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White weddings

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White Weddings

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

White Weddings

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination or to any other university.

_____

Danai S. Mupotsa
28 August 2014
The University of Witwatersrand
Johannesburg

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Sex [is] a site at which relationality is invested with hopes, expectations, and anxieties that are often experienced *as unbearable.*[1]

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[1] Berlant, Lauren & Edelman, Lee. 2014. S*ex, or the Unbearable?* Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press. p. vii.

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To trace a short chronology, I would like to begin with my first semester at Luther College, where I was confronted with a call to have a "vocation", Paideia, our first-year introduction to the Liberal Arts cum-introduction to the history of knowledge production, my first course in Africana Studies, and my first course in Women's Studies. My life as a pre-medical student ended here. I knew I was called to think about knowledge and power. What wonderful teachers, co-conspirators, friends. My love and thanks to Kristin Haltinner, Valerie Mitchell Sigwalt, Lawrence Williams, Char Kunkel, Jyoti Grewal, Jessica Barrett, Thaddeus Morelock, Sumner McRae, Meghan Myron-Karels, Andrea Lach Dean, Kate Goodall, Annie Hibbs, Mariah Flynn, Tendai Chirawu, Heidi Hansen, Marie Zellman, Courtney Allensworth, Jan Daker, Tom and Joann Goodall, Martin Klammer, Allison Happel, Sheila Radford-Hill and Kim Powell.

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Contents

Abstract 7

Figures 8

A Question of Power 9

Well Bred Girls Don't Answer Back 29

One is not Born, One Becomes an Undutiful Daughter 52

The Argument 68

The White Wedding 71

Bling Bling Black Diamonds 85

"Diamond Zulus" and the Invention of the Modern "Traditional Wedding 92

Out of Africa 104

The Oppositional Gaze 112

Defining the Bridal Gaze 120

Look at Me/Passing for Human 137

Happy Objects 152

Black Bridezillas 174

Diamantés are Forever 188

The Fat Black Woman and the Mind's Eye 201

Lobola for my Love 216

Modern Brides and their Traditional Weddings 223

Men without Tradition 241

Against Love? 255

List of Primary Sources 271

Selected Interviews 271

Television Shows 271

Feature Films 271

Made for Television Movies 272

Magazines 272

Blogs, Websites and Online Articles 276

Exhibitions 278

Pamphlets 278

Newspapers 278

Letters 280

Miscellaneous 280
Reports 281
Bibliography 283

Abstract

White Weddings falls under the National Research Foundation (NRF) Chair on "Local Histories, Present Realities", at the University of the Witwatersrand. The project was initiated by an interest in the promulgation of mediated representations of big fat South African weddings that reflect the conspicuous consumption of a "new" black middle class and elite in South Africa. The project reads consumption as a site for the elaboration of new forms of personhood in post/transition South Africa, read alongside a more critical genealogy of the black consumer. Reading ethnographic data against media/ted representations, this project emphasizes the liminality between the real and the imagined that weddings offer those have them as an opportunity to be literally on stage, performing an aspired for self/celebrity. The projects also views wedding rituals as the public performance of sex, working to regulate our heteronorms they literally perform our desires and aspirations (read differently from desire) for the "family" and "nation", marking gendered and raced bodies into an oedipalized process of myth-making that frequently slides past social analysis. I queer-y the innocence of our everyday understandings of coupledom and marriage to suggest that the meanings produced in the marriage ritual are constitutive of the discourse of *différance.* I refuse the dichotomy of tradition/modernity, which like others work to make natural deeply problematic conceptions, seeking a mode of thinking that recognises motion and is therefore nomadic. Nomadic thinking works particularly well for those of us examining the "local" in African spaces as subjects work and produce themselves more fluidly than more confined models of temporality suggest or allow. I propose the figuration "becoming-black-bride", to foreground the black women who were the subjects of the research, as well as the local that occurs through the marriage ritual is a central thread. Through this figure, I suggest that the circuits of capital, labour and consumption come to a head with the work of race, class, gender and sex. My reading of marriage rituals is not simply a critique of compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity, but through the figure of becoming-black-bride, I reveal the fragility of the aspiration of being properly human. The marriage ritual intends to enact intimacy in public for a reason; certainly, as I suggest this includes the aspiration for or to restore Order. Concluding "Against Love?" These rituals enact our desires to be visible within the logics of being properly human so through them, like other kinds of statements for inclusion we can and do make political demands. I am therefore tentative in my dismissal of these demands like others before me who for example support civil rights movements for marriage equality, but recognize that this form of inclusive politics is fundamentally problematic. Concluding "Against Love?", my critique of marriage practices and rituals attends to the enjoyment, pleasure, relations, dispossessions, anxieties, expectations, disappointments and negotiations attached to these modes of performing our selves and experiencing connection with others.

Figures

1 Celo and Danai Xigiane, Maputo 2010 45
2 The Embrace Collection, African Romance 59
3 The Danger to the White Woman 63
4 Isivumelwano 66
5 Bling Bling Black Diamonds 84
6 Civilised Natives Wedding 101
7 Honeymooners 103
8 Beauty and the Beasts 111
9 Shepherd and Vera, Midrand 2012 119
10 Mutsa with Danai, Chenai and Jedidah, Harare 2012 123
11 Fairy Tale Fantasy 126
12 Khanyisile and Lawrence, Vanderbijlpark 2009 136
13 Black Photo Album 148
14 Kroonstad Wedding 149
15 Molemo and Ben, Johannesburg 2012 151
16 How do you blend the Traditional with the Modern? 161
17 Rutendo and Marc, Avianto 2012 166
18 Group Picture, Rutendo and Marc 2012 167
19 View from the Balcony, Thembi & Zviko, Johannesburg 2011 170
20 Thembi & Zviko, Johannesburg 2011 171
21 "Healthy" Even Tone Skin Transformation 181
22 Nubian Bride Grooming Guide 182
23 19th Century Etiquette Manual on Bridal Style as Simplicity 186
24 La Collezione Dei Conti 187
25 Little Brides Receive the Body of Christ 195
26 Dolores in Baby Phatt 196
27 African Queen 199
28 Big City Lights 200
29 Makoti Chic 232
30 African Queen 236
31 Phephile and Nthatho, Soweto 2010 240
32 Beautiful Redi Thlabi in her Honeymoon Suite 251

A Question of Power

When someone says 'my people' with a specific stress on the blackness of those people, they are after kingdoms and permanently child-like slaves. 'The people' are never going to rise above the status of 'the people'. They are going to be told what is good for them by the 'mother' and the 'father'.[2]

White Weddings is a product of my personal/political experience. As a young bride I found myself confronted with messages that made me acutely aware of the ways that marriage practices bridge the space between family and nation in the work of patriarchal myth-making. Chastised for my critique of lobola, I was perceived as the kind of "modern feminist" who would be enamoured by the opportunity to be a princess for a day in my own big white wedding. Unnerved by the enthusiasm that followed our successful lobola negotiations, I was inundated with the pressure to produce a beautiful day and indeed to be a beautiful bride as an extension of this celebration. There has been no other time when my friends and family have expressed such a dearth of emotion towards me and indeed it did feel like an arrival to the peak of my life as my grandparents reached out in tears and told me that they had never been so proud of me. Weddings have an emotional effect that eludes description, even as Chrys Ingraham states plainly that it is this specialness that until recently has left them generally unexamined in social analysis[3], one cannot quite describe the depth of emotional work that we collectively invest in them. Indeed, even as I drafted the chapters which follow I found myself in tears as I fingered through the wedding albums of the women who so generously shared their experiences with me. Weddings have entered our imagination as scholars primarily because of the ways they display conspicuous consumption.[4] While readings of consumption have made this area of social practice available for analysis and even critique, I am increasingly aware that consumption spreads itself through affective and libidinal economies so that it is always

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[2] Head, Bessie. 1974. *A Question of Power.* Johannesburg: Heinemann. p. 63.
[3] Ingraham, Chrys. 1999. *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*. New York and London: Routledge. p. 3.
[4] See Ingraham 1999, Otnes, Cele C. & Lowry, Tina M. 2003. *Contemporary Consumption Rituals: A Research Anthology*. New York, NY: Psychology Press, Boden, Sharon. 2003. *Consumerism, Romance and the Wedding Experience*. New York, NY: Palgrave, Otnes, Cele C. & Pleck, Elizabeth. 2003. *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Howard, Vicki. 2006. *Brides, Inc.: American Weddings and the Business of Tradition*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, Mead, Rebecca. 2007. *One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding*. New York, NY: Penguin.

already imbued within all of our emotions, related to the meanings of personhood, belonging, social change and indeed justice in ways both expected and unexpected. It is therefore not my interest to offer a reading of conspicuous consumption as something that makes weddings themselves somehow "new" or different, but rather as affective sites produced in relation to consumption, but also to other things produced following the industrial revolution such as the production of public and private space and the invention of domesticity.

Read as one aspect of the "new", in the "new South Africa", consumption has become one of the modes for social analysts to anticipate and read change, citing the entry of the black consumer into new spaces and new socialities as markers of transformation.[5] These readings have then been confronted with work that traces longer genealogies of the black consumer[6] further complicating these perspectives. In the South African context, it is common parlance to speak of "modern", or "white" weddings and traditional ones. Following this assumption, are frequent assumptions that "authentic" past traditions are increasingly under threat following the incursions of capital, as weddings become more and more about consumption. I trouble these assumptions, most of all because they frequently rely on the assumption of a past heyday of African[7] marriage that was stable, heterosexual albeit not heteronormative, and hegemonic until recent historical interruption. Furthermore, it was assumed that the white weddings of "new black consumers" can be legitimately read as losing "authenticity", as the display of consumption is somehow not related to traditional marriage practices. Concerns over African marriage are not new, as state officials and intellectuals from the late 19th century

[5] See Narunsky-Laden, Sonja. 2003. Who's Afraid of the Black Bourgeoisie: Consumer Magazines for Black South Africans as an Apparatus of Social Change. In *Journal of Consumer Culture* 3:2, for example.

[6] See Bonner, Philip. 2012. The Black Elite on the Rand in the Interwar Years. Seminar Presentation, NRF Chair in Local Histories, Present Realities February 22. University of the Witwatersrand. & Iqani, Mehita. 2012. A Genealogy of the 'Black Consumer' in post-Apartheid South African Media: Counterpoints to Discourses of Citizenship. Conference Presentation at ENEC VI, the 6th Brazilian Meeting on Consumption Studies. 12-14 September. Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. for example

[7] I use "African" and later black. "African", as a racial category certainly works to produce the dichotomies of tradition/modernity in the ways that they are applied for the purposes of making and sustaining apartheid categories of difference. In my work more generally, I use "black" to signal those who identify politically as black, and use this term with the awareness of the ways that the term aims to confront essentialist constructions of race, and their dependence on notions of cultural difference.

paid close attention to the "decline" in African marriage and the loss of its "original" or intended meaning following the intrusion of capital.[8] It is then no wonder that it has become fashionable to cite the introduction of the migrant labour system and capital as the cause not only for a decline of this imagined heyday, but for the present abuses of lobola as the ritualised exchange of women for cattle is presumed more innocent than the present exchanges in cash and other consumer goods.

Considering readings of consumption as a site for new socialities alongside more "traditional" Marxist inspired readings of exploitation, alienation and indeed, what the nature of revolutionary change can or must entail, weddings are important in the sense as they push these perspectives towards and against one another. I follow Sharon Boden's argument that the wedding is a performance "that generates its meaning primarily though consumerism and romance (rather than, say religion)".[9] The controversy of maligning the ritual's role in "tradition", or "religion", brings the tensions of what social change means to a head. For those inclined towards a humanist Marxist perspective, the ritual might be perceived as "losing" its intended meaning and perhaps even some imagined sense of "authenticity", due to the corruption of capital. For those who read consumption as a mode of entering sites of prior exclusion, consumption might indeed hold the possibilities for new articulations of the self and hence the possibilities of transgression and even freedom. I aim to work past any mode of dialectical thinking here to think about the ways tradition, even religion and consumption, and modernity are invoked in discussions of wedding work around particular subjects that both open and close off the possibilities for a liberatory agenda. I contend that these rituals spread our notions of self and offer us possibilities for meaning-making and intimate connection with others connected to common ideas concerned with what it means to be human in this world and yet, I conclude unconvinced that the model of belonging that frames intimate connection with others from the point of view that ritualised marriage practices offer can be convincingly attached to, or fully articulate a liberatory agenda.

[8] See Krige, Eileen Jensen. 1936. Changing Conditions in Marital Relations and Parental Duties among urbanized Natives. *Africa* 9:1, for example.
[9] Boden, Sharon. 2003. *Consumerism, Romance and the Wedding Experience.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan. p. 211

It is important to note here that it is not just the rich who marry in South Africa as people negotiate through their various means and their various locations ways through which they can stage their entry into marriage because of the ways that the ritual has become one of the important ways that all people stage or make a claim at belonging. There continues to be a tension as I fully acknowledge the extraordinary disparities between the rich and the poor in South Africa which make it possible for us to read on to these categories "actors" and "spectators" in the staging of these events. And yet, this dialectic does not prevent those who are spectators from the desire to one day star in their own big wedding. I recall the recent wedding of my aunt at the Palace at Sun City where the narrative of the entire occasion was the bride and groom's arrival to wealth. The invitations included both a wedding website and full colour magazine that described their journey to love and indeed their journey to wealth from deprived childhoods to this extraordinary climax visualized in their wedding photographs as they posed in front of a massive bronze statue of an elephant. This narrative is not unique, for instance the 2012 wedding of actress and celebrity wedding planner Sophie Ndaba was staged as a "surprise" wedding. Guests were invited to a charity event where Ndaba asked them to bring cash and goods for an orphanage that she supports. During the party Sophie arrives in a white dress and suddenly the guests were privy to the nuptials of Sophie to her pastor husband. She explains to the crew from *Top Billing* (that happened to also be there) that this was an important way for her to marry, she grew up poor and she wanted to share her wealth with others.

Returning to the wedding at Sun City, during the sermon, after explaining what he thought was the difference between "respect" and submission to the bride, the pastor explained to the groom that for him the biggest challenge would be to master his wife's love language. The example he used was with his own marriage; in the early years when he travelled for work he would spend a lot of money buying her designer clothes and expect her to try them all on in excitement upon his arrival. She never did, gifts are not her love language. He encouraged the groom to not feel discouraged or angry if such a thing was to happen, joking about how he had once spent US$20,000 on her before he came to understand that she preferred quality time. I acknowledge that he might have been exaggerating, but it was apparent to me that most of the people there would never imagine spending that sort of money on clothes and I asked around during the reception

to gauge how this statement had been received by the other guests. One woman, who is my cousin and has been married through civil and traditional rites for over twelve years responded quite candidly. She then worked in Port Elizabeth as a teacher at a private college, while her husband and children live in a high density suburb in Harare with several of his sisters. They have been in a precarious financial situation for years and despite her own desires, are not yet in a position to have a white wedding. In fact, at the wedding we sat across from our great aunt who spent a large part of the evening lamenting the fact that my cousin still had not had a *muchato*[10] *a*nd as the oldest of us girls, she was a disappointment.

When I asked my cousin how she felt about the US$20,000 shopping trip she said she found it shocking, especially as this was a pastor who should recognize his audience. She also then continued to talk about how she had to gauge between her priorities which mostly included the cost of private school for her two children, against her other desires. She felt that their situation was far too precarious to take the risk, so like many other people that we both know, they would wait until much later to have a white wedding. She continued to reflect on the pastor's comments in relation to this big bling wedding we were at, suggesting that less than making her feel excluded, she recognized the similarly precarious location that our aunt and even the pastor inhabited, the display of things and claims at wealth for her were a ruse that disguised something much more messy. Aspiration and faith were the things that these people had and one had to understand this exaggerated claim and indeed the exaggerated consumption displayed at this wedding as a combination of the two. Indeed, even Robert Gumede who was reported to have spent over R5million on his 2010 wedding was also allegedly reported as owing massive amounts in unpaid bills in 2011. All of the men and women interviewed in the process of this study are fully aware of the amount of saving and the concomitant precarity that these weddings presented them. The pressures to prioritise and then stage a wedding one cannot afford in many cases has everything to do with a number of competing, occasionally contradictory desires and demands. When I began this project, I used the term

"aspiration," to signal the conscious and unconscious desires ascribed to the ritualized performance of weddings.

White Weddings, as the title of this project is not intended to privilege one form of marriage ritual, generally recognized as a formal affair including a bride in a white dress and a public declaration of commitment performed in front of intimate others, sanctioned by the law and/or the church. The choice of the title is intended to invoke this ceremony but to also queery the assumptions attached to it. I recognized weddings as a site for thinking during my own process of lobola, read by some as an engagement process leading up to the white wedding, and by others as a marriage ritual itself, the "traditional" ceremony as it is referred to, one of a series of rites that black women enter in the process of getting married. I was also offered the view that the traditional rites were intended to fulfil the requirements of family, tradition, culture and broadly speaking larger kinship networks, while the wedding would signal romance, love, and my opportunity to extend or perform some feminist version of myself, "it's your day!" There were a number of assumptions laid before me, that one practice was embedded in tradition, in the past, in collective history and in the language of obligation. The other practice reflected the choice and freedom of individuals in our society who exercise this freedom by choosing their partners and expressing their love during the wedding ceremony. I position the bride at the centre of this analysis; arguing that the bride operates as the symbolic centrepiece of the affair, with the full recognition that women's voices and desires regarding the rituals are often beside the point as the broader kin group assert their own desires as primary in shaping the performance. I am also interested in the ways that the tradition/modern binary works to produce and reinforce assumptions about what traditions mean and do, and what claims at authenticity then do. It is often the assumption for some that women who enter "traditional" marriage rites are moreso predisposed to patriarchal violence than those entering a civil arrangement. The site of the modern, read as freedom and choice can be read as in contradiction with tradition which for women is an unfreedom. I destabilize the binary logics assigned to marriage rituals, recognizing them as both being "modern", and "traditional", communal and individualistic, freedom and unfreedom, romantic and obligatory. I read the invocation of these binaries as operating in the kinds of ontological projects that I critically address here.

Scholars who pay attention to lobola recognize that lobola is not a static or fixed process. One could crudely define it as a process or set of negotiations between the families of a man and woman who intend to marry. These negotiations pay particular attention to the process of building relations between two "sets of kin", but also to how the woman/bride enters the family of the man and the success of these negotiations gets marked in several demonstrations of this act. For instance, in the bride's "arrival" at her new home, in her being dressed in clothes intended to signal her symbolic entry to the "family" as well as in rituals specifically related to her fertility. It is a process that seems unending, for even when children are born into the marriage, exchanges and relations marking the child's belonging to the patrilineal kin continue this process. I would also consider the "damage" negotiations in this refrain. These are negotiations that follow pregnancy outside of marriage when the couple does not intend to remain romantically involved. The child acquires its position and legitimacy through these negotiations and compensation to the woman's family. The ritualized exchange of women's potential fertility is not unique to lobola, or "traditional" negotiations. It is certainly mirrored in the symbolic language of the white wedding, not just crudely in the delivery of the bride to her groom but also in many other aspects such as the presence of children in the bridal party.

The unfixedness of what lobola is, is reflected in the variety of narratives concerning how the "traditional" aspects of the marriage are addressed in bridal magazines. In my discussions with brides it is clear that there is no consensus on what the process is and what it aims to represent. There are clear historical reasons why we inherit a multiple legal structure for marriage in South Africa. Colonial administration worked with African patriarchs in a process of codifying customary law, freezing traditions "into a static ahistoric mould."[11] This process had the result of inventing traditions if we follow Hobsbawm's definition of "traditions" as those practices which appear or claim to be old [but instead] are often quite recent in origin and are sometimes "invented."[12] This process of codification had particular effects most obvious that patriarchy becomes entrenched as something that we should assume is natural and as it should be in Africa. Reading the

[11] Shope, Janet Hinson. 2006. Lobola is here to Stay: Rural Black Women and he Contradictory Meanings of Lobolo in Post-apartheid South Africa. A*genda* 20: 68. p. 64
[12] Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. Introduction: Inventing Traditions. In Hobsbwam, Eric. & Ranger, Terence. (Eds). *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 1.

processes by which customary laws have been codified makes it difficult not to complicate the way we understand the relationship between civil and customary law and the relationship between these laws in the work of race craft.[13] I further contend that the invention of customary law is embedded not only with the desire of sustaining male power, but that is also premised on middle class aspirations marked by specific relations to consumption, domesticity, god and romance. I would also suggest that while the civil law assumes itself the neutral and egalitarian position in relation to marriage practice, against a more patriarchal legal structure caught in a "backward" time; both work in the same logics. While it is assumed that the logics of these structures is not only different from one another, as one is presumed to be egalitarian if not transformative as it is a product of one of the most progressive constitutional processes in the world. The irony as it is presented is that the same constitution supports a legal structure premised on customary laws that are fundamentally patriarchal and problematic, in fact anti-constitutional. The worked dichotomy between modern civil codes and traditional or customary practices presumed to be initially outside of "the Law", and brought into its language through a process of codification by missionaries, native administrators and members of a black elite. These processes reflect not only a desire to enter African customs into a civilising "Law" and "language", but have the effect of fossilizing cultural practices in the location of "origins", or "roots", read against a progressive teleos and this origin is frozen here as always already patriarchal. Shula Marks offers the *hlonipa* language as example, of the processes of inventing tradition that emphasised women's subordinate status in the pre-colonial state to implant it in native law as a response to the perception of an increasing lack of control over women.[14]

The processes by which native customs are codified work within the separatist logics of colonial and then apartheid governance, not only working to construct ethnic or cultural differences that we can presume can be mapped on to socially engineered space. We are invited to perform our traditions and cultural identities in these processes in languages

[13] See Sheik, Nafisa Essop. 2012. Colonial Rites: Custom Marriage Law and the Making of Difference in Natal, 1830s – c. 1910. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History. Ann Arbour, MI: University of Michigan.
[14] Marks, Shula. 1989. Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity: Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness. In Vail, Leroy (Ed). *The Invention of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey. p. 226.

that attempt to make claims at primordial essences, yet it has been demonstrated that ethnic consciousness is a new ideological construct invented in the twentieth century.[15] Ethnicity, read as an explanatory framework for the varying differences that regulate social, political and psychic life in contemporary culture frequently misrecognizes ethnicity, despite its quite recent invention and use of ethnicity by a then apartheid government to support Bantustan policies as cultural differences were mapped on to socially engineered space.[16] According to Leroy Vail, even for those interpreting the invention of ethnic consciousness reading the work of ethnic stereotypes in the urban context do so with the assumption that authentic, untouched, coherent and idyllic African cultural practices and ethnic differences can be located in the rural location, a point easy to dispute as these locations were certainly equally produced by capital.[17] I would add here that the rural location continues to be read in this manner as the space for authentic and coherent tradition. Viewing ethnicity as a romantic rejection of the present which leads us to a "looking forward" by looking back, we can see why ethnicity persists in post-transition South Africa that takes the celebration of ethnic difference as the foundation for its democracy. This celebration has had previous incarnations; the historical changes occurring in the twentieth century made "traditional values" appealing, as members of the nascent rural and urban African middle classes grappled with questions regarding African cultural practice. These men acted as intermediaries for the colonial state defining the boundaries of kinship, belonging and tradition to administer "indirect rule."[18] Using language as representative of cultural difference, these cultural brokers worked with missionaries and the Department of Native Affairs to organize cultural identities. These observations lead Vail to read the acceptance of membership to a "tribe", as concomitant with mission education and was therefore "forward looking", modern and fashionable.[19]

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[15] Vail, Leroy. 1989. Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History. In Vail, Leroy (Ed). *The Invention of Tribalism in Southern Africa.* London: James Currey. p. 3

[16] Shula Marks argues that white missionaries and colonial administrators were especially interested in "tribal discipline", as black workers were increasingly in contact with whites in urban spaces. These administrators identified women and the youth as requiring greater control through cultural practice, p. 219-221.

[17] Vail 1989 p. 5

[18] Vail 1989, p. 11

[19] Vail 1989, p. 14. Also seen Marks 1989, who argues that it is the "New African", embodied by the urban, mission educated black elite who called for a return to the "wholesomeness" of the past, or tribal life, p. 221.

It is important to understand that a broader discourse of belonging is under construction because of the repercussions it holds with regards to the location of women in relation to cultural practice. It is already evident that the men engaged in discussions to codify and implement the codes of customary law did so with the intention to address the "problem" of African women.[20] As others have argued, laws produced in the urban context[21] had the intention to control working and poor white women who endangered the project of white racial purity.[22] Anxieties about the location of black women had legal implications too, reflected in the work that the colonial then apartheid state did in addressing black women in the urban space. In collaboration with African patriarchs, customary law worked with the intention to return black women to some idealised rural location[23] meant to represent the "home". Lobola becomes a site for the contestation between men and women so the invented or "rediscovered" traditions related to its practice emphasize the control of women in the name of custom.[24] The emphasis on domesticity[25] is then also firmly planted to the process of lobola and part of what is expected of a wife.[26]

Shula Marks gives the example of the Zulu ethnic movement, "looking backward" and "looking forward" in response to the social changes produced by racist capital with the intended result of restoring a disintegrating tradition. This movement was a coalescence of a Christian and educated middle class and those recently dispossessed responding to an intensification of racial discrimination and economic hardship.[27] The invention of tradition

[20] See Marks 1989 p. 225
[21] See Klausen, Susanne M. 2010. Reclaiming the White Daughter's Purity": Afrikaner Nationalism, Racialised Sexuality, and the 1975 Abortion and Sterilization Act in Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Women's History* 22: 3, and Hyslop, Jonathan. 1995. White Working Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: 'Purified' Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against 'Mixed' marriages, 1934-9. *Journal of African History* 36:1, for example.
[22] See Glaser, Clive. 2005. Managing the Sexuality of Urban Youth: Johannesburg, 1920S-1960S. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38:2. And Kenny, Bridget. 2008. Servicing Modernity: White Women Shop Workers on the Rand and Changing Gendered Respectabilities, 1940s-1970s. *African Studies* 67:3.
[23] See Vail 1989, p. 15. Vail argues that an emphasis on the need to control women and a stress on the protection of the integrity of family came to be intrinsic to both ethnic ideologies and the actual institutional practices of indirect rule.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Marks 1989, for example argues that respectability is joined to notions of ethnicity, p. 224.
[26] See Mtose, Xoliswa. 2011. Wedding Songs by amaXhosa women of Idutywa, *Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa*, 8:1, for example.
[27] Marks 1989 p. 218

sometimes created contradictory responses principally because they relied on understandings of culture adopted from the new sciences such as Anthropology.[28] As Desiree Lewis and others demonstrate, these ontological projects depend on the idea of an always already patriarchal and heterosexual Africa.[29] The desire to restore coherent culture in response to a racist state, through the language of science that intimately produced racial difference was tenuous indeed. They articulate the desire to understand African culture as "in the middle" of a meeting of African and European and a disorganization of both.[30] These men were Christian and middle class elites and used forms of language that not only inflected customary law with syncretic language, mediating a Christian god and the ancestors, demonstrating internal debates and the desire for an universal notion of God that can deal with some of these concerns. Natasha Erlank observes the impulse to modernize as demonstrated by a reluctance to enter customary marriage in preference of Christian marriage, however this view fails to recognize the extent that the notion of a Christian god is interpolated into the broader notions of tradition and culture.[31]

Erlank further notes the importance of education in selecting a bride amongst such an elite, signalling a second matter always already present in the codification of customary law; that tradition has written into its logics middle class aspiration. I would be disinclined to suggest that lobola did not serve as a means to determine the benchmark for partnerships prior to this moment of invention, but would suggest that in this period of invention, education as cultural capital and instrumental to upward mobility is inflected into the definition of respectability. In no uncertain terms is it clear education in determining the status of the bride.[32] Shepherd Mpofu[33] confirms this when he concluded

[28] Marks 1989, p. 224
[29] See Lewis, Desiree. 2011. Representing African Sexualities. In Tamale, Sylvia. *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Cape Town: Pambazuka Press.
[30] Marks 1989 (p. 224) cites Albert Luthuli speaking at a meeting of African teachers. I would add that these debates are frequent in the content of the black press
[31] See Machera, Mumbi. 2004. Opening a Can of Worms: A Debate on Female Sexuality in the Lecture Theatre. In Arnfred, Signe (Ed). *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa.* Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, for example.
[32] See Mtose 2011, which argues that while wedding songs emphasize the domestic role of the bride, they also pay attention to her education as a sign of her eligibility to be a bride.
[33] Shepherd Mpofu was a doctoral candidate in Media Studies at the time of our discussions. I interviewed him along with his wife, Vera following their wedding. Shepherd is from Zimbabwe and Vera has family from Zimbabwe, South Africa as well as Malawi. I had a specific interest in speaking with

his treatise to lobola with the argument that it is absolutely necessary so that one does not end up marrying someone from "the street."[34] Let us take the following letter to the editor of *Bantu World* as an example:

> *Sir, the old fashioned way of rushing into marriage, without talking over any of the facts, has been proved, again and again, to be dangerous. In the old romantic days when girls never stepped out of their homes without an escort and chaperone, it was considered "not quite nice" for a girl to think of the events following her marriage; marriage was supposed to cure all ills, and be a perpetual state of honeysuckle, roses and affectionate attention. Girls themselves know that this is not so. The girl who goes into marriage clear-eyed is the one who comes out the happiest. In love there must be no false pride and prudery; above all, there must be no fear.*[35]

To be clear-eyed is to enter marriage with the view that it can only work if class aspirations are shared.

Women are invited to represent "their culture" for the purpose of creating a "comforting sense of brotherhood" and a "romantic rejection of the past" that is framed by a denigration of our traditions; yet as Vail reminds us, it is men for whom ethnicity holds the greatest appeal, as "women have no tribe."[36] I have observed this in a number of "traditional" wedding ceremonies; in the first ceremony the bride and groom are dressed in the traditional attire as the groom is welcomed to the home of his bride. As the couple changes to the attire of the groom on the following occasion when the bride is delivered; she is literally "changed" by her new in-laws; a visualised transformation from tribelessness to the fashionable, modern belonging to a tribe. Phephile Simelane Modiselle read her change in outfit as marking not only her welcome and entry to her new family, but her "new heritage" as well.[37] While we see the grooms also changing dress, the songs

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brides, however on a few occasions such as this, the groom was very keen to participate. As a fellow scholar and one interested in questions of race, culture and representation, Shepherd was keen to be clear in his definitions and terms.

[34] Interview with Shepherd and Vera Mpofu, 2013

[35] Mazwai, S.C. 1938. About Marriage. *Umteteli waBantu* March 12.

[36] Vail p. 15

[37] Interview with Phephile Simelane, 2013. Phephile is a South African woman who identifies as Zulu, albeit with a tense relation to this identification and to language. She grew up in Durban and then in Harare when her parents were in exile. Her sense of alienation, or distance to language and culture was certainly built by this period of distance. She also speaks of being back in Durban for high school and travelling between township and suburban space to visit friends and "learn" the appropriate relationship to speaking Zulu, or Shona. Her relation to an ethno-linguistic identity is tied to the ways she wants to think about being black in South Africa, so we spent considerable time speaking about black fashion and aesthetic practices as part of this self-work, self-identification, self-practice that

that accompany the rituals further relay the different significations for men and women in traditional dress. As Rutendo Bothma[38] illustrates:

> *All of my aunties had a song for him. His song was "Gogogoi, gogogoi, vaMushuku tauya kutora mwana wenyu", so it is like "Hello Mr Mushuku we have come to get your daughter*.[39]

Since her husband Marc is Afrikaans, the lobola process they pursued was framed only by the demands of her Shona family. In a focus group discussion some months prior, I had found that most brides were anxious about the question of "traditional dress," as it was really represented a moment of invention. So while the aspiration to perform the transition from "no tribe" to "tribe" is present, it has to be negotiated in the present through present interpretations and cultural brokers who help us to make the appropriate and more "authentic" choices in order to represent our cultural difference. Molemo Moiloa[40] recalled the visits to Nigerian dressmakers instigated by her Shona mother in law who saw this as "traditional" attire suited for the occasion of her arrival to their family home. She was stumped when it came the occasion for her husband Ben to arrive at their home, "what is traditional Tswana dress?"[41] she asks. Rutendo staged traditional dress, having an outfit made for her in Shweshwe print: "it was like, you know, African material. I got a skirt, a top and a dhuku, or head wrap. And then for Marc, a Cameroonian shirt with African prints. He was feeling very African."[42] The simulation of Shona ethnic identity is achieved through an idea of "African culture", while the dress is not derived from any specifically Shona cultural markers, the Shweshwe print works still, retaining the desire for a unique and coherent ethic identity. In the work I present here, I go further with the suggestion that this "African culture" is also brought into or co-opted as an aesthetic style offering brides the opportunity to both represent the larger kin group, but also reflect their unique and individual taste.

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evolves or finds different moments and styles of expression at different points in our lives. Phephile lives and works in Johannesburg. She is a financial consultant.

[39] Interview with Rutendo Bothma, 2012

[40] Molemo Moiloa is the director of the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA) and a former colleague in the NRF Chair in Local History where she completed her Master's degree. She is a scholar on youth protest and a visual practitioner. I was keen to hear her perspective on the production of images for the wedding and she was keen to read my analysis.

[41] Molemo Moiloa, Group Interview, 2012

[42] Interview with Rutendo Bothma, 2012

Marc wears "African" attire, signalling his entry into this fold of belonging. As no second "traditional" ceremony will follow where he brings his bride across to his family's threshold for her to be symbolically transformed through dress to her "new heritage," Rutendo says that they planned a big party for the lobola, where like at Phephile's "traditional wedding", included caterers, a tent and a DJ. The party which went on well past midnight was necessary as Rutendo explains because at that point they knew that the wedding would be in South Africa. Rutendo recognized that this might be the only chance for some members of her family to see her wed, but goes further in explaining what the white wedding in Johannesburg might also symbolize:

> *I think for us, because of our two extremely different cultures. Well, I think we would have still done a white wedding if I had gotten married to someone black. But then in our situation we definitely had to have a white wedding, just to also honour Marc's side of the family. Because they didn't come to the lobola, so for them it was still like there was this lobola thing, but we are also not married in their eyes.*[43]

The aunts singing in the background, "We have come to take Mr. Mushuku's daughter," pre-empt this ceremony which is not only a to honour Marc's side of the family, but acts in the place of the second ceremony where the bride is delivered to her groom. I want to follow Vikki Bell here who argues that if:

> *The wedding is indeed a moment in which certain cultural awarenesses and identifications are crystallised and anxiously ritualised. But rather than seeing evidence there of a system of rules and avoidances, the wedding might be theorised as a moment in which people are invited to position themselves as cultural beings, to place themselves within the performance of culture in ways that involve placing themselves within spatio-temporal, discursive (and therefore bodily, sexualised and racialized) boundaries*.[44]

Looking at such boundaries, I would argue that what the language of ethnicity aspires to produce are coherent structures of belonging, creating insiders and outsiders. They form a structure of kinship which as the notion of kinship implies, requires the bodies of women to reproduce itself. The question of language and the law require further discussion especially in relation to kinship as the psychoanalytic definitions of the three depend on an

[43] Ibid.
[44] Bell, Vikki.1998. Taking Her Hand: Becoming, Time and the Cultural Politics of the White Wedding. *Cultural Values* 2:4. p. 464-5.

oedipal myth. The newlyweds represent the micro-fascist structure of cultural/ethnic difference and the processes to produce it require the performance of cultural difference, brought to some sort of resolution through the negotiations between clans. I read both the "white wedding" and the "traditional wedding" as sharing and performing this and other logics.

This project works with a running metaphor of pornography, because as I argue, weddings are an act of public sex: like pornography, "weddings are more than rites of passage, weddings also "make" private sexual relationships public."[45] In public, weddings are the opposite of pornography performed in "the "dark" recesses of private display,"[46] I offer a reading of the white wedding that implicates it within an imperialist history to suggest that the meanings and representations produced here are not only about the aspiration to consume, or even to present oneself as a respectable subject and citizen, they are implicated within the symbolic language of conquest and domestication. The performers in these acts implicitly and otherwise work through this language, whether as actors in the 'traditional', or 'white' wedding to produce an economy both political and libidinal that is invested in display, territory and representation. That these performances are aspirational reflects the tensions between citizenship and consumption yes, but also what it means to occupy the status of subjectivity from the zones of the "unlivable" and "uninhabitable"[47] that those who are signified as abject within the symbolic and material language of this economy. The tendency is to try to bring oneself into the position of the positive, the human, the subject, to re-renter the social imagination within the model of this economy. In conversation with Saidiya Hartman, Frank Wilderson suggests that "once [we] realize [the] limits [of this economy] and begin to see its inexorable investment in certain notions of the subject and subjection, then that language no longer becomes that which rescues [...] but the site of the re-elaboration of that condition rather than its transformation."[48]

[45] Bell 1998. p. 177
[46] Bell 1998 p. 181
[47] See Butler, Judith & Athanasiou, Athena. 2013. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political.* Malden, MA: Polity.
[48] Hartman, Saidiya, V. & Wilderson, Frank B III. 2003. The Position of the Unthought. *Qui Parle* 13:2. p. 185.

Weddings as cultural performances project, or display the aspiration for normative gendered expression and compulsory heterosexuality. Through the dress, modification and movement of the body, these moments ritualize the fantasy of coherent and normative differences. Whether we examine the codifications of "customary", religious or "civil" law, despite the frequent invitation to view these as premised on separate logics; I contend that they are equally committed to a phallogocentrism described by Lacan as the Law of the Father.[49] Connecting intimacy, desire/love, domesticity and kinship, I read the ways that aspirations for the "family" and "nation" are produced through the conscious processes that happen at the level of the social, political, historical, scientific and epistemological. I also hold that the unconscious family "mommy-daddy-me", is co-extensively implicated within these processes and certainly within the processes that determine the Law. The bases for the mythical constructions of "the family", or "nation" are instrumentally connected to this Oedipal complex which frames the expression and constrictions of modern heterosexuality and aspirations for heteronormativity. I lead with a quote from Bessie Head's *A Question of Power.* Head recognizes the work of processes of oedipalization, suggesting that the unconscious has political, libidinized, spatialized, historical effect and affect. As Heidi Nast contends, the triad is actually a familial quadrad of the Mother, the Father, the Son and the Bestial Repressed.[50] Mommy-Daddy-Me as a structure of the political unconscious, is consciously idealized through the white, middle class nuclear family that is produced through a racist-oedipalization. The repression of the Bestial then works in the territorializing processes of colonialism creating what are racialized geographies. The myths of racial purity and aspirations for cultural difference that frame the colonial and apartheid projects, for instance become embodied libidinized processes through the structures of both the conscious and the "unconscious." Weddings offer a crucial moment to read time, space, desire and difference at these multiple, concurrent and co-productive levels of consciousness.

In our cultural landscape we receive the notion that romantic love, an extension of the invention of the "modern woman" is a site where we can express and elaborate on our

[49] See Evans, Dylan. 1996. An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. New York and London: Routledge.
[50] Nast, Heidi J. 2000. Mapping the "Unconscious": Racism and the Oedipal Family. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90:2.

new freedoms. I take the somewhat recent *Marriage, a History* subtitled "How Love Conquered Marriage", by Stephanie Coontz[51] as an example of this, and more generally how we are invited to understand marriage, culture, love and freedom. Coontz frames her argument on the understanding that marriage has undergone a number of transformations in a not-always linear progression from marriage as something located in communal relations, then related to strategic alliances between kin groups with intentions related to the accumulation of wealth. Dowry and bridewealth serve as methods that families mediate such processes across the globe with various nuances in different places at different times. Coontz pays attention to these transformations with the intention of seeking the point at which love, read as an independent choice that an individual makes, comes to "conquer" marriage suggesting that the "lovematch" is revolutionary, it is love and only love that motivates us to marry. According to this reading, over the last two centuries Europe and North America *have developed* new values about marriage, free of the coercions of the past.[52] The temporal and spatial relations she assumes are invested in a "West", whose history is presumably disentangled from the rest and in which history has happened. An apt example is offered when in a chapter on the diversity of marriage practice and rituals in the past she tells us that: "In Zambia, Bemba husbands and wives traditionally do not even eat together."[53]

Generous enough to speak about a specific "tribe", in their specific country, Coontz is careful not to make the mistake of referencing Africa or African cultural practices in ways that generalize the experience of a continent. And yet, given the careful, detailed history she does of the "West", an incoherent construct even in her own analysis as it appears to signify all places where Europe and North America trace their ontological genealogies from, whether or not they occupy some sort of coherent West; Coontz does not specify what period she is referring to in her reading of the Bemba. We can assume it is the present Bemba, marked by the reference to the recent and modern nation state of Zambia, but then "traditionally" seems to also make other kinds of suggestions. It is immediately implied that this practice of husbands and wives not eating together is authoritative, so that those who do eat together are not "traditional", and we are invited to read their

[51] Coontz, Stephanie. 2006. *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage.* New York: Penguin.
[52] Coontz 2006, p. 23. My emphasis.
[53] Coontz 2006, p. 26

marriage practices as "modern", outside of authenticity and entangled with the "West", which belongs to Europe and North America (or at least some of its constituents). Tradition here is also an anagram for history, leading us to understand that the past is the present, is also history in such African places because it can be flattened to one ahistorical narrative and any further progression, or history itself can only be read in relation to the penetration of imperialism and therefore Africa's invitation to modernity. Now it may seem as though I am paying too much attention to this one rendering, but I do so because it very neatly presents the assumptions that those speaking about marriage practices in South Africa invoke, albeit implicitly and perhaps even with innocence and benevolence.

In deciphering the many different ways that marriage is and has been understood the assumption that we are to accept is that alternative meanings and practices are a mimicry of western practices, which themselves are somehow coherent and self-produced in disentangled logic. Citing a study conducted in 1949 to "understand" and identify marriage practices in the world, which for her reflects the diversity of marriage rituals, it is evident that this, like other studies in the period rely on the assumptions described by Johannes Fabian through which the logic of time emerges in anthropology to produce the Other, who the western subject shares an affinity to, but who occupies that place that has no time, no progress for it is the West that has history.[54] In referencing this collection of essays she also fails to identify the degree of social engineering concomitant with imperial expansion and settlement that would characterize any study of marriage in Africa in the 1940s. While Coontz assumes that in the 1940s we can speak of "diverse" marriage practices allocated to disentangled temporal spaces in the "West" and the rest, the interest in African marriage, and indeed what have been described as "transformations in African marriage" reflect a commitment to the view that even if time stood still in Africa's past, at this time through the invitations of Europe's modernity and Christianity we could observe a narrative of progression. The studies like the one she cites are inundated with anxieties about what such "transformations" might produce. The practices of marriage would have been multiple, in processes of invention, as always. I read the attention paid to marriage by colonial governance and the intellectual work that supported it as

[54] See Fabian, Johannes. 2002. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

recognizing marriage practices as important political spaces for the ordering of space, knowledge and citizenship.

There is a second concern that I have about the ways we read and understand weddings and the suggestion that Coontz makes about love conquering marriage. Coontz wants us to read these transformations as originating as far back as the 13th century[55] but culminating later through the Enlightenment and the introduction of the market economy. The inventions of domesticity, romance and the lovematch lead us to the liberal individual who then ultimately has the choice to marry for love. In fact, Coontz notes the connection between domesticity not only as an invention that results in the re-ordering of space and labour, rendering women to the aspiration to occupy the private sphere of the home with a range of other implications. Coontz also recognizes this domestic space as one of the first sites for the articulation of a form of feminist politics.[56] Leading up to the Victorian period where the modern white wedding is not only formalized, but then through the consumer revolution and the expansion of the global middle classes becomes democratized,[57] Coontz recognizes this as the point at which marriage becomes one of the pivotal moments in people's lives.[58] Coontz does not recognize the formalization of the white wedding as an aspect of new consumer cultures entangled with the language not only of love and romance, but also consumption and class. Further, it is presumed then that from this point our choice in love and marriage then becomes one inspired by romance and love as though these relations are not embroiled in relations of gender power and are not at all connected to the logics of governmentality and biopoltics. In this sense, the "freedom" to love and then marry is somehow disconnected from the obligations to others that framed marriage and marriage becomes a site conquered because men and women can enter as liberal, independent individuals with equality.

In following the marriage ritual, I have observed what are often flippantly referred to as "white" and "traditional" marriage practices in South Africa, aligning one to some pre-

[55] Coontz 2006, p. 53
[56] Coontz 2006, p. 165
[57] See Berg, Maxine. 2004. In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century. *Past & Present* 18:2. And Penner, Barbara. 2004. "A Vision of Love and Luxury": The Commercialization Nineteenth Century American Weddings. *Winterthur Portfolio* 39:1. For example.
[58] Coontz 2006, p. 177

colonial, cultural space imbued with notions of authenticity and austerity. White weddings, marked as modern are read as marking love, companionate marriage and the gifts of liberal individualism. Scholars on weddings recognize them as consumer rites, and here I argue further that in South Africa weddings can be recognized not only as a consumer rite, but a new freedom and in fact as a "right." Here, in destabilizing the dichotomy between the two reading them not as related by some linear and progressive narrative with regards to the development of marriage rituals, but as sharing logics, co-constitutive and attached to a similar sentimentality around intimate attachment, kinship, love as an expression of freedom, ironically both perform and produce what I read as spectacular unfreedoms. I follow the bride, who has been given many names in the media landscape including "super-bride", bridezilla, "rich bride/poor bride", this figure is constructed as one that dreams of a Cinderella-like magical transformation of herself and her big day.[59] The "consumer-bride", as Bonnie Adrian argues is one "whose intense pursuit of an aesthetic perfection knows no bounds."[60] The hyper-visibility of the bride as a visual centrepiece of the performance alongside an investment in disaggregating my own anxieties about my location as a woman within the ritual led me to an insistence on centring this analysis on this figure. What I offer aims not to offer some essentialist reading of "women's experience," but to work between, across, towards and against both the notion of "woman" symbolically and materially. The "modern bride", a figure invented in the 20th century marks this rendering of love and marriage as not only spaces where the feminist agenda has won, but also spaces we aspire to occupy and broadly speaking in the media landscape we are invited to as an expression of post-feminist freedom.

[59] See Otnes & Pleck 2003.
[60] Adrian, Bonnie. 2006. Geographies of Style: Taiwan's Bridal Photography Empire. *Visual Anthropology* 19:1. p. 106

Well Bred Girls Don't Answer Back[61]

This work started with a small group of women and an ever increasing stack of bridal magazines. I held a few group discussions that included women who were not brides, and in two interviews the grooms insisted on participating. In the early days of the project I even interviewed a groom so keen about my project that he met me in the absence of his partner who I still have not met. I opted to work through word of mouth in selecting participants, in part following the auto-ethnographic inspiration of the work and in part based on a reluctance to start from the assumption that looking at a specific place will present me with a specific kind of research subject. Space/place is important for thinking in South Africa, as it works as a marker for identity since apartheid attempted to mark and affect bodies through the relations of time and space. Noor Nieftagodien offers 'the local' as an ideal location from which we can foreground 'the lived experiences of 'ordinary people' as 'the local' is "no longer just a place in which history happens."[62] My Master's research in Gugulethu inspired by a mode of feminist geography, developed with a similar set of understandings. Concerned with the idea of "post-apartheid space" as both material and symbolic, I sought the connections between consumption, popular culture and "new" spaces as sites for young women to enact modes of sociality and personhood.[63]

I left this work with an unresolved tension about how to think about space, place and personhood that I think was shared by my supervisor, Elaine Salo. She recognized the need for a reading of the local that recognizes space as unsettled. In recognizing these tensions, Salo insists on a questioning of "whether the identities of those who live in a local place are homogenous, anchored in that space."[64] Offering a figuration to dislodge essentialist and recursive categories of women's experience, Salo's 'Coconut' is fluid "actively [reworking] the meaning of space,"[65] and her experiences can only be read through a

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[61] Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1999. (2nd Ed). *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books. p. 76

62 Nieftagodien, Noor. 2010. The Place of 'the Local' in History Workshop's Local History. *African Studies* 69:1. p. 43.

[63] Mupotsa, Danai S. 2007. Gugule-tois, it's the Place to be! On Bodies, Sex, Respectability and Social Reproduction: Women's Experiences of Youth on Cape Town's Periphery. Dissertation completed in partial fulfilment for the Master of Social Science Degree in Gender Studies. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

64 Salo, Elaine. 2009. Coconuts do not live in Townships: Cosmopolitanism and its Failures in the Urban Peripheries of Cape Town. *Feminist Africa* 13. p. 12.

65 Salo 2009 p. 15.

"sustained gendered account of time as lived in its multiplicity, from within and across a number of locations,"[66] because at least in the case of the women who are the subjects of her work in Manenberg, this woman is located in a time that "cannot be considered modern in terms of the linear narration of modernization."[67] For those who mediate their experiences through the figure of the Coconut, it is not only their location that is multiple; they are embedded in a time that is simultaneously past, present and in Salo's reading, a yearning for the future.

"Women", and "women's experience" unresolved, I started this project with a conception of the "local" as a place: the Vaal Triangle.[68] I also entered my work as an auto-ethnographer: thinking through my own experiences with wedding work. Having lived in Sasolburg, Vaalpark then Roodepoort before I moved to Johannesburg halfway through this research, the spaces I occupied and the people I knew lived and moved across many "peripheries" of this city. The interviews with wedding service providers reflected an interest in representing the Vaal as one of Gauteng's other "wedding miles". The "Wedding Mile", is the colloquial reference to the vibrant wedding venue and service provider network in the West Rand that has become one of, if not the top location for a Gauteng wedding; as one travels further west on Beyers Naudé Drive one observes farms converted to wedding venues one after the other. These venues offer brides and grooms all the services they need under one roof and this wedding mile is possibly rivalled only by an analogous scene in Midrand, or better yet, the large bridal market of the Magaliesburg region. The steady and high increase in these businesses mark the turn towards consumption in wedding work, as a range of service providers, including pastors are hired in to perform the ceremony in chapels that are one of a few options for a couple's ceremony. In fact, it was Oakfield Farm, one of the first venues on the wedding mile that initiated the Bridal Expo, with an annual expo at their venue; the glossy magazine that was initially just an advertorial for wedding service providers is arguably the point of origin of

66 Salo 2009 p. 12
67 Salo 2009 p. 12.
68 The NRF Chair on Local Histories and Present Realities where this work is "located", privileges the examination of peri-urban places like the Vaal as they have frequently been neglected in social and historical analyses.

what is now a large and diverse market of South African bridal magazines.[69] The Bridal Expo is not a massive bi-annual event hosted in Johannesburg and Cape Town and rivalled by numerous other regional reincarnations.

I found brides in the Vaal, but also in Johannesburg and its broader metropolitan and peripheral areas. I recognized that these women, like myself had come to Johannesburg from many other locations and I recognized their locations as embroiled in tensions related to aspiration and arrival as university graduates with the potential of entering an upwardly mobile young middle class. I realised that it would be possible to spend time observing the Vaal wedding industry as well as the weddings of the couples I knew and met in these stages, to offer something interesting about the place and its particular history. However I was increasingly more interested in the narratives of "arrival", linked specifically to Johannesburg and the broader Gauteng region for young black couples who in all cases had travelled from many other places to build their careers and lives in this place. The local that I had in mind was clearly multiple and often contradictory, framed by the seemingly limitless opportunity "for individual and collective transformation through the acquisition of "things" and resources."[70] I now read this local as a figure itself, fluid and unfixed because of the ways it works the tensions of home/travel, Johannesburg and the geographies within its excess. I pose a view of the local as an assemblage, or assemblages of symbolic, social, political and material flows that are transient, principally through the narratives of the men and women that I spoke with and the texts that I read them through and against.

Having begun my work with the intention of reading the experiences of black women who were brides, like I was myself at the time; my work has involved a serious interrogation of what it means to speak of experience and indeed, privilege albeit through

[69] Interview with editor of *Wedding Inspirations*. W*edding Inspirations,* a bridal magazine that includes editorial content, advertising and the generic lists of "to-dos" and "service providers" is a biannual magazine. It shares the same story as Oakfield Farm's *Bridal Library* as it was initially intended to offer service providers exhibiting their wares at the Wedding Expo an opportunity to advertise their wares again. Bridal magazines generally combine the styles of teaching bridal etiquette and showing brides what goods and services they can purchase to achieve it.

[70] Comaroff Jean & Comaroff John. (Eds). 2001, *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Cited in Lewis, Desiree and Hames, Mary. 2011. Gender, Sexuality and Commodity Culture. *Agenda* 25:4. p. 2

a mode of strategic essentialism,[71] the standpoint of the "black bride". This is an important figure, or location, for me as researcher and the means by which I craft a series of very personal archives into threads that are intimate yet public, and connected to broader metanarratives of the self, the family, the kin, the nation and the work of knowledge production. Speaking about a small sample of people, who I selected on a small set of criteria; alongside a large breadth of other kinds of archives, it is my intention to both foreground a specific set of encounters produced by my intentions as researcher, while still making arguments that extend to the broader intellectual and political. I draw energies from a project that experiments in these ways; Alexander Santillanes' Master's dissertation is a life history and ethnography of just one person, his partner Bordeaux, which he positions as a set of stories central to an understanding of Afrikaner nationalism.[72] Santillanes draws inspiration from critical queer and feminist ethnographers who worked on individual subjects as a means of confronting the erasures of traditional ethnographic practices; "ethnographies of the particular" that challenge dangerous generalizations by "[exploring] people's everyday experience and the larger structures through which they are meant to make meaning of their lives."[73]

In this vein, the work of Gloria Wekker has also seduced me, as her examination of sexualities in Suriname takes as its point of departure the very personal and individual relationship Wekker has with Mis' Juliette Cummings.[74] Wekker shared a very intimate relationship with Mis' Juliette, and manages to weave a set of narratives, personal and particular to her life and their intimate life together, into a set of stories that hold broader illusory and explanatory powers. Wekker describes the interviews that she had with Mis' Juliette as "verbal artefacts", shaped by Juliette's own perceptions of the encounter and the work of Wekker's interpretation. Wekker states that "the question to be

[71] See Spivak, Gayatri. 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak? In Nelson, Cary. & Grossberg, Lawrence (Eds). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
[72] Santillanes, Alexander Vidal. 2007. Die Boerseun in die Volkspele Rok/ The Boer's Son in the Volkspele Dress: (Mis)performing Masculinity in the Afrikaner Nation. Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in African Studies. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
[73] Santillanes 2007, p. 7, using arguments posed by Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. Writing against Culture. p. 157-8, in Fox, R.G. (Ed). *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present.* Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
[74] Wekker, Gloria. 2006. *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

contemplated is not "what is the relation *between* life and story," but, far more interesting, rather, "what is the place of the story *within* the life?"[75] My project shares this commitment, as at multiple levels I am considering the meanings related to the work of self and image-making. Speaking to men and women in my immediate and almost immediate intimate relations meant that the interviews I carried out were sometimes with people I have known for a very long time. The encounter of the interview was then one which demanded to be read as momentary, specific and framed by both the scenes I set in my questioning and the demand to put across as set of ideas and images of the self, from both myself, and the person at the other end of the conversation. I believe these demands remain no matter what the degree of rapport is between the researcher and the person sitting in the position of the "subject" at the moment of the encounter. Wekker uses Portelli's model of three vertical levels, the personal, the collective and the institutional; to think about how Juliette organized her life in their discussions.[76] Through this, Wekker recognizes the attachments many of us share to notions of the "truth", to chronological narration and to speaking within the demands of shared notions of "the proper," while attending to the ways the stories told also disrupt these analytical and narratological frames.

Santillanes tells stories, inspired by the work of renegades like Zora Neale Hurston, whose work was often side-lined as "unscientific."[77] The voices produced by his study reflect this, as the first part is written in first-person narrative and speaks of Santillanes' experience of learning Bordeaux's history.[78] Santillanes' describes his anxieties about writing the first-person from Bordeaux's perspective, a process he wants to suggest might erase the "traces of the relationship under which [the] ethnography was produced, and giving a false sense of complete interiority."[79] I am similarly present in this narrative, reflecting a shared investment in reflexivity in research and writing. Bordeaux's name is not changed by Santillanes, and while I have given the people who participated in this research the option of changing their names, no one asked me to do so, so I have not.

[75] Wekker 2006, p. 6-7, cites Portelli, A. 2001. *The Death of Luigi Trastelli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral Stories.* New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
[76] Wekker 2006, p. 7
[77] Santillanes 2007, p. 61
[78] Santillanes 2007, p. 8
[79] Santillanes 2007, p. 9

These kinds of choices depend on desires for reflexivity, but also to a recognition of the work of story and narrative in ethnographic practices. My project is disloyal to disciplinary practice, so it is a process of attending to stories from various sites, sources, positions and archives. Santillanes is concerned with how to position the individual at the centre of his stories, how to use or place his voice, how to not act as ventriloquist and how to attend to his experiences. In the case of my study, reading the stories or encounters with real people as moments, encounters, processes of narrative production that I openly respond to, disrupt, interpret and ever so occasionally support means that I get to do something that might be dis-comforting to the idea of "real people", "truth-telling" and the commitment to explain the positions of black/women/brides as an authoritative account of their personhoods.

I have been privileged by coming out of antiracist, feminist and queer intellectual projects that put the work of objective "scientific" knowledge under scrutiny, yet this has not necessarily meant that positivism has been erased as a dominant force for what it means to produce a doctoral research project. The demand to collect facts, analyse and then explain them in a linear progression of "questions" and "answers" is a dominant package, made worse I believe by assumptive logics tied to what it means to do research in/on/of Africa/Africans as subject. I could recount endless anecdotes on the experience of local and international meetings and conferences, where I am hailed to describe what my work is about. People often hope that my work will explain the difference between "white weddings" and "traditional" ones, or be a reprimanding comment on consumerism, or that in looking at black women, it is my intention to address a great number of oppressions faced by black women and come up with conclusive remarks on possible measures to make it better. If I trouble these simplifications of my intentions, the accusations follow of this being work that is self-indulgent, holds no "politics" or commitment to transformation. When I try harder to explain, refusing to be flattened to a single sentence, or to hold the participants of my research to account for statements like "South African brides are like [FILL IN THE BLANK]," I have even been accused of being poorly accountable to the "real" people that my work address.

These encounters of being disciplined back to a commitment to some version of reality where real black people can only be recognized through a structural analysis that is

committed to their remedy led me, like many other critical scholars to return to W.E.B. du Bois' question, "How does it feel to be a problem?"[80] I find the kind of "questions and answers" writing crippling and endangering. This dissertation is therefore written in conversation and response to the work of thinking and writing. I attempt here a project of "writing in fire,"[81] because of the way it animates writing that feels, says, unsays, implies – speaks in silences, is negotiated, contingent, multiple and complex. [As such] writing intends to be ethically committed to a process of "unravelling the 'single bundle of nerves' in which the violence of race, nation, class, gender, and sexuality 'does not bear distinction.' [...] The political task that remains is neither a restoration not a restitution, but a creative destruction."[82] So what does it mean to write about the experiences of black women?

This project hinges on the tension between a rejection of the project of humanism and a commitment to reading the experiences of black women, which is a commitment that requires accepting in the least the ontological claim that there are black women and their experiences materially and symbolically offer a specific kind of standpoint. Standpoint epistemologies intend to foreground feminist critiques of the universal humanist subject through three main claims: that knowledge is socially situated; that those who occupy structurally marginalized social and political locations have a privileged viewpoint; and finally, that research should not only be committed to reading and addressing power relations, but that these readings should begin with the lives of those located in structurally marginal locations. And yet it is not just the standpoint of "women" that these theories are invested in, as Sandra Harding argues the "need for struggle emphasizes the fact that a feminist standpoint is not something that anyone can have simply by claiming it. It is an achievement. A standpoint differs in this respect from a perspective which anyone can have simply by 'opening one's eyes'."[83]

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[80] See Keeling, Kara. 2007. *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme and the Image of Common Sense.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 27, for example.
[81] See Cliff, Michelle. 1982. If I Could Write This in Fire I Would Write This in Fire. In Smith, Barbara (Ed). *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. New York, NY: Kitchen Table.
[82] Sexton, Jared. 2008. *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiculturalism.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 258.
[83] Harding, Sandra. 1991. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge": Thinking from Women's Lives.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p. 127

By implication, standpoint theories reflect that "objective", scientific positivist knowledge, despite its claims at being value neutral is in fact also situated knowledge. For feminists located in the work of knowledge production this has had the result of making us "outsiders within", or as bell hooks contends "we [look] both from the outside in and from the inside out […] we understood both."[84] Therein lies a tension, as we are located in and privileged through our membership at the centre of the power of knowledge production, while at least making claims at sharing the perspective of the structurally marginalized. In this same instance the neoliberal university has cannibalized and commoditized the political projects of critical race and feminist knowledge production so that assumptions about who holds expertise in the "black experience" or "women's experience" makes this a contentious site emptied of its principal engagements with power. This concern becomes even more critical when one recognizes the entanglements of the historical production of a racist and sexist institutional culture within the university,[85] and its present relations to corporate and state funding committed to the same forms of harmful phallogocentrism that claim, often through counting the numbers of black women, or research that uses race, gender and sexuality, albeit as mere description; as signalling the transformations of this culture; when instead this work further supports the original hierarchies and structures of power and exclusion.

Gayatri Spivak's intervention enters here, as she asks us to contend with the vocabularies of knowledge production and representation that regulate our writing and continue to be committed to racist and patriarchal rules. In Spivak's analysis, our knowledge becomes merely another commodity in the repertoires of constituting discursive and material Otherness. As a methodological response Spivak offers the notion of strategic essentialism, which I find useful as a means of entering a discussion of "black women's experience." That is, a rejection of essentialism which intends to flatten subalternity to neatly bound categories for a "difference feminism" which makes strategically essentialist claims, while sustaining an awareness that these claims are at best "crude political generalizations"; "a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a

[84] hooks, bell. 1984. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre.* Boston, MA: South End Press. p. vii
[85] See Mabokela, Reitumetse & Magubane, Zine. 2004. *Hear Our Voices: Race, Gender and the Status of Black South African Women in the Academy*. Pretoria, UNISA Press.

scrupulously visible political interest."[86] That is, that women need to appeal to, or act as if they expressed, a real essence or underlying identity in order to make political claims. If there were no such thing as woman, if the feminine were nothing more than a fiction, then women could not make demands, claims or interventions. However, women can speak as if they form a distinct group precisely because gender ideology has produced them as 'woman'; a historically and politically produced name, a nominal essence constructed from patriarchal history. In foregrounding a commitment to the experience of "Black women", albeit without the arrogance to assume that I can speak with "Truth", or authority on what that means, as the universalizing dialect of objectivity might aspire to do, I want to think about a post, or anti-humanist subject as a means of addressing these tensions. I read the question of "woman", as one that is always already in process, or "becoming", both figurative and material. I would also add here that in centring my work on the figurative and material becomings of black women, I offer a broader critique on the logics of "proper humanness" following the suggestion that it is through the affecting and abjecting of black women's material and figurative bodies that the project of humanism is enabled and enacted. That is, that this discussion is explicitly concerned with the production of the logics of difference.

