Existing otherwise requires acknowledgement, acceptance and reworking historical process that undermine futurity, through the use of glitch feminist techniques this quest for existence is realised.

My mode of inquiry, regarding the potentiality of glitch feminism restructuring the social categorical binaries, questions to what extent precarious Black bodies are shaped and determined by normative and hegemonic vectors of power, as well as to what extent is it possible for Black bodies to destabilise and corrupt spatiotemporal dynamics regarding "frames of recognitions" as Judith Butler aptly states. As a means to answer the questions I posed above, I implement glitch feminism as a generative point of refusal against the algorithmic assumptions of taxonomies through technological means and cyber recognition.

9.1. Postcolonial

Notably, Adam Amkpa locates "the aspiration to overcome the legacies of colonialism by imagining alternative universes anchored in democratic cultural pluralism" for postcolonial Black bodies through mechanisms of the photographic portraiture by means of nonverbal communication, styling and mis-en-scene. Through performative enactment of self and identity, the sitters within the postcolonial portraits, illustrate self-fashioning and chosen aesthetics that give life and breath to their subjectivities, agency and autonomy.

Illustrated through figure 5.2.5, the three Fulani shepherds obtain urban-working class props within their portraits, despite their traditional attire. I suggest the use of specific props such as the work briefcase, radio and cigarette gesture to postcolonial modern subjectivities within the prism of chrononormativity. Chrononormativity, mediated by structural and systematic conditions of the contemporary, theorises the manner through which particular temporal and spatial dimensions seek to regulate and organise "human bodies towards maximum productivity," towards global capitalist markets (Freeman 2010: 3). Furthermore, Freeman suggests that the chrononormative mode of regulation seeks to naturalise hegemonic operations of power to the extent that "institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts" (2010: 4). Both chronormativity and inquisition to curatorial regulation of biopolitics, provide an intersectional interdisciplinary

approach to understand ways through which gender and race are mutually oppressed, by hegemonic discourses of dominant contemporary society. offers a compelling critique of neoliberal capitalist society, whereby success is quantified through ownership and accumulation of wealth; Black male bodies and masculinities are biopolitically engineered to simultaneously affirm and negate the contemporary. Through discussing chrononormativity within a glitch feminism paradigm, I reiterate the claim by Legacy Russell that glitched marginalised bodies exist to disrupt the capitalist system. She suggests that marginalised bodies are a "computer virus" that function as a "threat to the function of the machine and its economy" through confronting "the endemic correlation between value and labour" (2021: 93). Further to this, figure 5.2.1. demonstrates the way in which the Black bodies pictured refuse standards of normativity through the apposition of their traditional attire and the modern urban objects they are posed with, as they "resist normative programming" and construct a contradictory version of reality in postcolonial era which seemingly assumed Western universalism as the norm (Russell 2021: 71). This form of resistance is a means to reject the system of categorisation which is forwarded by Western universalism and modernity.

Figure 5.2.6. presents a Black man fashioned as a cowboy; this form of speculative fiction relies on the act of giving the body as a "material form to something abstract" (Russell 2021). Whereas he is a Black man and Django, within the context of the original film, is a white man, I claim he disrupts the normative visioning of Django, as well as complicates the dimension of race and Africanity in relation to the spaghetti Western. Russell claims marginalised bodies through glitch *remixes* data of the normative algorithm to "rearrange and repurpose by any means necessary, rendering what rises from this rebirth unrecognizable from the violence of its original" (2021: 116).

Through my hauntological reading of the glitch ghosts, I suggest the spectre of temporality is blurred within specific images. Seen in figure 5.2.3 and figure 5.2.7 the distinct outfits worn by the differential generations signals to a delinking from temporality, within both Mali and apartheid South Africa. Whereas the younger man and his child were traditional attire, the older gentleman is adorned in Western urbanised suit, in figure 5.2.7. Contrarily, the young woman in figure 5.2.3 is wearing modernised Western clothing, echoing civil rights fashioning and the older woman wears traditional clothing. The portraits attain a timeless spatiality through the differential clothing of the competing eras or cultural distinguishing markers through clothing. There is a blurring of temporality and a sense of future tense whilst simultaneously being in the past. This begs to question what is defined as future and what is defined as past? Traditional attire from within a Western perspective is deemed as closer to nature than culture, whilst Westernised clothing seemingly mirrors progress and a future orientated project. I will not claim that the apposition which the traditional clothing and the modernist self-fashioning reflect an affinity towards Western progress or civilisation, rather that the differential clothing illustrates the way through which Black bodies have agency to self-write their subjectivity as well as the ability to construct their own modernity. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that the baby present in figure 5.2.7. signals a future – despite the image being taken in the past; it could also be suggested that the photograph is for the baby's future family and lineage. These two specific images reflect how time is nonlinear and when completely decontextualised, the ability to define

the time period these images belong to is obscured. The images that have been deliberated in relation to the notion of "belonging and being long" as a means to "persist over time" as Jose Munoz discusses in relation to queer futurity (2013: 13). I suggest figure 5.2.1.3 and figure 5.2.7 mitigate the complexities of a universality which coloniality/ modernity aims to maintain, whilst simultaneously proffering a future/ past blurring of temporality which ultimately reconfigures the colonial matrix of power's totalising wrath. Figure 5.2.7 illustrates a generational patriarchal portrait wherein the Black men photographed wear differential outfits and express differential poses, this juxtaposition gestures to the glitch as error, wherein the appositional bodies redefine the singularity of Blackness as a multi. As Russell claims, "every time we define ourselves, we choose definitions that reduce the ways our bodies can be read," as both men are Black, African and assumingly from the same lineage, the discrepancy in their expression of self and their definition of self is vastly contradictory. Though conflicting definitions of self, both Black men illustrate the way in which the Black image contains the ability to modify as "multitudes against the current of a culture-coding that encourages the singularity" (Russell 2021: 51).

9.2. Contemporary

I discuss the role of representation, agency and a necessary rapture for the Black-queer to exist within dominant society, though critiques of glitch feminism through the photographic portraits captured by Zanele Muholi and Fatoumata Diabate. Glitch feminism, in relation to queer theory, proposes "a backward glance that enacts a future vision," wherein the future utopia of Blackness is transcendental (Muñoz 2009: 3). As suggested by Jose Munoz, queerness, much like Blackness, is "essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (2009: 3). Whereas this possibility of another world is the material reality and metaphysical certainty for Black bodies and Black African image to mobilise the desertion of self and the being, as a residue of crystallised disidentification phenomena.

