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Of Patriarchy, Madness, Mythology, and the Queer in Nation Making: A critique on tropes of sexualities in post-colonial African Literatures

MA Research Report

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The objective of this research report is to interrogate how queer sexualities are represented in postcolonial African literatures. It is interested in the representations of queer sexualities and their place in the fiction of the nation. The meaning of queer that this report invokes is the coopted marker of pride and liberation that was deployed by gender and sexuality activists in the gay liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and subsequently, gender and sexuality scholars in contemporary times. As Marc Epprecht shows, used as a slur in the post-world war II period in North America, the term is now used in scholarship to stretch the limitations of "feminism, Marxism, subaltern, and other radical critical theories in order to facilitate enquiry into issues regarding same-sex sexuality that are hidden within the dominant discourse and to deploy the enquiry toward healing or dismantling coercive ideologies of gender, sexuality, and national or other sexualized identity" (Epprecht, 2008:12).

The report deploys this meaning of queer to locate homosexuality and same-sex desire at the centre of an argument about the development of the idea of the African nation, and how this idea of the nation continues to locate same-sex desire and sexuality outside of or hidden in discussions about dominant modes of sexuality expressions. To these ends, the report reads Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in conversation with Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001). Achebe's text continues to occupy the literary imaginary as the authoritative text representative of the postcolonial idea of Africa, while Dangarembga and Duiker's texts have been specifically read and analysed for what they contribute to scholarship on feminism, African sexualities and masculinities, respectively.

Things Fall Apart is a mediation on precolonial life and Africa's encounter with colonial conquest. *Nervous Conditions* gains cultural significance as a text negotiating the limitations placed on African women's experiences due to the intersections of communal culture and colonial conquest. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* occupies itself with an exploration of same-sex desire and sexuality in the context of a liberal democracy that is centered on the attainment of rights. The report reads these texts in conversation to explore how, in their representations of masculinities, feminism, sexualities and same-sex desire, a genealogy of gendered and sexuality

expressions can be witnessed in the evolution of postcolonial and contemporary representations of queer sexualities in the African literary landscape.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist Okonkwo is constructed as an archetype of the desired African male, imagined within a one-dimensional gender and sexuality expression register that seeks to maintain ideals of heterosexual affiliation in order to reproduce the nation. Wazha Lopang (2014) suggests that we can think about this strict register as severely compromising of the individual nuance that male bodies can exhibit in terms of their gendered and sexuality expression. For Lopang, because the text invokes an allegiance to African culture in representing precolonial life, its demonstrations of gender and sexuality expression are limited to this heterosexual framing because of the heterosexual norms and values that are imposed by dominant modes of articulations of culture. *Things Fall Apart*, in its resolution on a register of gender and sexuality expression, written as a text that sought to affirm the idea of Africa as contrary to that constructed by colonial anthropologists, can therefore be argued as limited in its representation. Gender and sexuality scholars (Epprecht, 1998; Msibi, 2011; Tamale, 2011) have shown that as far back as the sixteenth century, at the inauguration of modern sexuality, where sexuality came to be understood as the property of an individual subject, there is evidence that shows the existence of same-sex desire and alternative registers of gendered and sexuality expressions.

As Lopang illustrates, *Things Fall Apart* in its expression of a singular register of sexuality, would leave one with the sense of an inconsistency between what the novel articulates as Africa and what was the lived experience. This report explores the ways in which *Things Fall Apart* therefore, circulates limited representations of thinking about alternative forms of gendered and same-sex sexuality expressions. As a text written in attempts to recover the idea of the African nation as pure and not contaminated by the colonial experience, this report explores how *Things Fall Apart* masculinized and heterosexualised the nation in the postcolonial project of reclaiming the African nation.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga is preoccupied with the limitations and challenges of African female subjectivity and how these challenges are a result of what several scholars have theorised as the double bind; the intersection of inter-and intra- community cultural

conventions that negotiate hierarchies of subjectivity as well as the imposition of gender and sexuality expression as negotiated by colonial dictates. *Nervous Conditions* negotiates these conditions in efforts to give voice to Black female subjectivity. Several scholars have read this voice as liberational to Black female subjectivity in the imaginary of the postcolonial African nation. For Dangarembga (2004), the text exemplifies a register of representation that went beyond the limited politics of gendered expressions that offered African girls and women another mode on which they could imagine themselves as worthy subjects within the postcolonial reclamation project. This report interrogates how *Nervous Conditions* explores postcolonial Black female subjecthood and intimates the ways in which it deploys a queer sensibility as a mode of representation in offering an alternative reading of how Black women can be imagined in the project of nation-making. Further to this, it explores how the text negotiates Black women's writing about Black women protagonists, and how this can be read in a manner that allows for a queer lens to be applied as a mode of subverting the limitations placed upon Black women's creative and literary expression by patriarchy and colonial gender regimes.

The Quiet Violence of Dreams signaled a significant moment of rupture in postcolonial literary explorations of African sexualities and masculinities. Through its protagonist, it investigates the impacts of the limitations of heterosexual sexuality and dominant masculinities to complicate the imaginary of who and what constitutes legitimate forms of African gender and sexuality expression. Scholars have commended the work for its efforts in eroticising same-sex desire and sexuality and not falling into the trap of anthropologically negotiating those subjectivities. Using queer mythology alongside contemporary explorations of queer subjectivity, this report explores how the text offers an opportunity to think about lineage and genealogy as sites of making visible alternative gendered and sexuality expressions in the postcolonial reclamation project. It further explores how the text offers opportunities to think about displacement and renaming as temporal sites through which queer subject formation can be negotiated. This report interrogates how the text deploys queer mythology to further meditate on subject formation and how a refusal of rationality can make visible subjectivities that continue to be constructed as outside the strict regime of heterosexual subject formation. It further negotiates the ethics of representation and the racialized schema through which some forms of subjectivity continue to be marginalised.

As *Things Fall Apart* orients itself around the impact of colonialism and masculinities, among other themes, it is read in accompaniment with the two texts, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* to determine the discursive modalities through which queer sexualities circulate in these seminal works and to interrogate the extent to which they employ Achebe's fictional world as integral to what it means to be African. This report's argument is located within a set of assumptions about how the African nation is reproduced in African literature and how modes of living and existing are determined through Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It further meditates on how the narrative closures employed by Achebe, Dangarembga and Duiker, facilitate, challenge, affirm or disrupt the sanctity of the heterosexual African nation through the circulation of patriarchal constructions of masculinity and same-sex desires and sexuality, the negotiation of cultural protocols and colonial prescripts, and mythology and madness as points of entry into transgressive modes of existence within the nation.

This interrogation is oriented around the exploration of the cultural aspects that have been proposed as definitive of the idea of Africa (Gikandi, 1991) and how these aspects have been carefully mapped out to construct homosexuality, alternative sexualities and modes of gendered expressions as "alien to Africa, for both Africans in Africa and the diaspora, as well as international audiences" (Lopang, 2014:77).

This report meditates on these omissions, representations and curations through this series of questions:

- How does Achebe's invention of the African nation in *Things Fall Apart* and its formative construction of 'African culture' influence how the African nation is imagined and constructed in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*?
- How does Achebe's representations of African masculinities in *Things Fall Apart* influence the ways in which queer sexualities are represented in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*?
- How do *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* negotiate representations of other queer sexualities and other forms of being African that do not work within the regime of heterosexual masculinity?

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical considerations that underpin this report. It discusses the construct of the African nation and the tenets that frame the nature of its interaction and interrogation of same-sex desiring and homosexual (queer) bodies.

Chapter 3 discusses the epistemological framework that guides this report. It discusses the evaluations deployed by the researcher to facilitate the literary criticism that the report partakes in terms of constructing arguments.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodological decisions that guide the interrogation of the three texts, *Things Fall Apart*, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*. It outlines the epistemological paradigms that inform the decisions the researcher makes to construct the arguments the report proposes, and how these work in tension with each other. It further locates the researcher as a subject-object-interpreter in analysing the texts and how this facilitates the different modalities of engagement with the texts.

Chapter 5 meditates on Chinua Achebe's invention of African culture in *Things Fall Apart* and how this invention facilitated the circulation of heterosexualised identities and their resultant erasure and omissions of other ways of being African. This report problematises this paradigm of Africa and Achebe's influence on its creation by thinking through the many ways this ideation is heterosexualised and facilitates dominant masculinities. The report explores how Achebe's commitment to the ritual of continuity works to warn against the perils of memory not attended to. It further engages recent scholarship on Achebe's queer intimacies to investigate how nationalist homophobia requires phallic nationalist sentiments to facilitate the image of the heterosexual Africa nation.

Chapter 6 is preoccupied with expanding the feminist reading of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* beyond the gendered aspect of female subjectivity as it relates to patriarchal masculine subjectivity. This report is interested in exploring how Dangarembga signals a disavowal of the nation-making project. It further explores how a queered reading of the text can be offered to intimate how Dangarembga's use of intimacy between the protagonist,

Tambudzai and her cousin, Nyasha's relationship facilitates a particularised narrative continuation that offers a queer future in the imaginary of the nation.

Chapter 7 meditates on how K. Sello Duiker's deploys madness and mythology in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* to facilitate a destabilisation of African constructions of masculinity and sexualities and troubles the ways in which these tropes are used as discursive markers of difference in the project of African nation making. This report explores how Duiker works with ideas of naming, renaming and ancestry and how these work with mythology as a way of inserting homosexual/same-sex desiring bodies into the national imaginary and what it offers us in terms of thinking about nationhood, subjectivity and belonging. The chapter concludes with a reflection on Duiker's use of Grecian and Nordic mythology in his reconstructionist efforts and how that archive works to make visible the African queer ancestor.

Chapter 8 offers a summary of the main arguments made in preceding chapters and offers directions on what potentialities can there be for African literature to negotiate the ways the project of nation making can make legible those it has excluded in the past.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* chronicles the life of Okonkwo in the rural village of Umuofia. Following his life from the events leading up to his banishment from Umuofia for killing a clansman and disturbing the goodwill during the week of peace by physically assaulting his wife and the ensuing seven years of his exile. On his return to Umuofia, he finds a changing world that has encountered white missionaries, with a colonial government sweeping over the tribal Igbo society. This colonial encounter results in the simultaneous disintegration of Okonkwo and the village of Umuofia as per his desires.

Simon Gikandi (2001) argues that *Things Fall Apart* invents African culture as it was preoccupied with the postcolonial Pan-Africanist movements of the 1960s and 1970s that sought to define Africa and gave identity to those coming of age in that era. For Gikandi, its significance as the first African published text to gain international acclaim has meant that whenever "questions of culture, of literature and the destiny of Africa" (Gikandi, 2001:4) were asked, *Things Fall Apart* became the referential text. This was because it negotiated a longing to be reconnected within a "sense of commonness" (ibid) that defined what it meant to be African. He argues that in its investment in negotiating or rather, intimating towards a "shared common cultural project" (ibid) that defined the idea of Africa, Achebe's intervention in the "already existing colonial and Pan-African libraries transformed the idea of Africa" (ibid). Therefore, one can see argue that *Things Fall Apart* has indeed valorised the idea of culture in the thinking of African worlds (See also Nnolim, 2011).

As *Things Fall Apart* shows, in Okonkwo's Umuofia, masculine heterosexuality was identifiable on a "social and political level" (Lopang, 2014:77) by a man's ability to successfully farm yams and accumulate titles. Any form of masculine gender expression that was not in keeping with these strictures, was thought of as bordering on the effeminate and deligitimated their claim to masculinity and male subjectivity. In the novel, Achebe depicts Unoka, Okonkwo's father as a man who did not fulfil the requirements of manhood as per the dictates of Okonkwo's masculinist world disposition. Further to Achebe's investment in the articulation of African masculinity as hinging on a man's ability to provide for his family, to procreate and reproduce the nation, Achebe constructs Okonkwo as beset with the anxiety of being reduced to or likened to a woman in the nation. Driven by these anxieties, Okonkwo is terrorised by what he

refers to his first-born son, Nwoye's "incipient laziness" (Achebe, 2001:6) and subjects him to lashings to wean him off these personality traits and "encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and told them stories of the land – masculine stories of violence and bloodshed. Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent" (Achebe, 2001:17).

In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, published by the Women's Press and read as a feminist response to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Moyana 1994; Cohen 1992; Uwakweh 1995; Nair 1995), we are invited into the worlds of four women, through the narration of the protagonist, Tambudzai – Tambu for short. Through Tambu, we are introduced to her mother, Mainini; her aunt, Maiguru and her female cousin, Nyasha – four women with intersecting lives that confront patriarchy and masculinities that are in circulation and work to suppress their right to futures where they have agency and voice to speak for themselves. In the seminal essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Gayatri Spivak argues that when the subaltern is constructed as without history and therefore is unable to speak, and that if we think of the subaltern as female, we can see how women are constructed as "even more deeply in shadow" (1988, 82-83). This is due to the tenets of nation-making that dictate female subjectivity as subordinate to male subjectivity, as no nation making project has ever granted women the same access and privilege to the resources of the nation-state. Anne McClintock (1995) and Obioma Nnaemeka (1997), among others, show how all nationalisms construct themselves to circulate "powerful constructions of gender difference" (McClintock, 1995:13). Dangarembga, through the contentious narratives of the four women who inhabit Tambu's life, allows us to enter into a conversation with Achebe as a way of surfacing the gendered representations in *Things Fall Apart*.

This report thinks through Dangarembga's narration of the two young female characters, Tambu and Nyasha, as a site on which we can read queerness and how it is that their construction works to trouble or destabilise Achebe's heteronormative Africa. It explores the idea of alternative gendered and same-sex desire and sexuality expression as un-African and how Dangarembga employs a queer sensibility as a way of destabilising Achebe's heterosexual Africa. Tambu, reflecting on her cousin Nyasha's seeming misfortune with mental illness and an eating disorder, offers us a window into the ideas that circulate around Nyasha's queerness in Dangarembga's postcolonial feminist Africa. For Nyasha, constructed as not fully Zimbabwean

[formerly Rhodesia] as her formative years are spent in London, upon her family's return to Zimbabwe, she seemingly has the most overt difficulties in navigating the two worlds she occupies. in her attempt to negotiate a world of independence, free spiritedness and equality and one where the binds of patriarchal masculinities circulate the double bind of subaltern silencing, we are able to explore the implications of a patriarchal heterosexual imaging of Africa.

In *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, K. Sello Duiker's second novel, published by Kwela, Duiker introduces us to Tshepo, a graduate of Rhodes University who lives in Cape Town and leads a "listless life peculiar to the evanescent student years" (Raditlhalo, 2005:99-101). Beneath his nonchalant and naïve exterior, he lives with mental psychosis which started in childhood, and along with drug use, sees him routinely committed to Valkenberg Mental Hospital, a continuation of earlier periods at Sterkfontein and Tara Mental Hospitals after the death of his mother. Tshepo, after suffering physical and sexual abuse, without skills or work experience, and reduced to foraging, turns to male sex work as a way of allowing "himself to maintain both body and soul, while offering him a chance to explore his own sexuality at leisure, in a world that accepts his orientation" (ibid). According to Raditlhalo (2005), Brown (2008), and Carolyn and Frenkel (2013) Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* allows for discursive commentaries around the idea of heterosexual Africa in that it destabilises the view that a homosexual orientation is un-African. By interspersing Tshepo's life with "other characters' narratives to substantiate and elaborate on Tshepo's, allows for a fuller exploration of the gay community and its concerns" (Raditlhalo, 2005:101). This also marks an "intervention in discourses on non-heteronormative sexualities in South African fiction as Duiker disarticulates polarised taxonomies of sexual identities, thereby problematising the frame of identity politics and categories such as heterosexual and homosexual" (Carolyn and Frenkel, 2013:36).

While this report shares similar sentiments on the valorisation (Crous, 2007; Dlamini, 2016; Carolyn and Frenkel, 2013) afforded Duiker's work, it further problematises the regimes of visibility that are employed by Duiker to surface these destabilisations of normative sexualities within the idea of African nation making. As the protagonist transitions and deploys mythology as a medium to finally realise the exploration of their same-sex desire and sexuality, this report thinks through the productive quality of negotiating the past and present as sites for legitimating subjectivity. Further to this, it interrogates the use of mythology and think through Black queer

ancestry and its circulation in the project of nation making. Following the exploration of how madness and mythology are employed by Duiker to facilitate the legibility and visibility of African queer sexualities in African literature, this report further meditates on the racialized and classed dynamics that hierarchise queer subjectivity within the fiction of the nation, with South Africa as its backdrop.

2.1 The Fiction of the Nation

Several scholars (Zeleza, 2006; Mudimbe, 1988, Epprecht, 2008; Mama, 2007) argue that even as the idea of Africa is something that was cartographically constructed by the European imperialist project, and whose definitional character grew both gradually and contradictorily, this does not mean that the idea ceases to have merit. Paul Zeleza (2006) argues that the cartographical application of the idea cannot be discounted simply based on having it been invented somewhere else, therefore discounting its reality as historians working with the idea of Africa have long known about the invention of Africa. Historians have continued to use the idea of Africa as a signpost of a cartography with "multiple and conflicted spatial, political, and cultural referents" (Zeleza, 2006:15) yet they have not refrained from writing of and about Africa as though it is an "organic spatiotemporal configuration" (ibid).

The homogenising of Africa continues to be a site for contention about how representations of African life circulate in the rest of the world. This homogenising, aided by the postcolonial project of reclamation, enabled the circulation of a nationalism that allowed for "imagined political communities" (McLeod, 2000; Abdullah, 2007) that saw themselves as part of the greater collective of the nation's narrative. Fouzia Hassan Abdullah (2007) argues that nations do not naturally occur and are fabrications that are constructed through particularised desires that are fashioned upon the ideas of those they serve. The nation-making project constructs itself as both a "modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities and as a reflection of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a presumed communal past" (McClintock, 1995:358).

Further to this, McClintock (1995) and Nnaemeka (1997) show that the nation-making project imagines women as custodians of the traditions that hold the nation, imagined as static

and naturally invested in preserving cultures and traditions, thereby "embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity" (McClintock, 1995:359). Imagined in this atavistic mode, the project therefore depoliticizes women's politics while imagining men as the progressive custodians that enable the nation's development. Men are thought as progressive and revolutionary and enabling the progress of the nation, while women's politics are only "placed back on the national agenda as an aftermath of nationalist struggles" (Nnaemeka, 1997:2). Therefore, the project of nation-making requires these conventions of gender relation such that its relation to time can thus be managed as a "natural relation to gender" (McClintock, 1995:359) thereby centering conventions of the nation in relation to fulfilling the desires of men in the nation.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* can be situated here in the continuum of nationalist time to engage the postcolonial imagining of the African nation and its relation to time and gender. It can be determined that Achebe facilitates the circulation of a masculine heterosexual identity of African-ness that prizes above else, a version of masculinity that conquers. In its attempt at reclamation of the African narrative from Empire's construction of Africa, this report contends that *Things Fall Apart* is limited in its essentialist notions of what it means to be African and what Africa is. This report argues that *Things Fall Apart* works within the regime of fixing Africa into a primordial state, and not thinking of it as fluid and invented as "Africans are not moulded from the same clay of racial and cultural homogeneity" (Zeleza, 2006:16-17). The novel does not question enough the homogenised view of Africa by celebrating the "diversity, complexity, richness, hybridity and contingency of African identities and social and cultural life" (ibid) even as it attempts challenging the often "totalising narratives of both African nationalism and European imperialism with their dualistic and polarised representations" (ibid) of what it means to be of Africa and African.

