

Title

Making the Silent Violence of Rape Visible

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ABSTRACT

In this research, I investigate the images used for the depiction of black women in South African popular visual culture and the Western Art canon. A primary aim of my research is to highlight visual mechanisms that are deployed to eradicate and subdue black women's sexual violation. I do a comparison of these images with those created by South African visual artist Zanele Muholi. My analysis of Muholi's work aims to surface the ways that she unearths the silence surrounding the visual representation of the sexual violence experienced by black women.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

In 2016, I lived and worked in Johannesburg. I would commute daily from Diepkloof Soweto to Braamfontein which is near the Johannesburg Central District. Whilst interacting with my colleagues and peers, I noticed that in both these suburbs and others there was a fluidity in peoples understanding of rape and sexual consent. While reading for this research, it became clear that my understanding of sexual consent was ambiguous. I started to think of how the ambiguity around sexual consent is constructed.

This initiated my interest in the ways that visual culture intersects with sexual violence. In this research, I explore conventional visual representations of sexual violence and how these shape society's understanding of it. The overarching narrative in most of the images I have included illustrates the silencing of sexual violence. Silence in the research refers to; the sanitization of sexual violence in representations of it. There is also the physical invisibility of those that are violated. The bodies of the victims are represented as being absent of humanity. Thirdly, silence refers to the eradication of specific histories, certain violations are removed from the Art History canon.

The images I have chosen are located in the Western art canon and South African visual media throughout various parts of history. I pay attention to the bodies of black women in both contexts. Black women have been visualised in Art History and popular visual culture (visual language) as a group that is not worth saving. I argue that the constant influx of black women in paintings, music videos, advertisement campaigns, PlayStation games, billboards and social media as hypersexualised, positions them as a group that is unrapeable.

AIM

My overall aim for the research is to demonstrate how South African visual activist Zanele Muholi creates a counter-narrative for black women, who have experienced sexual violence. Muholi is a Johannesburg based photographer and visual activist (Swanson 2017: para 1). She photographs the LGBTQIA community in South Africa and abroad. When reading the literature

on Muholi, I have recognised that there is a research gap. Articles and some of the books regarding Muholi's practice tend to focus on the creation of the LGBTQIA archive, and how this is an act of social resistance. There is not much attention given to how the artist challenges representations of victims.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve the aim above, I will create a historical framework of images related to sexual violence. The images that I will use span over four centuries (17th to 20th century) and are from the Western art canon. These include paintings, drawings and photographs. I will do a visual analysis of these images, identifying visual mechanisms that have been deployed to silence sexual violence.

In this study, I focus on black women therefore, another objective of mine is to source depictions of this demographic, in the periods mentioned above. Images that I have found of black women are compared to other races (white). This enables me to highlight the effect of race on representation. The latter initiates a discussion on the devalued status of black women in different societies.

I will also source images from contemporary visual culture, these are predominantly photographs. Doing this allows me to show how traces of colonial ideology still linger in representations of black women. I will articulate a common theme in most of the images used and compare them to those by Muholi. This will help me identify the difference, and thus rapture what I identify as visual silence.

RATIONALE

My argument throughout the research is that there is a deafening silence around sexual violence and its consequences in the study of Art and Art History. This is the case, even though visual media contributes a great deal to society's understanding of what constitutes this type of violence. I do acknowledge the work of American female artists such as Cindy Sherman, Nan Goldin, Ana Mendieta and a few others who have tackled the subject of rape in their art practice. In South Africa, artists like; Donna Kukama, Nondumiso Msimanga, Nandipha

Mthambo, and Gabrielle Goliath also articulate sexual violence in their respective practices. But, this is a “small drop” in an ocean that is filled with skewed representations of rape and sexual violence.

My reasons for researching the subject of sexual violence are personal. I am a black woman living in a township in Johannesburg. I represent a demographic that is most likely to be sexually violated in South Africa. A study was done in Cape Town using the reported cases of rape during the 2007/ 2008 year, from 58 police districts in the city. The statistics illustrated that rape is more prevalent in “previously disadvantaged” (black) communities (Sibler and Geffen 2009: 40). There were higher numbers of rape in five of the 58 districts in the city (ibid.). 34% of rapes were from these five districts, which housed previously disadvantaged groups (ibid.). Nyanga had 7.97 % of the reported cases of rape, Harare Khayelitsha accounted for 6.91 %, Khayelitsha 6.75 %, Mitchell’s Plain for 6.83 % and Delft 5.28 % (ibid.). The statistics above suggest that rape happens more frequently in South African townships. The people that live in these communities are usually coloured and black.

South African townships are similarly notorious for the emergence of jackrolling¹ in the 1990s. This is where gangs of young men would drive around Soweto, and gang rape young women (sometimes publicly) (Wojcicki 2002: 270). Usually, this happened without any repercussions. I am using the example of jackrolling as it indicates how race and economic inequality gives rise to extreme incidents of gender violence, and black poor women are often the victims of such crimes (Simpson 1991 cited in Wojcicki 2002: 270).

Historical and current representations of rape suggest that if I were sexually violated, it would be visualised as something that I had encouraged. The crime happens predominantly to black women, not only because they are a large demographic but also because of the country’s racially divided past and its effects on modern-day South Africa (Sibler and Geffen 2009: 37). Jane Wojcicki a South African scholar, whose research focus is on rape, establishes that “sexual violence is widespread in South Africa, the women most affected are the working – class and

¹ People in the Soweto held a common belief that “jackrolling is not a crime, it is a game” (Mathiane 1990 cited in Wojcicki 2002:270)

poor [black] African communities" (2002: 271). The representation of rape is rarely done by black women and yet they are the ones that are most likely to be violated. When black women retell their own stories and experiences the material is more likely to be an accurate reflection of their reality. This is an urgent intervention that is required in the current representations of rape.

VALUE OF STUDY

My original contribution to the study of Art History is that I initiate a conversation on the intersection of sexual violence and visual culture. Particularly, in the South African context. I highlight historical and contemporary images that perpetuate rape culture and are especially violent towards black women. I examine creative ways that South African artists have used to counter this tradition. Analysing how humanity has been visually restored in black victims of sexual violence. This counter-narrative challenges stereotypes that have helped to nullify black women's victimhood; framing her violation as a crime that she incited, deserved and is consequently punished for.

"Art has the capability to re-articulate connections between signs and symbols" (Nelson 2015 24), the latter is what I claim Muholi attempts to do in her exhibition, *Only Half the Picture* 2006. Here she has taken historical associations that positioned black women with deviant sexuality, inferiority, and dirt; and counteracted these with black women's bodies having emotional fragility, embodying humanness, and struggling to process trauma. By doing this, she alters many historic visual "truths".

METHODOLOGY

In this research, I will conduct a visual analysis of visual media, and surface mechanisms of silencing sexual violence. I use theories in visuality, Black feminism, critical race theory, postcolonialism, and intersectionality when examining the artworks. Additionally, I have utilised literature from the psychology discipline. This discipline assists in my understanding and application of key concepts such as; rape, and consent.

Finally, I will do a comparative analysis of conventional representations of sexual violence against the photographs of Zanele Muholi. I will use photographs from the 2006 exhibition, *Only Half the Picture*. I focus on the photographs; *Case Number*, 2004; *Hate Crime Survivor I*, 2004; *Hate Crime Survivor II*, 2004; *Triple III*, 2005 and *Flesh III*, 2005. These images represent the hate crimes perpetrated against the LGBTQIA community in South African townships.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

VISUALITY

I have used the term “visuality” in all the chapters of this research. “Visuality” is not the simple act of seeing images, but rather a meticulous exercise of selecting images that are deemed worthy of being seen (Nelson 2015: 16). Michel Foucault understood “visuality” as “the nomination of the visible” (ibid.). These images are selected, constantly circulated and are used to indicate “reality” and “truth” (ibid.). Nicolas Mirzoeff argues that “the ability to assemble an authoritative mode of visualisation manifests the authority of the visualiser” (ibid.: 21). In the latter Mirzoeff creates a link between “visuality” and those that construct it. “Visuality” is a mechanism that transports ideology (ibid.). It is also used to perpetuate and retain power. From the latter, I argue that what society perceives to be rape/ sexual violence is not a reflection of what happens. It is rather a constructed reality that the public has come to understand as “reality”.

“Visuality” determines what is deemed as beautiful, pleasing but most importantly it can determine who has the right to exist, which bodies deserve to suffer, and which bodies are expendable (Nelson 2015: 17). Because of this, I have firmly based this research on Mirzoeff's interpretation of “visuality”. What surfaces as the representation of rape, who gets raped and who gets justice for their violation is strongly influenced by ideology (ibid.).

THE GAZE

I have used the theory of the male gaze as my foundation for the analysis of images in this research. First theorised by Laura Mulvey, it is the notion that the male gaze manifests itself in visual culture. An introduction to the theory is vital to this research because it enables the reader to understand the intention behind some of the portraits of women used in the research. Reading images through the male gaze shows how male sexual desires were prioritised in images that are meant to illustrate the sexual violation of women. The use of the male gaze in this research shows how the imbalance of power found in patriarchy has seeped into visual culture.

Mulvey uses the work of Sigmund Freud to articulate the power of the gaze. Freud claims that to look gives pleasure to human beings, he termed this "scopophilia" (Mulvey 1989: 25). This is a natural drive that people have which allows them to gain sexual pleasure from looking at others (ibid.). This way of looking turns those that are being "looked at" into objects (ibid.). Mulvey takes Freud's ideas and applies them to visual culture, particularly film. She argues that scopophilia is the basis of Hollywood cinema and that women are made objects in these films (ibid.: 17). In these films, female characters are created to attract the gaze of men, from the way that they talk, dress, and their personality (ibid.).

Mulvey's argument regarding the male gaze is that it perpetuates patriarchy as women are inactive in their visual representation, they are depicted the way that men see them (as sexual objects, unable to make decisions and vulnerable) (Mulvey 1989: 25). I have used this theory to show how the representation of women has the ideology of patriarchy behind it. These images are not a true reflection of women. They are rather a "regime of truth", constructed by men (Nelson 2015: 24).

BLACK FEMINISM

Throughout the research, I make mention of black women's agency and how it has been visually removed. Agency is defined as "free will" (Wilson 2008: 83). It can exist individually as well as collectively (ibid.). It is exerted through "voice, power and rights" (Renegar and Sowards 2009:

4). The notion of agency emerged in Western Europe during the advent of capitalism (ibid.). In this context, an individual's wealth and salvation were achieved through hard work, good work ethic and discipline (ibid.).

First and second-wave Black feminism place emphasis on “respectability”, that black women must counteract stereotypes of hypersexuality that were created during slavery and colonialism. Evelyn Hammonds conveys America’s Black feminism, as activism that is dominated by self-silence (1997: 175). Black women’s reaction to racist stereotypes has been to adhere to Victorian standards of sexuality, this is the repression of sexuality (Hammonds 1997: 175). Black middle-class women are socialised to police women who go against this silence, labelling them as traitors (ibid.). This behaviour is seen impacting the race negatively, "eroding black social legitimacy" (Warner 2015: 135).

Third-wave Black feminism is a movement that was identified in the late 1990s and is an "inclusive" feminist stance. It acknowledges fluidity and contradiction as part of the human experience (Renegar and Sowards 2009: 1). The movement perceives “self-exploration” and “self- reflection” as tools of self-determination (ibid.: 4). Here “agency” lies in the ability to “self – determine” without necessarily being aligned with traditional feminisms (ibid.). Third-wave feminism does not reject colonial stereotypes, it rather creates room for them to exist whilst, acknowledging that these are not the only parts of being a black woman. For example, there is the knowledge of feminine sexuality and expression of it. Simultaneously, motherhood and professional development are also acknowledged. This creates a black woman that is multifaceted and dynamic.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

I will pay special attention to the formulation of racial differences. I focus heavily on how Christianity was used to segregate races and substantiate the oppression of African people (Fritze 2009:105). In roughly 4th century Europe, Christianity was instrumental in the division of

racess (ibid.). In this religion, African (black) people were understood as the descendants of Ham (ibid.). This is a group that the Bible had cursed into servitude for their entire lives (ibid.).

Essentially a different origin was created for Africans. It was speculated that the black race was the "Pre – Adam" race (Fritze 2009: 105). Meaning that black people were created after God created animals, this species was the bridge between animals and Europeans (ibid.). They were more advanced than animals but inferior to Europeans. What is more, is that European people gave themselves dominion over this race, because the Bible in Genesis 1:26, states that "man must rule over animal" (ibid.). Because black people were not considered human, domination over them was naturally applied (ibid.: 121). This understanding of difference was perpetuated and identified as natural (the way things were meant to be). Thus, the oppression of one group of people by another was the natural order of life (Hall 1997: 245).

Black people were then stereotyped, reduced to a few characteristics that were widely recognised. These were that black people are; lazy, primitive, have minimal mental capacity, and naturally inferior (Hall 1997: 249). As a result, a social hierarchy was created (ibid.).

Stereotypes of black women regarding their sexuality were also created during this time. One of the prominent stereotypes about black women's sexuality is that it is animalistic (Marshall 1996: 13). I will analyse these assumptions in later chapters.

INTERSECTIONALITY

When analysing conventional representations of black women, I have combined the theories of feminism and the critical race theory (intersectionality). This is because the oppression of black women tends to be multiple. I have used the same theory in reading Muholi's photographs, this is because her work starts to visually depict the "manifestos" of these theories. She represents black women in a more empathetic manner. This way of representation reflects some of the arguments made by Black feminism theorists. Through her photographs, Muholi also starts to challenge the presumed difference between black and white women, by doing this she dissolves the binary between black and white.

KEY CONCEPTS

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND CONSENT

I will use the term “rape” frequently in the research. It is important to note that rape is only one type of sexual violence (Amnesty International 2011: 11). Sexual violence is a broader term and it includes sexual assault that is not restricted to the invasion of one human body by another (ibid.). I use a definition of rape that was introduced in the 21st century by international bodies such as; *Amnesty International*, *International Criminal Court*, *International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda*, and *International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*. These bodies inform my perception of rape and how I have applied the term in the research. I selected these bodies because human right conventions strongly inform their understanding of rape. They also give a definition of rape that considers the context of the crime and how this may inform consent; whilst other definitions have failed to do this.

RAPE MYTHS

While researching this topic it was apparent to me that "rape myths", are in fact “rape victim stereotypes”. However, "myth" is the word used in literature and the reporting of rape. Rape myths are essentially the knowledge that a culture or society assumes that they know about rape victims (Hall 1997: 47). Rape myths serve to trivialise the crime of rape by making the victim a villain. Rape myths will be explored in more detail in the research.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

CHAPTER ONE - A VIOLENCE SUFFERED REMAINS A VIOLENCE CONCEALED.

In this chapter, I introduce the representation of rape in visual culture. The context used is 14th – 17th century Europe. I do a visual analysis of representations of sexual violence made during this period. I surface the various ways visual language is used to silence the crime. I have included visual representations that are based on Biblical stories, Ancient Greek and Roman mythology. The chapter also challenges rape myths and questions their validity. This chapter also highlights the differences in the depiction of the rape of white and black women.

CHAPTER TWO – THE HELP

This chapter illustrates that stereotypes regarding black women permeate into all sectors of society; they affect every aspect of her life. The notion that black women are inferior, dirty, and diseased has had implications on how they are treated, particularly in the professional sphere. Most images in this chapter show black women's bodies in motion. She is either plaiting the hair of a white child, breastfeeding a white infant or lifting the leg of a white woman.

The images relay the message that black women are "infra-human", that their bodies do not tire, and are not fragile like those of white women. The impact of such notions is that black women are relegated the "dirtiest", and "most physically strenuous" work in their professional spaces. This chapter shows how other traumas black women have experienced have also been silenced. The violations I investigate here are in the black woman's professional life; they show a general disregard for black women that will inevitably leak into her sexual experiences.

CHAPTER THREE – UNIDENTIFIED WOMEN

In this chapter, I examine photographs of black women produced during colonialism. Most of these were produced for the study of anthropology and phrenology. The images that I have selected show the nuanced sexual violence, black women experienced at the hands of white men. I utilise photographs of young black girls and women in Europe's African territories.

What I highlight in the section is that the sexual violence that was perpetrated against young African girls would not have been conducted on their white counterparts. And that the violation of black girls' sexuality and childhood had no repercussions. This chapter acts as a visual foundation for chapter four, which discusses the sexual stereotypes that are associated with black women in contemporary visual culture.

CHAPTER FOUR – SHE IS DETERMINED TO ASSERT HER REFUSAL, AND HE IS DETERMINED TO SHOW HER ITS INSIGNIFICANCE.

Here I introduce contemporary South African representations of rape to the research. The images are predominantly from South African newspapers, magazines, websites and social media. I show how the images reflect violent stereotypes regarding black women's sexuality. The stereotypes suggest that her body was never her own therefore, consent is never required when having sexual intercourse with her. To illustrate the latter, I have conducted a case study on *Mavuso*. This is a current phenomenon in South African townships where black women and men come together each month for transactional sex.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISRUPTING THE SILENCE THROUGH THE BREAKING OF CONVENTION.

Here I do a comparative analysis of the current photographs used by South African media to the work of Zanele Muholi. I initiate a discussion of how Muholi removes the silence of violence from images of rape. The discussion leads to the alternative way of representing rape victims, one that does not re-victimise them. Muholi's work starts to question mainstream media and society; she analyses how it has been able to push black women's experience of rape to the periphery.

I also question the ideas of silence/speech and invisibility/visibility. Do speech and visibility grant the women in the photographs of Muholi agency? If so how? Moreover, how does the agency granted by the altered representation change their lives? If that is what the photographs are meant to do. I argue that silence is not always equated to victimhood, and that visibility is not a necessity for the gain of agency. The fundamental purpose of this chapter is to articulate why Muholi's photographs are different from current and previous representations of black women.

CHAPTER ONE

VIOLENCE SUFFERED REMAINS A VIOLENCE CONCEALED

The overarching focus of this chapter is to establish a link between visual culture and sexual violence. To achieve the latter, I will analyse images, predominantly paintings made from 14th to 17th century Europe. I have chosen to start in the 14th century because this is the time when Art History was formally recorded. This is seen in the book, *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptures, and Architects*, 1550 by Giorgio Vasari (1511- 1574) (Fernie 1996: 11). Here, Vasari, an Italian painter and historian includes artists that date back to the 14th century, he gives a biographical interpretation of artworks and starts to critique them (ibid.). This methodology was imported to the rest of the world and has informed the trajectory of Art History. The dominance of the West in Fine Arts has led to it influencing contemporary South African visual culture. It is because of this reason that I have situated the 14th – 17th century as the start of my research.

Through the examination of artworks made throughout these four centuries, I aim to isolate and highlight the ways that sexual violence has been silenced. Victims are visually silenced in various ways, the first method that I articulate is through "the gaze". Most of the artworks in the chapter are made by European men, thus my argument is that the victim is seen through the eyes of a man. My observation is that this representation of victims is often fraught with nuances of sexual pleasure, aimed to please the male spectator. This, in turn, silences the women's victimhood.

I will also address how sexual violence embedded in rape is silenced by the titling of artworks. In the subsection *Rapist or Hero*, I discuss the painting *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*, 1633 by Nicolas Poussin. The painting is based on the Greek legend where the Sabine women are raped and abducted by their Roman neighbours. However, the title of the artwork removes the sexual violence of the story. In this way, I argue that the artwork sanitises the occurrence of rape in Europe during this period.

I commence the chapter with the subsection, *Biblical Beauties*. This subsection enables me to demonstrate the influence Christianity had on the social understanding of rape. The Bible uses the Jewish definition of rape in its different books. *Biblical Beauties* gives an account of the rape of Bathsheba by King David, and the attempted rape of Susanna by two elders. The section examines the visual translation of the stories. I use the theory of “the male gaze” by Mulvey to highlight how these representations mute the victims. I argue that the intention is to attract the sexual desire of men. My argument here is that the visual focus of pleasing and fulfilling the male gaze gives way to the effacing of the crime.

Lastly, I will examine the “visuality” of black women in this period. The image that I analyse here, is *Rape of the Negro Girl*, 1632 by Christian van Couwenberg. This is a pivotal image in my research as it highlights the discrepancies in the values placed on women of different races. This image also starts the conversation of the role of representation in the dissemination of racial ideology.

BIBLICAL BEAUTIES

The Bible usually determines rape by evaluating the amount of physical resistance the victim demonstrates during the violation (Abasili 2011: 5). Largely informed by Hebrew dogma, the Bible defines rape as a physical act (ibid.). Physical force, aggression, and brutality must be evident on the victim’s body for a rape to be defined as such (ibid.). Moreover, the Bible limits rape to the vaginal penetration of a woman by a man’s penis (ibid.). If a victim fails to physically resist, then the event is not understood as rape (ibid.).

Renaissance Italy Art Historian George Vigarello, claims that the Bible sets aside rape with other moral crimes such as adultery, incest, and bestiality (2001: 24). The moral range in which the crime was defined, contributed to victims self-silencing (ibid.). This is primarily because the morality and chastity of a woman during this time were essential to her social life (ibid.). There are various occasions where rape victims did report the crime. When they did, they were framed as seductresses that had tempted innocent men with their beauty (ibid.). In this context, rape was a moral sin and thus trivial in the justice system (ibid.: 1).

The perpetrator which the Bible limits to males, was a victim of his lust, which he had no control over (Vigarello 2001: 29). When a perpetrator is framed this way the element of violence is removed, and rape is seen as an entirely lustful/ sexual act (ibid.). When rape is visualised in images, and text the aggressor is often said to have been overcome by the attraction that he felt towards the victim. Statements such as; "he only longed for a few minutes with the woman", or that "he was consumed by sexual desire", and thus took the woman by force were commonly used. I argue that these descriptions of male perpetrators sanitise the violence of rape. Additionally, these perceptions remove the responsibility of rape from the attacker to the victim (ibid.).

Although the definition of rape has shifted greatly since the Bible was written, there is still some ambiguity in contemporary society. Megan Lutz – Priefert, a lawyer and the author of *A Call for a more Permanent International Definition of Rape*, states that "throughout the world, there are different definitions and rules for what constitutes rape" (2015: 85). The lack of a solid definition is intrinsically tied with the way rape is represented in images and words. More recent psychology and human right theories frame rape as the penetration; however slight into a vagina, anus, and mouth by a sexual organ of the perpetrator or with any other object (Amnesty International 2011: 11). Rape happens when consent is not given by both parties to engage in sexual intercourse. At times consent is given but, the power relations between the individuals need to be weighed carefully (ibid.). This is because consent cannot be freely given when there is psychological oppression, duress, coercion or abuse of power (ibid.: 14). Here, the lack of resistance by the victim does not equate to consent (ibid.). It is with this understanding of sexual violence and rape that I will analyse the upcoming paintings.

BATHSHEBA



Figure 1: Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem *Bathsheba Bathing with Attendants*, 1594.

Bathsheba's story is based on her interaction with King David. King David is a man whom the Bible describes as "chosen" by God, to be the king of Israel (Mckenzie 2003: 360). David started with humble beginnings, the Bible's first mention of him is as a shepherd (ibid.). He is also said to be an intelligent, skilful fighter as he was able to obtain victory in his confrontation with Goliath, a man twice his size (ibid.). David is a man favoured by God (ibid.).

Alexandra Izuchukwu Abasili a theology scholar explains, that while David's army was at war he stayed behind in Jerusalem (2001: 1). He was strolling back and forth on his balcony, and the

image of Bathsheba bathing caught his attention (ibid.). The King asked one of his servants who she was. David was informed that her name was Bathsheba and she was the wife of Uriah (one of David's army men)². Bathsheba was then summoned to the palace and David "lay with her", lay with her is a euphemism used to imply that King David had sexual intercourse with Bathsheba (ibid.: 2). The Biblical scripture does not make mention of the attendants seen in the image by van Haarlem. It just says that she was bathing.

The New International Version Bible, 1978 describes Bathsheba as "very beautiful". It is this beauty that captures the attention of David while he was on his balcony (Abasili 2011: 2). Michael Avoiz a theology scholar, claims that feminine beauty in the Bible is seen through descriptions such as "black long flowing hair", "beautiful eyes", and "light skin" (2009: 344). The Bible makes mention of David's multiple wives and their beauty, the inclusion of his wives' beauty implies that David was a man who loved beautiful women (Abasili 2011: 2). It also indicates that he would be helpless once confronted with Bathsheba's beauty (ibid.).

The description of Bathsheba as beautiful connotes beauty with destruction. Beauty in this context is made to look as if it is a dangerous tool, used by women to allure men into sexual intercourse. Bathsheba's beauty is destructive because it is powerful enough to intrigue a righteous, and nobleman such as David. It is also destructive because it initiates the interaction between her and David and ultimately contributes to her rape.

George Nicol, a theology scholar, has argued that Bathsheba carefully uses her beauty to seduce David (1997: 17). Nicol declares that this is the reason Bathsheba bathed so close to David's balcony so that he would not be able to miss her beauty (ibid.). Viewing Bathsheba and David's interaction in this manner sustains the myth that rape is a testimony to a woman's attractiveness, and that it is a crime of passion. Moreover, that it is indeed a woman's beauty that causes the crime (Brownmiller 1975: 341). Susan Brownmiller, who is the author of the

² David was aware that Bathsheba was the wife of his army man Uriah. David had sent Uriah to the war and ensured that he was in the firing line (making sure that he dies) (Abasili 2011: 2). David had purposely stayed behind so that he could have an opportunity to have sexual intercourse with Bathsheba (Abasili 2011: 2)

book *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, notes that the attraction to a beautiful woman is heightened by the woman being vulnerable (1975: 341). It is their vulnerability that signals that they can be captured and thus are available. The Bible positions Bathsheba in this manner, it renders her vulnerable because bathing is an intimate activity and she assumes that she is alone.