Figure 5.3.1 illustrates a portrait of a transman or a masc-lesbian woman. Their identity is blurred not only by their unisex name but additionally through their mode of self-fashioning. Figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2., indicate the Black queer body through differential modes of representation; both illustrate the body obtaining a cosmic and liminal corporeal.

These portraiture photographs are embodied within liminal spaces and thresholds that are against the ruination and derelect of the Black African queer image. Against the lingering presence of apartheid legacies and coloniality objects, are the fascination for the uncanny sociopolitical reconfigurations of the Black African queer image in South Africa. Accordingly, where figure 5.3.1 blurs the sexual and gender orientation of the Black body present, while Figure 5.3.2. contributes to the theorisation of the Black queer body muting their gender identity. Muholi prioritises queering the glitch. By *queering the glitch*, I contend that queering denotes traversing the term glitch not to be 'straight(forward),' rather to queer is a "unceasing disruptiveness" against the normative system and produce a new evolved system that caters to queer bodies (Parker 2002: 148). By way of Muholi queering the Black image in figure 5.3.1.1 and figure

5.3.2, the underlying argument in favour of disrupting the binaries as Russell suggests, is that they unsettle the gender, racial and sexual orientation binaries. In a similar aspect to my assertion of queering the glitch, Legacy Russell proclaims, in the chapter titled: the *glitch refuses*, that "bodies embrace the in-between and beyond, all as an active resistance, a strategic blur of binary" (2021: 36). Figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2 encrypt the hardware of normative society through decoding and "shatter the rigidity of binary systems," towards remapping the physical corporeality as Black queer lived experiences in South Africa, against the backdrop of apartheid legacies. Further to this, both figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2. validate the Black African (queer) image as "a threat to the function of the machine" and a "embody the virus as a vehicle of resistance" through the adaption of being an intimidation and break from and to societal norms (Russell 2021: 93).

Figure 5.3.2 and figure 5.3.4 illustrate the way in which the cosmic body shapeshifts to various versions of itself and queering or 'Blackening' the complexities of being. As Russell suggests, the glitch is an avatar, the Black body is "shapeshifting, time-traveling, genderfucking" as illustrated in figure 5.3.2 whereby Muholi assumes a multitude of Black queer characters. Muholi is characterised as a shapeshifter within the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series as their body is transformed to various personalities and spectres of differential sociocultural symbolic figures that are reflected in Black queer life in South Africa. Muholi explores the Black queer bodies' lived-reality and lived-experience by way of performing alter-egos as manifestations of resistance and a survival strategy against historical legacies. Through the use of quotidian objects and the queer Black body, Muholi shatters the illusion of a universal and normative system asserted by the gendered and racial social markers. Ziphelele and the Dark Lioness series interweaves fiction and nonfiction characterised through racial and queer performativity. Through the interrogation of the contemporaneity condition of heteronormative society within local and global contextualisations. Wherein figure 5.3.4. Diabate presents a Black boy that transfigures himself as an animal while simultaneously a human. Diabate clarifies the shapeshifting of the boy through corporeal realities that shift dimensions of the cosmic body.

Figure 5.3.4. constructs a photograph that presents a beguiling narrative of masquerade through ceremonial pageantry. The use of the self-made mask demonstrates the production of imaginary worlds and imagination through the quotidian in conjunction to folklore. The mask questions the exactitude of mythology, folklore and subjectivity, as well as the creative power of imagination through a reshaped cardboard box and a plastic soil bag. I suggest this narrative of Blackness and Africanness explores the mystifying yet simultaneously demystifying quality of the Black image. Furthermore, the reconstruction of quotidian objects to signify wooden masks form an axiomatic enclosure of speculative fiction. Relating this to glitch feminism, the act of the glitch is avatar, wherein "performative practice," such as the re-enactment of the initiation ceremony, "resist an exclusionary canon of visual" (Russell 2021: 107). Further to this, in apposition to figure 5.3.2, I suggest the use of the quotidian is transformed into the speculative fiction of catholic iconography. Muholi claims that their use of quotidian objects is intentional and critical towards the interrogation how "photographers can question and deal with the body as material or mix it with objects to further aestheticise black personhood" (n.d). Bound by tyres, a halo contours their head, the use of the quotidian in this image is transfigured to create a religious

artwork. In addition to this, the background of this image constructs a stained-glass aesthetic. Muholi is transformed from a Black queer person to a saintly Black queer figure through speculative fiction.

Figure 5.3.1 illustrates the way through which the children pictured may be considered a cyborg or avatar through the use of mis-en-scene, whilst simulteously making reference to predecessors of the photographic style employed by Malick Sidibe and Seydou Keita. Diabate "reboots, revives and scrolls" through Malian historical photographic archive as a source for their inspiration (Russell 2021: 79). Furthermore, figure 5.3.2 and figure 5.3.1 illustrate the way through which the Black bodies photographed are de-territorialized and decontextualised within the space they occupy. The deterritorialization allows the figures to reterritorialize the studio domain as a comprehension that the physical form is versatile and the space these bodies occupy is reimaged and unrecognisable which allows for the disidentification of their figures (Russell 2021: 70).

Figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2 illustrate the manner in which queer Black bodies are signified as the undead ghosts by way of their absence and indeterminacy of being whilst concurrently presented as living populations that ignite fear and are perceived as threats through their ability to haunt hegemonic society. Muholi considers the ways in which oppressed Black queer bodies are lingering spectres in the present through visuality. Figure 5.3.1 and figure 5.3.2 illustrate the ways through which the possibility of Black life and Black bodies obliquely enact the distances of temporality and become imbued with a sense of cosmic matter that transcends histography. Where figure 5.3.1 presents a portrait of a queer person, in their home, figure 5.3.2 illustrates a queer person through household items; both transform the quotidian to expansive speculative realities that facilitate the construction of Blackness that escapes the stasis of conventional colonial imagery through racialised time. These specific images bring to fore the balance of recognition of the lingering presence of heteronormativity and oppressive whiteness with the live-giving force and cosmic reach of Blackness. The Black body is in a constant state of morphing and a fugitive substance that obliterates hegemonic Western universalism towards a creation of Blackness as infinite and an impossible possibility. As Ashraf Jamal suggests, figure 5.3.1, within Muholi's faces and phases series, presents a "quest for normativity… which gives them a disruptive force" (2015: 168). Figure 5.3.2 is a portrait of a Black queer body that is photographed in past, audienced in the present and indexed in the future. Ziphelele is assumed to be a saint, which denotes that she is already dead. They occupy an in-between temporality of disjuncture; whereby the image was captured in the past for future generations to venerate, whilst being viewed in the present.