2.2 Constructions of sexualities in the African nation

Sexuality scholars (Msibi, 2011; 2013; 2014, Lewis, 2011; Tamale; 2011; Desai, 1997, Epprecht, 2008) argue that the idea that the cartographical mass that is Africa did not exhibit same-sex desiring bodies was first introduced and circulated by European ethnographers and anthropologists who argued that Africa was "a sodomy-free zone" (Msibi, 2011:63). This

argument, Msibi shows, was useful to these ethnographers as it buttressed negative attitudes about homosexuality in Europe. As these assertions took hold in Empire's construction of Africa, the myth of African heteronormativity was institutionalised, their constructions became socially circulated. Their circulation supported the establishment and maintenance of oppressive patriarchal ideologies and constructions of subjectivity that sought to signify what could be considered normal gendered and sexuality expression. Because of the circulation of these oppressive patriarchal ideologies, they enabled an institutionalising of a double standard that allowed men to "feel morally and physically edified by multiple sexual encounters" while women were "held as morally and physically tarnished by the same" (Msibi, 2011:60). This double standard also translated in constructing men's sexual identity as primarily premised for reproduction. Yet as these scholars show, this prizing of heterosexual reproduction does not summarily prove that there were no instances of same-sex relations. While this is not to suggest that same-sex relations were publicly approved, such evidence does serve to shatter the prevailing discourse of a sodomite-free Africa which enabled a "political economy of heterosexuality that silenced indigenous" (Msibi, 2011:64) forms of same-sex desire and sexuality.

Gender and sexuality scholars (Oyewomi, 1997; Nnaemeka, 1997; Amadiume, 1987, Msibi, 2011, Tamale, 2011; 2013; Epprecht, 2008) have demonstrated that before colonialism in what becomes known as Africa, native people lived without the restrictions of Western gender norms. There was not necessarily a separation between gender and sex, meaning that "women could be male, and males could be women" (Msibi, 2011:65). While there can be a debate as to the material nature of these gender norms and how they constructed relationships by asking whether these female husbands did in fact engage in sexual relations with their wives or male wives with their husbands, what stands as unarguable is the fact that their permissibility and occurrence enables a frame to read the complex nature of precolonial Africa. Through this, we can reliably shatter the myth of heterosexual Africa that becomes instantiated by the postcolonial nation-making project. Sylvia Tamale (2013) and Thabo Msibi (2011) argue that the influence of the colonial encounter, and its imposition of religion as an ideology used to condemn homosexuality, was so severe such that it eroded the truth about the multiplicity and complexity of African gendered and sexuality expressions. Through the coupling of strict regimes of gender norms that anchor heterosexuality and are supported by religious ideology, we can

see how homosexuality comes to be constructed as un-African. As the ideology is given currency through manifestations of homophobic sentiment, we are also able to see this regulation as a tool for institutionalising sexism.

The investment in heterosexuality as a mode of subjectivity is therefore meant to legitimise the hierarchy that places men at the apex of society and solidifies their role and position, while maintaining the "hegemonic heteronormative hold on women" (Tamale, 2013:22) and masculinities. Therefore, we can see how the rise, visibility, and personification of homosexual and same-sex subjectivity then troubles conceptions of masculinity, thereby troubling heterosexuality itself. As in order for the legitimacy of patriarchy to be in place, compulsory heteronormativity is promoted through the institutionalising of "gender roles that are held up as fixed and legitimate" (Msibi, 2011:71).

2.3 Mythologised queers in the nation

Stella Nyanzi (2015) among other scholars (Epprecht, 1998; Hoad, 2007, Izugbara, 2011) shows the archive of extensive knowledge available in African sexuality research that works with stereotypes that have claimed homosexual and same-sex desiring persons as anomalies that are oppositional to the idea of heterosexual Africa. This archive continues to circulate caricatured concepts of African homosexual and same-sex desiring persons "as traditional spirit mediums floating between the spirit world of ancestors and present-day society" (Nyanzi, 2015:126). These caricatures imagine them as either "alienated for their non-indigenous practices or thrust deep into customary African psyche through possession by multi-gendered ancestors who deny individuals any agency" (ibid). As these scholars' work show, scholarly research into African sexualities has meant searching deeply into the cultures and histories of different groups of African people to "excavate mystical and ritualistic explanations believed to render the African-ness of queer individuals and communities" (Nyanzi, 2015:126). These excavations are done in service of the project of making homosexual and same-sex desiring African persons visible in the project of the nation. The intention being to destabilise the continuing silencing of alternative sexualities that the colonial and postcolonial projects continue to facilitate.

As these excavations circulate through myths that enable the nation to narrate itself, they therefore can be read as conveyers of some facts and truth relating to experiences of men's encounter with the "created order and its relation to the super-sensible world" (Joja, 2014:10). They tell the stories of the "super human experiences of the community" (ibid) and further communicate ideologies on man's relationship to the divine world in a rational manner. Therefore, in thinking about the use of myth and mythology, and madness in the project of African nation making, this report navigates how *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* employ these discursive modes of Africanness to rationalize a mode of thinking trough identities of Africanness that are not thought of as legible in the rational world. In Achebe's Umoufia, we encounter rational thinking subjects who circulate heterosexuated ideas of Africanness while in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, this report illustrates how Dangarembga and Duiker deploy mythology and madness as a motif to negotiate the queer body in the nation.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* works within a paradigm of patriarchal masculinities circulating the fiction of the African nation. In the text, we see how the intersection of colonialism, religion and the postcolonial reclamation project, converge to obscure visibility and legibility for non-heterosexual modes of African sexuality. Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* surfaces and troubles these hierarchies as it negotiates women's place in society, while questioning the effects of the colonial encounter in constructing Black female subjectivity. In reading these texts in conversation with each other, we can see how Dangarembga goes beyond the ontological questions of Black subjectivity as explored in *Things Fall Apart* and addresses the broader issues around the "use and abuses of gender in knowledge legitimation as well as the place for feminist theory in the report of African literature" (Nnaemeka, 2005:1). *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* straddles the spectrum of same-sex sexuality while negotiating the limitations placed on different forms of subjectivity. It further interrogates the expressions of masculinity as defined by *Things Fall Apart* and negotiates how the regimes of the expression of masculinity punish alternative forms of masculine expression.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This report has at its centre a preoccupation with exploring how citizenship and belonging in the nation-making project is determined by tenets that exclude those who do not work within its definitional strictures of dominant masculinities and the expression of heterosexual sexuality. It explores how those who are constructed as antithetical to the project of nation-making, those defined as homosexual and same-sex desiring persons, are therefore burdened with the charge of "undermining national sovereignty" (Alexander, 2005:11). This is even as the nation itself is invested in the ever-shifting process of meaning and defining as it "recolonises and renativises" (ibid) its citizenry in service of the project of making itself as predicated upon tenets outlined by neo-colonial definitions. This report reads heterosexuality and citizenry as predicated upon what masculinity studies helps us to understand about subject formation as "underpinned by discourses and material conditions that reproduce patriarchal, sexist, and heteronormative social conditions that act as the scaffold for a range of psychosocial problems" (Shefer, Stevens and Clowes, 2010: 512). Through this, we can understand how this scaffolding operates to facilitate the erasure of non-normative and non-heterosexual practices within communities of people. The report draws from sexuality and gender scholars' critique of how the categories "lesbian, gay, femme, sexuality, and subjectivity" (Hammonds, 1994:128) are often stripped of the contexts of how they intersect with the materialities of lived experience as they become normativised in the project of nation-making.

This report further orients itself with M. Jacqui Alexander's (2005) thinking around the deployment of pedagogies as enabling the harnessing of oppositional knowledge systems from within and across multiple simultaneous sites. For Alexander, this has the potential to make real the promise of "freedom and collective self-determination in terms that supersede those" (Alexander, 2005:6) that are imposed by the ideation of nation-making proponents. It thinks through the productive capacity of thinking about queerness both as defined through a gendered and sexuality expression but also hermeneutically through the experience of being Black as suggested by Critical Race scholarship (Hammonds, 1994; Spillers, 1987). It adopts this leaking meaning to think through the possibilities of queer futures for those whom the project of nation-making leaves behind, are enabled to reject the here and now and insist on the "potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (Hammonds, 1994:2). Further to this, it

foregrounds a reading of gender as being in constant tension, as it is "always in the process of being formed and re-formed through what we do and how we do it in negotiation with others, thus co-constructed by boys and girls, men and women" (Shefer, Stevens and Clowes, 2010: 517). As such, this report problematizes postcolonial constructions of stable categories of gender, masculinity and sexuality as it works with an understanding of how their performance can be displaced by this shifting understanding of gender and sexuality.

Through a close reading of these three texts, *Things Fall Apart*, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, read in conversation with each other, this report explores how the narrative arcs employed in the three texts work within an Achebean paradigm of African culture where gender, masculinity and sexuality intersect to construct a postcolonial version of African sexuality. It is interested in how the proposition of Achebe having invented African culture as it circulates in contemporary discussions of African literature, as operating in these three texts; opens up, limits, erases and disavows modes of being that either disrupt or destabilise Achebe's paradigm of African life and takes for granted its legitimacy as the benchmark upon which all postcolonial narrative arcs must rest. It thinks through multiple sites of knowledge systems to facilitate a way of thinking around destabilising hegemonies that visit tyrannies upon those who do not neatly fit into the tenets that facilitate those hegemonies. As Alexander argues, the project of colonial conquest has made any, and all, "innocence impossible" (Alexander, 2005:4). Therefore, if we are to understand how hegemony is constructed to work as spectacle, as in, it is exercised in the everyday practices enacted by ordinary people in the exercise of their citizenry, then we can see how "all spaces carry the potential for corruptibility" (Alexander, 2005:5).

It is this potential for corruptibility that this report orients itself around to offer multiple and leaking meanings of narrative developments in the selected texts, such that the potential for alternate forms of gendered and same-sex desiring bodies can be harnessed and realised. Therefore, working with an understanding of the intersections of racialized hierarchies around subject formation, the gendered and sexualised nature of enfranchisement and citizenship as well as the class dimensions that inform how some subjectivities are realised, this report negotiates the multiple sites these three texts offer up as a way of thinking through these intersections in order to realise alternative forms of subject creation that predicate themselves

upon the complex nature of the factors that inform their realisation. This report negotiates these intersections through a Black feminist literary criticism paradigm as a mode of thinking about the intersections of race, gender and sexuality in the project of nation making. In *Some of Us Are Brave* (1982), Akasha Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott and Barbara Smith argue that because of the inherent racist nature of white (both men and women) literary production and scholarship, and Black men's sexist literary production, there has been little or no room for the serious scholarship and consideration around the depictions of and analysis of Black women's lives in literature. As they argue, white literary scholarship does not effectively analyse the intersections of "racial politics and Black culture" while "Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives" (Hull, Bell-Scott and Smith, 1982: xxi; also see Crenshaw, 1991 and Mupotsa, 2010).

In reading these three texts, particularly in thinking of the framing the report deploys in interrogating Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, in relation to the project of emancipation that is achieved through the literary medium, this report thinks of Achebe's work in this frame of a politics invested in a political paradigm that is limited in negotiating the implications of the gendered and sexual politics in the lives of Black women and non-normative subjects. This report thinks of Achebe's work as archetypal of this type of literary engagement that does not fully comprehend the materialities of those it constructs as lower than itself in the hierarchy of enjoying the benefits of the nation making project. Following what Kimberlé Crenshaw shows in "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" (1991), this report is invested in thinking beyond a paradigm of the polarities of race, gender or sexuality as the "real issue" (Crenshaw, 1991:2017), and rather attempts to sit in this multiplicity as a means of negotiating the impact of how "racial and sexual subordination" (ibid) limits the emancipatory project in the nation. As the nation making project accords legitimate beneficiation to Black heterosexual men, gendered and sexuality sensibilities become secondary to the burden that the project of imagining the nation requires.

This report therefore reads *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* through this lens of duality, to think about those who become subjugated by the nation making project and think broadly about the implications of their literary production as antagonism, imaginary, liberational, and affirming to those the nation making project excludes. As Crenshaw

further shows, a Black feminist lens "offers an intellectual and political response" (Crenshaw, 1991:2017) that brings together these realities and sensibilities such that we can always imagine that any response to racial, gendered and sexuality subjugation, is always a "political response" (ibid) to all these oppressions. Further to this, I locate myself in this report with an awareness of the tensions around the hierarchical and patriarchal structuring of solidarity work around feminist and LGBTI/queer identities, particularly in South Africa and the rest of the African continent. Understanding that there are differentiated ways that myself, a cis-gendered Black homosexual male realise the tyranny of the state and the nation upon my subjectivity through instantiating heterosexuality as a legitimate sexual expression, I rely heavily on the theoretical directions of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; also see Cohen, 2005; Hull, Scott and Smith, 1982; Smith 1978) as an analysis that enables a discursive understanding of destabilised identity positions as facilitated by race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. at different intersecting moments.

As Awino Okech (2013) shows, the potential for effective and sustained solidarity can only be materialised if there is a reconceptualising of the structural fundamental theories around gender and sexuality locations. She argues that solidarity work should move beyond building bridges and should rather trouble the foundational theories that assume gender identity, and by extension, sexuality location, as "frameworks from which to understand, confront and dismantle patriarchy" (Okech, 2013:26). Aided by Okech's position on solidarity and queering African feminist spaces, I locate my positionality as a cis-gendered homosexual male who operates from an appreciation that solidarity demands that I become a pre-discursive subject in negotiating this work, and as such, it is the precondition upon which I engage the arguments presented in this report.

Chapter 4: Things Fall Apart and the Invention of African Culture

This chapter meditates on Chinua Achebe's invention of African culture in his work *Things Fall Apart* and how this invention facilitated circulations of heterosexualised identities of Africanness and their resultant erasure and omissions of other ways of being African. I work through Simon Gikandi's (2001) essay, "Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture" to think through how that version of Africa has continued to circulate and structure the idea of Africa as institutionalised in memory. In the 2001 introduction to the text, Biyi Bandele (2001) argues that in the history of African literature, *Things Fall Apart* opens with what is arguably the most famous and possibly the most celebrated paragraph.

In the novel, about the protagonist Okonkwo's infamy "throughout the nine villages and even beyond" (Achebe 2001:1), Achebe narrates the story of a man born into poverty who lives with the fear of turning out like his father, Unoka, who was characterised by his lacklustre industry with farming yams and accumulation of titles. Written in three sections, the story begins with Okonkwo's life in Umuofia as we learn of his youthful strength that amassed him veneration as a wrestler to an adult man who was a successful farmer who accumulated titles. The novel develops in earnest when Okonkwo is mandated to care for Ikemefuna, a young boy whom the village of Umuofia acquired as penance for a murder that was committed by members of another village. Through Okonkwo's developing timid relationship of fatherly love with Ikemefuna, we learn of his disappointment with his own son, Nwoye, who is described as exhibiting personality traits akin to those of Okonkwo's father. A few years after Ikemefuna is placed in the care of Okonkwo, the village elders decide that Ikemefuna has to be killed and Okonkwo is instructed not to participate in the killing. However, through his domineering display of machismo, Okonkwo deals the final blow that ends Ikemefuna's life. Okonkwo and his family become banished for seven years to his mother's homeland after he accidentally kills a Kingsman at a ceremonial event in Umuofia. While in banishment from Umuofia, Okonkwo learns about the arrival of Christian missionaries who are setting up churches throughout the nine villages and are converting many villagers to the religion. Just as he is about to end his seven years of banishment, Nwoye runs away from the family and converts to Christianity, an action which causes Okonkwo to disown him.

In a continuous power play between the village of Umuofia, at the insistence of Okonkwo and the missionaries, a spectacle of calamities ensues where the villagers are pitted against the Christian missionaries and their converts. As a last straw, with Okonkwo's leadership, the village elders burn one of the churches. As punishment for this action, the missionaries, through their unilaterally established judicial processes, capture the village elders. The village is sent into disarray and bail money is raised to secure the release of the elders. While discussing how the village could respond to this infiltration and erasure of their customs by the missionaries, the elders call a meeting to decide on resolute strategies. It is at this meeting that a messenger is sent by the missionaries to alert the elders that they do not have the mandate to hold such a meeting. Okonkwo, with aggression, kills the messenger and demands that the village engage in war with the missionaries. Noticing the reticence of the elders, Okonkwo leaves the meeting and hangs himself on a tree just outside of his compound. As Igbo custom considered suicide an abomination, Okonkwo's body is released from the tree by one of the missionaries' messengers and his body is not given a customary burial worthy of a man of his stature in the village.

Bandele signals the significance of the text in his meditation on the promise of freedom under which Achebe had written the novel, as the postcolonial moment was thought of as Africa having finally rid itself of the conquistador. He argues that while Achebe and his contemporaries were taken by notions of inevitable despair and unmeasured optimism, there was a recognition of the memory work that had to be done to mitigate the latent perceptions and fears around grievances and distrust as the common threat of the colonizer had been removed. Included among the contemporaries are Mongo Beti (1956), Camara Laye (1953), Ferdinand Oyono (1956) who wrote in French, while it was Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City* (1954) that would be considered the first major English novel by an author based in West Africa. Bandele argues that even from as early as 1952 with the publication of Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, there was this awareness at negotiating those tensions required to perform the cultural work of freedom and memory.

Yet it is his assessment that neither Ekwensi nor Tutuola could have prepared the world for Achebe's powerful elegiac that arrived on the literary scene having been fully formed, as in its totality, it was not misguided at what it was attempting to achieve. He offers that *Things Fall Apart* was equal measures of savage and tender as it was not imbued with cheap sentimentality

while offering characters that did not seek the reader's permission to exist while also not apologizing "for being complex or for being African, or for being human, or for being so extraordinarily alive" (2001:x). He aligns his thoughts to Gikandi's assertions, to be explored as the chapter develops, when he argues that Achebe's efforts with *Things Fall Apart* was:

> […] both a staggeringly ambitious work of invocation that was at once a celebration and an interrogation of the mores and culture of the South-eastern Igbo peoples, from whom Achebe descended, and an eloquent rebuttal of the all too casual denigration of Africans by, among others, European writers such as Joseph Conrad, whose quip about the Congo setting of Heart of Darkness was that he was merely poking around in the dead cats of civilisation, has come to define Africa in the Western imagination (Achebe, 2001:vii).

In this chapter, I want to expand on Bandele's thoughts and to think of the ways in which Achebe's work, having entered the post-colonial literary moment with such intent to create characters who were so extraordinarily alive and unapologetic to be African, fashioned a mode of thinking about the idea of Africa and how those who inhabit it behave/d. In Achebe's preoccupation with creating history, in making us who we are and creating the memory that those who have survived continue to hold as truth, in his excavating, celebrating and interrogating cultural mores, an idea of Africa is created and takes hold in the global imaginary. I think of how Achebe's commitment to the ritual of continuity works to warn against what Bandele warns as the perils of memory not attended to, its ability to mutate into a "trickster imp and [seduce] the wayfarer to the precipice and beyond" (Achebe, 2001:x). I problematize this idea of Africa and Achebe's influence on its creation by thinking through the many ways this idea is heterosexualised and facilitates dominant masculinities. I show the ways in which this heterosexualising of Africa works to reinscribe ideas of Africa as determined by the colonial gaze. I think of how perils of these fixed rituals of memory and how in seeking to avoid the seduction of the precipice, they produce and institutionalise the heterosexualisation of the African nation. I further problematize recent scholarship on Achebe's queer intimacies to think of the ways in which nationalist homophobia requires phallic nationalist sentiments to facilitate the image of the heterosexual African nation.

4.1. African Cultural Reinvention and the Archive

In this section, I work through Simon Gikandi's essay, "Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture", to think about the idea of African culture and how Achebe's text works within this theory. Achebe's work enters the world of post-colonial literature to give credence to literary texts from the African continent such that it has become an authority on what is African literature. As Gikandi argues and Bandele (2001) has shown, no writer of African letters before Achebe had been able to have the effect "Achebe had on the establishment and reconfiguration of an African literary tradition" (2001:4). This is to mean that writers before Achebe had not been able to offer a productive manner to write about versions of Africa and African culture that were legible to consumers of literatures of the world.