Bathsheba Bathing with Attendants by van Haarlem represents Bathsheba bathing; however, she is with two other women that the Bible does not make mention of. The painting adheres to the beauty standards I have mentioned earlier in the chapter. Bathsheba is on the left side of the frame; her body is the only body of the three women that is on full view. She has long light brown hair that is placed in a bun. She is light-skinned, and the light is positioned towards her body making her the focus of the painting. Bathsheba is depicted as the ideal woman, her breasts are voluptuous, her hips are exposed, and she is adorned with jewellery. The image minimises the facial and physical detail of the attendants and concentrates on those of Bathsheba. All the visual mechanisms used above contribute to making Bathsheba a sight for the “male gaze”. Van Haarlem has managed to highlight Bathsheba's beauty using various painting techniques; his rendition of Bathsheba emphasises her beauty. This is important as the Bible suggests that it is her beauty that makes her a victim.

Bathsheba Bathing with Attendants silences the sexual violence behind the story because it is preoccupied with the “male gaze”. The painting makes the viewer see Bathsheba the way that David would have seen her from his balcony. His gaze is invasive, even violent because Bathsheba and her attendants do not know of it. The frame focuses on satisfying the pleasure of the onlooker. King David and his blatant abuse of power have been visually omitted.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, rape according to the Jewish religion which informs the Bible, is a physical act (Abasili 2011: 5). Where physical force, aggression, and brutality must be evident for a rape to be defined as such (ibid.). If this description is used to understand what happened to Bathsheba, it suggests that she was not raped. The Bible says, "he lay with her",

there is no mention of violent coercion or physical force being used. The term “he lay with her”, opens space for the reader to presume that she had consented. It implies that Bathsheba was a willing partner to the act. It is important to note that this definition of rape is far different from the one that is used currently, where the power relations between the victim and the accuser are considered. The emotional and mental state of the victim prior and after the attack is also considered (ibid.).

Abasili disagrees and stresses the power relations between Bathsheba and David, arguing that the act could be considered a “power rape” (2011: 3). The Bible suggests that David has the status of God. He is first mentioned as pacing up and down his rooftop surveying the city (an action associated with God as he sees everything) before he saw Bathsheba (ibid.). When David is first introduced in the Bible he said to be a shepherd, which is a role associated with leadership and God (McKenzie 2003: 360). David then “summoned her” and “lay with her”, the description of David’s actions suggest that he is the subject and Bathsheba the object, it also connotes his power (Abasili 2011: 4). When the perpetrator is in a position of power there is no need to exercise physical force, rather coercive authority is used (Brownmiller 1975: 256). When this understanding of power and rape is applied to Bathsheba’s story it is evident that she was sexually violated by the King.

Bathsheba is summoned to the palace without knowing the reasons. She obeyed not because she wanted to have sexual intercourse with King David. But, because she was being called by the “King”, she could not decline his orders. Brownmiller substantiates Bathsheba’s actions by arguing that patriarchy trains women to be polite, respectful, and obey orders (1975: 256). Therefore, there should not be any surprises in Bathsheba's actions. When Bathsheba realised what she had been called for, her lack of consent would not have made a difference (Abasili 2011: 8). The power gap between Bathsheba (wife of one of the King’s army men) and King David had an impact on how the story played out (ibid.). Bathsheba’s experience is muted, nobody knows her point of view, the reader is only aware of her beauty because there is the underlining presumption that it is responsible for David’s actions (ibid.).

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 22: 23 – 25 states, “If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married, and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the young woman because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife”. The quotation from Deuteronomy gives the punishment for rape (specifying that the woman is a virgin). It recommends that both be stoned, the male accused of the rape and the victim for not screaming for help.

The law above suggests that the victim is as guilty as the perpetrator if she did not scream/shout for help. This law lessens the actions of the accused by giving equal punishment to the victim who did not scream. Silence from Bathsheba is seen by her being passive and succumbing to David's advances, she did not yell for help. Thus, David's actions are not recognised as rape. She also is not a virgin as she was married to Uriah, and the scripture says that this law only applies to virgins. The law of Deuteronomy creates an ideal rape victim, one that is vocal during the act, a virgin and one who has physical evidence that indeed the crime did take place (Avoiz 2009: 357). Every woman that falls outside of this description cannot be raped.

Bathsheba’s representation by Van Haarlem adheres to the law given in the book of Deuteronomy, which implies that she is not a rape victim. Bathsheba’s skin is smooth and radiant, it has no wounds or scars. Thus, there is no evidence of a sexual or physical attack. Her demure is poised, she is not depicted as screaming like the law advises a rape victim should. According to Christian ideology and the visual mechanisms employed by Van Haarlem, Bathsheba is not considered a victim of rape. Figure 2, is of the Biblical character Susanna, in the following paragraphs, I will analyse how her victimhood is removed through her visual representation.

SUSANNA



Figure 2: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1610.



Figure 3: Tintoretto, *Susannah and the Elders*, 1555.

Susanna's story is slightly different from that of Bathsheba. Susanna, also a married woman had her daily bath in her garden. She asked her maids to bring her her make-up and perfume, she would use these while bathing (Tamber-Rosenau 2017: 55). She then asked her maids to leave the garden and grant her some privacy (ibid.). Susanna was then alone in her garden, two elder judges appeared, they wanted Susanna to have sexual intercourse with them (ibid.). If she refused, they threatened to accuse Susanna of adultery³.

Figure 2, and 3 are two different renditions of the same story. Figure 2, is a depiction of Susanna's story by Artemisia Gentileschi a female painter (Grundy 2004: 2). Born in 1593 Gentileschi was a painter who practised in Renaissance, Italy (ibid.). Prohibited from attending a traditional academy, her father assisted her in finding a suitable tutor, Agostino Tassi (ibid.: 11). Gentileschi was later raped by Tassi (ibid.). Tassi did not serve any jail time for the crime (ibid.). Her rendition of *Susanna and the Elders* was her debut artwork (ibid.).

Figure 3, is a rendition by Tintoretto a male artist, born 1518 (Hahn 2004: 635). Tintoretto was renown for his ability to illustrate Christian narrative with paint (ibid.). He trained under Titian (ibid.). The different illustrations by male and female are of interest to me because of their very different interpretations of sexual violence. Figure 2, shows an irritable and uncomfortable Susanna. Her reaction is one of anger and disgust. She uses her hands to push the elders away. Her head is leaning towards the left and trying to distance itself from the elders. She is naked and her body is in a position that readies it to run away from the two men.

I put forward that Gentileschi's portrayal of Susanna is "victim-centred". By this, I mean that the visual is used to express the discomfort, and violation Susanna may have felt during the encounter. Even though she is naked, the viewer is not given access to her body, this is seen by her closed legs and the cloth that covers her genitals. The movement of her arms covers one of

³ Leviticus 20: 10 and Deuteronomy 22: 22 both describe adultery as prohibited sexual intercourse between a man and a *married* woman. Both parties are punishable for this crime (NIV 1973). The two elders that were looking at Susanna were also judges and knew that if she were convicted of adultery, she would be stoned to death (Hahn 2004: 635).

her breasts, halting the male gaze from gaining visual pleasure. Gentileschi's painting is centred on Susanna's refusal and frames the narrative as violent attempted rape.

Rodger Denson a journalist and art critic, offers the following understanding on the representation of rape; "The difference between the exterior and the interior views of rape is a seemingly simple point of psychological and visual perspective, yet one that speaks of a profound estimation by the artists, their patrons and audiences, on whether to favour the representation of sexual violence as aesthetic and dramatic action, or as ethical and psychological empathy" (2013: para 1). From the quotation, it can be assessed that Gentileschi's portrayal is an ethical one, that resuscitates the woman's (victim's) humanity. The painting challenges myths that women are tied to their carnal instincts and are thus, always wanting of sexual intercourse (Even 2004: 8).

Figure 3, by Tintoretto, seems to do the opposite of the one by Gentileschi. Here, the central figure Susanna takes up most of the composition of the painting. She is depicted according to the beauty standards of the time. Her skin is light, radiant, almost illuminated. She has plaited blonde hair, she has a hairless body. The depiction of hair on Susanna's body would suggest that she is an active sexual subject with her sexual desires (Berger 1972: 54). However, the purpose of the image was not to exalt the sexuality of women, but that of men. Thus she is depicted with no pubic hair. Susanna is represented through the lens of a man; the viewer sees her the way that the elders would have, which is with sexual desirability (Hahn 2004: 634).

Tintoretto depicts a Susanna who is looking at herself in the mirror. The mirror icon used is of importance to the image because it suggests that there is a vanity to Susanna. It suggests that she enticed the voyeurism by the elders, and even prepared herself for it. John Berger, a British art critic, observes that women are trained from a young age to look at themselves, and ensure that they are pleasing to the "male gaze" (Berger 1972: 46). In Figure 3, Susanna surveys herself, in doing so she takes on the perspective of the "male gaze", and evaluates her attractiveness to other males (ibid.). The mirror icon says that she intentionally lured the elders with her beauty, that she is aware of through the mirror. The inclusion of the mirror by

Tintoretto makes Susanna an accomplice to her violation, helping to dissolve the actions of the elders.

There are cosmetics near Susanna's foot and at the bottom of the mirror. the Bible states that she asked her maids to bring these to her. The use of cosmetics show intention in Susanna's actions, they imply that she was heightening her beauty (Hahn 2004: 634). The Bible also associates the use of cosmetics with preparation for sexual intercourse, which implies that Susanna was preparing to have sexual intercourse with the elders (Tamber-Rosenau 2017: 55). The inclusion of the mirror and cosmetics is not evident in Figure 2. This implies that the purpose of their inclusion is to imply that Susanna was active in attaining the elder's gaze, and her attempted rape.

There is a wall on the left of the image that separates the painting creating an "outside", and an "inside". Susanna is placed in what seems to be the "inside". Two men, presumably the elders are looking at what is on the other side of the wall, Susanna. One of the elders lustfully gazes at Susanna, looking into her thighs which are wide apart. The other elder goes around the wall trying to get to Susanna. What is explicit in the painting by Tintoretto is the violence of the "male gaze". Susanna is unaware of it, it's not consensual. She is unable to return their gaze, the latter leaves her without any agency.

Robert Hahn calls the painting, "an invitation to look...content driven invitation to voyeurism" (2004: 636). Hahn's comments illustrate the sexually explicit nature of the painting and the violence of its gaze. This depiction of Susanna does not match the Biblical story. Here Susanna is imagined as an object of male sexual desires. Mulvey claims that Hollywood films can objectify women to fill the sexual pleasure derived from sight, I argue that this is the same for the artwork by Tintoretto (Mulvey 1989: 18).

Figures 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate how visual mechanisms employed during 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th century Europe were used to silence the violence of rape, and by so doing exempting the perpetrator. In the artwork of *Bathsheba and her Attendants*, the victim Bathsheba is the seductive temptress, beautiful and calculating (Nicol 1997: 17). Painted as the epitome of

Western beauty, it is she who seduced the king. This shifts the responsibility from David to the victim.

Susanna is also depicted as “fishing” for male attention, by the inclusion of the icon of the mirror in Figure 3. It is her erotic beauty and knowledge of it that makes her a culprit in her attempted rape. Tintoretto’s rendition of Bathsheba favours a visual aesthetic that captures the male gaze. This is at the expense of Susanna’s victimhood. His depiction of Susanna sanitises the behaviour of the elders. The insertion of erotica, lust, and beauty in the artwork leaves it ambiguous. The viewer does not know whether he is looking at the retelling of rape, or a sexual encounter between the elders and Susanna.

This subsection has also incorporated certain Biblical scriptures that state that the punishment for rape should be distributed equally between the victim and perpetrator. As both parties are equally responsible. This scripture insinuates that a victim’s beauty, behaviour, and mere existence contribute to her sexual violation. The representations of Bathsheba and Susanna have indicated how this ideology filtered into the visual arts. I will now go on to examine how Greek and Roman mythology have framed sexual violence and how silence is elicited in these representations of rape.

RAPIST OR HERO

“Heroic rape” (Wolfthal 1999: 17), is a term that has been coined by Diane Wolfthal an Art History professor specialising in Medieval and Early Modern art and culture. Most of the imagery under heroic rape is a reference to Greek mythology⁴. Greek myths resurfaced during the height of the Renaissance and became a popular subject matter in paintings (ibid.). This type of rape assumes that women can be sacrificed (through sexual violation) for the greater

⁴ Greek mythology does not refer to the myths as commonly known, they are rather Greek stories (Dowden and Livingstone 2011: 4). The myths are not linked to history as they are not actual events that happened; they exist in another time; they are however geographically located in Greece (ibid.). These filter into every aspect of Greek life and form part of their national identity, collective memory (ibid.). These stories have been visualised in poetry, architecture, decorative arts and painting (ibid.). The research is concerned with their representations in paintings.

good of humankind (ibid.). In this subsection, I will analyse the depiction of the *Abduction of the Sabine Women*, 1633 by Nicolas Poussin. Here the Sabine women were raped and abducted by their Roman neighbours (ibid.). Their violation was justified because Roman men could not find wives any other way (ibid.). It was thought of as an honour for the women, as they were able to continue Roman lineage (ibid.). I then examine two depictions of the story of, *Leda and the Swan*. The first by Michelangelo in 1550, and the other by 1740. In *Leda and the Swan*, Leda was impregnated by Zeus⁵ after being raped by him. She bore him a child who would eventually become Helen of Troy. The birth of Helen led to the fall of Troy, without the rape, this would not have happened.

What is seen in all the paintings mentioned above, is that rape is being associated with lovemaking and procreation (Wolfthal 1999: 5). At times the word rape and seduction are used interchangeably (ibid.). The dark nature of rape has been effaced by depictions of women who are termed to be in “ecstasy”, or “orgasm”, suggesting that they are enjoying the violation (ibid.). Visually this is seen in the image *Jupiter and Io*, 1530 by Antonio Correggio. Here Io, a goddess whose body is painted as voluptuous and sensual. Tilts her head back as soon as Jupiter embraces her. The realistic rendition of her body and its actions explicitly shows Io in orgasm. This disinfects the act of rape and gives the illusion that the perpetrator is a loving partner (ibid.).

"Heroic" rape exalts male perpetrators, he is praised for his initiative, as it is seen in the story of the Sabine women. He is also praised for his courage, strength, and boldness. “Heroic” rape also reinforces the myth that it is again, the overwhelming beauty of women that triggers the male gaze and thus the sexual attack (Wolfthal 1999:17).

THE SABINE WOMEN

⁵ Zeus is known as the chief of the Greek gods (Larson 2011: 25). His father was Kronos (Greek god), Zeus overthrew him to gain his stature (ibid.). Zeus is recognised as the king of mankind and has fathered many children with both goddesses and mortals (ibid.).



Figure 4: Nicolas Poussin, *The Abduction of the Sabine Women* 1633 -34.

The story behind the legend was that Roman men could not find wives through courtship (Wolfthal 1999: 8). So they staged a festival and invited their neighbours the Sabine's to attend (ibid.). When they arrived each Roman captured a woman, and raped her (ibid.). After the mass abduction and rape, the women were married off to their assailants (ibid.).

In *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*, Nicolas Poussin attempts to visualise the mass abduction of the legend. In doing so he follows conventions of depicting rape between 14th to 17th-century Europe. The following treaty is from Giovanni Lomazzo (1538 – 1592), an Italian painter, and art critic. In his *Treatise of Art Painting* 1584, he states the following;

"Principally you have to show the captors force and insolence accompanied by a certain amorous desire for the woman taken and along with with that an equally furious and impetuous desire; such that the abductors appear fierce and eager. The victims should be in postures of defence, melancholy and sorrow, and therefore pushing the abductors with their fists, making efforts to escape by hurling their legs and wanting to flee; and besides that, biting, pulling their captors' beards, yelling, crying, praying humbly for their liberty; and the abductors hold them tightly in their arms in diverse postures. This cannot be represented without showing nude legs, ripped clothing, exposing of arms and chests, gestures and actions of force, from which follow swelling breasts, turned necks, outspread arms, sweat, bites, scratches, punches, and blows; these gestures, combined together make a pleasurable show of liveliness and violence" (Even 2004: 7).

In the *Abduction of the Sabine Women* the two women in the middle ground are, "...in postures of defence, melancholy and sorrow and therefore pushing the abductors with their fists" (Even 2004: 7). Their arms are stretched in the air showing their resistance to the abduction. The man in the foreground with a crown made of thorns, assumingly one of the Romans, has the muscles of a strong young man. This depiction maintains the myth which permeated throughout Europe during this time, that men are strong, courageous, and bold. The illustration of the man creates the image of an honourable patriotic man, who is only doing what is good for Romans.

The words "amorous desire", "swollen breasts", and "pleasurable show of liveliness and violence" all come together to create an erotic experience for the artist, and his patrons (Wolfthal 1999:14). The term "swollen breasts" frames the women as aroused in their capture, this suggests that they too gained sexual pleasure from the encounter. The women are painted through the "male gaze" much like previous paintings discussed in the chapter. Earlier in the chapter, I discussed how the painting, *Bathsheba and her Attendants* represented Bathsheba through the "male gaze". She is painted as beautiful, and sexually available. The painting *Abduction of the Sabine Women* seems to have a different violence to it. It goes a step further, and not only depicts the women as beautiful but also enjoying the sexual encounter. Silencing the act of rape even further.

On the extreme left of the image, a woman is trying to flee the scene. However, her attempts are in vain as a Roman man catches her. The convention of depicting women trying to run away from their assailant who was also known as a suitor was a popular motif during this time (Barolsky 1998: 469). Wolfthal argues that this motif shows that the woman did not consent to the sexual interaction that followed, as they were running away (1999:14). At the time, women running away from men was considered an integral part of courtship (ibid.). Here the man was a predator and the woman the prey (ibid.). Women have been traditionally associated with nature, thus they were represented as the animals that were hunted. This metaphor shows that what was rape was framed as courtship, that like hunting the predator will always catch the prey against its will.

Legally during the Middle Ages, and early Renaissance rape was considered a crime against men (Baines, 1999: 70). The sexual violation of a woman defiled the estate of her father or husband (ibid.). In the foreground of the *Abduction of the Sabine Women*, there are three bodies intertwined; a young Roman man with thorns around his head, an elderly man and a woman. The elderly man seems to be trying to protect the woman below him, this reinforces the idea that rape was a crime between men. If the woman underneath both men is the daughter of the elderly man, then he is essentially protecting his estate from another man.

The other mechanism used to silence rape in the artwork is its title. The title does not allude to any sexual violence. Words such as “abduction”, “seduction”, “ravish”, and “pursuit” were used to hide the sexual violence attached to the legend (Wolfthal 1999: 25). These words take away the criminal identity of the perpetrator and shape him as a man in “pursuit of love” (ibid.). Sara Russell reiterates this claim in her doctoral thesis, she argues that during Medieval and early modern years, rape and abduction had the same meaning (2010: 19).

The word “raptus” when directly translated into English is “seizure”, but it was used to describe abduction (whether there was sexual violence or not), rape, and couples that had eloped consensually (Russell 2010: 19). The interchangeable way abduction and rape were used caused confusion between the theft of people and rape. Vigarello notes that there were incidents where abduction was used to describe a woman that was raped but had not been taken to an

unknown location (2001: 49). The different words used to describe rape make the definition of the crime ambiguous. Visually this translates into the silencing of rape because the viewer is left uncertain of what the contents of the painting are.

The legend says that the Sabine women got married to their abductors (Wolfthal 1999: 17). The action of marrying an abducted woman was not unfamiliar in Roman society (ibid.). The book of Deuteronomy 21: 10 states, " When you go to war against your enemies and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands, and you take captives"; 21:11 "If you notice a beautiful woman and you are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife". This quotation illustrates that Christian ideology contributes to silencing the abductions (rapes) by veiling them as marriages (Wolfthal 1999:17). The transformation of rape to marriage seems to resolve the problem. It is a positive outcome that benefits both men and women. It benefits men because he can continue his lineage through procreation with the woman. It was said to benefit women because they are considered "damaged" after a rape, and finding a husband in this state would be a challenge (ibid.). Therefore, marrying her attacker resolves her dilemma.

Biblical scripture sustains previous, and current myths that "rape does no real damage to the victim". Wolfthal acknowledges this in her claim that women in "... images of heroic rape, they have suffered no great harm" (Wolfthal 1999: 17). That she can easily forgive the attacker. Thus marrying your rapist was not an absurd endeavour. Baines also affirms this claim by saying; "rape is at times reduced to nothing more than a frightening experience, 'a greater astonishment than damage', within this logic since rape constitutes so little real damage, a woman would be inclined to forgive the rapist" (1998: 77). Russell observes that rape was considered normal masculine behaviour, men could use it to secure marriage with a woman they desired (2010: 19). This is because the penalty for rape (marriage) was instead a prize influenced by patriarchy than punishment (Wolfthal 1999: 17).

The legend of the Sabine women and its depiction became very popular. it was crafted-on chests and painted on wedding banners during weddings (Wolfthal 1999: 15). The wedding chest was used for the procession from the bride's father's house to that of her husband (ibid.). The chest and banners were on display for the public to see (ibid.). Wolfthal explains that this

act, "constructed marital relations as a form of justifiable sexual violence" (1999: 15). The act demonstrates a long history of rape victims being turned into brides. It, therefore, suggested to women in that society, that the transition was normal. It verifies rape as a normal part of courtship.

The subsection has started a conversation about how visual mechanisms were employed. Not only to depict women through the "male gaze" but how they are represented as willing partners in lovemaking and marriage. Moving forward I will analyse the painting, *Io and Jupiter* by Antonio Correggio to show how rape was further sanitised by making the victim seem sexually excited.

IO



Figure 5: Antonio Correggio *Jupiter and Io*, 1530.

As discussed earlier, a prominent mechanism used in images of 'heroic' rape is to frame sexual violence as erotica. In the legend of Jupiter and Io, Jupiter a Roman god who is Zeus in Greek mythology was said to be pursuing Io and wanted to rape her (Larson 2011: 25). Correggio's depiction is disturbing because Io is depicted in a "lovemaking" position. She rolls her head back as if to indicate that she is deriving sexual pleasure, she also seems to be smiling. Wolfthal observes that Io's sexual consent is suggested in the trace of her smile as Jupiter kisses her (1999: 20). She caresses Jupiter, and he does the same. The arching of her foot recalls the movement found when a woman is in orgasm. Io returns Jupiter's advances; Io's touch ensures that the cloud presses firmly against her waist. Correggio visually turns Io into a willing lover, this is done through her body language.

Paul Barolsky describes Corregio's rendition of Jupiter *and Io* as, "as if the vapours within which Jupiter appears were an extension of his body, ravishingly enveloping and caressing Io" (1998: 469). The words "ravishingly enveloping" come up again, this description reinforces my earlier discussion of how certain words such as "abduction", "seduction", "ravish", and "pursuit" were used instead of "rape" to conceal sexual violence attached to myths (Wolfthal 1999: 25). My argument is that Barolsky says, "ravishingly enveloping Io" instead of "raping Io", to silence the violence.

Correggio has visually morphed Jupiter into a dark cloud. However, his face and hands are still seen. The use of the cloud is used to represent Jupiter. Substituting the body of a man for a cloud may imply that men are not sexually aggressive. Correggio's personification suggests that mythical bestial animals, rather than men perpetrate rape. In the following artworks, the morphing of perpetrators is further utilised to sanitise images of sexual violence. I will analyse visual renditions of the Greek myth, Leda and the Swan.

LEDA AND THE SWAN

The myth of Leda and the Swan originates from Greek mythology. It involves the god Zeus, who was notorious for both consensual and non – consensual sexual intercourse with mortal women and goddesses (Barnwell 1977: 62). In this myth, Zeus transforms himself into a swan and rapes Leda (mortal). Leda is said to have been married to another man at the time (ibid.). The result

of the rape is that Leda gave birth to Helen, who was both goddess and mortal (ibid.: 63). Leda who had had sexual intercourse with her husband on the day that Zeus raped her, was able to give birth to three children concurrently (ibid.: 64). Two were mortal and were her husbands, she was also able to lay an egg from which Helen was born (ibid.: 65).

Figure 6, and 7 are visual representations of the rape of Leda. In Figure 6 by Michelangelo, Leda is seen as a willing, consenting lover. However, in Figure 7 by Boucher, Leda is neither consenting or resisting she merely lies on the day bed.



Figure 6: Michelangelo, *Leda and the Swan*, 1550.

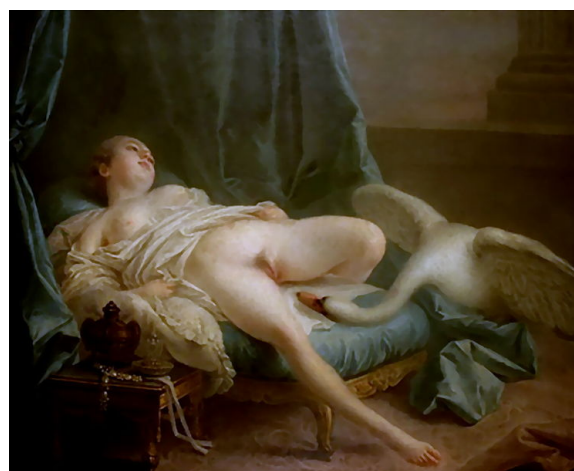


Figure 7: François Boucher, *Leda and the Swan*, 1740.

Although Figure 6, and 7 are made two centuries apart, there are similar motifs in both the images. The first is the swan being in between Leda's thighs. In Figure 6 the swan is positioned tightly between her thighs, Leda even presses her thigh against the swan, and he is consequently closer to her. She raises one of her legs and seems to envelop the swan, bringing it closer to her genitalia. The swan's head is nestled in between her breasts, its beak touches Leda's mouth and kisses her. Leda's head tilts to reach the swan's beak. She reciprocates his affection and kisses the swan back. Her arms are relaxed indicating that she is in a comfortable, non-threatening situation. The depiction of the swan's sexual actions and Leda's positive response to them represents consensual sexual intercourse.