9.3. Summary

Blackness is excluded from normative mechanisms of technology and formations of normativity; the Black African body is considered an error and a code to be re-written (Blas 2008: 16). As a means to disidentify against the normative hegemonic society, Blackness is noted as "unthinkable, raw material or code" that enables the potentiality of hacking the algorithm of

universalised system. As Blas indicates that marginalised Black bodies are a virus that corrupts hardware and mutates code to "recode the entire technological apparatus" (2008: 16). Along similar lines, Russell precedes to claim that marginalised bodies, in here chapter *glitch is virus*, that "We [marginalised bodies] want to corrupt data… We [marginalised bodies] recognize that in this breaking, there is a beginning" (2021: 116). Both scholars proffer the opinion that for Black bodies and the Black African image to exist in the normative society, they are required to deconstruct, reconstruct and encrypt new modes of being and doing. Through the use of glitch feminism and the listed queer theorists, I exclaim Blackness grasps "multi-valent subjectivities" beyond the normative schema as a means to work simultaneously "within and outside" modernity's praxis (Roysdon 2009: 17). Legacy Russell locates the body as a "cosmic corporeality" (2021: 117) and an abstraction to the material, in the chapter: the glitch survives. Moreover, Russell validates the notion of the corporeality of the body being abstract through the notion that being "gives form to something that has no form, that is abstract, cosmic" (2021: 76). Elisabeth Freeman (2010: 7) elevates the theorisation that "time… binds flesh into bodies and bodies into social beings" yet is bound "to history's wounds." Further to this Jose Munoz allocates queer people to "have been cast out of straight time's rhythm" and thus queer people "have made worlds in our temporal and spatial configurations" that go against the colonial universalisation of chrononormativity. The Black African image deploys the "imaginary as a computational strategy for survival" (20201: 80) through the lens of glitch feminism.

10. LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUES

As a means to evaluate the Black African image, this research investigated the Black body through the simplified yet nuanced experience of the colonial matrix of power, yet unintentionally discounted to address the intricacies of the image of Black Africanness through gender and class. As a means to problematise the theorisation of the Black gendered and sexualised body, all the photographers in the postcolonial era are male and thus provides a singular view of the male gaze. Conversely, through the selection of the contemporary photographers, they are either queer or femme presenting. Though making use of the different genders and sexuality markers in different sections, it does not illustrate a holistic "Black gaze" of differential social categories of identity within each section of the temporal periods. This research neglected to provide insight into the disparities of gender and sexuality within the practice and discourse of the photography medium, rather it focused on the racial marker of Blackness as the unifying assemblage. Despite making use of Glitch feminism, I employ the term feminism within an intersectional paradigm, which seeks to address all marginalised identities that defy and resist contemporary hegemonic society through survival strategies proposed. The main goal of this research, by the use of Glitch Feminism, is to demonstrate the way in which binaries, rather asymmetrical operations of power, oppress marginalised identities, specifically Black bodies, and how these bodies utilize technologies and mechanisms of resistance to promote liberation from hegemonic Western society. Lastly, though Glitch feminism predominantly examines the gender abstraction against oppressive systems, I have appropriated this framework to illustrate ways in which normative society is arranged by and maintained through legacies of modernity/ colonialism to which Black bodies resist, reboot, revive and survive in these structures of systemic hate and anti-Black racism.

This research presents two antinomies: the paradox of representation/ hypervisibility and the paradox of cruel optimism. Through the use of the specific frameworks and literature that I have selected, I further emphasise the precarity and marginalisation of the othered Black African body. The Black African body is hypervisible and the re-inscription of colonial difference is accentuated. Through the explicit investigation of the Black body, I inadvertently reinforce the artificial attributes of race and colonial discourse which this study attempted to contradict. Although the aim of this research is for the inclusion of the Black African image within the peripheries of hegemonic society, through highlighting the Black body, it obtains the inevitable opposition to mark the body as isolated and hypervisibile. Conversely, by means of exploring the Black body, this research claims the oversaturation and ubiquitous nature of the Black African image may lead to the normalisation of Blackness within the formation of a non-racial society and the Black identity is left homogenous. This assimilation into hegemonic society erases the fluidity and hybridity of Blackness. If Blackness is normalised, to what extent will it create its own modernity (a transmodernity) to exist against universality? My research suggests that concentrating on the Black African image and Blackness, I was able to re-read and reframe the

articulations of Blackness which gestures towards an act of resistance that disrupts the vilification yet exoticisation of the Black body. Ultimately, through either oversaturation of the ubiquitous Black image or emphasising the precarity of the Black body, hegemonic society will always perpetuate structural and material violence against the existence of the Black being and the Black scoptic regime. Regardless of the paradoxical claims of this research presents, my intention was to facilitate the reclamation of the marker of Black racial identity and Black image as a means for illustrating the myth of race and the potential to expose material realities that these marginalised bodies through the medium of photographic portraiture.