This project is committed to an assessment of femininity, which reaches at least one of its main achievements on or through the wedding ritual.[87] In his account of femininity, Freud affirms his commitment to a naturalized logic of sexual difference:

> *When you first meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male or female?' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty.*[88]

Liberal feminisms grounded on the logic of equality enter to disrupt Freud's position through "a commitment to the universality of reason [that] should lead to the dissolution of gender *hierarchy.*"[89] "Gender norms" that are decided socially and politically determine what "roles" men and women can occupy and how, or even if they will be compensated

[86] Spivak, Gayatri. 1996. *The Spivak Reader*. New York, NY: Psychology Press. p. 214
[87] See Bambacas, Christyana. 2002. Thinking about White Weddings. *Journal of Australian Studies* 26:72.
[88] Freud, Sigmund. 1973. Femininity. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.* London: Penguin. p. 140.
[89] Colebrook, Claire. 2004. *Gender.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan. p. 78

and in Claire Colebrook's assessment of these approaches, the body is irrelevant as "sex cannot affect out subjectivity; [...] as speaking and social subjects we have already distanced ourselves from our mere bodily being."[90] The notion of "sexual difference" emerges through the radical critiques of the reduction of the body to mere social representation,[91] so that the radical critiques of the humanist subject signalled through Kate Millet's notion of the "personal as political" for example, interrupt the liberal demands for equal pay, education and property as the site of political action by refusing "to see women as excluded from the traditional rights of man. The rights of man were *men's* rights – the rights of property, autonomy and reason – had been established through the oppression of women."[92]

Simone de Beauvoir enters the discussion with the suggestion that "women" emerge as an object of the male gaze that defines us; that is that the very notion of "woman" is a male concept as woman is always already the "Other": man is the subject, woman is the object who is only given meaning through and by men.[93] Her argument is then that "one is not born, but becomes a woman,"[94] as women's oppression is not biological destiny, but produced through social and historical forces. If sex is male and female; gender is the work of matching masculinity and femininity on to male and female bodies, and is constituted through compulsory heterosexuality. This rendering of the category of "woman" troubles Monique Wittig who suggests that "woman" becomes a nominal essence; if "women" are defined in relation to men, then lesbians by definition cannot be considered to be "women."[95] Woman is a myth that can only be confronted through the creative destruction of "heterosexuality as a social system which is based on the oppression of women by men and which produces the doctrine of the difference between the sexes to justify this oppression."[96]

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[90] Colebrook 2004, p. 79
[91] See Barad, Karen. 2003. Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs* 23: 3. Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meanings.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
[92] Colebrook 2004, p. 81
[93] De Beauvoir, Simone. 1974. *The Second Sex* (Trans). New York, NY: Vintage.
[94] De Beauvoir 1974, p. 265
[95] Wittig, Monique. 2012. One is not Born a Woman. In Abelove, Henry (Ed). *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader.* New York and London: Routledge.
[96] Wittig p. 108

Oyerunke Oyewumi's *The Invention of Women: Making Sense of Western Gender Discourses,* also troubles this category of "woman", arguing that gender is not always the best explanatory framework, as it emerges out of western institutions.[97] Oyewumi's concern is whether or not we can substantively make the claim that all societies are organized hierarchically around notions of biological sexual difference that place male-embodied subjects as universal and normative, and female-embodied subjects as the "Other" who are subordinated. Part of the question she asks is related to the ways that gender is produced through other axes of power including race, class, sexuality and age. Theorists of intersectionality would suggest that rather than reading gender as the ultimate logic of difference, gender itself should be understood as constituted in relation to these other hierarchies of power so that there are then endless categories of "women" constituted through the intersecting processes of subjectivation, and similarly the logic of racial difference should also be understood as constituted through gender.[98] Yet in *The Invention of Women,* Oyewumi argues that biological sexual difference is irrelevant in many African societies because gender distinctions are not coded within the structure of language, so rather than "gender", it is "seniority" that is the organizing principle.

Bibi Bakare-Yusuf engages Oyewumi's argument, endorsing the notion that gender should not be over-deterministically be aligned to biological difference, however she is concerned by the claim that through a reading of language or discourse one can access a "cultural essence", and argues that Oyewumi's method fails to understand how power operates and is embedded in language and the social practices it is attached to. It is not just the reduction of language to value-neutral representation that empties Oyewumi's analysis of power; "the experience of being a sexuated body affects how agents live through and are positioned in the field of power, language, discourse and social practice,"[99] yet this is absent in her analysis. In Oyewumi's analysis, the grammatical

[97] Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, also see Amadiume, Ifi. 1997. *Re-inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture.* London: York, NY: Zed Books and Nzegwu, Nkiru. 2006. *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture.* Ithaca, NY: State University of New York Press.

[98] See Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour. *Stanford Law Review* 43: 6.

[99] Bakare-Yusuf. 2003. Beyond Determinism: The Phenomenology of African Female Existence. *Feminist Africa* 2. Also see Bakare-Yusuf. 2000b. "Yoruba's Don't Do Gender": A Critical Review of

structure positions women as Other, resonating with de Beauvoir's position, however in the case of the Oyo-Yoruba, gender distinctions only refer to anatomical differences, which she uses to argue observably against Freud that "anatomy is not destiny,"[100] as "in simple terms, sex difference has no normative implications beyond anatomical distinction."[101]

It is not just that the analysis takes no account of the lived experience of sexed – or sexuated bodies,[102] but that in the analysis of language there is a continuous assumption that there are pure forms of language that one can access and analyse, against the poor translations projected through the colonial gaze and its logics. This authentic language with "true" meaning assumes an ahistorical and static singular originary meaning, as though meanings do not shift over time and across temporal locations and points of enunciation, or as Bakare-Yusuf argues: Oyewumi fails to see that language works only on the basis of embodied complex social interaction which both precedes and exceeds it."[103] Language is marked with social relations through the ways that it is practiced, leading Bakare-Yusuf to suggest that it is when one examines specific social situations that we can see how it is encoded. The example of the marriage ceremony is one such situation as sexual difference is not only produced, but is stressed as a part of the ways that essentialist claims are made about who "we" think "we" are, particularly through the ways women are placed as the representational sites for these claims.

While the work of femininity may never be complete, it is a fair argument to suggest that through the performance of certain rites of passage, femininity can at least be momentarily achieved. Weddings as ritual have such a function as Christyana Bambacas suggests that rather than focusing on weddings as single institutions, or cultural events; as rites of passage, we must also read them as one of (if not the) defining moments of a

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Oyerunke Oyewumi's *The Invention of Women: Making African Sense of Western Gender Discourses.* In Arnfred, S., B. Bakare-Yusuf, E.W. Kisiang'ani (Eds). *African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms.* Dakar: Codesria. p.

[100] Bakare-Yusuf 2003.

[101] Ibid.

[102] See Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. 2000a. In the Sea of Memory: Embodiment and Agency in the Black Diaspora. Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Coventry: University of Warwick.

[103] Bakare-Yusuf 2000a, p. 126

girl's life in her progression towards Womanhood.[104] This claim is made evident in a recent performance piece by Neo Musangi.[105] Through dress and posture, she demonstrates gender as performative and both masculinity and femininity are indexed as drag. Playing with material objects and movements Musangi signals masculinities and femininities; multiple, not singular and framed by affective relations albeit imagined, to time and space.[106] The piece was filmed in a public square in Nairobi. A crowd composed mostly of men surround Musangi, bewildered by the transgression of gendered norms. The gaze of the camera turns to these men as they are invited to respond to this critique of the triad of sex/gender/sexuality, commenting on their discomfort at not being able to fit Musangi in a neat category. His/her femininity and masculinity were equally "convincing." One man then tells the camera why this gender trouble was so disconcerting: "Who will marry her?"

The process of becoming/s girl-bride-woman as the achievement of femininity holds a number of implications. First, that the achievement of femininity requires compulsory heterosexuality; second, that the everyday work of femininity, including the modifications, containment of, movement and expression of the body are related to the ritualized rite of passage of marriage, the point at which the body at least for the staging of the ritual is made most "beautiful." These aestheticized and representational markers that stage what people claim as "our culture", in wedding work are often read and claimed as such through a logic similar to one that Bakare-Yusuf identifies as underlying in Oyewumi's argument as she suggests:

> *That Oyewumi's fixation with an untainted linguistic and social indigeneity is ultimately motivated by a desire to assert the radical Otherness of African culture in relation to Europe. This desire to proclaim Africa's own unique culture, mode of being and hermeneutic tradition has a long tradition in African political and intellectual history, embedded as it is in the quest to contest European denial of African humanity and European global dominance. Oyewumi's project of highlighting a Yoruba cultural logic that is not polluted by western gender demarcation or inequalities thus situates her in a long list of 'race men' who are keen to uncover and assert indigenous African knowledge and modes of self-representation. Yet, her desire to uncover a pure Oyo-*

[104] Bambacas 2002, p. 193
[105] Pereira, Jabu Chen. & Musangi, Neo. 2013. (Video Installation). Critically Queer. 10-14 September, FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg.
[106] For instance, Neo shifts through movements of the body to signal "urban", "rural", "the modern", "traditional"

> *Yoruba cultural framework that is anterior to colonial projects is deeply problematic and against the grain of the cultural system she wishes to uncover.*[107]

I appeal to the notion of "becomings", to signal the incomplete processes of femininity, as well as the notion of sexual difference. Sexual difference theorists like Rosi Braidotti who draws from Luce Irigary, argues that sexual difference is not some brute biological given, nor an effect of social construction. On the contrary, all our images and ideas of modernity, including the separation of mind and body, form and matter, reason and passions, have been produced by subjects who also position themselves as sexually different and differently embodied. For Braidotti, overcoming modernity and the notion of the disembodied and universal subject must begin with sexual difference, for it is the refusal of this difference which is the hallmark of the modern 'neuter' self.[108] For Braidotti, the 'female feminist subject' is produced *through articulation,* by asking *who* the subject of modernity is."[109]

I do not use the word identity often, possibly because of the ways it has been rendered through varying versions of standpoint in essentialist and essentialising ways. Yet it might work as a site or space for thinking about the moments at which it is pronounced. Stuart Hall who is invested in the notion of "identity", and its relationship to a politics of location that is deployed as strategic and positional, follows Foucault's desire for a theory of identity that is "not a theory of the knowing subject, but rather a theory of discursive practice," for Hall, the question of subjectification must also entail the question of identification which he defines as:

> *A process or articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little'- an over-determination or a lack, but the never a proper fit, a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play' of* différance*. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. And since as a process it operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier-effects'. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process.*[110]

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[107] Bakare-Yusuf 2000a, p. 134
[108] Colebrook 2004, p.85
[109] Colebrook 2004, p. 86
[110] Hall, Stewart. 1996. Introduction: Who Needs Identity? In Hall, Stuart & du Gay, Paul (Eds). *Questions of Cultural Identity.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. p. 3

Identities are constructed within and not outside of discourse, so are therefore produced in relation to specific historical and institutional sites, and for Hall, by "specific enuciative strategies"[111] that in their relations to the modalities of power work to mark the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion – the instances that call us to enunciate ourselves and our "identity" do so in ways that intend to mark this "traditional identity" as naturally constituted, unitary and coherent – or "inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation"[112] and yet these moments of enunciation are marked with multiplicities, contradictions and incoherence. It is important to note the work of producing an identity with coherent "insides" that can only be marked in relation to an outside, or a constitutive Other, which through its lack marks the "insides" as positive.

The image of my partner Celo and I is one such point of enunciation. It was taken on the "Xigiane" or "second day", following our "formal white wedding," in Maputo. It was a day that signified a number of things, first that "traditionally" it would be the day after the lobola negotiations are concluded and the marriage is agreed upon. After the "wedding night", I would be formally delivered to my groom's family and a second feast would ensue including a number of ritual practices such as advice ceremonies and an opportunity for me to display my future contributions to the social reproduction of my new family, by "acting out" domestic chores such as sweeping and cooking. Of course our lobola negotiations had been concluded a year and half before this day and our "white wedding", while formal in all the senses implied by scholars of the ritual, was infected with the performances of identity and the enunciations of "insides" and "outsides" of "tradition".

The meeting of at least two different cultural conventions offer an interesting example of the multiple readings of the significance of the occasion. According to my father's sisters who acted on my behalf through the processes of marriage, I was meant to travel with them and arrive under a solid white sheet. Celo's family were to meet us as the gate where the women would negotiate in order to allow the families to "meet". For the women in Celo's family, I was meant to already be at my new "home" and this occasion was for my natal family to meet my new family. Now I simply understood that this day would allow the family and friends who had not made "the cut" for the formal wedding to

[111] Hall 1996, p. 4
[112] Ibid.

see the new bride. I had been asked to wear my wedding dress again to further extend the glamour of the wedding to this second party.

I had bought a simpler cream lace dress instead. We had been collected from our hotel in the centre of town by our Padrinho's[113] Mercedes Benz and the number plates of the car had been replaced by personalized plates reading "Zezinho"[114] on the back and "Danai" on the front. The vehicle was also dressed in ribbons and flowers as is expected of a wedding car and as we drove from the city centre towards Celo's parent's quinta or 'farm'-cum-staged-rural, other cars swerved out of our way, clapping and smiling and occasionally stopping to actually tell us how happy they were for us. We had arrived at the gate and been ceremoniously received by a crowd of women, including Celo's four sisters who led us to the high table that was decorated with flowers and ornaments recycled from the previous evening's occasion. At the centre of the table was a two litre bottle of Johnny Walker Blue Label whiskey, later accompanied by a series of delicacies that at some point included goat head stew. We sat across from less elaborately decorated tables under a tent and adjacent to us was a large buffet table with food and drink. The festivities began once we arrived, interrupted when Celo's mum ran towards me and said "please come help, we do not understand!" As it turns out, the crisis was that both parties felt that they should be paid in order for the "meeting" to proceed. My aunts had my younger sister sitting under a sheet as a proxy for the absent bride and required a payment to be made to them in order to allow them access to the festivities – which could only begin once they entered with the proxy-bride and her trousseau and adequately demonstrated her proficiency, albeit it staged, in the domestic sphere. Celo's mother and aunt instead required that my aunts should pay them in order to earn the right to come and see me at my new home. The sheet-come-veil intended to represent my chastity caused further confusion as I unhelpfully joked that it was an aspirational symbol of my virginity. Everyone was offended.

seems that this couple would take on some responsibility in extending the knowledge of social distinction to the couple. In some aspects, this would also involve or include financial or material support for the wedding and after it.

[114] "Little Zé" is what Celo (whose full name is Celestino Fernando José Maússe) is affectionately referred to by his family. José was his grandfather's name and was extended to him as a signal that he possesses the ability to extend his grandfather's progeny.



1 Celo and Danai Xigiane, Maputo 2010

By the time the guests had an opportunity to come and greet the couple and share gifts and advice, the war cries between two newly established camps vigorously claimed that they "owned" me, or the couple as a whole, or that either I, or Celo was (and I quote) "number one."

Cameramen flanked us from the moment we stepped out of the Hotel Rovuma and captured the ritual, despite the confusion I describe above in an almost "prefect" way, to represent what I believe was intended to be an 'traditional wedding'. The picture depicts us on the built-for-the-occasion cement stage, flanked by various "traditional" African dancers who are simultaneously actors and spectators in the scene. Through movement and dress they performed as "Zulu", "Shangaan", "Xhosa", "Swazi" and at some point even as cosmopolitan urban township youths through the . The genres of performance intended to display what are enunciated as stable, coherent borders or boundaries of ethno-linguistic and cultural insides and outsides. Celo and I are also both actors and spectators, generally unaware of the script of the rituals of that day and drawn to the front, shield in hand, through our performance of romantic companionate marriage and the hard work of diplomacy, mark the boundary-making work that is the point at which identity is pronounced.

Wedding rituals, through language and bodies, enact the process (or at least the desire for) a project of territorialisation. I contend that this project, works through representational practices enacted on and through the bodies of women. Deleuze offers the notion of deterritorialization to open up new notions of subjectivity, so that the category of "woman" does not refer to actual women but to woman as *topos* or position and signifies a general transformation in consciousness which is nomadic, rhizomatic (having a diffuse root system) and beyond the polarities of gender identity.[115] This notion emphasizes becomings in process and plural because it also implies fluid boundaries. In the above example, the ritual intends to project or make claims, through the performance of sexuated boundaries of ethno-linguistic difference, and yet it also is heavy with excesses that imply greater fluidity than the coherent bound aspirations which a humanist subjectivity might desire.

[115] See Braidotti, Rosi. 2010. Woman. In Parr, Adrian (Ed). *The Deleuze Dictionary.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. p. 306-308.

These excesses emerge in the processes of naming for instance, as at the points of greeting varying attempts at announcing the bride and groom through genealogical accounts that return to an originary source of some kind have within their base assumptions, a set of myths concerned with "purity" and singularity; so that for men and women despite being "closely related" or from the "same" cultural backgrounds, through the performance of the marriage ritual enact singular and oppositional nationalized, territorialized claims with an equal vigour as would be the case when the base assumption is that the bride and groom do not share similar "cultures". While a "return" to specific origins is performatively aspired towards, a major point of irony also emerges as these micro-nationalisms somehow also neatly fit into the narratives of the broader national project as the diplomatic exchange erupts as one between whole modern nation states, despite that these national boundaries are not only superficial in the sense that their neat coherence is an aspiration at best; but that they are quite recently imagined projects. The tensions are eased at the height of the ritual as the bride is invited to join the "tribe" of her husband, learn the language and prepare for a life of social reproduction animated by the advice ceremonies and exchange of gifts. The various recent projects to read the formalization of the wedding ritual, often in the "West" all recognize "origins" of the ritual not only as the moment of exchange of women between men, but that this process enacts a performance of "public sex", as the consummation of the marriage marks the moment of becoming girl-bride-woman and the "height" of the aspirations of normative femininity.

Bakare-Yusuf offers the helpful notion that as embodied subjects we are "sexuated" that is, that we exist in relation to place, even when that relation is one of being on the outside, the fringes or exclusions of place. In this rendering, the "local" becomes a place that shapes the ways we experience our embodiment in an entangled process as our bodies give space its meaning.[116] Through Adrienne Rich's notion of a "politics of location", and Donna Haraway's "situated knowledge", Bakare-Yusuf contends that every speaking subject is a situated subject which holds socio-symbolic and material consequences. Foregrounding sexual difference as Braidotti does, Bakare-Yusuf calls on the notion of being/becoming sexuated as embodied situated bodies comes to experience that embodiment through the sexually specific social and historical meanings projected on to

[116] Bakare-Yusuf 2000a, p. 114.

that space. In her analysis, it is the slave ship on the Middle Passage that is a sexually indeterminate space[117], in my analysis it is the staging of the marriage ritual.

The sexuated becomings that I reference are similarly invested in reading situated embodiment as raced so that it is the process of becoming black woman that the analysis intends to foreground. Chela Sandoval's reading of Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* reads it as disruptive to a racial binary between "black" and "white", as it unifies these categories into a single body, a racially cyborg body, part technology as mask, and part biology as skin. Sexuated blackness then becomes this body of skin and mask invokes a kind of vertigo:

> *If skin is black, but the face one views, or wears, is only a disguise of white power – "black skin, white masks"- then physical, psychic, and cultural environs become unstable meanings: distinctions between insides and outsides, forms or contents, nature and culture, and between what is understood as superior or inferior are set askew. The metaphor "black skin, white masks" calls up, but also undoes, the racial binary opposition that the metaphor also depends on in order to be spoken. A metaphor such as this operates through what is known as a "chiasmic" change of signification, a twisted rope that makes meaning by turning in on itself, by repeating while simultaneously inverting the relationship between two concepts.*[118]

The appearance of black brides in the cultural landscape has been read by many as signalling something about the representations of blackness and women in South Africa,[119] yet I would insist that these mediated or signifying practices are not simply occasions for representations of the "self", but that these specific representations are intended to speak to how we are meant to understand where bodies should be sexuated with relation to blackness, whiteness and class. If for Sandoval, the "skin" in the metaphor functions as a mask that is an exterior cover for something other than what appears on the surface; the black skin is cannibalized by the white mask: it is masked, concealed, consumed; although it cannot fully disappear; so that it appears to us as a present/absence, another kind of disguise.[120]

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[117] Bakare-Yusuf 2000a, p. 115
[118] Sandoval, Chela. 2000. *Methodology of the Oppressed.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 84
[119] See Benita de Robillard, Benita. 2009. Something "New" That's been here All Along? Polygamy and the Afropolitan Bridal Couple in South African Bridal Magazines. In Du Preez, Amanda (Ed). *Taking a Hard Look: Gender and Visual Culture in Post-Apartheid South Africa.* Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
[120] Sandoval 2000, p. 84

The wedding ritual places (black)women as this kind of presence/absence as the ritual is framed around the movement of women from one territorial claim to another. Through the technology of the camera, this image captures a moment of looking relations that both naturalizes and displaces claims at coherent insides and outsides; although we all arrive and move on from this place where we can at least in that moment stage stand fixed in bound territory. Citing the metaphor of travel as a method of reading looking relations, E. Ann Kaplan notes this paradox: while travel may destabilize a fixed notion of culture, it heightens a sense of national belonging. People's identities when they are travelling are often more self-consciously *national* than when they stay home. In addition, travel provokes conscious attention to gender and racial difference."[121]

The brides that I spoke with live and occupy a local that "vibrates", if I follow Julien Henriques' notion of a "sonic diaspora". I was initially disinclined to do so, anxious about the implications of idealising a "home", the under/other side that any diaspora depends on. Henriques argues that "the propagation of vibrations may provide a better way of understanding diasporic spread than the conventional focus on the circulation of products."[122] These are corporeal and ethereal vibrations of rituals and dance routines. The emphasis of routes and travel "reinforces essentialist ideas of identity being founded in origins, authenticities, roots or retentions." Vibrations "seek to engage in terms of qualities, values and meaning of affective transmission and the infection of intensities."[123] In practice, this means thinking through the notion of locality in very serious ways. Following Henriques' discussion on "sonic dominance" and "vibrations," there are two ways of doing this that I am working through at the moment: the first, through the notion of nomadism: a tool that allows for one to view people's lives as always already multiple, unfixed and that people speak within, as well as outside and beyond the positions available to them within the collectivities to which they belong (or unbelong). Quoting Rosi Braidotti:

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[121] Kaplan, E. Ann. 1997. *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze.* New York & London: Routledge. p. 5-6.
[122] Henriques, Julien. 2008. Sonic Diaspora, Vibrations, and Rhythm: Thinking Through the Sounding of the Jamaica Dancehall Session. *African and Black Diaspora* 1:2. p. 215
[123] Ibid

> *The nomadic subject is a myth, that is to say a political fiction that allows you to think through and move across established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without burning bridges*.[124]

Braidotti, along with other feminists[125] work through the analytical tools developed by Deleuze and Guattari on deterritorialization. In these models, the map is one of connections, rather than localizing/localized points. Nomadism starts by acknowledging the bodily roots of subjectivity at the same time, that it rejects essentialism. As the nominal concept of nomadism suggests, nomadic subjects, are subjects in transition. They are not characterised by homelessness, but by their ability to recreate their homes everywhere. Following a history of geographical apartheid, labour migrations, settlement and forced desettlements, homelands and otherwise: I hold that the question of a "home" and the question of territory are deeply contentious in the South African context. It may seem politically alarming or curious that my point of departure is deterritorialization. But I follow Braidotti when she argues that the 'radical nomadic epistemology Deleuze and Guattari propose is a form of resistance to microfascisms in that it focuses on the need for a qualitative shift away from hegemony, whatever its size and however "local" it may be.'[126]

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a minor literature is instructive as I pursue a mode of writing disinclined toward a logic of the Same. In their view, language:

> *poses power relations through its grammatical and syntactic regularities, its lexical and semantic codes, yet those relations are inherently unstable, for linguistic constants and variants are merely enforced restrictions of speech-acts that in fact are perpetual variation. A major use of a language limits, organises, controls, whereas a minor usage of a language induces disequilibrium in its components, taking advantage of the potential for diverse and divergent discursive practices already present within language. Every language, whether dominant or marginalised, is open to major or a minor usage*
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> *[…]*

[124] Braidotti, Rosi. 1994. *Nomadic Subject: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory.* New York: Columbia University Press. p. 4.
[125] See Kaplan 1997, Colebrook 2004, Grosz, Elizabeth. 1996. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, Probyn, Elspeth. 1996. *Outside Belongings.* New York, NY: Psychology Press, Ahmed, Sara. 1998. *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, for example.
[126] Braidotti 1994, p. 5

> *Minor literature is less a product than a process of becoming minor, through which language is deterritorialized immediately social and political issues are engaged, and a collective assemblage of enunciation makes possible the invention of people to come.*[127]

Becoming black woman is a reading of sexuated bodies, chiasmic masks and a process of writing in minor literature that "is not the self-assertion of a rationally ordained imaginative subject, rather its eviction."[128]

[127] Bogue, Ronald. 2010. Minoritarian + Literature. In Parr, Adrian (Ed). *The Deleuze Dictionary.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. p. 171
[128] Braidotti 2010, p. 310

One is not Born, One Becomes an Undutiful Daughter[129]

This project has been extraordinarily difficult to both introduce and to summarize. Part of the trouble has been my own disenchantment with making authoritative claims about what I know as I increasingly snuggle into the comfort of being able to say something speculatively, yet in a loud voice. My locations as a student funded within a project committed to new or different methodological and epistemological modes of thinking, yet deeply invested in materialist analyses makes me feel unsettled and perhaps at times alienated. In registering the project in African Literature, the accident of wishing for Pumla Gqola as a supervisor projected me into another set of intellectual investments, which while similarly curious about what this project proposed, has its own political and intellectual categories and genealogies which I am not necessarily embedded in. Inter and multi-disciplinarity lends itself to such a condition. Laying claim to being an expert at everything and nothing is anxiety-provoking. Yet it has been the only manner by and through which I could think and write in all of the antagonisms that I find necessary in describing the events and occasions that form the body of this work. It is not only that I feel uncommitted to a narrative that tells you what evidence I have collected and then interprets it; as many have convincingly suggested, all "evidence" is already an act of interpretation. It is also that part of the argument that I am posing wishes to think about how the production of regimes of the self: political, intellectual, social and aesthetic are produced in modes of becoming that are incomplete but can also be at times extraordinarily productive. Beginning the work as a bride, speaking to other brides is then not an entry point, but an argument, a method and an antagonism I extend to all of the women in this work. For even when they have wished to project an image of themselves that was coherent, locked into the liberal humanistic longings for a knowing and knowable self-possessed subject, the expression of a refusal of a decided and univocal narrative suggests a shared conviction in troubling the location of becoming-black-bride.

There are running antagonisms in this work. The first is the figure of becoming-black-bride who lies at the centre of both the evidence and the argument. I analyse interviews, images, texts and film which are concerned with weddings, consumption and romance in

[129] Braidotti, Rosi. 2012. The Society of Undutiful Daughters. In Gunkel, Henriette. Nigianni, Chrysanthi., and Söderbäck, Fanny. (Eds). *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. p. ix.

general, or specifically with the experience or aspiration of being a bride for black women. I put the evidence to different kinds of uses, but refuse to insist on privileging one kind of text over another, quite simply because I am settled with the idea that my findings are speculative and intentionally intended to not offer an essentialist account. The black bride is a figure that enables me to speak to the specific experience of black women in this place, while also insisting on a critique of the following:

- Marriage practice
- The notion of 'tradition'
- Dominant or normative/normalizing femininity
- Whiteness
- The meanings of space
- The production of history

I am interested in time and space which are central to the demands of my funding for important reasons. That is, the notion that the present realities of post/apartheid South Africa are connected to the history which produced the nation that include but are not limited to a crafting of race, gender and sexuality as technologies that mediate capital and labour, and was mapped on to geographical space. Speaking broadly, there is an assumption that history produces the present connected to a commitment to linear narrations of time. These readings of the nation at its present then also assume a progression towards something *better*, so that the failures of the nation state are perhaps a surprise, or at least we can look to see some forms of progress mostly achieved by the introduction of democracy. There is an assumption here about inclusion, so that inclusion into the liberal frameworks of a humanist state will make positive changes to the social landscape which fails to question how the project of humanism is fundamentally produced out of the same set of technologies along with a commitment to the authoritative, singular linear narratives of the past and the present.

It is not revelatory to suggest that the reflection of the nation as one of increasing opportunity for all and a model of democratic inclusion is projected by the state and those invested in marketing it for their various purposes. There are also critics who remind the state over and over again of a failed promise and at most radical there are those who question the premise of the promise of the state to begin with. In all of these accounts

there remains a commitment to the possibilities of the present and future that is better than the past. Remarking on the subject, Scott suggests that: "anticolonial stories about past, present and future have typically been emplotted in a distinctive narrative form, one with a distinctive story-potential: that of *Romance.* They have tended to be narratives of overcoming, often narratives of vindication; they have tended to enact a distinctive rhythm and pacing, a distinctive direction, and to tell stories of salvation and redemption. They have largely depended on a certain (utopian) horizon toward which the emancipationist history is imagined to be moving."[130] I am not suggesting a total divestment in a utopic vision, on the contrary, instead I want to query the possibilities of that vision under the commitments of humanism, liberalism and their concomitant notions of what it means to be properly human. Much in the manner that David Scott suggests as he recognizes his project as thinking about the historicizing past hopes (such as anticolonial ones) as entailing "an analysis less of the transformative projects themselves than of the way those hopes reflect a certain understanding of the problem to overcome [...] the way sources of discontent or the obstacles to satisfaction are conceived and defined."[131]

I engage with works of art, more specifically with photography and the portrait. The reasons are multiple, for instance that wedding rituals are not only opportunities for image-making; they are also framed by the production of images. Wedding photographs, like some of the artistic work that I analyse intends to both confront existing, perhaps non-inclusive or problematic archives, while simultaneously producing a new one. The move, both literal and metaphoric; in demanding inclusion in the field of vision, is part of a politics that I wish to attend to. However, I also critique its base assumptions. The desire for a self-ruling subject, self-possessed who can possess property and propriety attended to by these demands, remains in my view uncritical or unaware of its implication within the work of the technologies of race, gender and sexuality. I am also suspicious of scholarship that frames revolutionary struggle in this and other spaces exclusively within the Marxist tradition, not only because of the humanist tendencies I admonish earlier, but also because the subject of analysis is contained in the figure of the worker and the ways that other

[130] Scott, David. 2004. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham NC & London: Duke University Press. p. 7-8.
[131] Scott 2004, p. 5-6.

modes of subjectivation are produced recede, or are reduced to mere cultural repertoire empty of power and politics.

I began this project in the Vaal quite incidentally. I lived in Sasolburg and my friends lived in Sasolburg and Vanderbijlpark and it seemed easy and interesting enough to think about that place and the people I knew there on the periphery of Johannesburg. Yet I struggled to fix my location there as the people I spoke to shared narratives of migration and aspiration like myself. I was immediately aware of the allure of Johannesburg, or the "Joburg dream", and as one of its victims I soon found myself moving towards it, first living in Roodepoort and now much closer inside its inner-suburban-belly. I have observed my peers marry, become parents and spend their weekends at the sprawling malls in and around the city. I have witnessed the same friends seek upward mobility and assess themselves against each other measuring their own ability to survive this place on their varying ability to access new things to dress their bodies and their homes. I have seen friends succeed in projecting such a fantastic image of themselves that they have been featured on the pages of consumer magazines that confirm their status as "new women" in the "new South Africa." I have also seen friends fail to meet the demands of this figure, and friendships suffering at the cost of the standards of keeping up with the Jones, possibly because there is too much familiarity in the failure of friends; it is too close, too intimate a reminder of our own precariousness as we live on the edge of a promise through a logics of debt.

Michael Burawoy and Karl von Holdt enter a discussion of this "Johannesburg moment", which they characterize as a post-apartheid moment of political rupture demonstrated by the project of transformation. Johannesburg functions as an icon of the post-apartheid project of transformation and yet it simultaneously confronts us with the contradictions of the post/apartheid reality:

> By virtue of its dynamism and scale, the city serves to refract them so that them so that the dynamic interaction between order and disorder, between multiple orders and the jagged edges of ruin, become most visible and most instance in this place. Johannesburg was always at the centre of making and remaking of the South African order. However, this moment is different, characterised, as noted above, by an historic rupture. [132]

[132] Burawoy, Michael von Holdt, Karl. 2012. *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press. p.4

The questions of order and disorder are central to their discussion and illustrated in their juxtaposition between a former "Durban moment" and the present "Johannesburg moment" that is refracted upon to debates concerned with the struggle towards a utopic vision. That is, that they recognize the purchase of Marxist traditions in thinking about South Africa and indeed within the antiapartheid and decolonial struggles, yet through Johannesburg they wish to consider the purchase of the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu's theories on social reproduction and culture. To this end, they set up a set of binaries, "the class binary of the worker versus the capitalist and the racial binary of the black oppressed versus white domination."[133] Corroborating the previous arguments I offer from David Scott, Burawoy and von Holdt content that these binaries place the agents of history within a master narrative of progress which has triumph at its end. Yet in the case of Johannesburg, there is incoherence and "moral certainties are no longer clear"[134] so for them, we need to assert a new binary. Now I am suspicious of a commitment to a new dialectic and its non-abandonment of the Hegelian posture.

On what von Holdt and Burawoy call the "racial binary of the black oppressed", Frank Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman suggest that rather than seeking a new dialectic, instead we might ask "what does it mean to bring [the position of the unthought] into view without making it a locus of positive value, or trying to fill the void?"[135] Their suggestions refuse a project framed by a metanarrative of progress or inclusion within the national project, so the transformation project of South Africa's liberal democracy would certainly be in question. I read their critique quite closely alongside James Snead's critique of Hegel, for it is not simply that in Hegel there remains a commitment to a fulfilment in the future, but that the binary of the worker is presented to us as though it were entirely separate from the question of race. The promise of time, progress the future in Hegel assumes not only a universal applicability of the male European subject, but in Snead's assessment actually depends upon the anti-typical time of the black subject.[136] This is an interesting entry into Ahmed Veriava and Prishani Naidoo's reading of Biko's Black Consciousness. For Veriava and Naidoo, like Snead the black subject presents a particular kind of haunting. In Veriava and Naidoo it is a haunting and then a scream, for Biko's politics of Black

[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid
[135] Wilderson & Hartman 2003, p. 181
[136] Snead, James. 1981. On Repetition in Black Culture. *Black American Literature Forum* 15: 4.

Consciousness refuses the logics of narrative time, it is a different order of time, heterogeneous and dense in the moments of our multiple presents.

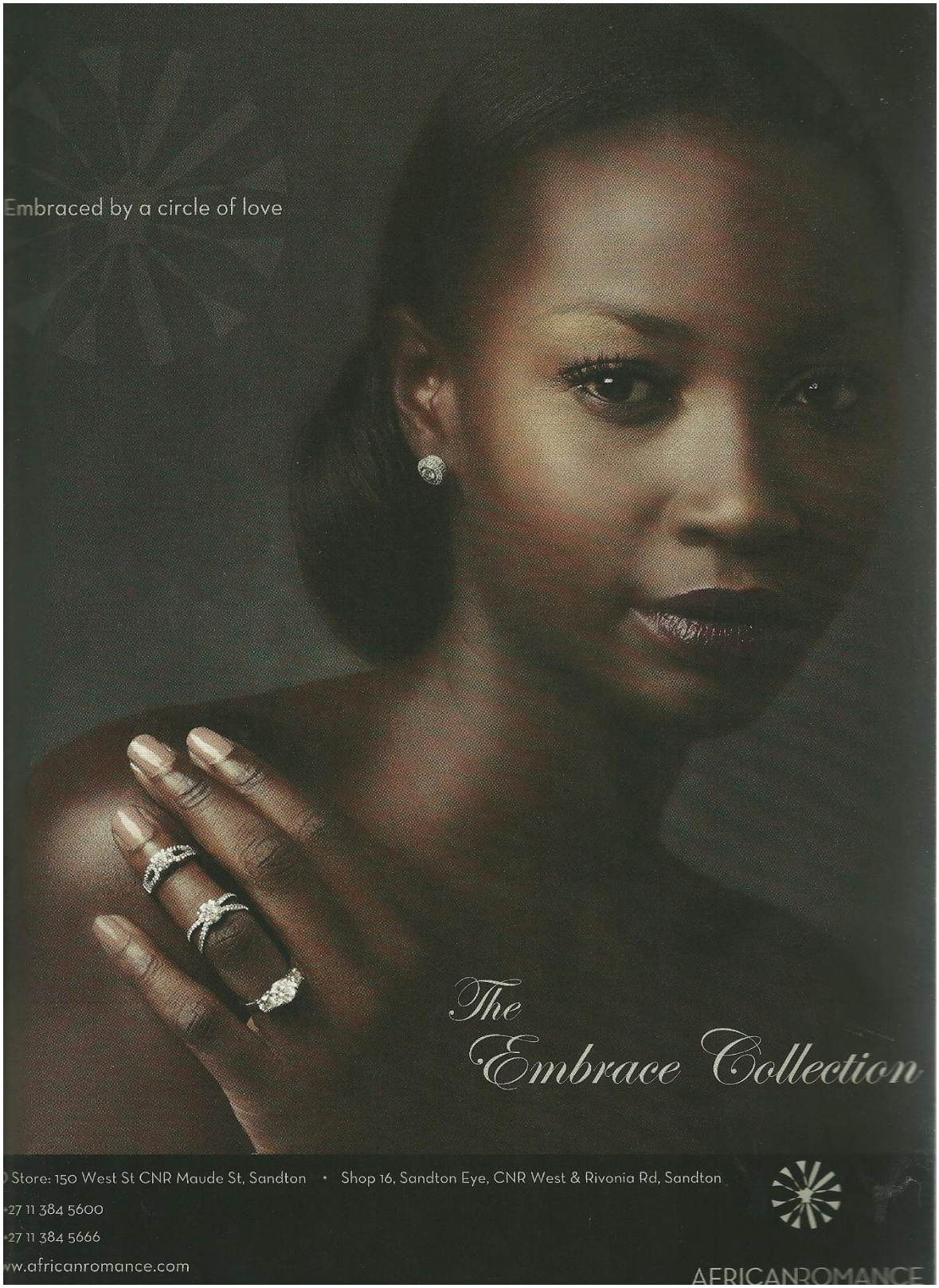
In reading *I Write What I Like*, Veriava and Naidoo have a number of intentions the first of which is to come in defence of the text as both original and relevant. In so doing, they read it against canonical texts which engage with the work of anti-racist struggle. The text interjects two texts in particular, which pose different responses to anti-racist struggle. In Leopold Senghor's Négritude, it is a concern with an African past and an African culture that presents us with our own form of humanism. Frantz Fanon's response in *The Wretched of the Earth* finds Senghor's position essentialist and hence problematic. Fanon suggests instead a dialectic of experience. On Négritude, the movement is one concerned with the expression of the black personality embattled within the humanist vision. If we can express (even quite simply just as a sign, an empty imagined signifier of a place beyond the beach, for instance) some vision of Africa and African humanness, then it is possible to build a confidence with which to confront the dehumanizing structures of race craft. For Fanon, the struggle of culture is not a defence against Europe to improve the esteem of Africans, it is instead the struggle itself. It is the struggle for national culture and as such is something of the present and of the moment, articulated within the frames of the demands of present struggle. Fanon recognizes Senghor's gesture, for the native intellectual desires to see themselves within a broader genealogical tradition that is properly human and coherent and perhaps even in the liberal projection of humanism and it is an important stage in the consciousness towards the elaboration of national culture, but it remains essentialist and problematic. So Fanon seeks a national culture that happens in the acts of struggle; it is more dynamic – it is embattled. Biko is the inscrutable shaped by both in Veriava and Naidoo's reading:

> What is so striking about this and similar passages, whether related to poverty or song, beyond their obvious essentialist romanticization of the African past, is how Biko's African culture is made to speak the strategic questions confronted by his generation. African culture is immediately politicized, opened up to the search for "new" weapons for the present struggle. If Senghor's negritude was an "emotional response" to that insult the white man has flung to humanity, as Fanon suggests, Biko's journey along the same path is a practical, if not opportunistic attempt to define the poles across which a "new humanity" would have to be forged.[137]

[137] Veriava, Ahmed & Naidoo, Prishani. 2008. Remember Biko for the Here and Now. In Mngxitama, Andile. Alexander, Amanda & Gibson, Nigel C. (Eds). *Biko Lives! Contesting the Legacies of Steve*

Rather than a force of negativity, or a void to be filling the scream is in Biko more profoundly the affirmation of difference. Yet, in the here and now confronted with the contradictions that Burawoy and von Holdt wish to contend with, Veriava and Naidoo end with the question of class as another key component of the argument that they wish to pose. In a large sense, defence of Biko appears to have the intent to rescue his image from its function as an empty signifier of black struggle. In so doing, they invite us to the scene of Rosebank Mall in Johannesburg where one can purchase a t-shirt for R300 with his face at the centre. Their suggestion appears to be that Biko and blackness as icons to market a burgeoning black middle class national project presents a tension for the struggle, a forgetting that is signalled through the image of the consuming black middle class. While I am sympathetic to the argument that the iconographic use of Biko on a t-shirt generally inaccessible to the "masses in struggle" is perverse, given the conditions of black abjection of the present, I am not sure if it is simple enough to dismiss black subjects that might consume the image as a mere extension of Rosebank Mall in the manner that they do. What strikes me about the image Veriava and Naidoo build is that it marks Rosebank and those that consume there as black. The black consumer and black middle class certainly pose a set of questions and contradictions because of the history of racialized capitalism, segregation and the manner by which transformation and freedom has been read through a logics of inclusion within the system of capital. And yet in this image, the whiteness of Rosebank is unmarked, or unremarked and something of the ways the binaries of the worker and the black subject have intersected within the public political in rather problematic ways.

Biko. New York, NY: Palgrave. p. 241 See also Biko, Steve. Senghor, Leopold. 1994. Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century. In Chrisman, L & Williams, P. (Eds). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Fanon, Frantz. 1994. On National Culture. In Chrisman, L & Williams, P. (Eds). Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Biko, Steve. 2004. I Write What I Like. Johannesburg: Picador.



2 The Embrace Collection, African Romance

To return to Buroway and von Holdt, the Johannesburg moment is an endeavour due to this problematic, which is why they turn to Bourdieu and his concerns with reproduction and order. They enter a critique of Bourdieu in their assessment of the ways the hegemony is effective *and* ineffective. On this subject, I wish to suggest that rather than a concern with hegemony alone, perhaps we should be thinking about the transmission of affect as a key historical category. I would take by example Franco Barchiesi's reading of how labour comes to be important in the South African struggle.[138] In particular, I would suggest that it is a reading of how labour comes to be important for masculinity and citizenship, while women, along with several private, reproductive and domestic spheres become appendages to one main experience. Barchiesi's contention is generally persuasive, for he does not believe that the black subject has been fully appropriated into the subject of the worker for varying present and historical reasons. I might stretch his proposal to read alongside Frank Wilderson's suggestions about the black subaltern, produced in his analysis of the United States "at the intersection of both a capitalist and white supremacist state" Wilderson contends that through a privileging of Marxist discourse, is only ready by the variable of the wage.[139] This is inadequate for Wilderson, who identifies a crisis similar to that observed by Burawoy and von Holdt, and signalled for Barchiesi, when the black worker is "ineffective." The black subject for Wilderson is a scandal, or through the terms of Hortense Spillers "a distended organizational calculus,"[140] which has the particular effect of destabilizing the notion of civil society altogether.

Colonial governance and its investment in segregation at the onset of a mining driven capitalism intended to confine Black political belonging to rural 'native reserves', yet as he notes, these black men were drawn into the system of migrant labour. Migrant labour had the result of producing a precarious class of African workers, but was enabling in other ways. Like others, Barchiesi notes that for young men it enabled an alternative way to earn lobola. From African women, it is in "unauthorized" urban occupations that they could

[138] Barchiesi, Franco. 2011. *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa.* Ithaca, NY: State University of New York Press.
[139] Wilderson, Frank III. 2003. Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society? *Social Identities* 9:2. p. 225
[140] Spillers, Hortense.1996. All the Things You Could be by Now if Sigmund Freud's Wife was Your Mother: Psychoanalysis and Race. *boundary 2* 23:3. p 82, cited in Wilderson 2003. p227

"challenge their confinement to the patriarchal universe of the reserves."[141] The work of women in the domestic service as example are read as wage earning alternatives and not the site of the worker. Even in Shireen Ally's reading of domestic labour, she reads domestic work as a category of the modernizing democratic state, against domestic servitude in the colonial and apartheid periods.[142] It is not that Ally seeks a neat continuum, on the contrary there are many continuities. It is perhaps the intimacy of work in the domestic space, along with the kinds of exploitation implied in the relations that are not limited to the body, like the emotional that leads Ally to insist upon a notion of bondage. Attentive to the organization of the domestic space, for instance, Ally frames her argument around the "room" of the domestic worker, an appendage for the production of properly human white suburban space or aspiration.

I am persuaded by Ally's contribution, but perhaps wish to suggest something slightly different. Like Ally, I do not think that the category of the worker is sufficient in relating the conditions and intimacy of domestic work. However, this is on the same grounds that I reject the conditions of the black male industrial labour under the category "worker". Beyond the insufficiency of a strictly Marxist analysis of power, I think there is more to domestic work than the relation of exploitation. Or rather, that as we read the industrial revolution as having a particular set of results, there is a concomitant domestic revolution. The categories or private/public, rural/urban, male/female that we easily roll with in our analyses are historically produced and hold particular kinds of purchase. The education in domesticity for black women, might have meant/may mean access to domestic work. It might also signal access to knowledge practices that enable entry into liberal subjecthood. Deborah Gaitskell's work is instructive in this regard.[143]

Sitting in the archives, I became obsessed with the documents from the former departments concerned with mental and social hygiene. These would be proceeded in the present and in parts by the departments of home affairs, or social development concerned

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[141] Barchiesi 2011, p. 29

[142] Ally, Shireen. 2009. *From Servants to Workers: African Domestic Workers and the Democratic State.* New York, NY: Cornell University Press.

[143] See Gaitskell, Deborah. 1979. 'Christian Compounds for Girls': Church Hostels for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6:1. Gaitskell, Deborah. 1983. Housewives, Maids or Mothers: Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, 1903-39. *Journal of African History* 24:2, for example.

with the governance of the social and charged with the work of granting citizenship on the grounds of particular notions of civility.[144] In the pamphlets, conference proceedings, proposals for domestic science training schools and revisions of school curricula I was made acutely aware of the connections between the production of space and spatial relations, notions not just about what a good body is or how it is managed, but the actual production of the body both inside and out, the mediations of the surface of the body and the skin, the relationships between the body, space and the health and science; and finally, the connections of all of these things to the work of consumption. Michael McKeon's book, *A Secret History of Domesticity* draws together explicitly the connections between the division of knowledge, of space between private and public and the invention of domesticity all constituted in the notion of civil society.[145] The invention of domesticity and the implications it has on the ways bodies, labour and affect are arranged are of interest to me. Further, in the documents I witnessed, through a commitment to coherent categories of race and gender, was reflected the manner by which the work of producing civil citizens, through various modes of social uplift was always already connected to a project that aspired towards whiteness.[146]

The apartheid project has of course been read as one not just about racial segregation, but intended as social welfare to uplift poor whites into the status of the properly human, or as Barchiesi describes as "social legislation [which] was in the end decisive in constituting whiteness as an intersubjective category."[147] Even present moral panics return to the poor white subject, who like the black middle class subject provokes an anxiety. This anxiety, I suggest reflects the manner by which whiteness itself functions not as a stable essential category, but is connected to the liberal logics of the pasts/presents and whose inclusions and exclusions are multiple and at times incoherent. This is not to suggest that we do not live in an environment that enacts both the real and metaphoric erasure of blackness, we certainly do.

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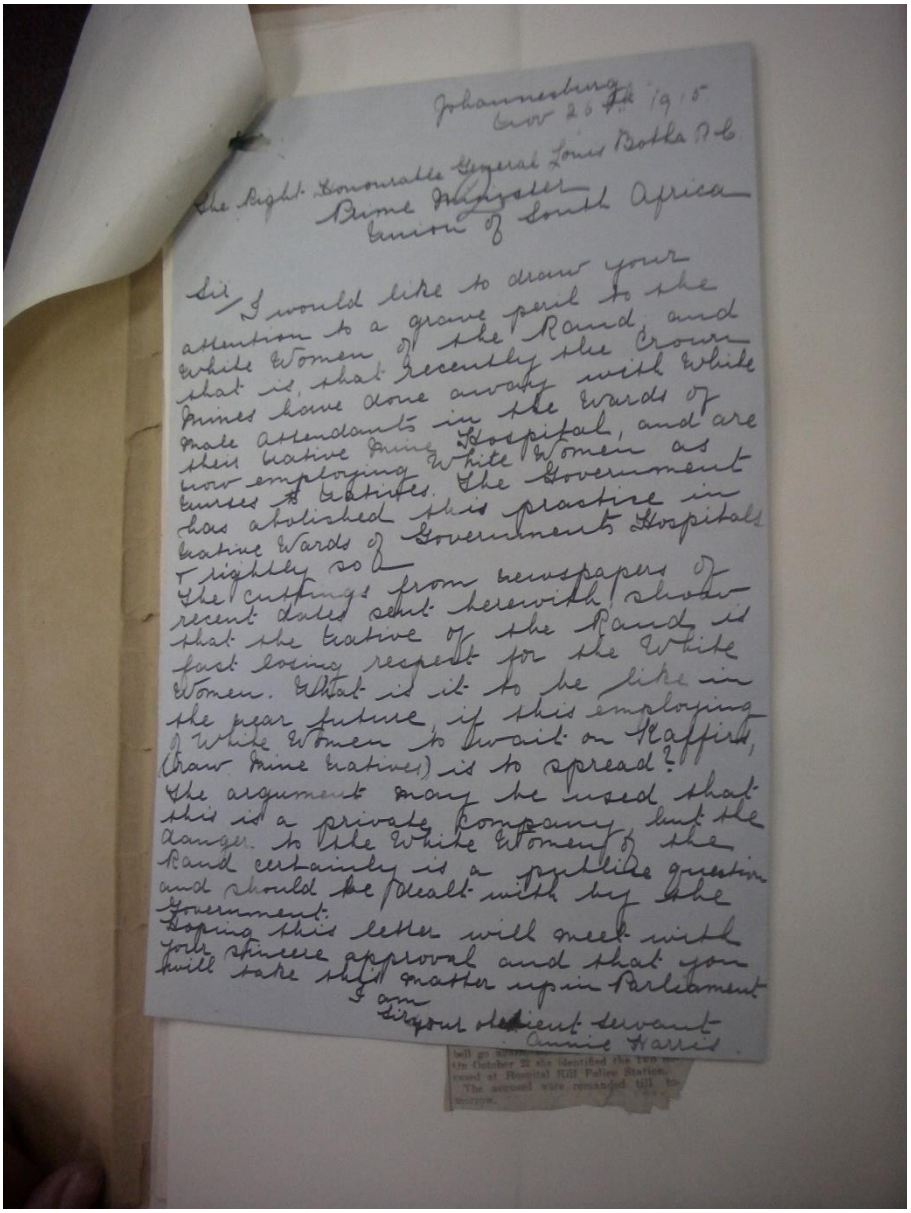
[144] See Chipkin, Ivor. 2003. 'Functional' and 'Dysfunctional' Communities: The Making of National Citizens. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29:3.
[145] McKeon, Michael. 2005. *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press
[146] See McClintock, Anne. 1994. Soft-soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising. In Robertson, George (Ed). *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement.* New York, NY: Psychology Press.
[147] Barchiesi 2011, p 30



Johannesburg
Nov 20th 1915

The Right Honorable General Louis Botha P.C.
Prime Minister
Union of South Africa

Sir,
I would like to draw your attention to a grave peril to the White Women of the Rand, and that is, that Recently the Crown Mines have done away with White male attendants in the wards of their native Mine Hospital, and are now employing White Women as nurses & Matrons. The Government has abolished this practice in native wards of Government Hospitals & rightly so.
The cuttings from newspapers of recent dates which herewith show that the native of the Rand is fast losing respect for the White Women. What is it to be like in the near future, if this employing of White Women to wait on Kaffirs, (our Mine natives) is to spread?
The argument may be used that this is a private Company, but the danger to the White Women of the Rand certainly is a public question and should be dealt with by the Government.
Hoping this letter will meet with your sincere approval and that you will take this matter up in Parliament
I am
Sir your obedient servant
Annie Harris

will go [illegible]
On October 2 she identified the two men
found at Hospital Hill Police Station.
The accused were remanded till [illegible]
Europe.

3 The Danger to the White Woman

I queer-y[148] the unmarked, or unremarked work of whiteness as central to the imaginings of labour, space, domesticity and consumption. The category of woman is invented in particular ways through the historical processes that necessarily lump together as the industrial, consumer and domestic revolutions. Bridget Kenny's work speaks to the work of intimacy at the intersection of "worker" and "consumer" in South Africa, suggesting a "repressed proximity" between the two as central to twentieth century capitalism.[149] Kenny's "shop-girl" articulates both the repressed proximity of consumption and labour, and the repressed work of whiteness implicated in the territorializing projects of constituting the category of woman:

> So women, if they have access to feminine respectability, must either stay at home (femininity as domestication), to be careful in how they move and appear in public (femininity as constrained mobility) [...] the construction of "the fearsome" is also bound up with the authorisation of legitimate spaces: for example, in the construction of the home as safe, 'appropriate' forms of femininity become bound up with the reproduction of domestic space.[150]

Sara Ahmed is concerned with the politics of emotions and like many others who are invested in reading the transmission of affect, she connects the ways that we desire, or feel our ways towards or away from objects, spaces and people is ways that frequently reproduce order, or hegemony. Central to order is the work of compulsory heterosexuality as she later continues:

> A heterosexual coupling may only approximate an ideal through being sanctioned by marriage, by participating in the ritual of reproduction, good parenting, by being good neighbours as well as lovers and parents, and by being even better citizens. In this way, normative culture involves the differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate ways of living whereby the preservation of what is legitimate ('life as we know it') is assumed to be necessary for the well-being of the next generation. Heteronormativity involves the reproduction or transmission of culture through how one lives one's life in relation to others.[151]

matrices of sex, gender, sexuality, race, corporeality etc… through notions of passing, failing and aspiration.

[149] Kenny, Bridget. Forthcoming. Retail, the Service Worker and the Polity: Attaching Labour and Consumption. *Critical Arts.*

[150] Ahmed, Sara.2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York and London: Routledge. p. 70

[151] Ahmed 2004, p. 149

Butler and Athanasiou describe this as the dual operation of power, both regulative and constitutive.[152] In Athanasiou's words, it is in the "scene of subjectivation", where "law and desire are intertwined. In this performative intertwinement, gender and sexual categories, identities and fantasies are reconstituted and reinvented in unforeseen ways as the law "strives."[153] In reading the ritual of marriage it is precisely this scene of subjectivation that I am invested in reading, following the questions invoked by Elizabeth Freeman. She suggests a dialectic between the wedding form and the role it plays in sustaining the institutionalized control of heterosexuality, and the possibility that lies for minoritized subjects to become culturally legible through its enactment.[154] To say this differently, the ritual of the white wedding as invoked by the title of this dissertation intends to invoke the ritualized formal white wedding which has been signified as not only an operation of respectable heterosexuality, but also of the modern and of whiteness itself,[155] and consider the possible disruptions that might occur when it is black subjects who perform it. Freeman suggests that it is "this doubled work of fantasy and rigorous demystification [...that is] fundamentally queer: to "queer" something is at once to make its most pleasurable aspects gorgeously excessive, even to the point to causing its institutional work to fail, and to operate against its most oppressive political results."[156]

The image which follows is taken from Sabelo Mlangeni's recent (and travelling) exhibition, *Isivumelwano*, or An Agreement[157], which comprises a series of photographs shot at various Southern African wedding ceremonies. The exhibition was described by the Goethe Institute of Johannesburg, where it showed in June of 2013:

> The project began with the documentation of weddings in South African townships, and continued with an exploration of these ceremonies in Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland. The resulting body of work focuses on the beauty and ornate nature of these ceremonies, as well as the traditions and attire that embrace the adaptability of cultures. Wedding ceremonies in black Southern African cultures are significant gatherings, often with more than one day of celebrations. Isivumelwano looks at the way Southern African cultures have been adapted over the years looking particularly at the amalgamation of African cultural practices and Western white wedding rituals.[158]

[152] Butler and Athanasiou 2013, p. 44
[153] Athanasiou, in Butler and Athanasiou 2013, p. 45
[154] Freeman, Elizabeth. 2002. *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. xiv
[155] See Ingraham 1999
[156] Freeman 2002, p. xv
[157] Also translates as "a contract"
[158] Mlangeni, Sabelo. 2013. Isivumelwano: An Agreement. 14 May [http://art-south-africa.com/220-news-articles-2013/1903-sabelo-mlangeni-isivumelwano-an-agreement.html] accessed 1 May 2014.

4 Isivumelwano



The couple, literally on stage is illustrative. The angle of the camera alerts us to the work of fantasy that is fundamental to wedding work. It also signals a failure of the form as the stage is *so* obvious that the performance appears to us as a form of drag. Central to the arguments posed in my work is a reading of the black subject, or the subject of woman as connected to time and space; in the image above, I suggest that is necessary to read racial and sexual difference through "queer time", an apparition that refuses the narrative of progress, even when it also aspires towards it. "Queer time" and "queer space"[159] occur in opposition to the institutionalization of normative heterosexuality and its orders of progress and reproductive time. The image as "drag", or "failure" draws across the chapters, which follow as I argue that the ritualized performances of the "white wedding" that I read signal a critique of the projects of modernity; an assertion that for subalterns it is not a failure in the work of mimicking Europe, but the work of displacing the dominance of a single narrative.[160]

In many senses I am keen on the same question that Freeman poses, as I contend that there are failures and oppositional strategies implied in the work of weddings. These are projects of aspiration, so in many senses failure is inherent to the ritual. It is also perhaps why I end with the question of love. It is feeling that has led this project to the notion of affect, for it is not just things that are purchased and exchanged; space is not just space and our calls to pasts and futures are all deeply implicated to a relationship to objects and how they make us feel about ourselves and others. In response to my work I have often heard an acceptance of the critique of normalizing heterosexuality, race, gender and sexualities; however there is a concern that I am dismissive of the feelings, reducing the act of the day to a set of performative gestures and aspirations. Of course I object to this. I am invested in reading the desire for happiness, or at least a projection of it. Happiness in Ahmed's assessment is a pretty conservative project, it stabilizes the order once again and we can all sleep at night comforted by the retention of the familiar. [161] I foreground an analysis of the tensions between aspiration, optimism, happiness and failure.

[159] Halberstam Judith. 2005*. Queer Time and Place. Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
[160] Scott 2004, p. 114
[161] Ahmed, Sara. 2010. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

The Argument

The White Wedding

In this chapter I examine the emergence of the white wedding. I am particularly interested in the ways this practice is read as racially "white", or Western and further, as emblematic of the influence of globalization, or "modernity" on a nascent or aspirant black middle class. I read the immersion of black consuming subjects in South Africa in the problematic temporality of tradition/modernity, as embroiled in local and global histories of notions of "good taste". **The category of "traditional" is not only a political category but a temporal one as well.** I argue that the formal consumptive wedding is not only literally produced through race, but that domesticity and consumption in this period are also produced by or through the black female subject who works symbolically to produce the fantasy of romance that the fantasy of the wedding ritual relies on.

The Oppositional Gaze

In this chapter I am interested in wedding photographs. The ways a wedding is performed has changed with the critical presence of the photographer. I am interested in the socio-symbolic desires implicated in these practices of image production. I take the self-portrait as object, to consider the ways the work of staging bodies and things in space to convey images of the ideal self and the ideal life. Allowing us to self-style as "celebrity" for a day, wedding photographs are both personal and intimate, and public and general. As public artefacts, I suggest the projections of self are connected to histories of ordering space and time. As such, the scenes curated at wedding venues offer a series of "genres" of space and the city. **I argue that the production or process of image-making is not only crucial to the proper enactment of the ritual, but is a process in and of itself**. Wedding photographs are one site through which we make demands to be recognizable within the logics of the "properly human", so I attend to the proposition that through wedding photographs and the self-portrait, black subjects might reflexively respond to the codes of the "modern", the "traditional" and "civilisation."

Black Bridezillas

Reading the Bridezilla as a figuration where the feminine and racialised other are represented in the register of the monstrous, I examine representations of black brides in the South African media to consider how the figure of the black female

operates within the logics of nature and culture, and how in turn these imaginings work to produce certain discourses concerning black female sexualities. The location of the bride as the primary consumer and the visual centre-piece of wedding production has strong implications, as while the emergence of consumer culture opened up spaces and forms of subjectivity for women, it is also marked by a demonization of woman as figures economic and erotic excess. As the objects of both aberration and adoration, the repulsion and attraction we feel towards monsters resonates with the ways that gendered patriarchal binaries construct women as the aberration to the masculine norm. **The Bridezilla as a figure is enabling to consider brides at the intersections of nature, culture and science – monstrous objects of display that resists, challenges and re-constitutes the notion of the normative or "properly" human.**

Lobola for My Love

In this chapter I examine traditional marriage practices, arguing that while there are good reasons for the invocation of a dichotomy between the "modern" and the "traditional" weddings of black women; in South Africa they both work within the logics of a post-feminist cult of femininity. Women are increasingly invited to be a queen for a day, a worthy reward for the hard-working, self-directed and newly empowered. I pose the argument that this relationship is not necessarily "new," as the premise of lobola practice always already assume the logics of middle class aspirations and the romantic ideal attached to it.