The artwork by Boucher is slightly different. Leda is spreading her legs open as if inviting the swan to view her vagina. The swan glares into her genitals undisturbed as Leda pulls her dress up. Her breasts are exposed. However, Leda's body language does not show any traces of sexual pleasure in the manner that Io's did in Correggio's, *Jupiter and Io*. Leda's facial expression does not show reluctance either, she simply surrenders to the swan's invasion, as if she has zoned out. Her gaze is directed to the emptiness, she lets the "swan do what it needs to do", without disturbance from her. It suggests that she knows the power of her attacker and is aware of his entitlement to her body. It looks as though Leda gives consent but under duress. Given Zeus' power, it would be difficult for her to say no, even though she may want to. Figure 7, shows a nuanced silence, violence that forces women to succumb physically with their bodies. This is done without regard of what they think or feel. Their objection to sexual advances is suppressed and rendered invisible.

A myth that was prominent during Early Modern Europe⁶, was that women could not conceive without having sexual pleasure (Baines 1998:79). This meant that any rape that resulted in pregnancy was not considered rape (ibid.). If the woman had retrieved sexual pleasure (and conceived) from the encounter it could not be considered rape (ibid.). Baines observes that medical texts from the Medieval period show that, "...the female, as well as the male, produces semen and that conception results from the meeting of the two forms of semen" (ibid.)

This equation assumed that semen was produced by men in all their sexual encounters however, women could only produce semen when they had an orgasm (Baines 1998:79). Additionally, it was assumed that women had greater sexual pleasure during sex. This happened in the release of their own semen and the reception of the man's semen (ibid.). If this is applied to the rape of Leda, it means that she was not raped by Zeus because she was able to bear him a child (Helen). What interests me is that the latter theory does not recognise the role of consent. Here rape is eliminated because the woman is said to have had an orgasm which implies that she derived sexual pleasure/gratification from the crime (ibid.).

⁶ is known as the period from the Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution, (www.rice.edu).

I will now move in time and look at research that has been developed in the 21st century to dispel the myth above. Currently, in South Africa and around the world victims (women) of rape are embarrassed to disclose that they experienced vaginal lubrication and pelvic muscle contractions (orgasm) during a rape (Suschinsky and Lalumière 2011: 160).

Like in Early Modern Europe, victims who admitted to vaginal contraction see a dismissal of their violation. Primarily, because vaginal lubrication and orgasm are connoted to sexual pleasure. Roy J Levin and Willy van Berlo conducted a review titled; *Sexual arousal and orgasms in subjects who experienced forced or non – consensual sexual stimulation*, in 2004. In the review, they argue that sexual arousal happens mentally as well as physically (Levin and Berlo. 2004:85). In an ideal situation (consensual adults engaging in sex) both mental and physical arousal would result in an orgasm (ibid.). However, it is not impossible to be just mentally aroused or just physically aroused. In the act of rape, victims could reach orgasm without mental or physical pleasure (ibid.). With women, their bodies are often displaying a natural involuntary reaction to vaginal penetration (ibid.).

Kelly D. Suschinsky and Martin L. Lalumière's study showed that women produced vaginal lubrication involuntarily (2011: 160). The study that they conducted; *Prepared for Anything? An Investigation of Female Genital Arousal in Response to Rape Cues* showed that women responded differently to men regarding sexual stimulation. Heterosexual women were shown sexual stimuli of lesbians, gay men, and non – consensual sex (Suschinsky and Lalumière 2011: 160). Most of the women displayed physiological sexual arousal in the form of vaginal lubrication, (Olivers, Rieger, Latty, and Bailey, 2004 cited in Suschinsky and Lalumière 2011: 160). These results showed that physiological arousal in women was not a sign of pleasure or desire but one of preparation (ibid.). They stress that the female body responds in this way to prepare itself for sexual intercourse of any kind (consensual and non- consensual) (ibid.). This reaction lessens the damage of the vaginal tract and reduces any vaginal tears (ibid.). The study shows that it is a nonspecific automatic reaction of the body. This research also claims that non-consensual sex has existed throughout history, and this is the mechanism that women's bodies have used to adapt (ibid.). Both these studies prove that the equation formulated about rape

and conception was a myth used to efface the occurrence of rape in European society. In the upcoming sections of the chapter, I will move on to more extreme examples of rape representation. This is of black women.

BLACK WOMAN



Figure 8: *Rape of the Negro Girl* is by Christian van Couwenberg, 1632.

The 1632 painting, *Rape of the Negro Girl* is by Christian van Couwenberg. Van Couwenberg is a Dutch artist that practised in 17th century Europe. Sujata Moorti articulates the following about this era, "black women who are raped have traditionally been silenced from the event and erased from history" (2002: 208). The image by van Couwenburg is important as it visualises a crime perpetrated on a group that was silenced. *Rape of a Negro Girl*, illustrates an actual rape take place. The image moves away from the fantasy of "lovemaking", seen when depicting the

rape of white women, as I discussed earlier in the chapter. The painting is much more direct and explicit in its violence.

Figure 8 shows a seated naked white man and a naked black woman forcefully situated on his lap. The way that the woman sits upon the white man suggests that there may be sexual penetration taking place. Another white man is standing in the centre of the image. He too is naked and has a sheet wrapped around his waist. His nudity suggests that he will take part in the activity if he has not done so already. The evidence of sexual activity and the attempts of the woman to flee the situation suggest a violent gang rape.

This image shows that the rape of a black woman is represented as much more "crude", and "punishing" than that of white women. White women have been historically treated with care because of their assumed fragility, this is seen in their rape being framed as imaginary (myth or lewd sexual fantasy). Whereas, black women's bodies have been understood as physically strong and resilient, implying that they can bear the trauma of a brutal gang rape.

The painting demonstrates multiple oppressions. The first is related to gender, this woman like other women in the chapter is owned and freely accessible to men. This is seen in the manner that the other characters in the painting react when the woman tries to object and flee. One of the three men points at her and laughs, this gesture suggests that the man feels an entitlement to her body. He is amused that the woman thinks that her will to escape, will prevail. The sharp contrast of the figure's arrogance along with the fear of the black women shows the power relations between the two. That, white men can rule over the bodies of others, and "the other" has no option but to succumb.

The artwork attempts to attract the "white male gaze". The artwork is representing a gruesome crime, but the victim's body is still framed to entice desire. This is seen by how the body of the woman is depicted, her position allows her breasts to be exposed. They are depicted in the conventional "perky" manner; her body is well toned, imitating the idealised white woman's body. Her right hand is swung in the air, showing resistance while her left hand seems to caress her attacker. The position of her left hand neutralises the violence in the image. It suggests that there is a part of her that does consent to the rape. Reinforcing a common racial stereotype

that black women are "lovers of rape". Essentially the painting is a representation of the subordinate position that black women assume in society. This is because the sexual pleasure of the invisible spectator and the white male characters in the painting are prioritised. Her trauma comes secondary, if at all.

When the hierarchy of races was formed, dirt became synonymous with the black race. *Rape of a Negro Girl* creates a link with this idea of impurity. It is done through the way the black woman is handled in the painting, she is treated like dirt/ garbage. She is handled carelessly, her will is discarded, she is humiliated and most importantly she is insignificant. The insignificance of black women is part of a racial ideology that has been repeated and transported through the centuries and still exists currently. I will investigate this further in later chapters.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have been able to point out the ideology that shaped the representation of rape in Early Modern Europe. The various images from throughout the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries show how society viewed rape and that they had suppressed its occurrence visually. The strong influence of Christian dogma on the representation of rape is illustrated in the subsection, *Biblical Beauties*, where rape had been restricted to the sexual intercourse of a man and a woman and the woman had to give physical evidence of force (besides vaginal penetration) that she had been sexually assaulted.

I have analysed images that frame the sexual assault of women as "heroic", that the women were sacrificing their bodily integrity for the "greater good" of humanity". The latter is seen in the images, *The Abduction of the Sabine Women* and *Leda and the Swan*. In the former rape is romanticised by the "swinging of arms" and the exposure of women's breast whilst trying to flee their attackers. In the latter rape is represented as passionate "lovemaking", both examples showing how the violence of rape was effaced during this time.

I have been able to address a significant objective of this research, and this is the analysis of myths about rape; how they originated and how they have been perpetuated. There was also an analysis of how the myths surfaced in visual representations.

Another important aspect of the chapter is the visualisation of a black woman being sexually violated. I struggled to obtain images of this nature in this context. The artwork by Van Couwenberg does two things. The first is that it gives evidence of the existence of black women in Early Modern Europe. The second is that it clearly illustrates how visual language was used to transport and circulate racial ideology. In the following chapter, I start to analyse representations of black women that are more easily accessible. This is of black women conducting manual labour during 18th and 19th century Europe.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HELP

In this chapter, I will be investigating representations of black women as the help. What I mean by this is that I will look at how her body has been removed of all humanness and utilised to assist in the lives of others. My claim is that her body has been removed of humanness because she is no longer a relational person, especially in the case of “live in” domestic workers. She has very little contact with her own children or her spouse (Cock 2011: 7218). These relationships make up our humanness and all human beings need them however she is denied this (ibid.). She is essentially putting her life on hold to earn a living (ibid.).

This chapter I will explore myths that are associated with black women. The predominant stereotype is that they are inherently dirty and that their physical strength is similar to that of a man (McClintock 1995: 105). Black women are represented as opposites of white women. She is seen as strong but also polluted, white women were seen as pure, fragile and precious (ibid.). The utilitarian purposes that black women’s bodies have been used for are; taking care of children (includes feeding them with her breast milk) and doing domestic chores (de Santana Pinho 2015: 119)

As a disclaimer, I would like to add that the authors that I look at regarding race, gender and labour are from very diverse backgrounds. This is because the idea that black women are inferior to other groups in society is a notion that is common throughout the colonial project. Imperialism and colonialism were implemented in different parts of the Global South by different European groups. Parts of the Americas were colonised by the Spanish, other parts the Portuguese. Similarly, in Africa, some parts like South Africa were colonised by the English and others by the German and French. The languages and techniques used to oppress native people in these continents may have differed, but the results were always the same.

DIRTINESS AND RACE

Dirt is associated with danger has existed throughout humanity however, the boundaries between dirt and purity took prominence in eighteenth-century Europe (Masquelier 2005: 169).

Soap was invented prior to the eighteenth century but, as the Victorian era began soap was considered an expensive commodity (ibid.). Cleanliness was admired amongst the wealthy, as it separated them from other social classes (ibid.). Soap represented domestic order, rationality and scientific knowledge (ibid.). Capitalism which has its roots in the bourgeois was considered a “clean” way of making a profit (ibid.). Monogamous marriages were also a “clean” way of having sex (ibid.). Rationality, Christianity and racial purity were all considered “clean” ways of living and thus encouraged, anything that fell outside of this was considered dirty (ibid.).

Mary Douglas explains that the excrements of the human body are considered dirty (cited in Masquelier 2005: 11). These are; vomit, pus, urine, faeces and blood (Masquelier 2005: 11). The exchange of these fluids created danger and anxiety (ibid.). Danger and pollution always came from the “outside”. Outside the nuclear family, outside of a social class, outside of a specific religion and outside of the dominant race (ibid.: 14). The only way to disassociate people with dirt is through “ritual cleaning” (ibid.: 14).

Blackness was identified as anyone that originated outside of Europe these were; Hispanic, Chinese, Indian, African and various other groups (Masquelier 2005: 175). Blackness came to represent the abject, dirt, the diseased, the poor, those who were heathens and the illiterate (ibid.). It was thought that the only way to rid people outside of the West of their inherent dirt was to educate them and introduce them to the ideas of chastity (associated with Christianity). Clean their living areas and introduce modernity (ibid.).

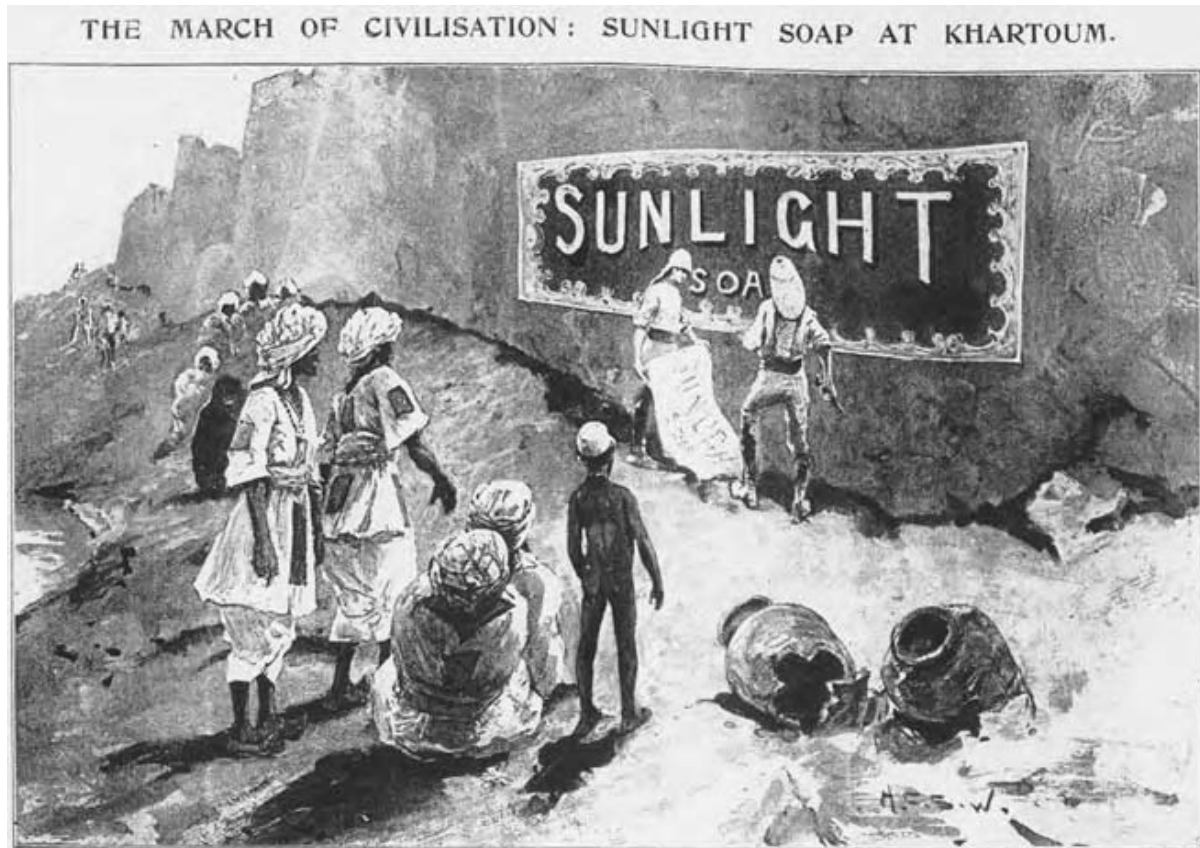


Figure 9: Sunlight Advertisement, *Illustrated London News*, October 8, 1898



Figure 10: Vinolia Soap, Magazine Advertisement, 1895

Figure 9, shows British colonialist advertising soap to locals in Sudan in the nineteenth century (Masquelier 2005: 175). This was done to inform the locals of the existence of soap but also to encourage them to use it (ibid.). Most of the population in Sudan at this time was Arab, they were thought to be more civilised than Africans but were still considered dirty (ibid.). Figure 10, is an advert for Vinolia Soap and was circulated around Britain in 1895. Here there is a white girl telling a black boy that he is dirty and that he should try Vinolia Soap. Both images convey European anxiety, a compulsion to clean the dirty black race. Tate (2015: 111) further emphasises this point by saying, the colonial project was trying to “wash blacks white”. And this was impossible to do because it not only related to the cleansing of skin colour but also their traditions, values and way of life.

There was also a fear of contamination whilst European families lived in colonies abroad (Stoler 2002: 67). Dutch men that were sent to Indonesia in the 19th century and had returned to Holland upon their retirement. Were said to have returned, “physically and morally a different man” (ibid.: 66). Once in Holland these men were said to have picked up (contaminated) traits that were not European. They are said to have shown “demoralisation”, “inaction” and general loss of the conventions of superiority (ibid.). Their stay in a primitive land had “decivilised” them (ibid.). This was usually diagnosed as “Phantom disease”, which was caused by sexual deviancy (associated with having sexual intercourse with native women) and a mental breakdown due to cultural shock (ibid.).

In colonies, black women were considered a threat to the purity of white nationality (Tate 2015: 31). The black woman was considered both grotesque and sexually desirable by the colonial male (ibid.). The sexual desire for her created the possibility of racial contamination as she was thought to be racially unhygienic (ibid.). It was the European woman’s duty then, to protect her husband from this type of contamination.

Furthermore, Tate (2015: 105) stipulates that this disgust in the black race ensured that the separation of races was enforced and maintained, like that seen in South Africa during apartheid. Black women have been subjected to the idea of dirtiness from colonial regimes but also for the fact that they are female. Traditionally women are considered dirtier than men. The

main reason for this is their menstrual cycle. Masquelier (2005: 12) notes that menstruation is a sign of “failed fertility”, and thus it is the bodies attempt to cleanse itself from the dirt of “failed fertility”. Additionally, women’s bodies are far more porous than those of men (Masquelier 2005: 12). This is largely because sexual fluids, menstrual blood and infants come out of women’s bodies. Heterosexual sexual intercourse also happens inside the body of the woman (Lamb 2005: 220). Women are passive receivers of any sexual fluids released by men during intercourse (ibid.).

The chapter will argue that it is this impurity that has contributed to the type of work that black women and their children are prone to (hard domestic and manual labour). But it has also contributed to how she is seen in society. The idea of being dirty makes you repulsive, someone that should be invisible and should be hidden from society. This preconception has made black women more vulnerable to ill-treatment from their employers. It simultaneously portrays her as incompetent. This representation of black women is important to my research as it informs the manner she is treated (dispensable and unimportant) during cases of sexual violence.

HIRING HELP

Goldstein (2003:67) argues that there is a status attached to the ability to hire a maid. It enters the employer into the middle class and upper-middle-class (if they were not already employing a maid). The employment of a domestic servant says to the society that you live in, “I can afford to have someone else clean my dirt” (Goldstein 2003: 67). The employer is then disassociated with any uncleanliness, even their own. Brian Owensby 1999 in *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle – Class Lives in Brazil* claims that maids are a marker that distinguishes the working class from the middle class. The opportunity of being able to hire a maid gives the employer power that they may have not had in their workplaces, or other spaces in society (Owensby 1999: 67). White men had more power over maids than their wives. This is because of the class, gender and race of the maid create multiple oppressions. White women also showed dominance over maids because of the class they were in and their race (ibid.). Having a maid reinforced social privilege because those that were already in power hired people that possessed the least power (ibid.).

Goldstein describes the middle-class and upper-middle-class as characterised by dependency on others (maids and other forms of hired help) (2003: 68). She notes that this helplessness of the middle class is still made to signify status and power (ibid.). Patricia de Santana Pinho reiterates this point and observes that employers are not aware of their dependency and assume that it is the maid that is dependent on them (2015: 113). The employer's argument is that they have given the worker an escape from dire poverty. At times the employer may give the maid old clothes or even pay for the maid's children's hospital fees when they are sick. De Santana Pinho claims that these are actions that, "soothe the racial and economic inequality" (2015: 113). These acts also lead employers to think that they have saved their maid from a life that would be otherwise plagued with much more discrimination and poverty (De Santana Pinho 2015: 113).

SURROGATE MOTHERS

Slavery was abolished in Paris in 1848 (Grigsby 2015: 434). When this happened, black women started to earn wages (very little) for their labour (ibid.). The 19th century saw an increase in the demand for domestic labour, mostly required by elite women (ibid.). By 1851, 40% of working women were in the domestic sphere (McClintock 1995: 85). Many women who had recently been freed from slavery resorted to working in the domestic sphere and some in sex work (ibid.). Those that entered domestic work often had childminding duties. They were either nurses or wet nurses (ibid.). The duty of wet –nursing is when women who had recently given birth to children of their own would use their breast milk to feed the children of their employers (ibid.).

The occupation of being a nurse or wet nurse meant that the bodily fluid of different races could interact (De Santana Pinho 2015: 118). Black women who were considered contaminated with disease, and physiologically underdeveloped compared to Caucasians, were now permitted to feed her employers children. De Santana Pinho observes that black women were perceived to produce breast milk that was thicker than that of white women (2015: 118). Her milk was used to "fatten" underweight infants (De Santana Pinho 2015: 118). The fear that

black women carried disease, in Brazil meant that wet – nurses were tested under the same commission as butcher shops and stables of milk cows (ibid.).

Similarly, Ann Stoler describes the treatment of wet – nurses by Dutch employers who had occupied Indonesia “...for the cleanliness and health of a wet nurse [Javanese nationality], ... not for the benefit of the servant but for the health of the Dutch infant she nursed. She was given ‘clean food’ and medicine, ‘told to sleep there’, forbidden to go home, because if she went home she'd be dirty. Her breast milk would be dirty” (2002: 198). Wet nurses were also instructed to wear “clean white shirts” before they started to breastfeed as this would protect the infant from her polluted sweat (Stoler 2002: 198).

The fear of a black woman being diseased meant that her movements and interactions with European children were carefully controlled (Stoler 2002: 198). She was treated like an animal because it was believed that her race was near that of apes (ibid.). Thus, her movements were surveyed and constricted like those of caged animals (ibid.). The latter rendering her inhuman.

The emergence of the wet - nurse in European society further entrench the disposition of the black race, because it robbed black infants and toddlers of their mothers (Grigsby 2015: 443). One asks who was feeding the child of the wet nurse? This is important to this research because it positions the black female body as being without the intrinsic human desire of taking care of her young. Lucille Maqubela (2016: 7218) argues that to hire a domestic worker/ maid was to “hire the personality and humanness”, of an individual. This is because the woman must put aside her own life and personhood. She must leave her children and her spouse, and she has to be available at all hours of the day. She is not expected to show any anger at the situation, rather she is expected to show gratitude, loyalty and obedience.

The upbringing of middle – class children was done by two women, “A working-class woman (nurse) who was put in the lower class of society and the [biological] mother who was a physically delicate, leisured upper-middle-class woman” (McClintock 1995: 80). It was the nursemaids that bathed, cleaned the vomit, urine and wiped the faeces of middle- class

children (ibid.). Wet nurses often bonded with infants and toddlers during feeding periods (ibid.). This meant that the relationship between children and wet-nurses was far more intimate than the one between their mothers (ibid.). The maids were characterised by “visible dirt, poverty and physical strength” (ibid.: 84).

The biological mother was removed from this type of dirt. Sigmund Freud said the following about his mother, “[She was a] distant figure of idealised perfection” (cited in McClintock 1995: 88). Middle-class women were encouraged to create and maintain the image of perfection and idleness as it linked them to an elite class (McClintock 1995: 88). It is the black woman’s labour that helped create this image. However, she is often omitted from conventional middle – class European family portraits, even though she is an integral part of raising that family.



Figure 11: Edouard Manet, *Children in the Tuileries*, 1861–62.

Figure 11, illustrates the existence of black women during Impressionism and the role that she played in European society. The images show her as being assimilated into European culture, this is seen in the dress that she wears and her behaviour is similar to other nursemaids. The black woman is on the right side of the image and she seems to be attending to a white child, the viewer knows she is black by the sienna that her flesh is painted in, and the headwrap that she wears. The headwrap was used as a sign to signify difference as it is associated with Africa (Grisby 2015: 444).

UPPER BODY STRENGTH AND HANDS

The hands of a person were rather important during this time in Europe, as they indicated the amount of manual labour that a person was exposed to. Smooth, small and fleshy hands were associated with upper and middle classes as they showed that one could afford to purchase the manual labour of others (McClintock 1995: 95). Working women were often associated with strong, masculine hands which were perfect for labour-intensive work. Black women created a portion of the working class however white women were also included in this class (ibid.).

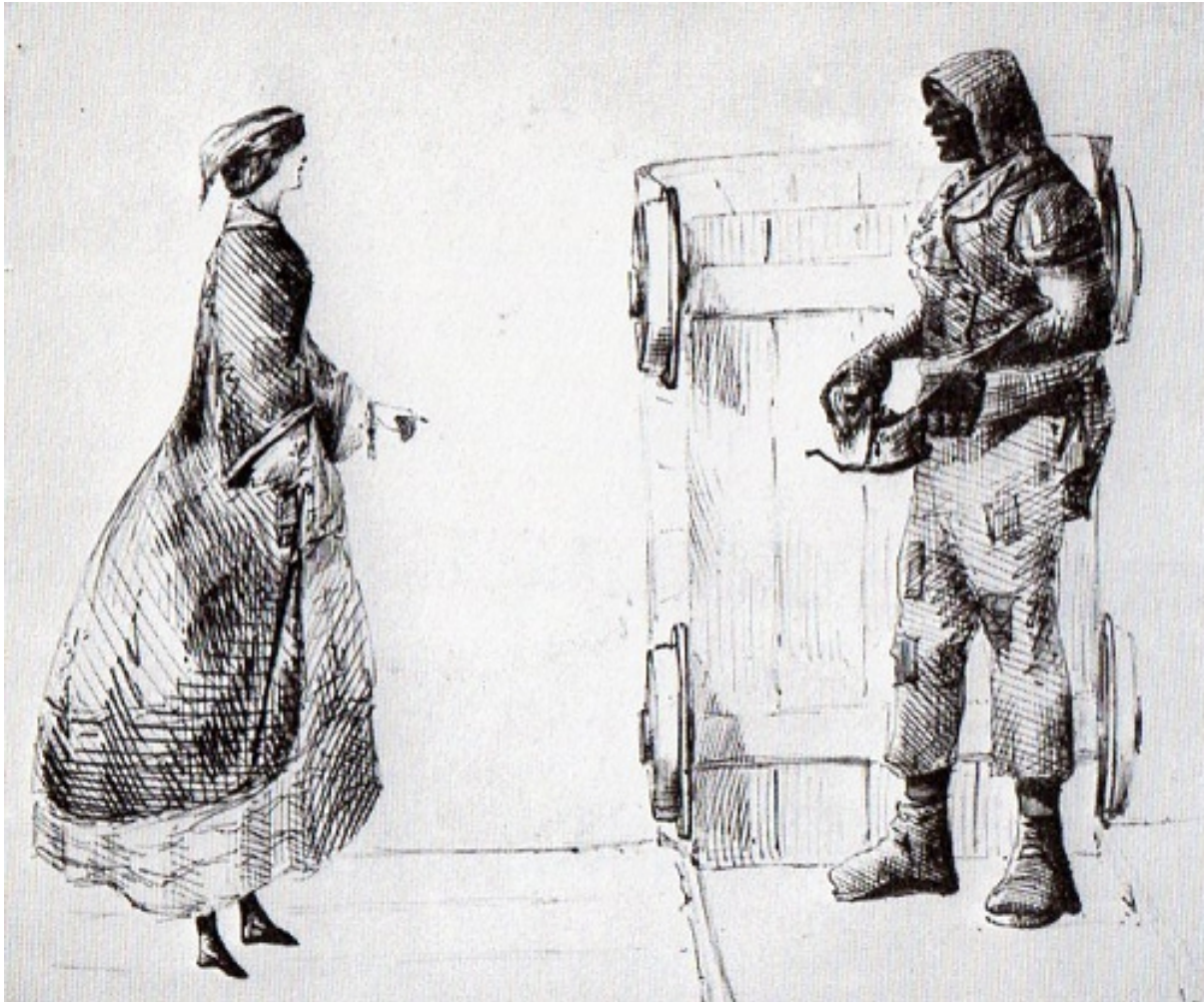


Figure 12: Arthur Munby *Racialising Difference*, Date unknown.