Another limitation this study presents is the weight placed on *Black African photographers*. Why focus on Black African photographers when there are multiple ethnicities and races that occupy the African identity? As a means to answer this question, the axiom of my argument is that the purpose of this research is to explore ways through which Blackness and Africanness intersect and ways through which colonial oppression enforced violence. To focus on other races and ethnicities in Africa removes the importance of indigenous bodies that experienced the violent regime of colonialism. Further to this, I explored ways through which colonial administrators captured marginalised Black bodies and how these legacies impact the way Blackness is visualised and imagined. I suggest the Black bodies, within postcolonial and contemporary era specifically, summon future realities of being represented on their own terms. The heightened insight of the transformative nature of self-representation and reflexivity is manageable when juxtaposing colonial Black body imaginings against reflexive Black re-presentation in postcolonial and contemporary contexts. Lastly, I pose the question as to how to define Africa? Simbao suggests Africa is a locality and geopolitical plane (2017), whilst Simon Carter proposes the concept of Africa is an abstraction – Africa is a social construct and racial designation (1998). I claim both of these theorisations articulate Africa aptly; Africa is both a social construction of place and temporality, while simultaneously it is a spatial geopolitical domain for those that inhibit the land. Where the concept of Blackness intersects both translations of Africa is as a rhizome of sociocultural and historical deterritorialization of the spatio-temporal continental domain.

When discussing components and intricacies of Black bodies and Blackness, most scholars would utilise critical race theory. I actively decided not to make use of CRT as a means to subvert the normative assumption of this theorisation in relation to my study of the Black race through portraiture photography. The frameworks I employed discuss the Black bodies and marginalised bodies in a nuanced theorisation without explicitly mentioning the Black race as the foundation of their claims. Glitch feminism illustrates marginalised bodies through technologies that encourage fugitivity yet fluidity of identity, whilst decoloniality deliberates on the global south from an episteme and ontology paradigm of transmodernity and defiance from Western hegemonic society. Thought CRT would provide direct insight to the complexities of the Black race through structural violence and systems of oppression (Delgado and Stefancic 2000: 7), I primarily focused on the future orientated project that Blackness undertakes through frameworks that present practical and artistic modes of representation beyond governmentality and civil rights terminology. Moreover, CRT's foundation predominantly lies within an African-American praxis, whereas my research is provincialized to Africa and thus makes use of frameworks that

demonstrate Blackness from a from a generalised modality and thus permit me to morph these frameworks into my argument holistically.

Due to time constraints, this research selected images with similar motifs and mis-en-scene, as way for the exploration as to how Black bodies are read through portrait photographs. Though each photograph presents differential themes and visual arrangements, there is a dominant theme and selection criteria I made use of. Despite aiming towards providing differential visualities of the Black image, especially within the postcolonial era, the Black images shared similar tropes and convey analogous meanings.

The second last site of contestation, within this study, is with regards to the contextualisation of the economic landscape and capitalist system. I intentionally disregarded the element of economic capital as it would give rise to complexities of race that I did not have the tools and means to address. There are various frameworks that discuss Blackness and capital, such as *Black Marxism* by Cedric Robinson, *The myth of Black capitalism* by Earl Ofari Hutchinson and *Capitalist Nigger* by Chika Onyeani. The Atlantic visualscape is briefly mentioned in the next few chapters as a means to illustrate the circulation of the Black image, yet it is not the primary aspect of my study. Where the Black image requests visibility through commodification and validation within a "contact zone" of contemporary capitalist society (Schneider 2013:36), I have instead highlighted the sociocultural and historical context and not the way through which the Black image disseminates within and through the global visual economy.

Lastly, as majority of my framework and literature review discussed the importance of the theorisation of positionality, I problematise my reflexivity and positionality in relation to my study. I am taxonomized as a mixed-raced femme body and identifying as politically Black; through researching the complexities of Blackness, it brings to fore the question whether I have the authority to discuss this topic. My study predominantly focuses on indigenous Black bodies and the complexity of race, whilst my physical appearance would not explicitly suggest that I am Black, I still maintain that I am politically asserting my Black identity. Alternatively, this problematisation of authority and authenticity of the Black race raises nuances of colourism and indigeneity of possessing an unambiguous Black body, it further reiterates the claim of this study that Blackness is fluid and defies the limited conception of normative claims (rather mythology) regarding race. By means of identifying as Black and producing this body of work, it further functions as an act of defiance against normative hegemonic society through my own personal capacity. I reclaim my Black body through analysing other Black bodies for the purpose of firstly, introducing more Black African knowledge to the predominantly white Eurocentric institution of the university and secondly, as a mode for self-representation as my own medium of a self-portrait through episteme.

11. CONCLUSION

Wherein Black African identities exist within the spatio-temporality nexus that simultaneously indexes rootedness and displacement, this research interrogated the iterations of the Black African image through portraiture photography in Sub-Saharan African contexts. The intentional deconstruction of temporality, for the purpose of the assigning an alternative genealogy of the Black African image in Mali and South Africa, periodization of coloniality, postcolonial and contemporaneity demonstrated the shift from colonial conventions to the (re)appropriation and (re)invention of photographic mechanisms by Black African photographers.

The differential temporality markers highlight the production of specific sociocultural and historical identities which reveal the definitive material conditions. The alteration in geopolitical context, temporality and spatiality offered ways through which the Black African image is transformed, as well as it triggers a nuanced representation of episteme and ontological grounds.Where colonial portraiture canons elicited the European and Western fascination with the colonial difference of the Black body, the Black African image was a site for voyeuristic phantasy; a being whereby essentialised primitivity is projected upon and rendered immobile by Western audeincing practices. Conversely, Black African photographers, from the period of postcoloniality to contemporaneity, established their factuality as an iterant of "double agents of cultural change," and as contributors and assets of both modernity and tradition, as well as cosmopolitan and older local subjectivities (Peffer 2013: 14).

I asserted that the conception of Blackness does not originate from Africa, rather Africans are reduced to the Black identity through the processes of racialised modernity strategies. I contended that the African continent signifies a shift from modernity's account of coloniality towards a geopolitical place of becoming and being for Black African bodies through the photographic lens. Obstructing hegemonic patterns of racial identification, I explored Black Africanness and the Black African body as a modality of transformation. The way in which contemporary and postcolonial Black African photographers respond to historical imaginings of Black African image are conventionally bond to coloniality through nuanced articulation of lived racialised experiences.

This research enclosed the appositional reading of the differential sociocultural and political conditions between Mali and South Africa to emphasise the intricacies of governmentality, varied Black African identities and embodied subjectivities. The ramifications of coloniality and modernity form contestations and conflicts for the Black African image which are heightened by the rejection of singularity to embrace multiplicity. The disputation and refusal to be relegated by colonial tropes is evident in the visuality of Black African images that are simultaneously restrained to the confinement of coloniality, yet the expansiveness of the Black African artistic and political radicalism.