The White Wedding

In almost all discussions of my work people are immediately inclined to imagine the wedding as the "white" wedding and in so doing, imagine something that belongs to some vague notion of "western" or European culture. I recall a conversation with a wedding photographer named Allan Mather who at the time acted as a coordinator for the Vaal Wedding Association. I mentioned that I was interested in weddings and he asked if I meant white weddings, to which I responded "yes". He then proceeded to offer his reading of what the white wedding was: a public marriage ritual, elaborately decorated and featuring catering, florists, photographers and a beautiful white dress. Interested in offering me a background of the work they do, he emphasized the development of a Vaal wedding industry, noting its large growth in recent years and the two most recent developments in their industry. The first, the emergence of the "wedding venue", a one-stop shop that covers all aspects of this big day. This observation falls in line with global trends in wedding work which Vicki Howard argues, is a product of the 20th century, where the formal white wedding not only gains popularity but comes to be considered a 'right' for all couples. In this light, Howard is interested in the processes by which a bridal market is invented and can succeed to the extent that "consumers readily agree to the commercialization of their marriage rituals,"[162] as in her view, this was not always the case. In the colonial period, Howard observes that men and women did not view their weddings as a consumer rite but as "communal celebration embedded in a system of reciprocity."[163] Increasingly a range of businesses were promoting goods and services, claiming ties with tradition and "ancient custom" with two critical results: weddings become occasions invested in the singular display of goods and special once in a lifetime consumption" and ironically as Howard describes it, these newly invented traditions become associated with the "Modern Bride."[164]

This "Modern Bride" relates to the second development in the Vaal's wedding industry as observed by Mather. He notes a steady increase in "African" brides which for Mather

[162] Howard 2006, p.1
[163] Ibid.
[164] Howard 2006 p. 4.

signalled aspiration in the post-apartheid context. Having an elaborate white wedding for Mather, while rooted in something I might say is racialised as white, was becoming less so as the white wedding was in fact about something else, consumption. The entry into modernity and citizenship is marked here with an entry into consumption and this consumption is performed in the white wedding. His readings of white weddings as primarily about consumption and say, not religion mirrors the arguments made by Howard and others. For example, Sharon Boden argues that weddings generate their meaning through consumerism and romance, rather than religion.[165] Following this, Cele Otnes and Elizabeth Pleck's *Cinderella Dreams,* makes the case that the development of the contemporary wedding industry is shaped by the fantasy of rescue.[166] The spread of (or democratization) of the white wedding runs parallel to the democratization of aspirations for the middle class. Through the discourse of romance, women are invited to "become modern" through romance and consumption. The Cinderella dreams that Otnes and Pleck describe then are about the fantasy that a prince will save the modern girl from the oppressions of class and sex and the lavish wedding serves the function of guaranteeing a happy ending in as much as it at least performs it. Otnes and Pleck pay close attention to the work of race in this fantasy, in as much as the fantasy enacted in the wedding depends on the exploitation of black labour and for them leaves us with the conclusion that the wedding industry must also ideologically be premised on a logic of white supremacy.

Mather was sure to note that for him the white wedding, especially in the Vaal was not about white people, because we certainly could not consider the shabbily arranged, self-catered or braai marriage rituals performed by members of the white poor and working classes as white weddings. The question of taste then is one marked by respectability and Mather's discomfort with poor whites and their lack of taste reflects broader historical concerns about how 'poor whites' threaten the white body politic and are thus deemed pathological. Annika Teppo views the apartheid state's intervention upon 'poor whites' as intended to restore the respectability of whiteness but also perhaps doing more.[167] Those

[165] Boden 2003, p. 112.
[166] Otnes & Pleck 2003
[167] Teppo, Annika. 2009. A Decent Place? Space and Morality in a Former 'Poor White' Suburb. In Steyn, Melissa. & van Zyl, Mikki (Ed). *The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa.* Pretoria: HSRC Press. Also see Brink, Elsabe. 1990. Man-Made Women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the Volksmoeder. In Walker, Cheryl. (Ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*.

interested in these interventions as a mode of restoring the respectability of whiteness (or in fact the myth of its purity) have for instance examined the creation of the ideology of the volksmoeder to both literally protect the body politic and its reproduction. Teppo speaking from the context of democratic South Africa wants to then think about the white poor and asks us to consider what happens when respectability is lost. If I may take liberties with her analysis, for Teppo if being "White" meant being civilised, "White bodies had to be civilised too."[168] The failure of poor white respectability is not just about respectability, it is a failure to be civilised. If whiteness is civilisation and white weddings are the performances enacted by the civilised through the techniques of the body and space, Mather's exclusion of poor whites is not simply one that is ambivalent. It is grounded in the stigma that Teppo argues poor whites face from all races in the present because it fundamentally refuses the dichotomies of white/black; rich/poor; and civilised/otherwise which work in the ways that wedding practices are imagined both within general social discourses as well as the scholarship on social practices in South Africa. Furthermore, class and race are fundamental and mutually constitutive in the constitution of taste.

To summarize, Mather's views suggest at least three things; the first is that the white wedding historically belongs to white people who presumably invented the traditions associated with it. This is not a unique conclusion as most of the people that I interviewed share the same perspective and it is also mirrored in the literature that views a "spread" in white weddings as a sign of the work of imperialism and late capital. Ofra Gidoni-Goldstein's examination of Japanese wedding traditions is instructive:

> *The wedding day of a contemporary Japanese bride begins with her being dressed in a many-layered 'traditional Japanese' outfit, complete with a heavy wig in the traditional style and the customary white, mask-like make-up. During the four or so hectic hours to follow she, and to a lesser extent her groom, will be busy in changing outfits as well as in*

Cape Town: David Phillip. Hyslop, Jonathan. 1995. White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: 'Purified' Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against 'Mixed' Marriages, 1934-9. *The Journal of African History* 36:1. Klausen, Susanne M. 2010. Reclaiming the White Daughter's Purity: Afrikaner Nationalism, Racialized Sexuality and the 1975 Abortion and Sterilization Act in Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Women's History* 22:3. And Klausen, Susanne M. 2001. 'Poor Whiteism', White Maternal Mortality, and the Promotion of Public Health in South Africa: The Department of Public Health's Endorsement of Contraceptive Services, 1930-1938. *South African Historical Journal* 45:1.

[168] Teppo 2009, p. 224

fulfilling their carefully assigned tasks in the wedding program. These include both a 'traditional-style' Shinto ceremony and 'Western-style' ceremonies such as the cutting of a huge inedible 'Western' wedding cake topped by miniature figures of a bridal couple in Western dress. As the day comes to an end the 'traditional' bride has been transformed into a 'Western' bride, with the requisite white bridal dress and increasingly, an extravagant hall gown as well.[169]

While Gidoni-Goldstein recognizes how notions of tradition and "the Western" are employed in the bid to sell consumer goods in Japan,[170] like Mather, he recognizes these transformations as signalling the non-white woman's entry into a westernized subject position. This view also frames the ambiguous feelings I sensed when interviewing black brides who recognized white wedding traditions as part of their own family traditions and heritage, but simultaneously not - because they were somehow western and signalled their own failure to practice "African" traditions. In fact, recognizing the cost of wedding rituals Phephile opted out of the white wedding completely because in her mind it did not reference her family traditions. This is despite the fact that white weddings have been part of her family's traditions for at least three generations and her extended family continues to request a white wedding in order for them to recognize her as a married woman even though she did perform the traditional and civil marriage rites:

> P: My parents met and were married in 1970 or 1969. They had what one would call a western wedding. I don't know much about the details of that. But I did see the pictures of it, you know. The white dress, the suit, the tie. So then I think at that time they sort of went with the western thing. I think primarily because my dad comes from a family where my grandfather was a missionary and my grandmother was a teacher. So my father came from that sort of family. On my mother's side, her father was a driver really by profession. A chauffer for some white man. And he was very involved in the church, particularly in his retirement. So I think it went that way because for them it was sort of Christian. It went in that direction. I don't know too much about my grandparents. They sort of passed on before I could know them I could say that I got to know my mother's father. You could say that he was very English in his way of doing things. Which was quite odd for me because he was this Zulu guy. His mannerisms, the way he did things, his home, his settings - they were very structured in the way he did things, again his mannerisms.

[169] Gidoni-Goldstein, Ofra. 2000. The Production of Tradition and Culture in the Japanese Wedding Enterprise. *Ethnos* 65:1. p. 33.

[170] And I would add, to be fair does not views these weddings simplistically as somehow indicating the hegemony of the West and its globalization over "traditional" Japanese practices. I do think that this particular narrative is interesting in the ways that it reflects an almost evolutionary transformation from one state to the other, which in many ways mirrors the ways people view the multiple marriage practices of black South Africans, almost as performance of time travel from the "traditional/African" to the "modern/Western".

[…]

D: Do you think that the choice you had to foreground and create the cultural experience you describe for you marriage – do you think that this is a choice that you could make based upon your class position, whereas someone who is still "aspiring to be middle class" may feel more pressure to display themselves in the form of a more formal wedding?

P: Yes, yes yes. I don't know if there is any foundation in this perception. My perception is that people naturally gravitate towards the western, or white dress way of doing things. It seems like what is expected, or the standard, the white thing we hear about quite a bit. I still get family members, not necessarily on my side of the family who keep asking me, when are you going to do this thing. I mean four years later. To people it is incomplete. They want to know, when is this thing going to be completed?

D: So you describe the wedding as Western, but it sounds like there are people who are very African, people who hold being African as a close central part of themselves, who are insisting that you do this thing. I would think that people who do not identify as African might be more inclined to recognize that this is your rite of passage for marriage than those who are African?

P: Well I think it is still that mentality of the whiteness and those sort of rituals are better, and are the way to go. I think people still aspire to that because that is firstly what we consume from the media perspective which tells us that this is great. I mean these weddings are becoming even showier. Particularly the black middle class and those just above it, who are having these Top Billing weddings, that involve a R200000 dress I only wore once! You know, and I think about my own sister who chose to go the western route and how that decision put her in a state of financial distress. Because of that. And for her, I think it is more of a female thing. I don't think that her husband would have minded. But I see what financial distress it put them in. I mean they spent 100s of thousands on a day. A beautiful day it was. But then at the end of the day they just go home. I mean we all go home and it is over. And for her that was what was important and everybody say, you have all of the pictures and that showed a certain level – of you know, of being. Particularly when we all tend to get married at more or less the same time, you know within a range of two or three years. So obviously we have to "outshine" the friends. With so and so having this and that. For me, it was something that was not my thing.[171]

To return to Mather's reflections, by his definition white weddings are about the instantiation of class position. Mather's exclusion of poor and working class white people from white wedding practices is due to their inability to buy the appropriate goods and services in order to perform a white wedding *and* their lack of cultural capital which

[171] Interview with Phephile Simelane Modiselle, 2012

disables them from performing white weddings correctly, even if they can access the goods and services. The literature mirrors the suggestion that white weddings do in fact perform one's status or arrival to the middle class. Popular culture's obsession with white weddings reflects these notions, for instance the US American reality television shows *Rich Bride, Poor Bride* and *Bridezillas* where we follow ordinary brides as they prepare for their big days. *Rich Bride, Poor Bride* focuses on the bride's battle to achieve and acquire everything she needs to make her fantasy come true within her means and every episode ends with a summary of the total expenses read against the initially presented budget. The couple is left to then ponder if their overspending was worth it after all. *Bridezillas* takes us further as brides selected for this show have budgets that are generally much smaller than the brides on the other show. These brides then try to achieve this fairy-tale perfection through various strategies that demonstrate both their lack of money and lack of cultural capital. Describing a recent season of the show:

> *Every bride dreams of her wedding day — but Bridezillas are willing to do whatever it takes to get it, no matter the consequences! This season's Bridezillas are hotter than ever, but just because they're beautiful doesn't mean they won't bring the bad behaviour. Bridal party wars, smashed cakes, irate in-laws, and lots of 'Zilla freak-outs are in store for the 9th season of WEtv's hit Bridezillas. Notable bad girl Natalie Nunn brings it like only she can, celebrity-style! And in a Bridezillas first... one Bridezilla will pay the ultimate price when she is dumped at her own reception*.[172]

We are led to conclude that these are bad women – women who presumably lack the cultural capital to enact the wedding ritual without losing total control. What is not made explicit is the relationship to class. We see it implied in the most recent casting call for the show where they invite "princesses" who want an American royal wedding to apply. Following a list of motivations for doing the show, including the possibility of having the dream wedding without the interference of extended family we see in bold: ***We will help you pay for your wedding.***[173] These weddings might certainly fall outside the bounds of Mather's notion of a white wedding; despite the provision of some capital to enact this big day, these bad girls lack the appropriate cultural capital to undergo the transformation into a princess for a day.

WEtv also produces *My Fair Wedding*:

[172] http://www.wetv .com/shows/bridezillas/about accessed 21 April 2013.
[173] http://www.wetv.com/we-tv-casting accessed 20 April 2013.

> *A bride knows what she wants for her wedding — the dress, the flowers, even the icing on the cake! But with only a few weeks before the big day, celebrity event planner David Tutera shows up and changes everything. How exactly will he tackle these brides' outlandish ideas to give them a wedding beyond their imagination? David sits down with the bride, he learns her style, likes and dislikes before taking over everything, creating her fairy-tale wedding in a short period of time*.[174]

The ideas cited as "outlandish" do not only demonstrate a desire from the brides' point of view to produce a wedding that is unique and perfect for them, their ideas signal both the inability to financially or culturally achieve the perfection that Mather notes is what constitutes a real white wedding. I am reminded of the local 2010 wedding of Robert Gumede to Portia Mkhize, which marked his transformation from being a caddy to a billionaire with a lavish golf course wedding for which they hired designer Gavin Rajah as creative director whose brief was "to go big." Rajah is reported to have spent a year planning this wedding, like David Tutera; following the bride's love of roses.[175] Boden opts for the "superbride" as opposed to the Bridezilla, whose job it is to transform herself and be the "heroic creator of her big day."[176] What we see in these shows is that while the bride is expected to channel her rational and emotional self to the work of this day, the "steady male" enters the fray to rescue the day from his irrational bride, as Boden argues. What is interesting about the Gumede case was the way that it was retrospectively read as "his big day", arguably because he was once a caddy and he has arrived upon billions: it is his big coming out party. But I think that Gavin Rajah wedding planner to the stars works too, as the hero much in the same way as David Tutera. While now able to afford his big day, it is important to think critically about the work that a figure like Tutera or Rajah play, to temper the outlandish desires of wedding consumers whose aspirations might otherwise fall outside of the appropriate. To return to the show, it is also important then to think about the kinds of ideological work that the television is doing to reinforce race and class in as much as they depend on the comedy of the failed aspirations of these

[174] http://www.wetv.com/shows/my-fair-wedding/about accessed 18 April 2013.
[175] Pather, Sashni. & Molele, Charles. 2010. When a Billionaire Says I Do. *The Post Online* 26 March. http://www.postzambia.co/post-read_article.php?articleId=7454 accessed 21 April 2013.
[176] Boden, Sharon 2007. Consuming Pleasure on the Wedding Day: The Lived Experience of Being a Bride. In Martens, Lydia and Casey, Emma (Eds). *Gender& Consumption: Domestic Cultures and the Commercialization of Everyday Life.* Aldershot: Ashgate. p. 74

superbrides. The question of good taste reverberates, calling attention to itself and requiring further inspection.

Renee Sgroi reminds us of the ideological work that reality television shows like this do, offering that what "may appear to be a real-life manifestation of a fairy-tale romance, the show's narrative itself acknowledges its own spectacle and expense, thereby signalling this fairy tale's inaccessibility to most viewers."[177] For Sgroi, the contradiction between the spectacle and the expense is where these shows do their work, becoming instructional tools that teach us how to emulate these weddings through our own consumption. It is important to note that while the initial "reality" television shows on spectacular weddings focused on celebrities and the royal, across the globe we see a present dominance in more ordinary people working to achieve their own fantasy weddings. There are plenty of examples that reflect the tensions between aspiration and budget and there are no qualms about the fact that we as ordinary consumers should relate to these ordinary people like us. Following such trends, *The Samantha's Bridal Show* follows brides as they prepare for their big day in Kenya. This television show is part of a major bridal media conglomerate that includes *The Samantha's Bridal Magazine,* a The Samantha's Bridal Expo and a training program that offers a "Wedding MBA."[178] Its sponsors and producers believe that the show allows you to see what a bride goes through. Sponsor Sheila Harrison of REDDs offers "I think that it has been positioned. It is really selling a dream. Selling a fairy-tale. And we really want to be a part of that."[179] The minds behind "The Samantha's" conglomerate clearly position themselves as instructors and the narratives produced reflect Sgroi's contention.

Chrys Ingraham views the white wedding as both about the instantiation of race *and* class status, arguing that wedding marketing campaigns, at least in the United States are targeted towards white middle class women in particular as they are more likely to consume these products than any other group. Recognizing this, Delores Dalrymple-Williams started her master's dissertation with the question: is there a market for a

[177] Sgroi, Renee. 2006. Consuming the Reality TV Wedding. *Ethnologies* 28:2. p. 124.
[178] http://www.samanthasbridal.co.ke/index.php accessed 20 April 2013.
[179] NTV. 2010. Samantha's Wedding Show Every Sunday on NTV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JayrjjpIfdg accessed 20 April 2013.

multicultural bridal magazine in the United States?[180] The question is valid if we follow Ingraham, and if we follow Dalrymple-William's desire for a multicultural bridal market it might be fair to view shows like *The Samantha's Bridal Show* as offering brides in Kenya and neighbouring countries the opportunities to consume the fairy-tale weddings that we had only previously seen in northern contexts. It then came as no surprise when South Africa saw its own reality wedding show launched in May 2013. Kay Kekana suggests that this might be the "next big thing for South African weddings," a "must watch for brides-to-be."[181] The presenter of *Our Perfect Wedding*, Thuli Thabethe tells us:

> *We have seen enough wedding shows on TV to last us a lifetime. Yet Our Perfect Wedding is still welcome because it is locally made. […] We try and document different South African weddings in a way that's never been done before. […] It is a three-day package that aims to inform and entertain viewers on how different local cultures do their rituals and traditions. […] If you have seen series such as Say Yes to the Dress or Rich Bride, Poor Bride, you will know what the tone of this show will be like. The only difference is that this is an African product, so we make it as personal as possible.*[182]

It is important to note that Thabethe wants to distance this show from shows like *Top Billing*, which present us with celebrity weddings which are presumably inaccessible. This show follows the everyday, which in many ways follows global trends in wedding media where the lavish and out of reach wedding reality shows presenting the marriages of the rich and famous have been replaced with the depictions of more ordinary women expending themselves in the efforts of this perfect day. Sgroi's contention that these shows work the contradictions of expense and spectacle remain valid. What is also interesting is the desire for African and black brides to claim space as black consumers to a market which as Ingraham argues, intends and constructs its norm as white and middle class.

One of the brides that I interviewed, Rutendo Bothma talked about her parents' recent wedding. Her parents have been married through civil and traditional rites for many years but were only recently able to have the lavish white wedding. Examining "real weddings"

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[180] Dalrymple-Williams, Delores. 2004. Is there a Market Bridal Magazine in the US? Thesis submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Diplomacy and International Relations. South Orange, NJ: Seton Hall University.
[181] Kekana, Kay. 2013. Reality Show: My Perfect Wedding. *News 24* 8 May 2013 http://m.news24.com/women24/Bride24/WeddingPlanning/Reality-Show-My-Perfect-Wedding-21030508 accessed 10 May 2013.
[182] Vomo, Munya. 2013. More Local Magic on Small Screen. *Independent Online* 9 May 2013. http://www.iol.co.za/tonight/tv-radio/more-local-magic-on-small-screen-1.1512829#.UYzQALX-G25 accessed 10 May 2013.

in South African bridal magazines over the last seven years one can observe that many black couples have their weddings after some years of marriage once they can afford a big wedding and a big wedding later in the marriage marks an arrival of sorts. For example, Pollet Sennelo and Tim Tebeila, whose renewal ceremony was featured in the summer issue of *True Love Bride* in 2008. Pollet and Tim had their first wedding in Soweto in 1998 which they found challenging: "We didn't want a repeat of that stressful situation, and managed to overcome this with a central venue like Summer Place."[183] Pollet describes the decision to have the wedding in Hyde Park as her husband's choice. She would have preferred to tour Europe, instead Tim wanted "to do something memorable; something that would benefit [them] and [their] family and friends. Tim settled for a grand occasion to show and tell their loved ones how they have fared in the last ten years of marriage."[184] This narrative is frequently repeated in these magazines and brings us to the final observation that I can take from Mather is that the advent of democracy in South Africa has meant that black people can enter either the middle classes, or the status of consumer citizenship. This consumer citizenship is demonstrated through the enacting of such things as weddings, claiming the right to stage one self's personhood through consumption. Deborah Posel's reflections on the idea of freedom in South Africa are instructive. Posel recognizes that in part, democracy in South Africa was imagined along a constitutive relationship between race and the regulation of consumption so that freedom in the democratic era can be and is experienced through consumption or the aspiration for it.[185] This seems to be mirrored in Mather's view of an increasingly large black bridal market.

For Mather the white wedding is a consumptive practice, but not only that as one also needs the cultural capital to consume it correctly. The white wedding is also rooted in white or European traditions. Finally, black people can now access this white or European tradition that is embroiled in consumption in larger numbers following the advent of democracy. The conclusions, as I mention are not unusual. However I think that it might be important to think about the processes by which white wedding traditions come to become the modern bridal market that we inherit. I want to think about the rise of consumer culture and the related notions of femininity and romance that are co-

[183] Real Weddings: Pollet and Tim Tebeila. *True Love Bride* Summer 2008. p. 125.
[184] Real Weddings: Pollet and Tim Tebeila. *True Love Bride* Summer 2008. p. 124.
[185] See Posel, Deborah. 2010. Races to Consume: Revisiting South Africa's History of Race, Consumption and the Struggle for Freedom. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33:2.

productive in that process. The globally entangled processes of industrialization which provide the structure for this bridal market to emerge are one way of making race and coloniality visible. Romance, femininity and consumption as affective notions are also embroiled within the developing discourses of race and coloniality. Examining the development of the bridal market in this way requires a reading of class as it emerges as a social category as one that not only shares an intersectional relationship to race and gender, but one that is also produced by them. I argue that in the period of the late 19th and early 20th century, a period when it is argued that the white wedding is commercialized and access to it is democratized, signalling an expansion of the middle classes something else is happening. Elizabeth Bell compares weddings to pornography arguing that they do the same thing: a wedding ceremony must be consummated by sexual intercourse, and hard-core pornography must depict penetration and ejaculation. Weddings and pornography [she proposes], are not opposites. They are *mirror doubles of the cultural performance of sex."*[186] If I follow Bell's contention that weddings are a performance of public sex, black women are central to the ways that this comes to be the case, even before we get to claim our right to be included as consumers of the bridal market.

Judith Butler describes the institutionalization of heteronormativity as both an operation of power and fantasy, one that postulates a "founding heterosexuality [that] *works* in the building of a certain state and nation."[187] Hidden under the cloak of heteronormativity, "practices such as weddings prevent us from seeing what is at stake, what is kept in place and what consequences are produced [as the wedding-industrial complex masks the ways] it secures racial, class and sexual hierarchies."[188] Mattie Udora Richardson follows this reading of heteronormativity, arguing that sexual deviance is more than homosexuality, as many deviances from the "social norms of marriage, domesticity and the nuclear family have brought serious accusations of savagery, pathology, and deviance upon black people," calling for a methodology that reads these discourses about

[186] Bell, Elizabeth. 2007. Performing "I Do": Weddings, Pornography, and Sex. in Lovaas, Karen E. & Jenkins Mercilee, M. (Eds). *Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 146.
[187] Butler, Judith. 2002. Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual. *Differences* 13:1. p. 35.
[188] Ingraham 2006, p. 215.

black sexual deviance as part of the mythology of white supremacy.[189] Rodrick Ferguson takes us further, so that we are not only engaging with a fantasy of heteronormativity, or the mythology of white supremacy but what he views as the nightmares of the heteronormative: "as its embodiment in whiteness attests, heteronormativity is not simply articulated through inter-gender relations but also through the racialized body," racial difference becomes the sign of nonheteronormativity.[190] I would further add that the racialised female body here *works* as the Other in the affective and disciplinary ways that Butler mentions. In this way, I am reading weddings and their affective and disciplinary implications through Foucault's notion of bio-power which reads the social transformations that occur from the 1800s as producing two main effects or systems of power, "that of sovereignty over death and that of the regularization of life."[191] Biopower requires a "norm" against which the "subrace" that was pathological could be measured and in fact, Foucault reads the disciplines of knowledge that emerge henceforth as technologies for the work of the production of difference.

If processes of inventing white wedding traditions required a racialised and gendered Other in order to produce itself, I propose that we can also see how the category of the "modern" constituted itself in a dichotomy with the "traditional." I want to draw the insights of Johannes Fabian here, who like Foucault recognizes the power of knowledge production, citing anthropology's claims at knowledge and hence power over its "object-the savage, the primitive, the Other," it requires a temporal, historical and political act.[192] The invention of evolutionary Time, for Fabian emerges with the notions of civilization, evolution, development, acculturation, modernization, industrialization and urbanization. These notions are not neutral, as they form the intellectual justification for colonialism and imperialism, as all societies are placed on a temporal slope based on their distance towards some notion of progress.[193] The category of "traditional" is therefore not only a political

[189] Richardson, Mattie Udora. 2003. No More Secrets, No More Lies: African American History and Compulsory Heterosexuality. *Journal of Women's History* 15:3. p. 64.
[190] Ferguson, Rodrick. 2000. The Nightmares of the Heteronormative. *Journal for Cultural Research* 4:4. p. 420.
[191] Foucault, Michel. 2003. *Society must be defended: Lectures Given at the College de France 1975-76*. (Bertani, Mauro. & Fontana, Alessandro. (Eds). Translated by Macey, David). New York: Picador. p. 249.
[192] Fabian 2002, p. 1.
[193] Ibid.

category but a temporal one as well. Desiree Lewis examines the myths surrounding African bodies produced through such discourses that do at least three things. The first is to locate Africans within "traditional" time, devoid of historical variation. This place is always already both patriarchal and heterosexual. Finally, African bodies and sexualities are deemed excessive.[194] Collectively, these myths work to not only place Africans in a bizarre relationship between the modern and the traditional, they crucially mean that reading the aspirations for heteronormativity through the white wedding is a process embroiled with all sorts of intended and unintended meaning.

In this chapter, I examine the literature on the white wedding. Dominant themes in this work include the role of consumption and the ways that it predominates in the practice. This literature also reads the practice of white weddings across the globe as a sign of the spread of a western global capital. The literature reflects an interest then in the notion of a "traditional"/modern wedding and the dichotomy implied in this notion is frequently applied in relation to readings of wedding practices in Africa. The history of the white wedding offers a location from which I can make the argument that it is entangled with fantasies about a racialised and sexualized Other. In this, I want to read the notion of "good taste" as one premised on these relations and the extension then of imperial power which I hope to reveal through my reading of the "black diamond" and the reading of the ascendance of the white wedding as produced through a romantic fantasy of the "porno-tropics". Through these examples, I queer-y the whiteness of the white wedding.

[194] See Lewis 2011.



5 Bling Bling Black Diamonds

Bling Bling Black Diamonds

The *Sowetan* featured an article titled "All about the Bling" in November 2011, posing a provocative thought: despite the high levels of unemployment, financial insecurity and increasing personal debt, there is still a place for lavish weddings in South Africa."[195] Madikwa posits the relative financial insecurity of the masses against the "new money": "For new money, walking down the aisle is the ultimate excuse to show off the bling."[196] Beginning with aforementioned billionaire Robert Gumede whose wedding included 2500 guests, Madikwa lists the biggest black weddings of recent times including that of David Mabilu which cost 15 million Rand. Dubbed "the wedding of the year" by *Top Billing* we were invited to their destination wedding in Mauritius. Describing it as "David Mabilu's Fairytale Wedding", *Top Billing* shared exclusive facts about the nuptials including the details of the rings of which the bride's included over two carats of cut diamond flanked by another one hundred and forty four diamonds. The story as it is reported is an itinerary of the outfits over the two day occasion and a contact list of service providers.[197]

In recent years we have witnessed an interest in weddings based on the observation that weddings have entered spheres of popular culture and it is a global, billion dollar industry. The wedding industry is defined by Rebecca Mead as a "catch-all expression to describe the infrastructure of service providers and businesses, ranging from individual entrepreneurs to massive corporations that seek to provide the bride and groom with the accoutrements of the wedding day, and in many cases, to do business with them long after the wedding day is over."[198] The wedding industry is interesting to Mead and others who recognize it as a recent and invented tradition, which invokes the notion of "tradition" to sell itself to its customers. They, like me are then interested in the processes by which marriage rituals are transformed into a consumer rite.[199] Madikwa's suspicion that marriage is out of reach for many South Africans is correct, as the 2011 census revealed

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[195] Madikwa, Zenoyise. 2011. All about the Bling. *Sowetan Live* 2 November. www.sowetanlive.co.za/goodlife/2011/11/02/all-about-the-bling accessed 22 April 2013.
[196] Ibid.
[197] David Mabilu's Fairy-tale Wedding. 2011. *Top Billing.* http://www.topbilling.com/articles/David-Mabilu's-fairytale-wedding--.html?articleID=963 accessed 22 April 2013.
[198] Mead 2008, p. 5.
[199] See Boden 2003; Freeman 2002; Howard 2006; Ingraham 1999; Mead 2007; & Otnes and Pleck 2003.

that only 38% of South Africans aged twenty or over were married. Mark Hunter's examination of the transformations of the category of *isoka* in KwaZulu Natal is helpful. He argues that the institution of marriage based on *ilobolo* and the transfer of cattle, while not fixing masculinities offered the location of *isoka* that signified men's entry into courting and in the process of finding a wife and establishing one's own home.[200] As Palamuleni argues, "early and universal marriages if they ever existed, are no longer a norm"[201] in South Africa. In examining the transformations in the meaning of the category of *isoka* since the 19th century, Hunter argues that what is a "discernable theme is the growing inability of men to secure a marriage."[202]

Men like David Mabilu and Robert Gumede, through these spectacular displays are frequently and derogatively referred to as the "black diamonds" of post-apartheid South Africa, likened to the less frequently invoked figure of "WaBenzi", the government official who drives the expensive Mercedes-Benz at the tax payers' expense.[203] Scholarship interested in the decline of African marriage is not new, it was certainly a feature of colonial and apartheid intellectual thought and social engineering. What seems new here is the notion that the spectacular display of weddings we are seeing is emblematic of the new forms of inequalities in South Africa, as a small number of black elites have emerged out of the ANC government's economic policy in this era. That is, the black middle class is read as a recent phenomenon in some instances and in more sophisticated readings, as yet another phase of development for a "new" black middle class, different from that of earlier periods in its origin and the instantiation of its status. Coupled with the assumption that it is the work of apartheid in transforming the African into an exploited worker; marriage rituals premised on community, continuities and cattle are viewed as threatened by the intrusion of racist capital. Billionaire Gumede and his contemporaries, as the representatives of the "new" black elite, then can be read in the ways Madikwa follows; as ejaculating their dubiously acquired wealth in the faces of poor black South Africans.

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[200] Hunter, Mark. 2004. Masculinities, Multiple-Sexual Partners, and AIDS: The Making and Unmaking of *Isoka* in KwaZulu-Natal. *Transformation* 54. p. 126.
[201] "Palumeni, M. E. 2010. Recent Marriage Patterns in South Africa 1996-2007. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology* 7:1. p. 47. Also see Budlender, D., Chobokoane, N. & Simelane, S. 2004. Marriage Patterns in South Africa: Methodological and Substantive Issues. *South Africa Journal of Demography* 19:1.
[202] Hunter 2004, p. 129.
[203] Eliseev, Alex. 2009. It's a WaBenzi Frenzy. *Independent Online*. 12 June. http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/it-s-a-wabenzi-frenzy-1.446221 accessed 12 May 2013

The figure of "WaBenzi" is helpful in elucidating these suggestions, as it points directly to the notion that this nascent middle class is a problematic product of the post-apartheid order; capitalizing on opportunities at the expense of the masses. The policy of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is frequently read in this light, offering a select few like the aforementioned the opportunity for excessive wealth. The interest in entrepreneurship for the ANC government is read by Okechukwu Iheduru as transforming from a compromise with white capital at the beginning of the democratic period to "democratise empowerment", to something viewed as more threatening at present.[204] Idehuru reads the ANC's strategy through its National Democratic Revolution (NDR), citing an incongruence between the macroeconomic policies of the ANC and the project of the NDR, as they have produced increased inequalities between a small black elite and the large poor and working classes. Roger Southall, while aware of the tensions here, does not necessarily view these projects as incongruent: "the problem for the ANC is that the very success of the NDR will lead to the development of a black capitalist class and the major growth of the intermediate black middle strata,"[205] through the provision of education, wealth and upward mobility are consequential.[206] These transformations can be counter-revolutionary as they lead to increased inequalities; for Southall the question then is how to enter this process in ways that avoid this. Southall's reading of the development of the black middle class here recognizes entrepreneurship not only as an unthreatening process of change in the new South Africa, but embedded in longer histories of black capital.[207] The black entrepreneur was a figure of the apartheid state, who even then was framed in controversy; both celebrated and reviled as a traitor.

The notion of a "better life for all" then comes to the fore, as those critical of the ANC's policy and its exclusions want a sustainable consumption that can be extended to the

[204] Iheduru, Okechukwu C. 2004. Black Economic Power and Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa. The Journal of Modern African Studies 42:1.
[205] Southall, Roger. 2004a. The ANC & Black Capitalism in South Africa. *Review of African Political Economy* 31:100.
[206] See Nattrass, Nicoli. & Seekings, Jeremy. 2001. "Two Nations"? Race and Economic Inequality in South Africa Today. Daedalus 130:1, who follow Thabo Mbeki's invocation of "Two Nations", to describe the ways that race framed material inequalities under apartheid.
[207] Southall, Roger. 2004b. Political Change and the Black Middle Class in Democratic South Africa. Canadian *Journal of African Studies* 38:3.

masses.[208] I think that Mehita Iqani's genealogy of the black consumer is helpful here as it recognizes that black consumption is not new: South Africa has always been a consumer society.[209] Iqani works through the tensions between a view of consumption as empowerment or manipulation, reading colonialism and apartheid as depriving black subjects politically and economically in ways that result in the notion of a "better life" being enmeshed with material markers.[210] Interested in media representations, the stereotype of black life as located in the apartheid geographies of the township and poverty, are juxtaposed against readings of a "meteoric" rise in the black middle class which led some to conclude that in the present (presumably post-racial nation) it is class that precedes race in the present environment.[211] The attention paid to black consumption, as I mention earlier then frames it not only "in poor taste", but also poor in taste.

The figure of the "black diamond" was introduced by the Unilever Institute at the University of Cape Town, principally interested in how to capture this new black middle class as a market.[212] Viewed as the products of BEE, this class desires in part due to the deprivations of the past. Unlike figures like Mabilu and Gumede, these reports considered the average income of the average black diamond to be R7106p/m in 2008.[213] Recognizing this as low, they add that it is important to consider that this is less about income and for those interesting in marketing, is more about spending power. Opting out of the language of class, these companies emphasize the notion of aspiration and as such, consumption can be seen as part of an understanding of inclusion and a better life for all.[214]. People like the Unilever Institute who recognize the purchasing power of the black consumer read

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[208] See Barolsky, Vanessa. 2012. 'A Better Life for All', Social Cohesion and the Governance of Life in Post-apartheid South Africa. *Social Dynamics* 38:1, for instance.
[209] If we follow Southall 2004a, p.314 it is an "intermediate" class of professionals and entrepreneurs, frustrated by the racist state who become important recruits for the liberation movement.
[210] Iqani 2012
[211] Nattrass and Seekings 2001, argue that in the present context the class structure in South Africa is less about race than class: there is a small multiracial elite, a middle class mostly constituted of the white working class and a large class of the black poor. They cite the increasing importance of intra-racial class differences. Also see Seekings, Jeremy, & Nattrass, Nicoli. 2002. Class, Distribution and Redistribution in post-Apartheid South Africa. *Transformations* 50
[212] Unilever Institute. 2008. *The Black Diamond.* http://www.unileverinstitute.co.za/Research.aspx?ProjName=Black%20Diamond accessed 12 May 2012.
[213] Ibid.
[214] See Krige, Detlev. 2012. The Changing Dynamics of Social Class, Mobility and Housing in Black Johannesburg. *Alternation* 19:1, who insists that the stereotyping of the black middle class as conspicuous consumers is the result of a side-lining of longer histories of social stratification among urban Africans.

class in ways that are interesting – and work with an awareness of how the nascent black middle class is assumed to be so not only because black people can presumably buy more, but that they can also demonstrate their consumption through spatial relations, quite literally by occupying formerly whites only spaces.[215] Historically, it was entrepreneurs and marketers who recognized black subjects as consumers.[216] The location of the majority of black diamonds as aspirational consumers does not only mean that this is a class of people subject to the marketing of corporations, but also reflects deeper issues related to historically produced deprivations. For instance, in interviews Chevalier found that respondents felt that "unlike the Whites, they have no capital, savings or inheritance to draw on and must go into debt if they wish to consume on any scale". [...] "The apartheid system made sure that we knew little about money, since we were supposed not to have any!"[217] Read this way, the black diamond as a category of aspiration reflects the desires for a better life for all that Iqani invokes. However, Chevalier warns us about the dangers of this stereotype as it constructs black subjects in South Africa primarily as consumers and *not* producers.[218]

It is interesting that the notion of a "better life for all" offered by Vanessa Barolsky is read in opposition between a greater good in "Ubuntu", and the irresponsible black diamond.[219] The opposition here depends on the juxtaposition of "bling" as presumably "modern", which requires the abandonment of the "traditional" investment in the communal good of "Ubuntu". Chevalier notes the moralising discourses about black

[215] For instance the Unilever Institute released a report titled "My Home: Shelter, Shack or Showroom", interested in the "home space" of South Africans. The interest in the home reflects the broader connections between the home, domesticity and consumption. I would further add that the assemblage of shelter-shack-showroom is interesting, as it reflects the importance of spatial relations and the non-exclusion of those most abject in the broader project of marketing and consumption. http://www.unileverinstitute.co.za/Research.aspx?ProjName=My%20Home:%20Shelter,%20Shack%20or%20Showroom accessed 11 May 2013. The idea that black people are travelling to "formerly white" spaces also works as metaphor, used to think about the kinds of goods black people can, and do consume in this context. See Leah Z.B. Ndanga , André Louw & Johan van Rooyen (2010): Increasing domestic consumption of South African wines: Exploring the market potential of the "Black Diamonds". *Agrekon: Agricultural Economics Research, Policy and Practice in Southern Africa*, 49:3, for example.

[216] See Thomas, Lynn M. 2012. Skin Lighteners, Black Consumers and Jewish Entrepreneurs in South Africa. *History Workshop Journal* 73, for example.

[217] Chevalier, S. 2011. The Black Diamonds: a South African Phantasmagoria. London: Economic and Social Research Council. The development of the National Credit Act in 2007 reflects the ambiguous location of black diamonds; while cited as the largest consumer category, black diamonds are also most likely to be heavily indebted.

[218] Chevalier 2011

[219] Barolsky 2012

diamonds are framed through criticisms that they are "whitening" themselves. In some senses, the dualism between the "individualistic conspicuous consumer" and the more responsible, "traditional" works within this logic and this is quite problematic. It is also no wonder then that the figure of the "coconut" has been used alongside the aforementioned to describe this location. Extending Iqani's view that anxieties about black consumption frame the white imaginary, I want to read this through Homi Bhabha's notion of a "veil of colonial phantasm": this discourse of a daemonic doubling emerges at the very centre of metropolitan life, then the familiar things of everyday life and letters are marked by an irresistible sense of their genealogical difference, a 'postcolonial' provenance[220]. The figure of the "coconut", like the black diamond is locked in dualistic temporality which for Chevalier works as a distraction, or as a *phantasmagoria*: it masks what is really at stake in society and politics.[221] The imagined lives of black diamonds work then, to sustain a racist imaginary *and* capital.

I do not want to trouble the notion of black diamonds without troubling the spectacle of these lavish white weddings entirely. Looking back at the celebrity weddings of the new moneyed black elite, it is difficult not to consider these weddings as obscene, perhaps perverse. These occasions, like the fairy-tales we are sold through reality television do the work of drawing us as aspirant consumers into its practices in ways that are extraordinarily complex. I still consider these performances as spectacle. I read spectacle in the sense offered by Desiree Lewis, who argues that power struggles in South Africa are publically performed and represented through gendered bodies.[222] For Lewis, "everyday performances of self acquire public prominence through spectacle, and therefore signal a form of "politics" beyond the formal political sphere."[223] As this spectacle is articulated visually, we have a room full of actors and spectators being invited to understand their belonging as tied to the aspiration to consume. It is important here to notice that the lavish weddings that I mention above do not follow the trend by making the bride hypervisible – instead it is David's fairy-tale, or Robert's "go big or go home." The ways that these men

[220] Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, p. 305.
[221] Chevalier 2011, p. 15.
[222] Lewis, Desiree. 2009. Gendered Spectacle: New Terrains of Struggle in South Africa. *Sida Studies* 24. p. 127.
[223] Ibid.

perform spectacle is central to what Kopano Ratele calls ruling masculinity. Ratele connects the post/apartheid aspiration for "a better life for all" to the spectacle, or in his words the "public spectacle and theatrics that transfixe[s the] nation."[224]

In beginning this discussion with "celebrity" weddings, I do not want to suggest that these big weddings are representative of the whole.[225] While prohibitive to the majority in the ways Hunter offers, more "average" weddings are certainly not on the same scale as the affairs I mention above. I do want to pay attention to those weddings because I think that the spectacle of conspicuous consumption of this "new" black elite exemplified by these "celebrities" is a useful way to think about the transformations leading up to the creation of a global wedding industry in the 20th century. The ways that consumption is moralized, but somehow mediated by discourses of civility and the policing of the "outlandish" offer clues about the ways that weddings in enacting class status are also policing of those who fail to consume correctly or rather, to have good taste. More generally, the expansion of the middle class in former colonies is read similarly; as tainted "not only by implicit exploitation of their lower-class counter parts but also by cultural inauthenticity and mimicry of (often foreign, colonial) elites."[226] Heiman, Liechty and Freeman recognize the inclination to read middle classes as "originating" in the place/time of early/modern Europe and "spreading" in a teleological pattern.[227] It is not only that we receive modernity/civilisation/middle class-ness through the west that leads us to progress,[228] it is also that despite the penetration of this modernity, our performances of self and modes of consumption are read a cheap imitation.

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[224] Ratele, Kopano. 2006. Ruling Masculinity and Sexuality. *Feminist Africa* 6. p. 49.

[225] For instance many wedding planning tools offer that the average South African wedding costs just over R70000, including wedding outfits, rings and "pampering for the big day" although this does not include the reception and honeymoon, See How to Organize Your Budget. www.gettinghitched.co.za/wedding-planning/budget/how-to-organize-your-budget_7.htm accessed 18 April 2013.

[226] Heiman, Rachel. Liechty, Mark. & Freeman, Carla. 2012. Introduction: Charting an Anthropology of the Middle Classes. in Heiman, Rachel. Liechty, Mark. & Freeman, Carla. (Eds). *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing Through Ethnography*. Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press. p. 6

[227] Heiman, Leichty & Freeman 2012, p. 12

[228] See Peterson, Bhekizizwe. 1990a. Apartheid and the Political Imagination in Black South African Theatre. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16: 2. Peterson alerts us to the complexities of the performances and consumption of "civilization". To return to the ways that family form is read as one way that African subjects are read as entering "civilization", see Russell, Margo. 2003. Are Urban Black Families Nuclear? A Comparative Study of Black and White South African Family Forms. *Social Dynamics* 29:2. Russell reads social practices that I would read as performances or techniques of the body, generally recognizable as aspects related to middle class aspiration as signs of transformations towards westernization.

"Diamond Zulus" and the Invention of the Modern "Traditional Wedding

The modern wedding is a product of processes of inventing traditions, signalled by the frequent use of the term "traditional", in describing the white wedding despite that scholars on weddings all agree that it is a recent invention.[229] White weddings in many senses are in fact "traditional", in the ways that they depend on the persistence of the "traditional family."[230] The customs of "modern" weddings for Dawn Currie are replete with symbols that are "unambiguously patriarchal," for example the position of the bride as the primary object of attention and exchange. Bonnie Adrian[231] argues that through bridal photography the bride is elevated to almost celebrity status, however this may be the last opportunity for such a status before the bride is confronted with the burdens of reproductive labour and family obligations. Currie wants to read against scholars like Emily Nett[232] who view women's investment in these marriage rituals as premised on the emotional or irrational, to recognize that the desire for and enactment of the wedding is mediated through the public. We can follow Tamara Sniezek for a moment, who recognizes weddings as located in ongoing family dynamics which come to then represent "who we are."[233] Who the "we" is in the present is the couple then and their families who through magical transformation and a memorable occasion, demonstrate their class position.[234]

The invention of these wedding traditions incidentally produced through processes that are invested in policing the conspicuous consumption of expanding middle and aspirant working classes. Howard offers that the view of elaborate and showy weddings as "evil" is not new. Looking at the US bridal market, criticisms of wedding excess was part of a larger critique of consumption in the early 20th century.[235] At this stage, the formal

[229] See Boden 2003, Howard 2006, Ingraham 1999 and Mead 2008
[230] Currie, Dawn H. 1993. Here Comes the Bride: The Making of a "Modern Traditional" Wedding in Western Culture. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 24:3.
[231] Adrian 2003
[232] Nett, Elizabeth. 1988. *Canadian Families Past and Present.* Toronto: Butterworths.
[233] Sneizek, Tamara. 2005. Is it Our Day or the Bride's Day? The Division of Wedding Labour and it's Meaning for Couples. *Qualitative Sociology* 28:3. p. 216.
[234] See Boden 2003; Ingraham 1999; Montemurro, Beth. 2006. *Something Old, Something Bold: Bridal Showers and Bachelorette Parties*.; & Otnes and Pleck 2003;
[235] Howard 2006, p. 9

wedding as a lavish catered affair was still in the process of its invention. Elites who had access to the formal wedding recognized it as "an immutable sign of civilization, something that belonged to the dawn of history,"[236] as these rituals performed one's etiquette and taste as a performance of power as "taste was more than just an expression of aesthetic preference; it signalled one's social identity or class status."[237] Before the rise of the white wedding, American weddings defied generalization. Many unions were formed without much of a furore and they did not require the intervention of the state or church. This is an important point to consider as the processes by which these unions were formed mirror what we might recognize as "traditional" cultural practices in relation to African or black wedding both in the past and present. The work that consumption-led interests in tradition take some aspects forward to the modern, while leaving others – and by others I also mean the "Other", who is forever constituted in some relation to being "traditional" and behind modern time. It is in this context that "good taste" becomes even more important. The 1920s mark a point when a series of invented traditions related to the formal white wedding emerge and it is also at this point that we see others being invited to practice white weddings including black and white, native and immigrant members of the middle and working classes. As access to the white wedding broadens, harsh criticisms of these weddings emerge, calling for "simple weddings" and a simple life.

There are two interesting things about this notion of "simple": that is a vision that privileges drawing inspiration from the past: bringing what is good from the past into modern society,[238] which included fashion, home furnishing and architecture. While simple, consuming the simple life was not cheap and in fact access to such goods was inaccessible to most women as this simple, tasteful wedding was quite costly and difficult to attain. Howard therefore contends that the idealized simple wedding of the early 20th century reflected the ambivalence of the middle class to the rise in consumer culture. In important ways, this ambivalence is reflected in post/apartheid responses to the consumer practices of an emergent black middle class and elite. It holds particular resonance when you read it against Howard's contention that weddings become a way for the poor and

[236] Howard 2006, p. 10
[237] Howard 2006, p. 23.
[238] Howard 2006, p. 25

immigrant to claim respectability and that "wedding consumption became a multivalent symbol of the promise of the American way of life and its failure to deliver a meaningful existence."[239] The debates about what a "proper wedding" is develop against the backdrop of criticisms of wedding consumption that led people to spend beyond their means, all the while still linking these weddings to the ideal of civilization.

Etiquette manuals produced in this period are instructive, for example in the preface of *Etiquette: Or, a Guide to the Usages of Society with a Glance at Bad Habits*, Alfred D'Orsay tells us that this manual is specifically for those who do not know, etiquette is:

> *The barrier which society draws around itself as a protection against offences the "law" cannot touch – it is a shield against the intrusion of the impertinent, the improper, and the vulgar – a guard against those obtuse persons who, having neither talent nor delicacy, would be continually thrusting themselves into the society of men to whom their presence might (from the difference of feeling and habit) be offensive, and even insupportable*.[240]

He continues, in particular reference to the nouveaux riche:

> *Besides, in a mercantile country like our won, people are continually rising in the world. Shopkeepers become merchants, and mechanics manufacturers; with the possession of wealth, they acquire a taste for the luxuries of life, expensive furniture, gorgeous plate, and also numberless superfluities, with the use of which they are only imperfectly acquainted. But, although their capacities for enjoyment increase, it rarely happens that the polish of their manners keeps pace with the rapidity of their advancement: hence such persons are often painfully reminded that wealth alone is insufficient to protect them from the mortifications which a limited acquaintance with society entails upon the ambitious*.[241]

Unfortunately, without distinction this class is prey to the crime of displaying itself in ways that most certainly lead to such mortification:

> *But few things betray greater imbecility of mind than a servile imitation of the extravagance of any fashionable monster […] It is bad taste to dress in the extreme of fashion; and, in general, those do so who have no other claim to distinction*.[242]

For Agnes Morton, it is the responsibility of the "ultra-fashionable", to help the ignorant lower classes to overcome their hostility towards refinement;[243] it is missionary work

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[239] Howard 2006, p. 28
[240] D'Orsay, Alfred. 1843. *Etiquette: Or, a Guide to the Usages of Society with a Glance at Bad Habits*. New York: Wilson and Company. p. 3
[241] D'Orsay p. 3-4
[242] D'Orsay p. 22-23
[243] Morton, Agnes H. 1911 (Revised Edition, original 1892). *Etiquette: Good Manners for All People, Especially For Those "Who Dwell Within the Broad Zone of the Average"*. Philadelphia, PA: The Penn Publishing Company.

which is "not so much a manifestation *towards others* as it is an exponent of *ourselves.* We are courteous to others, first of all, because such behaviour only is consistent with our own claim to be well bred."[244] Working with the interests of empire, organizations led by such "cultured" women extended their charity from the 1900s from missioning towards factory workers and slum dwellers in the metropole towards white settler colonies.[245] It is no far stretch to read the missionary enterprise in South Africa and its notions of "civilization" as indeed entangled with the notion of "good taste".

I would like to turn our attention to a representation of African subjects forming a formal white wedding in this period. The images below are taken from a collection of pictures of life in Johannesburg from the years between 1885 and 1935. The image in the top right is captioned "'Civilized Natives' wedding party," while the bottom picture is described as "Wedding ceremony: new style." [246] I find both descriptions interesting in the sense that they locate black subjects performing the formal white wedding in the category of the civilized. Performing white weddings, these "natives" would have formed part of the black middle class described as mission educated elites who were born into traditional African societies and equipped to fit into European society by virtue of their education, Christianity and assimilation."[247] The elite described by Howard, who through etiquette manuals and magazines defined "good taste," would probably also have read these images as signalling civilization. Philip Bonner argues that this black elite was engaged in its own articulation of taste because of their location in relation to a racist colonial state. This elite, while identifying with the liberal white elite, as black subjects they were "unable to articulate with conviction the metropolitan values it espoused."[248] This elite was compressed back to the classes beneath it, so Bonner contends that "tastes, values, culture, credentials became more important signifiers than in the metropolitan world."[249]

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[244] Morton 1911, p. 14
[245] Bush, Julia. 1998. Edwardian Ladies and the "Race" Dimensions of British Imperialism. *Women's Studies International Forum* 21: 3.
[246] Kallaway, Peter. & Pearson, Patrick. 1986. *Johannesburg: Images and Continuities. A History of Working Class Life through Pictures 1885-1935.* Johannesburg: Raven Press. p. 51.
[247] Odendall. 1984. *Vuka Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest in South Africa to 1929.* Claremont: David Phillips. p. 286.
[248] Bonner, Phillip. 1982. The Transvaal Native Congress 1917-1921: The Radicalisation of the Black Petty bourgeoisie on the Rand. In Marks, S. & Rathbone R.B. (Eds). *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa 1870 - 1930*. London: Longman.1982. p. 272
[249] Bonner 2012, p. 3

Bonner's reading follows Howard's assessment of what formal weddings come to mean for the aspirant working and middle classes in the United States, in performing the idealized or aspired for citizenship denied to those on the margins of society. While the elite of this period recognized marriage rituals as a part of all societies: "no nation was so barbarous as to not solemnize marriage with some rites, ceremonies and public rejoicings,"[250] the recognition of these practices as the "new" is significant in more ways than just the suggestion that African marriage rituals were undergoing processes of change. Images like these are resonant with one of the genres of missionary photography identified by Jack Thompson: the "transformative photograph."[251] The transformative photograph, sort of a "before and after" would frequently stage a comparison between the status of the "rural"/ "traditional"/ "home"/ "heathen", against images of the same group of people once transformed to the status of the "civilized." While the images aforementioned do not offer the "before," the copy implies that much like the make-overs we witness in reality television, the Africans have undergone a "make-over" or transformation into this "new" status. I want to follow Peri Bradley who offers the figure of the "monster": the transformations of the body to the complete, or the ideal is achieved through the banishment of the monster.[252] Through the "make-over", the body is made to conform through containment and discipline to its idealized form.[253] If I can take liberties with this reading in mind of Butler's assertion that bodies are produced through the repetition of gestures and acts which over time generate an image of reality; the make-over aims to accomplish this ideal image, but it requires the continued repetition of its performance if the ideal it to be maintained. Therefore the processes required to banish the monster can never be complete. It is in this sense that I want to argue that the transformation to the status of being civilized can be viewed not only as continuous, but as an unending in-between-ness or liminality that itself is "monstrous."

The state of monstrosity by definition is the space of liminality as it destabilizes; it is not just alien but is produced in the folds between "self" and "Other". The double articulation

[250] Howard 2006, p. 23.
[251] Thompson, T. Jack. 2004. Images of Africa: Mission Photography in the Nineteenth Century: An Introduction. Occasional Paper, Centre for African Studies, University of Copenhagen.
[252] Bradley, Peri. 2009. Monster's Makeovers: Transforming 'Monsters' into Beauty Queens. in Fhlainn, Sorcha Ni. (Ed). *Dark Reflections, Monstrous Reflections: Essays on the Monster in Culture*. Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press.
[253] Bradley 2009, p. 29.

that the figures of the monstrous evoke work much in the same way as Homi Bhabha describes the work of mimicry as:

> *The sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers*.[254]

The colonial gaze is threatened by mimicry as it implies a "looking back" both profound and disturbing. The weddings of "civilized natives" produce responses both profound and disturbing, as they reflect an inner compatibility between empire and nation, by troubling the signs of race and culture and making the "national" more difficult to naturalize. The double vision, or double articulation is that the partial recognition of the colonial subject as one's distant relative through these acts of mimicry present us with the liminal space of "not quite/not white". Bhabha continues: black skin splits under the racist gaze, displaced into signs of bestiality, genitalia, grotesquerie, which reveal the phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body."[255] The very notion of an "original" is troubled, for resemblance is "the most troubling thing to behold."[256]

The makeover from the savage to the civilized is never complete, relegating the status of the "civilized native" to the liminal category of the monstrous within this colonial imaginary. We can take the example of King Cetswayo, through the ways he was visually represented in the images circulated during and following his 19th century visit to London.[257] While stereotypical images of "Zulus" fascinated the British, Catherine Anderson suggests that Cetswayo himself challenged these stereotypes during his visit through his dress as he presented himself through the image of the European.[258]

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[254] Bhabha, Homi. 1984. Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse. *October* 28. p. 126

[255] Bhabha 1983, p. 132-133.

[256] Bhabha 1983, p. 191

[257] Anderson, Catherine E. 2008. A Zulu King in Victorian London: Race, Royalty and Imperialist Aesthetics in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain. *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation* 24:3.

[258] See Musangi, Jennifer. 2009. "Ayoba, Ana Kip Kip, Ayoba": The T-shirt Cult in the Forging of a Black Urban Youth Identity in Johannesburg. *Scrutiny2* 14:1. Musangi reminds us of the ways that dress then becomes foremost about politics of African subjects, more so than "culture", or religion. Also see James, Deborah. 1996. " 'I Dress in this Fashion': Transformations in Sotho Dress and Women's Lives in a Sekhukhuneland Village, South Africa. in Hendrickson, H (Ed). *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and post-colonial Africa*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Appearing in popular culture texts like *Vanity Fair*, the king never publically wore "native dress", disappointing many including Queen Victoria herself: "Unfortunately he appeared in a hideous black frock coat and trousers."[259] Despite Cetswayo's actual dress in public, the representations which circulated around his visit employed the code of caricature, opting to depict him instead as "savage in native dress." For instance one portrait produced to depict his visit with the queen has him partially dressed in a bear skin. The fiction here is self-evident as there are no bears in Southern Africa. Furthermore, even as when these texts attempted to represent the Zulu king in "western dress," the make-over is "monstrous"; he is imaged/imagined through the figure of the blackface minstrel performer. The blackface minstrel caricature of the American "Negro" worked to demonstrate the lacking civilization of black Americans through absurd costume and poor diction. Applied in representations of the king, despite Cetswayo's actual dress and presentation, the status of the "civilized native" is one to be mocked as it is merely cheap imitation.

The world fairs of the 20th Century are instructive if we are to understand how images of Africans worked not only to showcase the savage, but instead to display the desires and anxieties of the racist, sexist imperial project itself. We are well accustomed to the readings concerning the display of women like Sarah Baartman in the metropole as serving as an indexical sign of the excess and pathology of black women in producing white femininity.[260] What is interesting about the display of Africans (mostly men) at the Empire exhibitions in London and Chicago leading up to the 1936 exhibition in Johannesburg, is the way they foreground the modern city. African bodies on display then literally stage the contrast between the "savage" and "civilized", as the modern citizen-spectator is invited to recognize the African as their "contemporary ancestor."[261] Loren Kruger pays attention to phantasm of the "Diamond Zulus", staged at these events as the potentially educable subjects of a civilizing process, demonstrated through their dress:

> *The head in the bowler hat is recognizably the supervisor, only because he occupies the position behind the sorting table. Smart, the unnamed but presumably skilled sorter, and Jeremiah the "Tambookie" wear unremarkable "European" clothing; Klaas the*

[259] Anderson 2008. p. 19
[260] See Magubane, Zine. 2001. Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the "Hottentot Venus". *Gender & Society* 15:6, for example
[261] Kruger, Loren. 2007. "White Cities," "Diamond Zulus," and the "African Contribution to Human Advancement": African Modernities and the World's Fairs. *The Drama Review* 51:3.

> *"bushman" wears earrings and has apparently wrapped an animal skin over a European shirt; and Mafena the "Fingoe" wears some sort of turban, beads over his bare chest, and European trousers. Silos, the "Gcakela Kafir," holds a long spatula, but his role in the display—with his great stature, parti-colour blanket, and feather headdress—seems to be mostly ornamental. Apart from the supervisor, whose hatted head observing the men from the background marks him as a mental rather than manual labourer, the workers in this picture are those in some form of European dress. In contrast, the two least dressed are also the most idle*.[262]

"Diamond Zulus", a blurry lumping together of African industrial labourers staged this way, "partially nude", are discursively constructed in ways similar to my previous example of King Cetswayo. What is further interesting is the way this staging is worked to recast African subjects into the category of the modern, as they serve as industrial labourers working for diamond companies such as De Beers in South Africa to recover, clean and polish diamonds. On display, these Africans create a paradox; the Victorian taxonomy used "people on display" to maintain social distance between themselves and those who like Baartman, were curiosities. Further, as etiquette would have it, people who are technicians in this taxonomy should not draw attention to themselves. As such, these "Diamond Zulus" stage something which for Kruger is "not only modern, but remarkably so,"[263] subjects in the folds of "tradition"/'modernity" that the colonial and apartheid state would have to anxiously construct through the myths of difference in order to sustain the nation.

I want to return to Otnes and Pleck whose primary argument for the ascendance of the lavish wedding is the way it captures the romantic fantasy of a Cinderella-like transformation in conspicuous consumption, as the lavish wedding becomes a prime mechanism for communicating wealth.[264] They recognize that the traditions invented in these processes are not only working to communicate wealth or the aspirations for it, but that they depend on the exploitation of black labour, citing the invention of the "ring tradition" by De Beers[265] as illustrative of this argument. Chessler describes the ring tradition as one of the most lasting and universal symbols of marriage, citing the use of rings to seal contracts and relationships in different historical periods and locations as

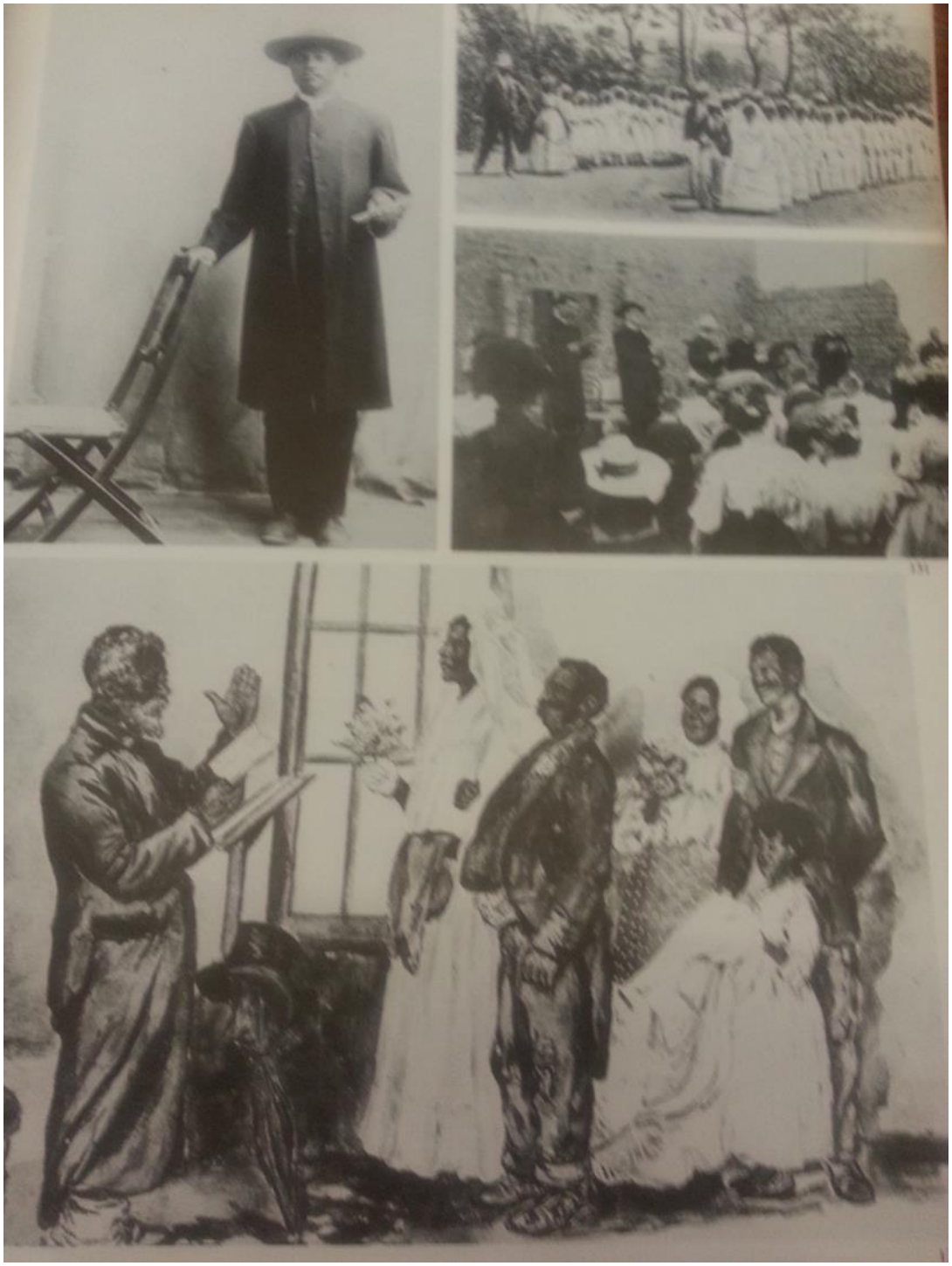
[262] Kruger 2007, p. 23-24.
[263] Kruger 2007, p. 27
[264] Otnes and Pleck 2003, p. 5-6
[265] See Epstein, Edward J. 1982. *The Rise and Fall of Diamonds: The Shattering of a Brilliant Illusion*. London: Simon & Schuster.

examples. The gemstone and subsequent choice of the diamond is interesting, as Chessler argues that the diamond was previously treated with suspicion and even aligned to the devil.