Figure 12, shows a sketch created by Arthur Munby, he made this whilst living in England (Tate 2015: 94). He would regularly walk around the city of London and photograph working woman (ibid.). In Figure 12, on the left, there is a dainty white woman who I assume is from the middle class, her hands are drawn as small, her frame is petite and she is dressed in a manner that conveys opulence and wealth. This woman exhibits fragility and the traditional idea of femininity. On the right there is an image of another woman, she is drawn as if she were a man, the woman is black, she has a large sturdy frame, her arms and legs resemble the masculinity of a man. This woman is far stronger than the one on the left. The black woman wears trousers that have been patched, these signal some level of poverty. She is dirty, it seems as if she had been working in a dirty environment, or one that requires physical strength. The motor vehicle

behind her suggests that she is a mechanic and that she lifted it herself. The image associates dirty, strenuous work with black women. Because the image is produced by a white male, it gives insight on how black women were perceived by this demographic. Tate asserts that “There is contempt for her athletic build, she is also made to look grotesque [and repulsive] when compared to the ‘normal’ white female body” (2015: 94). This representation of black women positions them as “intruder”, or the “outsider” as her body deviates from what is known as normal (Tate 2015: 101).



Figure 13: Arthur Munby *Race as Fetish*, Date unknown.

Above is another image by Munby. I chose to include the image because there is an emphasis on the arms and hands of the woman in it. Her hands are placed in the centre of the image, so the viewer is automatically drawn to them. The hands are big and dark, they are attached to even bigger arms resting on muscular legs. The posture of this person looks as if it is that of a man, usually associated with working-class men. The viewer is also confronted with female characteristics, the breasts on the figure and the high cheekbones on the face. This image

represents black women as androgynous, very masculine but still female. This representation of her body substantiated her exploitation. Exploitation in this context relates to the intensive manual labour, for extended hours that was expected from her.



Figure 14: Jacques Eugene Feyen, *Le baiser enfantin* (*The Childlike Kiss*), 1865.

In Figure 14 there are two women, one black and the other white. Each of the women is holding a white child. Grigsby (2015: 442) notes that it is the inclusion of the black woman into the frame that lets the viewer know that both the women are hired domestic help. If the image had omitted her, the painting would look like one of a mother and her children. The children wear clothing that seems to be more expensive than that of both women. The cap that the child on the left wears has elaborate detail and the child on the right wears a hat with a feather in it, these convey wealth.

The child in the arms of the black woman seems to be sliding off her lap. One can argue that it, so one child can kiss the other. However, Grigsby has noted that historians have suggested that the little boy is “... slipping off the lap of the strong Negress with white teeth and yellow eyes

who fails to secure him!” (2015: 441). The quote attaches incompetence and laziness to the black woman because of her race. It suggests that the nursemaid is unable to secure the child even though she has been depicted as having more strength than the other nurse. This is seen in her large hands.

Stoler (2002: 74) claims that “virtually every medical and household handbook in the Dutch, French, and British colonies warned against leaving small children in the unsupervised care of local servants [predominantly black women]”. This is because it was thought “that infants were being left to the care and training of ‘uncultured and untrained’ native servants, unsuitable replacements for proper mothers ...” (Stoler 2002: 124). Black women were seen as unable to properly take care of European children because of their race. They were black and it was assumed that their mental capacity was much less than that of the European, this point is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

The black woman is also described as having “yellow eyes”, however, if you look at the painting closely, the colour of her eyes is not visible to the viewer as her gaze is towards the child beneath her. The suggestion that the woman’s eyes maybe yellow is used to signal disease which was often associated with the black body. Reinforcing the myth that black women should be kept away from European children as they are riddled with disease. Stoler also observes that people that were seen as the “other” were thought of as morally corrupt. She states that “... servants were people that could corrupt European children” (2015: 136) and “affect the character of children” (2015: 136). The latter shows that black women were not only considered impure because of the medical disease that they carried but also because of the corrupt character they were assumed to possess.

UTILITARIAN BODY

Along with the dependence on black women to take care of children, she was also expected to conduct domestic duties such as washing dishes, cooking, laundry, and washing the floors. Patricia de Santana Pinho claims that the bodies of maids in Brazil were often of black, poor women (2015:117). Their patrons were white and wealthy; this is the group that held the

power in the relationship. The maids, on the other hand, were incompetent and had to rely on the instructions given to them by their patrons (De Santana Pinho 2015:117). The bodies of maids were considered an endless source of labour, that they were “hyper resistant” and “infra – human” (ibid.).

Maids in Brazil were constantly reminded of their place in society and kept in it. De Santana Pinho claims that maids being “kept in their place”, is seen by their accommodation in the homes that they worked in (2015: 108). Their sleeping quarters are sometimes at the back of the main house, at the basement of the house or attic. These spaces are also used as storage rooms, where old clothing and boxes are kept. Sometimes maids shared these spaces with domestic pets (De Santana Pinho 2015: 108). The location of “servant quarters” in these homes, is used to emphasize their inferior status (ibid.).

Rebecca Ginsburg (2000: 83) offers a similar narrative for black domestic workers in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. In 2011 it was reported that South Africa had almost one million black women employed as domestic workers (Cock 2011: 132). The need for cheap domestic labour in white suburbs around the country meant that black women could move to “better” living conditions, than the ones that they had in townships and rural areas. In suburban homes, domestic workers were given amenities such as electricity, easily available running water and proper ablution facilities (ibid.). “Live in” domestic workers usually retire to a room at the back of the house after completing their duties in the main house. The typical suburban house had a backyard with a tool shed, storage bin and “servants quarters” (ibid.). Ginsburg describes this room as “simple and crude”, it was usually eight by ten feet, had a shower and toilet (2000: 84).

Most of the backrooms did not have a ceiling and not all had electricity (Ginsburg 2000: 84). The furniture used in these spaces was considered “unusable” by the employer and then placed in the living quarters of the domestic worker. The keys to the room were with both the

employer and the domestic worker. The latter indicates that domestic workers did not have the privacy that adults usually have.



Figure 15: Ernest Cole, *Newspapers are her carpet, fruit crates her chairs and table*, 1960 -66

Figure 15 is a photograph of what the viewer assumes is a domestic worker in her living quarters in suburban homes. The assumption that she is a domestic worker is based on what

looks like a domestic worker uniform, hanging on her wardrobe. The size of the room also suggests that it is the back room that was used to house domestic servants during apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa. Ginsburg mentioned that the rooms were usually eight by ten feet which is 2.4 meters by 3 meters, this measurement seems accurate for the room that the woman is lying in (2000: 84). Figure 15, suggests that domestic workers lived in spaces similar to prison cells. This is because the room lacks space, it looks cramped and not appropriate for housing humans. It lacks human comforts, the flooring has cement on it, it makes the room look cold, much like a prison cell. The title of the photograph is, *Newspapers are her carpet, fruit crates her chairs and table*. This title suggests that the woman is poor, and she cannot afford normal carpets. This is the case even though she is employed on a full-time basis. The use of crates as furniture also emphasises the idea that the woman is poor.

Ginsburg claimed that the relocation of black domestic workers into suburbs improved their living standard (2000: 84). As she had basic amenities that were denied in townships and rural areas. However, the woman in the image shows someone who has not been removed from the cycle of poverty. Her inability to purchase basic items that are required in order to have a decent life shows that her role as a domestic worker has not “freed” her from poverty.

What is even more worrisome is that domestic workers are expected to not only live in such conditions but to be happy in them. Ginsburg (2000: 84) claims that the living quarters that domestic workers were given (for the period of their employment) “... was probably her most valued asset”. This statement perpetuates the idea that the black race is different from the white one, and that each race requires a different standard of living because of this. Ginsburg’s claim is fuelled by the notion that black people are not as developed as white people, that black people are in the earlier stages of mankind. They are thus unfamiliar with the “finer things of life” that white people are constantly exposed to, these are; living in a home that has heating, curtains and a carpet. She suggests that conditions that would not be acceptable to the white middle class would be most valued by the black woman because she is inherently inferior.

As is commonly known domestic workers are not paid a substantial amount of money although they work longer hours than the average working-class person. Nattrass and Seeking (2001: 45) argue that black women are the most economically disadvantaged group in the South African labour force. The pair also states that in 1994 the average per capita income for black people was one-tenth of that of a white person, (Nattrass and Seeking 2001: 46). Domestic workers are included in the statistic above, this means that the labour of the domestic worker was affordable and an unlimited resource. Their bodies were handled accordingly, her body was not given the respect and protection that her employer's bodies were.

De Santana Pinho observes that in contemporary Brazilian society some maids are not allowed to use electrical appliances in their duties because of their presumed illiteracy (2015: 115). Also, because it was thought that appliances are made to lessen the manual labour of the upper-middle class, but not that of the lower class (maids). Tasks were purposely made harder for maids as this body did not deserve the care of her employer.

The misuse of the black female body is echoed by Goldstein (2003: 61), as she notes that Gloria (this is a Brazilian maid that Goldstein shadowed) "worked fourteen- or fifteen-hour days and spent one or two hours every day travelling, often changing buses two or three times to reach each employer's home." This quote shows that the body of the maid did not share the same privileges as those that employed her, whose working hours were probably eight hours a day. It also shows that the humanness was removed from her as she was expected to work in a manner that the human body is not built for.

Maids were not trusted by their employers, they were encouraged to prove their trustworthiness by showing loyalty, obedience and affection to the employers and families. The maid is expected to provide all this emotional work, on top of her exhaustive manual duties. There is too much expected of her and even when she gives the emotional work, her employers return it with humiliating remarks and behaviour. Ginsburg (2000: 84) notes that domestic worker employers are infamous for "yelling harsh remarks" to these women. She also notes that there are times when domestic workers are given different food than that of the family.

They have their tea and coffee rationed and even locked inside the house. Again, this is behaviour that shows that she was not thought of as human (Ginsburg: 2000: 88). However, there were occasions where employers would give their maids old clothing, emergency days off, and money if she had a financial emergency.

De Santana Pino also notes that women who usually carried out domestic work were the descendants of slaves (2015: 107). She claims that even though slavery had ended in 1888 in Brazil, there were structural reasons that trapped the descendants of slaves in this type of work (De Santana Pino 2015: 107). De Santana Pinho describes systems that encourage this, one of them is when Brazilian maids are encouraged to bring their daughters to work to assist them with their duties (2015: 117). De Santana Pinho observes that this as a transfer of the maid's utilitarian function on to her children (ibid.). Young girls were expected to do this labour for free or to be remunerated with old clothing from white families (De Santana Pinho 2015: 111).

The other reason why the children of maids were in professions that required servitude is because of the wages earned by maids. Goldstein (2003:64) says this about the money that Gloria earned, "I calculated that Gloria was earning about six dollars a day [R71.00 a day]. Approximately one dollar was spent on one round-trip transport so that by the end of the day she came home with an average of five dollars". With the daily earnings of five dollars a day, Gloria is expected to provide for her seven children and some grandchildren as well. The latter shows that this low-income family would be unable to get themselves out of poverty. And that they would remain in poverty even though they were employed.

This subsection has illustrated that the black female body has been considered an object much like a vacuum machine or micro- oven. She has been used as an object that fulfils the child caring and domestic duties of others. Even though her presence has been one that has helped the European family, she is still considered with disdain and disgust because of her race and her gender. The subsection attempted to convey the many ways in which her personhood was denied while she executed her duties and a wet - nurse, maid and domestic worker.

HELPING THE WHITE WOMAN

The body of black women being utilised to assist white women is a representation that has been repeated throughout the history of Western art. This representation solidifies the subordinate position of black women. Contrast to this, the middle- class woman was made an ornament in her home because she spent her days being idle (McClinock 1995: 160). She was also seen as the safeguard of European tradition, surveying and controlling her servants, thus the wife became the head servant (ibid.).

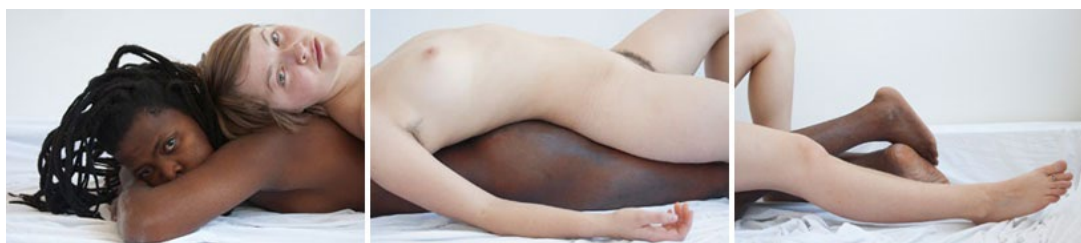


Figure 16: Edouard Manet *Olympia*, 1863.

Olympia by Manet is one of the most famous works in the Western art canon. However, historians have often critiqued it for the way it subverts the ever-present “male gaze”. Very little is said about the two subjects that are in the image and how they interact with one another. Olympia is infamously known as a sex worker. Sex workers were considered the lowest form of whiteness in European society. They were not desired by men and were viewed

as people that needed to be tolerated. What is interesting is that even with all this disdain for sex workers, black women were inferior to them solely because of race. In Figure 16, Olympia's body language shows that she considers the black woman as one of her accessories. She is to Olympia what the cat and slippers are; simply an accessory, an extension of her property (Grigsby 2015: 440). Manet's placement of a black woman's body with that of a sex worker suggests that black women like sex workers were bodies that could be hired.

The black woman's posture, size, clothing and demure recall representations of the African American mammy. This figure had a big frame, had muscular arms and hands; her duties were childminding and executing the domestic duties in homes of European families. The maid in the image *Olympia* has the same characteristics. Her dress seems to be too big and it looks like it does not fit her well. But it creates the illusion that her frame is big like that of a mammy. The colour of the dress (white) counteracts her deep brown skin colour which puts an emphasis on her race. The only part of the maid's body that are exposed are her hand and face. Her face has the "typical" African features used to categorise black people. These are fleshy rounded lips and a flat nose. Figure 16, positions the black woman as inferior to even the most despised woman of the white race. It shows that her race and gender places her at the very bottom of social hierarchy.



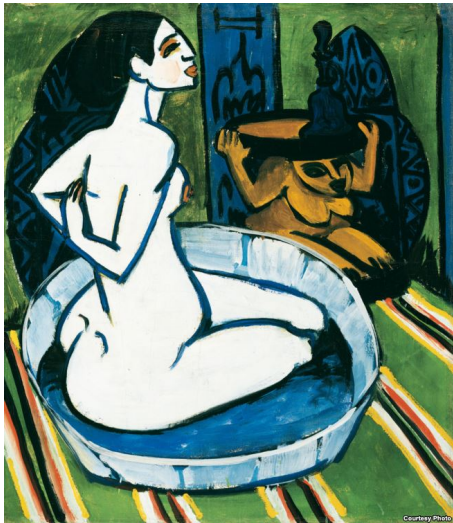


Figure 17: Zanele Muholi, *Catlin and I*, 2009.

Figure 18: Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem, *Bathsheba in her Bath*, 1594.

Figure 19: Jean Leon Gerome, *Moorish Bath*, 1870.

Figure 20: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Female Nude in Bath*, 1911.

Figure 21: Agostino Brunias *West Indian Washerwomen*, 1773–75.

Figure 17, shows a white woman whom the viewer assumes is Catlin (due to the title) whose weight is being carried by a black woman (Zanele Muholi) underneath her. This image is a contemporary representation of how the bodies of black women have been used to support white women. Muholi's body also suggests that she is representing a bed (strong and sturdy) able to carry the weight of others. Figure 17, shows how black women have been physically used by white women to their detriment. Figure 18, was analysed in Chapter One, however, the racial component of this artwork was not dealt with in detail. Here Bathsheba is bathing, being assisted by a black and white woman. The black woman seems to be holding up Bathsheba's leg suggesting that Bathsheba is unable to do this herself.

Figure 19, shows a white woman being assisted by a moor (colloquial for a black person in 14th – 19th century in Europe) to bathe. It is the black woman doing the heavy work, she is carrying a washtub filled with water and attempting to wipe the white woman's back. The woman has her back turned and is unconcerned about the difficulty that the black woman is having. Figure 20, shows a white woman bathing and opposite her is what seems to be a table made in the form of a black woman. Representing a black woman as a table is to claim that she is alive for the utilitarian purpose of others. It also suggests that she is an object and not a human being.

Figure 21, has a white woman in the middle of it, she holds her hip and seems to be looking down at the black women below her. As if she is surveying them whilst they work vigorously. Her race obviously exempts her from the strenuous manual labour. Her race also exalts her from the women beneath her, she is superior to the black women, her presence ensures that the work is completed. The artworks above all range from the 16th to the 21st century. I have purposely included works produced at different times throughout history to show how stereotypes regarding black women and their bodies have been maintained by repetition.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined how the black female body has been used outside of its sexuality. It's been used in the rearing of white children and also for domestic duties. This body has been a prominent figure in European households across the globe, particularly in the Global South. However, the black woman is still considered as polluted, illiterate, diseased, grotesque and

dirty; she is constantly being made invisible in the homes she works in. The latter is seen by her living conditions and treatment in suburban homes. Her body is presumed to be diseased and thus her contact with infants and children is either limited or carefully controlled.

The chapter has shown how her personhood has been removed in the professions she is likely to work. The absence of her children and spouse remove the intrinsic human need to raise your children and live with people who love you. I argue that her treatment in the professions of childminding and domestic work is informed by the value she holds in society. The research will show how this treatment transfers to her personal life (relationships with men and members of her community). How this treatment is transferred in the manner that men (black and white) think of her sexuality and access to her body.

CHAPTER THREE

UNIDENTIFIED WOMEN

In this chapter, I aim to articulate the conventions of silencing black female sexual violence during the colonial project in the Global South, particularly in the African continent. I start by illustrating the construction of the "negro" or "black" race. The construction of the "other," "black," "negro" is essential because it is one of the reasons that photography was an integral part of the colonial project. Paul Landau is a history professor at the University of Maryland, he claims that Europeans used photography as a way of communication between European countries and their colonies (Landau and Kaspian 2002: 141). The medium was used to communicate to Europeans what was happening in their territories. It was also used to show the behaviour of native populations, and to see the physical differences between races.

The chapter discusses how photography and drawing are utilised in the sciences of ethnology, anthropology, and phrenology. All of which were dedicated to studying human evolution, the chronology of man's development and difference that existed between races (Erickson 1977: 92). The studies showed a shift from a Christian understanding of the Pre-Adam human and gave a more scientific understanding of the origins of man and the different races (ibid.). All three disciplines convey difference through the act of "seeing", and thus have produced a substantial archive of photographs, and drawings. Mexican anthropologist, Fernando Armstrong-Fumero articulated the importance of the visual in these studies by saying, "the simple act of seeing allowed the relatively untrained to derive credible conclusions about race" (2014: 10). Statements like that of Armstrong-Fumero are significant in this chapter because they show how the visual is prioritised in these disciplines. The understanding of photographic representation in anthropology, ethnography, and phrenology is essential to this research as it was used to signify inferiority. It was also a tool of gratuitous sexual exploitation.

DIFFERENTIATING THE THREE SCIENCES

The images analysed in this chapter are all drawn from the studies of ethnography, anthropology, and phrenology in 19th century Europe and North America. As noted in the introduction. These studies tend to overlap with one another. They were all manipulated to substantiate racial oppression. Ethnography is the study of different races, and the kind of visual imagery that is privileged in the study is of people (the other) in their "natural" habitat (rural Africa) (Erickson 1977: 92). These were the photographs of different ethnic groups living their day to day lives, showing their lifestyles, rituals, and cultures (ibid.). Phrenology, which is also known as craniology, is the study of the shape of the skull and the brain (ibid.). This study's focus was to measure, "skull size, shape and especially capacity"(ibid.). The two "scientists" who pioneered the discipline in the 19th century were both physicians: George Combe and Samuel Morton (ibid.). Both believed that morals and human intelligence could be determined by the examination of the skull (Armstrong-Fumero 2014: 10). They hypothesized that admirable human qualities such as honesty, and intelligence were associated with the skull shapes of Caucasians (ibid.). Other races, whose skulls were different, were identified as lacking in these Caucasian characteristics (ibid.). This hierarchical categorisation of human skulls and traits created order. This racial hierarchy reduced European anxieties as they were in colonial environments that were unknown to them (ibid.).

Anthropology is considered slightly more "scientific" than ethnography, images in this study portrayed the race being studied in a photography studio. Outside of the native's natural context, in a sterilized environment (Joschke 2014: 282). The purpose of this was to extract human measurements of different races to further the study. There were standard poses used by each subject, that ensured that the study of their physiology was easier to read, one of these was "cartes-de-visite" (ibid.). I discuss this pose in greater detail later in the chapter. Another photographic convention that the study used, is visual comparison, to show differences amongst races (ibid.).

Towards the end of the 20th century, new scientists emerged. The use of photography and measurements provided by previous anthropologists were inadequate to support racial

difference. Armstrong-Fumero notes, for instance, that “Morton’s use of his numerical data was not particularly consistent ...his obsessive measurement was to bolster the sense that he was providing readers with accurate reproductions of the specimens in his collection” (2014: 16). This shows that material produced by “scientists” during the 19th century was not empirically based. All the studies were “developed in a time when the boundaries between scientific observation, aesthetic judgment and the ascription of moral values were fluid” (Armstrong-Fumero 2014: 12). Thus, their findings were far from objective.

The difference between races is a social construct, a system of categorisation (Panese 2014: 48). The advent of colonialism led to the emphasis of difference (ibid.). Photography was used as a tool to “push further” the propaganda that the “negro” or “black” race was inferior due to their physical biology. For instance, “scientists” argued that difference could be found in the jaw as, “[it] determined whether the nose was flat or long and the lips broad or thin” (Meijer 1997: 3). The camera was the primary tool used to “secure characteristic specimens of various [African] tribes” (Landau and Kaspin 2002: 144). Landau and Kaspin suggest that, like guns, the camera contributed to the success of the colonial project as it captured physical differences which then motivated oppression (ibid.).

VISUALISING THE “OTHER”.

There were certain conventions used across the three sciences, and in this subsection, I outline two that were the most common. The first is the act of grouping Africans, meaning that Africans were referred to as “The Sothos”, or the “Ndebele”. Black people became “deindividualized” (Landau and Kaspin 2002: 151) and nameless. Rendering them different from Europeans who were photographed for honorific reasons, in which their individuality and names were vital to the process. Images of black people were followed by captions that explained the *type* of person the viewer was looking at, such as “Young Zulu maiden in traditional headdress” (ibid.). This representative convention created and perpetuated stereotypes of African characteristics, and African behaviour became “predictable” (ibid.: 150).

Another convention used in the photographs is the idea of an "authentic African". Black people were photographed in their traditional attire, accessories, and "uncorrupted" by any colonial settlement (Landau and Kaspin 2002: 152). This visual representation meant that the distance between the coloniser and the "African other" was furthered and reinforced (ibid.). James Scott, Professor in Political Science and Anthropology (cited in Landau and Kaspin 2002: 156), argues that this representation became a "'public transcript'" of domination; the acceptable presentation of the colonised". It also became a transcript that used certain visual codes, that were familiar to the receiver. In the following parts of the chapter, I read images of black women and girls that were created during this time.

PHOTOGRAPHING OF YOUNG BLACK GIRLS DURING THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY.

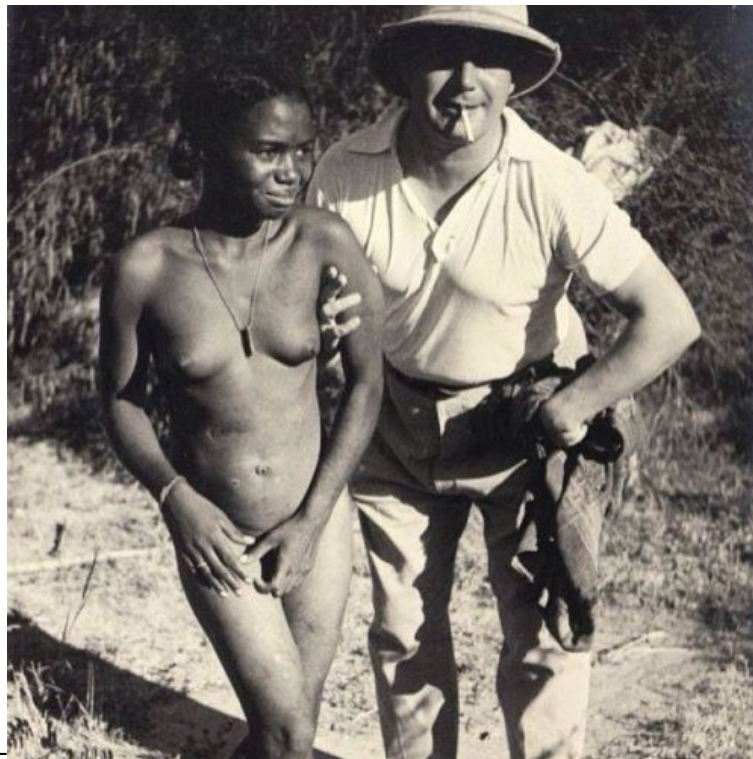


Figure 22: Photographer unrecorded, Date unrecorded

Figure 22, is one of two images for which I could not locate information on their source and date but, have included due to their significance to my argument. The photograph above is of a white man firmly holding the arm of a nude black girl. The most jarring aspect of the photograph is the juxtaposition of a white middle-aged man who is fully clothed against a young black girl that is nude. The race and dress code (lack thereof) of each of the subjects illustrates that they are not from the same cultural contexts or even continent.