For the Black African image, the deviation from citational claims of normativity, constructed through and by the formation of Black sociality, are a means to rupture the mechanical patterns

of hegemonic universal logic. Black African bodies may be considered as remanets of colonial pasts that exist concurrently in the present and future, by means of indeterminacy of temporality, located in a phantasmagoric state. I suggested that the Black African image engages with a hyper (re)generative state of the Black African existence which provoked sociocultural (re)production. Therefore, Black African identities are an evolving conversation of racial identity through the acknowledgement of difference.

I highlighted the ideological composition of taming the savage, existing without culture, defined by the pacification and socio-political fundamentalism of relentless certitude within the indefinite colonial wound. This visual regime is imbibed by the Western praxis of modernity through structural and material violence. Paradoxically, to destabilise the dogmatic elements of identity, as an immovable trait, there is an ironic duality that authors the Black African bodies persisting within the colonial discourse of infantilisation whilst simultaneously barbarisms. I claim that the Black African image, demonstrating social categorisation as a fixed construct embedded in performativity through the colonial discourse of modernity, functions as a memorialising site of understanding the violent atrocities against the Black African body.

The Black African identity, within the coloniality prism, remains imbued with colonial uncertainty and an ambiguous yet ubiquitous presence. I assert that Black African identities are no longer considered static, but fluid and slipping away from hegemonic norms. The reappropriation of nonverbal communication and mis-en-scene, against the colonial canons of photography, by postcolonial and contemporary Black African photographers illustrated the portraiture photography as a mode for emancipation. Through visual strategies presented by the eight postcolonial photographs and the four contemporary photographs, I contended that the Black African subjects and Black African photographers demonstrated a sense of geopolitical and biopolitical release from the structural and material violence of heteronormative society. I argued that by locating the significance of geopolitical temporality for the Black African body catalogues modes of “belonging” and “being long” and the “diachronic aspect of generality” (Freeman 2010: 19) Black African identities are in the constant state of deconstruction and reconstruction that results the Black African body in a condition of longing and potentiality of a black utopia. Through the use of portraiture photography, I assert Black African bodies are promised a spatio-temporality that affirm and cling to their embodied subjectivity vociferously. Whereas postcolonial images made visible the humanistic level of Black African subjectivity and episteme, the contemporary photographs illustrate an emerging presence for specific recognisability of the Black African image within the moment of the now. Further to this, I deduced that the colonial portraits were half-body or bust portraits whereas majority of the postcolonial portraits were full body. My reasoning behind highlighting the posture and arrangement of the Black African body is as a means to establish the differential functionality of composition in the Black African image. I asserted that whereas colonial portraits focused on the physiognomy and taxonomy of the Black African body, postcolonial images celebrated the individuation and embodied subjectivity through self-fashioning of the Black African body, and contemporary photographers grappled with racial identity politics and self-reflexive practices to

reimagine Black African futures. I proposed postcolonial and contemporary images operate as a site of resistance against hegemonic ideologies prescribed by the government and social structures – especially within the South African apartheid state wherein Black bodies were dispossessed and denied full citizenship. Through the postcolonial visuality, I suggested that wherein Black African bodies wear traditional attire, this use of clothing functions as an amour against the colonial and oppressive apartheid regime. Through the performativity of identity, constructed by means of mis-en-scene, these postcolonial Black African bodies presented a typography of "our modernity" as posited by Chatterjee (1991). I offered the differential pose and composition of the Black African body in colonial portraiture sought to reiterate the homogenous identity of the Black body, whilst Black African photographers imagined the Black African identity as futuritive and fluid racial markers. Ndimande and Moodley's Black and white vernacular portraiture photographs demonstrate ways through which issues regarding South African identity, nationhood and memory are embodied against British colonial rule to postcolonial apartheid within South Africa. Zanele Muholi predominantly explores the Black queer identity in contemporary South Africa, whilst Fatoumata Diabate expands on mythology and anthropomorphism through visual grammar to narrate sociality of Mali. Within the contemporary era, I gestured that Muholi and Diabate's Black African images mapped the dynamic possibilities of Black African identities to transverse colonial conventions of photography, through differential visual codes and techniques. Both contemporary Black African photographers contended with differential racial politics in their respective countries, yet the unifying asset between the two is their commitment to retrieving, reviving and reimagining Black African identity. Moreover, I claimed that Muholi and Diabate draw inspiration from African-originated myths, folklore as well as belief and knowledge systems. For instance, through the contemporary lens, Zanele Muholi contextualises their body of photography against the violent structures of apartheid and its ghosts, whilst Fatoumata Diabate oscillates between visual griot sociohistorical legacies, such as Malick Sidibe and Seydou Kieta, as well as celebrates ceremonial pageantry through folklore and oral histories. These images shatter the illusion of universal hegemonic and racist ideologies and present trans-modernity and provincialized biopolitics to their respective African countries. Postcolonial and contemporary eras investigate how the Black image employed modes of subversive resistance as a means to: 1) erect their own trans-modernity, 2) deconstruct the illusion of universality and lastly 3) perceive their Black African existence and reality from their indigenous geopolitical localities for liberatory modes of being.

Where Black Africanness embodies "temporal dissonance to dissidence that produces and develops a malleability of temporality" (Freeman 2010: 11), "time binds flesh into bodies and bodies into social" conditions, yet "binds histories wounds" wherein coloniality indicates haunting and ghostly properties. I asserted that though the debris of modernity and coloniality are calcified within the flesh of the Black African body, Black African photographers facilitate identitarian desires with fugitive qualities through portraiture. Through the Black African image, I postered that the schism between the past and the present existing simultaneously weave the presence of lingering trauma whilst the possibility of utopian realities for the Black African body

and image. I argued that the rejection of normative social coloniality, by Black African photographers, blur the presence of the unreal temporality which anticipates and decomposes hypervisibility and invisibility that obscures hegemonic norms. The conflict between mechanisms of Black African exclusion and the aspiration of Black African inclusion are embodied through visuality. Where the tension between legibility and precarity is dialectically incompatible with normative inscriptions of personhood, ontology and episteme, I offer the value that denial of invasive and expansive oppression is negated by opaque acts of resistance through photographic technologies and visual codes.