The diamond engagement ring tradition then is quite literally invented by advertising agencies in the 20th century in ways that not only make diamonds seem as the natural choice, but as though this is the way it has always been. Otnes and Pleck follow Edward Epstein's examination of the work of advertising agencies who created the slogan "diamonds are forever," which remains a mainstay for De Beers' advertising, as contributing to the widespread adoption of the diamond engagement ring tradition.[266] Epstein uses the notion of the "diamond invention", used by De Beers to sustain the value of diamonds, transforming carbon crystals into universally recognized token of power and romance. This invention of course depended on the exploitation of a migrant black labour force in South Africa.

I argue that the diamond invention was not only produced through the exploitation of black labour, but that this exploitation depends on the ways that race ideologically works in producing the wedding tradition itself. We see this if we return to the Johannesburg Empire Exhibition in 1936 for example, by reading the displays of partially dressed, "diamond Zulus" in the city. Johannesburg was staging itself as a modern, metropolitan city as the show-casing of its industry reflects. The reliance on black labour to produce this city is a site of anxiety, for this modern city aspired to be a white city. The reliance on "native dress" to signal the "traditional" aspects of these natives works as a reminder of their location as not quite/not modern, but also not at home here in the city. As Kruger's work reflects, this does not correspond to the self-fashioning of urban black subjects articulating their location as "at home," as "New Africans,"[267] however the staged diamond Zulus demonstrate the work of the myths of the "dressed native", against the "healthy reserve" which worked to produce the myth of Johannesburg as the modern, white city it so espoused itself to be, while allowing for a transient class of black workers to participate albeit as exploited workers in the building of the city.

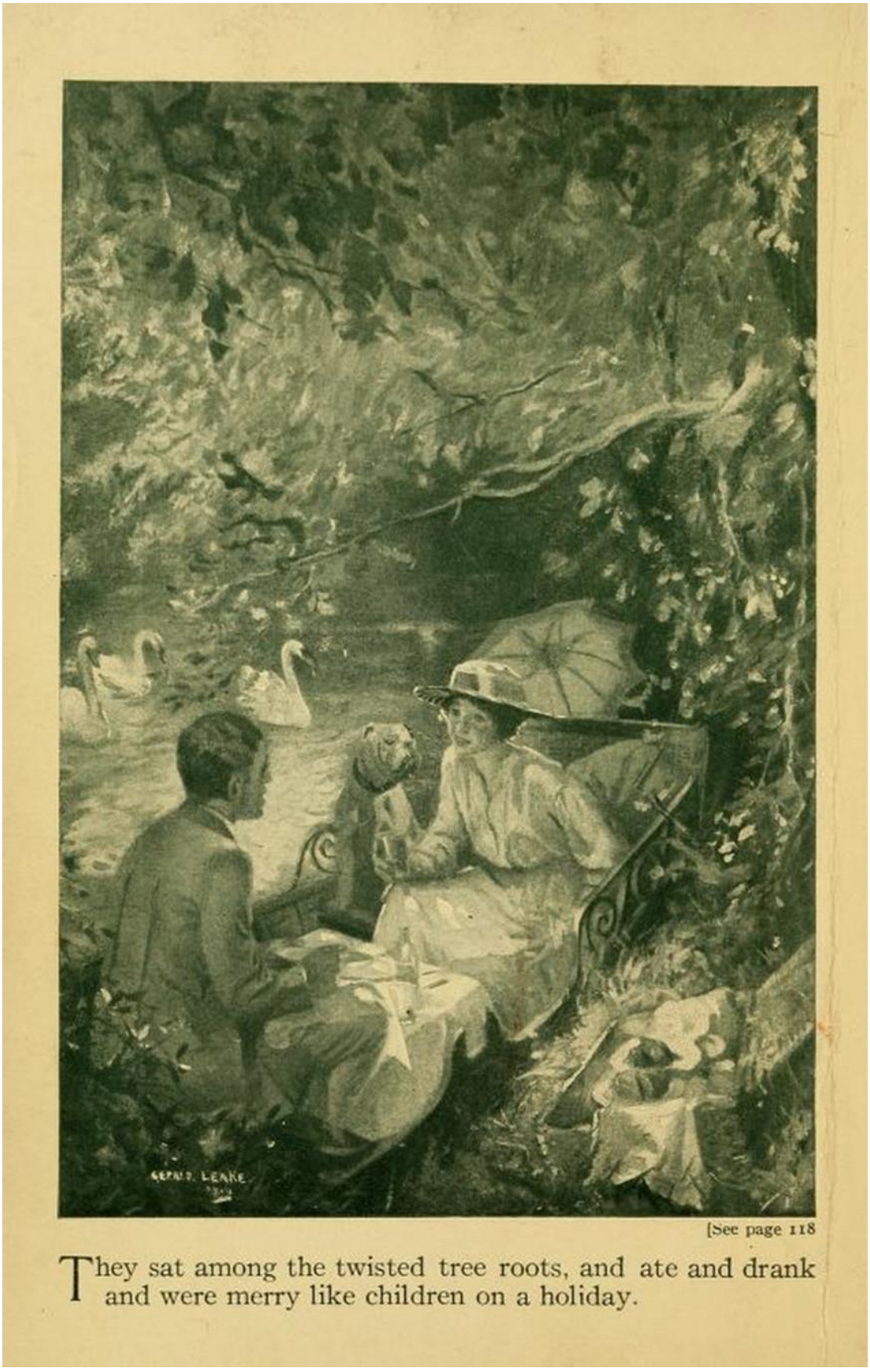
[266] Otnes and Pleck 2003, p. 66
[267] See Kruger 2007



6 Civilised Natives Wedding

Randall Packard argues that the apartheid state created a language of legitimation, perhaps a response to the tension between the empire and the nation as articulated by Bhabha, which employed these two myths.[268] I have hopefully demonstrated the anxieties that the "dressed native" produced, read as cheap imitation. This dressed native was emblematic of the physical and moral failings of urban Africans, struggling to settle to the urban environment. The healthy reserve is the idea that the rural/traditional space, albeit a fiction produced by the development of racist capitalism, was the natural and indeed better place for Africans to live. While the city depended on a class of urbanized educated black labour, through these myths that located black life in the traditional/rural/reserve, the state was able to support social and economic policies premised on the denial of the existence of a permanent class of urban workers and making no provisions for its social reproduction: African families we are to understand are not only "traditional", but authentically elsewhere, justifying the logics of separate development. The suspension of black subjects in another place and another time further renders the weddings of "civilized natives" as poor copies of an original. While signifying the "progress" of black subjects, these weddings are problematic, somehow coming at the cost of something presumed to be more so authentic and submerged in crisis as a result of the incursions of capital.

[268] Packard, Randall M. 1989. The "Healthy Reserve" and the "Dressed Native": Discourses on Black Health and the Language of Legitimation in South Africa. *American Ethnologist* 16:4.



[See page 118

They sat among the twisted tree roots, and ate and drank and were merry like children on a holiday.

7 Honeymooners

Out of Africa

In this section, I demonstrate the am ways that some of the ideas about how the white wedding is invented, ideologically frame the assumptions we attach to its practice in South Africa. In part I have done some of this work: arguing that the reading of black subjects performing white weddings as imitating "western" or "white" weddings (not quite/not white) as fundamentally problematic and embedded in the logics of racial difference and racist capital. To follow the reading of the history of the white wedding that I have just offered, I think it is now important to recognize the processes by which the white wedding becomes a fantasy that works in capturing people's desires as well as one that works, in the sense that people are increasingly able to access it; as entangled with the political economy of the colony and its metropole. If the white wedding comes into popularity at the height of the imperial period and the ultimate figure of this period, Victoria comes to represent an originary point for some of the meanings that wedding fantasies inherit; it is not a surprise then that weddings themselves are imbued with colonial imaginings and that in and of themselves feed and are fed by the fantasy and performances of imperial power. I want to continue from this point by thinking about how the fantasy of travel works in invented modern wedding tradition to demonstrate the ways that white weddings are implicated in the fantasy of racialized, sexualised and gendered imperial and colonial power.

I would be difficult to miss the ways that travel is invoked in the display of romance in South African bridal magazines, whether in the elaborate narratives of proposals, or in fact enacted through the "destination wedding." Along with selling domestic products for new couples and the goods and services of wedding production, we are also sold that to truly consummate our romantic connection, travel to a space foreign and exotic is a necessary ritual if indeed our love is true, take the example of a two-page advertisement for Pezula, a resort and spa in the Garden Route, which tells us that we deserve the ultimate honeymoon:

> *MARRY ME… At Pezula we make your wedding dreams come true. Our experienced team will take care of all of your plans from décor and flowers to menus and your designer cake… this is your dream.*

> *I DO… Celebrate your big day with champagne and roses and red carpet treatment, or the simple elegance of crisp white napery. Go African and rustic in the boma or opt for a beach wedding at a romantic castle… this is your wedding.*
>
> *HAPPILY EVERY AFTER… honeymoon in luxury and privacy in our sumptuous suites, celebrate in the champagne & whiskey bar, relax on secluded Noetzie Beach, be pampered in our award-winning spa and dine al fresco at Zachary's gourmet restaurant. Take a guided hike through ancient indigenous forests or an exhilarating horse ride across floral landscapes… this is your honeymoon.*[269]

South Africa has positioned itself as an ideal location for a wedding as well as a honeymoon in particular ways that depend on particular ideological and visual repertoires. Pezula is one of hundreds of private game lodges particularly interested in selling us the romance of the bush wedding, described as "idyllic luxury" and offering intimacy.[270]

In fashion editorials, it is interesting to observe the different ways what black and white women are represented in the intimate space of the bush. I am inclined to describe these depictions ad framed by two dominant images, or assemblages of what the relationship between femininity, romance and the bush might imply. These assemblages speak volumes about the work of race in producing femininity in this space: for the first, we can take the example of an image, drawn from *True Love Bride* that invites the African bride to remain "stylishly rooted"[271]; against a second which is part of an editorial on "natural beauty" set a*gainst* the evocative African bush with the aim of producing a "romantic impact."[272] While the white female subject in the second image invokes the romantic scripts of heterosexuality, the black female subject is projected as "at home" in the bush, a site that is the extension of her tradition, fixing her in time.[273] The colonial gaze implied in this photograph of a landscape produces the idea of "wildlife" in which stereotypes of

[269] W*edding Album* 2, 2008. p. 1 & 2.
[270] BotseBotse Bush Retreat. W*edding Album* 2, 2008. p. 30.
[271] Malatse, Thebe. 2008. African Queen: Remaining Stylishly Rooted in Your Traditional Nuptials with One of These Sensational Creations. *True Love Bride* Summer 2008/9. p. 26.
[272] Natural Beauty: Set Against the Evocative African Bush, These Gorgeous Gowns Create a Romantic Impact With Warm Tones, Soft Embellishments and Fabrics Such as Satin and Lace. *Wedding Inspirations* Summer 2012/2013. p. 39.
[273] As Homi Bhabha has suggested, 'an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness, see Bhabha, Homi K. 1983. The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse. *Screen* 24:4.

"tribe" and "race"[274] are explicitly produced and fix black female subjects. These notions are replete in these texts, for instance The "bush", as a tourist myth is produced out of a colonial imaginary requires the projection of women to produce is idyllic quality: indigenous women are rejected if too savage, and also rejected if too modern as women must protect "tradition" if they are to remain captivating.[275] The white woman instead demonstrates the powerful inscriptions of racial difference, consolidating her status as a member of the ruling class through her domestication of this African wilderness.[276] The "New Woman", or "Modern Bride", she depicts is an invention of the imperial period and discursively produces the "home" and white middle class femininity.[277] In these ways the depictions of landscape and nature reflect broader anxieties about race and gender.[278]

One of the "Real Brides" sections featured in the Spring 2010 issue of *Wedding Inspirations* is instructive. Titled "Beauty and the Beasts", we witness the marriage of Lizelle Alberts and Malcolm Green at the Timbavati Private Game Reserve.

> *The editor asks: Some may imagine a bush wedding as being all leopard skin and porcupine quills. Yours was simply glamorous. How did you get that right?*
>
> *Lizelle responds: We wanted a glamorous African wedding. The invitations we sent in rectangular black leather boxes with inlaid zebra skin, velvet ribbons and crystals.*[279]

The example demonstrates the obsession with images of wild Africa, animal-print clad natives in tow as abstract extensions of "nature"/"tradition"; these images are replete in the advertising for bush wedding venues in South Africa. Citing a fairy tale, *Beauty and the Beast,* our heroine not only receives the reward of her prince; through her beauty she conquers or domesticates the wild landscape. The private game lodge stages the fiction

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[274] Ranger, Terence. 2001. Colonialism, Consciousness and the Camera Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920 by Elizabeth Edwards; Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire by James R. Ryan. *Past & Present* 171. p. 203

[275] d'Hauteserre, Anne-Marie. 2004. Postcolonialism, Colonialism and Tourism. In Lew, Alan A., Hall, C. Michael., & Williams, Allan M. *A Companion to Tourism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

[276] Morin, K. 1999. Peak practices: Englishwomen's "heroic" adventures in the nineteenth century American West. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89:3.

[277] Beetham, Margaret. 1998. The Reinvention of the English Domestic Woman: Class and "Race" in the 1890s' Woman's Magazine. *Women's Studies International Forum* 21: 3.

[278] Also see Protschky, Susie. 2008. Seductive Landscapes: Gender, Race and European Representations of Nature in the Dutch East Indies in the Late Colonial Period. *Gender & History* 20:2.

[279] Love Stories: Beauty and the Beasts. *Wedding Inspirations* Spring 2010. p. 87

of a "wild Africa", a space which serves as the context for travel to romantic fulfilment. Imaginary African territories have of course worked in this manner, as David Bunn's reading of 19th century romance reveals.[280] The imperial period is marked by a proliferation of travel romance, and as Bunn argues the exotic sites of empire served as a space marked as "free". The invisible but necessary black women abstracted to nature and the category of the beasts serve as part of the spatial metaphor of Africa as "the promised land", mapping the body of Africa as feminine site of conquest in the imperial imagination.

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas goes further to suggest that fairy tales not only reflect the romance of conquest, but further "transfigure the discourse of folktales in order to strengthen the power of the bourgeoisie,"[281] imposing standards for sexual and social conduct. The heroine is able to conquer the beast (within, reflected through those necessarily around/outside her) by maintaining her propriety and achieving Cinderella–like transformation.[282] Again, as Otnes and Pleck show us, it is this dream of transformation that the romance genre[283] sells women as the opportunity to upward mobility and arrival to the bourgeois class.[284] The women in the image with our "beauty", are probably intended as "part of the family" in the romance of the bush wedding in a contemporary culture that tells us that racial difference is enjoyable: "commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture ethnicity becomes the spice, seasoning that will liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture."[285] Incidentally, the people (and "traditions") who serve as the extension of nature in these

[280] Bunn, David. 1988. Embodying Africa: Woman and Romance in Colonial Fiction. *English in Africa* 15:1.
[281] Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. 2010. Beautiful Maidens, Hideous Suitors: Victorian Fairy Tales and the Process of Civilisation. *Marvels and Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 24:2. p. 272
[282] Also see Currie 1993 and Ingraham 1999 who read the fantasy of being a "princess for a day" as central to the ascendance of the formal white wedding. Otnes and Pleck 2003 further argue that this transformation is especially important as is combines the elements of romantic love with consumer culture in the effort to produce perfection.
[283] See van Wyk, Malvern. 1997. Romancing the East Cape Frontier: Prelude to the South African High Romance of Empire. *English in Africa* 24:2, who argues that romance is a narrative mode, a way of telling a story, rather than a particular kind of fiction, it is not actually limited to fiction.
[284] Also see Levine, Elana. 2005. Fractured Fairy Tales and Fragmented Markets: Disney's Weddings of a Lifetime and the Cultural Politics of Media Conglomeration. *Television New Media* 6, who similarly reflect on the ways that major corporations use this fairy tale to garner their selling power.
[285] hooks, bell. 1992. Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace. *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* Toronto: Between the Lines Press. p. 29.

images are not only the "spice", but as part of the landscape can/must come under the protection/preservation of the modern white bride. As William Beinart and Katie McKeown argue, the wildness of Africa creates "the necessity for Western domination or possession, through assuming responsibility for African nature or imposing ideas of management and progress."[286]

The colonial space offered the opportunity for such fairy tale transformation, as emigrating women were promised new freedoms or a better life in the settler colonies.[287] These spaces offered the possibility of Cinderella-like transformation as through this travel, they could enter upward mobility. To understand this, we have to recognize the arrival of European women to the colonies as fundamental to the construction of whiteness and the structures of racial difference. Marriage works to produce the myth of racial purity and through marriage European women were invited to protect the European body politic.[288] The support that European women offered the imperial project worked to domesticate the space; take the development of homes with private bathrooms as an example of this work. Marriage was different from the acts interracial sex between European men and colonized women, because it instantiated these aspirations and produced a racialized notion of the bourgeoisie that made respectability not only about distinction or "good taste," but in fact become ways of producing and performing the purity of whiteness.

While the consummation of marriage is no longer performed in public, the honeymoon still holds the implied messages about consummation. According to Helena Michie in the Victorian wedding, the honeymoon marked a couple's entry to a private space where they could consummate their marriage and the idea that they travelled to a place where they could do this does not necessarily make this sex less public.[289] The ideas of romance that the fantasy of travel produces then becomes an important way to think about the practice.

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[286] Beinart, William., & McKeown, Katie. 2009. Wildlife Media and Representations of Africa, 1950s to the 1970s. *Environmental History* 14:3. p. 11

[287] Bush, Julia. 1998. Edwardian Ladies and the "Race" Dimensions of British Imperialism. *Women's Studies International Forum* 21: 3.

[288] Stoler, Ann Laura. 1989. Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures. *American Ethnologist* 16:4.

[289] Michie, Helena. 2006. *Victorian Honeymoons: Journey's to the Conjugal.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Examining a history of the "bridal tour," the predecessor of the modern honeymoon in the United States, Barbara Penner uses the notion of "mapping", suggesting that Niagara Falls as the ultimate honeymoon destination of the time appealed to newlyweds because of the ways that it imagined as a place for forbidden pleasures.[290] Travel is a structural element of the fairy tale,[291] and in both construct a liminal space or suspension of time where/when one can act in a way different than they do "at home", and the body of Africa, as the feminized exotic site for conquest has historically represented a space where sexual mores were looser.[292] As tourists, honeymooners enter a temporary suspension of reality that is both about travel and romance.[293]

Tourism is embroiled in a racialised and sexualised politics of desire, which is why the category of "sex tourism", is a misnomer of sorts in the ways it wants to imagine "sex tourism" as a separate category in and of itself.[294] Anne McClintock's notion of "porno-tropics"[295] is instructive as it reflects the European tendency to reflect its own forbidden desires to the colonies, sexualizing them in the ways that I have demonstrated above. With this in mind, I want to consider the work of the "bush wedding" in South Africa as dependant on the view of Africa as a "definitive hallucinatory space for the colonial imaginary,"[296] and the myths in/out of Africa are certainly reflected in the hallucinations that white weddings are imagined as personal and unique. As example, I want to take a moment to consider the 2010 controversy over a "colonial themed wedding", held at The Barn in Mpumalanga. The British couple Dan and Chantal are not unique in wedding abroad

[290] Penner, Barbara. 2009. *Newlyweds on Tour: Honeymooning in 19th Century America.* Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press. p. 55.
[291] Tartu, Risto Järv. 2010. Fairy tales and Tourist Trips. Fabula 51: 3/4.
[292] See Bhana, Deevia. Morrell, Robert., Hearn, Jeff., & Molestane, Relebohile. 2007. Power and Identity: An Introduction to Sexualities in Southern Africa. *Sexualities* 10
[293] McEwen, Haley A. 2009. Fauna, Flora and Fucking: Female Sex Safari's in South Africa. In Steyn, Melissa. & van Zyl, Mikki (Ed). The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa. Pretoria: HSRC Press.
[294] See Nagel, Joanne. 2000. States of Arousal/Fantasy Islands: Race, Sex, and Romance in the Global Economy of Desire. American Studies 41:2/3, who argues that there is an "intimate substructure" that underlies the global system; "the global economy of desire." This sexual economy seems to operate beneath the surface of the global system. The economy of desire is generally ignored or winked at, and it often only surfaces in the form of scandals or moral crises.
[295] McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York and London: Routledge. p, 21–2
[296] Van Eeden, Jeanne. 2004. The Colonial Gaze: Imperialism, Myths, and South African Popular Culture. *Design Issues* 20: 2, p. 18.

as some research suggests that by 2008 at least one in six British weddings took place abroad.[297]

It is of course interesting that the wedding is appears to celebrate colonialism, complete with an all-black staff. In response to the controversy surrounding these wedding photographs, the wedding photographers as well as the venue defended the wedding as one not about colonialism, but a unique wedding that was personal to the couple and making use of the romance and nostalgia of the film *Out of Africa*. While the use of a colonial fantasy to perform their "good taste" is not unique, what is interesting is the use of black labour, particularly in the ways that it is represented in their photographs. I found one other occasion where this was the case in a fashion editorial called "An Affair to Remember", that featured a range of outfits for a new bride to wear on a three-month honeymoon.[298] Set in the "country," we witness our white bride's departure from the country following the honeymoon with a summary of costs including R2.5 million for a Bentley Flying Spur. Her luggage, costing over R7000 per piece is carried by an entourage of two maids and one butler. One maid is white, perhaps disrupting the assumption that domestic labour in South Africa has been historically assigned to black persons but the only black models in the editorial are workers. Like "An Affair to Remember", Dan and Chantal's wedding enacts of consumption of the "Other", through the exploitation of black labour in service of a fantasy of imperial conquest; but I believe that it does more, embedded in a libidinal economy that performs the ways that sexuality is being organized and works to produce whiteness. I would further add that the image makes evident the split between domesticity and domestic labour that enables the fantasy of romantic love and companionate marriage to be a site where women can "have it all."

[297] Major, Bridget., McLeay, Fraser. & Waine, Danny. 2010. Perfect Weddings Abroad. Journal of Vacation Marketing 16: 3.
[298] Day, Bronwyn. 2008. An Affair to Remember. W*edding Album* 2, p. 100.



8 Beauty and the Beast

The Oppositional Gaze

In this chapter I am interested in wedding photographs. The literature on weddings pays close attention to the ways that the ritual is framed by the production of images. Charles Lewis notes the relationship between the repeated images we see of the rich and famous, frequently aligned to the consumption of goods, much like the photo essays in bridal magazines that tell us both what a fantasy wedding looks like, and what goods and services we need to purchase it. For Lewis, wedding photographs actually help to make sure that the script is followed. Likening the script of wedding rituals to the romance novel, "with wedding images, the hope is specifically the commercialized married and ideal life."[299] As Elizabeth Edwards argues, the production of photographs is not only about the production of a representation, we need to address the materiality of the photographs as objects.[300] For Edwards, photographs are "both images and physical objects which exist in time and space and thus in sociocultural experience. They have volume, opacity, tactility and a physical presence in the world enmeshed with subjective, embodied and sensuous interactions with them."[301] If we take this suggestion forward to wedding photography, I and other scholars are then interested in the ways that a wedding is performed has changed with the critical presence of the photographer and videographers.[302] I am further interested in the socio-symbolic languages that are adopted or enmeshed in these practices.

Sidney Cheung examines bridal photography and wedding video-recording in a study of Hong Kong, arguing that bridal photography and wedding videography are not only modes of documenting the events, but are useful markers of social change. The production of wedding images introduces a "new dynamism of marriage as a ritual"[303] as "visualization refers not only to the technical process of documentation, but also the

[299] Lewis, Charles. 1988. Working the Ritual: Professional Wedding Photography and the American Middle Class. *Journal of Communication Theory* 22. p. 89.
[300] Edwards, Elizabeth. 2002. Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs. *Visual Studies* 17:1.
[301] Edwards 2002, p. 67
[302] Abraham, Janaki. 2010. Wedding Videos in North Kerala: Technologies, Rituals, and Ideas about Love and Conjugality. *Visual Anthropology Review*
[303] Cheung, Sidney C.H. 2006. Visualising Marriage in Hong Kong. *Visual Anthropology* 19: 1. p.22.

expectations of how one's social life should be arranged and organized for remembrance."[304] Wedding photography plays a part in the production of the wedding ritual itself, it is a "new ritual" and crucially as Cheung observes, can be found in almost any country. Furthermore, as Adrian observes in her study, wedding photography is concerned with the production of "perfect" images for memory.[305] Bonnie Adrian goes further by examining the development of a distinctive mode of bridal photography in Taiwan that is now almost universally practiced. Adrian contends that this practice is illustrative of competitive consumption and imagined community, as the photographs perform the identity of the nation of Taiwan.[306]

Bonnie Adrian, like Cele Otnes and Elizabeth Pleck[307] recognize the ways that wedding photography allows the couple to be the stars of their big day through consumption. Calling it a "coming out party for women", Chyong-Ling Lin, Jin-Tsann Yeh and Pei-Chan Lan contend that through entertaining visual consumption, weddings then become processes of image construction.[308] In particular, Sharon Boden contends that through these photographs the bride is able to consume her wedding fantasy as they document the process of transformation through which the wedding is staged and through which these socially constructed events come to feel "authentic and romantic".[309] This transformation aims to produce a fairy tale, through which becoming a bride means "positioning oneself as a spectacle upon which the public gaze can be directed."[310] Lin, Yeh and Lan agree, viewing women's leading role in these photographs as signalling their independence as bridal photographs have turned from family portrayal to individualism, allowing people to create the romantic concept of self through photographic technique."[311] Selina Ching and Simin Xu call this the "bridal gaze", an aggregation of what the wider audience anticipates in bridal pictures. Crucial to this gaze is the way it demands

[304] Ibid.
[305] See Adrian 2003
[306] See Adrian 2006
[307] See Otnes & Pleck 2003
[308] Lin, Chyong-Ling., Yeh, Jin-Tsann., & Lan, Pei-Chan. 2012. A Coming out Party for Women: Empowerment Through Bridal Photography. *Social Behaviour and Personality* 40:2.
[309] Boden 2007, p. 113.
[310] Boden 2003, p. 116.
[311] Lin, Yeh & Lan 2012 p. 340.

an illusory narration of romance.[312] In their view, this illusory creates an ideal different from wedding photographs of the old "in which women were gazed upon for their separation from the natal family and incorporation into the groom's family."[313] The bridal gaze presents us instead with an idealized view of the couple as two unique individuals on their own and we do not get a full impression of weddings as family-oriented events that involve negotiations and bargaining, instead "photographs have therefore become an important arena in which the couple celebrates the ideal modern ideology of romantic love and imagines the triumph of couple-hood over family."[314] These images become glamorous and highly aestheticized romantic fantasy, presenting romantic love as the ideal of companionate marriage.[315]

In this chapter I am interested in interrogating this presentation of an idealized romantic couple. I make the case that the narratives in these images depend upon the visual spectacle of the bride who becomes the "main attraction", or the star of her big day. I use the notion of a "bridal gaze" to consider where women stand in relation to looking, or gazing practices and relations. If a bridal gaze presents us with an ideal; certain norms, excesses and exclusions are present in its constitution. I am interested in what it means to present black women at the centre of a heterosexist romance. To pursue this, I pose first that borrowing from other visual genres present in the media landscape such as bridal magazines, films and reality television programs, the narrative produced in wedding photography shapes the representation of the ritual as the climax of a fairy tale. The technologies of bridal photography are mirrored in the more public photographic albums in bridal magazines that use a range of pictures including collections of photographs intended to narrate the events of the weddings of real couples, the portraits of advertisements intended to sell dresses mostly, but also other products related to wedding production such as flowers and cakes. Wedding albums will frequently include portraits of these objects on their own, intended to form part of this memory of perfection. I would also include the fashion editorials in these magazines as an extension of wedding photography because they offer visual representations of the fantasy that the

[312] Ching, Selina., & Xui, Simin. 2007. Wedding Photographs and the Bridal Gaze in Singapore. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 9:2. p. 89
[313] Ching & Xui 2007, p. 91
[314] Ching and Xui 2007, p. 92
[315] Ching & Xui 2007, p. 101

white wedding is intended to perform, literally staging fantasies like *Cinderella*, or *Sleeping Beauty*, but also providing the readers techniques in posing and staging for their own photographs. The repertoires of bridal photography reflect or speak to different kinds of moments or fantasies related to what kinds of personhood they intend to present. It is not just the gesturing towards each other, looking at the face and posing to show romantic love, signalled most poignantly in the kiss, but that the staging involves objects collected and curated to index other kinds of meaning.

bell hooks contends that the representations of black women in the cultural landscape always work to present black women as a double other, as both raced and gendered others, the black female figure is the sign of sex. The figure of the bride is interesting to consider here, dressed in white albeit frequently metaphorically, the dichotomy of the virgin/whore implodes into itself. A number of authors have noted the discourse on female respectability, or what Darlene Clark Hines calls a culture of dissemblance that demands the representation of black subjects as respectable in light of popular discourses that would present her as otherwise. hooks along with/instead suggests that black women, aware of racist images of themselves engage in oppositional looking practices, or what she calls the oppositional gaze. Mattie Udora Richardson reminds us, "the tradition of representing Black people as decent and moral historical agents has meant the erasure of the broad array of Black sexuality and gendered being in favour of a static heterosexual narrative. Far from being totally invisible, the "queer" is present in Black history as a threat to Black respectability.[316] While big lavish weddings perform the "arrival" of the black consumer citizen, I think it does more work than this – much like a drag show, these weddings perform, or instantiate black sexual respectability but also reveal its instability:

> *Sexual deviance is more than homosexuality. Many different sexual unions and behaviours come under the rubric, including male-female sexual intercourse before marriage and sex across racial lines. Any divergences from the social norms of marriage, domesticity and the nuclear family have brought serious accusations of savagery, pathology, and deviance upon Black people.*[317]

I examine a striking photograph taken of Khanyi[318] and Lawrence at their wedding at

[316] Richardson 2003, p. 64
[317] Ibid.
[318] I met Khanyi and Lawrence when Celo and I moved to Sasolburg in 2007. Celo and Lawrence were newly recruited engineers at Sasol, I had just completed my master's degree and entered a life of

Stonehaven on the Vaal. The image is clearly reminiscent of Victorian portraiture as they literally stage on camera what a culture of dissemblance might look like. Citing the history of studio portraiture and the self-portrait as similar to the fairy tale, I suggest here that they shape the staging of bodies and things in order to create images of the ideal life. The fairy tale collides with the history of portraiture in South Africa, as the studio photographs of the 20th century, like present wedding photographic practices, involved the placement of objects, essentially curated to present the life aspired for and constructed by both the sitter and the photographer. The movement out of the studio and to the home is one mirrored in the work of wedding photography which also uses objects related to the home and the marks or signs that couples want us to recognize as related to their new lives together.

If we follow Paul Landau on the idea that portraits as representations have a dual function as both honourific and repressive;[319] as honourific, portraits intend to archive and represent the objects one has collected. I want to further add here that the space in which said collections are staged is also important as this space reflects said aspirations. Wedding photographs stage the "homespace" and "cityscape" as they intend to not only represent but further to define broader aspects of what Lauren Berlant has called an "intimate public sphere".[320] The wedding venue as the new site for the staging of the wedding ritual has been cited as "new" in the sense that it is a catch-all-business that sells the couple all aspects related to the big day. I would want to add here that the wedding venue is not just the sign that weddings have become "consumer rites", but that they make present an

housewifery. Khanyi, an electrical engineer herself lived in Mpumalanga where she worked for Eskom. Our relationships developed as mirrors of each other, as we were "engaged" for marriage, then had weddings and daughters in fairly close space of each other. I was first in all three accounts, so we have always had really interesting conversations. For instance, following the birth of my daughter I expressed to her, the difficulties I faced partly due to what we would call post-partum depression and partly what is social and political, the environment and experience of being made to feel as though my child did not belong to me. The ordinary practices that followed my daughter's birth that left me with the distinct impression (sometimes expressed quite directly) that my daughter belong to her father and his family and that I was simply a conduit for the extension of their progeny. Khanyi thought I was being over sensitive and too political. A year later when her daughter was born the conversation began again. She calls me late at night and says, maybe I had a point. That she enjoyed the possibility of talking about things like this that are difficult. That she still thinks I am a little too negative sometimes.

[319] Landau, Paul. S. 2002. Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa. In Landau, Paul S. & Kaspin, Deborah D. (Eds) *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*. Los Angeles and Berkley, CA: University of California Press. p. 144

[320] Berlant, Lauren. 2008. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Also see Berlant, Lauren. (Ed) 2000. *Intimacy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

intimate public sphere as the site for the staging of the wedding. Wedding venues offer the intimacy of privacy and the "comforts of home", further, they are designed to stage different kinds of "home" or homeliness, signalled by the fact that many wedding venues in South Africa will offer multiple venues on the same site intended to suit the tastes of the different clients they have. These venues have "great halls", and "kraals" for example, intended to signal not just the tastes of their consumers, but framed around particular ideologies about the home, the urban, the modern and the traditional.

The city also features as the backdrop of these performances offered to us, much like the homescape, as a multivocal genre, at times it is staged as "home" itself and in other instances these venues act as fantasy worlds or amusement parks that offer fictional worlds, and yet these worlds are reminiscent of other spaces in and around Johannesburg. Through the use of space and objects, we can look for an oppositional gaze when we pay attention to the ways black women self-reflexively engage with the varying codes related to "civilisation" or "the modern" in self-styling their weddings. Women, encouraged to take charge of their big day, organizing it around certain "themes" and "colours", has been described by scholars as instances where the illusion of control is spread, but also one that allows the bride and groom to have the illusion that their day is indeed unique and not simply the cold product the oft-repeated, sometimes simultaneously so when a venue has multiple ceremonies on at the same time. I do think that there is more suggested here than this; the other aspect of the "new" in South Africa and indeed in the South African intimate public sphere has often been read through the entry of black women into this public sphere. I wish then to conclude in considering how black women at the centre of this romantic process of image making might engage with their viewers and themselves in oppositional and other looking relations.



9 Shepherd and Vera, Midrand 2012

Defining the Bridal Gaze

Shepherd and Vera photographed above met at their church. They view their marriage as a part of the responsibility that a member of the church has – to be a good example for the younger members of the congregation. They also talk about their marriage as an entry into a life together, led by the two of them as a couple. In fact, while many of their relatives live in Malawi and Zimbabwe they picked a date and wedding venue in Midrand following Shepherd's romantic proposal even before they discussed the matter with Vera's uncle who was responsible for facilitating the lobola negotiations. Their wedding was intended to reflect the two of them as they entered their lives together, so while they were pleased that the guests were offered an area where the photographers could take candid photos intended to make them feel that they too were celebrities for the day; the main photographs like the one above feature the couple alone in romantic poses leaning towards their lives as partners. Aside from presenting our dreams of "conjugal bliss," wedding albums must also contain a mixture between the posed and staged, and spontaneous candids. In all of the cases that I followed, pictures taken by friends and family were found elsewhere, while the formal album contained those taken by the official photographers "thought of as a more legitimate or codified construction of the ritual."[321] Lili Bezner found a dichotomy between photographers who specialize in "candids" and those in formal portraits, which was mirrored in my discussions with brides regarding their own photos as the more legitimate photographs are intended to follow a more specific narrative of the ritual. Further, the "candid" itself has become one genre of this specific narrative and it might be useful to argue that it has become an extension of what is both legitimate and codified, as the bride and groom and their guests are invited pose "candidly."

Adrian and others point to the role of the bride as the visual centrepiece, the main actor on the day. I recall a recent anecdote shared with me casually about a bride who spent the day enacting the role of what she thought was a demure bride, shifting from one awkward unnatural pose to the next, demonstrative of this point. This is what has been described as the "bridal gaze." Adrian attends to this posing, paying close attention to the face

[321] Bezner, Lili Corbus. 2002. Wedding Photography: 'A Shining Language'. *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation* 18:1, p. 4

because it is the site of bridal beauty and this acting out of the appropriate – and yet in this picture we see Shepherd's face and Vera is instead gazing toward Shepherd, her hero. The man here is constructed as the hero that is so say that Vera acts as a sign, or a code that represents the ideological meaning that the category 'woman' has for men. While authors like Adrian seek the representation of women as women in bridal portraits, woman-as-woman is absent in the text, from the above example, women come to be represented only in relation to men. If we can argue that bridal portraiture follows the structure of Hollywood cinema to produce the bridal gaze, this gaze then is framed on an oppositional axis between the active and the passive, establishing the male character as the active agent where the drama unfolds and around which the look gets organized; against the female character who as the object of desire is passive. The bridal gaze read in this framework works for the production of male desire.

In Hollywood cinema we are invited to view with a voyeuristic male look, as Laura Mulvey argues; the spectator is made to identify with the optical and libidinal point of view of the male character, while women connote a "to-be-looked-at-ness."[322] In this view, the bridal gaze is a male gaze that has no room for a female spectator, as the female spectator adopts the male point of view. Even when the bride gazes at us, she invites us to view her through this male gaze. This notion is corroborated in my own experience as I was told on several occasions and in no uncertain terms that if I failed to be beautiful on the day of the wedding and further, if I failed to smile and make the appropriate gestures towards the camera I jeopardized the worth of the entire occasion. It might be useful to apply Mary Ann Doane's notion of female masquerade: while the male gaze is about a voyeuristic distance, as female spectators we lack this necessary distance as we are the image itself; femininity is constructed as "an overwhelming presence-to-itself of the female body,"[323] leading to an adoption of an over-identifying narcissistic gaze, a desire to become the object of one's own desire. Doane argues that for the female spectator one does not consume the image, one is consumed by it. Narcissistic visual pleasure is well evidenced in wedding photography, for instance the repetition of images of the woman transforming into the bride with the various aspects of her attire including the dress, shoes and

[322] Mulvey, Laura. 1989. *Visual and Other Pleasures.* New York, NY: Palgrave. p. 19
[323] Doane, Mary Ann. 1991. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis.* London: Routledge. p. 222

jewellery. Take the image below of my cousin Mutsa on her wedding day. My sister Chenai and I are in the background photographed as we help her prepare for the occasion and the image stages these preparations specifically by placing her in front of the mirror as she gazes upon herself. The objects on the dressing table include toiletries, perfume bottles and even a red and white teddy bear holding a rose, probably a gift my uncle gave his wife on a Valentine's Day in the past. My sister pictured on the left of the image has her arms demurely crossed in the front as she unassumingly and almost downwardly gazes at Mutsa, as is expected of the bridesmaid whose job on the day is the service of facilitating the bride's perfect day. I am pictured on the right closely watching the maid of honour, Jedidah as she takes on the envious task of closing the delicate satin buttons. The photographer entered the room once we had the dress on the bride and she immediately signalled for the bridesmaids to collect particular objects of her dress and place them in various locations with the intention to suggest to the viewer of the future album that even the process of dressing is able to reflect the discerning taste of the bride.

For Mulvey, mainstream cinema is coded in ways that place women into an erotic language that is unambiguously patriarchal. The Hollywood script she examines is like that of the Disney romance which many of the first bridal reality television shows framed their narratives around[324] and which brides regularly reference as a part of their fairy tale, what has been called a "Cinderella dream."[325] As with the structure of the fairy tale, there is a split between the spectacle and the narrative, the part of the groom is to play the active role leading the story forward, while the bride bears the "burden of sexual objectification"[326]; women play the role of spectacle. Bridal magazines are replete with references to fairy tales and replicate this structure, sold to us as true romance, for instance the image below from a fashion editorial that featured Romeo and Juliet, Little Red Riding Hood and Sleeping Beauty among others.

[324] See Ingraham 1999, Levine Elana. 2005. Fractured Fairy-tales and Fragmented Markets: Disney's Weddings of a Lifetime and the Cultural Politics of Media Conglomeration. *Television and New Media* 6:1; Gualtieri, Gillian. 2012. A Dream Come True: The Fairy-Tale Mystique and Wedding Culture Industry. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts. Gambier, OH: Kenyon College.
[325] Otnes & Pleck 2003
[326] Mulvey 1989, p. 838

10 Mutsa with Danai, Chenai and Jedidah, Harare 2012



These images are evidence of the profound impact that the genre of fairy tale plays in the fantasy of romance, but also more.[327] It is not just a gendered fantasy at play in the image-making and representational tactics of the narrative, but that the fantasy itself depends upon, or rather is simultaneously constituted through a race/d fantasy. That is, that the object/subject relations implied within the gazing relations between male and female are replicated within the symbolic language of race. As Heidi Nast reminds us; the Oedipal family drama that this psychoanalytic framework is constructed around works through the language of both gender and race.[328]

The placement of the bride at the centre of the text stages, literally, the moment of transition of becoming girl-woman-bride, and the achievement of femininity momentarily attained through the hard work of dressing and performing the body; then facing oneself through the mirror *as well as* the lens of the camera. This incident of masquerade works to stage this transition and is further supported by the presence of the bridesmaids who both reinforce the value of becoming bride, the aspirational practices of hegemonic femininity and the fulfilment of compulsory heterosexuality. It is not just that weddings are traditionally performed by heterosexual couples with same-sexed/gendered support-crews intended to depict the expectations of a dual sex/gender system; it is that the ritual itself is heterosexist. The work of image-construction for the ritual generally follows the expectations of social proscription, or as Ramona Oswald argues, of social authority.[329] What is often prescribed as "personal taste" is actually tied to authoritative discourses that reproduce traditional symbolism that reinforces the subordination of women. Oswald's analysis adds here that crucial to the ritual's proper enactment is the precise staging of heterosexuality as universal and compulsory.

Captured staring towards the mirror, Mutsa may perhaps be read as performing the narcissistic gaze, which Freud argues is a function of "the libido":

> **Some portion of what we men call the 'enigma of women' may perhaps be derived from this expression of bisexuality in women's lives. But another question seems to have become ripe for judgement in the course of these researches. We have called the motive force of sexual life 'the libido'. Sexual**

[327] See Ingraham 1999 p. 98-104
[328] See Nast 2000
[329] Oswald, Ramon Faith. 2000. A Member of the Wedding? Heterosexism and the Family Ritual. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 17.

> **life is dominated by the polarity of masculine-feminine; thus the notion suggests itself of considering the relation of the libido to this antithesis. It would not be surprising if it were to turn out that each sexuality had its own special libido appropriated to it, so that one sort of libido would pursue the aims of masculine sexual life and another sort those of a feminine one. But nothing of the kind is true. There is only one libido, which serves both the masculine and feminine sexual functions. To itself we cannot assign any sex; if, following the conventional equation of activity and masculinity, we are inclined to describe it as masculine, we must not forget that is also covers trends with a passive aim. Nevertheless the juxtaposition 'feminine libido' is not with any justification. […] thus, we attribute a larger amount of narcissism to femininity, which also affects women's choice object, so that to be loved is a stronger need for them that to love**.[330]

Fairy tales are stories that reflect our collective consciousness. Following the invention of the printing press the formally orally transmitted folk tales were interpreted into the form of the book. The fairy tale is a "wonder tale", where anything can happen;[331] the protagonist is blocked by a prohibition, they recognize their goal and act to overcome impossible obstacles. Otnes and Pleck further suggest that "in the case of Cinderella, the heroine accomplished the task of finding a way to the ball, and eventually found marriage, wealth and happiness."[332] Reading Cinderella, we can connect the levels of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary to understand how fantasy projects us into history. For Jacques Lacan, the ego develops in the "fictional", so that stories like this invite us to recognize ourselves as characters in the progression of a similar story. The mirror plays the function of linking our individual psyche with the outside.

Lacan suggests that it is through the mirror that the infant will come to imagine their body.[333] The "mirror" in this case is the idealized image, which usually comes first through the image or the form of the mother. The infant identifies with this idealized image, however this process is one of simultaneous recognition and misrecognition, for the mother's body and experience are not identical to that of the infant. The infant therefore only comes to fully understand her own body when the image ideal connects with and is produced through language.

[330] Freud 1973, p. 166
[331] Otnes & Pleck 2003: 26
[332] Otnes & Pleck 2003: 27
[333] See Lacan, Jacques. 2006. *Ecrits: A Selection.* New York, NY: WW Norton & Company.



11 Fairy Tale Fantasy

This means that our understanding of the biological body is always already produced out of socio-historical and cultural understandings within the Symbolic order. Said differently, rather than understanding that the body has sex, from which a gender is performed; the process of assuming a sex (or sexual difference) is what brings the subject into being.[334] The mirror is liminal, transitory but also never achieved due to what Athena Athanasiou describes as "the ambivalent and provisional powers of subjectivation."[335] Rather than a view of power as intentional and teleological, Athanasiou and Butler suggest that the fictions of gender and sexuality are produced in a dual/simultaneous process of constitution and regulation, the performance of which is always incomplete.

The fairy tale can be read as such a mirror, staged through the wedding ritual that I pose as the process of becoming girl-bride-woman; it enacts the process of identifying with the fantasy and the actual performance of the role of protagonist in the fantasy as bride. The process becoming bride is never complete and is therefore a state of simultaneous recognition and misrecognition that both marks an entry into the Symbolic order and a recognition of one's place within the social, symbolic, and real. Becoming the ideal version of oneself through the staging of the fiction of fairy tale romance is incomplete and chaotic, principally because while like the everyday performance of femininity, it becomes a productive, embodied constituting of the self; the hyper-femininity required on and through the wedding day make the performance of sexual difference come to appear as fiction. The body is radically changed and exaggerated to conform to the standards of idealized femininity, leading Thembi to suggest that through her hard body-work and the camera she aspired to look like her "unrealistic self" in the wedding photographs. On the mirror-stage, Lacan states that:

> *It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context as an identification, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image-an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, "imago".* [...]
>
> *For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be*

[334] Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York, NY: Psychology Press. p.3
[335] Athanasiou in Butler & Athanasiou 2013, p. 45

sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it.[336]

The bridal gaze as an extension of the phallocentric gaze is a helpful explanatory framework for us to understand how the wedding ritual, through photographs enacts certain processes of identification and subjectivation. However, there are limits to this reading, as the "gaze" which produces women as Other can only recognize the expression of desire for women as framed by the logic of lack; coming through the mirror stage is achieved not by the act of desire for another, but by the act of being desired. The Symbolic order is historically contingent; that is, the mirror and the fantasy are always already in processes of transformation. In this view of the gaze, men and women are imagined to not have other ways of seeing themselves and others and for the bride "the Other that she is remains trapped in the economy or the horizon of a single subject."[337]

Sthokozile Mhlanga's project in translation considers the challenges of introducing popular romance fiction into the Zulu literary system.[338] She takes the view that the traditional romance of a Cinderella rescue and prince might not have currency amongst Zulus or other African societies whose literatures have primarily been oral. She further contends that the system of lobola is evidence of an incompatibility between lobola and the romantic script. This position makes the assumption that the precolonial era was characterized by a Zulu nation that had separate public and private spheres, where the labour of men and women were naturally split, in a sense, that present patriarchal structures of gender difference and gender power were a part of what West might recognize as "natural law" in a mythologized Zulu national past. Mhlanga offers the possibility of reading idioms as a discourse of romance. She wants to call these idioms seduction; which I read as a mis/recognition of desire as it is framed within the language and Law of patriarchy. There is evidence of this in Mhlanga's rendering of beauty as she suggests that in this past black women did not lighten their skin or wish to be thin, so their standards of beauty were unaffected by the dominance of whiteness. In Mhlanga's

[336] Lacan 2006, p. 76
[337] Irigaray, Luce. 1997. The Sex which is Not One. In Warhol, Robyn R. & Merndl, Diane Price. *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary and Theory Criticism.* 1997. Rutgers University Press. p. 311
[338] Mhlanga, Shtokozile. 2010. Untombi Nethambo Lakhe LeKentucky: The translation of Popular Romantic Fiction into isiZulu. Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters in Translation. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.

assessment, the attractiveness of women was more dependent on the number of cattle she had to bring into the marriage and the number of children she would/could bear. Seduction, rather than romance and what I read as an economist view of the work of marriage in African societies intends to mark the narrative structure of the Cinderella romance as a separate logic on its own where love does indeed conquer all and the "natural law" that governs gender difference and compulsory heterosexuality is also conquered in a modern, read European world-making. As I suggest earlier, I believe this contention to be false. Chrys Ingraham's reading of the connections between capital and romance in the invention of the white wedding is most certainly as committed to women's attractiveness as dependent on a system of accumulation.[339] However, I do appreciate Mhlanga's refusal of a flat, neat translation of romance that can easily be applied to all contexts.

The Cinderella tale has been re-told in a number of ways, particularly in relation to the work of proper etiquette in wedding work. The figure of Cinderella is "ever the symbol of the good, beautiful, deserving woman, Cinderella has been portrayed and understood as resourceful or passive, but rarely as both. She has usually been a blonde beauty."[340] Becoming girl-bride-woman is an image-making process that is also always already about race, which is always already a part of the constitution of sexual difference. This suggestion leads bell hooks to quarrel with the idea that we can only recognize ourselves through the viewpoint of a single 'male' gaze by asking:

> *Are we really to imagine that feminist theories writing only about the image of white women, who subsume this specific historical subject under the totalizing category "woman," do not "see" the whiteness of the image?* [341]

For hooks, the psychoanalytic concept of "woman" erases socio-historical context, making race appear to disappear. The erasure of race in our readings of image-making is problematic. Photographs as objects are always already implicated in the production of race, for instance as a form of "cultural witness" of the colonial periphery.[342] The bridal gaze by implication is therefore not only gendered, but is also raced and implicated in

[339] Ingraham 1999: 104
[340] Otnes & Pleck 2003: 28
[341] hooks, bell. 2000. The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators. In Jones, Amelia (Ed). *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader.* New York: Psychology Press. p. 100
[342] Edwards 2002

colonialist imaginaries that have both historical and geographical implications. The beautiful black bride as the visual centrepiece of a romantic tale enters here, and I would like to continue in suggesting that for black women who encounter this figure there is a simultaneous process of identification, oppositional gazing and disidentification with the woman in the mirror.

In my interviews, participants indicated a keen awareness of the multiple levels of expectation placed on the production of wedding pictures. These discussions reflected awarenesses of being drawn to a desire for the fantasy, along with a simultaneous displacing of the self from over-identifying with it. If I apply José Muñoz' conceptualization of disidentification to work through the idea of an "oppositional gaze," disidentification is a strategy of survival and resistance used by minority subjects who fall outside of normative citizenship,[343] that Muñoz identifies as a mode of oppositional reading[344] that intends to produce new possibilities, while resurrecting normative forms of identification.[345] The following excerpts reveal these multiple processes of identification and disidentification.

While looking through their wedding photograph album, I notice the ways the bush is scenically framed as the setting for romance in Shepherd and Vera's photos, so I ask?

> D: Was is your decision to do the photos in the savannah?
>
> S: yeah. We picked the spot when we met the camera people the venue and stuff. For us it was more, not being cliché in a way. We didn't research about this, it was just our thinking. It doesn't have anything to do with your standard Pepsi thinking about Africa and the bush. Africans as animals. You know the Standard Bank advert that says "in Africa we are not fans, we are fanatics?" people don't say anything about it. It is amazing. That is like what that BBC journalist Andrews Harding was saying when he was writing about the vuvuzela during the 2010 World Cup. And no one said anything. You know, South Africa is so particular about its image, but only when you attack the corrupt nature of the government. But some of the things that actually attack us as African people?

Shepherd reveals that he has a critical awareness of how black people have been represented in the media. Vera continues to flip through the digital album.

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[343] Muñoz, José Esteban. 1999. *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 4
[344] Muñoz 1999, p. 26
[345] Muñoz 1999, p. 30

S: You know some of these things matter when you are taking a picture. Like this one she is looking down at us, as though we are objects. This is a white person shooting these photos, so we need to analyse.[346]

Thembi and Zviko did not want their images to look like the highly-scripted images of wedding photographs. They did hire a professional photographer, and while the images she produced are mostly "candid" in style, they mostly feature posed romantic portraits of the couple. Thembi did not want to be unrecognizable in her photographs, so speaks of making little effort in "becoming-bride", as an extension of their intention to not do things the way that everyone else does:

D: But also there is an element in creating those pictures that is about creating a fantasy and production to it, right?

T: They are not like normal pictures, though when we look back at it, most of the pictures that we took were not posing. We were walking and looking at things. But the ones where we were posing are the ones that I don't look as nice. So, there are some places where I wish we had had more traditional poses, like poses with our parents. In the end after the toast it was a free for all. Everyone wanted to be behind the camera. There are certain pictures that I wish I had, maybe pictures with my friends?[347]

Molemo works as a visual practitioner, so our discussions were animated with ideas about what are "good" wedding photographs and how one styles the scene and the self to do something "different":

M: I have always struggled taking photographs of people. I don't know. It is very personal. My perspective on photographs is that I don't want to be in them.

D: Is the bride what the visual narrative of the wedding hinges on?

M: I think that the photographs are about – I remember this friend of mine, her husband who was then her fiancé saying about the wedding, what are we going to do after this? They had spent a year planning the wedding. Now what are we going to talk about? Maybe we don't have that much in common. And I think there is this – even for me who didn't put that much into it, this "and now it is over" sort of feeling, after a lot of pain and pressure and tears. But like a few days after I did feel empty. I can't imagine what it would feel like if you have been doing it for a year and a half. And you are in debt. If that had been the situation then I would have been really depressed. And I think the photographs are part of that. I think a lot of

[346] Interview with Shepherd and Vera Mpofu, 2013

[347] Interview with Thembi Chandiwana, 2013. I have been friends with Thembi since we were twelve. Our paths have followed each other, usually intentionally. We were in high school together and both decided following our O'Levels to go to the United States and study Biology. She stuck with it, I did not. So she is now very accomplished, being both a medical doctor, who recently left clinical practice for research, and possessing a Master's in Public Health.

> people spend a lot of time looking at the photographs than at the wedding. Weddings are not that long. I remember a friend did photos before the wedding. And then photos afterwards as well. So she disappeared during the dancing and then did an hour long photo shoot. And like you produce the event so that you have something to remember it by afterwards.
>
> D: is it about creating realities that are some completely out of our reach?
>
> M: it is also that thing that is it going to be the most beautiful day of your life. Like you will never be that pampered or that beautiful again in your life.
>
> D: Why do we do what the bridal magazines tell us regarding beauty?
>
> M: everyone really does want to look like that for their wedding. But it is not sustainable. I think there is a difference between what the photographs try to do, all the romantic photographs of the couple looking into each other's eyes. You are too busy running around taking care of other people. It makes it feel like it was perfect.[348]

The fairy tale of romance is connected to the narrative of the penetration and conquest of virginal landscapes that are primitive and can or must be domesticated. This master narrative relies on subliminally gendered tropes such as "conquering the desolation," and "fecundating the wilderness," [which] acquire heroic resonances of western fertilization of barren lands."[349] This geography is mapped on to the bodies of black women as "the geology and topography of the land, then is explicitly sexualized to resemble the physiology of a woman."[350] The "dark continent", as Shohat contends is revealed through this gaze at the intersection of the visual exposure of the female Other at the centre of the spectacle, and colonial discourses that "allegorize the Western masculinist power of possession, that she as a metaphor for her land becomes available for Western penetration and knowledge."[351] The narrative of travel that frames the fairy tale, and the bridal gaze visually sits at the intersection of the "male" gaze and the "imperial" gaze that are never separate.[352]

The fairy tale is intricately tied to the invention of romantic love. The invention and formalisation of the lavish wedding is closely tied to both inventions as well as the

[348] Interview with Molemo Moloia, 2013
[349] Shohat, Ella. 2006. *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 18
[350] Shohat 2006: 27
[351] Shohat 2006: 32
[352] Kaplan 1997: xi

consumerist tendencies of the big wedding and the projection of a family life of consuming goods in future households. The consumer revolution was in part fuelled by the belief in romantic love, and it is the consumer revolution that spurred the industrial revolution.[353] The invention of romantic love has been claimed as characteristic of the advent of modernity, so while love is everywhere in everyday practices in Africa,[354] it is still marked as somehow not African. Jennifer Cole then suggests that "insofar as Africa has been marked in much Euro-American discourse as non-modern, and insofar as it's a place where many people live in poverty, it also continues to be marked as a place where love remains precarious."[355] Marriage has been marked as a property transaction between two families, or the traffic in women,[356] and "marriage was designed to ensure the legitimacy of heirs and provide a man with sexual service and a good housekeeper."[357] Romantic love is then presumed to "conquer" marriage,[358] ascribing it a site of freedom. Yet this freedom has not necessarily applied when love relates to Africa.

In ethnographic texts and even etiquette manuals, it is assumed that a separate logic locked in the past of transacting women is a more authentic way to understand how love operates in Africa. Indeed, love is presented as a product of the evolutionary process towards civilisation as is argued in a classic text that bridges both genres, *Primitive Love and Other Stories* by Henry Theophilus Finck. Published in 1899, this book had the primary intention of posing that love was the last product of civilisation; the primitive peoples of Africa, Australia, the Americas and Asia did not share the same affective ideals, such as love that Europe did; and that the actual work of sexual difference itself was a product of this progression:

> As civilisation progresses, the sexes become more and more differentiated, this affording individual preference an infinitely greater scope.[359]

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[353] Campbell, Colin. 1987. *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism.* Oxford: Blackwell. p. 50.
[354] Bhana, Deevia. 2013a. Introducing Love: Gender, Sexuality and Power. *Agenda* 27:2, 3-11.
[355] In Bhana, Deevia. 2013b. How to Talk about Love in Africa: A View from Jennifer Cole. *Agenda* 27:2 p.99.
[356] See Rubin, Gayle. 1975. The Traffic in Woman: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex. In Reiter, Rayna (Ed.) *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York, Monthly Review Press.
[357] Otnes & Pleck 2003: 29
[358] See Coontz
[359] Finck, Henry Theophilus. 1899. Primitive Love and Love-Stories. New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons

The primitive could not feel love principally because they do not experience individuality. In his arguments it is not just that sexual difference is barely established, the women are equally attractive to all and they marry not out of choice or romance, but simply out of utilitarian concerns. As illustration, Finck recounts a story of African love as told by Ernst von Weber. The story is about a woman named Yanikki who is quoted as stating:

> What! You expect my father to give me away for ten cows? That would be a fine sort of bargain, am I not worth more than Cilli, for who the Tambuki chief paid 12 cows last week? I am pretty, I can cook, sew, crochet, speak English and with all these accomplishments you want my father to dispose of me for ten miserable cows? Oh, sir, how little you esteem me! No, no, my father is quite right in refusing to yield in this matter; indeed, in my opinion he might boldly ask 30 cows for me, for I am worth that much!

The treatise of Yanikki might be persuasively read against the more romantic marriage proposal when a man gets on bended knee and asks his bride for her hand in marriage, as utilitarian. I recall Rutendo's description of their marriage proposal. Marc had made a reservation for them to have dinner at the Saxon Hotel on their anniversary. Little to her knowledge, he intended to propose and had ordered an engagement ring. The ring was ready two weeks before their reservation, yet he could not contain himself so he asked to meet her. She was at a spa at Melrose Arch and he quickly met her there. They sat at a restaurant and as Marc fumbled about, they witnessed a man reach out of his pocket and propose to the woman sitting opposite him. She had not expected the gesture so an awkward moment followed. Despite this, Marc found the courage to get on his knees and proclaim his love for Rutendo, telling her that she was the only woman for him and asking if she would marry him. The scene was compelling, as strangers cheered in excitement and relief, and sent multiple bottles of champagne in celebration. The engagement ring tradition and the consumptive rituals associated with the proposal mark it as equally transactional as the bargaining leading up to successful lobola negotiations. And yet, one practice is tied to the romantic script pursued by individuals and the other reeks of familial obligation and the transfer in women. Black women are invited to read their locations in both. In my interviews in almost all cases, without my prompting I was told that while they expected to feel devalued, like an object of exchange during the process, in their actual experience they felt the opposite and the experience was profoundly romantic. The experiences of individual love versus communal affect and obligation were ones

negotiated through a process of simultaneous identification, opposition and disidentification.