The representation of the young black girl shows her barely formed breasts, they are the focus of the photograph; this makes her representation sexually appealing. The girl shields her genitalia to retain some dignity, and to protect herself from the gaze. It is important to acknowledge that photographs of this kind were used to make postcards that were subsequently circulated around Europe. This distribution of the photographs adds to their meaning; they become a marketing tool, used to convey a certain image of Africa. Creating an image of a continent with sexual abundance (Landau and Kaspin 2002: 161). David Forgacs, Professor of Italian Studies and the author of *Italy's Margin's*, 2014 explains that the use of such photographs on postcards was to show that Africa, "was full of beautiful young women, dark-skinned and bare-breasted, some of them barely adolescent, who were there for the taking" (2014: 77). One European recipient of a similar postcard is noted as saying, "the lucky bastard! He surely doesn't get bored there" (Alloula 1998: 105). Forgac's statement and correspondence between colonialists show the intention behind the photograph. Suggesting that it was taken to elicit white male sexual desire.

Leo Longanesi an Italian journalist, wrote the following while in Italy's east African colony. "Never before had one marvelled at pictures of such firm and pointed breasts" (cited in Forgacs 2014: 77). One of the effects of the postcards was that they encouraged young European men to make their way to colonies (ibid.). In Malek Alloula's *The Colonial Harem* 1998, she references Longanesi's statement and notes, "the colonial postcard says this: these women, who were reputedly invisible or hidden, and until now, beyond sight [because veiled] are henceforth public: for a few pennies, and at any time. Their intimacy can be broken into and

violated" (Alloula, cited in Forgacs 2014: 73). Some women who were photographed were, quite literally, previously veiled as they were from North Africa, and were Muslim. The Muslim religion and the veil made these women unattainable, and unavailable to colonial men, therefore access to them was not easily gained (Yegenoglu 1998: 39). Forcing young women to unveil themselves, and documenting the process meant that Europeans had entered an interiority that they were previously denied (ibid.).

David Brion Davis, an American historian, labels the rape of black women during colonialism as, "A quest of inflicting the conqueror's genes on the enemy group" (cited in Wood 2005: 305). This statement emphasizes how rape is about power and domination. Who is able to rule over whom. The photograph illustrates the gain of power and a feeling of achievement by the coloniser. Kathleen Wood suggests that the sexual conquering of female bodies is a way men communicate with one another during times of war, and unrest (2005: 305). Taking photographs of "native" women symbolised the colonial penetration of "virgin" African land. It showed that the carriers of the enemy's gene pool had been captured. Essentially, this act was one group of men (white men) communicating to black men as to who held had power (ibid.). I would now like to shift the focus of the chapter to the visual mechanisms deployed to conceal the sexual violence in the photograph.

The image attempts to disinfect the sexual assault of the young black girl in that it takes the mask of an ethnographic or anthropological photograph. One, that is used to illustrate racial, cultural and environmental differences. The photograph adheres to conventions of "ethnographic representation". This is because the young girl is naked whilst the white man is clothed. She is in her "authentic African regalia", which in this case is only the animal skin around her wrist. The background of the subjects is a bush, there is a lack of modern infrastructure such as tar roads, it lacks any evidence of European settlement. This reinforces the idea that the viewer is looking at an image that represents an authentic Africa. The above suggests that the image was taken to show Europeans the behaviour and traits of "native" Africans in their "natural habitat". The latter only being an alibi to mask sexual exploitation.

Photographs are not neutral in meaning. The aspect that the image is a photograph, suggests that it is evidence, that it is factual. The photograph poses as a seemingly impartial document of biological difference. Because photographs are "[a] two-dimensional analogue mapping of three-dimensional real space" (Sekula 1982: 4). They are almost always denoted with reality and objectivity. During the 19th century, photographs circulating Europe from their territories were in themselves codes, and they signalled "intercontinental [reality] communication" (Landau and Kaspin 2002: 320). Before the advent of the camera colonialists used "authentic" artefacts as a means of communicating with other Europeans (ibid.: 144). Photography was thought of as a development from the artefact and a "tool of the empire". Landau goes as far as to compare its significance in European colonies to that of the gun (ibid.). The importance ascribed to the medium "... elevates the photograph to legal status" (Sekula 1982: 6). The authority given to the photographic image allows the questionable behaviour of the man to be insignificant (ibid.: 2). It shadows the injustices and violation that is in the image.

The young girl's pose is in the style of "cartes-de-visite", which was introduced in anthropology photography in the 19th century (Landau and Kaspin 2002: 145). This is a pose that turns the body slightly so that the head is not in a completely frontal position. The pose was used in phrenology and anthropology photographs because it was able to show the shape of the subject's skull; which was then used to categorise them racially (ibid.). Professor of History, Andrew Banks quotes Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) a German medical doctor whose research interests were in the discipline of phrenology. "The foreheads of negroes, for instance, are very narrow, and their talents of music and mathematics are in general very limited" (Banks 1996: 389). His utterance shows how the size of the skull was related to admirable Western human traits (ibid.).

Thomas Gossett, in his book, *Race, The History of an Idea in America*, 1997 includes the writing of English scientist, Dr Charles White. White claimed that; "The feet of Negroes are flatter, their fingers and toes are longer, and their thumbs are shorter. Their hair is coarser. Their cheekbones project more, their lower arms are considerably longer, and their chins, instead of projecting outward, recede as do those of apes. Their skulls are smaller in internal capacity.

Their nerves are larger, and their brains are smaller. Their bodies exude an unpleasant odour, a characteristic which is accentuated in apes" (White 1799, cited in Gossett 1997: 48). In the only book Dr White was able to publish, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799). He used photography as a tool to articulate difference, and thus photographs were constructed and positioned in a way that would highlight and emphasise the physiological difference. This is seen in the facial angle of the young girl in the photograph.

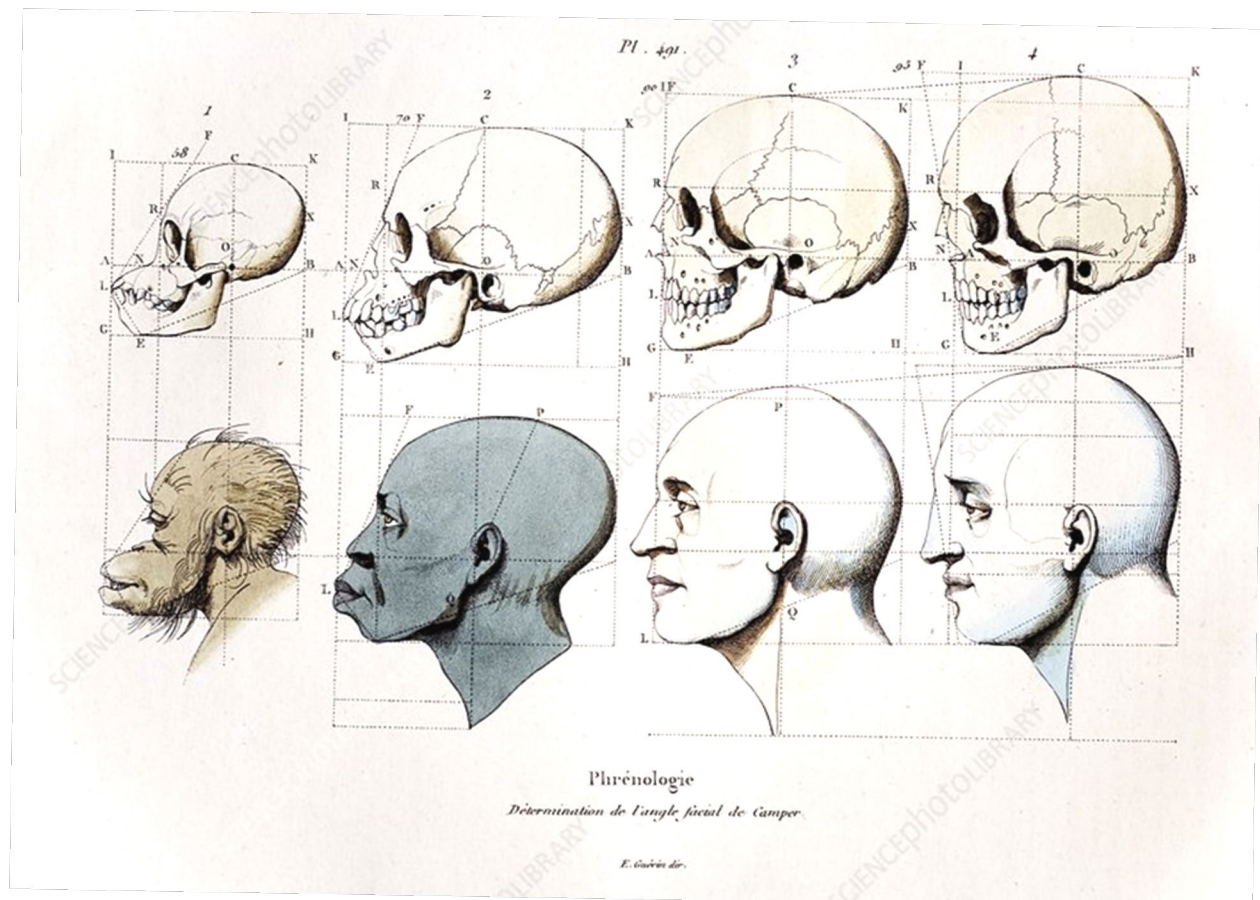


Figure 23: Petrus Camper (1722 – 1789) *Facial Angle*, 1760

Facial Angle is the title of the drawing and thesis made by the Dutch physician, turned scientist Petrus Camper (Meijer 1997: 2). In the thesis, he conducts supposedly, "accurate" drawings from human skulls and creates a racial hierarchy. Allocating and describing the different skull shapes of black people, white people, and apes. The ordering of the drawing suggests that black people were the "middle man". Meaning that they are not animals and not fully human (Bank

1996: 389). The pose, "cartes-de-visite" in the photograph of the young girl imitates those used to identify and categorise race. Her skull shape is made evident to the viewer and would suggest that the image is one for the study of phrenology. This camouflaging of the image neutralises the sexual violence in it. In the following section of the chapter, I further analyse colonial photographs produced during the 19th and 20th century, using the theory of the "adultification of Black Girls". I examine how this idea was implemented in the colonial project and makes the overtly sexual disturbing nature of photographs discussed in this chapter morally and socially permissible.

ADULTIFICATION OF BLACK GIRLS



Figure 24: Italian soldier Giovanni Varese with an unidentified woman, Ethiopia (1936).

Figure 24, is of a young black girl in the nude, who is sitting on the lap of a much older, white male colonialist. The position of her body to his seems to suggest that "she is his". Their body language strongly implies that he owns her, and unlike the previous image, seems to have *complete* control over her body. The way that the girl sits on his lap means that her buttocks are touching his genitals. There seems to be tension in the girl's body, her right arm is "tucked" under his. The awkward turn of her torso and the way her toes hold the ground all suggest that

she may be in this position involuntarily. This, along with the position of his left hand, near her breast, makes the photograph sexually charged. The age of the girl and the body language of the man hints that she may have been sexually exploited by him.

Sexual violence is neutralised in this photograph through the caption, which reads "Italian soldier Giovanni Varese with an unidentified woman, Ethiopia". The caption refers to the young girl as an "unidentified woman". This title objectifies the girl because her identity is removed. She becomes someone who is not known and does not belong to anyone. The erasure of her name takes away one of her human rights, which is the right to dignity. The latter is intrinsically tied with having a name. Hannah Arendt articulates that this loss of identity is because the "tribal or other 'backward' community did not enjoy human rights, it was obviously because as a whole it had not reached that stage of civilization" (1973: 291). Arendt's sentiments are extremely racist.

Alice Conklin, a professor in History explores the violation of human rights in the colonial project in her article, *Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France in West Africa 1895-1914*, 1998. In the paper, she gives an overview of how European colonies initiated the "upliftment of inferior races", but simultaneously denied native populations basic human rights linked with identity (1998: 420). She argues that the colonial project thought that, "Africans were too primitive to be citizens; only autonomous individuals, it was argued, could be safely entrusted with abstract political identity" (ibid.). Titling the photograph as "Unidentified Woman", renders the girl an object. It reduces sexual violence in the image because "objects cannot be violated". If she is thought of as unhuman then her sexual assault is insignificant.

The words "unidentified woman" also speak to a bigger concept, which is the "adultification of black girls". This is the concept that black girls are perceived to be more mature than other girls of the same age of different races (Ward 2014: 90). Therefore, the title says that she is a "woman", rather than the child that she appears to be. The construction of purity and virginity

had often excluded black women or women that were indigenous to colonies (ibid.). The highly sexualised nature of black females is not reserved for women of a childbearing age onwards, it also applied to young black girls (ibid.).

“Rosalia Bossiner, who accompanied her husband on a posting to Eritrea (Italian colony) in 1893, wrote of the ‘proudly erect breasts’ ... She also noted somberly that these women aged prematurely as a result of marrying and having children young. ‘At sixteen or seventeen they begin to lose their vigour, at eighteen they are wasted, at twenty they are old; and having lost their turgid breasts, firm hips, and wonderfully rounded arms, they often become repulsive’ (Forgacs 2014:73). The racist statement by Bossiner shows that when compared to their white counterparts, black girls faced the challenges of adulthood before they became adults. They engaged in sexual activity, bore children and married whilst they were in their teens, and when they had reached adulthood their bodies were “wasted” as Bossiner claims. The probability is that black girls did not age prematurely, they were treated as sexually-available adults before they became them. Figure 24, visually illustrates the concept of “the adultification of black girls”.

In the first study ever done on the “adultification of black girls”, *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood*, 2017. Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Black, and Thalia Gonzalez found that adults from different races often assumed that black girls were, “... needing less protection than white girls, and that black girls were seen to know more about adult topics and more knowledgeable about sex than their white peers” (Teshome and Yang 2018: 161). This understanding of black girls is informed by anthropological, ethnographic and phrenological understandings of race as being biologically inherited. The studies imply that “... the children of slave [black] women inherited the mothers' non/ status” (Sharpe 2016 cited in Teshome and Yang 2018: 161). The statement shows how racial inferiority was thought of as biological, thus black children and particularly black girls could never shed their mother's identity, of an object.

Teshome and Yang take the idea of "adultification" further and argue that the word "child" does not have the same meaning when placed next to a black body (2018: 161). Therefore "black girl child" does not have the same meaning as "white girl child" (ibid.). The latter is a signifier of personhood that requires protection and the former, one that can be sexualised, and a "body to be raped that is not yet ready for rape" (ibid.: 162). In patriarchal societies, girls are usually deemed more valuable than women, and the role of the father is to protect their girl children from other men. The image seems to suggest that this type of protection is only applicable to white girls. Essentially, the father is the caretaker of her virginity, protecting young girls from other men is protecting the father's estate (Castelli 1986: 66). Since the girl in the photograph is black, her sexual exploitation is much more palatable and the protection of her virginity is unnecessary because black women are born "rapeable".

Kathleen Ward a Sociology lecturer (2014: 90), quotes a principal from a residential school (boarding school) as late as 1948 in Canada saying this about native Indian girls. "The behaviour patterns of primitive people in respect to sex are unfortunately too predictable," and "nature is very strong in them... the problem, of course, is that these people with regard to sex mature much earlier than whites" (ibid.). The schools were administered by Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches that were instructed by the Canadian government to civilise 'native' children (ibid.:91). Teshome and Yang explain how institutions of "care" like schools, hospitals, mental and correctional facilities perpetuate violence against black people (2018: 166). The schools mentioned by Wood seem to perpetuate extreme violence on the people that it is meant to nurture.

The schools were under the spotlight because of sexual assault allegations by former students, the officials in the school were the accused (Ward 2014: 87). Ward goes on to describe how the image of the hypersexual black female contributed to her treatment by others. "The portrayal of the squaw is one of the most degraded, most despised and most dehumanised anywhere in the world... she has no human face, she is lustful, immoral, unfeeling and dirty. Such a grotesque dehumanisation has rendered all native women and girls vulnerable to gross

physical, psychological, and sexual violence” (ibid.). My inclusion of this quote is to illustrate the consequences of being a black girl during the colonial project. Moreover, my inclusion of this quote is also to allude to the fate that the girl in the image above may have faced. As opposed to other children of the same age, she was prone to great human right violations including those of sexual abuse. This assault of indigenous girls and women was considered a rite of passage for the colonial male once they landed on unknown virgin territory. It was not considered a crime (Kolsky 2010: 124).

A white soldier that had settled in the Italian colony of Eritrea is mentioned as saying; "I am talking about women, not females. There are plenty of females in the colonies, exuberant and well-endowed blacks; what is lacking are women, who can only be white" (Forgacs 2014 73). His words surface the objectification that black women and girls faced in colonies. The soldier differentiates "women" and "females" through race. The term "female" is scientific, and its use is not limited to the human species. It also includes other animals. White females, however, are referred to as "women" as they are considered human. Applying this understanding of black women on to Figure 24 shows how the sexual violation of the young girl is neutralised. I will now move to images that display sexual exploitation and assault of black women in the same period. I will examine the next image using the colonial objective of "ownership of native bodies", and how this dilutes sexual violence.

OWNERSHIP



Figure 25: Photographer and Date unrecorded.

I speculate that Figure 25, depicts an Italian soldier in Eritrea in the middle of the 20th century. The exact details are not available. The photograph is black and white. It is of a black Eritrean woman with a white man who, I assume is Italian. Both are in the water. The man firmly holds the woman's face and body. One of his hands resting firmly on her breast but it does not cover her breasts, it is positioned so that her nipple is exposed, this attracts a sexual gaze. He holds her jaw with a substantial amount of pressure, this, in turn, directs the woman's gaze to the camera. His firm grip on her jaw coerces her to smile involuntarily. This makes the woman look at the "invisible spectator" that is behind the camera. Portraying her "forced" availability and attracting a sexual desire (Finn 1985: 85).

The woman wears what seems to be "traditional" jewellery, she wears a metal headband and a large nose ring. Her waist is also wrapped in a "traditional" African cloth (in South African and

some other African contexts, this would be identified as a “kanga”⁷). All of these emphasise the woman’s “otherness”, that she is different, and from a different culture than the man that is holding her. It is this difference that justifies the control that he has over her body. Since the woman is black and the colonial project identified such persons as inferior, and primitive. The way that the man handles her seems to be justified because of her subordinate position.

Most European viewers of this photograph during the 19th century would not experience any discomfort in looking at the woman, because they would have thought of black women as property (Alloula 1998: 166). Photographs such as Figure 25, were a display of power, force, and European masculinity (Forgacs 2017: 77). Forgacs accurately recognises that the “imagined marginality of black girls was produced through photographs” (ibid.). They were visual tools used by colonialist to reinforce their superiority, showing that white men could possess/ own people.

Control, ownership, and the taming of black women were important because they were perceived as “hysterical” and “hypersexual”. One pseudoscientist wrote, “Apes and baboons menstruate less than negresses, monkeys still less” (Gossett 1997: 49). The comparison of the menstrual cycle of black women to that of apes, suggests that she is dirtier than animals because menstruation is associated with dirt (failed fertility). Mention of the lengthy menstrual cycle of black women reinforces the idea that they are highly sexual, and that this is linked to the duration of her menstruation. The presumed sexual wildness of black women positioned them below the social status of primates. White men were assumed to have physical and social power to control them. This image shows this power, as he can control the movement of what was then thought of as a wild animal (Corbey 1988:75). Here sexual violence is mitigated because she is an animal, needy of possession and without any possibility of sexual refusal (Alloula 1998: 122).

⁷ The Kanga is an African fabric that is used by women around the continent. It has various uses; to secure babies on the back of a woman, like a nightgown, head wrap and sometimes used as a skirt (Pather 2016: para 1). During the 2006 rape trial of then Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa Jacob Zuma said that the accuser Khwezi (pseudo name) had worn a kanga and this made him believe that she was initiating sexual activity between the two of them, since the trial the garment has had a sinister sexual connotation to it (ibid.)

Her dress suggests that she was not prepared to be in the water. However, the white man who seems to be wearing less than her was. Being in water symbolises leisure, relaxation, and sexual activity. Western cultures associate water with Nymphs. These are figures of Greek mythology and are found in rivers and springs (McCool et. al. 2008: 25). Nymphs are commonly visually represented as seducers of men and are often surrounded by springs. The "spring" is associated with ideas of female sexuality, as it is used to indicate sexual arousal of women (ibid.). This is a particularly Western understanding of water and female sexuality.

Both subjects in the photograph are smiling, each for seemingly different reasons. The black woman's smile seems to "eradicate" the sexual violence in the image, it signals that she consents to the man's behaviour and possession of her (Alloula 1998: 122). Simultaneously her smile conveys submission, she acknowledges the power of the man holding her (ibid.). The smile also suggests that she welcomes the sexual gaze that she receives. That her "native" culture was restricting her wild sexuality; the white man seems to have unleashed it. The woman can now be her true self, she can be promiscuous (ibid.).



Figure 26: Unidentified woman, two sailors and two men 1935, Massawa

Mario Fiore

Figure 26, is taken from the book *Italy's Margins* 2014, by Forgacs. It is a photograph of a black woman being forcefully held by four white men that are dressed like sailors. The woman's arms and clenched fists show resistance but her attempt to flee is futile. The woman is topless as her shirt has been removed by one of the soldiers. The removal of her shirt unveils her breasts, which then are on display. There are two other men on the edges of the image who are dressed in "traditional" clothing, which implies that they were native to the Italian colony.

The woman's body is reminiscent of the position of the "crucifixion of Christ"; her arms are spread and it is as if her body is being held up by the soldiers. The position signifies vulnerability, suffering, and anguish. Her position and lowered head also suggest that the woman may be a martyr, however, she is not being sacrificed for the greater good of humankind but for the sexual appetite of men. She is being publicly humiliated to appease the sexual appetite of the white men around her.

Again, the woman is dressed in "traditional" attire, the wrap-around her waist is known as a "Kanga" in South Africa. This mode of dress has sexual connotations to it as noted earlier in the chapter. The cloth is loosely tied to the woman's waist and looks as if it could easily "fall off" exposing her genitalia, which makes her vulnerable to further violence. Next to her waist, there is the very dark belt of one of the soldiers. His waist seems to rub against her as if his genitalia is pressing against her waist and buttocks. This gives the image sexual tension because the woman is being held and groped against her will.

The sexual violence in the photograph is not eradicated. But, the viewer is slightly distracted from it by the laughter or smiles on both the soldiers and native men that wear turbans. This activity suggests that there has been the creation of a "boys club", this is when men from different races come together and oppress women. Neither one objecting to her violation. The union in laughter also distracts the viewer because it suggests that colonialism was not "all bad".

That there were certain times when the racial difference was moved aside. Those times led to both the coloniser and the colonised to work side by side.

CONCLUSION

Each photograph in this chapter has been able to show that "sight was privileged" during the colonial project. Sight was used for the justification of the violation and subordination of a whole race of people. The act of seeing a photograph meant that "even the most careless observer" (Armstrong-Fumero 2014: 4) could understand racial hierarchy and categorisation. Through the analysis of photographs that would have been placed on postcards destined for West European countries, I have been able to illustrate how illicit sexual pleasure was embedded in images that claimed to be for the benefit of anthropology, phrenology, and ethnography.

The chapter has been able to show the relationship between photography and the effacing of colonial sexual violence. The first two images in the chapter start to surface the sexual adultification of black girls and how this nullifies their childhood. These images conveyed sexual violence through the nudity and positions of the young girls. The photographs portray the exploitation of black innocence for the sexual pleasure of male subjects and visual pleasure of the invisible viewer. These images convey that race and inferiority are biological, that black women from birth are "hypersexual", "dirty", and "wild".

The last part of the chapter began to examine the idea of ownership, how black women are considered property. That, because of the construction of the "negro" and "black" race black women have been reduced to objects, which means that they can be owned. The photographs showed black women's bodies being controlled by someone other than themselves, reinforcing the notion that their will (sexual consent) is insignificant.

The purpose of the chapter has been to show that the "visuality" of black women is what Teshome and Yang have termed "anagrammatical blackness" (2018: 164). This means that the images of black women produced during the 19th and 20th century show a disequilibrium at all

stages of their lives. Whilst other races, chiefly Caucasians are born with equilibrium and then something unfortunate happens to them, causing “disequilibrium”. Then they go to a care facility (hospital, mental facility) to restore the order (equilibrium). Black women are constantly visualised as, “born in disequilibrium, live[ing] in disequilibrium and die[ying] in disequilibrium” (ibid.). “Care” facilities do not restore order or a healthy state in the lives of black individuals. The example given in the chapter of a Canadian boarding school shows that institutions that are meant to nurture and protect, further violate black girls and women. This chapter has enabled me to convey the historical visibility of black women in the 19th and 20th century, this is important as it “sets the tone” for the representation of black women in the 21st century.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHE IS DETERMINED TO ASSERT HER REFUSAL, HE IS DETERMINED TO REMIND HER OF ITS INSIGNIFICANCE

STEREOTYPES REGARDING THE SEXUALITY OF BLACK WOMEN.