Though I affirmed the substance of the Black African image is in constant crisis and threatened by coloniality, I conversely insisted that it occupied a liminal temporality that racialised time affords the Black African body to perform a fugitive and shapeshifting fluidity. I argued that the generative qualities of decoloniality and praxis of glitch feminism provide new articulations of political and socio-cultural awareness; this enables the subversion through asynchronism of coloniality's temporal periphery for the evidence of Black African coevalness. The Black African image is a labyrinth of displacement and roaming fugitivity. Montages of fragmented episteme and ontology reflect the obsolete nature of modernity in the contemporaneity. Through this claim, I presented the recollection of naturalised and oppressive shards of coloniality elucidate a renewed constellation of identity for the Black African body. Black African identity do not follow heteronormative and chrono-normative linear temporality, as it tends towards racial time. I briefly discussed the concept of chrono-normativity without it becoming the central point of the argument. By means of investigating the praxis of chrono-normativity (Freeman 2011) and the evaluation of "straight time" (Munoz 2007), I claimed that the conceptualisation of compulsory heterosexuality, temporality and hegemonic societal structures are intrinsically intertwined within the neoliberal biopower and coloniality biopolitics. Racial time assumes that Black bodies exist "out of time" wherein their episteme and ontology ought to legitimise chrono-normativity. I advocate that despite the affirmation of chrono-normativity, Black African identities enact practices that subvert its rigidity through the mobilisation of de-synchronisation of temporality, from the alterity of coloniality. For instance, where Muholi, along the lines of racialised queer time, grapples with chrono-normativity, I asserted her Faces and Phases series facilitates its own temporality wherein the Black Queer African image engages with violent apartheid legacies, though forms its own temporality for the futurity. Moreover, I asserted Diabate engages with the plasticity of time by traversing orality and folklore within the contemporaneity.

Through the technological grammar offered by Glitch Feminism and decoloniality, I suggested that the Black African image resists the programming of the colonial matrix through encrypting and ghosting legacies for black bodies to disidentify. Whereas the glitch *ghosts*, I proposed that Black African bodies are offered as sites of embodied subjectivities that disturb the present and past-future towards futurive worlds otherwise through visual composition. Through de-articulating the Black African image and processes of de-racialisation shifts the configuration of Black Africanness, through geopolitical and biopolitical apparatus, towards emphasising the productive powers in constructing a fluid Blackness. Where hegemonic society seeks to delegitimise modes of Black existence and forms of knowledge production, I claimed

decoloniality illustrates ways through which subversive strategies, such as delinking, epistemic disobedience, border thinking and transmodernity, negotiate episteme and ontology to create new forms of being. The transgressive acts of delinking and epistemic disobedience are as a means to think from the margins and transcend colonial constructs, whereby these images initiate the process of aesthetics and/ or aesthesis of perceiving and re-seeing the regulatory photographs of colonial difference. Through enacting the archives of colonial difference, the narrative of coloniality/ modernity is unmasked and highlights the potentiality for the poetic and practical liberation for Black African bodies. These images illustrate the way through which Black African bodies is re-envisioned through the decoloniality lens of epistemic disobedience. Glitching, within glitch feminism, mobilizes technology for new modalities of being and new realities of existence. It rejects historical processing and lives through the material of the internet. The glitch body refuses order and makes use of radical technology as a subversive tool. I argued that through the act of self-authoring their websites, Muholi and Diabate construct a living-archive that facilitates the fluidity of Black African body and their embodied Black African positionality, agency and subjectivity. The fractures of coloniality are imagined through portraits that function as signifiers of trauma laden with legacies of modernity that are ghosts and spectres within contemporary society. The ghosts of modernity haunt contemporary photographers through the afterlife of societal structures. Survival strategies offered by decoloniality and glitch feminism present the shift from discussing the Black African body, delimited to racial formations by coloniality, towards the reconstruction of anoriginal nuanced complex identities. Blackness, through the decoloniality praxis and para-ontological framework, displaces the fixities and singularities of racial identity. The Black African image mutates, reconfigures and restructures ways of being through praxis offered by decoloniality and glitch feminism for concrete reconfigurations of systemic violence that grapples with the complexities of coloniality.

Black African bodies are an infinite malleable lexical and biological matter wherein the black image obtains a fugitive quality. Moreover, the postcolonial and specifically, contemporary Black African photographers, establish Black African identities to be considered as obtaining the centrality to plasticity – a body, being and episteme that is in constant slippage and escape from the fixity of colonial portraiture conventions and the possession by colonial hierarchies. Blackness and Africanness obtain a nomadic spatiality, regardless of their locality and provincialisation to the continent of Africa; these identities are fugitive and cannot be contained by dominant ideologies through geopolitics and biopolitical formations.

Iterations of the Black African body are fractured and rebuilt through the quotidian as a means to certify the presence of personhood through embracing the generative fluidity of racial identity. Through photographic portraiture, the exploration of the quotidian and the mundane offer significant qualities that transform the ordinary into unique generative and differential values. The quotidian presents a transfigurative forces of representation for daily transgressive acts for daily survival against a multitude of oppressive systems. The quotidian in the Black African

image expresses the radical acts of everydayness and vernacular intimacy (and sociality) as an intervention by means of the mundane. The reclamation of ordinary acts is a force of rebellion and intentional liberatory practices for the transgressive visuality of the Black African. Diabate and Muholi's boldly photographs grapple with racialised everydayness and the quotidian. I suggested the differential allocation of power between private and public spaces exposes the metaphysics of possession and self-possession. The confluence of private and public spaces is negotiated by Muholi in their Faces and Phases series. Queer black bodies are photographed in their quotidian localities, of their home's in the townships, yet the capture the Black African image is displayed in public spaces. The question stands, how do black bodies navigate privacy and publicity as expressions of power. Diabate and Muholi allocate the politicisation of aesthetics and the transmogrify and revolutionary quality that the quotidian objects offer. The use of the quotidian symbolic objects in portraiture photography by postcolonial and contemporary Black African photographers' function on differential spectrums. Within the postcolonial era, symbolic objects operate as visual props towards bestowing aspirations and self-fashioning, whilst the Black African photographers make use of the quotidian objects as a means to construct the transformability of mundane, everyday items that highlight meaning and value through ordinary articles as artefacts and artwork. Phantasmic invocations of Blackness are sites of possibility and embodied personhood predicated on transcending heteronormative structures whilst grasping a tantamount connection to the present tense, past dystopias and future utopias through the Black African image. The sedimented layers of epsestemic and ontological grounds respond to the historical conjuncture of identitarian formation. Through the transformative modality of the quotidian, ordinary tactics and modes are deployed for subversive resistance, survival strategies and fuel in the common lives of Black bodies.