The imaginary is produced where the textual and the fantasy meet to produce the "gaze", as well as the "look". Invested in a project that seeks to see how female and/or black subjects come to see themselves without resigning to a 'white' and/or 'male' gaze, and further, the "look" connotes a process, while the gaze is a one directional subjective position. The "look" is interesting as it complicates the notion that the viewing options women have are limited to narcissism and masquerade. That is, that the production of femininity as staged in the image of the bride staring towards herself in the mirror might imply that girl-bride-woman as process and figure might be read as produced through other routes that are not limited to a relation of being the Other of man. The case of black female spectatorship connotes a process by which black women construct themselves as subjects. The looking relations of black female spectators are framed by "the extent to which black women feel devalued, objectified, dehumanized in this society"[360] An oppositional gaze is more than resistance to the phallocentric gaze, it can contest, reinvent, invent on a number of multiple other levels, or work to produce alternative narrative texts.

[360] hooks 2009, p. 102



12 Khanyisile and Lawrence, Vanderbijlpark 2009

Look at Me/Passing for Human

Most of my initial discussions were with wedding photographers. Viewing their work, I noticed the repetition of images that adopted a style they vaguely described as "vintage". This repertoire appears to employ notions related to nostalgia to invoke tradition and romance. I was struck by the image above, of Khanyi and Lawrence from their formal wedding album. The majority of the other pictures are in colour and are posed to reflect romantic love as the couple gaze towards one another expressing their conjugal connection. Yet the photographer included a set of images in black and white, modestly posed and reflecting little emotion in the face. The couple stands facing the camera and apart from one another. Aside from their attire, there are no other props. The image could then be viewed as documentary, void of the intricate curating and staging of the romantic wedding photograph. The black and white photograph follows the conventions of documentary as it captures a moment that is suspended time, "not staged" and thus empirically true, it falls in contrast to the highly aestheticized images of romance that appear to possess a more fictive quality. Yet this image is not empty of intention and meaning. When I asked Khanyi what she thought of the image she thought it reflected a nostalgia for the "good old days" reminiscent of the wedding photographs of previous generations. The image reminded me of the same, leading me to my initial interest in the lives and weddings of the emergent black elite of the inter-war period. If, as Khanyi continued to suggest, the photographs of these "good old days" was a staging of the degree of civilisation of Africans, I wondered how these representations aimed to do this work; what logics they were imbedded in or speaking back to and what work personal objects like wedding photographs could do in an oppositional politics.

Reminiscent of Victorian and Edwardian studio portraiture, this image led me to Santu Mofokeng's *Black Photo Album/Look at Me*, a collection of photographs produced between 1890 and 1950 and then (re)constructed by Mofokeng who argues that while some of them might be fiction "a creation of the artist in so far as the setting, the props, the clothing, or the pose are concerned,"[361] there is no evidence of coercion, because the images tell us something about how the people in them imagined themselves, because they have made them their own. The family studio photographs were collected from friends, family and his

[361] Mofokeng, Santu. 2013. *The Black Photo Album/ Look at Me: 1880-1950.* Gottingen: Steidl

hard work as he pursued broader networks across the country. Mofokeng suggests that these images, while personally valuable and affective objects to the families who own them, are also important archives of the black experience in South Africa. The images are of an urban, black middle class, probably mission educated who may have owned property and considered themselves to be "civilised."[362] For the Mofokeng, the visual representation of well-dressed families project a counterpoint to the dominant visual language of the time that placed black people as objects of nature and part of the flora and fauna of the natural landscape. While these images might be read as the delusions of an aspirant bourgeois, the dismissal of the images and the sitters in them as evidence of mental colonization, is problematic for Mofokeng as these (re)constructions are, like the image of Khanyi and Lawrence, loaded with meaning and intention, that bears the potential of an oppositional gaze. This idea has certainly been given credence by the fact that the collection has been included in a number of exhibitions that frame it as "the end of the colonial gaze."[363]

The photographs in *Black Photo Album/Look at Me,* are presently exhibited at the Walther Collection in New York in a three-part series of exhibitions on Southern African photography titled *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive.* Mofokeng's (re)constructed portraits are juxtaposed against the ethnographic portraits taken by A.M. Duggan-Cronin at the same period. Often photographed outside as the extension of "nature", Duggan-Cronin's *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa 1928-1954* sought to represent "disappearing" indigenous populations. The ethnographic portrait, intended at least in this case to document the endangered "tribes" of Africa reflect the photograph's role in travelling narratives implicated at the nexus of an 'imperial' and 'male' gaze. Mofokeng's project interrupts this gaze through the concept of "the photographic archive as both a repository of documents and an assemblage of representations."[364] The images of "civilized" natives, urban black working and middle class families, tied with text and questions intends to offer an alternative archive: "images depicted here reflect their

[362] Mofokeng 1997, p. 171-2
[363] See Jayawardane, Neelika. 2012. The End of the Colonial Gaze? *Africa is a Country,* November 21. http://africasacountry.com/the-end-of-the-colonial-gaze/ accessed 26 September 2013.
[364] Mofokeng, Santu. 1996. Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890–1900s. *NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art* 4.

sensibilities, aspirations and their self-image."[365]

Assemblages are conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari, as "complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning."[366] Assemblages are formed through connections, sometimes albeit momentarily arranged to form what might appear as a diagram or a 'map of destiny.'[367] Mofokeng's assemblage can be read in this manner, as through images and text he asks us to read this map as a (re)construction, or oppositional narrative to the colonial archive and its use of the image in the work of producing racial difference. For Deleuze and Guattari, there are two axes associated with assemblages; a horizontal and a vertical:

> The horizontal axis deals with 'machinic assemblages of bodies, actions and passions' and a 'collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations of bodies'
> […]
> The vertical axis has both 'territorial sides, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization, which carry it away' [368]

Santu Mofokeng's "counter-archive" of largely self-conscious modern African sitters posing in the studio is an assemblage that implies a certain kind of "fiction" revealing both axes; as it (re)constructs the images through curatorial choices intended to project more than a collection of the family photographs of individual families. Mofokeng's challenge to dominant images of the African subject offers us the representation of a collective identity shared by a prosperous and self-possessed urban black elite that the dominant historical archive neglects, obsessed instead with the representation of black dispossession and abjection. Some of the pictures are followed with brief text telling us the names or occupations of the sitters and the date and location of the image if it is known. The brief commentary offered by Mofokeng, along with the documentary style of studio photography combine in a manner that suggests that not only where the people in the images real, but that the images must be viewed as a visual record of something that was

[365] Ibid
[366] Livesey, Graham. 2010. Assemblage. In Parr, Adrian (Ed). *The Deleuze Dictionary.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. p. 18
[367] Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Foucault,* trans. Sean Hand, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 36
[368] Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix.1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 88

also real or perhaps even a better version of the "true."

The privileging of the nuclear family and certain notions of property and propriety as the instantiations of what it means to be properly human relate to the territorial aspects of assemblages. Deterritorialization implies the creative potential of an assemblage: "to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations."[369] Deterritorialization does not follow a strictly dialectic relationship with reterritorialization, so the work of reterritorialization does not necessarily have to hold a negative connotation, however it does imply the work of establishing a territory once more. The potential to transform space, or assessment of time holds political force here, inhered by the potential of what internal and external shifts can be produced by a thing like the oppositional gaze, and yet I am not certain that the drive to confront the territorialising work of racial difference through its own logic sufficiently deterritorializes the travel narrative it intends to confront. The work of images to ascribe the value of "truth" in the work of representation requires us to read them as indexical:

> *Images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask. While a painting, even one that meets photographic standards of resemblance, is never more than the stating of an interpretation, a photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects) – a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be.*[370]

Mofokeng continues asking us, "who is gazing?"[371] a question that Frank Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman extend when they ask "what does it mean to bring [the position of the unthought] into view without making it a locus of positive value, or trying to fill the void?"[372] The concern Wilderson and Hartman offer is with political vocabularies that claim to be radical, but are implicitly integrationist – framed by a "metanarrative thrust [that] is always towards an integration to the national project [… which has the result of] the re-elaboration of that condition, rather than its transformation."[373] The aspirations Mofokeng projects on to this civilised elite of the past is also projected to the aspirations

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[369] Parr, Adrian. 2010. Territorialization/Deterritorialization. In Parr, Adrian (Ed). *The Deleuze Dictionary.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. p. 69
[370] Sontag, Susan. 2002. *On Photography.* London: Penguin. p. 154
[371] Mofokeng, 1997, p. 206
[372] Hartman. & Wilderson. 2003, p. 185.
[373] Ibid.

of the post/apartheid present and futures as the images of the "good old days" affirm the possibilities the national project holds with regards to freedom, justice, consumption and aspiration.

Kara Keeling contends that there is a struggle related to the "black image", citing the temporalities of culture as the sites of this struggle.[374] The political potential that the black image holds is made possible once the viewer recognizes the political limitations of the project of humanism. For Keeling, the "temporalities of culture in general have begun to conform to the temporalities previously positioned as particular to black culture."[375] Black culture is read here as a concept created by Europeans, as Other, or as an opposition to "European culture"[376], read as "civilisation." Reading Hegel's assessment of black culture, James Snead argues that:

> *Ever-developing European culture is the prototype for the fulfilment of culture in the future; black culture is the antitype, ever on the threshold. Black culture, caught in 'historylessness,' is nonetheless shielded from attack or assimilation precisely by its aboriginal intangibility (though particular blacks themselves may not be so protected). According to Hegel, the African, radical in his effect upon the European, is a- "strange form of self-consciousness": unfixed in orientation towards transcendent goals and terrifyingly close to the cycles and rhythms of nature. The African, first, overturns all European categories of logic. Secondly, he has no sense of history or progress, but instead allows "accidents and surprises" to take hold of his fate. He is also not aware of being at a lower stage of development and perhaps even has no idea what development is. Finally, he is "immediate" and intimately tied to nature with all of its cyclical, non-progressive data. Having no self-consciousness, he is "immediate"—i.e., always there—in any given moment. Here we can see that, being there, the African is also always already there, or perhaps always there before, whereas the European is headed there or, better, not yet there.*[377]

The "African", as Snead offers is a historical construct rather than static and ahistorical, is the anti-thesis of "the human"[378] which means that while the human "unfolds in time," the "Black is internal to time" haunting "the human's past, present, and future."[379] The claims of a chronological, linear temporality of "the human" is interrupted by the "Other", who lives in non-chronological time. The captions in Mofokeng's work deliberate on the

[374] Keeling, Kara. 2005. Passing for Human: Bamboozled and Digital Humanism. *Women and Performance* 15:1.
[375] Keeling 2005, p. 240
[376] Snead 2003
[377] Snead 2003, p. 16
[378] Keeling 2005, p. 241
[379] Keeling 2005, p. 242

family, class and consumption as the signs of what social status and distinction might mean in ways that do deterritorialize and reterritorialize the assumptions of the properly human, albeit through the demand for the claim to be seen through the logics of the properly human. Yet the juxtapositions between the ethnographic portrait and the self-conscious portraits (re)constructing the lives of an urban, black working and middle class appears to offer fertile ground with regards to how we can understand Snead's notion of repetition and recognize the further disruption of the linear temporality of the properly human.

I have found it difficult to reconcile with the notion that the urbanized African elite of the early twentieth century "aspired for modernity and a white middle-class existence, [for] a Western-style family represented a modern model of social relations and the antithesis of savagery."[380] I would argue that the assemblage Mofokeng reconstitutes could be read within the broader discourses of the "New Africans" who articulated the complex locations they occupied through "virtual publics"[381] that complicate chronological and linear time. These virtual publics would also include the ritual of white weddings, where like the theatre, multiple temporalities are staged, rehearsed, performed and negotiated.

The origins of an African middle class are cited as "mission educated elites"[382] who were "born into traditional African societies and equipped to fit into European society by virtue of their education, Christianity and economic assimilation."[383] Bonner notes that this elite was subject to contradictory pressures; while identifying with the values of the liberal bourgeoisie against more immediate white oppression "the colonised petty bourgeoisie was unable to articulate with conviction the metropolitan values it espoused, although for every member of the petty bourgeoisie there was always a corresponding great substratum among the upper level of working class – generally described at the time as the 'educated' or 'civilised' who aspired to their position and struggled to get in."[384] Bonner notes the precarious position that this Black elite faced "stunted and

[380] Erlank, Natasha. 2003. "Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912-1950." *Feminist Studies.* 29:3. p.656.
[381] See Kruger, Loren. 1999. *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics Since 1910.* London: Routledge.
[382] Odendall 1984 cited in Southall, Roger. 2004. "Political Change and the Black Middle Class in Democratic South Africa", *Canadian Journal of African Studies.* 38:3. p. 523
[383] Odendall 1984, p. 286.
[384] Bonner 1982, pg. 272

repressed";[385] he estimates the size of the Black middle class in the Witwatersrand was probably a little over 2000 in the early 1920s.[386] Campbell's examination of T.D. Mweli Skota's life concurs as he argues "buffeted by hostile government legislation, confined to impoverishment, segregated locations, forever starved of capital, the elite was constantly compressed back to the classes beneath it."[387] On the consciousness of the black elite, Campbell argues that:

> *It is a truism the elite's economic proximity to the black lower classes created the possibilities for 'downward identification' and 'radicalisation'. This paper offers no dissent to that contention. It does argue, however that the narrowing economic gap between the elite and the classes beneath it spawned a contrary process as well. De-classing created among the elite a need for mechanisms which maintained social distance, which emphasized status with the racial caste.*[388]

Bonner is of the same position, arguing that "tastes, values, culture, credentials became even more important signifiers than in the Metropolitan world"[389] and he cites Mission Christianity and education as the twin pillars of black urban respectability and distinction. I am comfortable with the assertion that this was a route to upward mobility; however Bonner goes further with the suggestion that if one word summed up black middle class culture and aspiration it was 'civilisation'. Natasha Erlank for instance, describes South Africa's black middle class as aspiring to modernity and white middle class existence,[390] citing monogamy, nuclear families, and tea services as marking the degree to which urbanized African families had moved away from the customs of their originary societies.[391]

I am inclined to suggest that the black elite interacted with their social worlds, not on some teleological scale of modernity against their less modern "traditional" or unassimilated counterparts, but were in fact interacting with concurrent modernities. For instance, David Atwell examines 'Christian' texts and makes some interesting observations which may help us to understand the ways that the Black elite consumed Mission

[385] Bonner, Philip. 2012. p. 3
[386] Ibid.
[387] Campbell J. T. 1987. "T.D. Mweli Skota and the Making and Unmaking of a Black Elite", Johannesburg: History Workshop. p. 2
[388] Campbell 1987. p. 3
[389] Bonner 2012, p. 4
[390] Erlank 2003 p. 656.
[391] Ibid.

Christianity and education. Atwell argues that "in the case of the 'Christian' texts, the subtext is found to be more secular than is often assumed, with writers using the theme to develop an active relationship with the historical effects and ideological content of modernity. Similarly, narratives about traditional society (or early colonial encounters) involve attempts to relocate modern subjects in revised versions of the past, to elicit principles around which alternative models of modernity or even civil society might develop."[392] For Atwell, these "writers produced by the mission schools were great modernisers (as opposed to anti-modern modern*ists*) in social as well as aesthetic terms, and had neither embraced city styles and virtues, nor discarded Victorian decorum as had their contemporaries."[393]

We can take the plays performed by students at Marianhill Mission in Natal, as example. The plays, directed by Father Bernard Huss were meant to convert Africans to Christianity.[394] Bhekizizwe Peterson identifies Marianhill's "foray into theatre [as having] to register at least three pressures: the challenges of spreading the gospel; the social turmoil accompanying historical changes; African responses to Christianity, colonialism, and capitalism."[395] For Peterson, *Joseph in Egypt* illustrates the "subtlety typified of Marianhill plays."[396] The play is meant to demonstrate with optimism the benefits of crossing over from traditional beliefs to Christianity. Peterson argues that for believers, the *kholwa,* it must follow that due to their adoption of the Christian faith "any representation of their experiences is also an interrogation of the efficacies of Christianity as a social discourse,"[397] and in fact the biblical story of Joseph "is reworked and made substantially analogous to the political tensions of Zululand and Natal of 1860 to 1904."[398] Marianhill plays were also produced under the influence of the Native Affairs Reform Association which was interested in the use of theatre for the purpose of education in its

[392] Atwell, David. 1999. "Reprisals of Modernity in Black South African 'Mission' Writing". *Journal of Southern African Studies.* 25:2. p. 267.
[393] Atwell 1999, p. 271.
[394] Peterson, Bhekizizwe. 1994. "I will Open My Mouth in Parables": Theatre and Evangelism in South Africa in South Africa Between 1900-1925." *Theatre Journal* 46:3. p. 349.
[395] Peterson, Bhekizizwe. 1994. p. 350
[396] Peterson, Bhekizizwe, 1994. p. 351
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid.

retribalization efforts.[399] Members of the Rand elite, such as Herbert Dhlomo and B.W. Vilakazi who were both students at Marianhill and worked closely on committees to promote cultural practices among the Black elite on the Rand,[400] use neotraditionalist strategies in their narratives: "to modernize tradition (Vilakazi) is to produce an amalgam: ("harmonious, developing integrally African"); to traditionalize modernity (Dhlomo) is to produce a mixture."[401] By implication, the gaze they produced functions internal to time, following Snead's argument.

Peterson notes that theatre was one of the responses to the sense of precariousness that the Black elite felt during this period and was "used to define and resist social alienation, construct human identities and social support networks, and articulate African experiences, aspirations and desire for a better future."[402] As a point of distinction, the black middle class distinguished themselves from marabi culture, engaging in activities that took place "outside of the restrictive terrain of slumyards and shebeens, settling instead for institutions such as schools, churches, cultural and sporting clubs. Middle class activities included an annual African Eisteddfod, dramatic performances by the Bantu Dramatic Society, and, concert dance programmes which featured choirs, classical music and dancing."[403] I would rather pursue a view that does not distinguish between the different forms of performance so strictly, as they form continuous and contiguous theatres where the social and political body could be articulated and represented in a virtual public. Loren Kruger defines the virtual public as "a discursive and social field within which alternative representations of South Africa could be entertained without direct exposure to the wrath of the state."[404] What Kruger suggests is that rather than a mere reflection of the historical experiences of black people, these plays were staged at particular historical moments and were powerfully emblematic of their times.[405] Kruger

[399] Kruger 1999, p 5.
[400] Kruger 1999 p. 6
[401] Atwell, David. 2002. "Modernizing Tradition/Traditionalizing Modernity: Reflections on the Dhlomo-Vilakazi Debate", *Research in African Literatures.* 33: 1. p. 107
[402] Peterson, Bhekizizwe. 1990b. "The Black Bulls of H.I.E. Dhlomo: Ordering History Out of Nonsense." *Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid.* Johannesburg: History Workshop. p. 2
[403] Ibid.
[404] Kruger, Loren. 1995. "New African, Neocolonial Theatre and "An African National Dramatic Movement", *South African Theatre Journal.* 9:1. p. 117
[405]Kruger 1999, p. 6

further argues that African theatre served as a "magnet for the display of disparate signs of dress, architecture, temporality and historiography,"[406] as the dramatic displays and other public performances and pageants in the black elite calendar as a key site for the representations of public selves to be made and contested. I contend that weddings form a part of this same public and through the same forms of display, are sites for the textual, symbolic and social contestations she describes.

The wedding announcement of a 1938 Kroonstad wedding is instructive, presenting us with the full cast and thick description of their costume. Typical of wedding announcements in the 'black' press newspapers such as *Umteteli waBantu* and *Bantu World*, these texts introduce us to the newly married couple, but also to a larger audience constituted of their guests. The announcements cover the usual concerns tied to the narrative structure of the wedding announcement, including the venue of the occasion and the details about the objects and artefacts used to produce the day that include the dress and the flowers. There are other inclusions that beg comment; first the mention of the educational status of members of the bridal party and guests; and second that these announcements often refer to multiple celebrations tied to the wedding ceremony. These moments signal a recognition that logics of what it means to be properly human are bound to exclude black subjects, yet through the performance of the wedding ritual and the enunciation of the self through the ritual one has the potential to confront or oppose its logics.

To foreclose these performances as a simple claim at the status of the 'civilised' is unsophisticated as it fails to reckon with the simultaneous critique of the aspiration of the logic of 'civilisation' that requires the abjection of an 'Other' to make itself legible or sustainable. It is not just a confrontation of the logics of the Same that is enacted through this performance. The work of deterritorialization is also reterritorialization, marked by the desire to represent oneself which disrupts a dichotomous narrative between 'tradition' and 'modernity', as the performance announces itself as both and neither, operating "from within the interstices of the dichotomising systems of colonialism and their false

[406] Kruger 1999, p. 18

binaries" and these included "the traditional to the progressive" and "the primitive to the modern."



13 Black Photo Album



KROONSTAD WEDDING—SELLO—IKANENG

The bride, Miss Naomi Ikaneng, looked charming in a graceful frock of silver lamé, with short coat fully pleated sleeves, and flowing train of the same material as the frock. Her veil of fine silk net silver embroid red was held in place by a silver orange blossem halo. She carried a bouquet of white and pale pink carnations. The maid of honour, Miss Bella Setiloane, wore a lovely frock of old rose cloque with head dress composed of small velvet flowers and circular veil She also carried a bouquet of pink carnations and ferns.

The two bride's maids, Misses W. Malan and E. Mofokeng, wore frocks on the same lines as the maid of honour.

There were four flower girls, M. Mothibeli, R. Ikaneng, G. Crutze and V. Mokitimi, two blue and two pale lemon, satin bèaute. Their head dress consisted of rosettes made of silk net to match the frocks.

The page boy, Master R. Mbaco, wore a suit of black velvet with blue collar and cuffs, and he carried a staff.

The bestmen were Messrs V. Crutze, B.A., and M. Litheko.

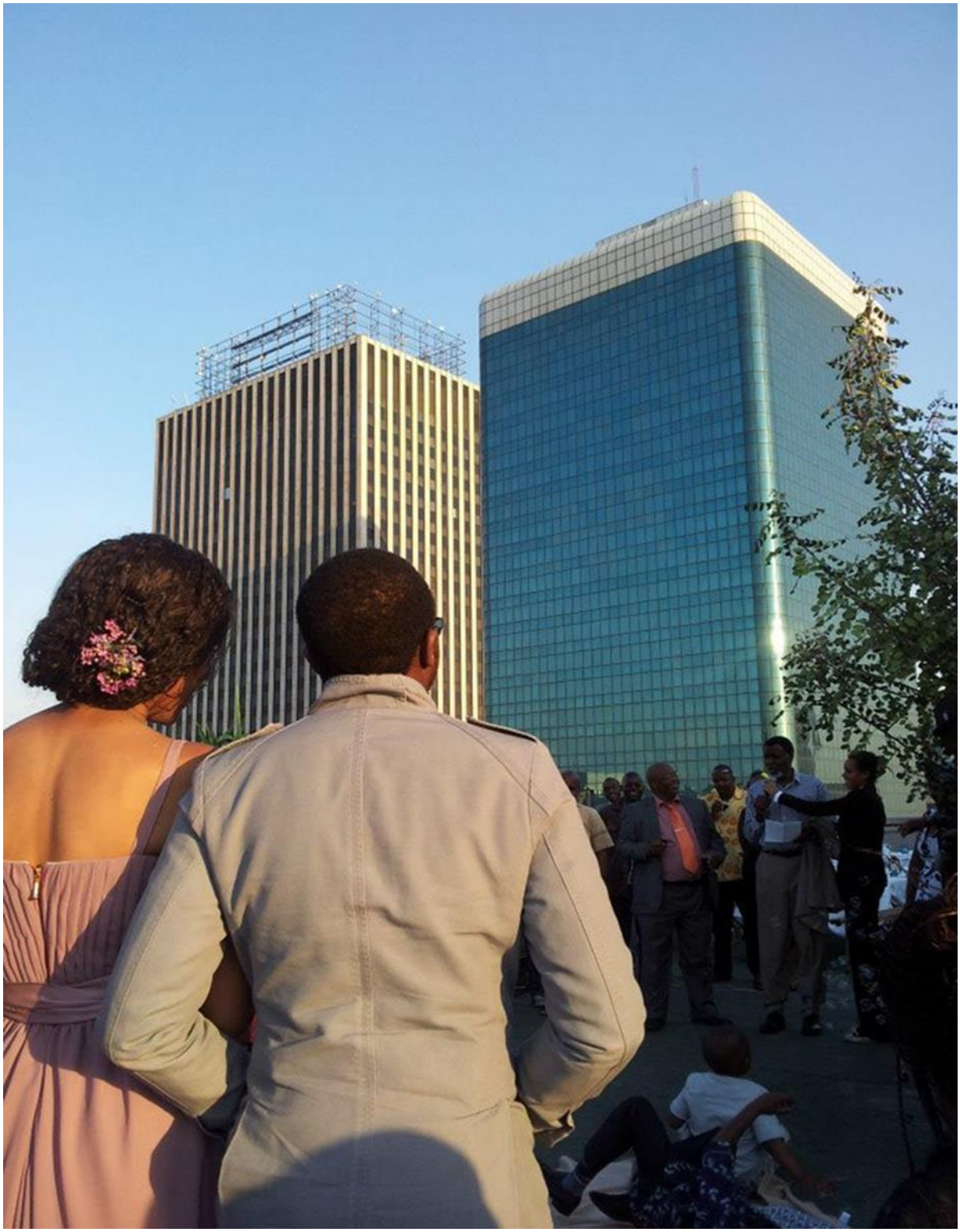
14 Kroonstad Wedding

For Kruger, such performances occupy "an 'intermediate' space between the two extremes, acting from a diffused space in which social and economic events defined the extent of marginality."[407] Disentangling vision from a teleological viewpoint between the modern and traditional, Michael Hanchard ask: How and in what ways have African-descended peoples been modern subjects?[408] For Hanchard:

> *At its broadest parameters, it consists of the selective incorporation of technologies, discourses, and institutions of the modern West within the cultural and political practices of African derived peoples to create a form derived autonomous modernity distinct from its counterparts of Western Europe and North America. It is not mere mimicry of Western modernity but an innovation of its precepts, forces, and features. Its contours have risen from the encounters between people of African descent and western colonialism not only on the African continent but also in the New World, Asia and ultimately Europe itself.*[409]

Following weddings as virtual publics, and the images produced to represent them as (re)constructive memory work offers the possibility of such a reading.

[407] Kruger 1999 Pg. 11
[408] Hanchard, Michael. 1999. "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora," *Public Culture.* 11:1. Pg. 245.
[409] Hanchard 1999, Pg. 247



15 Molemo and Ben, Johannesburg 2012

Happy Objects

Molemo and Ben had a rooftop wedding at INTERMISSION, a private art gallery and studio in the inner city on Jeppe Street that describes itself as promoting the "rejuvenation of Johannesburg's inner city."[410] Weddings and the photographs produced to represent them work through our ideas about space, objects and the home; they work as aesthetic markers and narrative maps about the people they intend to represent. In South Africa, the trend in weddings has moved increasingly towards the wedding venue, a catch-all location that offers all necessary goods and services to wedding consumers. These spaces offer us a stage with multiple sets where we can exhibit ourselves and our "new" lives through wedding photographs. Etiquette manuals from the period of the formalization of the white wedding describe in detail the distinction between the "home" and "parlour" wedding, suggesting a progression from the former "home" to parlour, now replaced by the "venue"; yet the ideological work that the "home" plays has not been displaced. And the work of travel to and from remains central to the proper enactment of the ritual itself. Scholars on wedding rituals maintain that implicit and explicit in wedding consumption is the figure of the "future" home of bridal consumers who become the primary targets for the marketing of household goods. Further, in wedding photography the work of the home as a location for photographs and the ways that objects and artefacts act in the display of the home,[411] are integral to the signifying practices of the aesthetic, leading Terence Heng to argue that wedding photographic practices work to produce a "home-scape" from which an aggregated or aspired for lifestyle might be perceived.[412]

Molemo and Ben walked from their home where they had dressed together to their wedding venue. Feet dressed in Allstars, Molemo opted out of the grand entry, unceremoniously arriving at the 21st floor as though it was just an ordinary day and this place in the city worked as an ordinary extension of her home life. Looking towards their friends, the couple stares towards the city and its buildings, staging the ways Johannesburg's cityscape[413] informs this everyday life. A cityscape, as Heng offers is a

[410] About. INTERMISSION. http://interalias.co.za/about/ accessed 31 May 2013.
[411] See Janaki 2012
[412] Heng, Terence. 2012. A Wedding Photographer's Journey through the Chinese Singaporean Urban Landscape. *Cultural Geographies* 19. p. 262
[413] Heng 2012 defines a cityscape, in relation to a home scape p. 267

mode of seeing the city from "down below" as walkers. Drawing from de Certeau, Heng views the city as text better read as a poem because it eludes legibility because it has no author or spectator, it is fragmented and escapes the totalizations of the eye. The city read here is a "*migrational* or metaphorical city [that] slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city."[414] The walk from home through the city, to a rooftop where Molemo and her guests gaze down, but also up and across the city mark it in this way as migrational, in tension the "home" and "city" scape play out the politics of location of the South African urban. A model of this gesture, Johannesburg has emerged as a site for the "new" in the social imaginary of post-transition South Africa, working as a symbol or "place of movement"[415] that is and has always been moving.

Michael Tilestad is concerned by the ways that the heterogeneity of the city allows for it to be read abundantly as a rhetorical figuration. Tilestad is concerned with work that draws from de Certeau's reading of the city that favours the social and discursive construction of the city. In Tilestad's assessment, these readings privilege a view that the city is constituted through acts of representation, with the effect that "Johannesburg in particular [has] been subjected to a new version of intellectual deism […] those who stage themselves as 'reading the city' in a post-modern register (everything is text, there is nothing outside the text) hurl down metaphors from on high, describing not – as I imagine Certeau intended – the ways in which individuals organize meanings, but rather making meaning in a mode that is more ecclesiastical than analytical."[416] By way of example, Tilestad refers to Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall's assessment of Johannesburg as "The Elusive Metropolis", which through 'styling' and 'cultural fashioning' is personified through metaphors that act as "laminating tropes" which "exert ownership over place and experience."[417] Alongside this are the fetishistic readings of Johannesburg as the trope of the global South, which becomes a site that usurps the "future" as it embodies the vision of a "post-apocalyptic future" inhabited by the living dead. It is in this context that Tilestad wishes to privilege other approaches to Johannesburg which are "more grounded, more rounded and more nuanced", focused on specific places and specific

[414] De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press. p. 103
[415] Nuttall, Sarah. 2004. City Forms and Writing the "Now" in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30:4 p. 740
[416] Tilestad, Michael. 2013. Approaching Johannesburg. *African Studies* 72:3, p. 441.
[417] Ibid.

histories, taking Phil Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien's *Alexandra* as example. In contrast to *The Elusive Metropolis, Alexandra* moves beyond the trope, by paying attention to the lived and "historicising the ways in which individuals theorise their daily lives: the ways in which meaning is produced, dialectically and prudentially, by the residents of our sprawling reality."[418]

Recently the landscape of the city has been read as a site for the conflation of private and public lives, or as Kerry Bystrom offers as a large interior[419] where the public, private, interior and exterior come undone or fold into one another. This reading of the city follows from the presumption that the post-apartheid era offers spaces for thinking and feeling in public and the intimate private sphere has in turn been moved to this public. The urban landscapes, homes and neighbourhoods where we take wedding photographs become sites where identities are performed and contested through consumption, social distinction and the environment itself. For Heng, these photographs are staged both by the performance of the sitters in the image and the ways that objects are organized with the intent to project an image of who the people are. The objects act as "aesthetic markers" that produce "narrative maps."[420] The stage and objects signal the "material supports of a particular way of life"[421] leading Heng to suggest that through these objects we can recognize a continuum between the "homescape", and the "cityscape". "Cityscape" refers to the other markers within the broader landscape and its architecture.[422]

The processes by which the white wedding was formalized and popularized are connected to the production of such a continuum. For instance, the opposition between the "home" and the "parlour" (or private and public) are pressed in late 19th and early 20th century etiquette manuals to produce a hierarchical taxonomy between the fashionable and the ordinary, take for instance the three-tiers presented to us in Emily Post's *Etiquette:*

> *The most elaborate wedding possible: This is the huge wedding of the daughter of ultra rich and prominent people in a city such as New York, or more probably a high-noon wedding out of town. The details would in either case be the same, except that the "country setting" makes necessary the additional provision of a special train which takes the guests to a station where they can be met by dozens of motors and driven to the*

[418] Tilestad 2013, p 447.
[419] Bystrom, Kerry. 2013. Johannesburg Interiors. *Cultural Studies* 27:3.
[420] Ibid.
[421] Heng 2012, p. 262
[422] Heng 2012, p. 267

church. […] A huge canopied platform is built on the lawn or added to the veranda (or built over the yard of a city house), and is decorated to look like an enclosed formal garden. It is packaged with small tables, each seating four, six or eight as the occasion may require.
[…]
The average fashionable wedding: the more usual fashionable wedding is merely a modification of the ones outlined above. The chancel of the church is decorated exactly the same, but except in summer when garden flowers are used, there is little attempted in the body of the church other than sprays of flowers at the ends of the first two pews, or possibly only at the ends of the first two pews.
[…]
A small wedding: is merely a further modification of the two preceding ones. Let us suppose it is a house wedding in a moderate sized house.[423]

The dressing of the home is a central motif in the staging of an appropriate wedding, as is the garden. Connected to these spatial tropes is the narrative of travel, or a destination so this intimate homescape has the ability to spread beyond the literal home of the bride as the material artefacts staged for the purpose of the event do the work of this imagining. I take the example of a description of the "home wedding" in a different manual:

Home weddings can often be made as impressive as church weddings. With correct decorations, the most spacious home can be transformed into an interior as lovely as the interior of a beautiful decorated church.[424]

The home is the site where a woman can not only project the image of her future life in marriage, but is invited to project its beauty as an extension of her own. The work of decorating the wedding venue so that it projects a romantic and unique vision or version of the self is intended to demonstrate the degree of taste a woman has; "we must learn to recognize suitability, simplicity and proportion and apply our knowledge to our needs […] a woman's environment will speak for her life, whether she likes it or not!"[425]

Sarah Nuttall's proposition is that there is a new culture of "self-stylization", which uses various texts as resources or accessories, visual but also textual:

> The self, here, is above all a work of art. The stylisations of the self that are projected in the magazine's images, however, are based on a delicate mix between actual emerging lifestyles of middle class black youth and on the politics of aspiration.[426]

[423] Post, Emily. 1922. *Etiquette.* New York, NY: Funk & Wangalls. p. 190-191.
[424] Watson, Lillian Eichler. 1924. *Book of Etiquette Volume I.* Garden City, NY: Nelson Doubleday.
[425] De Wolfe, Elsie. 1913. *The House in Good Taste.* New York, NY: The Century Co.
[426] Nuttall, Sarah. 2003. Self and Text in *Y* Magazine. *African Identities* 1:2. p 240

The body is a site which is re-registered or translated in manner specific to location, as even for Nuttall, location is central to the work of self-making. The 'scapes' of the social are read in this assessment as onomatopoeic; that is, not mutual mimicries but instead "the power to produce resemblances between signs, languages, objects" onomatopoeic not the same as the original and a play on identity itself. The connections that I read from the texts and images of 19th and 20th century etiquette manuals and wedding announcements with the ritualized narrative of the white wedding as a mass-produced global event practiced by men and women here and now, might be ill-serviced in a reading that views them either as mutual-mimicry, or in fact as onomatopoeic with the original. To this account, I would suggest the same argument applies whether we privilege a reading of the material conditions or the signifying practices which elaborate them. I have earlier suggested that the traffic in signs related to the boundaries of femininity, beauty, purity and whiteness marked on to the body of the bride are necessarily produced in relation to conquest and space and relational processes of boundary-making and aspiration that fundamentally trouble the work of any notion of an original.

Pumla Gqola calls upon a poem by Lebogang Mashile for the metaphor of whirling worlds, signalling the ways creative energies proliferate and are enacted by women in the South African public sphere.[427] In her reading of Mashile, Gqola notes that creativity signals or articulates change, creativity is a political that can pose problems in languages that do not limit it to either protest, or aesthetic and while she is speaking to a special journal issue concerned with the work of women poets, the idea that a literary geography is enacted in this form of creative production is one that I am keen to extend to reading how the aesthetic and political function in the ways black women arrange or create for the purpose of their weddings. I am anxious to read between the antagonisms provoked in the manner by which Tilestad reads Nuttall and others concerned with the city as a body of texts, against more historically grounded encounters because therein lies something fruitful in understanding the actual relations of producing a wedding in this place and the kinds of materials one has, materials or imaginaries out of memory and history are after all, always already connected to interrelations of power and deeply connected to something we might call "urban culture", or specific genres of culture attached to the work of building

[427] See Gqola, Pumla Dineo. 2011. Whirling Worlds? Women's Poetry, Feminist Imagination and Contemporary South African Publics. *scrutiny2* 16:2

Johannesburg. The physical context of the city, or the enacting of a retreat from it in the place and time of the present and multiple recent presents reads as a dynamic that speaks to the ways that desire is performed in the wedding ritual as also connected to multiple and varying tropes of territorializing (and attempts at deterritorializing) desires as well.

This chapter has paid attention to the production of wedding photographs. As I argue, the production or process of image-making is not only crucial to the proper enactment of the ritual, but is a process in and of itself. What I wish to extend here is the manner by which these images play space, particularly the genres of this city in these processes of image production. Ackbar Abbas argues persuasively that our relationships to the city are changed by images as images of the city increasingly tell us less and less about the city itself, we learn more about the image through the city, than about the city through the image:

> The implications of this for images are crucial: they have to deal not just with appearances but also with disappearances. It should be noted immediately that dis-appearance (think of the term as hyphenated) is not vanishing without a trace. That would be too literal-minded a way of understanding the term. Rather what disappearance suggests is not simple absence but a kind of problematic presence, a ghostly presence. The city disappears not because we do not see it, but because we do not know what we are seeing. This is because, as we shall be discussing presently, 'space' and 'time' have gone through strange loops. […] This can only mean that we are never able to provide any direct or immediate images of the disappearing city, only their after-images. [428]

The city as a site for multiple competing identities, claims and demands makes appearance and dis-appearances set scenes for the processes of subjectivation. I take as example the kind of attention the figure of *Sophie* produced by Mary Sibande has invoked. Sophie who was projected on the large skyscrapers and has been sent and sent to us again in the local, national and international public as a metaphor for the city that does something different in the ways that she appears and dis-appears through the city's skyline. Sophie's occupation of space has been read as metaphor for the entry of black women into the intimate public of the industrializing city. Her presence against the high-rise buildings presents black woman as worker, domestic and private, but also producer of the public: the street, the city, the industry – as well as the projection of a radical critique for a desire

[428] Abbas, Ackbar. 2011. Thinking through Images: Turkishness and its Discontents: A Commentary. *New Perspectives on Turkey* 45. p. 216

to imagine the public as outside of the work of a private. Mbembe and Nuttall suggest that Johannesburg is a metropolis that works through visibility and invisibility and in so doing makes invisible the migrant worker who in their view, more than the flaneur is the figure of African modernity.[429] Nuttall and others now site the visibility of black women, primarily through the figure of the domestic worker made unavoidably visible to us through Mary Sibande's figure *Sophie* as a sign that we can further contend that the private has entered the public. I want to suggest something else, that rather than the male migrant labourer underneath the city as Mbembe and Nuttall suggests, it is the figure of the black woman as domestic worker that is the paradoxical figure of African modernity. This suggestion is brought forward in Shireen Ally's work on domestic labour[430] as well as Bridget Kenny's work on retail workers in department stores.[431] Examining women as workers in the apartheid project and its concomitant modernity, they are able to recognize that this public sphere of labour was always already implicated in the desire to regulate space and in an ordering of space where the private was already public.

Simon Gikandi offers a response to a recent issue of *Public Culture* edited by Sarah Nuttall and Kerry Bystrom on the now private in public of South Africa by reminding us that the terms themselves are a part of the Enlightenment project and as such our engagement with them needs to work from this premise.[432] That is, the project of modernity was one that desired the production of separate spheres as a means of boundary-making. I will further extend this argument to suggest that the private sphere was one through which class was produced and reproduced. Further, that via the invention of domesticity it became a space that created particular relations between women and labour in the private sphere as Ally's work reveals. Gikandi continues in suggesting that the argument that debating intimacy and the public sphere need not be elitist as in the case of South Africa, despite its small size the black middle class can serve as the agents in this public sphere in ways that the liberal white middle class may not be able to, in order to include the masses, not as he indicates through "crass consumption." There is an unstable contradiction for me here, as we are then to presume that the enlightenment categories

[429] Mbembe, Achille. & Nuttall, Sarah. 2004. Writing the World from an African Metropolis. *Public Culture* 16:3. p. 364
[430] See Ally 2009
[431] See Kenny (forthcoming)
[432] Gikandi, Simon. 2013. Response. *Cultural Studies 27:3.*

of public and private space are produced in processes disentangled from the poor, or race and gender. The invention of domesticity that I read as the site where these categories are made most explicit confront the assumption Gikandi follows in pursuing a reading of the public sphere that is bound to Habermasian notions of a civil society.

Perhaps it is also this reading of the public that lies under the readings of the post-apartheid public in the other contributions to this issue except that of Thabisani Ndlovu who examines the ways the personal plays on South African television, suggesting that the success of the industry of confession television is connected to the public process of the TRC as a space where following the repression of apartheid people were called to air their emotions. I think this is one reading of why so many people in South Africa express their love, sadness, friendship and marriage on television, but cannot be read as a full account without a longer genealogy of the intimate public sphere. The symbolic home read not only as a counterpoint to the repression of apartheid was mediated in an intimate public sphere through the print media for a much longer period and towards a public broader than the elite who consumes high art of the regenerated city.

In the wedding photographs that I have observed, it is apparent that the wedding venue serves as a symbolic home, one which works with the specific ways that Johannesburg has been made in the imaginaries of the social public. In a sense, it is not simply an image-making invested in the romantic script, but the romance is extended to a narrative about the city itself, invested in the symbolic capital invested in this place akin to Stuart Hall's definition of culture:

> Culture is not just a voyage of rediscovery, a return journey. It is not an 'archaeology.' Culture is a production. It has its raw materials, its resources, its 'work of production.' It depends on a knowledge of tradition as 'the changing same' and an effective set of genealogies. But what this 'detour through its pasts' does is to enable us, through culture, to produce ourselves anew, as new kinds of subjects. It is therefore not a question of what our traditions make of us so much as what we make of our traditions. Paradoxically, our cultural identities, in any finished form, lie ahead of us. We are always in the process of cultural formation. Culture is not a matter of ontology, of being, but of becoming.[433]

[433] Hall, Stuart. 2005. Thinking Diaspora: Home Thoughts from Abroad. In G. Desai & S. Nair (Eds.), *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p. 556

Hazel Carby uses Hall's formulation of identity as a narrative that is always within representation, to "consider the creative, contested, contradictory and laborious work of constructing racial identities in narrative acts."[434] In such, Carby is invested in the manner by why a modern black subject has been projected into history. The previous discussion on the "New Africans" as performing a particular claim at the modern might serve as example, one which I intend to stretch in disrupting the notion of "the modern" itself, but also to suggest that the ways that Johannesburg and certain claims around temporal frames that are multiple, intends to mark it as a particular kind of modern. This post/apartheid imagining is aesthetically marked through notions of a newness and dynamism about the place that transacts the encounter with race. Where Carby asks "Does it matter where the encounters between Africans and Europeans, between those constructed as 'black' and 'white' take place"[435]? I might instead propose that it is a set of imaginaries of past, present and future encounters that become the aesthetic materials for the image of the city. This projection of Johannesburg as "modern" in this manner is not new. Jennifer Robinson's reading of the 1936 Empire Exhibition:

> Staging difference, through the lenses of ethnography, science and museology drew on a series of tropes including evolutionary narratives, hierarchizing exhibits according to their relative assigned importance, often juxtaposing the old and the new, or the traditional and the modern and frequently consigning traditional and indigenous cultural practices to a timeless existence in the past.[436]

But it was not just the narrative of difference, but was especially attuned to staging the social relations of the city, inclusive of labour and industry, and the domestic space. Bridal magazines targeted at black women that wish to sell what fringes between a "Black", "ethnic", or African/traditional aesthetic to their consumers. The objects curated in projection of such narratives are often tied to visions of the city, but also to nature and tradition leading me to joke constantly about porcupine quills, which always appear. The objects also draw on past imaginaries like that of *Drum* magazine, or Sophiatown which intend to connect to imagined pasts of black urban cosmopolitanism. One might call this a mode of "making do," or disidentification.

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[434] Carby, Hazel V. 2009. Becoming Modern Racialized Subjects: Detours Through Our Pasts to Produce Ourselves Anew. *Cultural Studies* 23:4., p. 625
[435] Carby 2009, p. 628
[436] Robinson, Jennifer .2003. Johannesburg's 1936 Empire Exhibition: Interaction, Segregation and Modernity in a South African City. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29:3, p. 762

"I wanted to be different, so the inspiration behind our wedding was the 1950s era."

"We just loved the modern aspects [...] I wanted to have an urban and chic wedding and Melrose Arch provided the perfect backdrop."

The place cards, on the bottom right use the names of various urban locations in Harare. "Mufakose", are used in ways very similar to the ways Sophiatown is invoked as a site of black urban migration and social respectability with broader connections to a past black urban cosmopolitan belonging.



16 How do you blend the Traditional with the Modern?

For Black women projecting their taste into the cityscape of Johannesburg can be read as a performance of their distinction in some of the complicated ways I have previously suggested. Johannesburg can be read in the manner that Sandra Manuel does with regards to Maputo. Manual reads the city as global and indeed as cosmopolitan.[437] Like Manuel, Nthabiseng Motsemme recognizes a cosmopolitan citizenship shared by all young people despite their actual class or spatial locations in the city. In applying Bourdieu's notion of distinction, Motsemme suggests that while all young men and women consume fashion, for instance, adorning and marking their bodies with various signs; it is through distinction that those in the middle classes are able to distinguish themselves. Through dress and taste, they are able to convey their belonging to a broader global, but also local public.[438] One of the most important insights offered by Manuel's work is that having a male partner, and being married are one of the signs or adornments intended to advance her social status. It is an aspect of this distinction. For both Motsemme and Manuel, the curatorial choices made about how to dress the body, or as I might add, the wedding, are sites upon which the specific cities and the global converge with other signifiers intended to project the range of texts that black women encounter about space, the modern/traditional, cultural practice as well as good taste.

Fashion reflects the structures of femininity and embodiment and is a textual and material system[439] that connects the ways objects can constitute processes of identification and subjectivation. The body itself is an object that fashion acts upon, as it is not fixed matter; as we follow new fashions our bodies are reshaped by them. The wedding venue mirrors these desires, as customers are offered a stage where they can represent themselves and their personal taste at a venue that functions as a homely private public. Even when the same venue can cater for more than one wedding at a time, through the use of objects the customer is sold the possibility of extending their personal

[437] Manuel, Sandra. 2012. Sexuality in Cosmopolitan Maputo: The Aesthetics of Gendered Practice through the Lens of Class. *Moçambique: Acumulação e Transformação em Contexto de Crise Internacional,* 3rd International Conference of the Instituto de Estudos Socias e Económicos, Lisbon, 4-5 September.

[438] See Motsemme, Nthabiseng. 2003. Distinguishing Beauty, Creating Distinctions: The Politics and Poetics of Dress among Young Black Women. *Agenda* 17:57.

[439] See Bartky, Sandra Lee. 1997. Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. In Conboy, Katie. Medina, Nadia & Stanbury, Sarah. (Eds). *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press; and Bordo, Susan. 1995. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

selves to a broader audience. In what follows, I examine three genres of wedding venue. There are others, for instance the "ranch" or "plantation", closely tied to the travel and conquest narrative I have spoken to or about at length in previous sections. Here, I am interested in three genres that are tied to genres of the city of Johannesburg and that I read in relation to what or how black women are read as occupying the public space.

Celia Lury argues that culture is topological, "as the introduction of new continuities into a discontinuous world and the making and marking of discontinuities through repeated contrasts [proliferate or compose] as mixed sign-system."[440] I would suggest the same and further suggest that this mixed-sign system in the ways it gets expression at wedding venues is deeply connected to what Sara Ahmed describes as a non-performative happiness. It is a commitment to a progressive narrative and a vision of utopia, so that while there is a recognition of a past racial segregation, where people all "know their place,"[441] there is a vision of the city as potentially full possibility as inclusive. This inclusive vision of a present/future finds expression in particular kinds of consumption, so that the project of the gentrification of the inner city, or urban redevelopment sells us a sliding scale of "authentic consumption" that speak to the visions of this future city. In important ways, these visions of new urban forms

The images which follow are of Rutendo and Marc's wedding. They were married at Avianto, a wedding venue on the West Rand wedding mile that describes itself as:

> A European-inspired village that has established itself as a creative stimulus for gorgeous wedding celebrations, focused team-building conferences, glittering functions and intimate getaways. Avianto consists of our Village Hotel, the well-known Banquet Hall with its charming and beautiful non-denominational Chapel, a magnificent Ballroom, the Fireside Room for a more intimate function, and the state-of-the-art Conference Centres, consisting of six separate conference rooms and a lounge.[442]

Unlike the genre of wedding venue that I describe in chapter two that is invested in an image of an untouched wilderness somewhere out there, Johannesburg as city confers a number of other refashionings of space and bodies. In the case of Avianto, we see the staging of a virtual Europe transplanted to the outskirts of the city. It is a virtual world like

[440] Lury, Celia. 2012. 'Bringing the World into the World': The material Semiotics of Contemporary culture. *Distinktion* 13:3.
[441] Barnard, Rita. 2006. *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 3
[442] http://www.avianto.co.za/avianto-overview.html accessed 25 September 2013

an amusement park that allows those occupying its space to perform or imagine themselves as ideologically planted at home in Europe. It also signifies in parts the post/apartheid white flight from the city to the gated suburban outskirts that mirrors aspirations for Johannesburg to remain within an aspirational locale of metropolitan modernity.

Thembi and Zviko actually opted to have their wedding reception in their home as a gesture intended to mark themselves as a part of the city. That is, that the city as a place for a black cosmopolitan identity that was perhaps previously denied. Their home is marked with objects that trace long genealogies of cosmopolitan urban blackness, including portraits of iconographic figures such as Miriam Makeba and references to a *Drum Age* intended to index this modern black cosmopolitan past, present and future. Once engaged, the couple purchased a penthouse apartment in the newly and fast-enlarging Maboneng district in the east of the city.[443] At that time, Thembi explained that being a part of a global urban culture was how she imagined her life with her partner and this apartment connected her, at least ideologically with places like New York City. Their building named Revolution House drew them in, urban in style in architecture and connected to a broader project of urban renewal, and Thembi was drawn to the idea of living amongst Johannesburg's most ordinary residents. Her mother was less keen and leading up to their move, which coincided with their wedding would lament: we fought to get you out of the slums and into the suburbs and now you grow up and move back. While Thembi does not foreground "race" as the ideological underpinning of a transnational cosmopolitanism that connects her desire toward "Revolution House", or an urban home/city scape; her reflections support the arguments offered by Nthabiseng Motsemme.[444] Motsemme suggests that a collapsing of the meta-narrative of apartheid places identities into crisis. Spaces like Johannesburg, imaginaries like *Drum* and Revolution House reveal this crisis and open space for people to articulate "new identities" in which race remains an existential drama. Thembi recounts a transnational, personal account of aspiration, black cosmopolitanism and desire:

> D: did you meet with your photographer and have an idea of the visual narrative that you wanted to create?

[443] See Odhiambo, Tom. 2006. Inventing African in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Imagination, Politics and Transnationalism in *Drum* Magazine. *African Identities* 65:2.
[444] Motsemme, Nthabiseng. 2002. Gendered Experiences of Blackness in Post-Apartheid. *Social Identities* 8:4.

T: Yes we did have a meeting. At first we wanted to have a lot of pictures of city-scapes. But eventually we just took a lot around Maboneng. I think what we wanted was, we didn't have a lot of family pictures and a lot of our pictures were just us. And we wanted natural pictures. That is one thing we asked for. We didn't want a lot of posed sort of sort of pictures. The ones we attempted looked awkward. It looks so terrible. So I guess it was natural poses with city-scapes.

D: So why city-scapes?

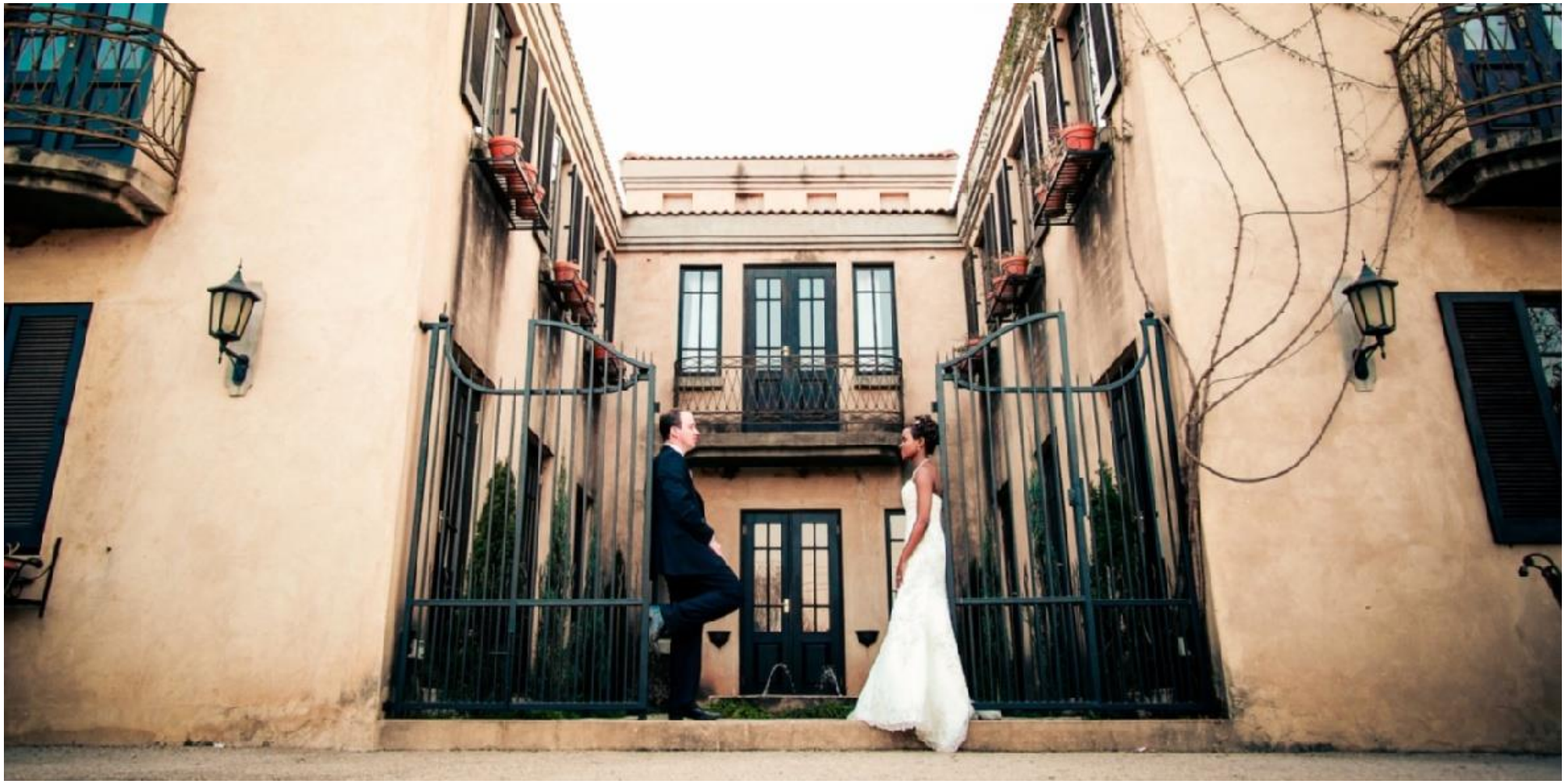
T: City-scapes because Joburg gets a lot of flak. I love Johannesburg, it is alive, and it is vibrant. It is changing. However I always compare Johannesburg to a woman you meet in a bar. She is not the gushy girl who wants to kiss you and take you home immediately. She is someone you have to court and pry and get all of her secrets out of. For me, this is the city.

My mum said something very very interesting when we moved into the city. She said, "We worked so hard so that you don't have to live here. So after all that, after we took you to the low density suburbs, you move back into the city!" Which I found ironic. Johannesburg has got 700,000 inhabitants. Mostly lower class immigrant populations. Internal immigrants too. Out of all that mess, it is alive. It is concrete, it is not so ordered. And whereas you could go somewhere that is beautiful with grass, and I love nature. But at the same time there is beauty in the city. There is something lovely about the concrete and the high walls and the stark barrenness of it all. No vegetation. That for me is an unpainted canvas. You can be whoever you want to be in the city. There is no expectation, because everyone is different. No one is worried about you. There is no "my car is better than this", because the people you see around you, there are homeless people. People around the corner. It taught me also that you are just a person. When you live in the burbs you are like "that Woolies is better than that Woolies!" there is no Woolies! The only salon, everyone can go it. The corner store sold tomatoes but they were tomatoes that anyone could buy. So, what was important for me and still it is that you don't have to have. It is not your accent, it is not the way you present yourself. You find your space in where you live. And I think different sort of people can live in the same spaces and eat the same bread. Whereas if you live in the northern suburbs. And the apartheid type structure. Or maybe it is not apartheid, maybe it is true of any city where the rich people live there and the poor people live there.

For me living in the city was such an amazing experience. Why can't this be a start? You can do something big and bold. Chart your own life, paint your own future.

[...]

My mum grew up in an urban slum, around Manzini next to the capital. It used to be a rural area but then it became crowed. So it was a high density neighbourhood. It was still traditional, but it was still urban. So she was like, you know I lived with like many people and I swore that I would never live here! And the kids would never live here!



17 Rutendo and Marc, Avianto 2012



18 Group Picture, Rutendo and Marc 2012

> What I also found interesting. No one wanted to go to Johannesburg. It was for economic reasons that attracted people to the city. Better jobs, better money. And often it was only one person that went. So Johannesburg was not really seen as a place of family or a place where things could grow. If that makes sense.
>
> But what I found ironic was that when we did the ceremony. We know our friends would be fine with it, but we weren't sure of how our parents and aunts, like the older people would take it. But what was interesting was that, especially the older men. Each one of them came up to us during the night of the ceremony and said to us, if I could get married again I would have done what I wanted, which was an interesting reassurance. We actually expected that people might find it awkward. Might find it too you know, left. Well not left. Weird, or strange. That people would not be willing to stay and once it was dark they would try to get out of the city. But people had a really really good time. They were like, thank you for doing this. We learned about the city in a different way. We think about how people can get married in a different way. And now it has becomes, well even our younger siblings are like, well Thembi and Zviko did it like this. Why do I have to have a traditional wedding? It is ironic. I didn't think that the older people would like it at much as they did.[445]

Maboneng, like Avianto both project a relationship to space for the people who intend to occupy them. These two examples project a vision of the city, imagined in these two examples as urban and industrial, and on the other hand as an extension of continental Europe. The flight from the city is imagined literally by the wedding miles that sit on the peripheries of suburban Gauteng. As practiced spaces, like theme parks these spaces enable brides to fashion the relations to the urban and the local all the while playing on a different ideas of "home." Both examples reflect the molar tendencies of territorialisation. It may be more obvious with the suburban Avianto, but Maboneng also is a good example of "privatizing the public realm", not limited to the neoliberal privatizing of space, but that it fits the criteria of being a cultural project that makes the public operate as a private interior.[446] "Imaginary infrastructures"[447] that intend to mark privates from public collapse in Bystrom's view, when ways of effecting others happen in physical space. In particular, it is private life that has both grown following apartheid, with an emphasis shift from the collective to the personal or individual. These "emerging city forms" privatize the project of urban segregation through the logics of private security creating an "architecture of

[445] Interview with Thembi Chandiwana Mudimu 2013
[446] Bystrom 2013
[447] Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2004. People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg *Public Culture* 16:3.

hysteria" of guarded interiors. All of these wedding photographs tell a story about space and about the meanings and intentions of the urban.