To use Gikandi's words, Achebe had been able to enter the "institutions of exegesis and education" (ibid), to mean that Achebe had been able to enter literary canons of criticality and authority about Africa. It is Gikandi's assertion that Achebe defined the "terms by which African literature was produced, circulated, and interpreted … and came to define who we were, where we were" or as Achebe asserts "where the rain began to beat us" (Gikandi, 2001:4-5). Yet it is Gikandi's extravagant claim Achebe is the person who "invented African culture as it is now circulated within the institutions of interpretation" (2001:7-8) that I want to think through and locate the ways it continues to haunt the imaginary of the African, both as a citizen and a subject. I think about subject-hood in the tradition of Black scholarship from the perspective of scholars such as bell hooks (1992), Patricia Hill-Collins (1986), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) as a way of thinking about the dialectic entanglement that is the existential experience of Black people as it coincides with what Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes as "global coloniality" (2013:ix). I therefore think about how Black people's ability to negotiate their demands, desires and experiences, is continually in relation to the tension that arises from their proximity to the colonial experience.

Gikandi supports this claim by pointing out that in his contribution to the existing colonial and post-colonial texts about Africa, by valorizing culture, Achebe transformed the idea of Africa. And also transformed the ways of thinking about Africa as previously, African culture had been either an anthropological fixation of European experts or a location of lack or backwardness. As

Achebe (1981) argues, it is through the stories of a people being told that history is created, and people are defined. Achebe argues that for an archive of memory to be created for those surviving, then it is the responsibility of the storytellers to tell that history to give meaning to their survival as memory can be seen as "healing and regenerative … a transcendent guide in the ritual of continuity" (Achebe, 1981:x). Gikandi further shows that *Things Fall Apart* was similarly as anxious as its contemporaries about the colonial context that it was written in, yet it managed to exist beyond that context, even as a text written within colonialism, as it seems confident to represent Africa even as it negotiates those colonial anxieties. In invoking folklore, mysticism and mythology, Achebe writes within colonial paradigms about African cultural practices that had since become markers of negative difference to the European invasion – the qualifying reasons for why Africa had needed to be invaded. We see this demonstrated in Achebe's exalting the mighty powers of Umuofia in the following passage:

> Umuofia was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and in magic, and its priests and medicine-men were feared in all the surrounding country. Its most potent medicine was as old as the clan itself. Nobody knew how old. But on one point there was general agreement – the active principle in that medicine had been an old woman with one leg. In fact, the medicine itself was called *adagi-nwayi*, or old woman. It had its shrine in the centre of Umuofia, in a cleared spot. And if anybody was so foolhardy as to pass by the shrine after dark [,] he was sure to see the old woman hopping about (Achebe, 2001:9-10).

These mythologies that Achebe writes about without need for explaining or diminishing their centrality to the functioning of Umuofia, is what anthropological scholars had used as substantiation for their findings of Africa as a dark continent (Lopang, 2013; Bandele, 2001; Mudimbe, 1988). In Achebe's insistence of their usefulness in nation making, and their concurrent occurrence with the reality of Umuofia, speaks to the confidence of Achebe's work that Gikandi signals as the game changer in the African literary stakes.

It is Gikandi's claim of confidence, what Bandele calls the refusal to be apologetic for who or what it is, its refusal to ask for permission to be fully African, that allows Achebe to shift the

thinking about the idea of Africa from "romance and nostalgia, from European primitivism, and from a rhetoric of lack, to an affirmative culture" (Gikandi, 2001:7-8). For Gikandi, this claim gives the confidence to affirm Achebe's work with this inventiveness, this sense that can allow us to think of Achebe as having "invented, or reinvented, the idea of African culture" (ibid). Gikandi writes of these foundational effects as having functioned for him a realization that Achebe's fiction or literary works were about bringing to life a familiar world imbued with a circulation of cultures, politics and management of economies that was familiar and real to him. A familiar world that had been misconstrued through a colonial language and structuring that was seemingly at odds with his lived reality. The work brought about a realization that in the reading and re-reading of literature, a "networks of connections between readers, writers, and context" (2013:3) is established. In this way, we can see the potentialities of texts as crucial to the ways in which we come to have knowledge about "subjects and objects and the images we associate with certain localities and institutions" (ibid). Following this thinking, then we can think about Achebe's work as an archive of African cultural reinvention or as making African culture legible in its mainstream circulation. It is a repository that Black people can always harvest from their sense of self that is unapologetic about articulating experiences of Blackness that was written not from a place of lack but an affirmative disposition.

Matt Richardson (2013) writes about this preoccupation with this recovering of self in the text as a "fever for the archive … a dis/ease" (2013:5) that is facilitated by institutions and familiar narratives that are concerned with "ordering the past as inheritance" (Peterson, 2002:29). Several African scholars (Mbembe, 2002a; 2002b; Peterson, 2002; Reid, 2002; Roberts, 2002) have problematized the reification of the archive as they argue that, that which becomes archiveable is inherently concerned with reproducing and legitimating the work of the nation. They contend that the archive is structured through a circulation of discriminatory power and judgement by those who curate it, determining what belongs in the archive and what should be discarded. Through this, the power of the nation to construct and consume time through its ability to reify and anesthetize narratives about itself that legitimate or pose a threat to its continuity is realised. Understanding the archive as politically and institutionally fraught, I think of Achebe's work as what Richardson (2013:6) describes as an artefact of denied memory that works to insert alternative narratives into the "strategic absences" (ibid) constructed by colonial dominance while working to "revise tropes of popular history" (ibid). It is these inserted

narratives and filling up of strategic absences that become a significant consideration for me in terms of how I think about subjectivity and the ways in which Achebe's work fashions an authoritative African nation ideal that circulates particularized ways of thinking about the African nation and its make-up.

Several feminist scholars such as Nnaemeka (1995, 1997), Andrade (1990, 1996, 2002, 2011), Gqola (2011, 2009, 2015), Mupotsa (2010), Chigonda-Banda (2015), Boswell (2015), Bakare-Yusuf (2003, 2004, 2015), in seeking to complicate the archive's disposition to constructing further absences, have dedicated considerable intellectual energy on the role of literature and the construction of nationhood in relation to the participation and presence of women and other marginalised subjectivities. As Mupotsa (2010), Nnaemeka (1997), McClintock (1995) show, the call to culture as a mode of representation is premised upon the nation making projects predilection towards, what Danai Mupotsa terms a "social respectability, middle class consumer-citizenship, domesticity and heterosexual reproductive coupling that justify and naturalize politicized gendered violence" (2010:4) as it relates to the intersections of the social, political and economic landscape at play on the African continent. She argues that through its engagement and treatment of feminine gendered expressions, we can come to understand the ways in which the nation narrates itself. As is typically with women subjects, at the heart of the project is the "control and management of young women" (ibid) while simultaneously rendering them as not belonging to the progress-oriented narration of the nation. These scholars have shown the ways in which literary production, particularly that concerned with the postcolonial African reclamation project, continues to cast women as secondary to the desires of men.

They argue that the male dominated literary production enterprise of the postcolonial moment sought to construct men as addressing anxieties about the nation and nation making directly, while women were understood to speak around it, imaging what Andrade defines as "fictional communities through collectivities such as ethnicity, village, and, above all, family" (Andrade, 2002:47). Through women's writing, in the way women writers cast their protagonists, Andrade argues, we can come to see how the family functions as allegorical of the power of the nation and the ways in which laws, policy and cultural customs are enacted to negotiate its control of women. Thereby rendering the locus of the family as the "nation writ small … where domestic life functions both materially and allegorically in relation to nationalism"

(Andrade, 2002:48). While literary fiction is never the unmediated expression of an outlook towards nationalism, women's relationship to nationalism in fiction nevertheless has and continues to be almost always more oblique than in that of their male counterparts. This is especially so in the early novels by African women writers, whose primary themes concern female identity or empowerment. Therefore, if the family in Black women's literature functions as allegorical of the nation, while culture is deployed in Black men's literature as speaking materially to nationalism, we can think about these literatures as offering a composite imaginary through which both texts are involved in a talking to and a talking back such that there is a construction of and a challenge to the pathologized Black family.

These works represent to the nation an "ever-present narrative of the broken Black family, which is challenged and reconstituted" (Richardson, 2013:3), performing a production of cultural labour that screams what Fred Moten suggests as a "mournful/political practice" (in Richardson, 2013:3). They exist to negotiate the space between the "past and the present, between the construction of memory and post-memory, personal memory and cultural recall" (ibid) while screaming that the accusations made about the Black family, therefore the nation, are not true. Yet what has become evident is that even in their screaming and giving testimony, they exist to reproduce a heteronormative resolution in relation to the question of the pathology of the Black family while silencing and suppressing "any echo of queerness" (Richardson, 2013:3). As Lopang shows, the imaginary of the pre-colonial African is one who is normatively heterosexual, functioning an "idealized and sexually correct" (Lopang, 2014:77) image thereby presenting homosexuality as a ludicrous proposition to the extent that the defining principles of the ideal African is that of the masculine symbolic that did not offer any "sexual ambiguities" (ibid).

Lopang's contention is that to recover the nation, authors such as Achebe constructed African maleness as predicated on three factors: "his valour in battle, his ability to provide for his family and his capacity to procreate" (2014:79). She argues that beginning with *Things Fall Apart*, where the ability to function in the role of man in the nation, at a social and political level, was defined by "farming yams successfully and accumulating titles" (ibid), the performance of anything contrary was considered effeminate, therefore failing in its ability to perform in the fictive of the nation. As Okonkwo illustrates further with his anxiety about the perceived laziness

of his son, Nwoye and his development under the tutelage of the young Ikemefuna, who was given to Okonkwo to care for after Umuofia received him as payment for a death caused by a neighbouring village:

> Inwardly, Okonkwo knew that the boys were still too young to understand fully the difficult art of preparing seed-yams. But he thought that one could not begin too early. Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a great man indeed. Okonkwo wanted his son to be a great farmer and a great man … Yam, the king of crops, was a very exacting king … (2001:25) Okonkwo was inwardly pleased at his son's development … He wanted Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father's household when he was dead … And so he was always happy when he heard him grumbling about women. That showed that in time he would be able to control his women-folk. No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (especially his women) he was not really a man … So Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land – masculine stories of violence and bloodshed (Achebe, 2001:38-39).

With the man defined mainly by his ability to recreate the nation and the woman as the conduit through which the nation is enacted, there was no room for any forms of alterity that disrupted the narrative closure of what and who is an African. Given these preoccupations at silencing the questioning of the Black family, the presence of queer sexuality would have been "unmelodic, improvisational, unpredictable, and irresolute" (Richardson, 2013:3). In the reclamation project, there was no space for "gender variance in this diasporic imagining" (ibid) to construct the heterosexual matrix, what Judith Butler (in Richardson) explains as the thinking that biology is linked to "gender representation/expression and sexual object choice" as the "expectation is that these qualities – anatomy, gender, and sexuality – predict each other through a linear progression" (ibid).

In Achebe's Umuofia, several incidents in the narrative show this, as witnessed with Nwoye's transformation, such that nothing pleased him more than being "sent for by his mother or another of his father's wives to do one of those difficult masculine tasks in the home" (Achebe, 2001:38) as upon receiving these messages, he "would feign annoyance and grumble aloud about women and their troubles" (ibid). It is perhaps in this passage where the fixity of gendered expression is cemented by Achebe's Umuofia. In the marriage negotiations for Okonkwo's friend, Obierika's daughter that customs of neighbouring villages are discussed, and delegitimising their sanctity:

> It was only this morning, said Obierika, that Okonkwo and I were talking about Abame and Aninta, where titled men climb trees and pound foo-foo for their wives. All their customs are upside down …The world is large, said Okonkwo. I have even heard that in some tribes a man's children belong to his wife and her family … That cannot be, said Machi. You might as well say that the woman lies on top of the man when they are making the children (Achebe, 2001:53).

Yet it is perhaps Nwoye's conversion to Christianity at the arrival of the missionaries that signals directly these anxieties about the improvisational and irresolution of the non-normative and non-conforming gendered expression that trouble Achebe's world the most. After the news of Nwoye's conversion reach Okonkwo, in his quiet moments he thinks:

> Okonkwo was popularly called the 'Roaring Flame'. As he looked into the log fire he recalled the name. He was a flaming fire. How then could he have begotten a son like Nwoye, denigrate and effeminate? Perhaps he was not his son. No! he could not be. His wife played him false. He would teach her! But Nwoye resembled his grandfather, Unoka, who was Okonkwo's father … How could he have begotten a woman for a son? … You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head high up among my people. If any of you prefers to be a woman, let him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so that I can curse

> him. If you turn against me when I am dead I will visit you and break your neck (Achebe, 2001:122;126).

Several scholars (Hammonds, 1994; Johnson and Henderson, 2005; Lorde, 2007; Mupotsa, 2010; Msibi, 2011; Tamale, 2011, Nyanzi, 2011, Richardson, 2013; Macharia, 2016) have argued that due to the Black political project of reclamation, the unmelodic and improvisational nature of the queer has thus come to be seen as a threat to narratives of Black achievement, civility and respectability. This has resulted in the instituting of a "queer limit to how we understand our history and ourselves" (Richardson, 2013:4) to silence the ubiquitous questioning about the state of the Black family. I argue then that Achebe's work can be located in the mode of negotiating this anxiety as an aim to resolve the "trauma caused by dominant positioning of Black people as sexual deviants who have incomplete, deviant, and ruptured families" (ibid).

Mupotsa (2010) along with other scholars (Mekgwe, 2006; Chigonda-Banda, 2015) is instructive in her suggestion that an interrogative process needs to be undertaken to recalibrate the ways in which the project of nation-making thinks about its relationship to the intersection of anatomy, gender and sexuality. She invites us to think critically about how we:

> [M]ight critically calibrate the relationship among sex, sexuality and gender without reproducing heteronormativity, but also how norms were made, circulated, lived, transformed, and resisted? Not just: how we were fucked by gender, but also: was it possible to fuck without fucking with gender? And most importantly: from which conception of power, what theory of the social and whose understanding of both the subject and embodiment would the most effective and nuanced critique of heteronormativity come? (Mupotsa, 2010:5).

Following Mupotsa's questioning of conceptions of power and how we conceive the social that informs subjectivity, I therefore imagine that the emerging queer scholarship of Achebe's work can be read in this mode of rethinking the social and the normative. As I have previously shown, the Black family is continually pathological, meaning that it is constructed outside the frame of what is normative. Race, gender and sexuality scholars already signified in

this chapter have theorised this as the discursive queer construction of the Black family in relation to the normative. This discursive thinking of queer has accorded emerging queer scholarship on Achebe a vantage of thinking productively about the circulation of sexual and political signifiers in his work.

Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi (2016), in a discursive queer reading of *Things Fall Apart*, argues that while the text does not "disclose specified embodiments of gay or lesbian identities or incontrovertible same-sex erotic acts" (Osinubi, 2016:162), through the proliferating circulation of a cluster of sexual and political signifiers; the buttocks and the python specifically, we are able to read Achebe's intimation towards queer possibilities in the text. He argues that since there is no singular rendering, a homology of meaning regarding the intersections of sexuality and politics, but rather a series of "temporally unfolding rearticulations of sexual politics" (ibid), then we can think of Achebe's use of sexual idiom as generative in terms of a project committed to the "right to sexual protection" (ibid) and the freedom of its practice. In this way, Osinubi offers a reading of *Things Fall Apart* that locates Achebe within a "democratic common" project that was already involved with the question of an "African queer emergence as a measure of democratic politics" (ibid).

While I consider Osinubi's reading of Achebe as significant in terms of unsettling what Nnaemeka (1997:2) warns is usually the polarising didactic frame through which some of the work by African scholars has been engaged by feminist scholars, I offer a critique of the reading in relation to what gender and sexuality studies offers in terms of the intersections of power, gender and sexuality as they relate to queer subjectivity. Scholars (Lopang, 2014; Macharia, 2011; Dunton, 1989; Gevisser, 1995; Hoad, 2007) have shown how national homophobia relies upon the phallic narrative that constructs homosexuality as an affliction that came with European colonisation. The postcolonial narrative of constructing the nation, which as Lopang (2014) has shown, presented an image of itself as heterosexual, narrates homosexuality as a result of the "weakening and perverting of African culture by colonial and neo-colonial processes, individual manifestations of the processes by which Africa was fucked up the [ass]" (Dunton, 1989:424).

Therefore, I argue that if Achebe's preoccupations at the time of writing *Things Fall Apart* was invested in the reclamation project, a hermeneutic reading of the queer configurations in his work seeks to further affirm the nation's project of constructing regimes of self and the other that places the homosexual or effeminate in the category of other. The imagery of the buttocks and python in *Things Fall Apart* circulates at the moment of Umuofia's colonial encounter with missionaries. Therefore, I argue that Achebe was intimating to the corrupting nature of the colonial encounter, as, if the figurations of the buttocks and the python circulate through an encounter with the coloniser, then we can think of Achebe's use of the imagery as negotiating the nation's anxieties. This mode of writing worked to legitimate Umuofia's masculinist dispositions as the coloniser was cast in the role of emasculating the nation, as homosexuality was then thought of as an ideological penetration that feminised the nation. The implications for this are that the nation is "masculine; the collaborator is female or effeminate; and the coloniser is, one supposes, homosexual" (Madness and Monsters, 2013) thereby having the capacity to corrupt the masculine nation. *Things Fall Apart* is a text that circulates with this authoritative and recognised currency that "is a call to remember our past, a gesture to history, and an entreaty for the future, but one that does not figure the queer in the Black past or, by extension, the future" (Ferguson, 2003:4). Unlike Osinubi's suggestion of a democratic common, I argue that *Things Fall Apart* continues to imagine the queer, homosexual and same-sex desiring, as not African and continues to be the "constitutive outside of what is understood, celebrated, and remembered about Blackness" (ibid).

4.2. Historical materialism and the messiness of Blackness

As previously shown, race, gender and sexuality scholars have argued that Black people's investment in civility and respectability is a way of resolving the ever-constant pathological questioning of Black subjectivity. This resolution can never be achieved as Blackness continues to be differently Othered in the normative constructions of what it means to be human. Richardson demonstrates how Black queer persons, homosexual and same-sex desiring, are continually caught in an impasse of desires as in one instance, they desire full recognition by the Black nation reclamation project, yet they recognise that this desire for recognition in Black memory is "antithetical to the Black desire to be considered civilised and non-pathological/normative" (Richardson, 2013:7).

Things Fall Apart navigates one aspect of Richardson's anxiety, the historical and cultural that is inherently queered due to its location in the subjectivity of the category of the human. In extolling culture and marrying the mythological and the secular, Achebe negotiates this tension. We see this through Okonkwo's married life where polygyny is a recognised cultural practice that does not negotiate anxieties of civility and western respectability. And perhaps it is the figure of Ezinma that clearly articulates Achebe's attuning to a cultural queerness that structures Black life. Ezinma, the only daughter of Okonkwo and his second wife, Ekwefi, is an *ogbanje*, described as "one of those wicked children who, when they died, entered their mothers' wombs to be born again" (Achebe, 2001:57). They are known to be wicked children who perpetuate the "evil cycle of birth and death" (ibid). Ezinma, unlike other children, calls her mother by her name and the relationship between her and Ekwefi is akin to a "companionship of equals" (ibid), not similar to those of mothers and their children in Okonkwo's compound. This enables Ezinma and Ekwefi to share little conspiracies such as allowing Ezinma to eat eggs in the bedroom, when it is forbidden for children to eat eggs. We are told that Okonkwo would have been happier if Ezinma had been a boy as she has the "right spirit" (Achebe, 2001:48), a thought that keeps recurring to Okonkwo whenever he encounters his daughter. Yet while Achebe intimates this complexity of gendered expression in the text, we quickly learn that Okonkwo is vested in respectability and civilised resolution of familial relationality.

In one afternoon as his children bring him food, Ezinma follows her sister, Obiageli – Okonkwo's eldest daughter with his first wife – with her mother's dish. We encounter Okonkwo sitting on a goatskin already eating his first wife's meal, while Obiageli sits on the floor waiting for him to finish. After Ezinma places the dish before Okonkwo, she proceeds to sit with Obiageli, following which Okonkwo shouts at her about how she is sitting:

> Sit like a woman, Okonkwo shouted at her. Ezinma brought her two legs together and stretched them in front of her … And after a pause she said: Can I bring you your chair for you? No, that is a boy's job […] (Achebe, 2001:33).