In *Chapter Three*, I discussed the black woman's body and how it has held a certain value in the colonial context. The value attributed to her body is tied to Western racial ideology that claimed that she is inferior based on the biological structure of her body. The inferior status held by black women in the 19th – 20th century, was transported into the 21st century, through visual representations, their repetition and reinforcement. This understanding of her body became natural; common knowledge that was not questioned (Story 2010: 23). Homi Bhabha, a Cultural Theorist affirms the latter by arguing that stereotypes are a form of knowledge that reinforces ideologies that are already in place (1983: 18). Stereotypes need to be "anxiously repeated", require "no proof", "must be in excess of what can be empirically proved", and are "ambivalent" (ibid.). In this chapter I examine how racial ideology has positioned black women's bodies as "hypersexual", and "inferior".

When stereotypes are applied to the bodies of black women, it implies that her body becomes a "text", relaying a message to its observer. Her body, mostly the colour of her skin reflects her intentions, mental capacity, and sexual transgressions. The predominant aspect of the body that I discussed in *Chapter Three* was the skull, and shape of the brain. In this chapter, I move to arguably the most observed part of her body; her rear end, and genitalia. I will discuss visual representations of her body through the ideology that stipulates that "some human bodies are *read*, and other bodies were attached to minds that allowed them to be the *readers*" (Story 2010: 24). The quotation above is from Kaila Story, a Women's and Gender Studies Professor at the University of Louisville. Story observes that Western societies created a division which made one group of people (Europeans) the determiners of the value, and function of the bodies of people that were labelled as the "other".

This hierarchy of races was asserted by the British colonial project in its territories during the Victorian era (Marshall 1996: 5). The Victorian era normalised the suppression of human sexuality (ibid.). This period was dominated by Christianity, which proposed that any sexual activity (especially that was done out of marriage), was lewd (ibid.). Abstinence was highly valued (ibid.). Marshall argues that British men and women suppressed their own fears regarding their sexuality (ibid.). Suppressing their innate desires, enabled a process of self-purification. Simultaneously they projected these fears on to black people especially, black women (ibid.).

This constructed meaning of black women's body was solidified by the notorious 20th-century exhibition of South African woman, Sarah Baartman. Whilst reading for this research I have noted that her body, has been used repeatedly by academics locally and abroad to relay the message of colonial sexual objecthood. I agree with many academics that she is an example of a body that, "could be dominated, and that which could be possessed, especially sexually" (Story 2010: 29). However, there were other women and men that faced the same circumstances as Baartman but seem to be ignored in postcolonial theory. I also think that the repeated exhibition of her body in textbooks, books, magazines, and journal articles further objectifies her. Her personhood and agency are lost in texts that describe how she was violated. In attempts to avoid the above, I will avoid using images of Baartman.

Sander Gilman in his text; *Black Bodies, White Bodies*, 1985 continues a discourse on how two completely different entities were attached to one other (1985: 223). This is the black woman's body, and deviant sexual activity (ibid.). These two seemingly unrelated subjects became used interchangeably (ibid.). It was argued by many pseudo scientists that; "the sexual appetite of black females went so far as to allow them to have sex with apes" (ibid.). The latter was explained by the difference in black female genitalia, and buttocks. The scientist Edward Turnipseed made claims that the hymen layer of the black female was two inches further into the vagina than that of the white female (ibid.). It was also noted that black women had an overdeveloped, and larger clitoris (ibid.). The pelvis of Caucasian women was also seen as superior because it was narrower than that of other races (ibid.: 243). Scientists also claimed

that white sex workers had the same anatomy as black women, this is the reason why these women (white sex workers), would choose to earn a living from sexual activity. Figure 28, shows the body of a black woman. This is a profile view which shows the shape of her skull, and the size of her buttocks. Both of these body parts are emphasized so that racial difference can be observed. Figure 29, shows a white woman who is a sex worker, her skull shape, hair, and skin are different from the woman in Figure 28. However, her buttocks also protrude. They are not as big as the woman in Figure 28 but are different from a typical Caucasian woman. This visual comparison was used to illustrate the biological differences between black women and white sex workers.

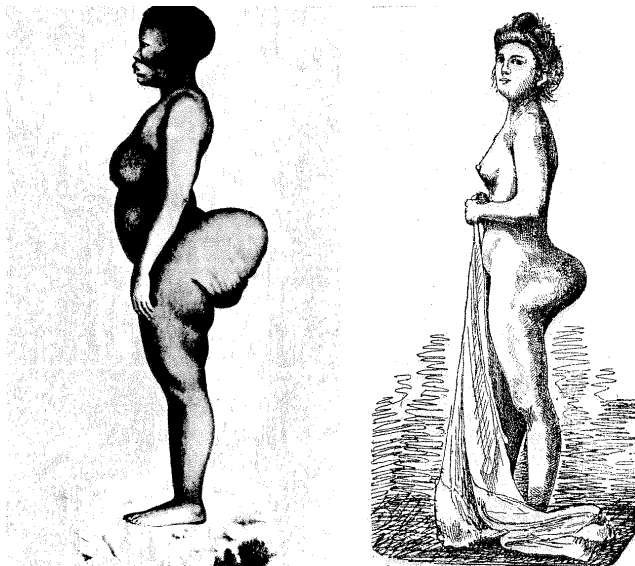


Figure 27: Khoisan woman by Georges Cuvier, 1817.

Figure 28: Italian sex worker by Abele de Blasio, 1905.

The images above suggest that black women are born sex workers because biologically their bodies deviate from the “normal” (white women). Andrea Dworkin articulates that black women were subsequently labelled as “whores” (1979: 205). In this context, the word “whore” has a dual meaning. It not only represents black women as sexually deviant, but also as “manipulative”, “greedy”, and “calculating” because they were able to make money from what

came “naturally” to them (1979: 205). The implications of black women’s bodies being interpreted as “hypersexual”, and a “whore” were that; “A whore cannot be raped, only used” (ibid.: 204).

Another stereotype that is associated with black women is that they are promiscuous; easily available to men (Marshall 1996: 15). This stereotype claims that black women are likely to have several sexual partners, because of an unusually high sex drive (ibid.). A black woman being promiscuous is closely tied to her being stereotyped as a sex worker. In cases where black women are sex workers, it is assumed that her high sex drive leads to the activity (ibid.). Economic reasons are rarely considered (ibid.). More contemporary stereotypes of black women are; Freak, Ratchet, Gold Digger, Baby Mama, and Bad Bitch (Campos et al. 2016: 54)

ANIMAL

Black women's sexuality is interpreted as animalistic (Marshall 1996: 13). This is because her sex drive is seen as powerful, innate, primitive, and strong (ibid.). Marshall goes on to claim that black women are renown for being, “‘better in bed than white women’, ‘being sexually wild’, strong and passionate” (ibid.). Alice Walker claims that “where white women are depicted as objects in pornography, black women are perceived as animals” (cited in Collins 2000: 139). Through the visual analysis of selected images, I would like to argue that black women’s representations throughout the New World have helped shape the way they are perceived currently in pornography. Mapp reinforces my stance by saying, “the black woman is often portrayed as a sex object [in pornography] to be exploited without justification by any man” (cited in Cowen and Cambell 1994: 325).



Figure 29: *On All Fours*. Date and photographer unknown

Figure 29, was taken in Algeria in the 20th century, it is of a native Algerian woman who is speculated to be a sex worker (Corbey 1988: 13). The woman is topless and is “on all fours” like the title suggests. This is a position that is connoted to animals. The photograph visually reinforces the ideology, that black women by virtue of their race are considered animals. This visualisation of black women further encouraged their oppression and bodily control. The woman’s kneeling position, also suggests that she may have been cleaning or scrubbing the floor. This activity reiterates claims that I made in *Chapter Two – The Help*, that the black woman’s body was thought of as “infra –human”. It could conduct labour-intensive activities like the scrubbing of floors, an activity that could not be carried out by white women, because of their perceived fragility.

Her physical activity also illustrates an observation made by Luis White when researching sex work in Nairobi, during the 1980s. Here White discusses how sex work is not only the exchange of money for sex (Masvswure 2010: 859). She notes that it is also the provision of “home comforts” by sex workers (ibid.). Sex workers provide services that are not sexual like; cleaning, cooking, washing of clothes, companionship, and making of beverages (ibid.). In this context,

agency is displayed by the woman if she chooses to conduct these activities for her male customers. The woman is smiling in the photograph, this represents the exercising of some agency by the woman. Primarily, because she includes “emotional labour” to sex work and she is not obliged to do this.

The following sections of the research will discuss more contemporary visual representations of black women. Figure 30, is the image of the entertainer (actress and model) Grace Jones. The photograph was taken by her former husband, and photographer Jean-Paul Goude (Kershaw 1997: 20). The image is titled *Jungle Fever* and was an artwork made to be an invitation for a Hollywood party at the Roseland Ballroom in the 1970s (ibid.). The photograph was later used as the cover for a book that retells the personal life of Goude, and the various black models that he had worked with throughout his career. Because Jones is a popular figure, her position in this photograph may not be recognised as subordinate. Her social stature suggests that she was exercising agency when she partook in it.



Figure 30: *Jungle Fever*, Jean -Paul Goude, 1981.

Jones' position in this photograph can be considered a more recent replica of the Algerian woman photographed in Figure 29. The two images illustrate that colonial ideology and semiotics were transferred from the 20th century to the 21st century. The photographs show how the perception of black woman's bodies did not change over a century. Jones is nude, her gaze directed to the camera, and confrontational. Her mouth is open like a wide animal would be when put in a vulnerable position. There are bones of what looks like raw meat next to her; this implies that she is a carnivore. Jones has a tail that is being held by a white hand in the background. There is another white hand holding a microphone in the foreground, suggesting that she should speak into it. The cage has the label "DO NOT FEED THE ANIMAL" on it.

An alternative reading of the image could be that Jones, is using stereotypical representations of black women to redefine their meaning. Figure 30, can be read as a deliberate attempt by Jones to convey the ridiculousness of racial stereotypes by making them hyper-visible, and excessive. Her transformation from a black woman to a feline animal conveys the idea that black women are hypersexual (Kershaw 1997: 20). Her masculine features reiterate the position of black women as the "other". Not fully female\ feminine, as she exhibits masculine features. The image could also be read as a critique of the European tradition of caging black people and placing them in zoos. This practice was predominant in Paris and Belgium during the 20th century (Kershaw 1997: 21). In this performance, Jones becomes a site of contradiction by conveying; humour and anger, the colonial and postcolonial critique. She makes racial stereotypes unstable (ibid.). Jones' performances may be considered as empowering because they critique racist ideology by mirroring it.

A counter-argument to the above is by author, Akeia Benard. Benard hypothesizes that oppression and violence are not always physical (2016: 2). That there are many cases where oppression is symbolic (ibid.). She describes symbolic violence as, "'gentle hidden violence', that operates under the illusion of choice" (ibid.). When this understanding of violence is applied to Figure 30, it opens the possibility that Jones' may have been exploited.

PORNOGRAPHY

In this subsection, I will give a more in-depth analysis of the depiction of women labelled as the “other”, in the pornography industry. I have purposely included the representation of black women in pornography because it is an industry that is explicit about its commodification of bodies. The role of pornography in society is seen in two ways; the first is that it is a healthy entity which facilitates the liberation of female sexuality (Dines 2006:283). The second is that it is a form of violence as it visualises female oppression and is often characterized by sexual violence (ibid.). Gail Dines observes that in pornographic films, “the more degraded and abused the woman, the greater the sexual tension and thrill for the male viewer” (ibid.: 285). The position that I assume in this subsection is that; what is known as pornography currently, is a reincarnation (re visualisation) of the abuse that women, especially black women have faced for roughly four centuries.

Patricia Hill Collins, stresses that black women in pornographic movies are seen being chained or caged and treated like savages (2000: 140). In this context, black women are again, visualised as animals. Black feminist and author Bell Hooks (1987: 59) suggests, that this image is familiar to one of black women’s necks being chained in slave ships that were leaving West Africa, bound for North America. Collins reiterates this by observing that black women are treated as if they, “were bitches in heat who cannot control themselves”, (2000:140). Black women are often seen in pornography giving white men oral sex while on their hands and knees. This is a position of submission and suggests that they are being dominated /ruled by white men (ibid.).

Gloria Cowen and Robin Campbell (1994: 335) both American scholars, wrote the article *Racism and Sexism in Interracial Pornography: A Content Analysis*. In it, they stated that “black women subordination [in pornography] is different from white women” (ibid.). Dworkin takes this notion further and adds, that pornographic films that include black women often have the features of; “the excitement of humiliation, the joy of pain, the pleasure of abuse ... the woman who resists only to discover that she loves it and wants more” (1979: 215). The quotation by Dworkin shows that the visual identity of black women is the basis for the “ultra” violence, that she experiences in pornographic films.

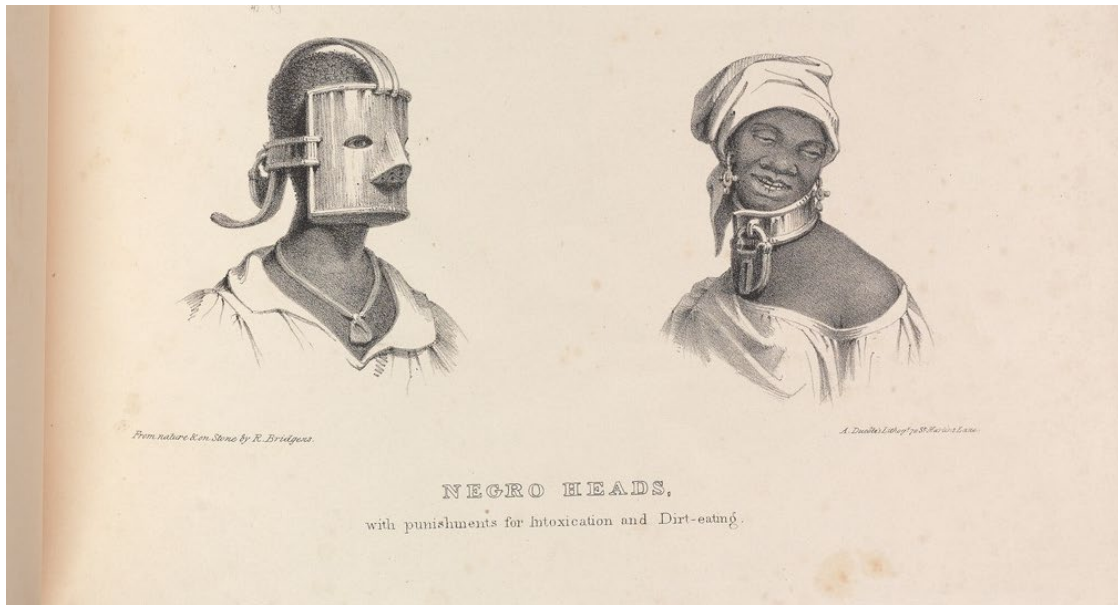


Figure 31: *Negro Heads (detail)*, Richard Bridgens, 1836.

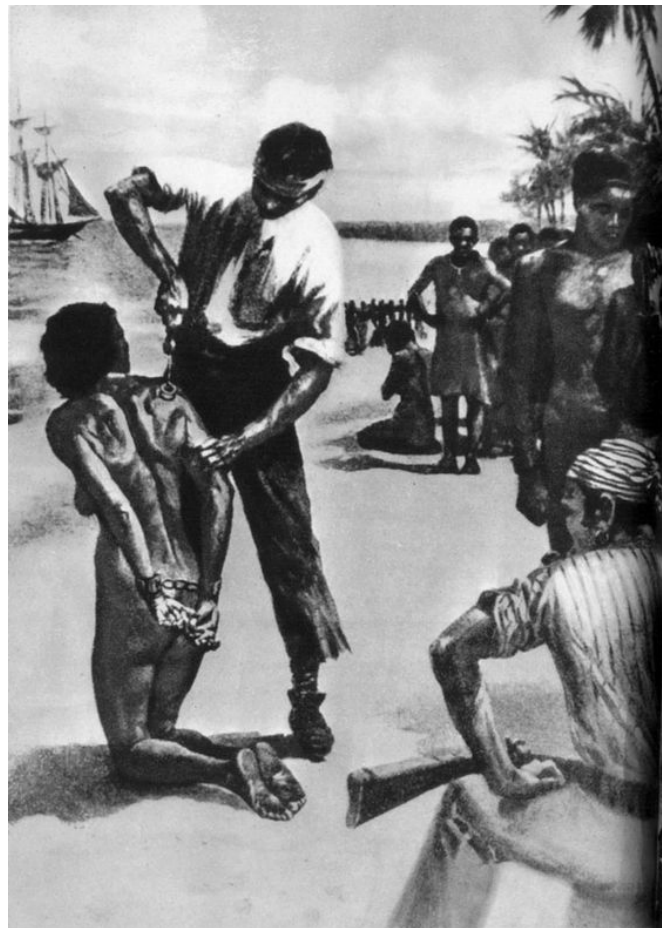


Figure 32: Date and artist unknown.



Figure 34: Date and photographer unknown.

Source: www.xnxx.com

Figure 31, is titled *Negro Heads* and is by the British artist Richard Bridgens (1785 – 1846). Bridgens moved to the British colony of Trinidad in 1839, he lived there for seven years (Skelly 2001: 5). Figure 31, is the detail of a drawing that he made whilst living in Trinidad. The purpose of the drawing is to visually depict the punishment that locals would endure if they were found behaving, in what the British identified as an “uncivilised” manner (ibid.). The head on the left is covered by a tin mask, this was the punishment given for individuals that were caught eating soil, also known as dirt-eating (ibid.). The female head on the right, with the tin collar, is the punishment one would receive for drinking alcohol (ibid.).

Figure 32, is of an African female slave, who was about to be “branded” by a slave owner. The image is from the *Writers' Program of the Works Project Administration in the State of Virginia*, 1940. The woman is kneeling which connotes submission, this position illustrates her social rank. She is naked and is being watched by other people who look like Africans and a white

man, whom I assume is a slave owner. Essentially the drawing is a visual representation of a black woman being humiliated and experiencing pain while a crowd watches on.

Lastly, Figure 33, is from a pornography website that is currently functioning and titled www.xnxx.com. It shows a black woman whose face is not seen by the viewer. Her neck, arms and hands are chained, and the chain is tied to a fence. This restricts her movement and reiterates the stereotype that black women are like animals. The chain around her reinforces that she needs to be controlled. The woman is slender and has straight black hair, both of these attributes connote European sexual appeal and are usually found on white women. These aspects of the woman's appearance seem to be included in the photograph to attract the gaze of the white male. This image of the black woman has the "best of both worlds", as she has the sexual urges of black women and the body structure of a white woman. This combination would evoke a heightened sexual attraction from white men.

I have placed these three images together because they illustrate how historical representations of black women, which are Figures 31, and 32 have influenced representations in the 21st century, Figure 33. The latter indicates how the black woman's body has been stretched beyond its limits and punished, in aims of fulfilling male sexual desire. Dines takes this idea further and argues that male sexual pleasure is heightened by the humiliation of black women (2006: 28). She makes an example by saying, "There is no apparent increase in male pleasure by moving [the penis] directly from the anus to the mouth, outside of the humiliation that the [black] woman must endure" (ibid.). Dworkin's also adds that pornography that includes black women is characterised by "rape, bondage, humiliation, fucking, assfucking, fingerfucking, cocksucking, cuntsucking, kidnapping, hitting ...gang sex" (1979: 215). All of the quotations above reinforce the notion that black women's bodies are "infra-human", or "animalistic" and can endure gratuitous sexual violence.

A worrying and common representation of black women in pornographic films is that they are shown as "initially resisting but eventually submitting" to sexual cues (Cowen and Cambell 1994: 335). Dworkin's describes an interracial pornography scene in her book, *Pornography: Men possessing Women*. Here a black woman's reaction to a rape by a white and black man is

described as, “her pain is horrible but her lust is overwhelming” (1979: 214). The book goes on to say, “but an inner voice with masochistic urges is telling her that she loves being forced” (ibid.). Collins reinforces this and observes that black women are seen “submitting after initial resistance to a sexual encounter” (2000: 137). This depiction frames black women as “lovers of rape”.

AGENCY

Pornography is considered violent in many ways, especially to black women. This one-dimensional view of pornography is misleading, as it also provides space for female viewing pleasure (Miller-Young 2010: 223). Many women (including black women) use pornography for this purpose. Furthermore, many black women are players in this industry. The women assume acting, sex work, escorting, film producing, and film directing roles. Therefore, limiting pornography to systematic and racial violence seems to flatten the discourse (ibid.: 220).

Black women actively choose to participate in the industry as it provides a lucrative income, flexible working hours and erotic autonomy (Miller-Young 2010: 220). The women use existing stereotypes of hypersexuality and animalism to generate an income. Black women's sexuality has often been exploited by large corporations such as MTV, BET and other cultural industries (Miller-Young 2008: 262). There have been instances where black women who have participated in music videos, as “video vixens” or “black ho’s” and have not been paid for their services (ibid.). In pornography, these women exploit depictions of themselves that already exist and are being circulated, for their benefit. The benefit can be financial and also serve as cultural capital (a stepping stone into another career) (ibid.). Women in the industry felt that they experienced systematic violence and racism in other careers, therefore, the explicit racial economy in pornography did not prohibit them from entering the industry (ibid.). Black women actresses are often encouraged to conform to white beauty standards in pornography (Miller-Young 2010: 229). This increases work opportunities and earnings (ibid.).

Other black women cited sexual pleasure, identity formation, and talent as their reasons for entering the industry. Not all black female roles in pornography are stereotypical (Ghetto, ratchet, a woman belonging to a pimp), there is some diversity (Miller-Young 2010:229). With

the emergence of black women producers and directors, the roles that are given to black actors are becoming more nuanced (ibid.: 230). Black sexual exploration, intimacy, and fantasies are placed in the foreground.



Figure 34: Anaconda single cover, 2014

Source: www.etonline.com

Similarly, artists like Nicki Minaj, create live performances and music videos that explicitly exhibit her already “hypersexualised” body. Figure 34, is an image for the cover of Minaj’s album, *Anaconda*. What Minaj does that the women in Figures 32 and 33 do not is return the viewers gaze. In the music video for her song “Anaconda”, Minaj and her back up dancers are in a jungle setting (Carmen 2014: para 8). All the women in the scene are “twerking” (ibid.). Additionally, Minaj performs a lap dance for the rapper Drake (ibid.). The performance is accompanied by lyrics like “Yes, sir, I am that bitch. Fuck you silly like a rabbit” (ibid.). Minaj’s body, actions, language, are highly sexualised however, this is used to show her sexual desires (at times sexual aggression) and not her availability. She consciously makes herself excessive and hyper-visible (Warner 2015: 130). Here negative European assumptions of black femininity are used but, their meaning is redefined. Minaj raps about fucking different men, her sexual pleasure, and her surgically enhanced big buttocks. The emphasis on her buttocks defies

white beauty standards and simultaneously celebrates black women's bodies. She uses the same tools (black women's bodies, rejection of authority, and vulgar language) as her male counterparts, to create an empowered narrative for black women.

The agency in Minaj's art is that she determines for herself how she is represented. Yes, the representation is hypersexualised however, it is owned by her and she decides who has physical access to it. She owns her sexuality and her body in the male-dominated rap industry. In conventional rap music videos men own and display black women's bodies (Carmen 2014: para 6). This is seen as normal. However, when a woman starts to own her image and body it is socially rejected and labelled as anti-feminist (ibid.). Carmen notes that "if black women aren't allowed to own their sexuality, then who does it belong to"(ibid.). A counter-argument to Minaj's feminism and agency is from Naila Kabeer. Kabeer claims that "for choice to be empowering it needs to challenge rather than reproduce inequality" (2010: 17). In the case of pornography and Minaj, I would like to argue that *choice* both challenges and perpetuates inequalities. It creates an individual that is in between agency and powerlessness

RAPE MYTHS

In this section, my claim is that racial stereotypes that are attached to black women regarding their sexuality make their sexual attack more likely to be dismissed. Darci Burrell asserts that society is of the presumption that "real rape" only happens to white women who are heterosexual and come from a privileged socio-economic background (1993: 95). This perception of rape is to the disadvantage of black women. Their sexual assault has been ignored, even though it is disproportionately higher than that of women of other races (ibid.).

Rape myths serve to trivialise the crime of rape by making the victim a villain, that "she is lying", or that "she has ulterior motives, like extortion in mind" (Franiuk et al 2008: 288). These comments are used to suggest that the crime did not happen (ibid.). They also imply that the victim brought the crime upon herself, that she wanted the sexual violation from the perpetrator. Myths regarding the rape of black women are informed by stereotypes attached to their sexuality. What I mean by the latter is that the notion that rape is trivial and the victim

does not suffer any damage can only be maintained, if the victim as in the case the black woman is already thought of as “filthy”, and “a lover of rape”. If the victim were respected in other areas of society and her visual representation showed her in positions of power, her violation would trigger some empathy.

CONSEQUENCES OF RAPE MYTHS

Rape myths not only affect the attitude of the offender, legal and security practitioners it also informs how people respond when black women are in threatening situations. Katz et. al. (2017) did a study, *White Female Bystanders’ Responses to a Black woman at Risk of Sexual Assault: Associations with Attitudes about Sexism and Racial Injustice*. They evaluated the amount of help (if any) a black woman would receive if she was in a situation that would lead to rape or sexual assault (Katz et. al. 2017: 273). The study was done in an American college campus. It came to the finding that white female bystanders were unlikely to assist black women that were vulnerable to rape or sexual assault, than if the potential victim was white (ibid.). The reasons for this were as follows; they believed that black women who had been seen drinking did not need help because “they know that it may lead to sexual violence” (ibid.). Another reason was that there were other people around, and the white female bystanders felt that these people could help the potential victim (ibid.). The study found that the bystanders were unlikely to feel responsible for a sexual assault because of the race of the victim (black) (ibid.). The race of the potential victim gave the bystanders the perception that the victim was to blame (ibid.).