Black bodies perform as punctuation within the grammar of the figuration of race that conjures being and the act of becoming through states of potentiality and possibilities as key phantastic assertions of identity, personhood and sociality.

Where Fred Moten advocates for blackness as a "refusal of refusal," black life rejects that which has been refused onto them through fugitive publics, impromptu and improvisational techniques of black sociality. The accumulation and constitutive properties of blackness illustrate the black body's preservative nature that operates on the plane of refusal that which has been refused onto them. Blackness occupies liminal topographies yet generative characteristics. It is a pre-formance for the performance of refusal of refusal. Blackness as a non-performance crucible of modernity yet acts on the freedom to perform refusal. To defy yet affirm norms emphasise the value of consent that is striped by hegemonic society. This state of refusal of refusal shares significant similarities with Munoz's disidentifaction. Disidentification responds to the rejection of hegemonic identity interpolations and the formation of identities through the political act of disrupting the identificatory activity. Disidentification and the refusal of the refused indicate the rejection of hegemonic ascription of identity. Moten's conception of the undercommons is a practice and condition for refusal against the ubiquity of colonial violence. Where blackness transcends generality, black bodies are architects of rebuilding their destiny through "originary

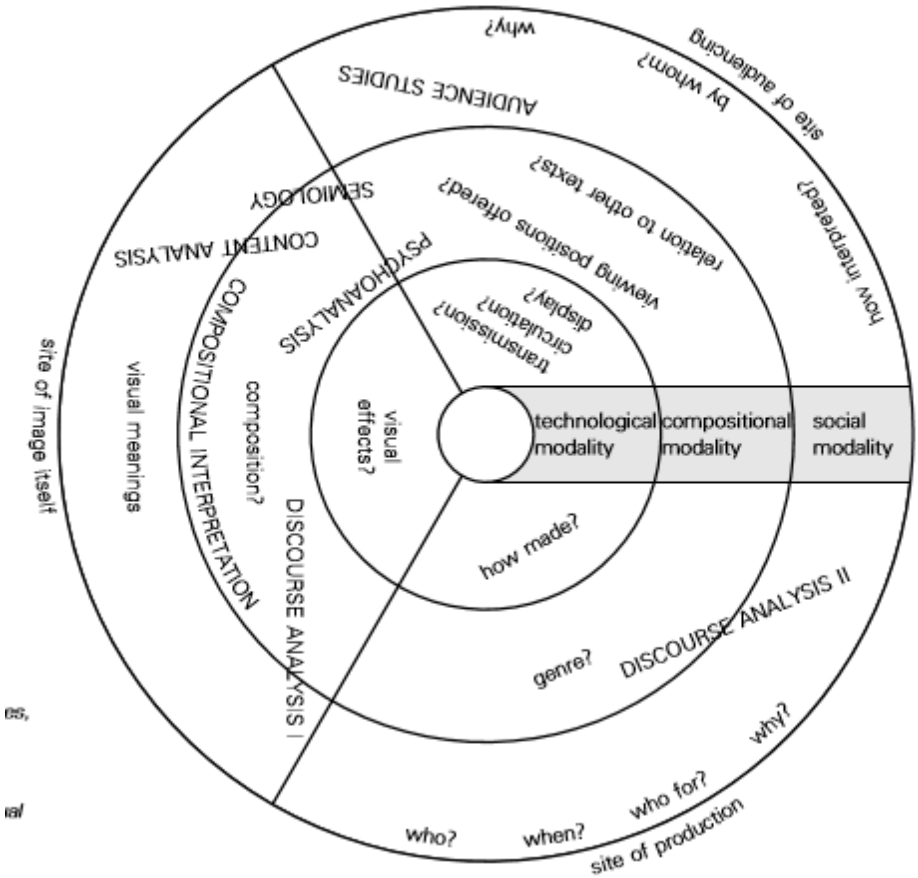
displacement" (Chandler 1). The act of refusal and disidentification proffers the ability to consent what has been imposed upon black bodies through the negation and disavowal of normativity through performative repetition that falls on the purview of devices that defy modes of description. Through the transformative force of paraontology as non-perfromance is the crucible for mourning modernity/ coloniality, it mobilises the consent to affirm or negate norms while allotting value on consent and the improvisation of existing through sociality. These modes of description are paradoxically experienced by displacement. The ongoing lived experience of improvisation operates in the refusal of phantasical normalcy. To become and exist as a black body is the act of refusing to assume a subject, rather it is to become nothing. Not within the afropessimistic non-ontology, conversely nothing is not an absence or a lack of life, but the richness and multiplicity out of which life is formulated. Black African identities are a transferrable substance that translates the enactment of the Black African identity and sociality for the denial of hegemonic universality. Through the creative strategies developed by photographic portraiture, decoloniality and glitch feminism are a means for the refusal and reestablishment of hegemonic systems that should facilitate recognition against western colonial taxonomies. The shift in ontological arrangements and transformations of anomalies of ontology relate to the liminal/ fugitive spaces of the Black African image as an in-between radical otherwise. Liminality from the margins is imbued with potentiality, through the act of disidentification by way of the rejection of performative social routines and systems they exist within. The entanglement of tools re-read, re-imagine and reconfigure the Black African body. The balance amid the recognition of haunting and lingering presence of coloniality vis-à-vis the lifegiving force and cosmic embodiment of blackness that traverses the temporalities and distances through the process of imbuing a matter fugitivity. Blackness bypasses entrenched ideologies that fix the black body by way of circulating Black African images. The black African body embodies the movement and liquidity necessary for blackness' collective sociality as a nomadic spatiality, as well as a living and liminal territory. The symbiosis and spontaneity of interactions of black sociality transmute the Black African body as an "undercommon" for black futurity and fugitivity. Engaging with the Black African image as a force that distorts normative logic through shapeshifting fugitive identity that promotes the ontological negation of non-normative racial reproduction. By way of introducing speculative fiction into the discourse of portraiture photography, black African photographers conjure a space and reality wherein the imaginary that offers a glorious invocation of blackness as a site of personhood predicated on reaching beyond the normative. Blackness is therefore not constrained and confined; it has the ability to camouflage and disguise itself through its elusive and unpredictable nature. By insisting black bodies can self-write, it summons personhood through a state of potentiality and dreaming. The provocation of vital mystical assertion of being and belonging exists in the fluid and fugitive state of blackness. Affirmation through and by negation is situated in the mobility of black performance as a living presence in the formation of blackness. What possibilities can be imagined and accessed in the present towards the actualisation of the black utopian future? The fluidity of black sociality and blackness begowns the conjecture of renewed narratives for black African utopianism. The potentiality and actuality of a black African utopia restructures and demolishes the binarism of western modernity and seeks to encrypt the resistance of blackness as futuritive and fugitive substance. The rhetoric of freedom through the praxis of