The figure of Ezinma functions in similar ways to the ways in which Roderick Ferguson (2003) in the introduction to *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Colour Critique*, suggests a way of thinking about how those who transgress these notions of civility and respectability are punished for their stepping out of bounds of mainstream Black civility. Ferguson meditates on the image of a Black drag queen prostitute [sex worker] who never fully belongs within the idea of the nation. As he argues "the country of her birth will call out to 'the American people'" (Ferguson, 2004:1-2) but the constitutive of those that make up the American people will not include "her or others like her" (ibid). Gender, sexuality and queer scholars (Ferguson, 2004; Macharia, 2011; Drucker, 2011; Cohen, 2005, Savran, 1995), in their scholarship, offer this report an entry point to think about Ezinma as "multiply determined, regulated, and excluded by differences of race, class, sexuality and gender" (Ferguson, 2003:1-2). She is the embodiment of the disciplining that homosexual and same-sex desiring bodies endure in negotiating the anxieties of those who want to instantiate "respectability, domesticity, heterosexuality, normativity, nationality, universality, and progress" (ibid) as the hallmarks of the Black nation. Other figures that allow us to see this disciplining is the image of Unoka, Okonkwo's father and Nwoye, Okonkwo's eldest son.

Due to their seeming laziness, and Unoka's inability to accumulate titles, as they both do not perform in the ways that masculinity is prescribed in Umuofia, they are feminized. As I've shown in the previous section, Okonkwo's great anxiety with his son after he converts to Christianity is that he had birthed a woman for a son and pertaining to his father, we learn that Okonkwo had lived with the fear of turning out like his father, whose failure and weakness he resented. He had never forgotten that a playmate in his youth had referred to his father as *agbala* – "a term that was not only another name for a woman, but it could also mean a man who had taken no title" (Achebe, 2001:11). Similar with the drag queen prostitute [sex worker], the figures of Unoka, and specifically Ezinma and Nwoye, enable us to see the social heterogeneity that become the marker for African culture as reinvented by Achebe. To make sense of this heterogeneity as a cultural site of regulating gender and sexuality expressions, these scholars (Ferguson, 2004; Macharia, 2011; Drucker, 2011; Tamale, 2011; Cohen, 2005, Savran, 1995) argue that this culture must be located within liberal capitalist frameworks of economic and social formations that have come to racialise gender and sexuality. As Ferguson

further argues, there is a need to also consider how these frameworks replicate themselves in the world and how they link "terrains separated by time and space" (2004:2).

Therefore, if we understand the nation as a terrain determined by "racial difference and gender and sexual conformity" (Ferguson, 2004:2), we need to "take up the critical task of both remembering and rejecting the model of home" (ibid) as offered in recuperative nationalist projects. Along with Ahmed (2010, 2006) and Fortier (2001), Ferguson offers that these homosexual and same-sex desiring bodies need to redefine the ways in which they define home, as currently it is "defined over and against" (ibid) queer subjects of color. Secondly, he suggests that an expansive critique of the moments and locations that make up home needs to be engaged to see how the deployment of culture as a marker of belonging expels from its normative constructions and meaning, those who do not perform in the expected ways of gender and sexuality expression as determined by culture. Along with Smith (2010), Johnson (2005), Muñoz (2005), Villarejo (2005), and Ahmed (2004), Ferguson's proposition of a queer of colour critique as an epistemological intervention in understanding how liberal capitalist ideology works to institute normative gender, sexuality and nation state formations, we are better able to interrogate the ways in which "racial, gender, and sexual practices antagonise and/or conspire with the normative investments of nation states and capital" (2004:6) to reproduce normative constructions of the nation.

These scholars have shown how historical materialism, as a way of thinking about how to exclude those who do not serve its sensibilities around civility, has ensured that non-normative gender and sexuality expressions have become marginalized in nation state formation. Working in collaboration with liberal ideology, assumed for the nation "normative heterosexuality as the emblem of order and nature, and universality" (Ferguson, 2004:6). I use the term materialism as thought through by Ferguson (2004) as a traditional privileging of class over other social relations, such that race, gender, sexuality, ableism, etc. are not applied in the construction of accounting for the ways in which society is constructed. This ideology has therefore continued to mark those, and that which "deviated from hetero-patriarchal ideas" (ibid), as that which constituted the disorder and not in keeping with "bourgeois definitions of civilization" (ibid). And this would mean that the modern nation has come to think of order and civility as articulated through normative hetero-patriarchal ideals as signs of progress and development whereas

those who embodied behaviours considered antithetical to the normative behaviours as signs of dysfunction and regression.

It is therefore my contention that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* works within this regime of civility as determined by historical materialism. It seeks to make the case for a heterogeneous hetero-patriarchal invention of African culture that authoritatively circulates as the archive of Africa in the post-colonial moment. Achebe's Umuofia is preoccupied with institutionalising African culture as normatively hetero-patriarchal, such that this invention of the African nation hinges itself on what Ferguson critiques as tenets of historical materialism, in its treatment of gender, sexuality, power and capital production. In its attempt to navigate the anxieties of the site of lack and uncivilised cultural practice, in its insistence on the resolution and normativity of the nation as symbol of progress, the text reinscribes colonial thinking about African subjectivity. Ferguson helps me to think about culture as expansive beyond the ritualised cues and practises that govern how communities of people organise but to think about it as a system of behaviours that attains political strength when it comes into contention with "economic or political logics that try to refunction it for exploitation or domination" (Ferguson, 2004:23-25). It is an amalgamation of "politics, culture and the economic" (ibid) that constitute an inseparable dynamic that can be used to dictate how citizens of a nation can negotiate their subjectivity in the nation. As I have articulated previously, this construction of normative subjects in the nation is expounded on here by the potential of culture as a political category to police identity formation. It is in many ways a major contributing factor to the limited hetero-patriarchal articulations of nationalism and subjectivity.

And again, we arrive at the ever-present impasse for those whom Achebe's world does not write about with authority, does not imagine into existence without any apologies. As I have shown, in thinking about the literature text as a cultural archive, it gains the potential to function in these definitive ways that can de determinative of how we imagine nations and subject citizens. Germaine de Steal's assessment of the complex relationship between "canonical literature, nationalism, and morality" (in Ferguson, 2004:25) shows that the reverence for nationalist literature is compounded by what she describes as literatures ability to serve morality. This is in keeping with the moralistic determinants of nation building in the era of historical materialism. As Germaine de Steal argues, "for there can be no enduring honour in a

country where there is no public morality" (in Ferguson, 2004:25). If national literature facilitates the project of ensuring national morality, therefore compartmentalising and enshrining national honour at the exclusion of others, then the project becomes ever more pressing to trouble this sense of honour that is warranted by literatures invested in hetero-patriarchal ideals that betray the desire of the postcolonies to reimagine and articulate themselves in their fullness.

Chapter 5: The Nervous Conditions and of Non-Africanness

> *Some things could not be explained, she muttered. Such things could only be seen.* (Dangarembga 2004:144)

In this chapter, I am preoccupied with expanding the feminist reading of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* beyond the gendered aspect of female subjectivity as it relates to patriarchal masculine subjectivity. While there have been readings of the text as a response to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Moyana, 1994; Cohen, 1992; Uwakweh, 1995; Nair, 1995) as it locates at its centre the internal lives of the women characters while primarily exploring cultural locations of female subjecthood, I explore how Dangarembga signals disavowals of the nation-making project. I further explore how a queered reading of the text can be offered to intimate how Dangarembga's use of intimacy between the protagonist, Tambudzai and her cousin, Nyasha's relationship facilitates a particularised narrative continuation that offers a queer future in the imaginary of the nation.

Nervous Conditions, published in 1988, is the first in a proposed trilogy, with the sequel, *The Book of Not*, published in 2006. The work is a first person narrative account of Tambudzai's life in postcolonial Rhodesia, which became Zimbabwe. We are introduced to Tambudzai, who becomes affectionately referred to as Tambu throughout the novel, as a young girl refusing condemnation for not being sorry that her brother had died. We soon discover that Tambu's brother, Nhamo, died at the mission school where her uncle, Babamukuru, is the headmaster. What makes Tambu refuse to apologise is that because of her brother's death, the opportunity for her to advance her studies at the mission school becomes realised, what she calls "my escape" (Dangarembga, 2004:1). Tambu declares that the text is about the intersecting lives of the women in her life; her mother, Mainini, her uncle's wife, Maiguru, her mother's sister, Lucia and cousin, Nyasha. Beginning with her life in the village where she lived until she was thirteen; Tambu's family, headed by her father, Jeremiah, lives in dire poverty while Babamukuru is away in England furthering his studies, along with his family; his wife Maiguru and their two children; Nyasha and Chido. When Babamukuru returns from England, he is appointed headmaster of the mission school on the hill just outside Umtali town. Babamukuru decides that it would be prudent for Tambu's brother, Nhamo to further his studies at the mission school, while Tambu is left having to convince her father that she should be allowed to continue her studies in the

village. Due to Jeremiah and Babamukuru's patriarchal decision-making regime, Nhamo is sent to the mission school while Jeremiah insists that Tambu's role was not to attain an education but to learn how to be a good wife.

Tambu, defying her father and through her industrious efforts, growing and selling maize to raise the money to pay for her school fees, manages to stay in school. Within a few years, her brother passes away from a mysterious illness while at the mission school, and thus after his funeral, Babamukuru and Jeremiah decide that Tambu will take his place. Tambu's life changes at the mission school, with her command of the English language and industry in her studies, fortified alongside Nyasha's inquisitive and defiant nature, improving. However, through all the new things she learns, she remains cautious not to fully assimilate as she worries that she might become rebellious like her cousin, Nyasha. While Tambu and Nyasha grow closer, sharing a bedroom, it is Tambu's sense that Nyasha is not grateful for the opportunities that her parents have given her as Nyasha constantly challenges her father, resolving to do all in her power to never anger, or act against Babamukuru. While at the mission school, Tambu accepts her uncle's heavy handedness with his household, reasoning with herself that he was the closest thing to a god that she knew. It is upon her discovery that Maiguru also obtained a Master of Arts degree while in England that she starts to question, internally, and seeing the merit in Nyasha's resistance to Babamukuru's tight fist in the home. Things come to a blow for Tambu and Babamukuru when Tambu refuses to attend her parents wedding, an event Tambu feels is a spectacle and embarrassing to both herself and her parents, who were declared to have been living in sin even though they had raised Tambu and her siblings.

Tambu, allowed to miss the wedding, is punished with house work when the family returns. Maiguru argues with Babamukuru that the punishment is severe, which descends into a separation as Babamukuru tells Maiguru she can leave his house if she does not want to abide by his way of doing things. Maiguru leaves for a few days to stay with her brother, leaving Nyasha excited that her mother had acted contrary to expectation yet unsatisfied that she had opted for another male figure. In the latter part of the text, Tambu is offered a scholarship to attend a private Catholic mission school, Sacred Heart. At first Babamukuru refuses that she attends the school and concedes after Maiguru's insistence. When Tambu returns home for the holidays to the mission house, she notices how Nyasha has grown skeletal, her condition

becoming severe such that she descends into a suicidal rage and is diagnosed with the eating disorder bulimia/anorexia nervosa and depression, leading to her hospitalisation. After Nyasha's hospitalisation, with Tambu worrying for her, Babamukuru takes her to the village to see her family where she has a conversation with her mother, Mainini, that Tambu considers a warning. Mainini's assessment of the situation is that all the children are sick from their Englishness and Tambu needed to be careful not to succumb to it.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's assessment that there is "something especially shocking – something inhuman, unnatural" (Dangarembga, 2004:vii) about Tambu's coldness when she tells us of her brother's death. It is her not being sorry nor her refusal to apologise "for my callousness, as you may define it, [her] lack of feeling" (Dangarembga, 2004:1) that fascinates the most about Dangarembga's work. On the first page of the text, Dangarembga gives the reader an analysis of the events that locate Tambu in what she calls "a position to write this account" (ibid). From this position, the reader can ask questions already about the "plurality of power formations, historical encounters and blockages" (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003:8) that locate Tambu's experiences at home, and subsequently in the world, or to use Bibi Bakare-Yusuf's words, "across time and space" (ibid). It is Appiah's sense that Dangarembga's text does not easily locate itself within the "common critical view" (Dangarembga, 2004:ix) that many of the modern African novels are written in response to or to address the western reader, as has been the case with writers of Achebe's generation. He argues that the text escapes a "safari moment" (ibid), as it is not written to satisfy the sensibilities of those he defines as interested in a "Zimbabwe written for the moral and literary tourist" (ibid). According to him, Tambu's narrative evolution refuses the archetypes of poverty and morality that characterise much of that literature.

Appiah argues that Dangarembga is not concerned with addressing the "Other from elsewhere" (ibid) as Tambu is primarily concerned with how the women in her life are able to negotiate the "duplicitous double bind" (Mekgwe 2006:11; Chigonda-Banda 2015:2). This double bind of African female experience that is premised on the negotiation of internal societal patriarchal organization of gendered relations within communities of African people and externally imposed ideas about gender as a consequence of the colonial encounter. Dangarembga alerts us of this double bind early in the text after Tambu complains to her

mother, Mainini, that her father, Jeremiah, does not want to let her continue her studies. While making her case to her mother that her Maiguru is a better wife to her Babamukuru for having attained her education, Mainini educates Tambu on the difficult location of being a woman as she responds:

> This business of womanhood is a heavy burden ... When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age … And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength (Dangarembga, 2004:16).

Appiah demonstrates that Dangarembga, in not addressing herself to the other, works from an understanding that these burdens can only arise from a shared understanding of their specificity by Tambu. "[H]er silent and invisible hearer, the you" (Dangarembga, 2004x-xi) that she is refusing to apologize to for her callousness about her brother's death.

Supriya Nair (1995) offers a reading of the text in view of the melancholy of the postcolonial intellectual who is often alienated from those they are meant to serve, who in *Nervous Conditions,* she argues, is made female. In much postcolonial literary production, Nair argues that the postcolonial intellectual is "both totalized and masculinized" (Nair, 1995:131; see also, Smith 2000:247). Her intervention is that while many writers of early postcolonial literature focused on men as the only ones with the capacity to negotiate the effects of colonialism from both a physical and psychological perspective, the women's responses are singularly depicted as internalizing the loss and regressing into psychosis. It is her assessment that in *Nervous Conditions*, we can see how colonial education is used by Tambu to facilitate an escape from her subordinated location towards achieving her own goals. Further to that, unlike her cousin Nyasha who decries the status and lived experience of women in the African family by constantly challenging her father, Tambu instead "senses [that] their strength [is] in their particular methods of resistance and learns from each one while forming her own distinct identity" (Nair, 1995:137). Accordingly, Tambu shows that even as a woman character, while the

melancholia of postcolonial intellectual history is an unavoidable condition, it is not "inevitably, tragically self-defeating" (Nair, 1995:138).

And more interestingly is another of Appiah's question that points us to the heart of these power formations, historical encounters and blockages when he asks "who is it that may define our protagonist as callous? To whom, in other words, does our protagonist decline to apologise?" (Dangarembga, 2004:vii). Given that, as readers, we engage this callousness with the understanding that the narrator, and the author, are both women? Pauline Ada Uwakweh's (1995) reading of the text points us in a direction where we can engage the question. She commends the liberational nature of Dangarembga's text around depictions of women in Zimbabwean literature. She declares the first person narrative accounting by Tambu as a literary strategy that marks Dangarembga's realisation of her voice in the male dominated literary space in Zimbabwe. Uwakweh argues that Tambu and consequently Dangarembga's attainment of voice is "self-defining, liberational, and cathartic" (Uwakweh, 1995:75). It moves the image of women from the traditional and conventional roles of mother and wife or the trope of the rebellious non-conformist and situates her within the family as a conscious subject who is "capable of independent thought and action" (Uwakweh, 1995:76).

Dangarembga herself gives credence to these feminist readings, writing that she sensed a lack of visible female role models in literature for young women in Zimbabwe at the time she was writing, as much of the literary production was from and about men. Accordingly, this resulted in a lack of ambition from the young women she engaged with, which made it seem as though realising one's ambition was too difficult, leading many of them to give up or "settle for third if not forth best" (Dangarembga, 2004:211). Her effort was to remedy that situation and make African girls and women worthy subjects of postcolonial literary exploration. And while the work was critiqued as being presenting an unfair reality of Black women's lives by some male critics, Dangarembga insists that she had written with the intention to demonstrate an appreciation for the complex politics of "postcolonial subjecthood beyond the singular consideration of gender politics" (Wilkinson, 1992:196). In this context, Dangarembga's work can be seen as standpoint epistemology that visions the world from an experiential location that is self-conscious about the expression of its desires. Defined in feminist scholarship as a critical positionality that is shaped by marginal social locations that enable one to produce a

revolutionary "seeing from below" (Lewis, 2007:19), standpoint theory enables "a politics of non-hegemonic resistance that accepts the uniqueness of intersections and multiplicity" (Lewis, 2007:27).

With this context, and the seemingly inescapable bind of inter- and intra- cultural patriarchal prescriptions and the colonial experience, I want to extend these feminist readings of *Nervous Conditions*. I want to think of the ways the text can be helpful in how we think about nationhood and belonging. I work through Black feminist scholar and essayist Barbara Smith in her seminal work, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (1978), to meditate on the ways we can read Dangarembga as intimating a queer rendering of subjectivity within the nation. And the constraints that exist to make those existences impaired and not in keeping with the fictive of the nation. I also explore the strategies Dangarembga employs to make visible subjects who exist in the margins of the nation.

5.1. The Queered Aesthetic of Dangarembga's Disavowal of the Nation

As I have shown in the preceding chapter in my exploration of *Things Fall Apart* and its argued authoritative functionality in fashioning Africa, the imaginary of the pre-colonial African is one whose sexuality expression is assumed as fixed and heterosexual. This imaginary functioned as a medium of negotiating anxieties about the pathological question of the African family. These anxieties are to legitimate an image of Africa that is imagined as sexually correct. Therefore, the idea of a homosexual African was a ludicrous proposition to the extent that the defining principles of the ideal African was that of the masculine symbolic. This symbol did not offer any sexual ambiguities that would disrupt the harmony of the normative heterosexual who was invested in reproducing the nation.

Alice Walker's (1974) in her seminal essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: The Creativity of Black Women in the South", allows me an entry point to say the things I am anxious about saying in this chapter. Walker argues that Black women's relationship to their spirituality has always been so intense and deep and unconscious even as they lived blindly through their lives, becoming shrines to the men who used them. Suffering years and decades of abuse and mutilation through centuries and eras that did not acknowledge them, they had "dreams that no one knew – not even themselves, in any coherent fashion – and saw visions no one could

understand" (Walker, 1974:1). For Walker, they waited, moving to music not yet written while throwing themselves into spiritual worship as it was the only way they could constructively utilise the waste that was their "unused and unwanted talent" (Walker, 1974:2). They became priestesses of the highest form of artistic expression. She argues that this artistic expression extended beyond the church, and if only we looked high and low to see how through the ingenuity of our grandmother's gardens, the creative force of their folklore, and the varied ways in which they managed to create items of clothing with utility, they found an outlet for these creative sensibilities.

Walker's claims are productive to think about Dangarembga's work when she suggests that even without knowing it, there was the disruptive and subversive potential of our grandmother's creative lives even when the work was not considered legible as such, as even they themselves did not recognise the creative potential of their work as something that happened beyond the singing at church. Following Walker's prompt, I think of the potential of Dangarembga's unseen yet potentiated 'dreams and visions' in inviting us to partake in reimagining how the African nation can be constituted.