Wedding photographic practices enact a collision of the fairy tale romance with other genealogies of visual practices. In particular, wedding photographs draw on the techniques of portraiture. Portraits as representations have a dual function as both honourific and repressive;[448] as honourific, portraits intend to archive and represent the objects one has collected. Portraits also generally intend to represent the individual self. Wedding photographs, read as portraits can then be argued to have share the characteristics of being both indexical and iconographic. These images index certain relations to the real world, so the objects placed in the text are more than just signs of something else. The figure of the bride in her white dress is certainly iconographic, so I argue that the process of becoming-bride is a moment at which one can make fantasy a reality. But it is not only just about the individual self, for once a figure is an icon, it is open to a larger intimate public and serves a symbolic purposes for the function of the public and its ideals. Through certain modes of consumption, we are invited to express our free individual selves through the work of self-styling. Yet, the production and uses of wedding photography suggest that they are texts that are dialogical and relational, presented "to an interlocutor: and not usually to a single addressee, but to an implied "audience".[449] Staring towards their guests-come-spectators, Molemo and Ben sit in the intermediate space between a performance of their individual desire for each other, and a projection of their expanded selves in relation to their friends, family, the city, the Law and the logics of belonging. Karin Barber asks: "Do people always and everywhere seek to make things endure?"[450] The ritualised performance of the wedding is a process of making enduring memories of a projection of future happiness. The sites of memory, like the wedding photography album as a text that allows "people invariably [to] establish social forms and attentively maintain them; both the establishment and maintenance are creative, emergent and continuous. Texts, in this view, are instances of instauration which are central to the human experience."[451]

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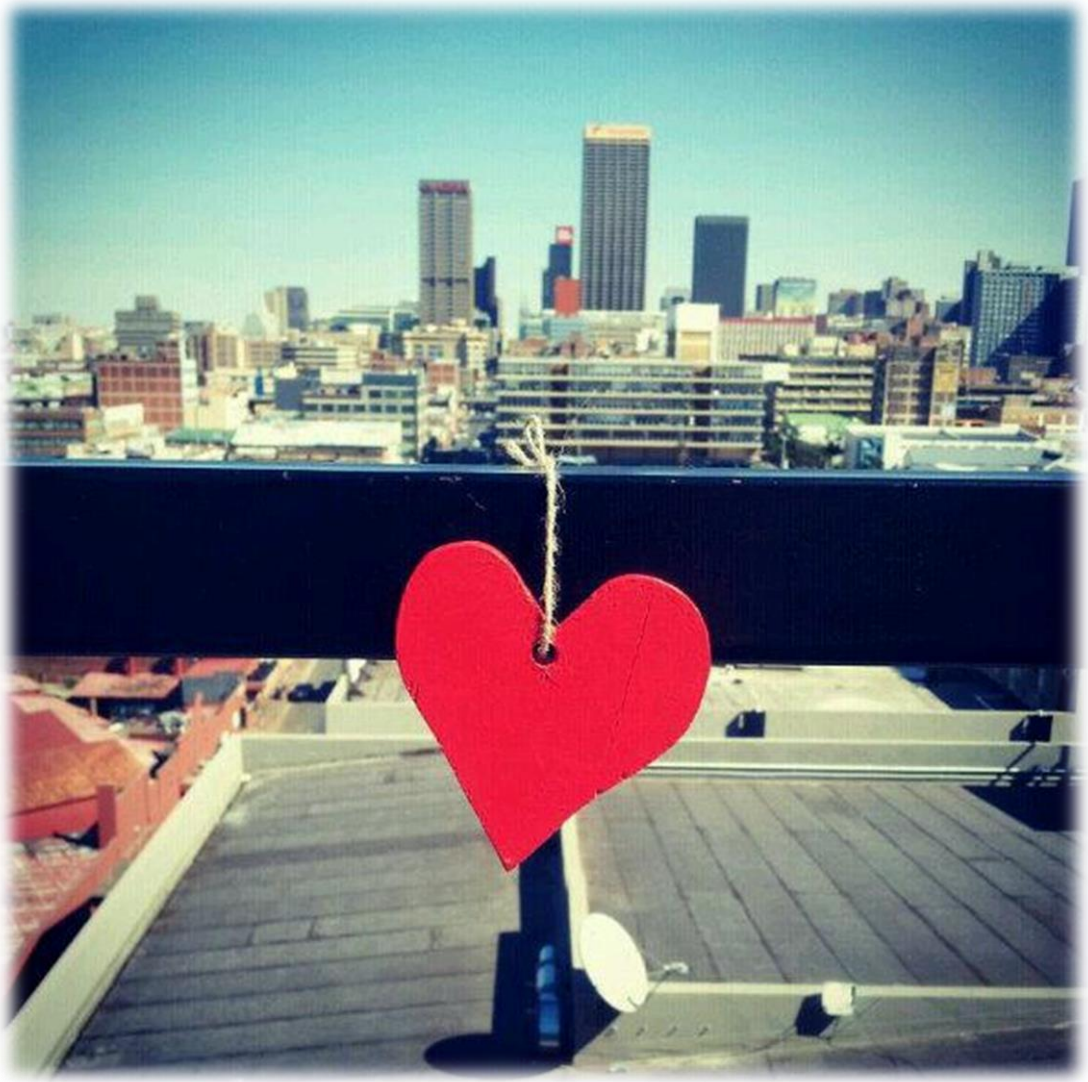
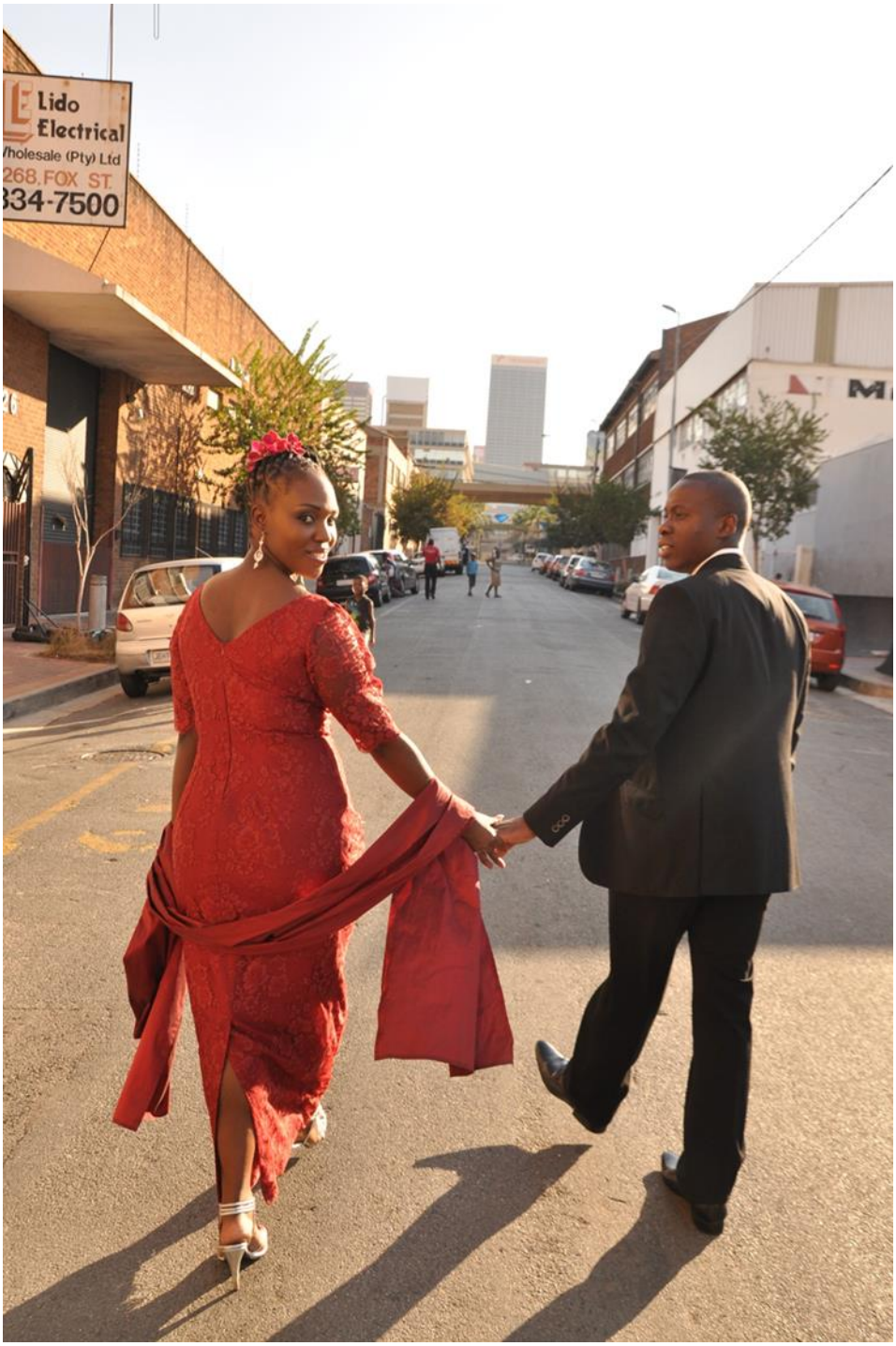
[448] Landau 2002
[449] Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Image-Music-Text.* Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang. p. 146
[450] Barber 2007. *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.24
[451] Barber 2007, p. 4.



19 View from the Balcony, Thembi & Zviko, Johannesburg 2011



20 Thembi & Zviko, Johannesburg 2011

While positioned as individuals in love, the work of weddings as depicted in the image above frames the future as one bound to a broader audience and re/collects romantic couplehood to wider social processes "which, because they are genuinely social, the product of *joint action* between people."[452] Happiness, as Sara Ahmed reminds us, in an orientation to objects, an affect that connects desire, fantasy to values and objects. For Ahmed, the family is one such "happy object"[453] and the ritual of the white wedding presents us with the achievement of the love plot as happiness is the "perfect end."[454] We work hard to make and keep the family, because like the objects we consume once within the folds of consumer-citizenship, it promises us the possibility of happiness. The tension between the individual self and the broader public is much less a tension. In my arguments about the "bridal gaze", I am invested is understanding how becoming girl-bride-woman interpolates us as subjects into the folds of what is a racist and phallocentric Symbolic order. And yet when I think of myself, Mutsa and Molemo I know that there are other looking relations and even perhaps a way that we might gaze upon ourselves outside of the logics I describe above.

There is a final conclusion that I wish to draw here. The work of image-making, especially when it is the portrait is one invested in a humanizing project. The scene of the wedding is one of public intimacy connected to a similar project and in the context that I have observed, there certainly are claims at modes of belonging that intend to oppose dehumanizing "pasts". It is not just that the two venue types that I read against each other are a part of the Same projection of Johannesburg's position as a particular form of imagined future urban inclusion. In the case of Avianto, which offers us the possibility of a little Europe (or European city/village) in our local, I might suggest that the images resonate with the project of inclusion in a formerly exclusive ideal – humanism succeeds as the present/future is unlike a past where certain bodies might have been excluded. On the other hand, and this does not have to be a strict opposition or set of distinctions- but in that set of images there is a bit of the same as the former, but through a commitment to some vision of past/present/future black cosmopolitanism there is possibly a vision of humanism that might be rather than a wish to be included within the Eurocentric vision of the human, aspires instead for inclusion in a

[452] Shotter, Jonathan. 1981. 'Vico, Moral Worlds, Accountability and Personhood. In Heelas & Lock, A. (Eds). *Indigenous Psychologies: The Anthropology of the Self.* London: Academic. p, 273.
[453] Ahmed 2010, p. 30
[454] Ahmed 2010, p. 34

genealogy of a Black or African humanism that has a logic all of its own about what it means to be properly human.

Black Bridezillas

In this chapter I am interested in the figure of the Bridezilla. Sharon Boden examines the experiences of wedding consumers and the significance of consumption in the production of the wedding day. For Boden, the wedding is a "cultural event or performance which generates its meaning primarily through consumerism and romance (rather than say, religion)."[455] In Boden's view, wedding consumption promotes gendered behaviour and Boden proposes the "superbride" who is the "heroic creator of her big day [who is able] to channel the rational and emotional aspects of her personality into the business of wedding consumption."[456] The massive international following of reality television shows that follow the bride's journey in wedding production (including *Say Yes to the Dress, Bridezillas, Rich Bride Poor Bride, Whose Wedding is it Anyway?, Four Weddings, Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* and *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* which all air in South Africa) emphasize the point Boden makes. In fact the BBC show *Don't Tell the Bride* is premised on the humour of the anxiety that a bride might feel if she knew nothing about her wedding while her groom planned it all, down to her dress:

> Brides, have you been dreaming about your wedding day for as long as you can remember? Do you have a clear idea of how you want your big day to be? Would a £12,000 wedding be a dream come true for you?
>
> Grooms, would you like to have more say in your big day? Do you have big ideas and want to impress your bride on her special day? Maybe you and your Best Man plan to create a wedding day that people will be talking about for years to come.
>
> Don't Tell the Bride is looking for couples that are fun, vivacious and passionate about getting hitched in 2013.[457]

The show, like many others achieves its success by preying on aspiring brides who cannot afford to pay for their "own big day". While this show and others have featured same sex couples planning their weddings or civil unions, the premise of the show is predicated on

[455] Boden 2003 p. 112.
[456] Boden 2003 p. 74
[457] http://www.bbc.co.uk/showsandtours/shows/beonashow/dont_tell_the_bride_2013 accessed 23 April 2013

location of the bride as both the creator of the day and the visual sign or symbol of its overall success. Even when a man, heterosexual or otherwise is featured as the "bride", he is represented as excessive and feminine. Tamara Sniezek proposes that wedding planning work is disproportionately invisible, unpaid women's work.[458] Wedding media, including the internet, bridal magazines, books and television portray messages that maintain the status quo by reinforcing the relationship between consumerism and femininity.[459] The money that couples and families invest in the pursuit of magic, perfection and romance is intended to create a fairy tale-like transformation, what Otnes and Pleck call "Cinderella-like magical transformation"[460] that is mirrored both in the aesthetic presentation of the day and the presentation of the bride herself.[461]

In paying attention to the consumer-bride or the super-bride, scholars like Bonnie Adrian have thought through the category of the "Bridezilla", which she defines as "the bride whose intense pursuit of an aesthetic perfection knows no bounds."[462] Through wedding media that targets the bride as its primary consumer, we are also warned that as brides we all face the risk of losing control and becoming this figure. I was unintentionally cautious in my interviews, as I never directly asked the brides if and when they ever felt out of control. From these discussions it seems that for the most part the greatest conflicts emerged when passionate family members had strong opinions about what the day should include, ironically in almost all cases for the more reluctant brides. Mind you, they all considered their weddings and the approach to the ritual as unique and unconventional: as a negotiation of their desires as a couple, the interests of their family networks and an attempt to not participate in the conspicuous consumption that contemporary South African weddings are about.[463] The couple most conventional in the sense that they said

[458] Sniezek, Tamara. 2005. Is it Our Day or the Bride's Day? The Division of Wedding Labour and It's Meaning for Couples. *Qualitative Sociology* 28:3.
[459] Engstrom, Erika. 2008. Unravelling the Knot: Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 32:1. p. 63.
[460] Otnes & Pleck 2003
[461] Also see Besel, Angie., Zimmerman, Toni Schindler., Fruhauf, Christine A., Pepin, Joanna & Banning, James, H. 2009. Here Comes the Bride: An Ethnographic Content Analysis of Bridal Books. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 21.
[462] Adrian 2006. p. 108
[463] See Humble, Áine M. 2003. Doing Weddings: Couple's Gender Strategies in Wedding Preparation. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Development and Family Studies. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University.

"it is our big day, it is all about us,"[464] Shepherd and Vera, faced the least resistance which may have been due to the fact that they made a lot of choices that were uncontroversial: a religious ceremony; a white dress for purity, fruit cake and even a veil. They were also most resistant to the suggestion that the process of marriage could ever cause tension in familial relations.

That said, the loss of control is evident in bridal magazines in two interrelated ways, the first being the excess of extremely detailed advice on how to stay in control of *yourself* and the big day. For example, issue one of *Nubian Bride* features a guide on bridal party etiquette titled "Whose job is it anyway?" We are warned that unless bridesmaids are made aware of these expectations we could face complications, complications that are not described, just illustrated by the image of a weeping bride and a concerned bridesmaid holding her hand.[465] The second way is evident in the advertising. Scott and Pleck note the role of advertising in shaping the rituals related to the white wedding, selling/telling us that we need a series of goods and services for the big day and our future lives as newlyweds.[466] What I have seen discussed less specifically, but is certainly implied in theories related to the bride's potential "break-down", is the plethora of advertising for herbal treatments for anxiety and depression for example.

Messages like this imply a need to take heed as the bride, in order to stay in control of our emotions. These messages also imply that the bride is framed by a frailty, a frailty that I believe still hinges on the fantasy of being a delicate princess and not quite capturing the horror that is the monstrous Bridezilla. I read this as a consequence of the function of these magazines as manuals to help you to produce yourself and your wedding *and* as tools that aim to sell you products. Maria Corrado argues then that "by teaching brides what behaviour is expected of them, inside and out of the bridal shop, bridal workers work to sustain the status of professional and control the bride's behaviour."[467] Molemo recalls the struggles she had with her wedding planner over the issue of draping, for example. She had never imagined draping as part of her city rooftop wedding and she had

[464] See Humble, Áine, M., Zvonkovic, Anisa M & Walker, Alexis J. 2008. The Royal We: Gender Ideology, Display, and Assessment in Wedding Work. *Journal of Family Issues* 29:1.
[465] Williamson, Bridget. 2012. *Nubian Bride* April-September. p. 24
[466] Otnes, Cele & Pleck, Linda M. 1996. Something Old, Something New: Exploring the Interaction between Ritual and Advertising. *Journal of Advertising* 25:1.
[467] Corrado, Maria. 2002. Teaching Wedding Rules: How Bridal Workers Negotiate Control Over their Customers. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 31:1. p. 33.

intentionally selected a full time mechanic and part time event planner, a "man's man" as she described him, under the assumption that he would be less inclined to be a control freak. She describes a three-month battle and at one point she conceded to have the draping as her planner had insisted that he would pay for it himself. The struggle ended when Molemo's partner Ben intervened and said no. Molemo reflected an acute awareness of the relationship between herself and the "wedding instructors" that included magazines and this planner.

Rutendo instead appreciated the expertise, offering a detailed list of costs down to the price of each tea light that her planner produced for her. In her description, the expertise offered by the venue she selected and her planner who mediated her relationship with service providers worked to enable the retention of her sanity. This follows Kristin Blakely's reading of wedding planning as the sign of the commodification of domestic service.[468] As brides following a "have it all" liberal feminism, we are encouraged to be both career women and have a well-produced wedding of our dreams through the labour of a well-organized wedding planner. Khanyisile who works as an electrical engineer found the process of planning her own wedding so rewarding that along with studying part time for a master's degree in Engineering Management, she completed a diploma in wedding planning in 2012. She aspires for a career as an entrepreneur so she has signalled a wish to start her own business as a wedding planner on several occasions.[469]

The location of the bride as the primary consumer and the visual centre-piece of wedding production has further implications. The emergence of consumer culture while opening up spaces for women, "[helping] to shape new forms of subjectivity for women" [470] by locking our intimate needs, desires and perceptions of self to mediated public representations of commodities; is also marked by the demonization of women as we are discursively constructed as impulsive buying machines. The female shopper is insatiable and for Felski becomes the figure that epitomises the intimacy of economic and erotic excess in dominant images of femininity.[471] It is this figure that Adrian describes above as

[468] Blakely, Kristin. 2008. Busy Brides and the Business of Family Life: The Wedding Planning Industry and the Commodity Frontier. *Journal of Family Issues* 29:5.
[469] Also see Winch, Alison. 2012. We Can Have it All. *Feminist Media Studies* 12:1.
[470] Felski, Rita. 1995. *The Gender of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 62
[471] Ibid.

pursuing perfection with no bounds. Engstrom extends Adrian's definition as she suggests that this new bridal identity "takes the role of the bride in a new direction by encouraging women to assert themselves and take explicit control of what a gendered society tells them is their special day."[472] I read a subtle difference in their definitions. Engstrom identifies the Bridezilla as a recent phenomenon produced in part in the way that Ingraham views the contemporary white wedding as a product of transnational capital where the white wedding is a mass-marketed production line.[473] This reading does not recognize the work of the nascent "bridal market"[474] as defined by Vicki Howard when the lavish white wedding becomes more formal, commercial and accessible to the global middle and working classes. Barbara Penner argues that it might be misleading to read Howard's "bridal market" as equivalent to the mass-marketed wedding described by Ingraham, however it is important as many of the innovations that would transform the white wedding into a mass product come into fruition in this period.[475]

Felski's argument that the female shopper, or Bridezilla in this instance; reflects the intimacy of the erotic and economic in dominant femininity is important to consider. I hope to have already demonstrated in my reading of the white wedding and its ascendance as a globally desired ritual or practice as closely tied both to a desire for and production of race. At the nexus of the erotic and economic where femininity and consumption become problematic, race always already enters. Tom Odhiambo's reading of *True Love* magazine suggests that it is in the post/apartheid context that black women emerge in the visual media in South Africa and become both consumers and consumable.[476] I suggest instead that black female consumers were invited to consumption much earlier than this, and in pursuing these longer genealogies one can recognize the ways that black women's consumption is doubly marked as problematic.[477] The Bridezilla, as portrayed in the visual media like the television show *Bridezillas* loses control in the space between her desire to

[472] Engstrom, Erika 2009. Creation of a New 'Empowered' Female Identity in WE-TV's *Bridezillas Media Report to Women*. p. 6
[473] Ingraham 1999.
[474] Howard, Vicki Jo. 2000. American Weddings: Gender, Consumption and the Business of Brides. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Austen, TX: University of Texas.
[475] Penner 2004, p. 1.
[476] Odhiambo, Tom. 2008. The Black Female Body as a 'Consumer and a Consumable' in Current *Drum* and *True Love* Magazines in South Africa. *African Identities* 67:1. *p*. 72
[477] Iqani 2012

produce perfection and her inability to access it. The show itself employs the mode of melodrama as the main character, the Bridezilla becomes increasingly unbearable, causing the viewer to sympathize with her innocent groom and family members. We are left to wonder what happens to these couples once the cameras leave and in at least two episodes, our Bridezilla is left at the altar and we can all understand why. She is awful, evil, out of control and in almost all cases a little bit cheap. The devices employed by the show's producers strategically apply the bride's lack of cultural capital to reveal why she will neither achieve Cinderella-like transformation, nor deserve it and the representational strategies used to display her lack of "good taste" are premised on a critique of irrational female consumption that is produced at the intersections of race and class. The fictions of romance employ the techniques of melodrama to craft a climax at the achievement of the marriage contract. Women's magazines present this melodrama through various visual and narrative techniques and the work of making the body feminine is work that will help us achieve this this goal.

The body is a site upon which the task of becoming girl-bride-woman is performed and achieved. Bridal magazines are laden with images and work plans to enable the bride to achieve her goal. The transformation of the body into bride reveals the many ways the body is excessive and further, how through various techniques of control, can be remade into the ideal. The fantasy presented through the visual can be achieved through work on the insides and outsides of the body. The containment of excess is also both about the body not occupying too much space, and the simultaneous control of the sex of the body. Becoming girl-woman-bride is a process that requires the containment of every aspect of the body and is most poignantly represented through the aspiration for the thin body. Judith Butler reminds us that there is no prediscursive body, there is no "pure body" as the body is a "locus of production, the site of contested meaning."[478] The body is then always already materialized through its interactions with machinic processes that include an assemblage of nature, culture and science. The thin body represents the triumph over need and want, but also allows us to see how the body is always already a cyborg:

[478] Butler 1993, p. 10

> A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as science fiction… a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self.[479]

[479] Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, NY: Routledge: p. 149



21 "Healthy" Even Tone Skin Transformation



Grooming GUIDE

We give you tips on how to handle everything from cellulite to bushy eyebrows before your big day.
By **JACQUI JOSEPH**

Every bride wants to look radiant on her wedding day, but most of us need a bit of help to achieve a svelte silhouette and glowing skin. While there is an array of treatments on offer, selecting the best therapy for your needs can be overwhelming. Here are some of the top industry recommendations to help bring out the best you.

BUFF BODY

While there is never a substitute for a healthy diet and exercise regime, we sometimes need a little extra assistance to get into picture perfect shape for the special day.

STUBBORN FATTY DEPOSITS

One of the key concerns that plagues women is the size and shape of our mid section, usually our stomach and bum. Try CoolSculpting® Fat Freezing by Zeltiq, launched in SA by Laserderm Aesthetic Clinics (www.laserderm.co.za). This treatment literally "freezes your butt off" and is suitable for women who don't want to go the liposuction route. Scientific research demonstrates that fat cells are more susceptible to extreme cold and they are selectively and permanently destroyed through a process called Cryolipolysis (cold lipolysis). Subjecting fat cells to sub-zero temperatures causes them to die.

The cells are then absorbed and

...ished away by the body over a few ...nths, leaving you sleeker.

...single treatment is usually enough ...reat love handles or small pockets ...lat. For a larger belly or flaps under ...r arms, two treatments should suffice.

...The procedure is non-invasive and ...u can return to normal activities ...mediately. It's relatively pain-free ...d doesn't utilise anaesthetic or ...in medication. Some patients ...perience redness, minor bruising, ...ngling or numbness in the treated ...a, which is temporary.

...Changes may be noticed as quickly ...s three weeks after treatment. An ...erage reduction in the fat layer of ...tween 20% and 40% can be seen in ...out two to four months, so you need ...o plan to have this treatment early in ...der to achieve the best results for ...ur wedding day. The ideal candidate ...ould be within five to 10 kilograms of ...eir ideal weight.

...The prices range from R7 000 to R12 000 per area.

CELLULITE

...ellulite is notoriously difficult to get ...of, but it's possible to improve your ...pearance with treatments such as ...rboxytherapy (carbon dioxide therapy ...improve circulation and smooth skin), ...ynergy or endermology (lymphatic ...inage massage), and mesotherapy ...ny injections of a cocktail of ...bstances to help improve drainage and circulation).

"All are very effective in treating cellulite," notes Dr Natasha Begg-Spiro of Laserderm Aesthetic Centre.

Depending on the area and degree of severity, one or more of these therapies can be administered. For best results, start your treatments at least four months before the big day.

- Treatments range from between R280 to R1 000. For best results, you may need a few consultations.

> *"Tinting your eyebrows gives an illusion of thickness and definition if they need a little oomph"*

EXCESSIVE SWEATING

Although Botox is commonly done on the face as a wrinkle treatment, it has another useful application. It's invaluable in the treatment of hyperhidrosis – the excessive sweating of underarms, hands and feet. "This problem is very prevalent and affects many, causing severe embarrassment," says Hardus Bester, CEO of Best Body Skin Clinic.

Botox blocks the nerves that supply the sweat glands, preventing them from producing sweat. Small amounts of Botox are injected into several spots around the affected areas; this takes between 15 and 30 minutes. The effects kick in a week later and last about eight to nine months. Side effects, like slight temporary bruising and redness at the injection site and sometimes headaches, are unlikely, but may occur in a small percentage of patients.

- Botox is priced from around R500 to R1 500 per area.

For more information, contact Best Body Skin Clinic 082 809 1093.

HAIR NECESSITIES

...facial hair like brows and lashes need special attention for the big day

...BROWS AND EYELASHES

...not neglect your eyebrows and ...lashes. They frame the face and ...ovecur make-up a finished look. ...ir brows are not up to scratch, bite ...tweezer and grow them out for at least ...months," says Dr Catherine Davies of ...Restoration SA. "It's worth going to ...professional eyebrow shaper. Nothing ...creates a wedding 'face' better than ...groomed eyebrows," she says.

...Tinting your brows gives an illusion ...thickness and definition if they need a little more oomph. Shaping and tinting should not be done within seven days of your wedding day.

For a brow consultation, contact brow guru Gillian from Brow Express on 082 584 2348.

If your eyebrows have gaps that won't grow in, try having permanent make-up (tattooing) done. This is highly effective and looks natural if done by an expert.

We recommend Tusc Medical Aesthetics in Sandton City on 011 884 657.

FALSE LASHES

For pretty lashes, most gals are opting for falsies, either the glue-on kind or the individually placed lash extensions.

- Both are effective, the difference being that regular false lashes are cheaper and can be found in most cosmetic retailers for around R55. But they can only be used once, whereas the permanent lashes are sealed onto your own lashes and grow out over weeks; these cost around R700 per application.

Visit www.eyelashextensions.co.za.

If you're happy to showcase your natural lashes, try one of the many lash growth boosters, like Rapid Lash or Jan Marini Lash Factor, about 12 weeks before your wedding. Applied to clean lashes at night, they should be used from about two months before your wedding. >>

FACE CARE

The three key concerns when it comes to the face are wrinkles, scars and pigmentation. It is best to see an aesthetic doctor for an assessment and advice on what treatments would be suitable to help reduce or eradicate any of these conditions.

SKIN PEELS

Skin peels resurface your skin, revealing healthier, smoother underlying layers. They are superb for enhancing radiance, minimising pigmentation, clearing acne and reducing acne scars.

However, not all peels are created equal. "One has to be very careful when undergoing peeling treatments, especially with darker Asian and black skins that can react adversely to certain harsh ingredients," says Bester.

Bester swears by the VI Peel, saying: "There is an immediate improvement in the texture and clarity of the skin."

The treatment takes 20 to 30 minutes. There's almost no discomfort. Clients tend to experience a warm, tingly sensation that quickly subsides.

There is little or no downtime. The peeling process lasts two to three days, and is easily managed with the post-peel kit that is included with the peel. You'll see results in just one week.

The VI Peel is safe for all skin types and ethnicities. It's said to be the only peel safe to use on the eye area, neck, chest and hands. In addition to removing the surface layers of skin, exposing new surface cells, the peel also benefits the structure of your skin, increasing collagen production in the dermal layers. It is advisable to do this four weeks before the wedding.

- Skin peels start at R3 000 per treatment.

BOTOX AND FILLERS

Quick-fix treatments such as Botox and soft tissue fillers help to erase lines and restore volume in key areas. Botox gives your face a marked improvement, lifting and smoothing lines – giving you a refreshed, relaxed look. It is especially good for the vertical frown lines between the eyebrows.

> *"Botox lifts and smooths lines, giving you a refreshed and relaxed look"*

Soft tissue fillers can soften deep lines and add volume to areas such as under-eye hollows, cheeks and lips, if necessary. Adding a small amount of filler under a scar will often help to lift it and make it less noticeable.

The procedures are bearable, with a pin-prick being the only pain you will feel. It takes no days to two weeks for the treatment to settle in properly.

- Botox treatments start from R1 000 per area.
- Soft tissue fillers start at R1 800 per syringe and results last for approximately a year.

For more information contact Laserderm (www.laserderm.co.za)

SCAR TREATMENT

Treating scars is a difficult procedure. Hypertrophic and keloid scars will decrease in size with steroid injections into the scar, and acne scars will benefit from treatments such as Fraxel laser, which help to build up normal collagen, replacing the abnormal scar tissue in each lesion.

- Fraxel laser treatments start at R1 000 per treatment. Multiple treatments are usually needed and results take a few months to become evident. Φ

22 Nubian Bride Grooming Guide

The cyborg is a useful figure for us to understand how the body can be monstrous and what other notions are attached to the figure of the Bridezilla. The Bridezilla is a hybrid figure, complex as it resists and challenges the normative human being, "for all that it is extra-ordinary and widely characterised as unnatural, the monster is not outside nature. It is, rather, an instance of nature's startling capacity to produce alien forms within."[480] The Bridezilla read as monster is an object of display. With the view that the Bridezilla is produced at the intersections of race, class and gender I am interested in the ways that brides are represented in South African bridal magazines. I read these magazines, as instruction manuals within a larger affective economy that produces immaterial labour. Elizabeth Wissinger proposes that "the concept of affect resolves some of the difficulties of treating forces that may only be observable in the interstices between bodies and technologies, or between bodily forces and conscious knowledge [and that] in the analysis of discourses, meaning systems, the social construction of the body is thought as a centre of action and reaction, a site of energy flows and changes in intensity."[481] As Wissinger views affect as mediating or "taking control" of the preconscious, for her, affect is without logic. I disagree, because in my reading of these magazines through the Bridezilla as figuration that reads race and gender into the production of immaterial labour, I propose that we can see a logic a work that not only abjects the feminine body, but requires the abjection of the raced female body in order to produce the fantasies that the mass-marketed bridal industry is trying to sell us, in order to produce the visual centre-piece that is the bride.

I follow Julia Kristeva's idea of the abject as that which lies between the subject and the object, representing those things rejected or disturbing in common discourse, yet crucial in underpinning the social order.[482] The Bridezilla as a figuration is useful, not only because it represents the aspiring consumer bride, but because as a figure it is always already abject. Formed out of the conjunction of the "Bride" and "Godzilla", this monster enables us to see how femininities emerge at the nexus of the erotic and through contradictory

[480] Shildrick, Margrit. 2001. *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 10
[481] Wissinger, Elizabeth. 2007. Modelling Consumption: Fashion Modelling in Contemporary Society. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9:2. p. 232.
[482] Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection.* New York: Columbia University Press. p. 65.

conceptual connections between women, the biological sciences and technology. Rosi Braidotti describes monsters as "human beings who are born with congenital malformations of their bodily organism, [also representing] the in between, the mixed, the ambivalent."[483] As the objects of both aberration and adoration, the repulsion and attraction we feel towards monsters resonates with the ways that gendered patriarchal binaries construct women as the aberration to the masculine norm. Women then, as the signs of difference, are monstrous as Braidotti reveals "femininity and monstrosity can be seen as isomorphic."[484] The theory of the abject not only applies to the production of femininity, it is analogous to the production of race. This analogous relationship makes sense to us because of the ways that race and gender come to depend on each other through specific histories, which I hope to have already demonstrated.[485] As Kobena Mercer argues, "analogies between race and gender in representation reveal similar ideological patterns of objectification, exclusion and 'othering'."[486] To take this further, race and gender are intimately co-productive and the abjection of the black female body works in the production of the kind of femininity that can accomplish Cinderella-like transformation, even when it is always already just an aspiration. The intimacies between race and gender are monstrous intimacies defined by Christina Sharpe as "a set of known and unknown performances and inhabited horrors, desires and positions produced, reproduced, circulated, and transmitted, that are breathed like air and often not acknowledged as monstrous."[487]

Reading the Bridezilla as a figuration where the feminine and racialised other are represented in the register of the monstrous, I believe I can enter a fertile examination of representations of black brides in the South African media. In this chapter, I begin in considering how the figure of the black female operates within the logics of nature and culture, and how in turn these imaginings work to produce certain discourses concerning black female sexualities. I then focus on the specifics of the body work involved in

[483] Braidotti, Rosi. 1994. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory.* New York: Columbia University Press. p. 75.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Also see White, Frances E. 2010. *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism & Politics of Respectability*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. p. 83.
[486] Mercer, Kobena. 1994. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies. New York, NY and London: Routledge.* p. 191
[487] Sharpe, Christina. 2010. *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 3.

producing a visual and material, or embodied unrealistic self for the wedding. I conclude in considering the ceremonies leading up to the wedding that are intended to position a new bride for life after marriage, principally by coaching her in "proper sex." Being "good at" sex, along with the notion that sexual fulfilment for women comes in the form of a future of reproduction are piled into assemblages of post-feminist, "traditional" and religious discourses with the intention of selling us the position that as sexually "free" subjects, we can enter a marriage of sexual freedom. I pay attention to how the notions of free, loving, romantic and even pleasurable sex emerge out of particular histories concerned with the ways the body should be managed and contained.



23 19th Century Etiquette Manual on Bridal Style as Simplicity



24 La Collezione Dei Conti

Diamantés are Forever

Judith Butler argues that the sexuated body is culturally constructed within regulative discourses in a process by which sex comes to appear as though it is different from the gender process. By implication, it is not that gender is a purely discursive practice, but that bodies are materially produced through gender. The narratives in bridal magazines expose this material and discursive work by repeating images of an idealized femininity and reflecting on the kinds of femininities that lie at the boundaries of good taste and erotic excess. Take the images above, advertising local bridal salon and designer, La Collezione dei Conti. In my review of South African bridal magazines published between 2008 and 2013, I have observed a clear pattern. While editorial content generally includes women of all races and intends to suggest a rainbow of inclusion, the advertisements for wedding gowns generally exclusively feature white women. With the exception of Bride & Co,[488] La Collezione dei Conti is the only other salon that regularly prints advertisements that feature black men and women, as well as inter-racial couples. The wedding dresses featured can be persuasively described as bordering on the fringes of consumptive and erotic excess. These dresses are over-embellished, shiny, bling and defying all logics of stylish simplicity. I would have to say that they look quite cheap. It is interesting that it is this salon that should choose to repeatedly feature black women in their advertisements. All bridal salons intend to market their products to an inclusive audience, and yet a centring of the white female body predominates the visual representation of the ideal, read universal bride.

Bridal magazines function as advertising spaces with mini-editorials alerting their consumers of what specific brands of clothing to wear in order to display the appropriate cultural capital. These magazines are dominated with images of wedding dresses generally in three main ways; first through advertising space purchased directly by bridal salons and designers to showcase their collections; second, in specific sections dedicated to sharing the recent trends in dress design; and finally, in fashion editorials which are generally themed around some aspect of the fantasy of the big day. *La Collezione dei Conti* describes its brand as follows:

[488] And salons that specialize in "traditional" wedding dresses

> La Collezione Dei Conti is where you will find the wedding dress of your dream. Fashion has always been a tradition for the Conti family, starting with Maria who began working with the famous designer Shubert, in Via Veneto, Rome, at the age of 14. She is now 86 and still puts her last touch before each garments is handed over to the bride ... All the garments are produced in Italy with selected Italian fabrics ... Let us now dedicate some time to our groom. Fashion has gone a long way for our man, from clothes to health and beauty. It is time that we start understanding that fashion in Europe is very concentrated on men because they are the ones that always need to be encouraged to be part of the stronger sex. Let him choose the suit that makes him feel special for his bride on this special day and also be the centre of attraction, stop with those boring groom suits ... Our bride and groom will walk down the aisle in a regal appearance of a prince and princess.[489]

What is described as fashion-forward, literally selling the allure of European design, is quite frankly excessive and incidentally, not simple. The localised renditions of European-style glamour and sexual difference are brought to Sandton for the bride and groom who love to live at the centre of attention and rehearse, "strong" hyper-masculinities and hyper-femininities. The excess in sex and consumption will make you feel special.

Power is represented, constituted, articulated, and contested through dress, so fashion is indeed a political language[490] that connects the public and the private, or the individual with the social.[491] The idealization of the body of white femininity is itself marked through the bodies of models which through "perfected images have become our dominant reality and have set standards for us all- standards that are increasingly *un*real in their demands on us."[492] The body acts as both the site and the language through which positioning is negotiated. The idealized body of white femininity is marked by particular regimes that circulate to make it the ideal, but can be read to understand the social and historical work of race, sex and sexuality, and class. The bodies of black women as brides in bridal magazines are frequently marked with excess in size, sex and bling and the sort of transformations expected of these bodies in becoming bride are set against the standards of beauty marked by white femininity. The blingy brides of La Collezione dei Conti illustrate the ways the gaze operates on the black female body and mark it as uncanny. As a raced, gendered and sexualised bodies, out of control and transitional, these bodies are marked

[489] http://www.lcdeiconti.co.za/landing_page.htm accessed 28 May 2013.
[490] Allman, Jean. 2004. Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress. in Allman, Jean. (Ed). *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress.* Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press.
[491] Allman 2004
[492] Bordo, Susan. 2003. Never Just Pictures. In Jones, Amelia (Ed). *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*. New York, NY and London: Psychology Press. p. 456

as female-monster-bodies, or Bridezillas. The excesses implied in body and dress suggest the malformation of sexual difference, compulsory heterosexuality and even a desire for heteronormativity. The monstrosity of these figures are productive in revealing the fictions of femininities and compulsory heterosexuality. They also serve as demonstration of how heterosexual practice, even in the work of marriage can queer the logics they depend upon. The white woman with black husband and children is lodged into the narratives of erotic excess through the transgression of interracial intimacy and reproduction, reflecting the flimsiness of this ideal white femininity. Whiteness itself emerges as an embodied and discursive aspirational practice which like femininity, is one framed by continued failure.

By way of example, I would like to discuss an episode of the Channel 4 (airs on BBC Lifestyle in South Africa) reality television show *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings.* The show works through the bridal reality television show repertoire of following brides leading up to their big day, but combines this aspiration with a documentary style that through an ethnographic gaze invites us to peer into the lives of a more primitive tribe. In the first episode of season two, titled "Diamantés are Forever", we are invited to see the work of beauty that women and girls do in order to achieve a "traveller" vision of ideal femininity. The narrative invites us to see the extremity of their practices, suggesting to the viewer that dominant society's practices of femininity are simpler, in fact more "natural" than the extreme measures of the tribes we are to observe. The process described to us places great emphasis on the becoming girl-bride-woman, as it is girls we gaze upon. These girls from another tribe are potential victims of a patriarchal culture, as the narrator tells us explicitly of the lack of equality for women in traveller communities. The girls we gaze at are explicit in their aspirations for femininity from a young age, marked through a set of ritualized rites of passage that include christenings and first communions that lead up to the massive performance of a white wedding. In this particular episode we view a group of very young girls undergoing extraordinary feminine transformations to literally look like little over-sexualised brides and enter the church to receive the "body of Christ" for the first time. This example certainly illustrates Bambacas' argument that femininity is for girls: "in using the term 'girls' [she refers] to how the bride is constructed in popular and public

discourses, for regardless of their age or social positions, 'girls' as a cultural group are central to the construction of the wedding."[493]

In "Diamantés are Forever," the "communion girls" are cousins; twelve year olds Bridget and Rosemary, nine year old Margaret and eight year old Nan Girl who are in a competition to be the most attractive on the big day. Nan Girl elaborates, "It's important to look good for your Holy Communion, it's important to look good for God, God wants to see you looking good," and the girls tell us that beauty is pain. We follow the eight year old as she enters her beauty regime which includes a visit to the tanning salon. Nan Girl continues:

> So I can't have ugly nails, ugly make-up, a spray tan with patches or an ugly dress. God wants to see you looking good.
>
> I'm gonna be the best. I'm gonna look like a princess and they will be the ugly sisters. My mum told the dressmaker to make sure I look the best.[494]

Later in the episode she tells us that while she's heard that you can get cancer from the tanning bed, she does not know any traveller girls who have. For travellers, "being brown is just as important as being bling." 'Girls' are central to the construction of the wedding ritual according to Catherine Driscoll, as the figure of the bride is "predominantly constructed as immature and/or incomplete and the bride functions as a mode of feminine development."[495] In this sense, the transpositions of the Bridezilla are necessarily about an immature, out of control person coming into control of themselves, albeit briefly for this feminine performance. The girls in BFGWs remind us that the fairy tale genre is indeed intended for little girls who are told that this transformation is an aspiration for the future. The girl who succeeds at the climax of the fairy tale is beautiful. The weddings of the 'girls' depicted on this television show literally perform the fantasy, to the extent that the fairy tale transformation into the bride functions as caricature indexed by overly elaborate dress and decoration and frequent pumpkin-shaped carriages drawn by horses. As viewers, we are invited to recognize the excessive caricature of their fairy tale depictions as signalling their failure at idealized white femininity. In Nan Girl's own words, these girls

[493] Bambacas 2002
[494] Diamanté's are Forever. 2011. *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* Season 2 Episode 1
[495] Driscoll, Catherine. 1998. Becoming Bride. *UTS Review: Cultural Studies and New Writing* 4:2 p. 139

achieve their transformation to bride through their excessive consumption and hyper-femininity, or through brownness and bling. The producers are keen to (re)construct the ultimate slogan of the diamond invention "diamonds are forever", to "diamantés are forever" to signal the practices of these women as cheap imitation.

The show intends for us to observe their transformation, but at a distance as these young girls are depicted as extreme. The images of their beautification are projected with images of girls cleaning for example. At one stage in the episode we see a toddler using real detergent to clean her doll house as metaphor for the life of domestic servitude that faces these women. Antoinette Burton uses Wendy Brown's concept of "historical injuries", to argue that the "injured identities" of colonial others were central to the work of Victorian feminists in how they marked out their role in the Empire. The gaze implied in this show suggests the same, as non-traveller women act as documentary researchers on the lives of these 'othered' women. Defining the term 'injured identity', Brown intends to refer to the ways certain groups have made claims for inclusion in the liberal state through the claim of historical injuries. As such, those women who experience a "time lag" in accessing the same rights within the liberal framework, become the sites upon which liberal white feminism attaches its cause for an equal future for all.[496] The non-traveller dressmaker Thelma, who features on every episode acts as our intercoluter into this backward time as she explains traveller customs to an audience of women who unlike the travellers she works with, have achieved some modicum of "freedom" from the extreme labours of femininity. Thelma has been so successful at this job that in 2013 a spinoff show was launched called *Thelma's Gypsy Girls,* where she would offer a number of traveller women the opportunity to learn a trade as apprentices in her studio. The melodrama is fulfilled because despite her actions and intentions to show these women a better life (who we are told generally leave school at the age of 8 and become dependants on their fathers then husbands), Thelma fails over and over again to draw these women into the

[496] There is a substantive literature from Black, Third World, Southern, African, critical race, and queer feminists that confronts white liberal feminism. See Brown, Wendy. 2002. Suffering the Paradoxes of Rights. In Brown, Wendy & Halley, Janet (Eds). *Left Legalism/Left Critique.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Also see, Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge; Lorde, Audre. 1996. *Sister Outsider*. Berkley, CA: The Crossing Press; hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I A Woman*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press; Moraga, Cherríe & Anzaldúa, Gloria. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Colour*. New York, NY: Kitchen Table Press.

liberal sanctions of an equal state and out of a time and place the does not belong within the logics of modern Britain. Thelma and the narrators, who are almost always women, use their positions as women to connect to the "suffering bodies" of the not quite/not white girls to suggest to the viewer that the sexual difference that they experience is not only in better taste than the traveller women they study, but that by implication their freedom is better too. These "suffering bodies", are placed in a "distinct class/colonial position [...] in relation to the 'saving body': 'saving bodies' are middle class; and white; the 'suffering bodies' working class or black and colonial."[497]

Doezema's application of Burton and Brown's notion of injury is useful in reading the morality of white liberal feminisms. Doezema is keen to observe how the notion of slavery gets interpolated as metaphor to describe prostitution through the notion of "white slavery", which she persuasively argues, leads to a feminist campaign concerned with purity.[498] Slavery as metaphor for prostitution is also connected to a rendering of marriage as slavery, connecting the two notions in an intimate relation to how we understand the operations of sex and gender. For instance, Joel Quirk observes that anti-slavery campaigners of the 19th and 20th centuries spent considerable time on the subject of African marriage as a form of slavery. Jeff Guy's analysis of what he calls "pre-capitalist" African societies does the same, as he suggests that the relations of gender power and labour enacted forms of servitude and enslavement, albeit more complex than "slavery." Colonial others marked as beasts of burden are locked at these two extremes, wife/prostitute, while the figure of the simple bride sits at the site of freedom drawing her sisters into the folds of liberal equality.

I would like to read the representations of the girl-come-brides in BFGWs as hybrid, or miscegenated figures, in the manner proposed by Jennifer DeVere Brody. DeVere Brody argues that English culture is preoccupied with the "hybrid", as "the very concept of hybridity supposes pure forms that can be mixed, and the reproduction of purity requires the erasure of hybridity."[499] For DeVere Brody, this preoccupation with "purity" is one

[497] Doezema, Jo. 2001. Ouch! Western Feminists' 'Wounded Attachment' to the Third World Prostitute'. *Feminist Review* 67:1. p 22
[498] Doezema 2001, p. 23
[499] De Vere Brody, Jennifer. 1998. *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity and Victorian Culture.* Durham NC: Duke University Press, p.1.

framed by logics of morality, "race" and "gender", and women sit at the centre of representations of the national (re)production of such purity as the "supposed instability, plasticity, and variableness of the feminine "woman" generates contradictory narratives of her value and power, as well as prescriptive tracts detailing strategies for her control."[500] The sanitized version of an English *white* identity then intends to curtail or control the white feminine. The representational tactics applied to traveller women and their weddings functions in such a manner, as their "not white/not quite" performance of femininity places them at an ethnographic distance from the ideal. DeVere Brody's analysis is useful here, as she intends to bridge the intellectual work of the broad fields of Victorian Studies and Critical Race or African Studies, to trace long genealogical connections bound to the production of race and the myths of racial purity. Big, brash and uncontained, the caricature weddings of traveller women do not just mark them as not white, but mark the erotic language of excess through ethnographic distance as black.

In "Diamantés are Forever", 21-year old Dolores' extravagant wedding was featured. As a "wealthier" traveller, Irish Dolores spends most of her year in the warmer parts of southern Europe. She travels back to Ireland at the height of the wedding season for her elaborate wedding. Thelma has had to prepare a number of costumes for this occasion, which include three "tropical" themed green and blue monstrosities, shaped like palm trees which she and her two sisters wore on the party before the big day. The palm-tree dresses have been warmly adopted by bloggers world-wide and mock versions of the dress can be purchased online for bachelorette parties. Dolores is not in on the joke, as she thought her choice reflected her unique personal style. Flowers and the usual things people attach to their dresses were far too ordinary in her estimation. Many of Thelma's previous clients have also included fairy lights and fireworks to really make a dramatic impact but this was also far too ordinary. For her fairy tale she opted instead for a cat. Not any cat, it was a cat figure that looked suspiciously like the logo for American fashion brand Baby Phat.

[500] De Vere Brody 1998, p. 4-5



25 Little Brides Receive the Body of Christ



26 Dolores in Baby Phatt

The bedazzled "Baby Phatt" dress with imitation logo was mirrored in the décor, as the wedding cake also featured multiple cat cakes, many of which were not actually cakes, but were polystyrene moulds covered in icing. The baker tells the viewers that this was for two reasons, the first being that the elaborate designs they receive from traveller clients would fail to support themselves if they were made of actual cake. The second is that these cakes would actually just be far too expensive if they were not at least partly fake in the middle. DeVere Brody's analysis is useful as she centres the performative nature of whiteness, often seen as unmarked and unchallenged as a site of power. By locating black women at the nexus of race and gender, she suggests that rather than seeing identities as piled upon one another in a sequence, the hybrid body enables us to see how bodies are raced, sexuated and classed etc…, synchronically. Further, that the categories contained within the notion of the "properly human", the "tame and the wild", are mutually constituted: Race, gender, blackness, femininity, the human and the animal – the shifting position of these figures, which are unevenly placed, complicates and even violates categories that are supposed to be whole, pure and inviolate."[501] The failure implied in the attempts at femininity, wedding work and whiteness reflects political possibilities. Dolores, dressed in an imitation dress of an African American "urban" brand, Baby Phat reflects these possibilities. For DeVere Brody suggests that the hybrid figures of failed white racial purity reflect the desperate aspiration to constitute pure whiteness in the first instance. Judith Halberstam suggests that this failure for belonging is also one of anticolonial struggle.

I connect the brash weddings of the traveller girls to the overly diamantéd dresses of La Collezione dei Conti, to connect to a broader discourse of failure in South Africa. The big bling weddings of the new-moneyed elite, along with the less expense aspirations of the working poor are framed in a similar gaze. In my discussion with wedding producers, the not/quite attempts at producing fairy tale perfection are read as excessive in poor taste and sex. The scene at any Department of Home Affairs is visual testament. Molemo and Ben registered their marriage in the Soweto department and Celo and I registered ours in Vereeniging. We both experienced surprise upon arrival as couples arrived in rented white dresses and the office had a very dirty, shiny elaborate dress available in the case you arrived without one. Champagne flutes filled with jelly and plastic rings were made

[501] DeVere Brody 1998, p. 19

available to couples for photographs to be taken by the resident photographer who would frame the image to depict a white wedding. I am in two minds about this scene. On the one hand, it reflects the deep connections that the civil law has with the logics of Patriarchal Law. Despite the invitation to see the civil law as horizontal and framed on the notion of a citizenship that is shared by non-raced, non-gendered citizens, in the actual performance those positions matter in order for it to be acted out right. On the other hand, I read the image-making as connected to an aspiration to belong within the logics of the properly human, so in rehearsing the practices of the white wedding in a civil office, the broader demands of citizenship are articulated. The big, brash and glamorous failures, along with the cheap imitation failures of ordinary weddings not only reflect the flimsiness of the logics of being properly human, the as 'unbecoming' weddings of ordinary folks refuse legibility. Halberstam reads this sort of failure through the notion of the "weapons of the weak," which refuse to "acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline as a form of critique."[502] The Bridezilla as failure suggests an oppositional politics that certainly does this work.

[502] Halberstam, Judith. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 88.





27 African Queen



28 Big City Lights

The Fat Black Woman and the Mind's Eye

What is romantic love?

How does it feel to be in love?

When a man loves a girl, he feels such an overwhelming ***individual*** preference for her that though she were a beggar-maid he would scorn the offer to exchange her for an heiress, a princess, or the goddess of beauty herself. To him she seems to have a monopoly of all the feminine charms, and she therefore monopolizes his thoughts and feelings to the exclusion of all other interests, and he longs not only for her reciprocal affection but for a monopoly of it. "Does she love me?" he asks himself a hundred times a day. "Sometimes she seems to treat me with cold indifference is that merely the instinctive assertion of feminine ***coyness***, or does she prefer another man?" The pangs, the agony of ***jealousy*** overcome him at this thought. He hopes one moment, despairs the next, till his ***moods*** become so ***mixed*** that he hardly knows whether he is happy or miserable. He, who is usually so bold and self-confident, is humbled; feels utterly unworthy of her. In his fancy she soars so far above all other women that calling her an angel seems not a ***hyperbole***, but a compliment to the angel. Toward such a superior being the only proper attitude is ***adoration***. She is spotless as an angel, and his feelings toward her are as ***pure***, as free from coarse cravings, as if she were a goddess. How royally ***proud*** a man must feel at the thought of being preferred above all mortals by this divine being! In ***personal beauty*** had she ever a peer? Since Venus left this planet, has such grace been seen? In face of her, the strongest of all impulses selfishness is annihilated. The lover is no longer "number one" to himself; his own pleasures and comforts are ignored in the eager desire to please her, to show her ***gallant*** attentions. To save her from disaster or grief he is ready to ***sacrifice*** his life. His cordial ***sympathy*** makes him share all her joys and sorrows, and his ***affection*** for her, though he may have known her only a few days nay, a few minutes is as strong and devoted as that of a mother for the child that is her own flesh and blood.

[...]

A Story of African Love

An amusing incident related by Ernst von Weber (II., 215-6) indicates how easily utilitarian considerations override such skin-deep preference as may exist among Africans. He knew a girl named Yanniki who refused to marry a young Kaffir suitor though she confessed that she liked him. "I cannot take him," she said, "as he can offer only ten cows for me and my father wants fifteen." Weber observed, that it was not kind of her father to let a few cows stand in the way of her happiness; but the African damsel did not fall in with his sentimental view of the case. Business and vanity were to her much more important matters than individual preference for a particular lover, and she exclaimed, excitedly:

"What! You expect my father to give me away for ten cows? That would be a fine sort of a bargain! Am I not worth more than Cilli, for whom the Tambuki chief paid twelve cows last week? I am pretty, I can cook, sew, crochet, speak English, and with all these accomplishments you want my father to dispose of me for ten miserable cows? Oh, sir, how little you esteem me! No, no, my father is quite right in refusing to yield in this matter; indeed, in my opinion he might boldly ask thirty cows for me, for I am worth that much."

[...]

Sex in Body and Mind

> As civilization progresses, the sexes become more and more differentiated, thus affording individual preference an infinitely greater scope. The stamp of sex is no longer confined to the pelvis and the chest, but is impressed on every part of the body. The women's feet become smaller and more daintily shaped than the men's, the limbs more rounded and tapering and less muscular, the waist narrower, the neck longer, the skin smoother, softer, and less hairy, the hands more comely, with more slender fingers, the skeleton more delicate, the stature lower, the steps shorter, the gait more graceful, the features more delicately cut, the eyes more beautiful, the hair more luxuriant and lustrous, the cheeks rounder and more susceptible to blushes, the lips more daintily curved, the smile sweeter.
>
> But the mind has sex as well as the body. It is still in process of evolution, and too many individuals still approximate the type of the virago or the effeminate man; but the time will come for all, as it has already come for many, when a masculine trait in a woman's character will make as disagreeable an impression as a blacksmith's sinewy arm on the body of a society belle would make in a ball-room. To call a woman pretty and sweet is to compliment her; to call a man pretty and sweet would be to mock or insult him.

[...]

Personal Beauty versus Personal Decoration

Must we then, in view of the vast number of opposing facts advanced so far in this long chapter, assume that savages and barbarians have no aesthetic sense at all, not even a germ of it? Not necessarily. I believe that the germ of a sense of visible beauty ***may*** exist even among savages as well as the germ of a musical sense; but that it is little more than a childish pleasure in bright and lustrous shells and other objects of various colours, especially red and yellow, everything beyond that being usually found to belong to the region of utility (language of signs, desire to attract attention, etc.) and not to aesthetics that is, ***the love of beauty for its own sake***. Such a germ of aesthetic pleasure we find in our infants ***years before they have the faintest conception of what is meant by personal beauty***; and this brings me to the pith of my argument. Had the facts warranted it, I might have freely conceded that savages decorate themselves for the sake of gaining an advantage in courtship without thereby in the least yielding the main thesis of this chapter, which is that the admiration of ***personal*** beauty is not one of the motives which induce a savage to marry a particular girl or man; for most of the "decorations" described in the preceding pages are not elements of personal beauty at all, but are either external appendages to that beauty, or mutilations of it. I have shown by a superabundance of facts that these "decorations" do not serve the purpose of exciting the amorous passion and preference of the opposite sex, except non-aesthetically and indirectly, in some cases, through their standing as marks of rank, wealth, distinction in war, etc. I shall now proceed to show, much more briefly, that still less does personal beauty proper serve among the lower races as a stimulant of sexual passion. This we should expect naturally, since in the race as in the child the pleasure in bright baubles must long precede the pleasure in beautiful faces or figures. Everyone who has been among Indians or other savages knows that nature produces among them fine figures and sometimes even pretty faces; but these are not appreciated. Galton told Darwin that he saw in one South African tribe two slim, slight, and pretty girls, but they were not attractive to the natives. [...] Ugliness, whether natural or inflicted by fashion, does not among these races act as a bar to marriage.

> **[...] Far from admiring such beauty as nature may have given them, the lower races exercise an almost diabolical ingenuity in obliterating or mutilating it.**[503]

Published in 1899, *Primitive Love and Other Stories* relays a range of texts from the burgeoning fields of human science, clearly invested in scientific racism to make seamless claims around what it means to be properly human, and what the grounds of sexual and racial difference might be. It is interesting that in Finck's assessment, it is the process of an increasing sexual difference that marks the progression of a civilisation, fulfilled in the enactment of romantic love. Romantic love, while a quality of the highest forms of human civilisation is not universal so there are apriori conditions to explain the functions of desire, sex and social reproduction in other societies that have no appreciation at least, for beauty. E. Frances White reads a range of similar texts to reveal the ways that Africa was signified in the "scientific mind" and the "popular imagination" in the processes of inventing race and gender as logics of difference.[504] For White, the analogies between race and gender make sense to us because of the ways they were linked in the 19th century mind. In citing science along with the imagination, White intends to consider the ways that biological explanations come to describe social relations and their consequences with regards to power so that the human sciences that we inherit not only depend upon biological models to explain unknown social phenomena, but seek causal relations between them; that is, that race and gender are not only analogous constructions, but share a causal relation as well.[505]

When Freud states later in the 20th century that "the sexual life of adult women is the 'dark continent', for psychology,"[506] he did not intend to refer to black women at all, yet for White, understood well that the analogy worked in the popular imagination in invoking the representation of the exotic, erotic, excessive and frightening. Finck's treatise to romantic love extends the gesture, as he explains heterosexual love and sexual difference through his understanding of race. He was not the first, and makes frequent reference to Charles Darwin for instance to use the position of women as explanation of the causes of

[503] Excerpts from Finck 1899, emphasis original
[504] White 2010, p. 81
[505] White 2010, p. 84-5
[506] Freud 1973, p. 34-5

racial inferiority. White continues to argue that debates on race and gender henceforth depended upon each other, leading Darwin to conclude "that sexual inequality was more pronounced among civilised people than among savages,"[507] a point he makes quite similarly to Finck by using beauty as a marker to make his point. The scientific mind required or marked the bodies of inappropriated others through figures of the excessive, or nature and the monstrous; as part of the project of constituting the ideal of human perfection, or at least the aspiration for it. White connects the scientific mind with the popular imagination, an important point; for the "mind's eye" reveals a concern with visions of both the constitutive insides and outsides of bodies.

The work of the achievement of ideal femininity is certainly more complicated for African-descended and located people.[508] Reading bridal magazines intended to a black female spectatorship invites certain questions with regards to the ideal of femininity. For the most part across all bridal magazines, there is a presentation of a feminine ideal for the bride and this ideal is constituted in relation to whiteness. Yet there are strong counter discourses and contestations, connected to black beauty, black aesthetics and black stylization. The work of becoming, as I suggest, is always already the work of intervening on the body as machine and animal to make it as close to the ideal, so it is interesting that the idealizations of black beauty that run through these magazines and are conversant with an idealization of white beauty and femininity reflect a transnational affective set of notions about "blackness", or "African-ness" that may in some instances affirm "black beauty" and in other instances, reinforce the non-ideal status of blackness. Similar questions lead Nthabiseng Motsemme:

> I was once again struck by young Africans' desire for self-authoring via the medium of dress. There are, of course, a number of sites to observe these emerging body practices such as changing hair expressions, gestures and ways of walking and moving around the city. However, this briefing will focus on meanings of adornment and the body. It will analyse how practices surrounding dress and fabric become imbued with layered meanings, weaving the aesthetic and ethical into our daily experiences of dressing. It will suggest that certain notions of beauty, desirability and femininity are expressed

[507] White 2010, p. 94
[508] Gqola, Pumla Dineo. 'Crafting Epicentres of Agency': Sarah Baartman and African Feminist Literary Imaginings. *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophie* XX.

through changes in dress at particular historical moments, and in turn transform the very bodies that inhabit these garments.[509]

For Mostemme, these new modes of dress "introduce new notions of 'the beautiful' [...yet] while these sartorial practices seek to liberate black female bodies from their histories of oppression to a stylised freedom, they also create new separations and distinctions between Black women."[510] I would agree with her arguments about an "afro-femme" aesthetic that is a contestation, yet I also wonder about the ways these bodies in dress continue to be marked within the same logics, even when included within the discourses of the stylized body-beautiful. Discussing the wedding dress with Vera and Thembi, I encountered reflections that reflect such contestation:

> D: so for you, why did you have a white wedding? Was the lobola not a sufficient? What purpose did it serve?
>
> V: At first, I did not want a white wedding. I just thought that after the lobola we could just have the lunch to celebrate. But then as time went by I realized that me being Christian; I was cutting God out of the whole process, because the reception and celebration happens after you have been to church and the pastor has blessed you. And then I thought that maybe we just need to have that ceremony and then they could witness this marriage and we could unite before God and say our vows. So that's how we ended up doing a white wedding. We never meant to do a white wedding.
>
> D: So what aspects of white wedding traditions did you do, and what did you not do?
>
> V: Ok. I wore the white dress.
>
> D: What did a white dress mean to you?
>
> V: They say purity. Yeah, like I was chatting to this other lady who was saying that you must wear everything white, even the shoes. And I was like huh? I was like no, no. my veil had a green lining and I was wearing gold shoes. I guess the white dress symbolizes purity so I wore that.[511]

> D: and why not the white dress?
>
> T: I never wanted to wear a white dress. The reason was, 1) wearing a white dress would have set a tone which I didn't want. So even if I had worn a traditional dress it would not have been in white. Because the symbolism of white, I don't know – is it pure? I don't know, why is white the colour of wedding dresses? Like if I thought of the most special dresses I could wear, for

[509] Motsemme 2003, p.12
[510] Motsemme 2003, p. 12
[511] Interview with Vera and Shepherd 2013

myself if I was going to a party, I would never wear a white dress. It has got a lot of connotations to it! Give me the red slutty dress! So because we were not having anything traditional, it seemed redundant to not have a traditional theme. Everything else was breaking away from that. Red was my favourite colour so I wore a red dress.

D: So if you don't want, you didn't want to pursue anything traditional, why then have the public declaration? Why have the food? Why have the photographs?