The data from the research above suggests that race affects whether a potential victim of sexual violence is worthy of being “saved” (Katz et. al. 2017: 273). The potential victims “worthiness” of being saved is not only linked to race but to the level of their intoxication (drugs or alcohol), manner of dress, and careless or provocative behaviour (ibid.). Figures 35, 36 and 37 are photographs that were circulated on the social media platform, Twitter. They are of a black South African woman dressed in what is identified as a “mini dress”, or “provocative” clothing as she attempts to get on a local taxi. The marking on the taxi suggests that she is in the Gauteng province of South Africa.



Figure 35: Photographer unknown, 2019



Figure 36: Photographer unknown, 2019.



Figure 37: Photographer unknown, 2019.

The young woman is groped, her underwear is removed and her buttocks are exposed. These images show that the woman is not of value, and thus "not worthy of being saved". The predicament that she finds herself in is threatening and nobody attempts to reprimand or stop the two men violating her. Instead, Figure 36, shows one of the male passengers laughing while the woman is being publicly humiliated. The passenger's laughter implies that the woman is deserving of the violation, or that "she knew what she was getting herself into" by dressing the way that she did. It is also interesting how the photographer's focus is on the woman's body and clothing as opposed to the bodies of the perpetrators. This focus on her body proposes that it is her body that invited the violation and that her clothing may have contributed to it. My argument here is that the framing of the photographs serves to minimise the behaviour of the two men and blame the woman for her attack.



Figure 38: Photographer unknown, February 2008.

Figure 38, is from the infamous 2008 *Noord Taxi Rank*, assault of two women who were dressed in what is identified by South African society as “provocative” clothing. One woman wears a black mini skirt and the other a black dress with black leggings. The women were commuting in Johannesburg using “taxis”. When they arrived at the taxi terminal known as *Noord Taxi Rank*, they were followed by a group of men, predominantly taxi drivers and vendors. The women were groped, physically assaulted, and stripped by the mob of men. The photograph above is of the men following them before the assault. Like in Figures 34 and 36, there is a man who is laughing, whilst the women’s body language indicates fear. Both have their hands clasped. The focus of the photograph is of the two women’s bodies; they take up the most space and are in the foreground. The black mark used to omit their faces may have been included to protect the identity of the women. However, the blacking out of their faces also has violence to it, removing their personhood. It further turns them into objects.

Framing the women as sexual objects evokes the myth that, “they are wanting of the attention”, and that they are to blame for their hypervisibility at the taxi rank. The visual mechanisms used to make their bodies the focus of the photograph evoke the latter. The photograph shows roughly 14 men behind the two women, none of whom stop the intimidation of the women. All the men seem to come together to “laugh”, at the women’s

expense. Figure 38, further illustrates that black women's bodies are presumed as not being "worthy of saving", that their violation is justified by the colour of their skin and manner of dress. In the upcoming subsection I further analyse the depiction of black women in popular media, the focus of the subsection is the representation of women engaging in "survival sex."

REPRESENTATIONS OF SURVIVAL SEX

Survival sex refers to women and some men who do not identify as commercial sex workers however, they exchange sex (usually with an acquaintance) for various items (Wojcicki 2002: 268). It could be for money or a woman's electricity bill (ibid.). Wojcicki study was done in Soweto in Johannesburg and Hammanskraal in Pretoria, both townships are in South Africa, and where the practice is commonly known as, *Mavuso* (ibid.: 274). In these two areas "survival sex", is very common especially in taverns and shebeens (ibid.). Here, men offer drinks to women, and there is the expectation that women should have sex with them after this (ibid.). One woman interviewed in the study was quoted saying, "they buy me a beer and ... so then comes the time when I have to go with him to his place" (ibid.).

After a woman has had sexual intercourse with the man she is given a monetary reward (Wojcicki 2002: 268). The expectation found in transactional sex/survival sex often triggers rape being used as a punishment (ibid.). Especially, when women consume drinks and refuse to engage in sexual intercourse with the buyer afterwards (ibid.). The women's economic condition (unemployment) encourages them to engage in sexual activity even though they may not want to (ibid.). Wojcicki quotes one of her interviewees who said, "one day I went with my friends to the stokvel [in a tavern]. So when we arrived there, these men came to us and offered to buy us drinks. I said to them I want a cold drink, not beer... One of the guys brought me a cold drink and I drank it. Afterwards, the guy wanted to take me home with him. I refused, but there was nothing I could do. I ended up in bed with the guy, so I can say the guy raped me" (ibid.:276). In this subsection, I claim that the monetary exchange of sex makes black women vulnerable to sexual assault. I also claim that the visual representation of this activity is skewed.

I would like to acknowledge that the notion of transactional sex is not unfamiliar to the African context. In patriarchal societies such as South Africa, black men are socially conditioned to

provide material goods for their spouses and partners (Masvawure 2010: 858). This is seen as an indication of love and commitment. This is a requirement for many black women when they get into relationships (ibid.) Heterosexual and heteronormative relationships are entangled with monetary gifts and commodities (Miller-Young 2008: 283). However, the women in these relationships are not villainised like those that partake in *Mavuso*. Mirelle Miller-Young identifies traditional associations of sex with "family labour" as one of the reasons transactional sex is not considered respectable (2008:283)



Figure 39: Film Still. May 2016. *Mavuso, Checkpoint Enca*

Cameraman: Tshepo Makgetha

Figure 39, is a film still taken from the *Enca Checkpoint* documentary titled *Mavuso* which was aired on the 16th of May 2016. The still shows one of many occasions where the cameraman focuses on the women who are "skimpily dressed", and the camera is directed to the exposed body parts of the women. This still shows the thigh of a woman at the event and a man whose face is close to her genitalia. The interaction represented by the documentary puts forward the idea that *Mavuso* is a "sexual free for all". Any man who is willing and has the resources can consume the bodies of the women. The cameraman could have easily focused on the men who

exploit the circumstances of economically vulnerable women. But then again, this is not the image that South African society is familiar with and not the body that is blamed for inviting sexual violation. The cameraman in this documentary adheres to colonial conventions that have depicted black women as "lewd", "in heat", and "always ready for sex".

Whilst the representation of *Mavuso* is skewed, the women who engage in it do practice some agency. They are not merely victims of their circumstances. There is the misconception that women that engage in transactional sex are from a poor socio-economic background (Masvawure 2010: 858). Yes, there are women who do this for day to day survival but, there are also a substantial amount of women who do not. Middle and working-class women who engage in transactional sex may do it to avoid emotional commitment that is expected in "traditional" relationships (ibid.). This means that some women who have transactional sex use it to avoid monogamy and emotional ties to one exclusive partner. A young woman in rural South Africa was quoted as saying, "Married men are perfect because they do not spend much time with you because of their family responsibilities ... so I have ample time to meet with other men when he's with his family" (Mampane 2018: 6). Other women were sexually attracted to older wealthier men (Masvawure 2010: 858). In both instances, black women form, and end relationships according to their needs.

A study was done on black women who have multiple sexual partners by Stephanie Campos, Ellen Beniot and Elois Dunlap (2017). A 19-year-old black woman, who is identified as "Madness" revealed that she had three sexual partners (Campos et al. 2017: 56). One who considered her his steady girlfriend, a past boyfriend, and a sugar daddy (ibid.). Madness said that her decision to have multiple sexual partners was due to her desire for sexual variety (ibid.). Another 19-year-old known as "Pinky" also had three sexual partners, her reason was that her "main partner" was not fulfilling her sexual needs (ibid.). She is quoted as saying "'He doesn't satisfy me anymore'" (ibid.).

Some of the women in the study had multiple sexual partners because each one was providing her with different monetary gifts (Campos et al. 2017: 53). Juicy is quoted as saying; "My number one is taking care of my expenses as far as clothes, hair and nails, things like that.

Number two, he don't know what his money going to but he just gives it to me. Number three, he takes care of anything that has to do with school, home, bills, things like that. Number four, that's just like, pocket expenses money. He don't give up much. I use him for MetroCards, weed, cigarettes, and whatever" (ibid.: 56). What the statement by Juicy indicates is that women do not only engage in transactional sex for survival items but, also for leisure and luxury items.



Figure 40: Film Still. May 2016. *Mavuso*, Checkpoint Enca

Cameraman: Tshepo Makgetha

Figure 40, is another film still from the documentary *Mavuso*. It has a woman captured saying, a man said he would give her money to buy hair (these are hair extensions that are predominantly used by black women). This is a luxury item, that the woman does not need. Its function may be used to indicate her social class or upward mobility (Masvawure 2010: 858). Tsitsi Masvawure has researched the "Blessers" trend in Southern Africa and claims that some young women engage in sexual relationships with older, and wealthier men for prestige making (2010: 861). The monetary gifts (often included luxury hair extensions, the latest gadgets, fashionable clothes and facials) that were given to the young women "set them apart" from their peers (Masvawure 2010: 861). It gave them visibility in their respective communities, it also situated the women as more "sexually appealing" (ibid.). Successful womanhood is often determined by the type of male partner that a woman can attract (Jewkes and Morrell 2012: 1731). Having a wealthier, more accomplished and successful male partner positions the

women as “more sexually appealing” (ibid.). These young women actively chose men that will be able to give them the visibility that they desire, as well as maintain their reputation (ibid.).

The different reasons outside of survival, that women have transactional sex for, illustrates a complex relationship between oppression and agency. Black women are actively using their sexuality for their benefit. The agency exercised in choosing a “certain type of man” often gives them access to upward social mobility, finances their educational aspirations, the consumption of luxury goods, sexual experimentation, and pleasure. However, after the initiation of the relationship and managing multiple partners, many women need to surrender their power (Jewkes Morrell 2012: 1726). In patriarchal societies like South Africa, women are expected to surrender to men (especially if men provide financial assistance or gifts) (ibid.). In many urban and rural contexts in South Africa, men are expected to control women (ibid.). As a result, transactional sex cannot be purely perceived as women exerting their agency, nor is it solely the exploitation of women.

CONCLUSION.

In this chapter, I have been able to provide visual evidence for the claims that I make in this research. The first being that sexual stereotypes regarding black women have shaped the way that the world identifies them and engages with them sexually. These stereotypes have imaged black women as “lovers of violent, crude sex and rape”. The women become embodiments of the stereotypes of “diseased’, ‘licentious’, ‘dirty’, ‘unable to control lust’, ‘bestial’, ‘good in bed’, ‘breeders’, ‘prostitutes’, and ‘sexually immoral’” (Marshall 1996: 5). The chapter has also given insight on how these stereotypes affect the lives of ordinary South African women, this was done by the examination of the *Noord Street Taxi Rank* case study and the recent sexual assault of a young black woman commuting in a taxi.

The major finding of this chapter is that the stereotypes regarding the sexuality of black women, rape myths and the visual representation of black women in popular media create an on-going cycle. By this, I mean that stereotypes inform “rape myths” which then inform the visual representation of black women. This visual representation is constantly repeated, which leads to the strengthening of the stereotypes and solidification of rape myths. It is an on-going

cycle that reinforces the oppression, and mistreatment of black women. It is a typical case of "visuality", here certain depictions of black women were elected by those who held social power, white men (Nelson 2015: 5). In the chapter, I argue that this "visuality" was initiated in the 18th and 19th century and that these images have been repeated ever since. Creating a one-dimensional view of black women. In the upcoming chapter, I will discuss how Zanele Muholi challenges this case of "visuality" and creates an alternative representation of black women.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISRUPTING THE SILENCE THROUGH THE BREAKING OF TRADITION.

In the preceding chapters, I have highlighted the various ways that "visuality" has silenced or diluted the occurrence of sexual violence. My primary aim for this chapter is to articulate how the work of Muholi challenges dominant representations of rape, particularly that of black women in South Africa. I argue that Muholi's unconventional manner of photographing rape victims washes away centuries of purifying the representation of sexual violence. And, in this way she disrupts the "visuality" of rape. The importance and originality of this study are that it compares the artworks of Muholi to those found in contemporary South African visual culture. This comparison allows me to illustrate the shift from skewed representations of sexual violence.

I analyse the following images of Muholi in this chapter; *Case Number*, 2004; *Hate Crime Survivor I*, 2004; *Hate Crime Survivor II*, 2004; *Flesh III*, 2005 and *Triple III*, 2005 all of which are from the exhibition *Only Half the Picture*. The images listed will be compared to current popular visual culture representations of rape in South Africa. By popular visual culture, I refer to images that are mostly in mass media platforms like newspapers, magazines and the internet.

I will also explore a central part of Muholi's practice which is "activism". I will define what "visual activism" denotes and how Muholi attempts to achieve it. My argument is that Muholi's work achieves "activism" through its depiction of the pain of others. In her representation, she encourages viewers to act on the violence that they are confronted with, (Bissonauth 2014: 239). But in doing so she simultaneously adheres to centuries of objectifying the black body and gaining momentarily from this. I will now analyse more conventional images of black women in South African visual culture.

LOVERS OF RAPE

In this subsection, I address the stereotype that black women enjoy rape. There are several occasions in the research where I have discussed the trivial way rape is thought of. In *Chapter*

One, I mentioned that there was the assumption that women were more carnal than men, and thus always wanting sex (Baines 1998: 82). That they may initially reject sexual attention but will always succumb to men's advances because of their carnal ways (ibid.). In *Chapter Four*, I discussed how black women were represented in pornographic films, that they are seen refusing the sexual advances of men, but eventually they “give in” and enjoy the sexual violation (Collins 2000: 137). Collins argues that the latter makes black women look like “lovers of rape” (ibid.). Here I will highlight the way that this stereotype filters its way into popular representations of black women in South Africa. The first set of visuals I will analyse are from the popular South African newspaper *Daily Sun*.



Figure 41: *Daily Sun* Cover, photographer unknown, 8 July 2015.



Figure 42: *Daily Sun* Cover, Lucky Manti, 3 November 2018.

I have inserted images from the newspaper *Daily Sun*, a South African publication with a daily readership of 5.6 million, the highest in the country (www.news24.com). The newspaper is mostly read in urban areas (ibid.). The paper is largely consumed by the black working class of South Africa (ibid.). The first two covers share a similar stereotype, and this is the sexual availability of black women in South Africa. Although they do not speak of rape directly, they do refer to the country's rape culture. Figure 41's, headline shouts "It's a No Panties Stokvel" and Figure 42, "My Punani is Free!". These images and captions subconsciously support the idea that "black women are sexually available to anyone". The images in these covers reinforce the idea that women seduce men through activities like not wearing panties, and flashing their vaginas. The images seem to say "you do not have a right to claim rape if this is what you do". Almost implying that the women are making themselves available to all forms of sexual violation.

Figure 41, shows a black woman dancing "provocatively" at a local tavern where the practice of, *Mavuso* is practised. I explained the meaning of this term in *Chapter Four*. She is photographed dancing with her legs spread apart, revealing her thigh and that she has no underwear on. The woman seems to be intoxicated and is about to fall, there is a man in front of her. He is holding a beer bottle and does not seem to help her, even though she is about to fall. The photographer focuses on the woman's unstable posture and half-naked body, this visual focus gives the impression that women who partake in the practice of *Mavuso* are "unruly", "like to flash their genitals", "promiscuous" and "wanting of sex".

However, I contend that this is a case of "visuality", this image has been carefully constructed to frame black women in a certain way. It is not a reflection of reality neither is it objective. This is because there is another woman in the background, who is fully clothed and seated. The photographer does not focus on other women that do not display behaviour that is considered "unruly" or "hypersexual". He chooses to isolate the woman who appears to have no underwear because this is the image of black women that South African society is familiar with. The visual focus on the woman's actions and not of the men who also participate in the activity

of *Mavuso* frames black women as “always ready for sex”. Putting forth the perception that black women are responsible for their sexual violation because they dress and behave in ways that deviate from what is socially acceptable.

Figure 42, is another *Daily Sun* cover. It supports the story of a child rapist. The cover has three images all taken by Lucky Manti. The largest photograph is of a black woman pulling down her trousers exposing her vagina with the caption, "Leave our kids alone ...MY PUNANI IS FOR FREE". "Punani" is an informal term used when referring to a vagina. The other two, smaller images are of the alleged perpetrator, his face and body are covered, while he is escorted by the police. The juxtapositioning of a completely clothed alleged perpetrator with an exposed woman is jarring, as it suggests that men are sheltered from the responsibility of rape. Whilst women are represented as enticing it.

The dominant image on the cover is of a woman pulling down her trousers to expose her vagina, this has the connotation of a “high libido”, and “wanting of sexual intercourse”. She looks ecstatic that she can do this. Her expression suggests that it is something she has been wanting to do, and now she has the freedom to do it. Her behaviour and expression perpetuate the stereotype that black women are hypersexual. It is because of her illicit sexual nature that she is happy to expose her genitalia, implying that her sexual urges are fulfilled by this behaviour.

Behind the woman, there is a silver Volkswagen Golf, a rather old model. The brand Volkswagen is strongly associated with black South African township culture. The brand is often used by black males as a status symbol. It is also known as the representation of male sexuality, it connotes that the man driving it is wealthy and has unlimited access to women. In the article *Soweto Now* 2004, Achille Mbembe, a Research Professor at the University of Witwatersrand interviews Nzizi Dlamini from Soweto. Dlamini says the following about the car, “Today, Golfs and BMWs are still the cars that every young man dreams of owning. They represent access to women, drink, and a good life” (Mbembe et. al. 2004: 504). The car becomes a phallic symbol and a representation of black masculinity. It's positioning in this cover is significant, as it is behind the woman's body. Suggesting that it is sexually penetrating her

from behind. As if the woman is “getting what she is asking for”, this is the sexual attention of men (both consensual and non-consensual). In the following newspaper cover, I will illustrate another stereotype that has been associated with black women, this is that they are primitive and very often behave in hysterical ways.



Figure 43: *Daily Sun* Cover, photographer unknown, 1 March 2014.

Figure 43, shows a newspaper cover that has the photograph of what seems to be an angry black woman. She is photographed as she is shouting and pointing at the camera. The story is of how police officers physically abused her (she has a bandage around her head, she also has some missing teeth), when she tried to open a rape case for a child, whom I presume is hers. The caption next to her photograph reads, “SA’S ANGRIEST WOMAN”.

The newspaper sensationalises the story by referring to the woman as “SA’S ANGRIEST WOMAN”, doing this suggests that her anger is unwarranted. That she is overreacting, and this is because being “irrational” is an innate female characteristic. Implying that her anger is unwarranted makes her violation and that of her child seem trivial. That none of these violations harness her reaction. The focus on the woman and her “hysteria” moves the attention of the story away from the child rape, and her physical abuse by police officials. She becomes a spectacle. Sara Ahmed, the feminist writer recognises that “sensational stories can turn pain into a form of media spectacle in which the pain of others produces laughter and joy” (2004: 32). This is seen in the representation of this woman. Furthermore, the woman wears an African National Congress t-shirt. The ANC is a South African political party, the garment has the face of then, party president Jacob Zuma. The image is of Zuma laughing, this against the woman’s facial expression emphasizes the careless nature that her violation and that of her child are thought of. Images like the one in this newspaper article are not accidental, they are the traces of Mirzoeff’s understanding of “visuality”. The image of a hypersexual, easily available and irrational black woman has been constructed so that those in power can show their dominance and retain it. I will now move on to analyse photographs taken by Zanele Muholi and investigate how these challenge visual culture and the Western art canon.

COUNTER VISUALITY



Figure 44: Zanele Muholi, *Hate Crime Survivor I*, 2004

In *Hate Crime Survivor II*, Muholi elicits an atmosphere of entrapment, pain, and injustice. Here there is only the bottom half of a woman's body shown, her arms and hands are also in the frame. She joins her hands together and the hospital tags she wears start to look like prison 'cuffs'. This brings about the idea that the figure may be a prisoner. The woman also wears hospital pyjamas that have stripes on them, again alluding to the idea of imprisonment. There is a dark mood associated with the photograph, this is achieved through the subtle lighting. The implication that the victim may be seen as a prisoner raises the unfairness and injustice black rape victims are faced with. This is the mocking and victim-blaming by police and health officials (Jewkes et. al. 2002: 1239). Sometimes the unfairness is rape cases not being properly investigated because police departments have a shortage of resources (ibid). Or, not being able to see a health professional after the attack because there isn't a free health care facility near your township (ibid.). The government's attitude towards rape victims imprisons them and gives them the roles of both victim and perpetrator. They are the ones that "pay" the most for their violation.



Figure 45: Zanele Muholi, *Hate Crime Survivor II*. 2004.

Contrary to the front covers from the *Daily Sun*, Muholi's *Hate Crime Survivor II and I*, show the very serious repercussions rape has on its victims. In *Hate Crime Survivor II*, Muholi photographs a body lying on a bed, a hospital bed. The viewer is unable to see her face or other portions of her body, she looks like a "lump" or a "mass". In this artwork, Muholi portrays the fragility of the black human body. The framing of the photograph only lets the viewer see the bed and the body of the woman. This suggests that she is in a small space resembling a prison cell. The idea of prison has the connotation of a hard criminal which this woman is not. The framing of the artwork suggests that the woman is being punished. Not because she has done something wrong but because she has been violated by another.

The natural lighting quietly portrays the brutality of rape. The brutality of rape refers to its physical violence as well as the violence of humiliation. Dianne Taylor author of the article, *Humiliation as a Harm of Sexual Violence: Feminist versus Neoliberal Perspectives*, observes that humiliation is not the "by-product" of a sexual assault, it is rather the intention of the assault (2018: 239). It is seen in the forced submission, loss of personal autonomy, physical intrusion and absence of self-determination (ibid.). The woman is in the foetal position which further suggests that she has succumbed to the violence of humiliation.

Most importantly humiliation "...isolates someone from all the others", and "the humiliated one is singled out as *no one* or *nothing* – but as nothing which is visible" (Guenther 2012: 61). When the quotation above is applied to the work *Hate Crime Survivor II*, the isolation that characterizes humiliation is seen in the body of the victim that lies on the hospital bed by itself. The position of the body signals loss and mourning, these are the by-products of sexual assault. Muholi's intentional representation of the victim's body as "lifeless", "black lump" and "slouching" starts to challenge the "visuality" of the black woman. She is no longer seen as an active participant in her sexual violation. This is because she is not depicted wearing "provocative" clothing, exposing her genitalia or rear end thus, adhering to stereotypes that generally assume she deserves to be raped. The image suggests a restoration of her humanity because her body is photographed as fragile and adversely altered by the sexual violation. The

artwork ruptures the notion that black women are so prone to sexual deviance that they are not affected by rape (Gqola 2016: 128).



Figure 46: Zanele Muholi *Flesh III*, 2005

In *Flesh III*, by Muholi the viewer may assume that he/she will be witnessing a pleasurable pornographic experience, because of the nudity of the figure. But there is a violence that makes the artwork a traumatic aesthetic experience. The viewer is confronted with a close up of a woman bathing. Traditionally women bathing has been used by white male artists of the 15th, 16th, 17th 18th and 19th century to illustrate sexual availability and vulnerability.

Muholi challenges this and takes a frontal photograph of the woman, so the subject is aware of being photographed and of the viewer's gaze. The woman's head has been taken out of the frame, only leaving her body in a bathtub. The woman is voluptuous and reminiscent of 19th-century drawings of Southern African women. Her large breasts, abdomen, and thighs are exposed. This is not the frame of a woman that would be considered a European beauty. Her stomach spills out, her thighs show her cellulite and her back rolls are showing, it seems to be a more realistic depiction of women. Muholi breaks the Western ideal of what a sexual assault

victim should look like. That she needs to be identified as a Western beauty, and that it is the same beauty that is responsible for her violation.

The photograph then shows the woman reaching down to her vagina as if to clean it. The image is also strongly related to masturbation. However, for this research, I will argue that it conveys a cleansing ritual. At the point where her arm meets her thighs, there is a dark shadow. The shadow does not correspond with the rest of the photograph which is low in contrast. The shadow suggests that there is darkness where she is trying to wash/cleanse. This darkness may be a rape, which she is trying to cleanse herself of. The way her arm is positioned, tightly in between her thighs suggests that she is cleaning herself with force, "removing a stubborn stain". How her face has been cut off implies she cannot look at the viewer in a submissive way, that reads as available. That her actions are not to attract the male gaze, but for other purposes. The power in the way that she uses her arm and the way that it hides her genitals prohibits a sexual male gaze.

Flesh III, successfully subverts traditions regarding sexual violence but simultaneously dehumanises the subject by cropping her face. The face is an important part of one's identity. Its absence turns the victim into a non-person, her face has been replaced by her body which is a very literal way of dehumanising one (Cheney 1993: 2000). Similar to traditional drawings of black women in earlier centuries, this woman becomes an unknown body. An unknown body which is used to represent "otherness", the "violated", the "unclean". Showing that, although Muholi is trying to reverse the representation of women as objects, she indirectly does the same. I think that the latter is unintentional, but it shows the limitations of using the "visual" to create an alternative representation. I will discuss this issue later in the chapter and conclusion. The following artwork discusses how Muholi creates an alternative representation using the absence of the body, I will do a visual analysis of the work *Case Number*, 2004.

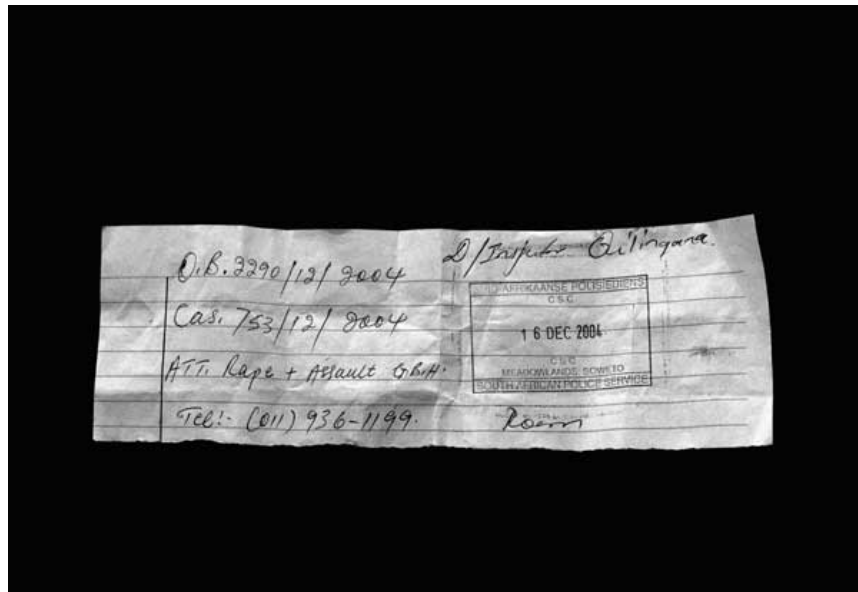


Figure 47: Zanele Muholi, *Case Number*, 2004.