While Tendai Marima (2011) in "Cuddling Cousins and Woman Love: Figuring Sexual Ambivalence in the Colony" offers a reading of the relationship between Nyasha and Tambu as a form of *macocotte*, an African-Caribbean term that describes intimate relationships between young girls. She describes it as a *kweyol* word deployed to describe "intense friendships between adolescents who discover and experiment with sexuality" (Marima, 2011:274). The practice is culturally recognised as a safer mode of sexual experimentation for young women, relative to heterosexual experimentation. She argues that through this mode of friendship and experimentation, *Nervous Conditions* shows how sexuality can be plural as it "displaces the dominant idea of a naturalised, single sexuality" (Marima, 2011:269). It thereby transcends the boundaries of nature and culture by closing the gap between what is hetero and homo and destabilises the categories that "naturalise sexual difference" (ibid). While Marima's reading fascinates, I propose that there is a differentiated way in which we can think about agency and sexuality in Dangarembga's work. I think about how she intimates how we can make legible other ways of being African that are not predicated on heterosexuality in the nation.

I propose, unlike with the practise of *macocotte* that assumes heterosexuality for those practising it, a reading of reading *Nervous Conditions* that does not work from an assumptive position of heterosexuality. I read *Nervous Conditions* as a lesbian text as suggested by Bertha Harris (in Smith, 1978:23). According to Smith, Harris suggests that when we encounter Black women's literary work that does not perform in the ways that patriarchal or western literary thought constructs literature, we are able to think of the presence of strong positive portrayals of Black women who are central to the narrative. We can think about how they are negotiated through narrative continuations that use sentences that refuse to do what they are "supposed to do" (ibid) or refuse to be linear in their construction and evolution. She argues that we can think about this work as "innately lesbian literature" (ibid). As Crenshaw shows, a Black feminist lens "offers an intellectual and political response" (1991:2017) that brings together these realities and sensibilities such that we can always imagine that any response to racial, gendered and sexuality subjugation, is always a "political response" (ibid) to all these oppressions. Through the eroticised nature of the relationship between Tambu and Nyasha, I intimate towards Dangarembga's dreams and visions around queer subjecthood as legitimate subjects within the African nation. Further to that, I think about the incestuous nature of the relationship as an offering from Dangarembga to think about the potential of a queered sensibility to how we imagine partnering and circulation of love within the nation.

As Dangarembga herself asserts, she wrote the text in some hopes to encourage young African women to take up their space in the world and "do their thing, whatever it might be" (Dangarembga, 2004:209). She writes with an awareness of the challenge imposed onto women to be themselves in the world, what she calls the "constraint of being a woman" (Dangarembga, 2004:211). As Smith argues, the development and use of a Black feminist criticism lens in analysing the literary works of Black women has the potential to have it be experienced anew to complicate previous assumptions while exposing for the "first time its actual dimensions" (Smith, 1978:23). This is to mean that through these new readings, we can make new meanings of the work that we could have previously missed precisely due to what Smith critiques as the stunting presence of "the ideas or methodology of white/male literary thought upon the precious materials of Black women's art" (ibid). According to Smith, a Black feminist reading of Black women's work should always attempt to make the commitment to exploring the systemic connections of how "sexual and racial politics" (ibid) construct Black women's subjectivity in

ways that require Black women to be innovative and daring. It should follow that Black feminist literary criticism must also embody this "highly innovative and daring spirit" (ibid) of the work itself.

I locate my reading of the relationship between Tambu and Nyasha by thinking of their relationship as lesbian not because they are lovers but rather that their relationship plays a central role in facilitating for the reader what Smith argues is the commitment to Black feminist literary production. With this reading, we are able to destabilise how we have previously engaged with the text. Smith, in a rereading of Toni Morrison's *Sula*, explores not only how the text works as a lesbian text because of the "passionate friendship" between the protagonists, Sula and Ne. She also explores how Morrison pays attention to critically questioning the "heterosexual institutions of male/female relationships, marriage, and the family" (Smith, 1978:23) and how these impact Black women's lives. I use the location lesbian to expand my thinking of the construct beyond its sexualised location and to think of it discursively. I work with Radicalesbians (1970) thinking around the category lesbian when they ask, "What is a Lesbian?":

> A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society – perhaps then, but certainly later – cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with herself (Radicalesbians, 1970:1).

Morrison's *Sula*, published in 1973, follows the lives of Sula and Nel, two young women who meet in 1922 when they are both twelve, about to enter puberty and discover boys. They grow up in contrasting households. Nel's invested in social convention and rigid while Sula grows up in a boarding house ran by her grandmother and mother, both considered loose and eccentric. The young girls gravitate towards each other for they had long met in their dreams before they met in person. When they finally meet, they felt the "ease and comfort of old friends" (Smith, 1973:52). Smith contends that Morrison, whether she was conscious of it or not at the time of writing *Sula*, negotiated both lesbian and feminist questions around Black

women's "autonomy and their impact upon each other's lives" (Smith, 1978:23). This passage illustrates Smith's point about Morrison's *Sula* and makes a pointed indication towards the erotic romanticism that circulates throughout their relationship:

> Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be. Their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on. Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers (Sula's because he was dead; Nel's because he wasn't), they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for (Morrison, 1973:52).

I follow this thinking to negotiate my erotic reading of Tambu and Nyasha's relationship when they encounter each other in their teenage years. Having been close in childhood and now estranged becaus of Babamukuru's family emigrating to England to pursue his studies, Tambu's relocation to the mission house necessitates that they reestablish their relation. Tambu, made aware that she will be sharing a bedroom with her cousin, after Maiguru shows her to the bedroom, expresses her apprehension at the idea, "thoroughly distressed now that my fate had been made clear" (Dangarembga, 2004:76). She had been "intrigued and fascinated" with what she calls a "very small part" of her "anglicised … glamorous" cousin, the "adventurous, explorative part" (ibid). however, her main apprehension comes from what she feels would be Nyasha's ability to disrupt her desire to continue her erudite concreteness and categoricalness. According to Tambu, Nyasha held "too many surprises" that "would distract me", something "too intangible for me to be comfortable with" (Dangarembga, 2004:76). It was Tambu's sense that "Nyasha would not be good for me. Everything about her spoke of alternatives and possibilities that if considered too deeply would wreak havoc with the neat plan I had laid out for my life" (ibid). Tambu negotiates what she feels is the threat to her definite sense of self by thinking of her cousin as something that threatened to undo the learnt ways in which she knew to be a woman, and survive, as her mother had told her about the burden of womanhood.

I explore this encounter further to think of what it was that Tambu was sensing in Nyasha as intangible, that which threatened the finite ways in which she thought to negotiate her life in the mission. I argue that Tambu's discomfort comes from what she could recognise about

herself, and that is her desire to reclaim all of herself for herself and not to live in the shadow of her father, Jeremiah, her Babamukuru or even her now dead brother, Nhamo. As Radicalesbians argue, when societal oppression has been internalised, in order to avoid having to deal with themselves, some women "resist relating on all levels to other women who will reflect their own oppression, their own secondary status …" (Radicalesbians, 1970:3). Because in acknowledging and equating themselves, it means that they confront a sense of self that they have "gone to such lengths to avoid" (ibid). In being made to reckon with themselves in this way, they know that they "cannot really respect and love that which [they] have been made to be" (ibid).

Radicalesbians' desire for us to think the category lesbian as beyond the sexual but to think of it as the 'rage condensed to the point of explosion' is similar to Cathy Cohen's (2005) proposition on the radical potential for queer politics. Cohen offers a radical assessment of how queer theory, in attempting to locate the politics of sexuality at the core, has reinforced the "reductive dichotomies of heterosexuality and everything else as queer" (Cohen, 2005:22; see also, Okech 2013:23). She argues that instead of performing the fundamental role of "destabilising the assumed categories and binaries of sexual identity" (Cohen, 2005:22), certain readings of queer theory diminish the radical potential of queer as a category. This is the potential to make explicit the "ways in which power informs and constitutes privileged and marginalized subjects on both sides of this dichotomy" (ibid). For Cohen, to realise this radical potential to make visible queerness and the "practice of queer politics" (Cohen, 2005:22), the discussion of the discursive potential of queerness must be "located in its ability to create a space in opposition to dominant norms" (ibid) in order to facilitate "transformational political work" (ibid). I follow this thinking and propose that when we read *Nervous Conditions* and think about Tambu's reflections on her relationship with her cousin, Nyasha, it becomes legitimate to expand both Smith and Radicalesbians' thinking of this as lesbian and to locate it within Cohen's proposition of a radical potential to enable "the comprehensive and transformational character of queer politics" (Cohen, 2005:25).

Both Tambu and Nyasha find themselves having to negotiate differentiated spectrums of patriarchal oppression, as this passage illustrates:

> I felt secure at the mission in Babamukuru's shadow and I could not understand why Nyasha found it so threatening … I though it wise to

> preserve my energy, unlike my cousin, who was burning herself out. I put it to her: couldn't she wait to make the points she thought needed to be made? But she thought that if she waited she would forget what those points were. 'It happens,' she assured me. 'You get so comfortable and used to the way things are. Look at me now. I was comfortable in England but now I'm a whore with dirty habits … 'I know' she interrupted. 'It's not England and I ought to adjust. But when you've seen different things you want to be sure you're adjusting to the right thing. You can't go on all the time being whatever's necessary. You've got to have some conviction, and I'm convinced I don't want to be anyone's underdog. It's not right for anyone to be that. But once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on. And that's the end of you. you're trapped. They control everything you do (Dangarembga, 2004:119).

In this passage, Dangarembga shows how Tambu and Nyasha negotiate the heteronormative sensibilities that warrants acceptance into the project of nation making vis-a-via their relation to Babamukuru. While Nyasha refuses to be comfortable so that she does not get used to the wrong things, Tambu grows quieter as her strategy for negotiating her place in Babamukuru's world. Negotiating their realities, we see that through their "existence and everyday survival, [they] embody sustained and multi-sited resistance to systems, based on dominant constructions of race and gender, that seek to normalise [their] sexuality, exploit [their] labour, and constrain [their] visibility" (Cohen, 2005:24). Through this lens of understanding multiple resistance and recognising everyday survival, we can therefore analyse heteronormativity "as a system of regulation and normalisation" (Cohen, 2005:29). While it is Nyasha who continually embodies explicit physical and articulated resistance to Babamukuru's normative expectations, Tambu also adopts a physical and verbally articulated resistance mode when she refuses to attend her parents wedding. By reading these moments of resistance to the dominant norms of expected performance, following Cohen's thinking, we can read their locations as lesbian. Their resistance refuses how they are made invisible as their actions must always be in keeping with Babamukuru's expectations.

To demonstrate the point further, to show the "limitations of the Black female body" (Smith, 1978:24) in a racist and sexist society, what Cohen suggests as "displacement" (2005:29), Dangarembga uses the relationship between the young women to negotiate the rejection of acceptable behaviour and toeing the line expected of female subjectivity. She intimates to the reader to read her characters as embracing strategies of survival that "promote self-definition and full expression" (Cohen, 2005:29). They use these strategies to assert their entitlement to the "full rights and privileges of citizenship" (ibid) that heteronormativity is resistant to confer. Nyasha especially, in being an explicit site of contention to her parents by disavowing the ways women are known to behave themselves, embraces this political strategy of self-definition and full self-expression. This in turn results in the frustration about a daughter who is thought to be wrong in her location within the ideal of the nation. In this passage, Babamukuru is unable to reconcile Nyasha's refusal of docility and assumed subjectivity placed on her as a Black woman:

> 'I don't know what is wrong with her … But there's something wrong with her, something very wrong. A good child doesn't behave like that. I tell you, Ma'Chido, sometimes I don't sleep, thinking about the way that daughter of mine has turned out (Dangarembga, 2004:85).

In this passage, it is Maiguru who is perplexed by her daughter's sense of independence and her refusal to embrace the African nationalist expectation of how daughters should relate to their families:

> They are too Anglicised,' explained Maiguru … 'they picked up all these disrespectful ways in England' … 'and it's taking them time to learn how to behave at home again … We keep trying to teach her the right manners, always telling her Nyasha, do this; Nyasha, why didn't you do that? But it's taking time. Her head is full of loose connections that are always sparking. Nyasha! Ha, Nyasha! That child of mine has her own thoughts about everything … (Dangarembga, 2004:74).

Nair (1995) also suggests that Nyasha's diagnosis with anorexia nervosa and bulimia can be read as expressive metaphors of performing orally the pressures of her father's unyielding sovereignty and the burdens of colonial history. She suggests that her bulimic purging can be

read as an indication of the "indigestibility of patriarchal order and discipline" (Nair, 1995:137) that is internalised through her anorexia, and an attempt to exercise some measure of will through punishing and disciplining her body. In contrast to Nyasha, Tambu who arrives at the mission with a desire to be concrete and categorical and distancing herself to Nyasha, Dangarembga uses Tambu's transition to illustrate how Tambu reclaims herself as lesbian. She reclaims the ways in which the rage condensed inside of her is used strategically to give full self-expression, as illustrated in the following passages. In this first passage, Tambu's sense of docility is affirmed by her desire not to disrupt her uncle's world and her commitment to herself to being as "straight as an arrow, as steely and true":

> He concluded by defining for me my immediate tasks. 'To be good, listen to what we, your parents, tell you to do, to report your books diligently and not let your mind be distracted by other things. That is all I have to say to you … I entered our bedroom vowing earnestly that I would be like Babamukuru: straight as an arrow, as steely and true (Dangarembga, 2004:89).

And in contrast in the evolution of the story, Tambu recognises that her compliance to her uncle's worldview is her undoing:

> I had thought that issues would continue to be clearly delimited, with Babamukuru, who was as nearly divine as any human being could hope to be, imposing the limits. Through him, because of him, black would remain definitely sombre and white permanently clear, even in spite of Nyasha, whose strange disposition hinted at shades and textures within the same colour. My vagueness and my reverence for my uncle, what he was, what he had achieved … stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood I had used to define my own position. It had happened insidiously, the many favourable comparisons to Nyasha doing a lot of the damage. It was such a bed of confusion. I would not have been here with Babamukuru if I had not been able to stand up to my own father, yet now I was unable to tell my uncle that this wedding was a farce (Dangarembga, 2004:166-167).

As Tambu remembers that she had embodied a lesbian sensibility in her girlhood days before she came to the mission, Dangarembga constructs a bolder young woman who recognises that being "constructed feminine" and being "a whole person [is] irreconcilable" (Radicalesbians, 1970:3). Dangarembga, in employing these narrative plots, illuminates both Tambu and Nyasha's sense of knowing that to refuse heteronormative expectation, would signal as not being a real woman. It would signal rather that being a woman who seeks to be independent and refusing to belong to a man, is to become "invisible, pathetic, inauthentic and unreal" (ibid).

Babamukuru considers Tambu's refusal to attend the wedding an act of rebellion against him and resolves to remind Tambu that he has the power to determine how invisibilised and inauthentic she can be. He declares "I am the head of this house. Anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in this house, bent on destroying what I have made" (Dangarembga 2004:169). Significantly, Dangarembga illustrates the double-bind of Black women's experiences in Tambu's recognition of the complexities Nyasha points to in being a woman, of being Black and living in a heteronormative patriarchal world. In this world of complexities, shades and textures exist within the same colour while her uncle's heteronormative patriarchal world, there was only a black that was definitively somber. As Radicalesbians' suggest, it is only in letting go of "male given identity" (1970:3) that women can create themselves anew, to give each other a new sense of self. In this passage, the sense of letting go is illustrated:

> Looking back, I see that that is how our friendship began. In fact, it was more than friendship that developed between Nyasha and myself. The conversation that followed was a long, involved conversation, full of guileless openings up and intricate lettings out and lettings in. It was the sort of conversation that young girls have with their best friends, that lovers have under the influence of the novelty and uniqueness of their love, the kind of conversation that cousins have. They realise that they like each other in spite of not wanting to. You could say that my relationship with Nyasha was my first love affair, the first time that I grew to be fond of someone whom I did not wholeheartedly approve. (Dangarembga, 2004:79)

As Smith shows with Morrison's *Sula*, we can recognise how Tambu and Nyasha's awareness of the limitatons of heteronormative patriarchy and racism upon their lives – being that they are 'neither white nor male' – are the driving motivation to "understand their need for each other" (Smith, 1978:24). Dangarembga illustrates what Smith argues has always been at the core of Black female friendship and bonds, the necessary lubricant needed to facilitate the "barest of survival" (ibid). In Tambu and Nyasha's bond, we see how the two girls find the "courage to create themselves" (ibid) outside of the strictures of heteronormative expectation.

5.2. Incest and the Nation: Recuperating a Queered Aesthetic

In this section, I work with the category of lesbian in its sexualised definition, in the context of women loving other women, romantically. I examine the ways in which Dangarembga's narrative development between Tambu and Nyasha presents an opportunity to rethink how the text has been read around female friendship, patriarchy and the nation. I think through how this reading can facilitate a conversation about incest as a queer emotion, affect and aesthetic that can be instrumental in destabilising heteronormative nationalist desires in postcolonial literatures. As Zethu Matebeni (2013) shows in "Queerness Intimacy Race" I am interested in how her proposition for a queer framework allows us to reorder how Black women's desires, their "bodies and sexuality" (Matebeni, 2013:404) have continued to be represented in postcolonial literatures. Discussing photographer Zanele Muholi's photograph, *Caitlin and I*, a three panel print of two naked female bodies lying on top of each other, Matebeni argues that Muholi's work subverts the often-violent rendering that has reduced the black female body to be a target for "colonial scientific pornography" (Matebeni, 2013:405). These renderings have largely led to, specifically, black lesbian women being considered the undesirable. Matabeni argues that with the image, Muholi enters dangerous terrain as she asserts "female intimacy and sexuality that is self-sustaining and self-sufficient" (Matebeni, 2013:406; see also Gqola, 2006a, 2006b; Salley, 2012).

Through the image, Matabeni argues that we can begin to negotiate a disentanglement of thinking the dichotomy between the private and the public, and rather to think about intimate normalities. Through these normalities, we would be able to move our imaginings or

witnessing of black female bodies together not as an expression of colonial conquest, pain, torture or pornography. Instead we would be able to read pleasure, intimacy, beauty, joy and eroticism when we see two black female bodies (Matebeni, 2013:405). I follow Matebeni and propose that a reading of a sexualised relationship between Tambu and Nyasha enables us to have a conversation about Dangarembga deploying queer incest to work against "painful colonial histories of black female torture" (Matabeni, 2013:404) that desexualise black women. Dangarembga introduces us to the intimacy that permeates Tambu and Nyasha relationship the first night of Tambu's arrival at the mission. In their private moment after Maiguru leaves them together in the bedroom, Tambu notices Nyasha's stolen glances as they steal each other, engaging in eye play that elicit images of star crossed lovers. Said another way, to borrow from Matebeni, Dangarembga introduces a regime of visibility that allows us to imagine the erotics at play in the moment to destabilise our accepted regimes of violence and violation associated with black female bodies.

In that first night, Tambu shares how these feelings were felt and circulated in the moment. She tells us how Nyasha "could not resist eyeing me quickly" (Dangarembga, 2004:78-79) when she had thought Tambu was not paying attention to her. Nyasha burst with laughter after their eyes met "because of course I was doing the same" (ibid). The "intimacy that had permeated" (ibid) the room at that stage was intoxicating and stimulating, leaving Tambu feeling reckless in ways similar to how she felt after "draining the dregs in my father's gourd had done when [she] was little" (ibid). In another moment, after they have become comfortable with each other and are shopping for clothes to Tambu's parents wedding, Nyasha's approval of Tambu is equally exhilarating enough to make her "tingle with pleasure. I came close to being infatuated with myself" (Dangarembga, 2004:92). In another incident, when Tambu becomes aware that her relation to herself is changing, marked especially by her relationship with Nyasha, we can think of as her revelation to herself and her inhibited desire for her cousin:

> Thus began the period of my reincarnation. I liked to think of my transfer to the mission as my reincarnation … I was meeting, outside myself, many things that I had thought about ambiguously; things that I had always known existed in other worlds although the knowledge was vague; things that had made my mother wonder whether I was quite myself, or

> whether I was carrying some other presence in me … it was a time of sublimation and I was the sublimate (Dangarembga, 2004:94).