T: […] Also sometimes in modern society, there is nothing wrong with being traditional. But for me I didn't want to do it just to tick the things. We are going to have a white dress, tick. We are going to do this, tick. Like, does it have meaning and validity for me? And is it the sort of thing that if I was to say on that day was I an actress, was I me? So having people, you know we always have people at home. We invite people. I don't think you could say that we are a private couple that does things on their own. We celebrate everything to death. Zviko is always taking pictures of everything. So I guess it is not to say whether it was traditional or not. It was authentic. If my authentic self was to wear a white dress, and oh I want everything to be big and fabulous and to have a shrimp cocktail fountain then maybe, but that is not me though.

D: Did you feel any pressure yourself to become the bride? Any pressure to be beautiful?

T: There is a lot of pressure. I was going to gym, I wanted to lose weight. So I did feel pressured. Like I had a pimple two weeks before and I was like oh my goodness the pictures are going to be awful. So yes, there is pressure to look beautiful. But, I wanted to look like my best self! **Actually, not my best self, my unrealistic self**! I wanted to lose ten kilos! To have like amazing skin! But how I looked on the day you know, when I look back? I think I look nice. I look lovely. Do you think I could look that way again? Yes I could. I actually didn't put a lot of effort – people go for pedicures and manicures and stuff before. I went to the same place where I did my hair because I didn't have time. I had these acrylic nails that I don't like. My hair was normal. My dress was not so expensive. So I will probably look more fabulous at a later stage in my life. It was not like the peak of my fabulousity. And ironically, I weigh less than I did then. I was like "I need to be skinny, I need to be skinny I need to be skinny!"

You know some people are like, you have never looked as lovely as you did on your wedding day.

D: Some people don't think that I am myself!

T: I think there is sometimes when you look at people's pictures and you are like who the hell is that person?[512]

[512] Interview with Thembi Chandiwana Mudimu 2013

Bridal magazines that direct their attention to black female audiences generally produce a set of genres of an afro-femme aesthetic. Bridal magazines projected to a "more general" audience also work certain representational tropes of black beauty. The images I show above speak to these genres, or tropes. It is an aesthetic of femininity that requires a temporal projection to, in the one instance it is "traditional" marriage and the space and time is located in "the bush"; in the next instance it is a cityscape or black woman as trope of the urban landscape.

In "Big City Lights," the trope is taken to an extreme, as red lights frame the image making the suggestion of black woman as whore[513] quite visibly apparent. The connotative implications of this, and the aforementioned representational tropes regarding black women appear in a high frequency, and share the quality of representing various signs of excess; of the body, of decoration, of fat, of eating, of consumption, of taking up space. This excess is built around notions of being "natural", or more close to nature that speaks to the arguments posed by White, for instance about how the scientific and popular imagination frames the sexed and raced body in the scene of excess to produce it's ideal of the proper.[514] And yet, it is through certain awarenesses of these discourses that images like this get produced as a black feminine, or afro-feminine aesthetic. The excessive body of black femininity informs the practices of an afro-femme aesthetic.

The management of "insides" and "outsides" is central to the work of the proper enactment of femininity. In my discussions, there were frequent slips related to questions about being "natural", doing style, performing romance and questions about the body. The trans-historical construction of "the body" in relation to blackness was a present awareness, so that the invocation of excessive body as fat, or evidence of the virgin/whore dichotomy, simply slipped out of any discussion. In particular, the trans-historical corporeality of the "fat black woman", was present in conversations moe explicitly about sex. Which were also evidently always not always about sex. Scholars working on

[513] See Russet, Cynthia. 1989. *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

[514] White 2010; also see Schiebinger, Londa. 1993. *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press; Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 1995. Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of 'Hottentot' women in Europe: 1815-1817. In Terry, J. & Urla, J. (Eds.) *Deviant Bodies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, Gilman, Sander. 1985. Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature. *Critical Inquiry* 12

weddings have noted that part of an "empowered" bridal identity is a post/feminist discourse of sexual liberation. Hen parties are then moments to not only celebrate the sexual contract one is about to enter, but also to perform an allowed-for expertise at doing sex. Yet, it was clear that this was not as neat as those argument might suggest. Proper sex was both a doing, and a process of managing the body and its "naturalness".

When Thembi got married, her friends split into at least two disparate groups. We came into her life at different moments, shared different interests and perhaps even different politics. Some of us had known and shared a strong dislike for the other for over a decade. The scene was set for friction. No more was this evident than on the occasion of her bachelorette party. Following numerous consultations with each other over email, we finally agreed on a party bus and a night out. A week later one of the women suggested that this might not work and instead offered her sister's very large house in Sandton as a venue for a private house party. Our equal contributions would be used to buy food and drink and possibly the provision of other services, such as games. The budget for these games and a "sexy" costume for the bride was quite small. Through our misunderstandings, we agreed to hire a "Zambian"; a colloquial term for a woman who in this case was actually a Zambian national, who would run a class on "proper sex" in marriage for two hours. For almost all of us, we had grown up attending parties with our mothers. These were "kitchen teas" and baby showers were women gathered and after sufficient drink a naughty sex related conversation would ensue led by a woman hired as expert. In my recent past at my cousin Rati's baby shower, I was called in to the room to learn from one such expert. She said that beauty alone was not enough for even "Shatricia"[515] could steal your man with the skills she was going to teach me. Tea itself is metaphor, as Molemo learned leading up to her wedding, as her mother in law would frequently mention to her that she should remember to "make tea" for her husband often.

So I was set the task of finding a "Zambian", which I did. I also spent a few hours at Oriental Plaza on the afternoon of the big night seeking cheap arm-length gloves and other sexy clothes to dress the bride-to-be on her special night. As friends we awkwardly gathered and proceedings followed in the same manner as the "Zambian" arrived quite

[515] The verb "kushata", means to be ugly in Shona

early and demanded that the still sober crowd gather in a circle as she placed our friend at the centre and proceeded to demonstrate a technique that she called the "lazy man". The lazy man is something I am inclined to believe that many of us would like to soon forget. And yet, in our teacher's estimation it was a feminist lesson of sorts. You see, sex was something she understood as an act we were obliged to do with our husbands and male pleasure in sex was not just expected, it was natural. For women, pleasure should be achieved however it is necessary that we are coy about this pleasure. Your husband should not be expected to give you pleasure, to be a husband is to be a "lazy man." So we took turns, Thembi first and most often, at learning how to straddle the teacher-as-metaphorical lazy man on the ground and through subtle movements in the hips and upper body, not only leading our man to climax, but with subtlety and demureness also managing to achieve completion ourselves. This is the "lazy man."

Over a year later I found myself front and centre at another such occasion. When Mutsa got married, she asked me to arrange a separate bachelor party for her cousins and friends while my mother and aunts arranged a "kitchen tea" that would be a more "traditional" affair. I literally walked off of the plane from Johannesburg to my aunt's townhouse in the city centre of Harare to a family braai of at least three generations of women on my mother's side. It was like the parties that I grew up attending as the children played on their own generally unaware of the other activities at hand. The friends and cousins all generally under the age of thirty-five were called upstairs to a bedroom where we would receive "life lessons." On this occasion, festivities were opened with a prayer. The first half of the speech was about the good management of the body and from the extensive time I have spent since, examining the archives of past social and mental hygiene departments, this was a speech any 19th century lecturer in the field would have been proud to record and repeat, laced with the doctrines of social uplift. Again there was a prayer betwixt a tale on the value of shaving the hair in the armpits and vagina, cleanliness is next to godliness after all. It was all sex talk, as we were reminded of previously taught lessons on the proper constitution and regulation of a sexuated body. And again this was brought to conclusion with a tale similar to the lazy man, for "proper sex" was primarily intended for the production of male pleasure. Similar to the case when Molemo was reminded to "make

tea the pleasure which we would in turn receive would come in the form of a full-belly-with-child.

One would hope that the occasion of the night out with friends would be less frigid. Taking a cue from the multiple evenings I enjoyed leading up to my wedding I planned an evening in the VIP section of a popular night club. In a private room, we could have a drink and a laugh with some generic bachelorette party games one can find online. Typical games involve testing the bride on her knowledge of her groom, and testing the various friends and family on their knowledge of the bride; sort of a competitive sport in intimate knowledges. Two games I chose proved controversial. "Never have I ever", a drinking game and party classic which involves taking turns stating something that one has never done and all those who have done it drink and perhaps share the tale. We followed this game with another that involved pre-set questions to which each guest wrote down their answer and placed it in a hat. Once collected, the group would decide who wrote which answers. Our group was soon established as marked with two distinctions, the "virgins" and the "whores", as through various linguistic codes such as jokes, sarcasm and repetition it was clear that we all understood that proper women were either virgins, or at least held the decorum to act as such despite the actual state of things; an active silencing of sorts.

Mattie Udora Richardson suggests a method for thinking through black sexuality beyond the discourse or language of silence, arguing in fact that "Black women [are] not completely silent about their sexual lives, but that they confin[e] all inferences to sexual intimacy within the boundaries of marriage."[516] Richardson applies Darlene Clark Hine's notion of dissemblance as it "effectively describes how tightly regulated discussion concerning their personal lives emerged as Black women's available avenue for political and personal protection against the overwhelming discourse of sexual immorality. Hine argues that these ellipses manifest themselves as a "culture of dissemblance" wherein Black women protect themselves by creating the "appearance of openness and disclosure but actually [shield] the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors."[517] Dissemblance is an effective way to understand how Black women obscure the details of

[516] Richardson 2003, p. 65
[517] Ibid.

their sexual lives from the historical record as was the case in the performances of femininity that I have witnessed at a number of bachelorette parties. It is "good" to be "good at" sex, but to reserve those abilities for the purposes of being a good woman in marriage.

"Good women" in Patricia McFadden's assessment do not discuss sexuality in public.[518] In her argument, McFadden is interested in a reassertion of feminist agency that separates sexuality from reproduction and emphasizes choice and pleasure for women. Charmaine Pereira's response to McFadden confronts the notion that it is a silence that confines "proper sex" for African women.[519] Instead, it might be more productive to understand where the silences come from, how they operate and what "noises are filling those silences." Pereira also questions the generalisation that African women are deeply sexually repressed. Even or especially in the confines of marriage, African women may be officially entitled to sexual pleasure perhaps even choice in Pereira's assessment. This position shares an interest in understanding how silence actually operates with Richardson's interpolation of Hine. Where she goes further is in questioning the liberatory possibilities of sexual power.

For McFadden, "pleasure" and "choice" are rarely acknowledged as the most important aspects of female sexuality and argues that for African women, sexual pleasure actually elicits alarm. She calls this a "socio-sexual anxiety" that intimately connects sexuality with power:

> The systematic suppression of women's sexual and erotic inclinations has led to the conflation of sexuality and reproduction within a hetero-normative cultural and social matrix.[520]

In choosing pleasure and choice as her operative words, McFadden privileges a logic of freedom that troubles me slightly. In the "traditional" and pseudo-scientific/religious sex-pert lessons as well as in the bourgeoning bachelorette party market I see a repressive silence articulated with equal rigour to a narrative of pleasure, choice and freedom. This observation has led scholars on marriage rituals to argue that these parties create the

[518] McFadden, Patricia. 2003. Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice. *Feminist Africa* 2.
[519] Perreria, Charmaine. 2003. Where Angels Fear to Tread: Some Thoughts on Patricia McFadden's "Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice". *Feminist Africa* 2.
[520] McFadden 2003

space for women to articulate a post-feminist self were sexual pleasure, as power has been achieved.

African feminists are generally in consensus with the notion that the idea that silences regarding sexuality in Africa are a response to broader discourses on the immorality of Africa and African sex.[521] In these accounts, the negotiations that African women make with regards to the management of bodies and sex are always already framed as a response to discursive orders produced in the 19th century which in defining proper humanness, required the bodies of women, and Africans to make sense of sex, hygiene and the ordering of space. African feminists often suggest that repressed Victorians, upon the sight of unrepressed Africans used this as reasoning to justify a racist colonialism. In emphasising the confrontation of Africa and Europe to explain cultures of dissemblance, there appears a foundational assumption that "Europe" or indeed the "Victorians" were always already not repressed, when in fact this same period is one where a new ordering of the world and of sex and sexuality is produced. It is these questions that are fundamental to Michel Foucault's examination of how the category of sexuality itself comes to exist:

> There may be another reason that makes it so gratifying for us to define the relationship between sex and power in terms of repression: something that one might call the speaker's benefit. If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such a language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets the established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. This explains the solemnity with which one speaks of sex these nowadays. When they had to allude to it, the first demographers and psychiatrists of the 19th century thought it was advisable to excuse themselves for asking their readers to dwell on matters to trivial and base.[522]
>
> [...]
>
> One can raise three serious doubts concerning what I shall term the "repressive hypothesis." First doubt: is sexual repression truly an established historical fact? Is what fist comes to view – and consequently permits one to advance an initial hypothesis – really the accentuation or even the establishment of a regime of sexual repression beginning in the seventeenth century? This is a properly historical question. Second

[521] See Osha, Sanya. 2004. Unravelling the Silences of Black Sexualities. *Agenda* 18:62; Tamale 2011; Arnfred, Signe (Ed). 2004. *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet;
[522] Foucault, Michel. 1985. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Random House. p. 6

> doubt: Do the workings of power, and in particular, those mechanisms that are bought into play in societies such as ours, really belong primarily to the category of repression? Are prohibition, censorship, and denial truly the forms through which power is exercised in a general way, is not in every society, most certainly our own? This is a historico-theoretical question. A third and final doubt: Did the critical discourse that addresses itself to repression come to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that had operated unchallenged up to that point, or is it not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it "repression"? Was there really a historical rupture between the age of repression and the critical analysis of repression?[523]

Foucault suggests that "repressed sex" is a notion invented in economies invested in its governance and it is the same structures of governance, through medicine, science, psychology, demography and others that femininity comes to be recognizable within a specific relation to sexuality. For Foucault, women's "passivity" in sexual life is influenced by "social customs,"[524] which is persuasive, were it not apparent that there are global congruencies that share a committed view of sexual difference that depends upon femininity as fulfilled in the work of reproduction:

> Along with the abandonment of clitoral masturbation a certain amount of activity is renounced. Passivity now has the upper hand, and the girl's turning to her father is accomplished principally with the help of passive institutional impulses. [...] The feminine situation is only established, however, if the wish for a penis is replaced by one for a baby[525]

I want to think about the rituals associated with the bachelorette party, where we are told to celebrate our sexuality. There are people writing on this "new" ritual and from my work, I would say there is a dualism applied/implied in these practices although people often incorporate both. Yet in both instances there is a re-instantiation of Freud's position that sexual pleasure is fulfilled in the wish for a baby, even when it is an independent "free" woman who is entering the heterosexual sex act. Kopano Ratele reminds us that cultures are contested networks of encodings and objects which people inhabit"[526] Ratele notes that "in South Africa, this mode of representing an organising culture derives, among other sources, from the muscular truth-regime of segregation – its cultural structure

[523] Foucault 1985, p. 10
[524] Freud 1973, p. 1149
[525] Freud 1973, p. 162
[526] Ratele, Kopano. 2007. Native Chief and White Headman: A Critical African Gender Analysis of Culture. *Agenda* 21. p. 65

reinforced the policies of segregation. Keystones for this insidious thinking were a number of laws passed in the 1950s, out of which I will refer to only two: The Population Registration Act (PRA, No 30 of 1950) and the Bantu Authorities Act (BAA, No 68 of 1951). Used as a scaffold for a theory of between- and with-group racio-cultural relations, the PRA and BAA entrenched apartheid's cultural regime as a feature of the world that individuals had no choice but to live with."[527] Yet it is precisely a set of claims about this culture that reinforces the social forces that make heterosexual sex as "proper" in the ways I describe above come to appear as though it were natural, even more "authentic." To this end, I recall an awkward conversation with my sister in law a few years ago where she explained that on Friday afternoons she gets home from work early, prepares a good meal and meets her husband in sexy lingerie at the door. It was not simply a story that we were sharing, it was a moment of instruction accented later in claims about coherent cultural traditions that can be made peculiarly vis-à-vis notions of cultural difference.

[527] Ratele 2007, p. 68

Lobola for my Love

In this chapter I examine traditional marriage practices, arguing that while there are good reasons for the invocation of a dichotomy between the "modern" and the "traditional" weddings of black women; in South Africa they both work within the logics of a post-feminist cult of femininity. Women are increasingly invited to be a queen for a day, a worthy reward for the hard-working, self-directed and newly empowered Ms New Black. I pose the argument that this relationship is not necessarily "new," as the premise of lobola practice always already assume the logics of middle class aspirations and the romantic ideal attached to it.

This project began with an investment in reading women's experience. The commitment to the personal as political has meant that the kinds of objects and subjects I look to for thinking practices draw from a practice of connecting my own ordinary experiences to the experiences of others. This project then started with a precarious relationship to auto-ethnography, a practice I am inclined to describe myself as doing albeit with a partial commitment, because it somewhat describes what I am doing, starting with reflections on my own experience of wedding work. I could place myself in similar locations and locutions to research participants – but it was not simply an insider/outsider[528] deal that placed me in certain relations to the object of research; the intimacy that I shared with these women was less personal than our varying degrees of friendship and connection imply. We share a collective membership in a broader intimate public that was more than sharing genealogies of discourse about managing our bodies appropriately to convey respectable femininities, although this is certainly a part of it. What was so extraordinarily ordinary about our exchanges was that they were collective

[528] See Narayan, Uma. 1989. The Body of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non-western Feminist. In Jagger, Alison M & Bordo, Susan. (Eds). *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Hill Collins, Patricia. 1991. Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought. In Margaret J. Fonow & Judith A. Cook (Eds). *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press; Taylor, Jodie. 2011. The Intimate Insider: Negotiating the Ethics of Friendship When Doing Insider Research. *Qualitative Research* 11:1; McDowell, Linda. 1992. Doing Gender: Feminism, Feminists and Research Methods in Human Geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 17:4 for example.

experiences connected to a more general set of narratives in an intimate consumer public. So "airing my personal business,"[529] was an epistemological entry to the public/private that is intimacy, and as I come to the end I am most certainly convinced that not only is there an intimate public animated by "women's culture", and a "consumer public", but that this public is central to the workings of the public/private – the private has not increasingly entered the public, but is both central to its constitution and simultaneous rupture.

For Angela McRobbie, the responsibilities of social institutions like family, education, the law and medicine which have historically done the work of ensuring sexual difference to produce the "girl as a certain kind of subject" has been eroded by the emergence and authority of consumer culture in the lives of young women and girls.[530] This consumer culture applies post-feminist strategies to re-define female citizenship for women whose freedom "is won", in the case of the global north and "in the process of being won" elsewhere.[531] In McRobbie's assessment, this female citizenship takes a different direction away from the "public-mindedness, political participation, democratic accountability [and] social welfare" which was how a feminist ethic or politics might have been characterized in the past.[532] In the case of South Africa, it might be disingenuous to suggest that a public-minded political consciousness would be in contradiction with the emergence of consumer citizenship. As Mehita Iqani reflects, citizenship and inclusion in post/apartheid South Africa is shaped in relationship to consumption.[533] The advent of consumer citizenship does not signal a weakening of public participation in Iqani's account, but rather suggests "new kinds of public connection" and political action. Furthermore, in the case of South Africa where structures of exclusion included the prohibition of access to leisure and retail opportunities, Iqani contends that the political discourses of inclusion are bound to rehearse the practices of consumption within the logics of freedom.

[529] Berlant, Lauren. 2008. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture.* Durham NC: Duke University Press. p. vii
[530] McRobbie, Angela. 2008. Young Women and Consumer Culture. *Cultural Studies* 22:5 p. 532
[531] McRobbie 2008, p. 533
[532] Ibid.
[533] Iqani 2012, p. 5

There are a bounty of social texts to corroborate Iqani's position, none so more obvious than women's magazines. Women's relationship to consumption is spread in these texts, along with what I read in contradistinction to McRobbie as a public political. In Sonja Narunsky-Laden's assessment of seven consumer magazines for black women in South Africa, she ascribes two dispositions; the didactic and the aspirational,[534] to suggest that these magazines act as informal educational platforms for a broader public of other black women, and in aspiration as they spread broader messages about socially "proper" behaviour and a collective "good." In examining the black press from the early 20th century, a "self-help" and "self-rule" narrative is evident and corroborates Narunksky-Laden's claims in her examination of more recent texts, although I it is my intention to complicate this view in this chapter.

These texts work through the assumption of a broader women's culture which is "distinguished by a view that the people marked by femininity already have something in common and are in need of a conversation that feels intimate, revelatory, and a relief even when it is mediated by commodities, even when it is written by strangers who seem, on the face of it, vastly different from each other and from any particular reader."[535] This women's culture does not necessarily reflect what is empirically true, which might be why it is characterized as aspirational, as fantasy and melodrama are characteristic of the genres it produces in order to suggest to those who consume it that they share within a grander narrative and experience. This means that people participate in it who may share nothing of the particular worlds being represented in a given magazine, novel, film, soap opera, wedding venue or television advertisement, and yet they participate in the aspiration for, or the promise of belonging and mass intimacy. In the bridal magazines and the mediated cultures it emerges from, marriage practice becomes a site for the mass contemplations of intimacy, normalcy and the future within the texts of women's consumer publics.

[534] Narunsky-Laden, Sonja. 1997. Middle-class Matters, or, How to Keep Whites Whiter, Colours Brighter and Blacks Beautiful. *Critical Arts* 11:1/2.
[535] Berlant 2008, p xi

Marriage as an institution has been read as universal,[536] something that for Robin West, "we" would have shared an understanding about what it means or represents. For West, up until the mid-twentieth century in North America it was understood to mean:

> *A lifelong union, sanctioned by the state, community, and faith, between a man and a woman that hopefully would be blessed with children. […] A man contemplating marriage would expect to take on the responsibility of being the head of a household. He could be responsible for the economic support of his dependents, including his wife, and he would be charged with the duty of making major decisions on behalf of his family – such as where to live, how to invest of spend their income, how best to develop their joint assets, and how to direct their children's educations. A woman contemplating marriage would expect to enjoy her husband's economic support, and would be charged with the daily tasks of raising their children, as well as the domestic chores involved in maintaining a household. They would both expect lifelong, monogamous sexual intimacy and affection from the other. Both husband and wife, if this pact were honoured, would achieve considerable social acceptance from their larger community in the process.*[537]

West works with an awareness of how this universal, or universalizing discourse appears, so that marriage may not actually have been a universal expectation for all Americans,[538] and yet wishes to suggest that this narrative is only disrupted at the beginning of the 21st century as the "promise" of marriage is no longer as robust as it formerly was.[539] The disruption in the meaning has been the cause of a number of transformations, mostly connected to the law. First that marriage does not necessarily mean a life-long contract; that marriage does not have to mean that a couple must have children; and finally marriage is not necessarily just about a man and a woman as same-sex couples can also legally enter the practice.

For West, the extension of marriage to same-sex couples possibly signals an important undermining of the connection between civil law and "natural law":

> *a 'law of nature', with its roots in Christian and Catholic theology, but no longer so limited, that dictates not only the purported moral superiority of heterosexuality over deviant homosexuality, but also dictates what we might call (borrowing from a number of*

[536] See Nkosi, Sebenzile. 2011. Lobola: Black Students' Perceptions of its role on Gender Power Dynamics. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.
[537] West, Robin. 2007. *Marriage, Sexuality and Gender.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. p. 1-2.
[538] See Berger, James. 1996. Ghosts of Liberalism: Morrison's Beloved and the Moynihan Report. *PMLA* 111:3; Hill Collins, Patricia. 1989. A Comparison of Two Works on Black Family Life. *Signs* 14: 4; Spillers, Hortense J. 1987. Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book. *diacritics* 17:2.
[539] West 2007, p. 2.

sources) a 'natural orders of things': an order of things, knowable by man through his faculty of reason, guided by his experience and his capacity for logical thought, in contemplation of his given nature.

[… It is] not incident to, and is certainly not a construction of, but rather is a foundation of and condition for the social order we call civil society. It is older and deeper and more natural than the social contract itself. Traditional marriage and family, in this view, is a condition of statehood, not a result of it. It is a foundation on which states rest. It is not a creation of the state. It is a precondition for the existence of the state itself.[540]

West's assessment is persuasive, as there are certain "promises" that the wedding ritual enacts related to the common understanding she proposes was at least in her purview, once shared amongst those who participated or merely observed others as they entered its field of practice and are connected to the humanist project that I critique above. A split from "tradition" is signalled here, as legal marriage becomes this thing that can involve arrangements that are not just a man-woman union with the goal of child-bearing, yet West continues to suggest, this notion of a legal marriage as disinvested in this problematic, territorializing Law where the wedding ritual performs a transfer or "traffic" in women[541] fails to render marriage as a new site of freedom, or a widening of the notion of "proper humanness".

Sebenzile Nkosi's reading of "traditional marriage" in South Africa begins from the perspective that the practice of marriage differs between cultures, and these differences are significant because in a place like this, there has been a hierarchical structural relationship between different kinds of marriage practice. A historical privileging of civil (read as Christian and Western) marriage against the multiple modes of customary marriage practice, means that in Nkosi's view, customary marriage (read as the practice of lobola in this analysis), has been placed in a historically marginal location in relation to an assemblage of civil/Christian/Western law. For Nkosi, the legal recognition of customary marriage through the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 signals a transformation with regards to this relationship so that all forms of marriage practice are rendered "equal" at least in the eyes of the law. I am not necessarily persuaded that this moment signals an "entry" to the law for customary marriage, as customary law has much

[540] West 2007, p. 5
[541] See Rubin 1975.

longer genealogies of production and interpolation via the state than this,[542] and the "civil" law of this state is arguably entangled with the desire for customary law. However I am drawn to Nkosi's rendering of the importance of lobola as locked in tensions with the other aspects related to the project of transformation in South Africa: first, because of the ways that lobola practices might contravene legislative demands for gender equality; and second because if the liberal logic of freedom attached to the transformation project which offers black women new opportunities to participate in the public sphere, then Nkosi wonders if lobola is still relevant at a time when men and women are assumed to be equal in their access of income and in sharing responsibilities in production and social reproduction.[543]

The tension in understanding the importance of lobola is interesting as it rests upon what I read as a Marxist-inspired understanding of exchange that simultaneously wants to attach it to notions of "value" that fall outside of the notion of commodity exchange. Nkosi opts for the term "bride-wealth" to signal the inadequacy of "bride-price" because the fulfilment of lobola does not denote the act of a husband buying a wife. The "value" of bride-wealth is measured on the premise that it serves a number of purposes: the distribution of productive and reproductive resources, including the transfer of rights, particularly of a woman's procreative capacities, from her natal family to the groom's family; the sustenance of measures of social control between generations and genders; and finally that it serves as a means for people to claim a cultural identity.[544] Bride-wealth as value and not commodity exchange is a tension that runs through Nkosi's analysis of these levels of intended meaning, leading to the conclusion that lobola has become an element of the capitalist system that works to benefit men and that socially, politically and economically alienates women.[545] The ritualized exchange of women for things, loosely based on the "value" of women is practised and shared in many spaces across the globe and through different forms at varying times. The formal, highly consumerist white

[542] See Sheik 2012.
[543] Also see Mwanbene, Lea & Kruuse, Helen. 2013. Form over Function? The Practical Application of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 1998 in South Africa. A*cta Juridica: Marriage, Land, Custom.*
[544] Nkosi 2011
[545] Also see Maithufi, P. & Bekker, J.C. 2002. The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 and its Impact on Family Law in South Africa. *Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 35:2; de Souza, Monica. 2013. When Non-registration becomes Non-recognition: Examining the Law and Practice of Customary Marriage Registration. *Acta Juridica: Marriage, Land, Custom.*

wedding that enjoys global spectatorship and participation stages this exchange, albeit through particular forms of invented tradition that mark "modern" couplehood as free, companionate, romantic and outside of broader kinship demands, while simultaneously still connected to "tradition". Despite the intimate connection shared between romance, tradition and consumption; the liberal logics of freedom attached to this version of the "modern" intend to sell us the notion that the wedding ritual, once free from tradition fits neatly into a language of self-possessed individuals who share a horizontal citizenship with our new partners.

Modern Brides and their Traditional Weddings

Weddings have entered spheres of popular culture and are a global, billion dollar industry. The wedding industry as defined by Rebecca Mead refers not only to the infrastructure of service providers that offer the bride and groom the goods and services both for the day and their future lives together,[546] as well as the recent and invented status of present wedding practices. As Mead argues, through the invocation of "tradition", marriage rituals are transformed into a consumer rite.[547] In South Africa it is argued that the majority of people do not marry formally are more likely to live in numerous alternative arrangements, yet despite this, the white wedding is pervasive and present in our visual and popular culture. Dawn Currie recognizes this visibility as related to a correlated persistence of the "traditional family."[548] The customs attached to white weddings, replete with symbols that are "unambiguously patriarchal" are the "traditions" that frame these modern practices. This point is interesting to consider when you recognize that in South Africa we are told that as black women we have both "modern" and "traditional" weddings:

> *Every bride has her highs and lows; all brides dream about this day and want everything to be perfect. For African brides there is also a cultural aspect that kicks in. As a 21st-century woman, you don't necessarily know much about your culture, but when you get married, your wedding must fulfil certain expectations. Before your Western white wedding, you might want to have your traditional ceremony – and the lobola bit must be taken care of. Having two ceremonies adds stress, as the two events are usually quite close together – sometimes literally only a few days apart - and at different locations. Then there is the topic of the families. There are always so many people involved and everyone is telling you what to do and how to do it.*

Jackie Tiriboyi, a wedding planner offers this advice in a 2008 edition of *True Love Bride*, reflecting an oft repeated discussion on the expectations for black brides to perform multiple rites in marriage practice; defined within the language of a dichotomy between "modern" and "tradition". Narunsky-Laden reads the invocation of this doubling as the result of a contestation in representation in black consumer magazines for women like *True Love.* These magazines confirm the status of new socialities offered to black women

[546] Mead 2008, p. 5.
[547] See Boden 2003; Freeman, Elizabeth. 2002. *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in America.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Howard 2006; Ingraham 2008; Mead 2008; & Otnes and Pleck 2003.
[548] Currie 1993.

in the democratic period in spaces such as work or the formerly white suburb through a desirable domestic figure, while invoking debates about the "modern" and "traditional" to redefine and re-legitimise the indigenous customs of black South Africans.[549]

Benita de Robillard argues that it is difficult to "discern a seamless legitimisation of the practices of lobola, customary marriages and polygamous sexuality" in these texts,[550] in fact they pose a contradiction. The scripts that frame the presentation of monogamous romantic couples is confronted with a contradiction when it comes to "our roots". Making reference to an article about a "real wedding" in *True Love Bride,* de Robillard argues:

> *Notwithstanding Collins's acknowledgement that cash, rather than cattle, is now the "preferred currency" in lobola negotiations, the article is framed by, and saturated with, quaint illustrations of cows. These illustrations function as a synecdoche, which suggests that a potentially vexing set of "rural traditions" has been comfortably recast and distilled into a modern conception of the monogamous heterosexual romantic couple. The text seems caught between obligation to acknowledge that marriages in South Africa are not always, or only, "civil" unions and a fear of opening up troublesome aspects of heterosexual politics that is infused with racial politics. In doing so it celebrates lobola without acknowledging that complementary marriage processes are undergoing changes and are sometimes contested by an audience the magazines presumably want to engage.*[551]

De Robillard's critique is centred on polygamy, as it troubles the romantic framework pursued in these magazines, whose modern bridal couple is presented to us as monogamous. Representations of weddings framed and legitimated by the notion of romantic love that are also polygamous are increasingly featured in some magazines. For example a recent issue of *Drum* featured the wedding ceremony where Amos Mkhonto married three women at once.[552] Described as "outdoing" the polygamous President Jacob Zuma, by his village Chief Jackson Matukane, Amos tells us he married them out of love and all three women are his "sweethearts." He goes further boasting that he was inspired by the "ancient kings", "I'm following in the footsteps of King David of the Bible. He was a man of many wives but his polygamous marriage was different from mine. I married my women in one wedding ceremony."[553]

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[549] Narunsky-Laden, Sonja. 2001. Making the Paper Speak Well, or the Pace of Change in Consumer Magazines for Black South Africans. *Poetics Today* 22:2. p. 527-8
[550] de Robillard, Benita. 2009 p. 84
[551] de Robillard 2009 p. 87
[552] Mazibila, Surprise & Nkgadima, Thomo. 2013. In Love with My Three Brides. *Drum* 25 April. p. 12.
[553] Mazibila & Ngkadima 2013, p. 13.

At the heart of de Robillard's critique is a concern with "traditional" marriage rites and as implicated in the politics of re-phallicising an injured black masculinity in South Africa. Implied in the dichotomy between "modern" and "traditional" marriage practice is the idea that a defence and re-legitimization of traditional cultural practices is the desire to restore the injustices of racist colonialism which mis-interpreted "our cultures", distorting and degrading them. "African tradition", becomes this perspective, marginalized and poorly understood by western logics and in need of defence:

> *Sometimes it depends who is saying those sorts of things. You know, one thing especially in my field of study – you have to look at a certain thing from a certain perspective. If you look at media globally, or media from an African perspective they will look at it differently. And I guess history will be the same thing. There are certain things that you cannot pontificate over, like white historians sometimes cannot be qualified to speak about black cultures and how they do their things. You can be in a position to speak about some things but the way you understand certain things and the way you analyse them won't be sort of, will be influenced by where you come from and the meaning that you derive from that will be different from what the people derive. You look at the issues of globalization and modernization and you might think this is backward, but what does it mean to the people? And having said that I think the whole process, well it builds family relationships. When a man pays lobola it shows that to a certain extent they can or have the potential of being a provider. Because when people are getting married they are looking forward to a situation where there is security, there is provision and you know people can be able to take care of each other. That is why it is rare that you can go and get married to someone who stays in the street. There are issues of security. Issues of provision. Of course, love matters. Questions of securing family relationships also.*[554]

What is also implied in this defence is view that traditional marriage rites are problematic for women and undermine their status within marriage. Emphasizing that the "true" meaning of the practice is only discernable to those within it, Shepherd assumed that any questions that I had about the practice and its history would be framed by this negative connotation and felt it necessary to be clear that the subject, unlike white weddings which we can pontificate over, was out of bounds; in its own cosmos, "our culture" in need of our protection.

It is interesting that discussions of lobola and other cultural practices are premised on the assumption that patriarchy is natural and indeed in need of defence against the encroachment of a "western" or imperial modernity. One response to these notions has

[554] Shepherd Mpofu, Interview with Shepherd and Vera Mpofu, 2013

been to highlight the complex location produced for African women who in marriage are in a balancing act between some notion of "the modern" and that of "the traditional". For instance Takunda Chabata argues that it is the commercialisation of lobola, "a new characteristic" that has endangered women in marriages in Zimbabwe as it essentially commodifies us[555]. The argument Chabata offers depends on the notion that our "traditions" are premised on the status of Africa as always already heterosexual and patriarchal.[556] Within this cosmos, spaces where African women "negotiate" their secondary status are acknowledged as desperately undermined by the intrusion of new socialities based on "Western" liberal individualism where women "claim" their rights outside of culture. The "clash" which ensues is described by "Fana the Purp":

> *Women demand lobola to be paid for them yet with conditions, selecting what suits them of being an African wife and redefining their role to accommodate their unfairness.*[557]

In 2008, I wrote about my own experience of the process of lobola. My insights were read in light of these presumptions – as the editor framed the article with this copy: "Getting engaged the old-fashioned way proves a challenge for a modern feminist."[558] Less concerned about the commercialisation of the practice, I tried to suggest that the exchange of money or goods to signify the transfer of my personhood and reproductive capacity from the patriarchs of my family to those of my partner's was problematic. In the process of writing, the editor was interested in my status as a "modern" woman engaging with this process and like many commentators on the article, seemed to think that I would view the white wedding which was to follow as my big day, an almost feminist act of sorts. The responses to my article were instructive as lobola was defended as "uniquely African" and therefore essential to our collective identity. I find this unconvincing as parallel practices exist in many cultures and national domains.[559] As I tried to suggest that both rituals were "traditional", and as Currie argues, implicated in unambiguously patriarchal

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[555] Chabata, Takunda. 2012. The Commercialisation of Lobola in Contemporary Zimbabwe: A Double-Edged Sword for Women. *Buwa! Journal of African Women's Experience* October.
[556] Lewis 2011.
[557] Fana the Purp. 2012. "Only Fools Pay Lobola" 24July http://www.justcurious.co.za/2012/07/only-fools-pay-lobola/ accessed 18 February 2013.
[558] Mupotsa, Danai S. 2008. "Lobola for my Love" in *Mail & Guardian* 23 July http://mg.co.za/article/2008-07-18-lobola-for-my-love accessed 18 February 2013
[559] See Adrian 2003, for example. I find the notion that lobola is unique to Africa. I am not unconvinced that what it means to be African does not necessarily depend on it. As I argue in the chapter, processes like lobola are central to the ways that belonging and kinship are imagined and regulated.

language, the response I was confronted with viewed my treatise as symptomatic of being a young woman discontented with lobola and captured by the romance of taking centre stage in a lavish and somehow feminist white wedding. Different to Currie's reading of "tradition" that calls white weddings out from their claim on "the modern", the people that I spoke to almost all worked with a notion of "tradition" reserved for the "traditional" ceremonies and separate logics for the white wedding.

Phephile, opted out of the white wedding, choosing to only perform the traditional ceremonies. A business strategist by profession, she took it upon herself to investigate, carefully discerning the expectations of both families; she produced a detailed project document that addressed the expectations of all related parties. She did not initially intend to only have a traditional wedding and in fact told me that it was not necessarily her first choice:

> *I have never really applied my mind to consider how I identify myself. But when it came down to it, I felt that I needed to do something a little more authentic to me. And I think that the reason why is that even while my father grew up in a Christian environment and we grew up as Christians, our African beliefs or cultural beliefs have always been important, especially to my dad. It is quite interesting because you can actually see the struggle in him, because he sort of wants to honour his ancestors and that line. And then there is also the Christian and that line. I think my fathered juggled those things also when I was younger. But as he gets older, as we get older the cultural aspects become more prominent. So when the time when I was the age to get married, I had a choice firstly. Financially I could not do both, it was either or. And at the end of the day I was like this is more important for me. It was more authentic and a lot less shaped by what others are doing. And what is sort of expected. It gave me an opportunity to dig and find out what this thing is all about.*[560]

Phephile continues to be harassed by members of her extended family to have a white wedding who view the traditional wedding that she had as only one stage of an otherwise incomplete process. She views their perceptions as conventional but problematic as they are embedded in a "mentality of whiteness." Further, she is concerned that these occasions are primarily about consumption:

> *I mean these weddings are becoming more showy. Particularly the black middle class and those just above it who are having these Top Billing weddings that involve a R200000 dress that I can only wear once! You know, I think of my sister who chose to go down the western route and how that decision put her in a state of financial distress [...] I mean they spent*

[560] Interview with Phephile Modiselle Simelane

hundreds of thousands on a day. A beautiful day it was, but then at the end of the day they just got to go home. I mean we all go home and it is over.

This was not to suggest that her traditional wedding was without its own consumption; besides the actual goods and monies transacted to formalize her marriage, the two-day ceremony required the service of professional caterers, a hired tent with the required furnishings, a DJ and photographers, trained traditional singers and dancers who not only staged tradition through their performances, but also acted as advisors to Phephile as she planned her day; as well as the purchase of the appropriate traditional dress which literally perform the cultural identities of the couple, not merely as "African culture", but specifically aimed at representing specific ethnic identities. Unaware of what "Zulu", or mixed Sotho-Tswana-Coloured traditional dress was, Phephile sought the advice of others in performing the ascribed cultural identities. The contradiction between the desired to simulate an assumed-to-be-coherent ethno-cultural identity and its incoherence, as for many of the women I interviewed, it did not necessarily map on to their lives is somehow resolved through these consultations. Despite the fact that our present understandings of ethnicity are recent and embedded within the logics of the development of racist capital, these performances reify of notions of coherent ethno-cultural body politics. Like Phephile, Thembi also sought the advice of a "cultural consultant" named Mr. Gombe who helped them to create the authentic process of lobola that she and Zviko wanted.[561] Such consultation and the further expertise offered by the intermediaries who traditionally negotiate between the families create a comforting sense belonging and common understanding that indeed we know who we are and what our culture is about.[562]

The importance of dress to bolster the authenticity of traditional marriage practices is not insignificant. For instance, in the second episode of *Our Perfect Wedding,* we meet Thami and Nombululelo, two nurses who work at Harry Baragwanath Hospital and live in

[561] Mr Gombe is the author of a book on Shona cultural practice, see Gombe, J. 1996. *Tsika DzevaShona*. Harare: College Press. The book is often cited by those seeking to reference Shona cultural practices outside of a western tendency to distort and caricature African practices. See Masinire, Sam., Mudzanire, Benjamin and Mapetere, Kudakwashe. 2013. Unpacking the Eurocentric Indictment of Pre-colonial African Socio-political Institutions in Literary Works: *Pfumo Reropa* and *Gonawapotera. Greener Journal of Social Science* 3:2 for example.

[562] In the interview with Shepherd and Vera, Vera insisted that their lobola was "simple" and this was the case because all parties shared an understanding of what the expectations were. Despite the heterogeneous cultural backgrounds of the couple, this they understood their common ground was premised on an "African" culture and shared tradition, which I do not doubt was related to a shared structure of belief from their religious backgrounds as Seventh Day Adventists.

Dobsonville, Soweto. The producers take us along as the couple separately visit the designers of their traditional wedding attire for a final fitting. Dressed in cow hide and beads, Thami sits on the sofa in the lounge of the designer's home and tells us: "I am the only one who is going to be wearing this. I am the groom." He is then captured attempting the high kicks characteristic of tradition Zulu dance, as the narrator tells us that the groom is really excited. The excitement, as the groom explains is because he does not get to dress like this all of the time, in fact the last time that he did so was when he was in a traditional dance group when he was younger. The designer of the traditional outfit, Bongani "Desh" Molisane intervenes and tells us that this is no ordinary traditional attire, in line with the notion that on your big day you must not only be beautiful but unique: "What is unique about this outfit is that it is a branded outfit." The camera leads us to the leather tag with the brand name "Desh" to confirm the superior status of this outfit. The scene continues in the melodramatic style that bridal reality television shows generally follow as there is suddenly a crisis: will the designer complete all of the grooms-men's outfits in time? Resolved by the promises made by the designer, the groom and his men leave his house, reflecting on the pending disaster that might occur if the traditional outfits are not completed in time: "it's going to be a problem. Our wedding won't be complete without the traditional aspects. So we're going to simulate a traditional wedding. And I don't think our ancestors would be happy with that."

Following Thami's idea that one simulates a traditional wedding, Phephile's simulation was carefully produced with the intention for it to *not* be a transaction. Comparing her wedding to her sister's lobola negotiations which she describes as "literally a transaction", she was determined to move as closely as possible to the cultural factors, while avoiding any potential drama:

> *People might think of it as mechanical. I might have been described as being a control freak. But when it is all said and done, I think that firstly it was two cultures coming together. It was the Zulu and then the Tswana/Sotho and whatever else in Nthatho's background. I did not want a situation where someone could say "well that is not our culture and not the way we do things" so I thought, let's put things up front. […] I was framing what I see and understand as being part of my tradition. And yes, a lot of it was constructed, but even the construction was about trying to understand where a lot of these practices come from, you know? I did not want to feel like there was a transaction happening.*

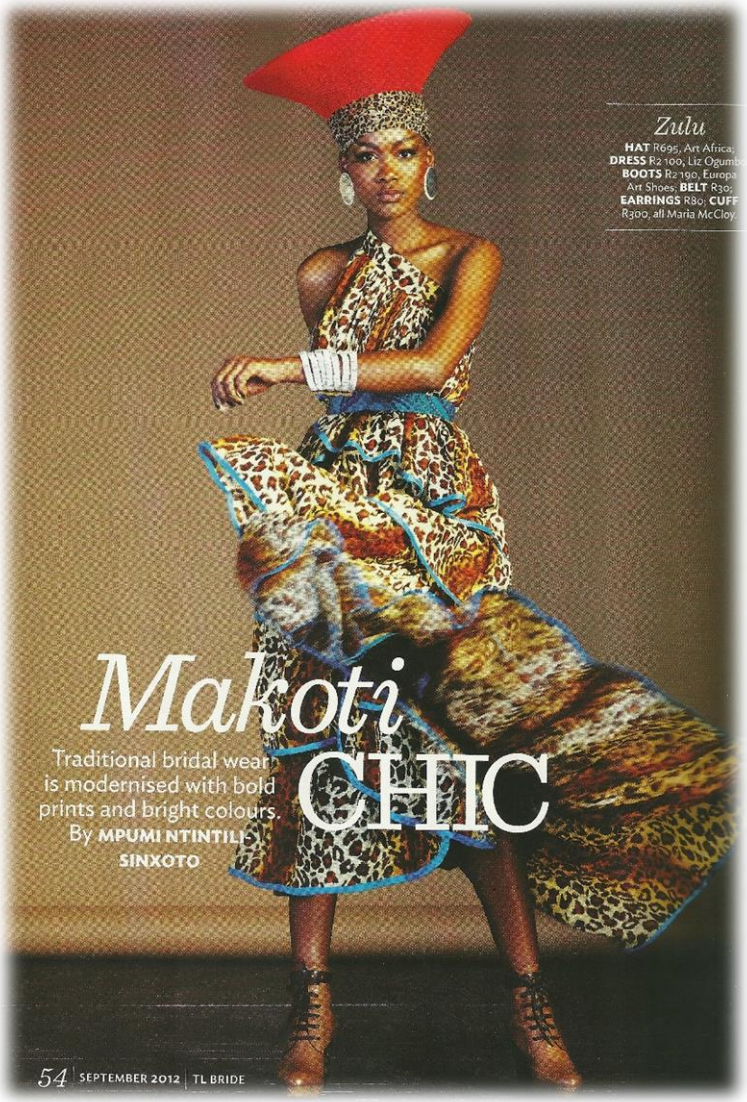
I am reminded of Currie's proposal concerning the modern wedding, as a ritual that evokes "tradition" and the sentiment aligned to it in order to sell us something new and modern, a consumer rite that somehow makes us feel empowered, despite the ways that the ritual performance itself might simply promulgate "traditional" patriarchal conventions. While Phephile and others repeat the dichotomy of the "white/western/modern" wedding against one that is more "traditional", when in many instances the actual practices performed by a couple are a series of negotiations between the two conventions that assemble a lot of similar ideals and performances, in fact are, like Phephile's wedding, an invented (and modern) tradition. Further, we can follow the argument that it is also marked as a consumer rite, as we are invited to consumer new products this sells us tradition. Take the following fashion editorial from the September 2012 issue of *True Love Bride* as example.

Following the style trends, these chic selections are framed within the language of the ethno-linguistic difference; designed to be fashionable and unique while performing our traditions. Through our consumption, we can be both traditional and the self-fashioning producers of our big days in the same language offered around the white wedding, images caught at the nexus of traffic between a "globalised episteme of bourgeois subjectivity, and its local styles."[563]

Magazines like *True Love Bride* and *Nubian Bride* which direct their attention to the black bridal market, use photographic essays like this to draw us into the fantasy and offered a list of service providers so that we know how to produce such a day. As Sgroi suggests, these stories offer the space for viewing pleasures to be directed both at consumption in general as well as towards specific products and brand names.[564]

[563] de Robillard, Benita. 2009. Something "New" That's Been There All Along? Polygamy and the Afropolitan Bridal Couple in South African Bridal Magazines. In du Preez, Amanda. (Ed). *Taking a Hard Look: Gender and Visual Culture.* Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p. 76.

[564] Sgroi, Renee. 206. Consuming the Reality TV Wedding. *Ethnologies* 28:2. Also see Winch, Alison & Webster, Anna. 2012. Here Comes the Brand: Wedding Media and the Management of Transformation. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*. 26:1. Winch and Webster argue that wedding media's explosive growth is linked to a rise in branding culture and its exploitation of women's apparent aspirations for visibility. Wedding media branding appropriates romantic narratives of traditional femininity, such as achieving the perfect bridal look and finding and marrying 'the one'. Simultaneously, it offsets and validates this traditionalism through associating the spectacle of wedding consumption with the self-determining power to manage transformation.



Makoti CHIC

Traditional bridal wear is modernised with bold prints and bright colours. By **MPUMI NTINTILI-SINXOTO**

Zulu

HAT R695, Art Africa; **DRESS** R2 100, Liz Ogumbo; **BOOTS** R2 190, Europa Art Shoes; **BELT** R30; **EARRINGS** R80; **CUFF** R300, all Maria McCloy.

Sotho

DRESS R7 800, Tiaan Nagel; **TULLE SKIRT** R890; **TOP** R890, both Clive Rundle; **BELT** Stylist's own; **EARRINGS** R30, Maria McCloy; **SNEAKERS** R635, Feiuye; **HEADWRAP** Stylist's own; **BAG** R240, Art Africa.

Ndebele

DRESS R1 150, Liz Ogumbo; **SHIRT** R799, 46664 at Stuttafords; **TIE** R125, Babatunde; **HEADPIECE** R795, Art Africa; **EARRINGS** R100, Maria McCloy.









29 Makoti Chic

One of more prominent ways we are sold African tradition in consumer magazines is through the reference to royalty. As many scholars examining white weddings as consumer rites note, the fantasy of romance tells us that we live for the one special moment when we can be a princess for a day. There of course was no better opportunity to capitalize on this notion than in 2011 when Kate Middleton married Prince William. *Wedding Inspirations* framed its entire autumn issue on the matter including a feature article listing the most iconic wedding in royal history. The list included Princess Elizabeth, Grace Kelly, Princess Diana and Queen Raina or Jordan amongst others. Right before the main attraction, Kate Middleton herself, we are offered our own royal couple, Zulu Princess Mukhosibemvelo and Sipho Nwayo who married in 2009:

> *The attractive couple held their reception in Durban's Botanical Gardens with hundreds of esteemed guests and family members joining the celebrations, including the Swazi Royal family (the bride's mother Queen Mantfombi is the sister of Swazi King Mswati III) and the bride's father King Goodwill Zwelethini, who has 37 children. Princess Bukhosibemvelo's dress was created by Johannesburg designer Julian –a strapless dress with a pleated bodice and intricate embellishments. She carried a simple spring bouquet. The groom was dressed in a stylish Giorgio Armani suit. He is said to have paid a lobola of 120 cattle for his bride, who is a beautician by profession. Renowned Johannesburg-based designer Julian launched his label in the mid-80s. He is known for his elegant couture that embraces sleek, tailored lines, simple silhouettes and intricate detailing. We has a royal clientele including top celebrities and models, and when not designing fashion, concentrate his creative energies on his interior décor business.* [565]

Chrys Ingraham tracks the genealogy of the white wedding gown from Queen Victoria, to Princess Elizabeth, Princess Grace and Princess Diana at the height of empire where a lavish white gown becomes the standard, "laden with symbolism [as] it stood for purity, virginity, innocence, and promise, as well as power and privilege."[566] Ingraham further suggests that the unambiguous references to royalty and empire are less frequently invoked in bridal magazines in the United States, although the symbolic language that privileges whiteness and wealth in the ideology of love remain. Nostalgia is invoked in romantic scripts to re-narrate history and naturalize tradition, problematic as what we receive as tradition is the re-legitimization of ruling class interests.[567] It is interesting that in the aforementioned example, invoking the nostalgia of history it is Zulu royalty and

[565] Wedding Belles. 2011. *Wedding Inspirations* Autumn. p. 52
[566] Ingraham 1999, p. 34.
[567] See Ingraham 1999 p. 88 and p. 98.

tradition that we are invited to recognize as our own in what is a mainstream bridal magazine.

I think there is something else here related to the recuperation of African tradition where African traditional marriage is freed from the heavy baggage linking it to women's oppression. We see this in the way that Thembi talked about her experience of lobola.

> *And I thought that an exchange of cows for me, would make me feel cheapened. Make me feel like a good. But it made me feel respected and valued. That was not an expected feeling.*

I recall confronting my aunt about the process and why I could not be a more prominent participant in the negotiations and she tried to console me by telling me that I was not to worry about anything, this day was my special day intended to make me feel valued. She said that a queen never has to worry about petty details, why should I? Rutendo corroborates this idea, telling me that in her family when it is your day for lobola you are pampered, you do not need to worry about anything:

> *On Friday, I woke up at 7. My sisters, my cousins were all up, because they had hired a caterer and a DJ and stuff. My little sister was in charge of the caterers. […] My one cousin was in charge of all the drinks. And then Tari was in charge of the DJ and making sure that all of payments were made to the various services providers. So I was not doing anything. We always have thing, that if it is someone's big day, you always make sure that they don't have to stress and they don't do anything. So they had woken up at I think 5.30, 6? They let me sleep until 7.30. I just woke up when I woke up and they ran me a bath and they got my clothes out and then they made sure that the maid ironed them.*

Bridal magazines when referring to black women or traditional weddings, make reference to the "African Queen", forgoing the usual reference to being a "princess for a day".[568] The figure of the "queen" works here as a reference to an imagined belonging to traditional kinship systems that value black women, certainly embroiled in the project of re-phallicising indigenous cultures but there is more. The idea of black beauty are fraught, as blackness was historically designated to the signs of the ugly and sexual excess. It is no surprise that Nakedi Ribane's *Beauty: A Black Perspective* is laden with references to a "reign", or beauty queens as the processes by which beauty and femininity have been politically contested have relied on the notion of the "African Queen. It is interesting that as presented in these images, this queen instantiates her status and beauty through the

[568] See the fashion editorial Fit for a Queen (*Nubian Bride*) and the cake promotion from *Wedding Inspirations.*

use of colour and elements of nature including animal print, feathers, porcupine quills and flowers. In addition to this, the invocation of tradition employed here relies on a discourses not only about culture, but also race. Further, in presenting us with an aesthetic, albeit problematic, it suggests that these processes are embedded in the practices of consumption.

I contend that along with the desire to restore an injured African patriarchy as de Robillard argues; or to re-legitimise indigenous cultural practices, as Narunksy-Laden argues; something further is at hand. More than doing the work of representing traditional African marriage practice as rituals in the background of the lavish white wedding, presumably our primary "prize"; consumer magazines instead are telling us that as black women we can have it all. The notion that "we can have it all", is firmly planted in the history of magazines for women[569] and in South Africa like in other contexts we are sold the notion that as women through our purchasing power we can achieve independence and control.[570] The bride, placed at the centre of the processes by which the formal and commercialised wedding is produced enacts her "new" subjectivity as project manager to consume for/produce her big day all the while demonstrating her skills as a member of the professional labour force. I want to be clear that having it all really means *all,* as demonstrated in the mandate of the new *Drum Weddings,* which aims to be "the ultimate guide to traditional African weddings as well as Western styled weddings for African women in South Africa."[571] The editor, Khosi introduces us to this new magazine by inviting us to her own recent wedding:

[569] See White, Cynthia L. 1970. *Women's Magazines 1673-1968.* London: Michael Joseph., & Ferguson, Melinda. 1983. *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity.* London: Heinemann.
[570] See Schwartz, Suzanne L. 2013. Girl Power through Purchasing? The Urban, Young, Educated, Working, Indian Woman and Aspirational Images in Personal Care and Beauty Aid Advertisements. *Advertising and Society Review* 13:4.
[571] See *Drum* 2012. Introducing the Ultimate Wedding Guide. September. http://drum.co.za/2012/09/13/introducing-the-ultimate-wedding-guide/ where they tell us "Every bride needs the best advice at her fingertips when it comes to planning her dream wedding, whether it's her white wedding or her traditional celebration."



30 African Queen

> *"Umakoti ngowethu!" "Kgomo!" These are just two of the songs we sing when celebrating the love and official union of two people who have decided to become husband and wife. And what joyous occasions they are. The ululations, dancing, food and noisy bridal convoy are intoxicating and the euphoria takes over an entire community. Quite simply, it is magical.*[572]

Khosi shares her wedding experiences, telling us she had initially desired a small ceremony including only 30 or so people, but the families would not have it so she met them with the compromise of a white wedding ceremony on the banks of the Vaal River for 120 guests, "including two taxis filled to capacity with "relatives" [she] never knew existed." On the following day they had a traditional ceremony at her parent's house with an additional 200 guests: "yes, African weddings are a community affair, but you must put limits in place," her role as the editor is to help you to achieve this kind of control.

Unlike other bridal magazines in South Africa which focus their attention on "real" brides and their weddings, *Drum Weddings* features celebrity weddings, which in this issue included Connie Ferguson, Sophie Ndaba, David Mabilu, Odwa Ndungane and Swazi Bishop Mpendulo Nkambule, rounded of by the lavish traditional wedding of Supersport presenter Fezile Makhanya and his bride, former Miss Earth South Africa 2010, Nondyebo "Nondy" Dzingwa.[573] Described as a "timeless romance", these high school sweethearts celebrated with a "traditional" affair that represented the blending of two cultures:

> *Fezile looked like a proper Zulu warrior as he shone in his ibeshu, complete with armbands, traditional spear and shield. And his bride was a truly radiant makoti who embraced her new Zulu heritage in a stunning traditional outfit. According to her good friend and designer, Matome Seshoka of Antherline, this Zulu dress was actually a surprise gift from the Makhanya family to welcome their new maktoi into the family. "Nondy was pleasantly surprised when she saw the dress as she had no idea I was making it for her," Matome says. For Fezile, Matome created a full Zulu outfit that was also very traditional. But this very African wedding had a modern spin which reflected the couple's contemporary taste and personalities.*[574]

The traditional affair presented here, while signalled as traditional through dress and the rituals of following successful lobola negotiations, including the umbebeso, an exchange of gifts between the families; the wedding ends with an ornately decorated reception under a rented tent. This reception included set tables with intricate floral arrangements

[572] Zwane- Sigunqa, Makhosazana. 2012. Ed's Letter. *Drum Weddings* Spring/Summer. p. 3.
[573] Incidentally, Fezile and Nondyebo have since split in 2013. Sophie Ndaba's nuptials also fell apart, as it is reported that despite having the lavish wedding the union was never legally registered and the couple has since split.
[574] A Timeless Romance. *Drum Weddings* 2012 p. 47

in the wedding's colour scheme of burnt orange, catered food (although the copy editor was sure to remind us that there was also food cooked by the friends and family, mostly the product of the animals slaughtered as a part of the ritual), as well as a wedding cake. The photographs of the wedding are professional and include the "before/after" shots that follow the bride and groom as they prepare for their big day. These are the characteristics one would usually be inclined to use in describing the modern white wedding, invoking consumption and romance through a ritualised celebration of "tradition."

Some African bridal magazines work through the tensions of a "white" and "traditional" wedding in a number of ways. The first, as offered by de Robillard, is to make reference to the practice as a fulfilment of the requirements of their family or culture. This is articulated in two ways, either in reference to the engagement, where brides will say that their groom proposed the "traditional way", sending his uncles to her parents' house to initiate negotiations. The rituals related to traditional marriage are often determined by temporal and spatial relations which might be why the view of traditional marriage through lobola as an "engagement" emerges. These magazines talk about traditional marriage practices in a language celebratory of cultural difference, which they frame around the process of getting engaged. In one example from *True Love Bride*, the author wants us to recall that it is not simply about the "I do", as we have to negotiate multiple processes, processes principally framed by ethno-linguistic cultural identities with the primary goal of getting engaged.[575] In South Africa, like many other African countries these traditional rites are legally recognized. The temporal ambiguity surrounding traditional marriage practices must certainly have further implications. Increasingly, one can also observe brides and grooms like Nondyebo and Fezile who opt for one event that captures the demands of all required ceremonies. The language used varies from a "traditional" wedding, to a white wedding influenced by traditional aspects. [576]

What is significant is that rather than just a background aspect, traditional rites serve a further purpose which might explain why they, like weddings can endure. The brides I

[575] Sekhula, Thabiso. 2012. Rules of Engagement. *True Love Bride* September. p.90-92
[576] See the images of the wedding of Nontokozo and Sifiso Khumalo who had an "Africa" themed white wedding. *True Love Bride* 2008 (Winter) p. 84-5.

spoke with worked within some of the logics presented above, defending the practice or expressing a desire to pay attention to it as a process with its own contradictions, but meaningful for the larger purpose of preserving family and culture.[577] However, it would be insufficient to simply view this adherence only as a commitment to the project of a re-phallicising Black Nationalist project. Bridal magazines work as guides to help us resolve some of these contradictions as we are invited to celebrate our traditions through our personal style. Through this consumption, we are blinded from the patriarchal messages that signal these as processes of exchange between men, through which we act as vehicles for reproduction. The process by which the bride is delivered and marked with her new heritage is in no way different from the wedding procession by why a father passes his daughter to another patriarch.[578] Invited to act as the subject who produces the big day in white weddings, we are invited into a post-feminist subjectivity that tells us that we "can have it all". I argue here that traditional weddings have also been cast into this "have it all net", as a further instantiation of post-feminist consumer-citizenship. Traditional weddings demand that we view them not as sites of invention and consumption, fundamentally challenging the distinction between the white wedding and traditional weddings as brides experience them through the language of romance and fantasy.

[577] Shope, Janet Hinson. 2006. 'Lobola is Here to Stay': Rural Black Women and the Contradictory Meanings of Lobolo in Post-apartheid South Africa. *Agenda* 20:68
[578] See Mead 2008 and Currie 1993



31 Phephile and Nthatho, Soweto 2010

Men without Tradition

In the September 2011 issue of *True Love Bride* Khwezi Magwaza reflects on the "Price of Paying Your Own Lobola":

> Beyond the gossiping and Tweeting. Modern African women (who are used to buying their own bling anyway) have begun to rear their head in the once male-only custom of lobola, with some contributing or even paying for it themselves.[579]

Magazines like *True Love* present us with this new black woman, who can "have it all." She has a career, beautiful clothes and following a lavish wedding, can produce a beautiful family. In this sense, the performance of a white wedding along with the enactment of traditional rites are part of a series of things that we can have as empowered and modern women. In fact, if we follow Magwaza, through all of the possibilities that we have as modern women, lobola itself has to transform itself and include us, as we have a say and a role to play if the tradition is to survive. The notion that South African men are disempowered and unable to fulfil the obligation to "buy us bling", are repeated in this and other magazines. For example the July 2012 issue of *True Love* offers the article "Scrubs International", captioned: South African men are often called out for being scrubs, but what about those men from distant lands?"[580]

If we are to respond to Currie's question, "Why does the traditional family persist?" it would seem that we need to look at the figure of the "new" or "modern" African woman. While she is cited as "picking and choosing" with regards to what aspects of traditional customs she wants to participate in by her detractors, she is also bound to logics of the "modern"/"traditional" which use, or abuse culture[581] when it comes the time for us to question gendered hierarchies and patriarchal conventions. In fact it is precisely this argument that Takunda Chabata invokes, suggesting that the in-between-ness has resulted in a closing off of space for African women to challenge patriarchy within the boundaries of culture. The "modern African bride", is constructed through media discourse as a post-feminist in ways that co-opt feminist discourse into the work of heterosexual consumptive citizenship. In this view, the white wedding is invoked through the notion of the "modern", as described as "Western-style", in ways that enable both

[579] Magwaza, Khwezi. 2011. The Price of Paying Your Own Lobola. *True Love* September. p. 130.
[580] Tshabalala, Lerato, Ferguson, Melinda, & Mogoatle, Lerato. 2012. Relationships: Scrubs International. *True Love* July. p. 115.
[581] See Palitza, Kristin. 2006. Culture (Ab)used to Dodge Women's Rights. *Agenda* 20:68.

white weddings and lobola to be legitimised and deemed desirable as part of the package within the romantic and consumptive plot that we are sold. While scholars viewing lobola as outside of the logic of romance, I argue that it is embedded in these notions and through both lobola and white weddings we consume a "cult of femininity" that makes patriarchy and its logics appear to be normal and the way it should be, as Khwezi's article reveals it most certainly is, as men are scrubs and women must take on new responsibilities in the present dispensation.