reconfiguring the Black African image is positioned at the alteriority of western modernity. Through the de-racialisation of the Black African body, it obtains the consent to be fugitive whilst maintaining a level of fluidity. Postcolonial photographic portraits of the Black body are predominantly considered through the social ontology and paraontological lens, wherein these bodies are captured through social entities and ways through which their self-fashioning is noted as a future project that transcends the colonial and hegemonic Western societal standards.

To conclude, portraiture photography is a corporeal and ontological negotiation between intimacy and distance that mirrors, reflects and refracts the Black African image. The one-dimensional perspective of black African bodies is dissipated and evacuated through specific mechanisms that are deployed to animate the tensions for (re)reading the black African image in Mali and South Africa. In tandem to the loci of blackness, situated within the historical passage of modernity, Black African postcolonial and contemporary photographers function as nascent forces of visuality for the potentiality of black African utopia. Disidentification and the act of refusal take shape in alternative ways of being and doing through the reappropriation of hegemonic elements yet subvert the original practice to create new expressions to facilitate the reconstruction black African image. The gesture and acknowledge the presence, past and future's past of the black african surrogate the potentiality of a black utopia. Portraiture photography provides a lexicon of resistance and grammar for agency as tools to manifold the liberation of visuality and actuality of the Black African body.

APPENDIX

. METHODOLOGIES



4. 3.1 Critical Visual Methodology chart: Sites, modalities and methods for interpreting visual materials (Rose 2001: 30)

Quantitative research	Qualitative research
• Portrait genre • Mis-en-scene • Form of portrait • Nonverbal communication Quantitative content analysis investigates images through coded variable categories.	• Four colonial era photographs • Eight postcolonial photographs • Four contemporary photographs Multimodal visual analysis

Figure 4.3.2. Table of population constraints

Portrait genre	**X = 1**	**Total**
Studio	xxxxxxxxxxx	13
Vernacular	xxxxxxxxx	9
Location	xxxxx	5
Artwork	xxxx	4
Ethnographic	xxxxxxx	7

Figure 4.3.3 Coding table for genre of portraiture

Period/ Era	**Photographer**	**Platform of retrieval**
Colonial (late nineteenth century)	• Edmond Fortier • James Gribble • Samuel Baylis Barnard	• The Walter collection • Artblat • Museum of Fine Arts Boston • Edmond Fortier website

Apartheid (1948 – 1994)	• Richard Ndimande • Kitty Moodley	• The Walther Collection • Guardian website
Independence of Mali (1960)	• Malick Sidibe • Seydou Keita	• Artnet catalogue • Galerie Magnin-A
Contemporary (2000 – current)	• Zanele Muholi • Fatoumata Diabate	• Instagram • Personal website of photographer

Figure 4.3.4. Context of production categorised through creator, temporal designation and platform of sourcing materials.

	Frontal	**¾ angle**	**Side profile**	**Total**
Close-up				
Bust				
Upper body				
Full body				

Figure 4.3.5. Table: Form of portrait: angle and pose

	Confrontation gaze	**Averted gaze**	**Total**
Rigid pose			
Relaxed but engaged			
Subjugated/ passive			
Commanding			

Figure 4.3.6. Table: Nonverbal communication

Categories of mis-en-scene					

Location	Studio	Location			
Medium	Digital photography	Daguerreotype	Black and White film		
Costume	Formal wear	Casual	Traditional outfit		
Lighting	Natural	Artificial	Dim	Stark	Neutral
Props	Decorative tableau	No props utilised	Functional props		

Figure 4.3.7. Table for categories of mis-en-scene

	Technological modality	Compositional modality	Social modality
Site of production	1. What camera was used? 2. Is it a daguerreotype or Black and white film? 3. Was it captured in a studio or environmental setting?	1. What genre is it? a. Studio b. Location c. Ethnographic and archival d. Vernacular	1. Who is the photographer? a. Known b. Unknown 2. When was it produced? • Colonial to post-colonial era • Apartheid period • Democratic and contemporary South Africa
Site of the image itself	1. Visual effects: a. Lighting b. Editing	1. Who is in the frame? a. Named b. Unnamed 2. Elements and principles of design: • Composition	• Symbolic form as the photograph • Symbolic forms found within the photograph that construct cultural meaning

		• Focal point • Lighting Dim/ stark contrast/ natural/ artificial • Texture • Symbolic elements 3. Mise-en-scene • Location: studio/ outdoors • Costume • Props • Decorative tableau 4. Nonverbal communication of sitter: • Gaze • Posture • Facial expression 5. Form of portrait: a. Angles	
Site of audiencing	• Mode of transmission, circulation and displayed. • Viewing positioned offered	• Where is it displayed? Art gallery? Internet archive? blog? • Is it displayed within its original context?	• Who was it made for? a. Commissioned b. Colonial gaze c. Gallery or art space d. Online social media platform • Why was it created? a. archival and ethnographic use

			b. Personal expression • Representation of racial identity

Figure 4.3.8. Adaptation of Critical Visual Methodology from Rose's chart (2001, 2007, 2010) as cited in Mara Mbele's *Transfiguration of the Black image* thesis (2018).

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