Equally as Smith warns not to corrupt our reading of Morrison by claiming that she "wrote something that she did not" (Smith, 1978:25), I am aware of the limitations in how we can re-read Dangarembga to reframe Nyasha and Tambu relationality. Yet, I concur with Smith that similarly to Morrison, Dangarembga worked with a 'consciousness' that makes probable "romantic female desire" (ibid) for the young women. Similarly, as Marima (2011) shows, there is productive utility in thinking about the relationship between Nyasha and Tambu as a way of giving "political meaning to the concept of alternative sexuality" (Marima, 2011:277) within the nation. Marima argues that as the young women develop affection towards each other, underscored by undertones of erotics of letting ins and letting out, they blur the binaries of intimacy and innocence. They therefore construct a reading of experimentation and ambiguity that can be thought of as disruptive to how gender and sexuality expression is "fixed as heterosexual and intimacy as not incestual" (Marima, 2011:276). It is this consciousness that I want to investigate deeply to explore Dangarembga's potential deployment of incest to make visible the queer, the marginal and those wanting to work outside the scope of "denied subjectivity" (Matebeni, 2013:405-407) to assert female intimacy and sexuality that is self-sustaining and self-sufficient.

As Dangarembga negotiates escaping heteronormative conventions of Black female subjectivity, her potential deployment of incest works in similar ways to how Carolyn Tate, in "Lesbian Incest as Queer Kinship: Michael Field and the Erotic Middle-Class Victorian Family", deploys Foucault's argument in *History of Sexuality*. Tate shows that since the family has become the obligatory locus of affects, sexuality by its very nature is incestuous as "feelings, love" develop in the home such "that sexuality has its privileged point of development in the family" (Tate, 2013:181). Tate accordingly asks us to problematise the universality of the feminist analysis of incest as located within patriarchal privilege, and think of the ways class privilege, especially in the Victorian conception of the family, allows for contradicting value judgements that are deployed to "defend some forms of erotic family affection and vilify others" (Tate, 2013:181-183). In similar ways, we can think about Dangarembga and how she intimates towards a disavowal of the heteronormative patriarchal construction of familial relation to limit

compulsions with "redeeming the family" (Tate, 2013; Ferguson, 2004; Macharia, 2011, Ahmed, 2004) or as Halberstam (in Tate) argues, to forget the family and to make legible alternative "modes of caring and belonging" (Tate, 2013:181) within the nation.

As Tate argues, incest troubles the heteronormative schema of societal construction precisely because of its assumed fear to undo "the social order" yet she shows that, historically, the archive demonstrates that "incestuous feelings, metaphorical and literal" (Tate, 2013:197), rather than disrupt and transgress familial "hierarchies and boundaries" (ibid), they in fact facilitated "bourgeois hegemony … and that this anxiety and fear, did not exclude the possibility of a queer coupling as it was possible that families worried about expressions or manifestations of desire that were both known and unknown, both possible and impossible" (Tate, 2013:189). I think of this anxiety as perhaps what Dangarembga attempts to explicate in Nyasha's letter to Tambu when she is away at boarding school. Babamukuru's ability to "organise his immediate world and its contents as he wished" (Dangarembga, 2004:88) is threatened by this sense of the unknown that can become known, this impossibility that he knows can become possible. In his attempts to quell it, he insists on regimented schemas of negotiating the family home. Nyasha recognition of this anxiety is best articulated in this passage in her letter:

> I think, though, that your uncle is pleased with the quieter environment and I have discovered that it is restful to have him pleased, and so these days I am doing my best not to antagonise him. You can imagine how difficult that is. Impossible, it seems. I cannot help thinking that what antagonises is the fact that I am me – hardly, I admit, the ideal daughter for a hallowed headmaster, a revered patriarch. I have asked him several times if we may come to see you (through my mother, of course – it's always best to be quiet in his presence), but he believes it will spoil you (Dangarembga, 2004:200-201).

Following my thinking around Dangarembga's deployment of incest, I posit that Babamukuru is sensitive to the possibility of this impossibility, and in delaying the family's visit to Tambu at Sacred Heart, it is how he negotiates making unreal this impossible possibility that he knows not to allow himself to know. In this way, he can continue to facilitate the ideal of himself he has constructed, that according to Tambu, is a "rigid, imposing perfectionist, steely enough in

character to function in the puritanical way that he expected, or rather insisted, that the rest of the world should function" (Dangarembga, 2004:88). It is this anxiety that allows him to think of Tambu as "an evil thing in this house, bent on destroying what I have made" (Dangarembga, 2004:169) in the instance of Tambu's defiance to attend the wedding. Similarly, his anxiety is evident in the moment he strikes Nyasha after she arrives home late from a school dance, admonishing "I cannot have a daughter who behaves like a whore" (Dangarembga, 2004:116). In the use of labels 'evil' and 'whore', Dangarembga employs a strategy of silencing and denial that Radicalesbians describe as how the label 'lesbian' is deployed by those who have an investment in keeping women in line. In using these words, the intention is to continually remind women that they are "stepping out of line" (Radicalesbians, 1970:2) and that they have "crossed the terrible boundary of [their] sex role" (ibid). Their assertion is that the label 'lesbian' is "invented by the Man to throw at any wom[a]n who dares to be his equal, who dares to challenge his prerogative … and dares to assert the primacy of her own needs" (ibid).

Dangarembga also points us to what we can potentially read as legitimating of this anxiety. In Tambu's reflection about seeing her Nyasha grieving the loss of her relationship to her father, we can see that:

> The general feeling was that Nyasha was sulking because she had not been able to have her way. But I was closer to her than anybody else and so I sensed the conflict that she was going through of self versus surrender and the content of sin. Although I did not understand her anguish, because the distinction between right and wrong, what was and what was not sinful, was still very clear to me in those days and followed very closely the guidelines set out for us at Sunday School (Dangarembga, 2004:120).

This invocation of sin perhaps presents a most telling interrogation by Dangarembga of the young women's relationality, as similarly in the moment Maiguru finds them sharing a bed in the morning. Nothing is made of this incident as Maiguru recognises that "Nyasha was beginning to feel better and so nothing was said" (Dangarembga, 2004:121). I propose that Dangarembga constructs both Tambu and Nyasha's erotic semiotics as a sensibility that fashions the young women as "out of time" with heteronormative expectation in a similar manner to how Kate

Thomas facilitates our thinking in the essay "What Time We Kiss: Michael Field's Queer Temporalities" (2007). Thomas offers a way to read the palpable sadness and alienation of queer subjects as forming part of the historical archive of queer histories that torment the queer subjects in their eras, and to recognise how they embody the "queer sense" of being located as "out of sync" with national sentimentality (Thomas, 2007:327-330). As illustrated in the passage below, in the aftermath of Babamukuru and Nyasha's physical altercation, it is Chido, Nyasha's younger brother who does the bidding for his parents and reinscribes Nyasha's positionality in the nation as the daughter who should know the limits of her subjectivity:

> Nyasha wanted to finish her cigarette, but Chido was nervous and naturally disapproved of the habit. He took the cigarette from her and ground it out … 'She's coming, Mum,' Chido called back, helping Nyasha to her feet. 'Don't upset her any more,' he told her. 'She doesn't need it.' 'What about me?', Nyasha asked plaintively. 'Does anyone care what I need?' … 'You are the daughter,' Chido informed her. 'There are some things you must never do.' (Dangarembga, 2004:119).

Chido in this moment reaffirms what Halberstam (in Thomas) describes as "the inevitable chronologies and lifetimes of repro-time" (Thomas, 2007:332), which They describe as "believing in scheduling and sticking to it, articulated in the belief of the family time of children's imagined needs; of the generational time that privileges continuities of wealth and name and the connection through time of the family to a national past" (ibid). In negotiating Nyasha's desire through her refusal to honour repro-time by embodying acceptable forms of behaviour, Dangarembga employs what Thomas helps us to think of as the transient and transitive quality of queer production. It is her contention that the "creativity of queer lies in its ability to imagine seemingly impossible futures and tangle seemingly fixed time lines" (Thomas, 2007: 327) that can be realised in employing Cohen's conception of the radical potential of queer theory as a political strategy. Dangarembga uses Nyasha's ultimate breakdown to enable flight from these commands and customs that she wishes to destroy instead of "wanting to keep them in the family" (Thomas, 2007:346). As Nyasha recognises, in confession to Tambu, admits "It upsets people. So I need to go somewhere where it's safe. You know what I mean? Somewhere where people won't mind." (Dangarembga, 2004:205).

I conclude this chapter by thinking through Nyasha's breakdown as Dangarembga's way of highlighting how the Black lesbian female body, in its attempts to release the rage inside, has been "violated, humiliated, tortured and fragmented" (Matebeni, 2013: 413). In paying close attention to the erotic poetics of Nyasha and Tambu's relationship, she enables a new schema of visibility to be possible to think of the Black female body as re-centred in the "erotic equation" (ibid). This works against the desexualisation of Black queer females and further challenges the heteronormative ways desire has been regulated. In the aftermath of Nyasha's altercation with her father, it is Tambu who "saves her life" (Dangarembga, 2004:120-121). In her silent-alone moments while missing Tambu, as she says, "badly", Nyasha reaffirms Dangarembga's commitment to both a discursive and sexualised exploration of a lesbian text, as Smith argues. This passage demonstrates:

> In many ways you are very essential to me in bridging some of the gaps in my life, and now that you are away, I feel them again … I know I should not complain, but I very much would like to belong, Tambu, but I find I do not. I spend a lot of time reading and reporting now that you are not here for us to distract each other, but I must admit I long for those distractions – it's not virtue that keeps me busy! (Dangarembga, 2004:200-201).

In conclusion, I argue that *Nervous Conditions* is a discursively lesbian text because of the emotions explored between the two young women, in its "definitiveness to give voice to female characters and in the way that it commits itself to destabilising the assumed politics of heteronormativity" (Smith, 1978:25-26). As Smith further guides, because of the patriarchal and sexual politics that circulate around Black women's lives, "heterosexual privilege" (ibid) becomes the only currency they have to make real their unseen dreams and visions, therefore "maintaining straightness" (ibid) becomes their only recourse. Further to this, by applying a queer studies lens to the reading of these texts, we might recognise the inherent potential in recuperating familial intimate desire as a queer sensebility to make real these lives and their associated desires. While this reluctance to employ "incest as a queer mode, as queer kinship" (Tate, 2013:197-198) is due to a desire to resist further "pathologisation by eschewing widely tabooed forms of intimacy" (ibid) that facilitates mainstream homonormative desires, Cohen's proposition for a radical prospect of queer politics can provide the entry point to make

inhabitable forms of subjectivity that construct themselves outside of national time and insist on being “out of sync” with repro-time in order to offer differentiated modes of existence in the nation.

Chapter 6: The Nation and its Quiet Violences

> *The Black queer ancestor is an unimaginable figure in mainstream diasporic memory. That she does not exist is a fiction of domination, an effect of trauma that has made her illegible even in alternative archives*. (Richardson, 2013:14)

In this chapter, I am preoccupied with how K. Sello Duiker's uses madness and mythology in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* to facilitate his protagonist, Tshepo's destabilisation of African constructions of masculinity and sexualities. And how this destabilisation troubles the tropes used as discursive markers of difference in the project of African nation making. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), Duiker's second published novel, is a first-hand account of its protagonist, Tshepo's journey to self-discovery. It is a three-part evolutionary autobiographical opus written in literary forms that bleed into each other, social realism fused with mythology and magic realism. The novel's main narrative voice is that of Tshepo with his best friend Mmabatho and several other voices continually adding a second person dimension to his account. In the beginning of the novel, we meet Tshepo as he is experiencing a psychotic episode which is later diagnosed as cannabis induced psychosis after he is admitted to the Valkenberg Mental Institute in Cape Town.

Tshepo, a Rhodes University journalism student who did not complete his degree, is now living in a commune with friends from Rhodes in Woodstock, an old suburb in Cape Town. He listlessly moves between his life in the commune and Mmabatho's flat, while smoking marijuana to cope with the lack of clear direction for his life and what he wants to do professionally. He thinks often about his love for art and painting as a direction to focus his talents. While in the throes of his psychotic episode, Tshepo informs us that he is bleeding from his genital area and begins to wonder about the delineations of bodily function between men and women. Tshepo is admitted to Valkenberg at the insistence of Mmabatho and while he is there, he believes the treatment to be slowing his cognitive abilities and fights with the orderlies about taking his medication and participating in therapy. In efforts to save himself from the situation, he hatches an escape plan and informs Mmabatho of his intentions at one of her visits to him. He manages to escape and after realising that he has been kicked out of the commune and does not have a

place to stay, he is captured again by the police and sent back to Valkenberg. In his second stay at Valkenberg, he decides to participate in therapy and follows the rules to deal with the abuse he was suffering from the orderlies and other patients. At Valkenberg, through conversations with his therapist, his friend Mmabatho and encounters with one of the patients, Zebron; Tshepo connects the pieces of his formative life and remembers his traumatic upbringing at the hands of his father. His father, a gangster in Johannesburg, was responsible for his mother's death by hiring men to stage a robbery at Tshepo's parents house. The men, before killing Tshepo's mother, sexually violate her along with Tshepo. Tshepo remembers that Zebron had been one of the assailants and promises himself to stay away from him and complete his treatment without further incidents.

After he is discharged from Valkenberg, he shares a flat with Chris, a convicted murderer who was incarcerated at Pollsmoor for the crime. Chris helps Tshepo find a job at the restaurant where he works at the V&A Waterfront. While living together, Chris subjects Tshepo to emotional and physical abuse for Tshepo's middle class mannerisms and sensibilities of expressing forms of masculinity that he deems are not consistent with African/Black men. He charges Tshepo with thinking that he is better than him and with being soft for not having had a difficult life and is intent on teaching him how things work in the real world. Chris' abuse of Tshepo culminates in him sabotaging Tshepo's employment at the restaurant and together with a friend of his, sexually violating Tshepo and locking him up in the bathroom for several days. Tshepo does not mention any of this abuse to his friends and justifies Chris' behaviour in a classic case of Stockholm syndrome as he is infatuated with Chris and finds him physically arousing. After the incidents with Chris, Tshepo moves out and asks Mmabatho for temporary lodging until he has found employment. While searching the classifieds and finding no success with formal office employment, he becomes fascinated by male personal ads and wonders to himself if he could try sex work. He secures employment at Steamy Windows, a male centered massage parlour. He is told that anything he can do to enhance his appeal to clients will be helpful. He changes his personal aesthetic and adopts the alias Angelo, after the Italian sculptor and painter of the sixteenth century High Renaissance, Michelangelo. While at Steamy Windows, Tshepo explores his same-sex desires and is introduced to the ideas of the Raphaelite brotherhood, and Grecian and Nordic mythology and how they negotiated same-sex sexuality and desire and how these can be useful in imagining a new world. These learnings expand

Tshepo's thinking about himself and his own questioning of the binaries between work done by men and women in the world, and how their energies can be harnessed differently.

As one of two Black male sex workers at Steamy Windows, Tshepo realises the limitations of the brotherhood as a Black male sex worker when he encounters incidents of racism; at one instance by the manager of the massage parlour and by white clients who want a sexualised masculine Black male body. His disappointment leads him to further question whether he belongs in Cape Town, convincing himself that he is doing his sex work to save money so that he can further his studies. After he is summoned to come see his dying father in the hospital, who informs Tshepo to leave Cape Town for Johannesburg, Tshepo resolves to leave sex work behind and embark on a journey of healing by moving back to Johannesburg. Tshepo informs Mmabatho of his decision to move back to Johannesburg, without disclosing details of his work or his same-sex attraction/desire. The two lament how Tshepo has grown because of his work while Mmabatho focuses on raising her child alone, after breaking up with Arno, her German partner who does not want to marry her. Before leaving for Johannesburg, Tshepo encounters a spriritual guide, Naisub, who gifts Tshepo his otherworldly powers as Horus, the son Isis, and informs him of the role he will play in bringing healing to the world. In Johannesburg, Tshepo leaves behind his identity as Angelo and secures employment as a caretaker at a non-governmental children's home. The novel ends with Tshepo having found peace as he believes Johannesburg has given him the time and space to think, unlike the suffocation he experienced in Cape Town. His search for meaning and purpose comes full circle at the children's home as he believes that he has finally found the person he had been searching for. He is now more trusting in the process of his life, which meant he trusted himself more.

The novel has been hailed by Dlamini (2015; 2016), Carolin and Frenkel (2013,) and Crous (2007) as a ground-breaking text in its preoccupation with masculinities and sexualities in the democratic promise of an idealised Rainbow nation, South Africa (Dlamini, 2016). While a significant body of literature explores homosexuality and same-sex desire (listed below) within the constraints of colonial conquest and as an aberration to African morality, Carolin and Frenkel (2013) argue that Duiker's work marks a noteworthy intervention in the often essentialised depictions of "non-heteronormative sexualities in South Africa" (Carolin and Frenkel, 2013:36). For them, Duiker's work can be considered as one of the first significant South African works of

literature to "engage critically and meaningfully with same-sex intimacies outside of a taxonomical framework" (ibid). They argue that Duiker's is attentive not to reproduce the conditional and conditioning assimilatory demands that often work within "rigid identity categories" (ibid).

Carolin and Frenkel contend that unlike several African literary texts that pathologise same-sex desire/homosexuality, Duiker's work rather, eroticises same-sex desire (Carolin and Frenkel, 2013:37). This pathologisation can be seen in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) where dominant ideas of masculinity and male desire are privileged for female consumption, and where men can only be defined as legitimate subjects if they are able to farm yams, accumulate titles and marry women for procreation purposes (Lopang, 2013), or Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), where homosexuality is believed to corrode African cultural mores and signaling homosexuality as an affliction of soulless people, or in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1973), where even as there is a psychosocial exploration of the homosexual character – Gideon – he is constructed as an outsider, thereby giving credence to the idea that homosexuality/same-sex desire is largely a preserve of those not born or considered African from the continent. They argue that Duiker opens up the space for same-sex emotional intimacy to be explored, thereby pointing to the complex and varied experiences of subjectivities that are often silenced and denied in "mainstream public cultures" (Carolin and Frenkel, 2013:37). Significantly, they argue, the novel destabilises "discursive and cultural systems of sexual identity" (ibid) by bringing eroticised masculinity and same-sex sexual pleasure into the imaginary of what are largely bifurcated gender and sexuality expressions in public spaces.

Nonhlanhla Dlamini (2015, 2016) also reads the text as an intervention to the oft stale depictions of African male sexuality that challenges the perceived unnaturalness of same-sex desire in African nation making, while also questioning the schema of privilege that locates heterosexuality as the pinnacle of masculine gender expression. She argues that by destabilising this silencing of other "masculine genders and expressions" (Dlamini, 2015:129), Duiker works with "contemporary South African discourse" (ibid) around the omission of "indigenous forms of queer desires" (ibid) to enable provocative engagement on the subject and "challenge societal bias" (ibid). She submits that Duiker's work "enacts and disrupts the dichotomies of

heterosexuality/homosexuality and masculinity/femininity" (Dlamini, 2015:129; 2016:69) to legitimize and acknowledge "black queer desires onto the contemporary South African social sphere" (ibid). While these readings of the text enable productive ways to think about alternative sexualities, defined by Chi-Chi Udine and Kabwe Benaya (2006) as multiple forms of sexuality expression that do not adhere to any strict conditioning on the sexuality spectrum, thereby offering a much more pluralistic approach to sexuality. For purposes of this chapter, I am interested in how Duiker deploys mythology as a pedagogical site to facilitate what M. Jacqui Alexander (2005) proposes as pedagogies of crossings between the sacred and secular that retain the awareness that they embody a political and spiritual sentiment. In the text, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred*, Alexander labours to facilitate a paradigm through which I read Duiker's novel as a work engaged in the discursive process of negotiating crossings (Alexander, 2005:7).