"Ms. New Black," is this figure, offered by Narunksy-Laden who through examines black consumer magazines as an archive to trace the desires and representations of the black middle class in South Africa. Laden views magazines as "cultural tools", through which the "aspired to" although not necessarily "given" states of affairs are evoked through the representation and codification of what are "urban, middle-class repertoires."[582] These repertoires are derived from 19th century missionary enterprise as well as strategic transformations "from below." For Narunksy-Laden, magazines and other texts in popular culture like romance novels, are a site for generative production: extending Karen Barber's argument that "it is important to recognize the extent to which African cultural innovators have seized upon the possibilities of the media to revitalize their traditions and generate new forms."[583] In this vein, the "Africanization of romance novels", a genre which influences and interpolates the consumer magazines, as not very different in intent and purpose from "Western chick-lit", with slight differences in the characterization of the protagonists.[584] Following the title of an article in the no-longer in print *True Love Babe,* "Meet Mr and Mrs New Black," that captures the locations of "Middle Africans", "neither here nor there, neither Bantu no coconut, one foot in kasi and the other in Rosebank" who commodify their blackness through different modes of self-stylization. Laden reads these popular romance texts where we can meet these characters as spaces where South Africans might imagine themselves "providing the world with new species, new styles of South African stories."[585]

[582] Narunsky-Laden 2001, p. 515.
[583] Barber cited in Narunsky-Laden
[584] Narunsky-Laden p. 67
[585] Narunsky-Laden p. 72

The Unilever Institute recognizes the buying power of the "middle" African woman, initiating a research mandate on "Black Diamond Women," who they identify as independent, financially secure and ambitious, "calling the shots and making decisions about purchases."[586] The findings of their report suggest that black women are increasingly the primary breadwinners and have the final say on most matters, attributing South Africa's "progressive constitution" as supporting non-sexism and encouraging gender equality. These black diamond women have aspirations to play "catch-up" and enter the middle class; coupled with a sense of duty to their extended families, recognizing a tension between their independence and their "cultural beliefs". The teleological narrative that observes an ascendant class of black women rising from a traditional past to an independent future comes to a halt, as these marketers are confronted with a "tension" of two times colliding. Jude Clark recognises the ways the "then" and "now" are mobilised in reference to discursive constructions of culture in a temporal and spatial relations with public/private, past and present, old and new. In this context, black women claiming any power are read as doing so through the "now", "new", or modern. In addition to this, love is cast as a choice that independent women have, framed as agentic and signalling the success of democracy in achieving gendered equality, while simultaneously casting these woman as cultural outsiders acting in the space outside of tradition. Alongside this, love-as-duty is mobilised as an obligation to family/culture/nation[587].

Consumer magazines celebrate this new form of subjectivity for women. There is no more evocative example of this than clearer example of this than *Destiny* magazine:

> *DESTINY is a high-end business and lifestyle magazine for women. It is aimed at, stylish and intellectually curious women who are either interested in, or actively engaged in business. As the first publication of its kind in South Africa, it aims to fill a void for business and financial information that connects, supports and inspires women who are professionals, entrepreneurs, businesswomen and general business enthusiasts.*[588]

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[586] Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing/ TNS Research Surveys. 2008. It's Onwards and Upwards for SA's Black Diamond Women. (Press Release, 29 October)

[587] Clark, Jude. 2006. 'Looking Back and Moving Forward': Gender, Culture and Constructions of Transition in South Africa. *Agenda* 20:68.

[588] http://www.media24.com/en/magazines/ndalo-media/destiny.html accessed 16 May 2013. The magazine along with a number of other ventures falls under Ndalo Media, a company owned by Khanyi Dhlomo (in a 50/50 joint venture with Media 24). Dhlomo was editor of *True Love* for 8 years

Ms. New Black, as represented here is not just a professional or entrepreneur, as the magazine is also replete with the confirmation that our aspirations for marriage, family and domesticity fall perfectly in line with what it means to be a modern woman. These magazines promote a solidarity amongst women about stress a reciprocal relationship between suffering, survival and success; and the self-made life in capitalist society.[589] Consumer magazines for place women create an intimate public space that is an achievement for a "previously marginalized" class of women and as such promises belonging, acting as a guide for the way that we should live.[590] As women's magazines do in general, the editors share their lives as "one of us," creating a space where we can identify with one another and recognize a common fantasy about what it means to live as a woman in this world. I am interested then in the location of black women in relation to wedding consumption, in particular in relation to consumption for the traditional wedding. Both practices as invented traditions depend on a "cult of femininity."[591] This cult makes the work that femininity involves appear to be both natural and a part of what we all understand as being "in common" between us as women. The language that these magazines offer us is within a therapeutic narrative; as women through self-direction and self-knowledge we can assert ourselves and indeed progress towards our *destiny.*[592] The fantasy central to women's intimate public is that through our hard work we can progress from a more complex to a simpler version of ourselves marked by our arrival to marriage, where we can finally have a life that means something.[593]

Crucial to such an intimate public is the knowledge that as women we are encouraged to live for love but are ultimately disappointed as the love we receive is one that takes.[594] A part of this common fantasy is that we understand our suffering within it as a pleasure in its own right. I take for example the wedding of Thami and Nombululelo featured on the

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and was the founding editor of *Destiny.* She is certainly embodies the aspirations of the magazine. See www.destinyconnect.co.za/page/about-us

[589] Thurman, Christopher. 2008. Oprah, the Leavisite: A Caveat for Feminism and Women's Studies in South Africa. *African Studies* 67:1.

[590] Berlant, Lauren. 2008. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

[591] Ferguson, Marjorie. 1983. *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity*. Portsmouth: Heinemann. p. 5.

[592] Illouz, Eva. 1997. *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Conditions of Capital*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

[593] Berlant 2008

[594] Ibid.

second episode of *Our Perfect Wedding.* Following their ceremony, the host of the show tells us that there is pending drama; Thami's ex-girlfriend was rumoured to be coming to the wedding and she planned to upstage the bride. Our host then investigates, asking every woman she can find if they are Thami's ex-girlfriend and if they know if she is coming. She further connects with these guests as they agree that if this ex did indeed show up at the wedding, they would all be ready to deal with her as a collective. It is implied in the interactions that Thami was potentially unfaithful to Nombululelo however this is not our main concern. Instead we share in a recognizable logic of women's intimate suffering at the hands of bad men[595]. The local film, *Ilobola* also holds its central premise on this fantasy. We meet our protagonist, Nkele, a successful 39 year old business woman who has just broken up with her boyfriend Mike. We must assume Mike has been unfaithful as Nkele moans to her best friend Lebo and domestic worker Rose about his sudden departure and pending nuptials to another woman. Nkele wishes for the relationship that Lebo has with her husband Sifiso as she truly has it all. To console her, her Sifiso sets her up on a date with a colleague Tebza and sparks fly immediately. After two months the happy couple consummate their relationship and she happily tells her mother that she is in love. Two months later, she is pregnant and Tebza proposes. Following a business trip, Tebza returns with a beautiful ring and indeed all of Nkele's wishes come true, as in the next shot we see her mother reading the letter from Tebza's family:

> **To the Monares: The Molefes would like to request your daughter's hand in marriage. If it suits the Monares, we will send our delegation on the 23rd of this month. We hope that you will accept our humble request.**

Women's culture as presented by Berlant constructs the figure of the bride as the ideal achievement for women perpetuating the idea that marriage is a moral imperative, particularly because it is assumed that we now live in a world where modern women like Nkele can have it all. In post-transition South Africa, it is assumed that transformation has raced and gendered implications offering a constitution that intends to offer equality between races and genders. Second wave feminisms critical of marriage practice as both

[595] Thami and Nombululelo get tattoos to mark themselves as permanently connected to one another. As they leave the tattoo parlour, Thami tells us that this was important for him to do as Nombululelo was the mother of his first child

a sign and a source of women's oppressions[596] are assumed irrelevant in this context, as equality has been achieved. We certainly see this equality in the figures of success presented to us in magazines like *Destiny.* Like the workplace, marriage too is perceived as a site of equality[597] leading Angela McRobbie to argue that feminism's view of marriage as problematic "can now be shown to be a mistake."[598] Framed with these assumptions, the bride that we are invited to be is a post-feminist figure invited into a "new sexual contract" that offers us the post-feminist guise of equality.[599] Through this contract, as women we are invited to participate in consumer culture, becoming hypervisible[600]. Through beauty and fashion, this view encourages us to believe that we can displace patriarchal authority taking up sexual freedoms originally intended only for men. Paying one's own lobola, in this view is the product of our success as wage-earning career girls, and the pursuit of marriage comes part in parcel within this logic that encourages us to always be perfecting ourselves. No longer passive, weddings offer us the occasion to act out our choices much like the "superbride" invoked by Sharon Boden, an aspirational consumer identity allowing women to take control as project manager and centre of attention on their big day.[601]

Franka Heise calls this the post-feminist bride, celebrated for her personal freedom and professional success; bridal media reifies her status and success[602]. Pumla Gqola warns us that this public discourse on gender is conservative and not transformative,[603] as what we receive as "women's empowerment" relies on what happens when women occupy the public space for Gqola, creating a contradiction as women are constructed in public culture as "highly empowered", while they must adhere to "limiting notions of femininity" in the

[596] See Friedan, Betty. 1973. *The Feminine Mystique.* Ringwood: Penguin Books. And Rich, Adrienne. 1980. Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Signs* 5 for example.
[597] See Geller, Jaclyn. 2001. *Here Comes the Bride. Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows for example.
[598] McRobbie, Angela. 2009. *The Aftermath of Feminism. Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage. p. 20.
[599] See Schuster, Sherril Horowitz. 1997. Here Comes the Bride: Wedding Announcements and Bridal Norms. *Sociological Focus* 30:3. In this study, Schuster finds that despite women's expanded role in capital, there is little change in the conventional expectations of what it means to be a bride.
[600] McRobbie, Angela. 2007. Top Girls? *Cultural Studies* 21:4-5.
[601] Boden, Sharon. 2007. Consuming Pleasure on the Wedding Day: The Lived Experience of Being a Bride. In Casey, Emma. & Martens, Lydia. (Eds). *Gender and Consumption: Domestic Cultures and the Commercialization of Everyday Life.* Aldershot: Ashgate. p. 111-2.
[602] Heise, Franka. 2012. "I'm a Modern Bride": On the Relationship between Marital Hegemony, Bridal Fictions, and Postfeminism. *M/C Journal* 15:6.
[603] Gqola, Pumla Dineo. 2007. How the 'Cult of Femininity' and Violent masculinities Support Endemic Gender Based Violence in Contemporary South Africa. A*frican Identities* 5:1. p. 116.

private space.[604] The "intimate colonization" of patriarchy is recuperated as weddings, "modern" and "traditional" depend compulsory heterosexuality and male desire. The cult of femininity expressed through the modern, or post-feminist bride therefore works to restore patriarchal marriage, albeit reinvented as the life-long aspiration for the empowered.

Nkele a successful businesswoman who had everything but the perfect man is disappointed in the end. Tebza has told Nkele that he is a successful tender-preneur working on a deal in Italy. He tells her that after a visit to his mother who has encouraged him to initiate the lobola negotiations as soon as possible so that the child can have his name, that he is concerned as he cannot fulfil the obligations of his business deal in Italy and pay the lobola. It is decided that Nkele will take out a loan of R160000 which he will use to pay the lobola. Once the multi-million rand deal is completed, Tebza would easily pay back the money. The 23rd arrives and after a day of excitement and waiting Tebza does not show up. When she sees him later, he says his uncles were in a car accident and were unable to make it. He disappears, visiting infrequently with many excuses which leads a suspicious Nkele to visit his mother, whose address was on the letter sent to her mother to initiate the marriage process. Arriving in her BMW, Nkele sees a heavily pregnant woman pruning her a well-manicured garden much like her own. She asks to see Mama Zaza and is surprised to find that this woman is not Tebza's mother, wearing exactly the same ring as Nkele, she in fact is his finance. When confronted, he lies that she is an obsessed ex-girlfriend and when he leaves this time he does not return. With the help of Lebo, Zaza and Nkele go bar-hopping and find their fiancé in a bar in Orlando West proposing to yet another heavily pregnant woman who has been told that he is the son of Patrice Motsepe. Indeed it is disappointing for Nkele and Zaza, who he swindled out of R400000 of pension and a car. The film comes to a close as the three women joke about the police search for this con artist. Zaza turns to the women and tells them that Tebza did do at least one good thing for them, "sisterhood is very hard to find and I have found it guys. I love you guys."

The therapeutic narrative of progress towards our destiny, while holding marriage as the ideal goal, relies on our disappointment. We love, are disappointed and repeat as

[604] Gqola 2007, p. 117.

Berlant argues that women's intimate culture is framed by optimism. The forms of gendered personhood we are afforded in these texts makes the claim that we can all identify with one another, especially through our experience in suffering well exemplified by the genre of the advice column. The risk we take if we are to live at all, is the risk of love. Sometimes tragic, melodramatic or tragic, the romance plot requires that as women we must at least entertain the belief in the capacity of love and to be needed, whether it is by a lover, a friend or our children. The hope for love is not relinquished even in the face of another bad man. It is not a surprise that Magaza frames a discussion concerned with women's newly gained abilities to pay lobola with the failure of men to come to the table, "we are used to buying our own bling anyway." The presence of newly empowered women seeking love so that they can have it all is frequently coupled with discussions about the failure of men to access respectable masculinity through marriage as they cannot afford to pay for lobola. For example, Mark Hunter argues that marriage rates in South Africa are falling because lobola is too expensive, excluding the masses.[605]

The rising cost and inaccessibility of lobola is read as the product of colonialism and apartheid[606] for example, Mark Hunter argues that following the Native Land Act of 1913, black men were forced off land and into waged labour. The introduction of a market economy had the result of a transformation from cattle to cash, which had broader implications. Not only did this signal the commodification of the practice as "the symbolic meaning of the practice that emphasizes relational interdependence and respect [was] threatened"[607], it also set in motion changes in relations between men and women. Read as a practice transformed, with negative consequences by colonialism, racism and capital; some desire to we inherit understand it as "not bride price," responding to the racists assumptions of missionaries and colonial administrators who viewed lobola as a sign of the backwardness of African societies. In these readings the importance of cattle is related

[605] See Hunter, Mark. 2006. Father's without Amandla: Zulu-Speaking Men and Fatherhood. In Richter, Linda & Morrell, Robert. (Eds). Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa. Pretoria: HSRC Press. Hunter argues that the use of the phrase anginawo amandla, I don't have power is used to express many forms of weakness among Zulu speakers, in particular, in reference to men's inability to pay lobola as a man who fails to marry is viewed as "failing".
[606] See Posel, Dorrit., Rudwick, Stephanie & Casale, Daniela. 2011. Is Marriage a Dying Institution in South Africa? Exploring Changes in Marriage in the Context of iLobolo Payments. *Agenda* 25:1. Also see Hunter, Mark 2010.
[607] Hunter 2006, p. 68.

to women's reproductive labour and some notion of reciprocity between the two families. What is exchanged in these explanations is not the woman, the cattle served as compensation for the loss of her productive and reproductive capacity, enabling male members of the broader kin group to also marry within a patrilineal social structure that we are invited to read as not necessarily patriarchal. Hunter amongst others recognize male unemployment as radically transforming both dominant and non-dominant masculinities in particular as men seek new or different rites of passage to adulthood, denied the "traditional" processes of lobola. We receive then a crisis of masculinity and the black family, as men can no longer access marriage. Mogale Moganedi laments the difficulties young men are faced with in an article titled "How Much is your Daughter?"

> **I do think (and I have no evidence to prove this, I'm simply hypothesising using the simple laws of economics) that some men may be put off by the huge fees. Is it possible that this scourge may well be responsible for the perception that men are non-committal? That they have to be dragged kicking and sometimes screeching (like the brakes of his downgraded car — he had to save for lobola!) on his way to the altar to say "I do?"**
>
> **[…]**
>
> **Lobola was initially intended to enable the man to prove he can take care of his wife and family. Today's version seems to actually set him on the back foot from the very outset. It is a counterproductive exercise that ensures the first few years of marriage are often dedicated to settling debts related to the wedding. The parents have to bear in mind that once having gotten married we need a house in which to live. Why should they then impoverish us before we even leave the mark?**[608]

In this reading the commercialisation of the practice is problematic and as Moganedi continues to suggest may be the reason why some men feel as though they are purchasing their wives. The disempowered man unable to pay lobola becomes one of the figures that the post-apartheid project aims to address. De Robillard notes the relationship between moments of decolonisation as they are frequently marked by processes of rephallicisation enabling black male subjects to assert masculinities materially and symbolically restoring them from the emasculation that colonialism produced.[609] The practice of lobola is then defended within this double space as both problematically commercialized and

[608] Mogandei, Mogale. 2012. How Much is Your Daughter Worth? *Mail & Guardian* 12 July. http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/readerblog/2012/07/12/how-much-is-your-daughter/ accessed 23 April 2013.
[609] De Robillard 2009.

inaccessible, but to be celebrated as a process that affirms phallocentric male tradition in need of recuperation.

Bambacas' definition of white weddings is helpful, as she signals the term as one that refers not simply to the occasion, but the circulation of ideas about the ideal bride that are attached to it: the production of a set of cultural rituals that are designated and validated as traditional."[610] Weddings "do" the work of territorialisation in the ways that they work through a fantasy or aspiration for a "home". It is this view that leads me to map my work topologically, that is, through a reading of connections. The tendency to map space, born out of the desire for conquest and domesticating foreign lands produced a model of mapping that is topographical, invested in accurate representations of space as fixed. On the contrary, through a reading of subjectivity as nomadic, I offer the model of topological maps which use points and lines to reflect positions and linkages. This map also reads popular texts that circulate in what can be vaguely referenced as "women's culture". Take the image above, an advertisement for the wedding venue Thaba yaBatswana. The advertorial features local radio and television anchor Redi Thlabi in a large white dress presumably staged during or following her actual wedding. Like many genres of wedding media, we are invited to read the scene as both fantasy and reality and as such we can act as both participants and spectators; we are being invited to purchase this same dream after all. The image was of course staged or prepared for the advertisement, yet it is a "real" representation as she really did marry there.

[610] Bambacas, p. 287



32 Beautiful Redi Thlabi in her Honeymoon Suite

Redi Thlabi is a public figure who fares well as representative of the opportunities afforded to black women in the post/apartheid state. A useful post-feminist figure, I recognize her as part of a broader intimate public, who through various mediated texts is part of an intimate cultural space that is both general, but personal and intimate as well. In the image, Redi is draped around the bedpost in the honeymoon suite, a synecdoche for the wedding ritual which essentially builds up to the moment where the couple is invited to consummate their marriage in public. If we read wedding venues as theme parks, this venue frames itself at the intersection of African tradition, nature and conservation and luxury. The ordering of space is demonstrated through the domestication of nature and African culture. Weddings, while representative of the domestic or private sphere but are themselves held in the public sphere and the appeal of being publicly intimate it is not simply the "banquet kraal" that we can visually encounter, but the honeymoon suite as an arena for the appearance of the bride-to-be. It is not simply the woman's centrality in the sphere of the "home" and the monopoly she is assumed to take in this space that makes this an image of Redi and not say, her and her new husband; if I follow the posture of Bambacas it relays the notion that it is the bride that is central to the wedding itself.

The image relays the work of a consumer public, mediated through the circulation of texts that are centrally connected with women's relationship to consumption to produce a "woman's culture" that Lauren Berlant defines as something "distinguished by a view that the people marked by femininity already have something in common and are in need of a conversation that feels intimate, revelatory, and a relief even when it is mediated by commodities, even when it is written by strangers who seem, on the face of it, vastly different from each other and from any particular reader."[611] The consumers of this "woman's culture" do not always need its material to be empirically true, even though the image of Redi is "true", it is also a clearly staged process of image-making that makes it a central part of these genres, for we can also stage our own processes of making an image and in sharing the experience, even if it is albeit as aspiration, or indeed a cruel optimism. This means that people participate in this broader "woman's culture" who may share nothing of the particular worlds being represented in a given magazine, book, film, or potential wedding venue; still participate in the promise of belonging that it represents

[611] Berlant 2008, p ix

insofar as they are trying to recalibrate whose experience it can absorb so that they can feel included in the mass intimacy that has promised to include them.

Redi functions as an extension of the promise of inclusion in the narrative of transformation especially through her positioning as a version of a woman who can "have it all" in interesting ways. She is signified in liberal discourses as-feminist-figure that can be projected into a text that reflects her as present and future gift in marriage without disrupting her role as a public feminist of sorts, which speaks to Gqola's arguments on the cult of femininity. While we are invited to see black women's presence in the public sphere as key/central figures as signalling the transformation of the state, and indeed, as the kinds of "new freedoms" of the public that democracy intends, Gqola rightly shows that this is conservative, as it is "saturated by normative heterofemininity; and not just because the intimate sphere provides a convenient register in which to debate and obscure larger knots of social attachment and antagonism: it survives also because its central fantasy […] is the constantly emplotted desire of a complex self to rework the details of her history to become a vague or simpler version of herself, usually in the vicinity of a love plot."[612] This point is important and I also wish to read it alongside another critical aspect of "women's culture", which is that in these sites of shared self-exposure, aspiration and disappointment is a strong discourse on a "well managed" "self-help" which "fits" individualising liberal ethics.

Black women's entry to new sites of work, living, consumption and presumably pleasure mark the post-transition city as transformed as the visual representations of black women are increasingly everywhere, marked through figurations that reflect on the urban/rural, modern/traditional, civil and customary law, the city, respectability, sexuality, production and reproduction and indeed the spaces African women occupy in what commentators have called "transformations" in African marriage. Reading black women's public role in shaping the public/private of both the apartheid and post-apartheid city, I offer the suggestion here that we read black women as principal agents through which modernity and domesticity are invented, rather than as latecomers to modernity as we are often invited to think. In this way, I wish to read Redi as a figure similar to someone like

[612] Berlant 2008, p. 7

Charlotte Manye Maxeke, to work through what this self-ruling black female subject does in disrupting the readings of the "new."

Natasha Erlank, speaking of the "emergent" black middle classes of the early 20th century suggests that the maintenance of gender difference was central to the their new domestic model, and "the distinction between traditional and modern values is also seen in attitudes toward marriage. Modern lifestyles included the refusal of customary marriage practices, such as polygamy, bridewealth, and the choice of marriage partners by parents."[613] The notion of a stable opposition between a "new domestic model" and an old set of traditions is only possible if we understand black subjects as occupying a stable location on a teleological ladder towards modernity.

[613] Erlank 2003, p. 657

Against Love?

I want to return to the episode of Our Perfect Wedding *featuring Thami and Nombululelo. In this scene, we see Thami travelling with the goat intended for the traditional marriage ceremony. Nombululo's family has asked him to pass by with the goat so that they could see it before they purchased their own later that day. Thami hears something shaking and he gets out of the car, shocked to find that the goat had escaped! We are left in stitches at the sight of a goat running through the streets of Dobsonville in Soweto, while three grown men chase it around corners and through people's manicured gardens. Thami had been on the phone with a friend who recounts the story from his perspective, telling us that he had called to check if the suits had been collected when all he heard was "Grab the goat! Grab the goat!" he laughs. The comedy continues as Thami realises that there are other people's goats grazing in these streets and it would only be a matter of time before his goat was mixed up with the others. Relieved when they finally retrieve the animal, they joke about the crisis while the camera turns back to the friend on the phone who tells us, "for us with rituals, especially those that involve ancestors, once you miss one step, from there all the bad things that happen will be attributed to that." Thami and the goat finally arrive at his grandmother's house where as she performs a ritual, burning umphepho and offering traditional beer she speaks to the ancestors asking them to bless her grandson. The narrator intervenes, "as the scent of umphepho rises, they receive an unexpected miracle." Thami and Nombululelo had not realised that they needed to book a date to marry through civil rites at the Department of Home Affairs. With two days to go, they receive a phone call from their priest telling them that he had managed to get them a last minute date leaving the couple massively relieved as they were worried that they would only be able to marry after their wedding that Saturday. The following day they arrive at the church late, having forgotten the required ID photos and find the church locked. This misfortune leads to a positive outcome as the late arrival of the official and unavailability of the originally intended church give the couple enough time to take photographs and travel to another church, the church that they would in fact be having their wedding in on the following day. The narration invites to see this blessing, ultimately leading to their marriage in the family church as the outcome of the respect that they pay in following tradition. In a heady mix a Christian god, their Zulu and Xhosa ancestors and a set of consumptive performances of ritual lead to their romantic climax as Thami takes Nombulelo's hand in marriage.*

My thinking about weddings was sparked by a sudden suspicion of intimate attachment. I, like all of the women I interviewed had quite naively imagined that there is love and then there is an explosive celebration of that love as two individuals form a romantic union. I should add here that my own act of idealizing companionate marriage was perhaps the most naïve on two counts. The first being that I had long recognized the site of the personal as political: this has been the site of my activism and thinking. The second is that

I would fail to recognize that romantic love and marriage are so closely implicated within the broader languages of kinship and belonging. I recall heady conversations with all of the participants in this project about what we all read as people acting "crazy" with regards to weddings, wanting to participate and feel included or involved to such an extent that the sanity-restoring response for one positioned as the bride was to recognize that this is not about you and calmly move on. There is a third and new contention I hold with regards to this matter, that the position of the bride is one that places her at the centre of a fantasy, a post-feminist fantasy that signals the achievements of liberal subjecthood granted to women in a world that claims transformation through the language of equality, and yet it is this same position that produces girls-as-women in an asymmetrical relation of gendered power within the heterosexual matrix.

The work I have done here has been to take elements of marriage ritual and practice in South Africa and place them into broader social, political and historical context while posing arguments about both the ways that we are made into subjects both "properly" and "not properly human" through the meanings produced in these performances. Weddings I argue, are staged: they perform our aspirations to belong within the broader languages of consumption, of kinship, of citizenship in ways that reflect what Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou pose as the "good life" under the biopolitical conditions of neoliberal governmentality. I challenge the dichotomising language about tradition and the modern, not only because it is boring and unhelpful, but because of the ways it is layered into other ontological dichotomies that work to produce difference and naturalize the processes by which bodies are constituted and regulated as raced, gendered and sexed. Part of the ways that this layering happens is through the prioritising of a teleological framework of time. The previous chapters reflect a troubling of a singular and linear time, with broader implications for the reading of space/place and the local.

In attempting the work of summary, it occurs to me that it might have been simpler to write a neater narrative that offered greater attention to the specific details of the weddings I attended, or the interviews conducted. The breadth of materials that I examined was broad and included archival documents, magazines, feature films and televisions program and participant observation and I read all of these materials as interpretive texts from which I gather multiple, multi-and-covalent, contradictory, co-

productive narratives about the ways the marriage ritual imbues and is imbued with meaning and intention. In **A Question of Power**, I intend to foreground the danger I felt posed by the proposal of a neat narrative that claimed authoritative truths about the conditions of the present; that assumed a progressive narrative of the post/apartheid place, space and time which through a loud nationalist narrative claims movement from a past towards a future, laced by successes, delusions and disappointments depending on the view one sits from. The scenes I have observed reflect the desires of the nationalist narrative but also reflect the excesses of it. The sites that I prioritise reflect the connections I have made between these texts. There are a number of key words that I am keen to place close emphasis upon:

- Temporality
- Vision
- The wedding ritual
- Race
- Sex/gender/sexuality and the heterosexual matrix
- Becoming black-woman-bride
- Image production
- Consumption
- Taste
- Belonging

I conclude with love because I argue that it sits as the centrepiece of the ritual I examine and informs the logics of all of the key words I outline above. Love is one of the things that under the neoliberal framework Butler and Athanasiou describe as the "good life", is offered to us as universal, as an achievement and further as a "freedom". If I return to my critique of "the modern", I also invoke the figure of Africa which lurks through my analysis to support their point, as work on love in Africa has read it (sometimes in ways that resist it) as a part of the experience of being or becoming a modern subject. It is implied, even in the most critical work that social transformations in Africa have made the expression of romantic love and the practice of companionate marriage plausible indeed as a new "freedom," even when read as a part of longer histories of the transnational movement

of affective ideals,[614] yet most certainly a characteristic of the modern, even when read as multiple and vernacular. Scholarly work on love read it as an instantiation of modernity. I would follow Eva Illouz who argues that love is always already a part of the expression of being/becoming a modern subject through the means of consumption[615] and as I argue earlier, a way that class and race are constituted within the language of difference. This specific pointing is necessary in complicating the sites or spaces of the modern.

I begin this concluding chapter with a reflection on an episode of *Our Perfect Wedding.* The show follows the couple in the twenty-four hours leading up to the moment when they declare their love in public, or as I suggest at the beginning in following Vikki Bell, that it is a moment at which we are invited to position ourselves as cultural beings and further, that culture itself is placed within spatio-temporal and discursive boundaries that are bodily, sexualized and racialised.[616] I enter this work with an interest in women, who as I offer are placed as the symbolic centrepiece of marriage practices. Marriage practices place women at the centre of a ritualised transfer in kinship mergers and exchanges. This point, along with the consumptive characteristics of marriage rituals are reasons why I recognize the white wedding and traditional marriage rituals as *not* distinct practices. Yet, for black women who have to engage with multiple rites of marriage that make claims to be distinct or perform different kinds of cultural awareness. I follow the discussion between Sonja Laden and Benita de Robillard who follow the dichotomizing language between white weddings and traditional marriage. Laden reads the invocation of this doubling as the result of a contestation in representation in black consumer magazines for women like *True Love.* These magazines confirm the status of new socialities offered to black women in the democratic period in spaces such as work or the formerly white suburb through a desirable domestic figure, while invoking debates about the "modern" and "traditional" to redefine and re-legitimise the indigenous customs of black South

[614] See Hirsch, Jennifer S & Wardlow, Holly. (Eds). 2006. *Modern Loves The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.*;* Padilla, Mark, B.; Hirsch, Jennifer S.; Munõz-Labby, Miguel.; Robert E. Sember, Robert E. & Richard G. Parker, Richard G. (Eds). 2007. *Love & Globalization: Transformations of Intimacy in the Contemporary World* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press; Also see Cole, Jennifer & Thomas, Lynn. (Eds) 2009. *Love in Africa*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
[615] See Illouz 1997
[616] Bell 1998, p. 464-5.

Africans.[617] De Robillard instead argues that it is difficult to "discern a seamless legitimisation of the practices of lobola, customary marriages and polygamous sexuality" in these texts,[618] in fact they pose a contradiction. The scripts that frame the presentation of monogamous romantic couples is confronted with a contradiction when it comes to "our roots". Making reference to an article about a "real wedding" in *True Love Bride,* de Robillard argues:

> Notwithstanding Collins's acknowledgement that cash, rather than cattle, is now the "preferred currency" in lobola negotiations, the article is framed by, and saturated with, quaint illustrations of cows. These illustrations function as a synecdoche, which suggests that a potentially vexing set of "rural traditions" has been comfortably recast and distilled into a modern conception of the monogamous heterosexual romantic couple. The text seems caught between obligation to acknowledge that marriages in South Africa are not always, or only, "civil" unions and a fear of opening up troublesome aspects of heterosexual politics that is infused with racial politics. In doing so it celebrates lobola without acknowledging that complementary marriage processes are undergoing changes and are sometimes contested by an audience the magazines presumably want to engage.[619]

"Traditional" appears to signal the things we probably usefully recognize as locking us into particular projects that re-inscribe our locations within problematic structures of power and yet they also, as Laden suggests, become sites for the negotiations of a politics. Romantic love, implied as absent in polygamous marriage in de Robillard's analysis, but presumed by both and many others as a logic outside of tradition is a point I have hankered on through this work precisely because of the ways it get assumed into the language of freedom and self-possession. Perhaps these are the limits of our language when it comes to reading intimacy that (sometimes for good political reasons) lock us into impossible dialectical oppositions. I should not forget to address the address the goats, the cows and the manicured gardens. I invoke them because they are central to the ways I am trying to unravel desire. One of the ways of reading I impose on this dissertation is that of psychoanalysis, for many reasons related to the processes of subjectivation as well as desire. The marriage ritual is a scene that lends itself to psychoanalytic reading for reasons I have demonstrated, especially through the bride's relation to the mirror, or the image.

[617] Laden 2001 p. 527-8
[618] De Robillard, Benita. 2009 p. 84
[619] De Robillard 2009 p. 87

The "good life", of self-possession, property and propriety is of course reinforced through the processes of image-production where we can project ourselves into the narratives of humanism through representation. So what is it about these animals that troubles de Robillard, or becomes absolutely necessary for the proper enactment of the ritual for Thami?

Now the ritual of the white wedding is undoubtedly, despite the re-invention of the traditions associated to it – also a ritual in the traffic of women, to borrow Gayle Rubin's terminology. I want to think about the intervention of Vikki Bell who thoughtfully examines the ritual performance of the bride giving her hand to her groom. Of course within the traditional frame-work this hand would be given by her father or other paternal figure to said groom; a "tradition" many brides disrupt with the intent to re-signify the ritual and perform their "choice" in the matter. Bell reads "the scene" closely, of an anxious bride-to-be as she hands over her hand, a moment that is a complicated set of becomings:

> '[S]liding off the glove without turning it inside out.' What is it about the interior of the bride's glove that makes it unseemly at the marriage ceremony? Perhaps the interior of the glove is to be hidden in a ceremony that is about the outward displays of circulation - the circle of the wedding ring that displays the circulation, the gifting, of women. Her interiority disrupts an exchange between the men who are becoming linked through her, in which she is the exchanged, the gifted; or maybe more simply her movement would appear too keen to receive the ring, to receive him, and if so, there is a loss of serenity. In short, it would not be very becoming; and instead, she has to take her time - 'nobody will rush you'. For taking her hand in marriage would be too monstrous were she to turn herself, by turning the glove, into a double-handed creature, as if she had two right hands; the hand fleetingly, cruelly, demonstrating a monstrosity prior to the signing of her bond/band.
>
> There is already too much to say here. There are already too many allusions. To the hand, the gift, the present (the temporal, the given), the exchange, the circle, the waiting, the becoming, the signing (of the hand, of the register, of humanity).

The Law, capital L, that marriage rituals enact are premised around becomings that are also processes of boundary-making or as I suggest in the dissertation, of territorializing. It is an ordering of space and time; of the body; of the body in relation to other bodies; and of other kinds of bodies, "insides and outsides" of "cultural groups", or kinship, or race that lock us into a progressive narrative between pasts, presents and the future. The codification of multiple legal codes regarding marriage in South Africa make these

processes of boundary-work, presenting the diversity of these codes appear as an extension of an inclusive projection of freedom and democratic inclusion. And yet it is the Law, capital L which prevails. The scene at the Department of Home Affairs where it would presumably be imagined to be a site were two self-possessed individuals enter a contractual agreement on the terms of liberal "freedom", are laden with the symbolisms of exchange attached to the wedding ritual. Even when the bodies enacting the ritual resist this framing of their practice of freedom, the language prevails which is why I follow Robyn Wiegman's critique of the law of marriage altogether, for it may increasingly become "inclusive", but requires us to be projected into history through a repetition of a fundamentally problematic ordering.

The monstrous hand that is exchanged returns us to this question of being properly human. I dedicate a chapter to the monstrous figuration of the Bridezilla because of the ways that it illustrates the anxieties and incompleteness of becoming bride, but also because it signals the aspiration for, and failure of the work of becoming properly human. The monstrous hand in Bell's description is mirrored in the monstrous relations between the bride and the horse-and-carriage, perhaps quite similarly to the worry de Robillard feels about the quaint cows as backdrop, which serve as avatars for the exchange in women. This mirroring of women-species and animal species causes us anxiety. It makes us worry about our freedoms, or relative freedoms. The transformations that lead us to the assumption that the "lovematch" is revolutionary[620] and occupy the binary logic that supports the reading of marriage practices within an uncritical reading of cultural difference as natural and ahistorical. In the previous chapter, in reading lobola through the narrative of romantic love, I do not only intend to illustrate that African "traditional marriage" is framed in the logic of romantic love, despite the not-so-clever insinuation we are invited to accept by the play of words that suggest that lobola and love are in contradiction. I want to also think about black women's location in relation to the inventions of domesticity, consumption and love because of the ways they relate not only to the invention of the "modern white wedding," but also because I make the suggestion that it is in the logics of the domestic revolution that liberal feminist demands are articulated. The conquest of the private sphere by early domestic feminists is signalled by

[620] Coontz 2006

women's abilities to not only enter the public sphere through suffrage, work and consumption, but also by their relief from the aspects of domestic labour in the home as this work was relegated to the "domestic worker." Ruling the home, then is signalled by the liberated woman's status as the "domestic goddess." I read the domestic revolution in a number of ways. In **The White Wedding** I am making the suggestion that the imperial project through settlement, the discourse surrounding "landscape" and in its practices of territorializing worked to domesticate the empire. This project of domesticating empire mirrors the project of domesticating the natives who act as an extension of the landscape. However, in offering a reading of "good taste," I suggest that there is simultaneous project to domesticate the European settler, and the desire to anxiously regulate the racial, sexual and bodily boundaries, which lead to new architectures so that domestic space undergoes transformations central to the imagining of compulsory heterosexuality, kinship and heteronormativity. In this regard, I want to follow arguments posed by Evelyn Blackwood on what or how "heteronormativity" works, as a critique of normative heterosexuality. Blackwood argues that despite its critique, the term "participates in its own erasures of gender and ethnic relations within heterosexuality." Blackwood continues:

> One cannot talk about heterosexuality or homosexuality or any sexuality without recognizing how it is interpreted, constructed, hedged about, and defined differently across genders, ethnicities, and classes; how hegemonic ideologies come into play to limit or privilege certain sexualities and the gendered and raced positions that are created and maintained by dominant groups or states around those sexualities; and how gendered and raced categories of people come to claim these sexualities and their privileges or stigmas or to resist labelling imposed by dominant groups.[621]

Heidi Nast makes a similar move in interrupting the oedipal triad of "Mummy-Daddy-Me" that underpins Patriarchal Law and the heteronormative family with the argument that modern constructions of race are not simply "add-on" logics, but are informed by and inherent to a normative and normalizing family quadrat of "Mother, Father, Son and the Repressed bestial to argue that "racism's immanence to oedipal familial constructions."[622]

[621] Blackwood, Evelyn. 2005. The Specter of the Patriarchal Man. American Ethnologist 32: 1. p. 43
[622] Nast 2000 p 215

The continued recall to an opposition between customary and civil law is not for nothing, as I am reminded by Jeanne Prinsloo's thoughtful reflections.[623] Prinsloo is interested in the ways the notion of a "tribe", or ethnic identity gets deployed in relation to democratic governance, or a civil identity. The notion of the tribe, an inheritance of "indirect rule" and its segregationist policies; is retained in our present. Dorrit Posel and Stephanie Rudwick conducted research on present perceptions of customary law and Lobola, finding that the practice was contested, invented, reinvented and debated, much in the same ways that I found.[624] Rudwick and Posel conclude in finding that where there was consensus was in relation to a sense of obligation to the practice of lobola, framed around an affect towards "collectivist identity politics." This conclusion corroborates Prinsloo's observation; despite a variety of senses about the practice, and the ways that it is conterminous with the idea of a customary identity, however invented, rehearsed, failed and reconstituted; is retained.

A large part of my work is concerned with the ways the ways we use these rituals to make claims about being properly human. The different versions of humanism that I describe and critique read inclusion as a political site that signals change, and progression and the affects we gain from inclusion within the humanist vision are meant to make us happy. And yet sometimes they do not. There are more and less "proper" ways of projecting oneself into history through marriage that hinge upon the production of inclusions and expulsions, and the work of projecting ourselves into the scene requires, despite hard work at times, that we become protagonists within a scripted fantasy. The image-work we do in becoming represented within these logics does not fail at reducing those who despite the demand for the liberal "rights" of the human, where always already meant to be excluded from it so I am left with the position that adding oneself, or finding one's place within the fantasy appears to continue the work of replicating the symbolic, imaginary and real orders which render particular kinds of bodies illegible and precarious. All of these levels occur in a multiplied simultaneity yet of course we often must return to the level of the "real" to read or speak to what the material consequences are. What are

[623] See Prinsloo, Jeanne. 2007. News Constructions of Customary Identity versus Democratic Practice: The Case of Lindiwe Dlamini and Mswati III of Swaziland. *Communicatio* 33:1.
[624] See Rudwick, Stephanie & Posel, Dorrit. 2014. Contemporary Functions of iLobolo (Bridewealth) in Urban South African Zulu Society. *Journal for Contemporary African Studies* 32:1.

the affective consequences of the becoming-black-bride, as an in-between-ness – human-not-so-human, bridging nature/culture, or the human/animal?

> Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingment or extrusion of a momentary of sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensisties and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, towards through and estension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. Indeed, affect is persistent proof fo the body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinancies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations.[625]

A complicated Foucauldian order of things, as proposed by Samantha Pinto in her reading of the blues that has "a quality and form that challenges some of the dominant power structures, is complicit with others and establishes structures of meaning of its own."[626] Her project is invested in an disordered, or reorder identity politics concerned with the representation of black women, but rather than one that depends on a notion of essential woman, or is bound to nationalist fantasy concerned with what black woman means or signals for a black nationalist project, Pinto suggests the possibilities of a inventing a language that is outside of the logics of the nation. In beginning with becoming black woman, I am keen for the same, so centring black women at the heart of this project intends to do this, with the same intention to dislocate a stable black subject.[627] Pinto's project is concerned with narrative, and precisely with how one confronts the teleological narrative form. In reading a number of narrative forms and discursive and disciplinary texts, my intention is the same, so that rather than seeing the weddings of black subjects in a post/apartheid state as a product of a set of historical developments, it is my intention to project a view of time and space that collapses multiple pasts and presents. My thinking on how the local operates has also always been troubled with a view of settlement, and

[625] Gregg, Melissa & Seigworth, Gregory 2010b p1
[626] Pinto 2013, p 1-2.
[627] Pinto 2013, p. 3

has instead assumed a narrative of travel. The wedding ceremony itself mimics the role that travel plays in building the fantasy of territorialisation that the marriage contract intends to produce. The staging of the marriage ritual is brought to conclusion with the real and performative ritual of travel. It is not travel to and from, with the intention of settlement that Pinto intends to present as the work of diaspora, and it is not just physical movements, but involves movements in aesthetic and interpretive strategies.[628] .

In **A Question of Power** I introduce the subject as well as the main figure/figuration of the study, which is invested in how one reads/thinks the experience of black women as brides, without problematic recursions to essentialism. I am further disinvesting in certain modes of reading particular objects/subjects of knowledge which include women, Africa, emotions/affects etc… I invoke Bessie Head's novelized account as inspiration because of the manner by which she presents a process of subjectivation that is always already split, multiplying and in processes of becoming in/from a space that unapologetically engages as such, despite the context around her which is committed to utopic visions that are often univocular, or speak as such under the claims of universalism or universal applicability within a political project that wants to assume authority but probably should not. The schizophrenic narrative would be characterized through certain knowledge "ruptures" (postmodernism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology as examples) but refuses to be legible as induced/seduced/produced by and then made legible to the experience of a black female subject.

The White Wedding is where I begin, re-reading the history of the formalization and spread of the white wedding and dislocating it from the assumption that it is a "white" practice that "spread" to Africa and other places through the processes of globalization. I further contend that the white wedding, formalized in the period of high colonialism worked to produce a fantasy of public and private space, requiring the domestication of women as well as foreign land. The discursive terrain through which the meanings of the ritual are produced require race, class and colony in order for the romance and fantasy the wedding aims to perform to work. Following Natasha Erlank, by this time the white wedding is already a standard marriage practice for urban black South Africans[629], and as

[628] Pinto 2013, p. 4
[629] Erlank, Natasha. Forthcoming. (Unpublished) The White Wedding: Affect and Economy in South Africa in the Early Twentieth Century.

she offers, this "muchato", operates easily alongside the 'traditional" practice of lobola. I therefore refute the reading of white weddings as "new" for black South Africans, seeking a more complex reading of the ways that the lavish white weddings of a presumed to be "new" black middle class are read within the language of "new money" and "bling". The notion of taste, good and bad, I argue is historically imbued with all sorts of meanings and intentions about the civilising process. In this way, good taste was always an issue bound to race. In one way, the white wedding comes into being as an instantiation or symbol of whiteness and imperial power, explaining why black people's weddings continue to be read within the register of "not quite/not white."

The next chapter **The Oppositional Gaze** intends to extend the arguments posed in the previous chapter about the display of bodies in examining the work of wedding photography. Struck by an image from Khanyisile's wedding that employed a mode of nostalgia reminiscent of Victorian portraiture like the photographs in Santu Mofokeng's *Black Photo Album.* The representations of black subjects and women in visual culture arguably construct both as objects of desire for a white male gaze, which critical race and feminist critics have attempted to read and offer alternative modes of looking. First is a reading of how women come to be objects of the male gaze and in particular how the language of romance is enacted through the depiction of fantasy or fairy-tale like transformation. I do a reading of a photograph of a bride looking into the mirror as she prepares for her wedding, a common wedding photography genre; to think about how we are interpolated into the male gaze through a narcissistic gaze. What does it mean to turn the gaze on black women as the subjects of a romantic narrative? bell hooks argues that black women, always already suspicious of the ways they are represented have an "oppositional gaze", a mode I intend to explore as a mode by and through which black women operate against the "bridal gaze." I offer both as readings of what re-representing the self through photographs can offer. I pay attention to Johannesburg in particular as the site of this re-representation, arguing then that this oppositional politics is an act of reterritorialization, and as such attempts to reclaim the self as a subject, as well as the city. In so doing, I initiate the discussion on acts of territorialisation and the kinds of claims they make in relation to the valences of dispossession.

In **Black Bridezillas** I draw from the connections between the hysteria of the bride and the body that needs to be contained in the work of becoming a bride. The figure of the

Bridezilla bridges such a gap, as becoming a bride for instance requires a triumph over needs and wants, represented by the thin body: "a stripping down to some clear, distinct, essence of the self, fat represents just the opposite – the shame of being too present, too hungry, too overbearing, too needy, overflowing with unsightly desire, or simply "too much." Often the fear of being "too much" will have a strong sexual dimension."[630] I draw from literature that reads women, and black women in particular within the dialectics of nature and culture, for instance through the notion of fat. Read as "more natural", and bridal magazines follow common discourses of black women's "natural" standards of beauty as "fat", despite the dominance of a discourse that requires black women to be thin. This fat, or excess, as Bordo offers is related to a narrative of sexual excess that requires further elaboration. The Bridezilla as a figure is monstrous, "the grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change."[631] I am therefore interested in the tensions between the containment of the body, emotion and sexual excess alongside the possibilities the body offers to transgress boundaries.

Lobola for My Love is interested in love as a labour and an aspiration. The therapeutic narrative of progress towards our destiny, while holding marriage as the ideal goal, relies on our disappointment. We love, are disappointed and repeat as Berlant argues that women's intimate culture is framed by optimism. The forms of gendered personhood we are afforded in these texts makes the claim that we can all identify with one another, especially through our experience in suffering, well exemplified by the genre of the advice column. Women's culture as presented by Berlant constructs the figure of the bride as the ideal achievement for women perpetuating the idea that marriage is a moral imperative, particularly because it is assumed that we now live in a world where as modern women can have it all. In post-transition South Africa, it is assumed that transformation has raced and gendered implications offering a constitution that intends to offer equality between races and genders. Second wave feminisms critical of marriage practice as both a sign and

[630] Bordo 2003 p. 462
[631] Russo, Mary. 1995. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity.* New York, NY: Psychology Press. p. 8

a source of women's oppressions[632] are assumed irrelevant in this context, as equality has been achieved. We certainly see this equality in the figures of success presented to us in magazines like *Destiny.* Like the workplace, marriage too is perceived as a site of equality[633] leading Angela McRobbie to argue that feminism's view of marriage as problematic "can now be shown to be a mistake."[634] Framed with these assumptions, the bride that we are invited to be is a post-feminist figure invited into a "new sexual contract" that offers us the post-feminist guise of equality.[635] Through this contract, as women we are invited to participate in consumer culture, becoming hypervisible[636]. Through beauty and fashion, this view encourages us to believe that we can displace patriarchal authority taking up sexual freedoms originally intended only for men. Paying one's own lobola, in this view is the product of our success as wage-earning career girls, and the pursuit of marriage comes part in parcel within this logic that encourages us to always be perfecting ourselves. No longer passive, weddings offer us the occasion to act out our choices. I also then suggest that this post-feminist black woman is not as "new" or produced by a post/apartheid condition by tracing a longer genealogy of liberal feminisms.

So I conclude with the statement/question "Against Love?" reading intimate attachment as aporetic dispossession. Butler and Athanasiou describe dispossession as an aporia:

> Dispossession is a troubling concept. It is troubling that as we seek to write about it, it is highly possible that it gets us into trouble. In order to put this troubling concept to work – that is, in order to engage with the ways in which it gets us into an aporia. On the one side, dispossession signifies an inaugural submission of the subject-to-be to norms of intelligibility, a submission which, in its paradoxical simultaneity with mastery, constitutes the ambivalent and tenuous processes of subjection. It thus resonates with the psychic foreclosures that determine which "passionate attachments" are possible and plausible for "one" to become a subject. In this sense, dispossession encompasses the constituted, preemptive losses that condition one's being dispossessed (or letting oneself become dispossessed) by another: one is

[632] See Friedan, Betty. 1973. *The Feminine Mystique.* Ringwood: Penguin Books. and Rich, Adrienne. 1980. Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Signs* 5 for example.
[633] See Geller, Jaqlyn. 2001. *Here Comes the Bride. Women, Weddings, and the Marriage Mystique*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows for example.
[634] McRobbie, Angela. 2009. *The Aftermath of Feminism. Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage. p. 20.
[635] See Schuster, Sherril Horowitz. 1997. Here Comes the Bride: Wedding Announcements and Bridal Norms. *Sociological Focus* 30:3. In this study, Schuster finds that despite women's expanded role in capital, there is little change in the conventional expectations of what it means to be a bride.
[636] McRobbie, Angela. 2007. Top Girls? *Cultural Studies* 21:4-5.

> moved to the other and by the other – exposed and affected by the other's vulnerability. The subject comes to "exist" by installing within itself lost objects along with the social norms that regulate the subject's disposition to the address of the other. On the other side (the extent to which this side can be assumed as "other" will have to remain in suspension for a while), being dispossessed refers to processes and ideologies by which persons are disowned and abjected by normative and normalizing powers that define cultural intelligibility and that regulate the distribution of vulnerability; loss of land and community; ownership of one's living body by another person, as in histories of slavery; subjections to military, imperial, and economic violence; poverty, sectarian regimes, biopolitical subjectivation, liberal possessive individualism, neoliberal governmentality and precaritazation.

I read the processes of territorialisation, which are ultimately why we are all always already dispossessed as macro and microfascisms, many of which we take for granted in the everyday and a large part of my project here is to read these microfascisms and seek a deterritorializing mode of thinking. And yet, how do I resist the urge or desire as I read of people recognize to be properly human. The politics I aim for here privilege a reading of desire that as not lack, but sees desire as productive. And it also privileges a post or anti-humanist posturing. It is perhaps the reason why I wish to end with the goats, cows and horses as images that disrupt. The traffic in women as not properly human mirrored in the connection with animal-bodies is central to the biopolitical governmentality of the world we live in, and which makes certain bodies (reduced to mere matter) precarious. Yet I want to see the apparent in-between-ness and failure of being properly human as potentially disruptive in ways Rosi Braidotti suggests:

> Sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences, from being categorical boundary markers under Humanism, have become unhinged and act as the forces leading to the elaboration of alternative modes of transversal subjectivity, which extend not only beyond gender and race, but also beyond the human.[637]

There is still so much to say. The tensions I play with here are grounded in the difficulties of relationality and freedom that move far beyond a dialectical logic. The political work of being, or becoming recognizable within the logics that frame our conceptions of the proper have real effect and affect in the world. Yet I see potential unbecoming in the consistent failures of our desires to be seen, to aspire to become within those frames. I began with ideas around aspirations to consume, one way of being legible or recognizable as a proper subject in this world. And I suppose it is not simply a fetishizing of failure that

[637] Braidotti, Rosi. 2013. *The Posthuman.* Cambridge: Polity. p 98

I present here, but a critique of the project of the proper human. It is not simply failure. In the liminal site of the not-quite/not-white is the instability of the whiteness itself, expose it and make it fragile.

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Drum

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Spring/Summer 2013, Issue 2
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A Stylish Affair, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 22-25.
Elegant and Vibrant, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 26-29.

Perfect Memories, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 30-33.
Sunshine and Blue Skies, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 34-37.
Charming and Chic, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 38-41.
Step into a Fairy-tale, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 42-45.
Glamour and Romance, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 46-49.
Family and Happiness, Reader Weddings Features. p. 50-51.
Modern Tradition, Reader Weddings Feature. p. 52-53.
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Perfect Fit. (Feature on Body Shape and the Perfect Dress) p. 58-69.
Real Women don't fake it, Black like Me Advertorial. p. 67.
A Touch of Tradition. (Feature on Traditional Outfits) p. 80-89.
African Runway, Feature on Fashion Designer Matome Seshoka. p. 90-93.
Cake, Glorious Cake, Feature on Wedding Cakes for Traditional Weddings. p. 104-5.
Nkomo, Pamela. Tips from the Expert. p. 106-8.

Fairlady Bride

Summer 2010/2012
Pretorius, Liesl & Shihambo, Sunshine. Traditional or Conventional? p. 53-58
The Choice that Lasts a Lifetime (Advertorial for Anglo Platinum). p. 59
6 Real Weddings to Inspire You. p. 61-92
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April-September 2012, Issue 1
Thulo, Lebogang. Editor's Letter. p. 9.
Ndaba-Harrington, Sophie. Good Advice. p. 16.
Nubian Bride Wedding Timeline. p. 18-22.
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Christopher, Kgomotso. A Love No Less Ordinary. p. 30-32.
Mphalala, Pearl. Saying "I do"… the Zulu way. p. 34-36.
Fit for a Queen (Fashion Editorial). p. 38-45.
The Temptress (Lingerie Fashion Editorial). p. 50-54.
van Zyl, Melissa. Wedding Looks for Every Bride. p. 66-67.
Jennifer and Loyiso, Real Weddings Feature. p. 72-76.
Namhla and Thuse, Real Weddings Feature. p. 78-80.
Ncumisa and Thulani, Real Weddings Feature. p. 82-84.
Zoleka and Patrick, Real Weddings Feature. p. 86-88.
Terisha and Sheraz, Real Weddings Feature. p. 90-92.
Khumi and Simphiwe, Real Weddings Feature. p. 94-96.

Ideal Venues. p. 118-120.
Nubian Bridal Gowns (Fashion/Wedding Dress Feature). p. 133-148

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Summer 2008/2009, Issue 11
Sitole, Dorah. Editor's Letter. p. 8.
Malatse, Thebe. African Queen (Fashion Editorial on Dresses for a Traditional Wedding). p. 20-30.
Malatse, Thebe. You're Beautiful (Fashion Editorial for Dresses for a 'Western' Wedding). p. 32-40.
Ferguson, Melinda. Wedding Planners, What's the Fuss? p. 64-6.
Khumalo, Nonhlahla. Here Calms the Bride. p. 68-72.
Young, Norma. Going to the Chapel. p. 86-91.
Young, Norma. Mother (in-Law) Knows Best. p. 4.
Shaw, Linda. Do I Really Take This Man? p. 96-8.
Timeless Pleasures (Advertorial for Noritake). p. 99.
Win a Wedding, Winners: Sindiswa and Innocent Mbotshwa. p. 114-5.
Thandi and Milan Masondo, Real Weddings Feature. p. 116-7.
Phumelele and Thabo Matji, Real Weddings Feature. p. 118-9.
Khensani and Sifiso Mbelengwa, Real Weddings Feature. p. 120-1.
Nomile and Joseph Ngqendesha, Real Weddings Feature. p. 122-3.
Pollet and Tim, Real Weddings Feature. p. 124-5.

Summer 2012/2013, Issue16
Tshabalala, Lerato. It's a Love Thing (Editorial). p. 14.
Mahlaba, Palesa. Celebrity Weddings. p. 16.
Joseph, Jacqui. Grooming Guide. p. 18-20.
The Choice that Lasts a Lifetime (Platinum Advertorial). p. 21.
Ncgobo, Ndumiso. The Truth about Marriage. p. 30.
Mopedi, Kemong. Brand New Day. (Interview with Loyiso Bala) p. 32.
Mogoathle, Lerato. Picture Perfect. p. 34-6.
Mahlaba, Palesa. Here Comes the Bride. (Fashion Feature). p. 40-6.
Mahlaba, Palesa. Honeymoon Numbers (Trend Report on Lingerie). p. 48-52.
Ntintili-Sinxoto, Mpumi. Makoti Chic (Fashion Editorial). p. 54-8.
Mothlabane, Vuyiswa. Grooming Glory (Feature on Hair). p. 70-4.
Sekhula, Thabiso. Thank you, Pastor. p. 78.
Ferguson, Melinda. Good Bride, Bad Bride (Game/Quiz). p. 79-81.
Molefe, Tokiso. Solid as a Rock. p. 84-8.
Sekhula, Thabiso. Rules of Engagement. p. 90-2.
Mopedi, Kemong. A Love that Knew No Colour. p. 94.
Motsenyane, Lebo. The Wedding Planner. p. 100-2.
Moshoeli, Lerato. Fit for the Aisle. p. 104-6.
Mogoatlhe, Lerato. Before Saying I Do. p. 108-10.
First Night Fantasies (Feature on Sex). p. 112-3.
Blissful Sounds. p. 118-22.
Kellhofer-Habib, Katja. Rooftop Chic. p.128-9.

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The Professionals: Advice on Photography, Blooms and Looking your Best. p. 31-35.
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Norris, Phillipa. Kalahari Dreaming (Feature on a Bush Honeymoon). p. 142-149.

2008, Issue 2
Two’s Company. p. 42-5
New Heights (Fashion Feature). p. 80-96
An Affair to Remember (Fashion Feature). p. 100-16
Take it Slow (Island Honeymoon). p. 156-161

2012/2013 Issue 2
Rheeder, Eulogi. On Location. 36-40
Big City Lights (Fashion Editorial). p. 50-61
Watters, Lauren. Urban Legend. p. 62-3
Ever After (Fashion Editorial). p. 98-109
Be Spellbinding. p. 110
Centre Stage (Fashion Editorial, Lingerie). p. 122-8
Kelly-Lee and Brett Andrews (Real Weddings, Bush). p. 136-7
Ingarfield, Heather. Call of the Wild (Honeymoons). p. 158-162

Wedding Guide

2012/2013
African Bride Section – Gauteng p. 41-64

Wedding Inspirations

Autumn 2011
Wedding Belles. p. 46-53.
Body Countdown to the Big Day. p. 66-68.
Healthy Bride (Eating Plan). p. 70-71.
Look Great in Your Wedding Dress (Fitness Plan). p. 72-73.
Fairy tales Do Come True, Dis-Chem Skincare Laser Salon Advertorial. p. 74-75.
Gallagher, Julie. & Royston, Alex. It’s Party Time! p. 82-86.
White Magic (Feature on Wedding Flowers). p. 88-94.
A Grand Affair, Nwabisa and Mikki Xayiya. p. 118-123.
Honeymoon Hotlist. p. 124-130.

Spring 2011
Legging it. p. 56-7
Looks to Love. p. 62-68
Yes, You Can Lose the Weight! (Advertorial for USN Phedra Cut). p. 69
Van der Knaap, Lisa 30 Top Tips to a Perfect Wedding Reception. p. 76-80
Muldersdrift Wedding Mile p. 79
A Modern Classic, Lance and Linda Boyd. p. 116-19
Love and Adventure, Sacha and Kathryn Matulovich. p. 120-23
Golden Glamour, Motlatsi and Kopano Mabaso. p. 124-7
Oh Happy Day! Peter and Philippa Shaw.p. 128-131
A Dream Come True, Farouk Farista and Sharon Rao-Farista. p. 132-5
Van der Knaap, Lisa. Off the Beaten Track. p. 140-2
Dream Weddings, Advertorial for Tala Game Reserve. p. 143

Winter 2011
Cover-up Couture. p. 16-7
City Chic. p. 22-33
Winter-proof Your Beauty Regime. p. 42-4
Urban Glamour. p. 52-7
A Snapshot of the Big Day. p. 78-81
Together Forever, Van Zyl and Eugené Wait. p. 84-7
A Celebration of Love, Kulani and Nlhensani Lebese. p. 88-91
Inner-city Romance, Panos Zagaretos and Chrissi Deligatos. p. 92-5
A Fabulous Fusion, Sasha Naidoo and Emma Collet-Naidoo. p. 96-9
From the Heart, Johan and Jayne Harley. p. 100-3

Summer 2013/2012
Natural Beauty (Fashion Feature). p. 33-45
Sheer Romance (Fashion Feature on Lingerie). p. 52-60
It's a Guy Thing. p. 62-5
Alcock, Pippa. Practice Makes Pretty. p. 76-80
Extreme Body Makeover (Advertorial for USN Phedra Cut). p. 81
Alcock, Pippa. To Tighten and to Tone… p. 84-5
30 Ways to an On-Trend Wedding. p. 90-2
After the Rain, Hendrick and Jean-Daniel Meyer-Vermeulen. p. 136-9
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