In her suggestion of crossings as a way of thinking about a crossroads or an intersection where different points of divergence and convergence become realised, Alexander invites us to think about how "multiple operations of power, of gendered and sexualised power that [are] simultaneously raced and classed" (2005:4). And as they are not practiced in completely closed off or "epistemically partial borders of the nation-state" (ibid), we are able to understand how sexualised hegemony is produced and maintained. Her thinking about crossings allows me to construct a stitching together of Tshepo's experiences while at Steamy Windows and how the change of his name to Angelo functions to extend the continuum between the secular, sacred, political and spiritual. As Dlamini has shown, Duiker's novel locates itself within a conversation about heterosexual masculine privileging in the African imaginary as it attempts to wrestle with what Alexander calls the "habits of privilege" (Alexander, 2005:2). These habits maintain and privilege sexualised hegemonies, thus continuing to invisibilise those who do not work within regimes of dominant masculinities that give a sense of superiority to those who make themselves fit within those regimes.

Kopano Ratele (2014:414) shows that the tenets of these dominant forms of masculinity rely on an authority that locates men at the apex of gendered hierarchy, even as it is flailed by contradictions that simultaneously find expression through alternative forms of sexuality and desire expressions. Alexander argues that those who participate in these dominant habits of

expressions of masculinity "don a veil of false protection so that they never see themselves, the devastation they wreak or their accountability to it" (Alexander, 2005:2). In my location of this chapter in Tshepo's life as Angelo, I am interested in exploring the ways Duiker works with ideas of naming, renaming and ancestry and how these work with mythology as a way of inserting homosexual/same-sex desiring bodies into the national imaginary. I explore the potentialities of Tshepo's name change and what it offers in thinking about nationhood, subjectivity and belonging. I further explore Alexander's proposition of a pedagogy of crossing to think about Duiker's use of mythology as a stitching of the sacred and secular with the political and spiritual. The chapter concludes with a reflection on Duiker's use of Grecian and Nordic mythology in his reconstructionist efforts and how that archive works to make visible the African queer ancestor.

6.1. The Ungrievable Unknowns

In this section, I explore how Tshepo's name change to Angelo facilitates a reimagining of how homosexual/same-sex desiring bodies can instantiate themselves within the nation. I argue that Tshepo, embodied by Angelo, in negotiating the turmoil of his trauma and exploring his sexuality, highlights one of the many ways in which the nation-state is preoccupied with reproducing and maintaining a homogenised ideal of itself. This ideal is maintained by constructions of "practices of dominance" (Alexander, 2005:4) that become institutionalised in the machinery of the functioning of the nation-state, and insidiously, become part of the lived experience through their assumed naturalness in the nation. As Sarah Ahmed (2004) notes, the nation-state creates particular modes of national sentiment that produce a cultural politic that limits how some bodies are able to express their emotional attachment to and about the nation. Ahmed shows that these types of emotional sentiment create social groupings and alliances that become legitimated sites of national identification and are given credence by their assumed naturalised expressions. These sites are usually typified by concealing the material and historical contexts that imbue words and ideas with the cultural meaning and value they circulate in the contemporary moment. Her submission is that those words and ideas assign meaning to bodies and shape them in the imaginary of the nation, and as they are repeated, they "accumulate an affect that enables their dominance" (Ahmed, 2004:92).

In this mode, we are then able to see how these regimes of dominance such as ideas around the unnaturalness of homosexuality in the African nation, gain significance in the tyranny they visit upon the bodies of those who are homosexual and same-sex desiring. Ahmed points towards a reading of Tshepo's name change to Angelo as a way of thinking about the ways national politics constructs homosexual and same-sex desiring bodies as being ungrievable as they are not recognized as lives worthy of national grief sentiment. Following Ahmed, we can think of Tshepo's assumption of Angelo as an attempt at "refiguring the sentiment and possibilities of grief within the nation" (2004:159) and as a way of inserting same-sex desiring bodies within the affect schema of the nation. Akin to this reconfiguring is Polo Moji's (2014) proposition that when one dislocates their constructed mode of being in the world – their subjectivity – there is a detachment from the kinship structures that enabled that subjectivity as well as the simultaneous embodying of a new subjectivity that enables new ways of being. She argues that if we can think about language as a reflection of how the human subject sees and names themselves in the world, therein we can see the possibilities of how naming gives power to the one who does the naming to determine their subjectivity.

To follow Moji, through the continuum of Tshepo as listless student, Angelo as explorative subject, and Tshepo as shaman, we see how through destabilized forms of "kinship, rituals of naming and memory" (2014:190). Duiker illustrates how renaming serves as a performative act that enables a "mediation between multiple sites of affiliation" (ibid) to the tenets of nation-making. Alexander argues that in maintaining the nation-state and accruing its privileges to those who participate in the habits of privilege, the nation-state deploys traditions. These traditions become practices of dominance "that uphold the heterosexualisation of family and of morality" (Alexander, 2005:3) such that there is no interrogation of the fixity of these practices. This deployment facilitates the muting of interrogations about the "immorality of empire in the recirculation and rearticulation of myths of origin" (ibid) and nature to negotiate some subject-citizens as always having been outside the scope of the nation's imaginary (ibid). Keguro Macharia (2013:280) helps us see how these practices "limit intimate modernity to heterosexual intimate modernity" (ibid). They refuse the proposition of "modern intimacies" (ibid) that function in ways that are "distinct from married heterosexuality" (ibid) such that there is a continuation of the linear idea of the nation and subject formation – a concept Halberstam theorises as 'repro-time'.

Thinking through Macharia's proposition, I make the case that the tenets of repro-time are facilitated by the understanding that married heterosexuality signifies what is considered "culture and heritage" and whatever that does not function like it, be it "single motherhood, abstinence, queer desires, are implicitly marked as a-cultural, a-modern, a-traditional and contributing nothing to history, the present and the future" (Macharia, 2013:380). Duiker attempts to make explicit this location of privilege and superiority that dominant masculinities work within. In narrating the sexual violence he experiences at the hands of his housemate – Chris and his friend – Tshepo draws our attention to the anxieties of a male body that doesn't work within the habits of privilege. In an early encounter, after securing a job where Chris works, Chris walks into Tshepo's room as he is changing his clothes. Overcome by an anxiety to continue undressing or not, Tshepo decides to continue, reasoning with himself that:

> I'm very self-conscious around other men, especially Chris. For a brief moment I torment myself with whether I should continue getting undressed or whether I should wait. No, it'll look obvious, like you're a faggot or something, I tell myself (Duiker, 2001:259).

In another incident, in a section where Chris is the narrator, after orchestrating Tshepo's loss of employment while emotionally and physically abusing him, leading to the sexual assault incident, Chris bemoans Tshepo's disposition as a mild natured, mannered person. He states "But I'm sick of him … He makes me angry … He's so nice, so fucking nice it makes me sick … Everyone gets a little angry, swears a little, fights a little, steals a little. What's wrong with him?" (Duiker, 2001:278). Tshepo, in not wanting to appear as a 'faggot', and Chris wanting him to behave like 'other people', vacillate in a continuum that seeks to locate Tshepo within these traditions. For Tshepo, by denying a version of himself in order to belong, and for Chris, by wanting Tshepo to behave like him so that his actions can be legible to him in the fiction of how collective groups of people behave in the nation. Both incidents are illustrative of the anxieties that follow the practice of these traditions that a maintain a sense of national belonging.

Tshepo is fashioned to demonstrate the permeability of these habits of privilege by dislocating his subjectivity to harness nation-state affect that precludes him as a result of his disposition and stunted masculine expression. Chris, conversely is constructed to demonstrate

the ways in which these dominant habits of privilege of national sentiment around masculinity expressions, construct narratives that "anchor and legitimate" (Dlamini, 2015:98) their version of an exclusive heterosexuality that circulates as a signaling of power to other "men and women as well as young boys and girls" within the nation (ibid). Tshepo and Chris become a site to witness how dominant masculinities, through their veil of self-protection, silence other expressions of masculinities in the nation's imaginary.

6.2. Duiker's Mythologies of Crossing

In this section, I work with Alexander's proposition of a pedagogy of crossing as an epistemological site that has the potential to reconstruct how the secular and the sacred, while understanding them as both political and spiritual, offer generative pedagogies to think about the nation-state and citizenship. Alexander evokes the spirit of Kitsimba from the Mayombe region of Central Africa, who numbered among the many who "forcibly undertook the Middle Passage" (Alexander, 2005:7). Kitsimba is a site of remembrance for Alexander, to remember the "symbolic and real violence of the crossing that brought her to the new world and bestowed her plantation slave name 'Thisbe' (2005:307). Placing spirit and sacred subjectivity side by side, Alexander uses the spirit of Kitsimba to transport the reader to places of remembered knowing, where the cycle of action, reflection, and practice as sacred praxis that reverses the privileging of thinking as knowledge. Kitsimba serves as a pedagogical site that instructs on the "perilous boundary-keeping between the sacred and the secular" (Alexander, 2005:7) to illustrate the ways in which "the personal is not only political, but spiritual …" in order to offer an interrogation of the limits of "secular power" (ibid) and how its interaction with the logics of repro-time continue to construct hegemonic materialism.

I work with Alexander's use of Kitsimba as a practise in disturbing and reassembling the normative divides that construct the "sacred and secular, the embodied and disembodied" (Alexander, 1005:7). I do this in order to push beyond these binaries and deploy with seriousness "the dimensions of spiritual labour that make the sacred and the disembodied palpably tangible" (ibid). This is central to the desire to make legible the lived experiences of "millions of women and men in different parts of the world" (ibid) that practices of dominance remove from the public imaginary. Similar to Alexander use of Kitsimba, Duiker deploys Nordic

and Grecian mythology in the text to facilitate a conversation around sexuality and gender functioning such that a corruptibility of the hegemonies that construct this dominance is possible. As Alexander argues, the pedagogical practice of stitching together the sacred and secular as political and spiritual, is primarily invested in the potential held by "oppositional knowledges and political mobilisations" (Alexander, 2005:5) in the construction of "moral agency" (ibid). This potential is realised in how it complicates the national imaginary's relationship to itself. In a conversation with Angelo; Sebastian, a white male masseuse at Steamy Windows, embarks on an analysis of gender and sexuality relationality that deploys these mythologies. In making the case for male same sex relationships or encounters, Sebastian narrates the story of Zeus and his catamite, Ganymede, to Angelo. According to Sebastian, Zeus turned "Ganymede into an eagle so that he could love him in body and spirit because he was so captivated by his beauty" (Duiker, 2001:331) even though he had wives and children. In the prelude to this tale, Sebastian also shares the story of a "certain tribe somewhere in the South Pacific" (Duiker, 2001:330) where men stay in compounds all by themselves without any women when they are training for war. They rely on young boys for their nutritional and sexual sustenance, the latter through fellatio. He shares these stories to demonstrate:

> But so-called primitive cultures are way ahead of Western man in this regard. They understand sexuality and live it in a way we can understand … Maybe by those young boys ingesting that semen they are ingesting something about the elders, the warriors. Maybe information is being transmitted. It's so ritualistic … Perhaps the boys are in turn giving the men strength by doing that, honouring the phallus, which is really just a hot energy spot. It just seems to me like a way of activating energy … The Greeks, they understood this, it was acceptable … The Greeks explored the dichotomy of old and young. I think perhaps they understood relationships in life a little better because they didn't see everything as black and white. There was a lot of grey areas … (Duiker, 2001:330-331).

In this above passage, Duiker enables crossings between the past and the present, between the secular and sacred to think of the crossing as a location that is "something given …" or "… revealed" (Alexander, 2005:7). It is a location we are able to break through in order to

transgress and disrupt the "inherited concepts and practices" (ibid) that circulate as the truth of what we believe we know in order "to make different conversations and solidarities possible" (ibid). According to Alexander, these crossings enable a summoning of pedagogically "subordinated knowledges" (ibid) in order to make possible the practice of bringing into existence lived experience that hegemonic materialism silences in "the practices of marginalisation" (ibid). Duiker is not alone in summoning these pedagogically subordinated knowledges. Audre Lorde in her biomythography, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, works with the figure of Afrekete, described as a "trickster and messenger of the gods, figuring prominently in the mythologies of Yoruba cultures found in Nigeria, Benin, Brazil, Cuba and Haiti, among others" (Provost and Lorde, 1995:45). According to Lorde, Afrekete is the "mythical women whom we must all become" (ibid) to demonstrate the ways in which mythology is useful in destabilising cultures of dominance. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, about Audre Lorde's life depicted as the fictive Zami, is about her journey to self-discovery as a lesbian woman.

Zami, growing up in New York, flees to Mexico where she begins a sexual relationship with a woman where she realises the limiting effects of the racist, patriarchal and anti-erotic society in the United States that she escaped. Upon her return to the United States, Zami forges an identity that integrates her sensual, intellectual, and artistic sides while recovering from a failed relationship with a white woman. While getting her life together by going to college and writing poetry, she makes peace with her erotic desire for other women. While writing poetry and sending it out, she encounters the mythic character of Afrekete, who is embodied by a women Zami had encountered in her youth. Through her encounters with Afrekete, Zami recognizes that her life is now a "bendable, pliable entity that challenges myths and, in the end, makes a new myth of its own" (Provost and Lorde, 1995:47). According to Lorde (in Provost and Lorde), the image of Afrekete, deployed to serve the role of a trickster across her poetic and fiction work, works due to its ability to embody a "multivocality and ability to act as translator … unpredictability, abundant eroticism, and gender ambiguity" (Provost and Lorde, 1995:46). As the two are constructed as intertwined in her work, Lorde argues that Afrekete is useful in that they provide an opportunity for "productive interpretations" (ibid) of how she constructs both "text and identity within the text" (ibid). In so doing, she is able to reverse the dominant values of a society that "defined us as doubly nothing because we were Black and because we were Women" (ibid). Negotiating her location as a Black woman and a Black lesbian woman, Lorde

deploys the figure of Afrekete to attend to what are considered "unconventional, even taboo, sexual practices" (Provost and Lorde, 1995:47). Because of Afrekete's fluid gender orientation, being at "once both male and female" (ibid), they are not restricted to "human distinctions of gender" (ibid).

Like Lorde, Duiker works with the historical and metaphysical to further destabilise notions of sexuality and gender in an incident where Sebastian opines on the same sex history of Viking culture. He suggests to Angelo that "the Vikings were so successful in their expansion because they were a little friendlier with each other than people thought" (Duiker, 2001:332). They "sought comfort and strength by fellating each other" (ibid) when they were away from their wives. He further suggests that there is perhaps a mysticism in circulation in the practice of same-sex erotics after Angelo challenges the rationality of this historical fiction:

> Spurious, because it's unsettling to think of all those guys who pillaged and were brave, hard warriors as being that intimate, as allowing themselves to be that vulnerable. Look, all I'm saying is that there is more to two men getting together than meets the eye, however ugly it may seem to other people … I mean, being ambiguous, being attracted to your own sex or to both sexes – maybe understanding it is beyond us. Maybe it is life responding on its own … I'm suggesting that maybe sexual ambiguity is nature reacting … balancing things out. I mean, we are going out of control as a species, we are our own biggest threat … And things can't carry on the way they have been much longer … (Duiker, 2001: 332-333).

What Sebastian intimates is the potentiality of the crossing as a crossroads of sorts where there is "convergence and endless possibility" (2005:8). A location where there is the potential to displace what we don't need "in order to pick up that which is necessary" (ibid) in order to chart new paths of liveable realities for those marginalised by practices of dominance that are deployed by the nation-state. Or as Alexander argues, that have been "rendered more fragile under empire" (ibid). She further argues that it is at this generative location where "the genealogies of feminist, neo-colonial, and queer politics that are simultaneously transnational" (ibid) reside. To borrow from her phrasing "It is a place from which I navigate life …" (ibid), I

suggest that this is also the location from which Duiker is intimating that the nation could potentially navigate itself from as well. In Duiker's crossings, the potentialities of relationality are plentiful in giving the nation-state alternatives to the very urgent need for constructing inclusive ways of "being and knowing". These inclusive ways can configure the "different metaphysics" needed to depart from subjectivities that are "premised in difference" to ones that are based on an "inter-subjectivity premised in relationality and solidarity" (Alexander, 2005:7-8). As Sebastian further makes the case:

> I think gay men are going to play a more prominent role in the future … they have the energy, time and resources to plough back a lot into a struggling civilisation. I mean, we are on the brink of destruction … Gay men are going to take their place in the world arena in the future … I'm talking about something beautiful, pure, something worth celebrating because its honest … Now you see in the new order gay women are going to be the wise women of the community, the wise mothers, the elders … Women make things work in a way that men can't, even gay men. Women operate on a different level because they're so introspective. Women's role is going to be greater than men's because society will revert to a reverence for the earth mother. It's already happening … Men may rule, but women will dominate … Women's influence will be felt everywhere, it's already being felt (Duiker, 2001:334-335).

Duiker, in excavating the mythological archive to make legible same sex and ambiguous sexualities, facilitates a process of memory work that uses the archive not only as "secular but rather as a sacred dimension of self" (Alexander, 2005:14-15). Through this, we are able to understand the crossing as "never undertaken once and for all" (ibid). In occupying this location of crossing as a continuous shifting, enables a refusal to "insist on two feet" (Alexander, 2005:8), said differently, to refuse the insistence on the stability that is enabled by practices of dominance that legitimate citizenship. Rather, it is an invitation to embrace a shifting towards "three legs into the legs of the deep, round cooking pot used to prepare medicine on the open fire" as the "three feet make the stretch more necessary, more liveable, more viable" (ibid).

These historical crossings as deployed by Duiker highlight Alexander's argument that we would have to negotiate the Sacred "as an ever-changing yet permanent condition of the universe" (Alexander, 2005:15-16). And as though directly speaking of *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, Alexander offers perhaps the most profound intervention that will preoccupy my exploration of the text in the second section of this chapter:

> Different voices inhabit this text … they shift and transform, so much so that different voices emerge … as Lorde argues, this shifting voice is the poet bringing faint yet decipherable whispers of freedom, a conjunction of the aesthetics of creation, the beauty of the Sacred and the flight of imagination. Modulations in voice, therefore, are not solely speech – perhaps not about speech at all – but instead are about an opening that permits us to hear the muse, an indication of how memory works, how it comes to be animated. But whose memory, whose voice, and whose history? (Alexander, 2005:16).

To conclude this section, I submit that Duiker attempts at reinscription and subverting dominant forms of masculinity by deploying Grecian and Nordic mythology, points toward David Eng, Judith Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz (2005) reconceptualising of the idea of diaspora, prompting us instead to think about queer diasporas. They suggest that instead of perpetuating our investment in the tenets of nation-making such as home and nation, we should ask what is to be gained politically if we stop thinking the idea of diaspora as about "ethnic dispersion, filiation, and biological traceability" (Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz, 2015:7) but instead in terms of "queerness, affiliation and social contingency" (ibid). They offer that through this conceptualization of diaspora, we gain a critical site to contest "traditional family and kinship structures" (ibid). At this site, there can be a rethinking of how "national and transnational communities" (ibid) are not based on narratives of "origin, filiation and genetics" (ibid) but rather on "destination, affiliation, and the assumption of a common set of social practices or political commitments" (ibid).

6.3. Where/Who is the Black Queer Ancestor?

In this section, I interrogate the ways in which the queer ancestry deployed in Duiker's mythological archive continues a history of erasure and practice of domination by empire to continue to make invisible the black queer ancestor. I rely on two texts to negotiate these interrogations, Matt Richardson's *The Queer Limit of Black Memory: Black Lesbian Literature and Irresolution* (2013) and José Esteban Muñoz's "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position" (2006). I return to the epigraph that begins this chapter and interrogate Richardson's proposition that the black queer ancestor is an "unimaginable figure in mainstream diasporic memory" (Richardson, 2013:14) and that their disappearance or rather, lack of appearance, is a "fiction of domination, an effect of trauma that has made her illegible even in alternative archives" (ibid). Richardson's proposition speaks to an ambivalence I hold with regards to Duiker's archive in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, a sensation Muñoz validates in his work as a "brown feeling" that is representative of a depressive disposition concerning an "ethics of the self" (Muñoz, 2006:676). This ethics is embodied by black and brown people and other minoritised subjects who "don't feel quite right within the protocols of normative affect and comportment" (ibid). While I have given a reading of Duiker's text that privileges a multiplicity of subjectivities within the nation-state, a three feet positionality as Alexander suggests, it would be remiss not to attend to this brown feeling that is facilitated by the fiction of domination that perpetuates the erasure of Black queer subjectivities.

Heather Love (2007) argues that the paradox of transformative criticism is that its desire for a liveable future is often negotiated through histories of "suffering, stigma, and violence" (2007:1). She shows that these very histories become an albatross of memory and signification for the reclamation and affirmation that is required to make legible those who have historically been denied subjecthood. As I have previously shown, colonial and postcolonial modes of representation of homosexual and alternatively gendered and same-sex expressions have resulted in the death of those identified as homosexual or same-sex expressive in the literary text in service of the project of nation-making. And as such, much of the preoccupation of the project of reclamation, imagination and making legible in queer studies is negotiating the tensions of what is seemingly a "contrary tendency – the need to resist damage and to affirm

queer existence" (Love, 2007:3). Love contends that these tensions are indicative of the desire for progress that belies the project, as at its core, is a belief and hope of a better future for those marked as alternatively gendered and same-sex desiring subjects in the nation. While she recognizes that the desire of the project aims at complicating the queered subjects' relationship to the evolution of the nation, the repository through which this desire is manifested presents a challenge. At one instance, it requires a refusal of thinking about national time as linear while also making it necessary to recover those made dead to celebrate their existence in the queer past. As a result, I follow her thinking to argue that Duiker finds himself caught in what Richardson describes as an impasse of desire[s], the tension of exploring "the link between homosexuality and loss" (Love, 2007:3) or the preoccupation with proving "it does not exist" (ibid).

As I have made the case for my ambivalence with Duiker's deployment of mythology as a strategy of making legible, I think more in tune with Love and think about the political utility of this ambivalence in terms of the limitations of the tensions that the project of queer reclamation negotiates itself through. Love is instructive as she argues that this utility produces a dimension where the "painful and traumatic dimensions of these texts and of the experience of reading them" (Love, 2007:4) is thus disavowed or minimized. In this thinking, I expand both Love and Muñoz's arguments as I think through the mainstream reception of Duiker's work as a transgressive text. I think about the utility of the work as not necessarily representing an "avoidance of the various antagonisms within the social that define our recognition and belonging as racialized, gendered, and sexed subjects" (Muñoz, 2006:675-676). In its setting in the City of Cape Town and its protagonist who is a Black man, the narrative is complicated by the apartheid history of South Africa. The text performs as literary production Muñoz would describe as a story "about the problem of belonging in alterity" (ibid). In several moments in the text, Angelo experiences the racialized nature of sex work in Cape Town, and more significantly, within Steamy Windows. In a moment after West, another white male masseuse passionately kisses Angelo and welcomes him to the brotherhood, declaring "We are all brothers. We look after each other. We know each other well. You'll see" (Duiker, 2001:323), the racialized nature of sex work makes itself apparent.

Angelo and another black masseuse at Steamy Windows, Cole, are referred to as 'Stallions', a preoccupation with African male genitalia Alexander helps us to understand as functioning within:

> [a] foregrounding of the sexualisation of subjectivity on the part of the heterosexual neo-colonial state and white gay capital, both of which mobilise gay and lesbian bodies for their sex: one in the service of the heterosexualising imperatives of nation-building and imperial tourist consumption, the other in the service of a sexual economy of gay desire where native bodies are made to assume, as in satisfy, the anxieties of colonial scripts and gay capital accumulation simultaneously (Alexander, 2005:11).

As Muñoz suggests, the "epistemological core of what race is has become less and less accessible" (Muñoz, 2006:679). It therefore becomes necessary to think rather of "what race does" (ibid) as a "performative enterprise" (ibid) that is accessed "through its effects" (ibid) in order to understand its circulation. When a white male client wants to secure the services of Steamy Windows for an overnight booking, upon his sighting of Angelo – who is described as having a swimmer's body – to mean lean yet athletic – the client retorts with "Isn't there another black guy?". As the cost for the overnight booking is made known, the client offers "A thousand rand, that's a bit steep[!]". This occurs in front of Angelo, with the client looking "at me as though to check I warrant such a high price. He doesn't seem convinced … I could die. I have never felt so humiliated" (Duiker, 2001:357). In another moment where race is explicit in its performative enterprise is the encounter between Angelo and Shaun, the manager of the parlour, after Angelo returns from his overnight booking. After Angelo gives account for the client's reticence the night before, Shaun responds:

> 'So that's why he was like that. For a minute I thought he was going to go kaffir on us last night', he says and looks up suddenly. 'Sorry, I didn't mean it like that.' … 'Angelo. Sorry, hey. Genuine. It's just a stupid expression. I wasn't thinking. You know I don't think of you guys like that. Cole has

> been with me for a year,' he says, embarrassed that his tongue betrayed him. (Duiker, 2001:374-375)

Angelo for his part says "I'm shocked, offended. The word has always stung, but I smile to dismiss the comment. The bubble had to burst sometime, I say to myself, my mind still reeling from that word" (Duiker, 2001:374). As Shaun proceeds to give Angelo the etymology of the word, "eager to absolve himself", Angelo offers "It wouldn't matter anyhow. Most people only use that word with one intention" (Duiker, 2001:375). Angelo's recognition that the bubble had to burst at some point is an acknowledgement of his brown feelings. It is a recognition that minoritarian affect, no matter its register, is always "illegible in relation to the normative affect performed by normative citizen subjects" (Muñoz, 2006:679). These encounters present a "sobering note on the dangers of offering up sexual freedom alone" (Alexander, 2005:12) because as Xavier Livermon shows, the struggle for recognition and respect by black queers – unlike white queers who enjoy recognition and access to citizenship through their proximity to state resources and rights – is less about a challenge to the state even as this is important to counter the use of culture as exclusionary by state actors. Rather, it is about "a challenge to how black subjectivity is performed and imagined as heteronormative in the public sphere" (Livermon, 2012:299). Duiker's work is an exercise in what Livermon describes as black queer cultural labour that works to challenge these exclusions to black subjectivity. It is a "purposeful reworking of identity and refashioning of selves both individual and communal" taken up to disrupt "ossified identities, created and imposed by colonialism and apartheid" (Livermon, 2012:206). It centers itself in Cape Town, a city representing a simultaneous site of the nation-state's 'anxieties of colonial scripts and gay capital accumulation' while also being the site of imperial tourist consumption – the ultimate tourist destination in South Africa, reminiscent of Europe.

In this idyllic city, as the fissures in the brotherhood are made apparent, there is a recognition that black queer subjectivity cannot be accommodated by white queer subjectivity, and in turn by the nation-state. These realisations represent "the rip, the breakdown" (Muñoz, 2006:684) in the construction of post-apartheid South Africa and its rainbow nation. Yet what continues to make my brown feeling linger is how Duiker harvests mainly from a white queer archive to facilitate the pedagogical crossings that are made possible by the spiritual labour of

connecting the sacred with the secular and the political. Richardson through Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, uses the passage below to illustrate how fictions of domination have erased the black queer body from the historical archive, as well as the alternative archive:

> Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody anywhere knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don't know her name? Although she has claim, she is not claimed. (Morrison in Richardson, 2013:9)

According to Richardson, Morrison in this passage reminds us how we are unable to "remember those we do not miss", those who have never been "recognised as fully human to begin with, the dispossessed and disremembered" (2013:9). The passage is an acknowledgement that there are some subjects that never achieve "in the eyes of others, the status of living" because of the "residual subject relations set in motion from slavery and colonialism and are still active in the dominant imaginary" and entrenched in particular ways even after their formal ending. He contends that because of these reasons, "Black queers are, in many respects, dead to Black memory …" and as "… part of the constitution of Blackness is negation and displacement … Black queers do not figure into the collective memory, remaining disremembered and unrecognised by our own – negated by the negated, dissociated from Black memory" (Richardson, 2013:9-10).

Duiker's cultural labour works at "addressing the violence of excision from Black memory and of Black queer articulation … " in an attempt to create "a new geography of sexual, gendered, transnational and racial identities and a queer, unconventional and imaginative archive of resistance" (Richardson, 2013:11). Yet, it does not have black queer ancestry to harvest from these geographies, and instead, recirculates empires constructions of non-normative subjectivities in a way that is able to "mimetically render various depictions of the problem … with a crypto-universalism" (Muñoz, 2006:675) that privileges white subjectivity. As I have previously shown, even as it is non-normative, white queer subjectivity always has access to recognition. Richardson proposes a reimagining of the past to be able to say the things we couldn't say in the past, such that we are able to infuse "the past with difference" (Richardson,

2013:15-16). He contends that “Black queer culture comes into existence because of and despite this violence and displacement” (ibid), this feeling of brownness. He suggests that it is perhaps in the interrogation of the Black archive where we ask difficult questions to “examine Black abjection as a form of epistemology” (ibid) and to see how these pedagogies can be used to re-memory and remember those who have been forgotten by the archive.

Gonzalez-Lopez (in Richardson) argues that we can think of these “collective wounds as epistemological locations” (Richardson, 2013:15-16) that allow us transformation in the “midst of complex ambiguities, tensions and contradictions” (ibid). They contend that through these processes of “reimagining past violence’s and sites of resistance has the potential to remind those of us in the present to be aware of those falling around us: falling into violence, falling into mass incarceration, falling into despair” (ibid) in similar that we can remember about moments of “erotic pleasure and creativity that are such valuable sources of knowledge” (ibid). Alexander thinks of this process as “an excavation of the costs of a collective forgetting so deep that we have forgotten that we have forgotten” (Alexander, 2005:14) in order to facilitate the generative potential of the work. This generative potential would put a twist on historical research and represent embodied resistance through affection between black queer subjects so that “love, sex and pleasure” can become “forces that push back against the absolutely negating system of brutality and death” (Richardson, 2013:24). This imaginative work can be seen as a “practice of historical commentary, a trespass against demands of evidence, finding recourse and voice through the creation of imaginative counter-narratives and embodied practices” (Richardson, 2013:14).

As both Richardson and Muñoz intimate, in working with the black queer archive, there is a recognition that there is never a resolution rather that there is “something unfixed, with movement and potential” (Richardson, 2013:5). It is a reparative impulse that can be “enabling and liberatory” in the same way that an “attentiveness to those things mute within us, brought into language and given a syntax, can potentially lead to an insistence on change and political transformation” (Muñoz, 2006:687). As Duiker shows, his work is an attempt at “weaving together a provisional whole” (Muñoz, 2006:683) in the return of his protagonist to his identity of Tshepo. It is “indeed not a whole but rather an enabling sense of wholeness that allows a certain level of social recognition” (ibid) where he lives in Johannesburg. I functions as a

reparative performance of love for himself and those who now make up the universe of his life at the children's home. In Johannesburg, a more peaceful Tshepo continues his encounters with other men. These encounters have:

> "intimacy of some sort as part of our ritual. They offer me blueprints for survival, for building a new civilisation, a new way of life … They all go about the quiet business of telling me their secret, sharing their wisdom. We have so much to learn from each other. There are better ways they keep telling me, capitalism is not the only way. We haven't nearly exhausted all the possibilities, they say" (Duiker, 2001:607).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research report interrogates how citizenship and belonging in the African postcolonial reclamation nation-making project is determined by tenets that exclude those who do not work within its definitional strictures of heterosexual gender and sexuality expression. It explores how those who are constructed as antithetical to the project of nation-making, those defined as homosexual and same-sex desiring, are continually burdened with the charge of undermining the sovereignty of the nation-making project.

In Chapter 5, this report interrogates how these tenets orient themselves on the exploration of the cultural aspects that have been proposed as definitive of the idea of Africa. These cultural aspects have, over years in the project of African postcolonial reclamation, been carefully mapped to construct homosexuality, alternative sexualities and modes of gendered expressions as alien to Africa, for both Africans in Africa and the diaspora, as well as international audiences. I argue that Chinua Achebe's depictions of Okwonko is archetypical of patriarchal heterosexualised masculinities that were imagined to be the desired registers of male expression that sought to redeem the imaginary of Africa in the world. This report meditates on how *Things Fall Apart* has been accorded the status of reinventing the image of Africa in the world though its focus on culture. By using culture as a marker of political commentary in the text, Achebe facilitates circulations of heterosexualised identities of being African and their resultant erasure and omissions of other ways of being African. This report problematizes this idea of Africa and how its reliance on the reproductive capacity of its citizenry desires the silencing of same-sex and homosexual sexuality expressions through its instantiating of dominant masculinities.

In Chapter 6, this report is concerned with expanding feminist readings of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. The chapter troubles the narrative by reading the two young female characters, Tambu and Nyasha and their relationship and offers a queered reading of this relationship. The exploration fashions how the relation between Tambu and Nyasha works to destabilise Achebe's heteronormative Africa. This reading follows my overall aim to

explore the idea of alternative gendered and same-sex desire and sexuality expression beyond the gendered aspect of female subjectivity as it relates to patriarchal masculine subjectivity. Dangarembga signals a disavowal of the nation-making project. Chapter 7 is concerned with how K. Sello Duiker deploys madness and mythology in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* to destabilise dominant African constructions of masculinity and sexualities and trouble how these tropes are used as discursive markers of difference in the project of African nation making. The report further explore how Duiker works with ideas of naming, renaming and ancestry and how these work with mythology as a way of inserting homosexual/same-sex desiring bodies into the national imaginary and what it offers us in terms of thinking about the nationhood, subjectivity and belonging. The chapter concludes with a reflection on Duiker's use of Grecian and Nordic mythology in his reconstructionist efforts and how that archive works to make visible the African queer ancestor.

In conversation with each other, this report considers how *Things Fall Apart*, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* grapple with the cultural archive produced by *Things Fall Apart* and its reception. Driven by a sensibility to re-memory and re-member the African family, the project of the nation invested itself in colonial regimes of national time and progress such that notions of civility as predicated upon a heterosexual framework, became the defining principle of the postcolonial imagination. This report demonstrates how this heterosexual sensibility has been limiting to the scope of gendered and sexuality expression that humans have the scope to express and negotiate in their realities. As demonstrated by gender and sexuality scholars such as Mupotsa (2010), Msibi (2011), Tamale (2011), the privileging of heterosexuality as the exclusive mode of sexual expression and relation in the nation, has resulted in a heteronormative attitude towards social relations. These attitudes have institutionalized the idea of two sexes, each with gender roles that have been predetermined, therefore marking their place in the nation. As Mupotsa shows, these attitudes are pervasive across social attitudes, but patently "visible in family and kinship ideologies, in other words, a narrative of a founding heterosexuality works in the building of Afro-radical and nativist fantasies of the nation" (2010:6).

With these fictions firmly in place, this report considers how alternative modes of existing in the nation disrupt the founding mythologies that continue the traditions of nation

making, thereby marking those who behave differently as antithetical to the project of nation making. Even as heterosexuality has been shown not to be a monolithic construct and experience, with normative and dominant versions of heterosexual expression such as monogamy and marriage accorded respect and valour, this report shows how the project of nation making accords privileges to those that publicly perform according to the tenets that have been marked as definitional of the nation. In negotiating how the non-normative body can find belonging in the project, this report attends to the ways these fictions of the nation are stunted by their preoccupation with procreation and reproductive time as markers of progress. The report negotiates different modes of how the family can be oriented to offer differentiated modes as alternatives to the fiction of procreation and progress as markers of national development and continuity. Through a Black feminist reading of *Nervous Conditions*, this report shows the limitations placed on the Black female body as a subject in the nation, and therefore imagines the scope of gendered and sexuality expression outside the scope of nationalist sensibility. By deploying incest as a sentiment of affect and intimacy, this report reimagines the paradigm through which intimate desire can be realized in the fiction of the nation. In foregoing the nationalist, patriarchal sensibilities around sexual desire as only legitimate if expressed through opposite gendered and sexualized bodies, this report reconfigure how kinship is imagined and offers a way of thinking about family as expansive beyond the nucleus of bloodlines.

A reading of *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* offers an interrogation of the bodies that become privileged with national affect as they are seen as legitimate beneficiaries of the nation making project. This report shows how these bodies, constructed as same-sex desiring or homosexual, or working outside of the dichotomy of two sexes, negotiate this exclusionary heterosexual paradigm of the nation through performative acts that accord them autonomy in negotiating their subjectivity in the nation. Further to this, the report shows how an attentiveness to the intersections of race, gender and sexuality complicate how these performative acts can be practiced by those marked as non-normative. Because legitimate beneficiaries of the nation making project continue to be imagined as heterosexual, the sensibility of the project invokes the masculine imaginary of the nation, thereby charging same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies in the nation as corrupting its sanctity. This report locates *Things Fall Apart* within this authoritative currency that calls to remember the past of Africa as a

hallmark for how the future can be imagined and enacted. In these futures, same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies are imagined outside of the project for democratic sexual commons where the nation allows for a multiplicity of sexuality expression.

This report further considers the role of the archive in imagining the queer body in the nation and the power dynamics that instruct the reading of same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies as non-normative. It argues that due to the exclusion of the same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies in the memory of what constitutes the imaginary of the African nation, in negotiating the nation's anxiety about insistence to beneficiate from the nations affect schema, the excluded bodies are burdened with the work of excavating from historical archives to legitimate their existence. As the nation's sensibility about civility is predicated upon its alignment to the liberal project of civility, the silencing and erasing of the non-normative body is undertaken to unpathologise the Black family. In using the archive, this report argues, queer bodies enact resistance by un-silencing the archive and excavating the costs of a collective forgetting process that facilitates the postcolonial project of civilized sensibilities. This work is undertaken to perform historical commentary that trespasses the dominant modes of erasure that continue to locate the queer body as outside the experience of Blackness. Further to this, this report argues that the non-normative body undertakes renaming rituals in the nation to dislocate their constructed mode of being in the world in order to detach themselves from the kinship structures that denounce their being. These rituals perform a simultaneous objective, to detach themselves from the kinship schema of the nation while enabling them to embody a new subjectivity that enables new ways of being. These rituals further instruct the non-normative body on how it can use language as a reflection of how they see and name themselves in the world, enabling these bodies to think about renaming as a performative act that enables a mediation between multiple sites of affiliation to the tenets of nation-making.

While recognizing the productive capacity of the archive, this report further problematizes the inherent backward looking that seemingly plagues same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies in the nation. The report argues that as a ritual of inserting themselves into the affect schema of the nation, the non-normative body has had to deploy a politics of progress as a mode of legitimating itself in the nation. However, as this report shows, this narrative of progress is plagued with politics of race, as in its attempt to create new geographies of gendered

and sexuality expression in the nation, the project is limited by the liberal, white frame that continues to recirculate empires constructions of non-normative subjectivities. This report argues that this liberal frame renders queer politics with a crypto universalism that privileges white subjectivity, as even as white queer bodies are considered non-normative, due to the racial and political schema that inform nationalist sensibilities, white bodies already benefit from the affect schema of the nation. This report argues for a reimagining of the past to infuse it with difference in order to bring into existence Black queer bodies and cultures that have been erased because of this violence and displacement that the nation making requires for its legitimacy. The report further argues that there productive capacity in interrogating and reporting Black abjection such that we can construct epistemological frameworks that enable a pedagogy that re-memories and re-members those that the nation have opted to erase.

The report argues for a disavowal of fictions about progress that are predicated upon the desire to work within the scope of liberal conceptions of progress and civility. As a mode of re-memory-ing and re-member-ing itself, this report proposes an attunement to an irresolvability around conceptions of subjecthood such that the project of the nation can be liberatory to those that have been historically placed outside of the complicated and irresolvable center of the heterosexual privileging of national sentiment. As Mupotsa shows "the political task that remains is neither a restoration nor a restitution, but a creative destruction" (2010:16). This report illustrates the different modes of creative destruction that enable a nuanced imaginary of the nation where the nation is imagined beyond its phallic sensibility. In *Nervous Conditions* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, this report shows how the nations anxiety about its masculine nature is negotiated to enable differentiated realities for those who do not participate in the established regimes of nationalist discourse and legitimation. It offers a vantage through which we can imagine same-sex desiring and homosexual body in the nation such that they can be benefactors of nationalist sentiment and partake in the ancestral lineage of the nation.

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