Case number, 2004 is a visual representation of secondary victimisation. It sums up how professionals in the police, legal and health profession behave when faced with rape victims. The image portrays stereotypes, and myths regarding black women even though her body is not present in the artwork. This is an important aspect of Muholi's work, that she can trigger bodily violation through the absence of the actual body. In *Hate Crime Survivor I, II* and *Flesh III* she removes the faces of the victims granting them some privacy, protecting them from the further intrusion of the viewer's gaze. In this artwork she takes this idea a step further and represents the victim through her absence, this is a relatively new way of representing black women in South Africa.

The photograph is of a rape case number receipt; the viewer presumes that this was given to the victim after she reported the crime. The receipt shows the case number 753/12/2004 and what the crime is, "rape and assault". It also gives the name of the investigator responsible for the case, which looks as if it is "Investigator Qilingane". The date on the stamp corresponds with the case number, the number shows that the case was opened on the national public holiday "Day of Reconciliation"⁸) which is on the 16th of December. The telephone number at

⁸ 16th of December was named the Day of Reconciliation in 1995 after the apartheid regime had ended. This day pays tribute to the many that died on the 16th of December 1838 due to the Battle of Blood River (where the Zulu

the bottom tells the viewer that the case was reported in Johannesburg because of the dialling code (011). The police stamp shows that the case was reported at Meadowlands Police station in Soweto, Johannesburg. The stamp and telephone number on the receipt show that the victim may be a black South African woman from the township Soweto.

One of the most striking elements of the image is its pitch-black background which helps to highlight the folds and crinkles that the receipt has. The viewer is not aware whether the condition of the receipt is due to the carelessness of the victim or the police officer. The condition of the receipt suggests that the piece of paper is not important and that it is disposable, it is not even a full piece of paper. When in fact the receipt is quite important, it is the only legal piece of documentation to show that the case is under investigation. The receipt acts as a witness to the crime, it is there to support the claims of the victim.

The piece of paper serves to question South African reality, it seems to say, “how is this possible?” That in the 21st century, on a day considered the “Day of Reconciliation”, human beings are treated in this manner. Muholi plays on the irony created by the date. It is a day that is used to commemorate the lives that were lost in the Battle of Blood River, in the year 1838 (Dlamini 2001: 125). Muholi is questioning the advent of democracy in South Africa and if it did rid the country of violence. And whether holidays like the “Day of Reconciliation”, should exist if other South African's right to bodily integrity is being violated. In this way, Muholi challenges representation and questions the idea of democracy.

In this subsection, I have illustrated the various ways that Muholi creates an alternative visual language for the representation of black women. And has created what Nicolas Mirzoeff has termed as “counter visibility” (2011: 5). She shifts from a one-dimensional hypersexual object to a more complex human being as seen in *Hate Crime Survivor I and Hate Crime Survivor II*. Black women start to be identified as human, with multiple layers that are informed by their socio-economic status, geographic location, race and trauma. She creates a representation that halts the sexual pleasure of the white male gaze. By doing the above she lifts the lid on the

and Afrikaners battled for land). The day encouraged South Africans to make peace with their past and reconcile their difference (www.apartheidmuseum.org)

trauma and alienation faced by black rape victims. This trauma was suppressed by the representation of black women as "workhorses", "infra – human", "lovers of rape", "loose", "fast", "deserving of violation" and "available". These representations blamed black women for their sexual violation, labelling it as insignificant and a social inconvenience; this made the rape of black women invisible while simultaneously fuelling it.

CHALLENGES

While Muholi does question certain traditions of representing rape victims, she also strongly adheres to some. One of these is the removal the victims face to focus on another body part particularly the hands. The hands of an individual play an important role in how they are identified. In *Chapter Two*, I discuss the way that the hands of black women were used to identify their socio-economic class. Here, I continue the conversation about the hands of black women especially rape victims. This feature of a woman has been used in conventional South African visual culture to convey victimhood. There is a visual focus on the hands of the victims. The movement of the hands is used to convey the anxiety, panic and vulnerability the figure may feel.



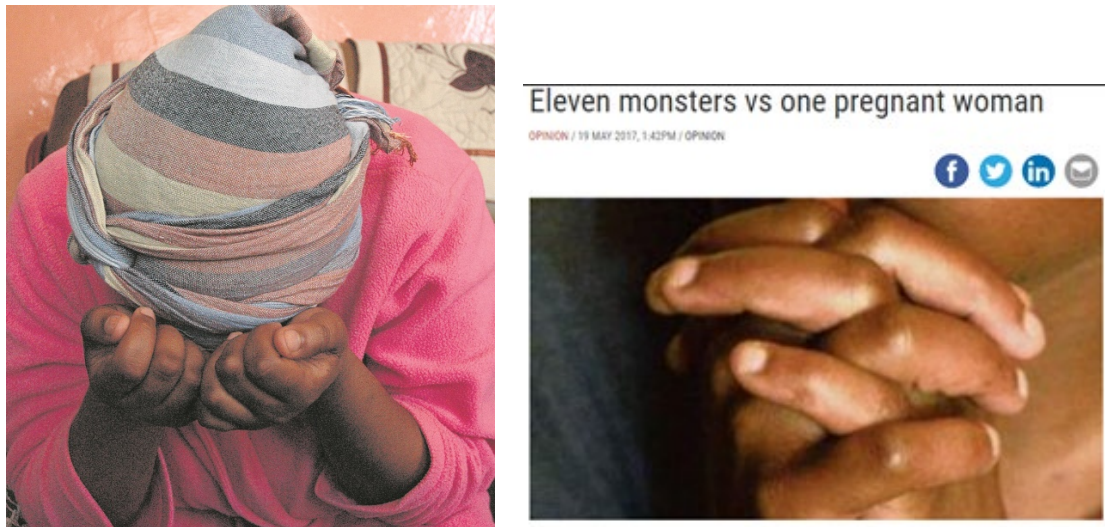


Figure 48: Zanele Muholi, *Hate Crime Survivor I*, 2006.

Figure 49: *Daily Sun*, photographer unknown, August 19 2018

Figure 50: *Daily Sun*, photographer unknown, November 27 2015

Figure 51: Boxer Ngwenya, 2017.

Figure 48, shows the artwork by Muholi, *Hate Crime Survivor I*, the emphasis of the photograph are the hands of the subject. Figure 49, on the right, is a photograph of the thighs and hands of a 16-year-old girl that was raped. She is playing with her hands, suggesting that she may be anxious. The photograph is taken from an article in the *Daily Sun* titled, "I was raped by a 'friend'!" Figure 50, is a visual for the article, "Nine –year –old girl raped" again from the *Daily Sun*. Here the face of the girl is not seen, as her hands cover it, shielding her face from the gaze. The hands are balled into fists, which may indicate that her body is trying to comprehend the trauma that it has faced. The use of hands is also used by the photograph of Boxer Ngwenga. In Figure 51, a person is holding her hands together, almost as if she is praying. The photograph was used for an article by www.iol.co.za titled "Eleven monsters vs one pregnant woman". This was a report of eleven men who stood in a queue to rape a pregnant woman in downtown Johannesburg.

From the visual examples that I have included above, I can draw the following; that South African popular visual culture has a heavy reliance on the use of hands when depicting victimhood. The exclusion of the face and focus on the movement of the hands is symbolic of vulnerability, humiliation, and may also suggest that the identity of the woman is being protected because of the nature of the crime. The victims face is rarely shown, at times she is hiding her face, or the photographer has cropped the image so that her face does not show. Her body is used to identify her. Muholi sticks to this South African manner of portraying victims, this allows her images to be instantly identified as those of violence and pain.

Muholi uses what Ann Kaplan has termed "mediatized trauma", this is when the media creates a structure of images and events that are identified as traumatic (Meek 2011: 34). Media has the power to create a memory of some images as traumatic and others as not (ibid.). For example, images of the World Trade Centers are constantly used to convey the trauma associated with 9/11 (ibid.). The viewers of mass media are familiar with the codes used and this is how the traumatic association is created. Muholi adheres to the conventions and representational strategies of this visual field. One of them is the use of hands to depict a victim of sexual violence. By adhering to the conventions of representing pain, violence and victimhood she gains an established audience. This audience is ready to consume the representation and feel the prescribed rage/shock attached to the images. Another way that Muholi adheres to visual conventions is by using the human body to convey pain.

REPRESENTING PAIN

The visual representation of pain is difficult because pain is subjective (Ahmed 2004: 23). How people experience pain is a combination of physical sensations on the skin and the mental associations of that physical sensation. The mental association is how meaning is derived from pain (ibid.). For example, if I burn my arm with an iron, there is going to be the physical sensation that I feel on my arm. However, how I make meaning of that pain will be based on previous experiences of pain. If it turns out that I have been burnt by an iron before, I will associate that experience with the current one. It is important to note that pain is not only

caused by an encounter of an object with the body but also encounters between bodies (ibid.: 24).

Sara Ahmed states that “...the sensation of pain is often represented – both visually and in narrative – through the wound (a bruised or cut skin surface). The wound functions as a trace of where the surface of another entity...has impressed upon the body” (2004: 27). I thought that the latter quote was significant concerning the representation of rape. This is because rape (under the best circumstances), has an invisible physical wound, that cannot be traced. At times the penetration of one body into another does not have a wound, this makes the representation of rape even more difficult. Ariella Azoulay claims that the actual image of rape taking place is very hard to find (2008: 231). When one does find something related to rape, it is usually a partial image that does not depict the whole story. She claims that these are some of the challenges associated with the visualisation of sexual violence (ibid.). Muholi's work finds itself restricted by these challenges because as she tries to represent sexual violence and black women differently, her work starts to embody other stereotypes. This is the difficulty found in visualising sexual violence.

Simone Weil also articulates the challenges found in depicting violence, she claims that “violence turns anybody subjected to it into a thing” (cited in Sontag 2003: 12). The violence perpetrated against the subjects of Muholi's artworks turns them into objects. They are no longer human but are the representation of the surge of gender-based violence in South African townships. And while the cropping of the individual's body parts and faces provide them with privacy and reduces the audience's gaze, it also strips the subjects of their humanness and their individuality (van der Vlies 2012: 146). They become the unknown, a number in the statistics and become the indicator of violence.

Pain is described as something intimate and lonely. Because of this, it is very difficult to know what someone's experience of pain may feel like (Ahmed 2004: 29). When an audience feels shocked, anger or sadness. The showcasing of the pain of other's is not about them but about the audience that views it. The audience is encouraged to feel “sadness”, and “anger”, but how

does this benefit the subject? This reaction seems to trivialise and neutralise the very real violence and brutality that the subject has encountered (ibid.: 21)

Below are examples of conventions of representing people who have been through torture or violence. The images below show a trend or convention of depicting human pain. I have to be sympathetic and say that these tactics are used by artists to get the message through to the viewers. I argue, however, that the subjects are fetishised. Here, the viewer is confronted with the use of the human body to visualise human pain. The use of multiple bodies is also used to show the scale of pain. The bodies are naked which illustrates the victim's vulnerability. Susan Sontag a photographer and art critic argues that "the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost as the desire for ones that show bodies naked" (2003: 43).

The images below combine both nudity and suffering. The inclusion of the human body in this state may have been done to achieve the maximum impact. I have included an image from the Apartheid era; *Mine Recruitment*, 1967 by Ernest Cole. Muholi's *Triple III*, 2005, and an artwork by Evelyn Bencicova *Ecce Homo*, 2014. Here pain is shown by bodies with wounds. Muholi sticks to the convention of using the wound as an indicator of aggression towards the body and thus a trace of pain. She also uses multiple nude bodies to illustrate the magnitude of sexual violence in South Africa. The victims do not have names, which is another convention of representing pain. Again, making them statistics. The women are in the foetal position, huddled together suggesting that they may be cold. They seem to be in a destitute position, this is seen by the lack of clothing and the act of lying on a concrete floor.

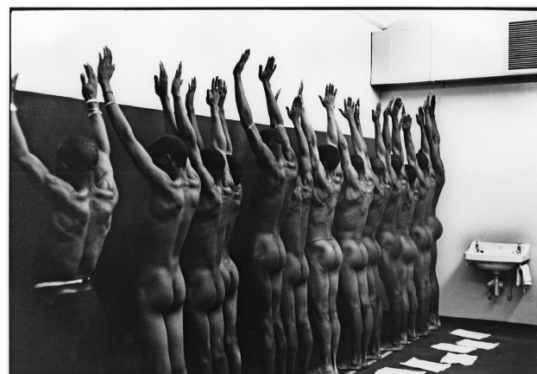




Figure 52: Zanele Muholi *Triple III*, 2005.



Figure 53: Ernest Cole *Mine Recruitment* 1967.

Figure 54: Evelyn Bencicova *Ecce Homo*, 2014.

Figure 55: Margret Bourke – White *The dead at Buchenwald*, 1945.

Muholi identifies herself as a photographer and a visual activist (Swanson 2017: para 3). Part of the reason she labels herself as a visual activist is that she has been able to create an archive for the black LGBTQIA community in South Africa. This archive is centred around the love and loss seen in the LGBTQIA community (Bissonauth 2015, 241). Before her intervention, such an archive did not exist. She has managed to insert black queer lives in South Africa's history and create visibility where there was none.

The images that Muholi exhibits are meant to urge the audience to see differently and encourage them to act (Bissonauth 2015: 239). Natasha Bissonauth positions Muholi's practice as an "effective appeal to act" (ibid.). She encourages the audience to see the subjects differently than how their offenders did and in this way, it "restores the subject's humanity" (ibid.). The subjects are no longer seen through the eyes of heteronormative patriarchy. They start to be seen as human beings that engage in normal human activities. The act of seeing the subjects differently removes them from the shame, deviance and dirt that they are often associated with in mainstream society (ibid.: 242). Bissonauth claims that the presence of Muholi's images in any space is an act of resistance, as the act of seeing the subject shifts them from the margins into the centre (2015: 241).

I argue the contrary, images that represent pain and human suffering, turn the audience into voyeurs and intrude on the subject's privacy⁹. Muholi adheres to this tradition by photographing bodies that have gone through intense physical and emotional pain. Some of the photographs are taken immediately after a sexual violation or whilst the victim is still in the hospital. The viewers of Muholi's artworks are looking into a very private part of the subjects' (people that they do not know) lives. Sontag (2003: 42) argues that historically looking at other's pain has pleased the audience, the audience becomes voyeurs unintentionally.

Brenda Loukes says that depicting the pain of others; "creates awareness, brings the issue out to light. We can hope that it affects a politician somewhere who puts something into action to change something at a casual level" (Loukes 2016: para 1). I disagree with this stance.

Photographing people in pain and assuming that any change will take place once people (from Western countries) have seen the pain is to affirm traditional racial power relations (Ahmed 2004: 22). It is to position the subjects as the objects of pain/ brutality/ torture and to say that change will only take place once the West has seen it and are moved (emotionally) enough to make that change (ibid.). The subjects hand over their agency to other people, that they do not know. My argument is that Muholi's representations of rape are geared toward the *audience* and their reaction. What the subject has lost or felt becomes secondary. The images also reinforce that Subaltern subjects should be constantly identified by wounds of violence. This is a convention the Muholi sticks to (ibid.: 32).

Kleinman, Das and Lock 1997 (cited in Ahmed 2004: 32) observe that; "collective suffering is also a core component of the global political economy. There is a market for suffering: victimhood is commodified". It sometimes seems as though Muholi commercialises the pain of others even though she is a part of the community that she photographs. She is ultimately selling the unknown violated bodies of black women in her exhibition *Only Half the Picture*, 2006 to the local and international art market.

Muholi is represented by the fairly established *Stevenson Gallery*, in South Africa where she has had four solo shows (Thomas 2010: 423). She has also had solo exhibitions in North America

⁹ I am aware that the intrusion of privacy, especially in the case of Muholi happens with the subject's consent.

and Europe (ibid.). She has benefitted financially from her visualisation of other people's pain. I am aware that the latter is a convention as artists also need to earn a living. Muholi has received numerous awards, one of which is the prestigious France's Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2017 (www.stevenson.info). This award is given to artists who have contributed to the art culture of France, this confirms that Muholi's work is constantly circulated in European and elite spaces. These spaces seem to re-violate her subjects, that have already been violated by their offenders and the legal system of South Africa. The subjects are used to show what happens in "other" countries, they embody the violence and savagery that is often associated with the Global South. The photographs seem to reinforce the idea that African men are violent and are constantly looking for women to violate sexually. They also reinforce the lack of agency African women are notoriously known for.

Muholi's choice of exhibition space (gallery spaces that are often elitist) and subject matter brings a divide of, "us" and "them". Those that look, distance themselves from those in the photographs. Those that are photographed are of another country or another part of South Africa. There is also a divide between the poor and wealthy, black and white, privileged and previously disadvantaged. The removal of the works from their context (contemporary South Africa), makes the subjects objects for the Western gaze. By this, I mean that if Muholi's exhibition spaces were in townships, in South Africa where sexual violence predominantly takes place, their "effective appeal to act" would benefit the victims of sexual crimes much more. It would not only philosophically give the subjects their humanity as Bissonauth suggests, but in reality as well. It may change the way that perpetrators see their victims and at the very best may incline them to stop their actions.

The attendees of Muholi's exhibitions are mostly white (although a black audience is being developed in Johannesburg and other parts of the world). Andrew van der Vlies, an Art scholar recalls a panel discussion at *Stevenson Gallery*. Here, Muholi was asked by "a young Zulu-speaking male audience member, why her work appeared in this 'safe', 'white' spaces when she claimed she wanted to challenge 'black' attitudes" (2012: 141). Muholi responded that it would not be safe for the individuals in her images. Primarily because homophobic hate crimes were

rife in townships. I would like to argue that Muholi showcases her work in a predominately white audience (locally and abroad), because of the history of displaying black bodies. A white audience like the one that would be found in France or Amsterdam is familiar with the black body portraying the abject. This audience is more welcoming to Muholi's artworks. This audience has been conditioned by colonial history and contemporary media¹⁰ to condone the objectifying display of black bodies.

Muholi assesses that the people she photographs would not be safe if their images were displayed in South African townships. I would like to argue differently, in her *artworks Hate Crime Survivor I, Hate Crime Survivor II* and various others Muholi is commended for the privacy that she gives to the individuals in her work. Van der Vlies observes that "The woman in *Aftermath* is a victim, but she is not subjected to a prying gaze... We do not see her face. She is an individual whose dignity is respected and whose privacy is restored" (2012: 144)¹¹. If indeed this is the case and the subjects are anonymous, at a very superficial level, there should not be a fear of showing these images in South African townships or other developing countries like Jamaica, Zimbabwe and Thailand¹²(Louw 2014: para 1)? The latter would give Muholi the opportunity to change mindsets in places where corrective rape is rife and might result in fewer cases of rape. Would this then not constitute activism? Where the subjects are viewed differently, and this may change social behaviour.

I am inclined to say that Muholi's subject's trauma seems to entertain the viewer, implying that their painful and traumatic experience is there for the visual pleasure of others. This silences the victim and puts the viewer at the forefront. Ahmed says that "forgetting would be the repetition of the violence or injury" (2004: 33). Which I suggest is what happens after the viewing of painful images like those in *Only Half the Picture*. It seems that Muholi tends to perpetuate the very violence she claims to mitigate. I will investigate other ways of

¹¹ I am aware that not all of Muholi's artworks crop the figures face or other body parts.

¹² Incidents of corrective rape have been recorded in these countries as well,

representation that might lessen the viewer's gaze and somewhat protect the subjects of gender-based violence.

SILENCE AS AGENCY

Voice is a Western mechanism of demonstrating agency (Parpart 2010: 1). In a Western context, voice provides women with the ability to assert themselves (ibid.). This model of agency has also been used in the South African context, an example is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Motsemme 2004: 917). Here, individual confessions of the atrocities of apartheid were used to liberate those that were previously oppressed and the oppressor (ibid.). Very often silence is perceived as passive and disempowering but, social conditions are often volatile, and speech is not always possible or positively rewarded (Parpart 2010: 1).

In cases of conflict, like apartheid, many women used silence as a method of self-preservation and protection (Motsemme 2004: 917). Kabeer observes that "not all forms of choice can be seen as empowering, so too there is nothing inherently empowering about agency" (2010: 17). I acknowledge Kabeer's stance however, I think it is problematic for society to perceive women who have consciously chosen to remain silent regarding public and private issues, as purely passive. The discourse regarding silence is much more nuanced and requires further research. In patriarchal societies challenging authority through speech and visibility can have detrimental effects (Parpart 2010: 2).

Voice and visibility, especially in cases of sexual violence still taint the victim's social image. Silence in these cases may be the most self-preservative choice. Therefore, silence cannot be categorised as purely passive (ibid.).

Whilst reading for this research, I started to explore the artwork of Gabrielle Goliath *Personal Accounts*, 2014. Goliath describes the work as personal accounts of women who have experienced domestic abuse and some that have been raped (www.gabriellegoliath.com). I argue that this work starts to "deconstruct the binary between voice and silence (or visibility

and invisibility)” (Samuelson 2007: 120). It plays with these binaries in a way that Muholi’s work lacks. The work also starts to question whether “ the movement from silence to voice is a liberatory one” (ibid.). I have included film stills from the exhibition.



Figure 56: Gabrielle Goliath, *Personal Accounts: Christolene*, 2014.

Figure 56, is a close up image of a woman whose name is Christolene. The video of her is a silent one, even though she is talking, the viewer is unable to hear her voice. Her speech has been extracted from the video. What the viewer hears are the claspings of lips, the swallowing of saliva, pauses mid-speech and the clearing of her throat. The viewer is barred from her experience and does not know what she speaks about. Her facial expressions may incline the viewer to think that she is recalling a traumatic experience (this could be a hijacking, death in the family or divorce). Because of the lack of speech, the viewer is left frustrated. They cannot access entirely, the subjects “sadness”, and “anger”. The latter also represents the fact that a viewer or outsider can never comprehend the pain of others fully (Ahmed 2004: 208).

I argue that the artwork gives victims of violence some agency because the artwork determines what can be known about them and what is denied. It is as if the woman shares what she is comfortable with making public and prohibits the exposure of some events in her life. In this way, there is a blurring of the effects of voice and silence. It is the woman's silence that renders

her assertive and entitled to privacy. It is as if she gains her humanity back using silence. This shows that invisibility and silence can also liberate and heal.

The viewer does not have uncontrolled access to the subject's vulnerability. The work changes the viewer's participation when looking at images that depict pain. The eradication of her speech also seems to suggest that the subject is unable to articulate the pain that she has experienced because of its difficulty. This makes the artwork more about the subject than the audience. Sasaki 1998 (cited in Motsemme 2004: 917) says that; " silence acts as a form of resistance to the 'invasive gaze of those that who have historically held the power to interpret both speech and silence of the other'". This artwork can illustrate that silence can act as resistance to dominant ideologies and oppression.

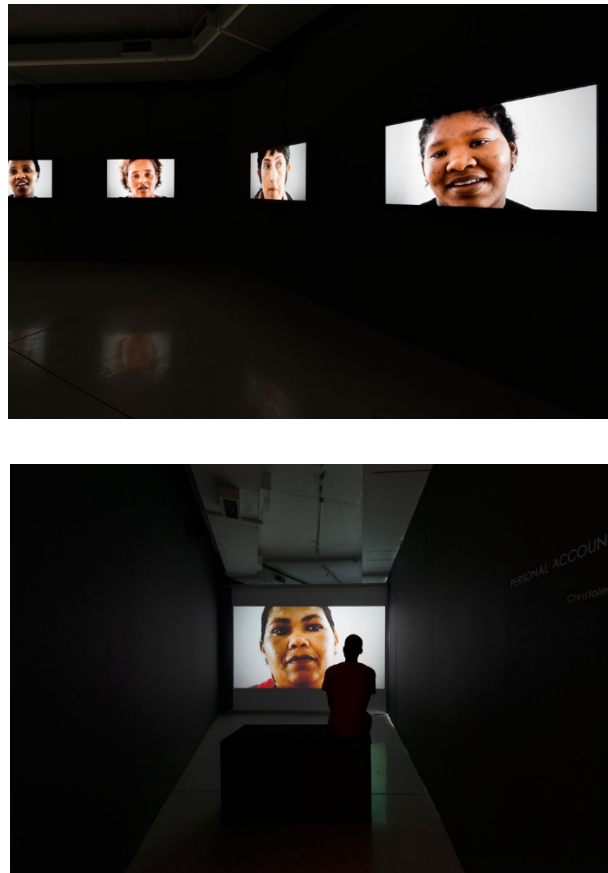


Figure 57 and 58: Gabrielle Goliath, *Personal Accounts* (Installation view), 2014.

CONCLUSION

My intention for including the work of Goliath is not to suggest that her practice is better than Muholi's. My inclusion is to highlight alternative means of representing victims. Methods, that restrict the fetishization of pain and trauma. My findings in this chapter were significant. I expected to write about the various ways which Muholi has changed the representation of black female rape victims. However, in many instances, she maintains some of these traditions. I think that one of the most prominent reasons this happens is because of the difficulty in representing the invisible wound of rape or pain. This part of the research has shown that although Muholi's artworks are revolutionary in many ways, she is constricted by the field that she works in, visual culture. Visual culture has limitations to the extent it can represent the pain of others. This is primarily because bodies (which Muholi uses) already have an inscribed meaning. Moving away from these meanings may require that other visual culture professionals, not only artists, move away from certain representations.

I have discussed the various ways that Muholi adheres to stereotypes that have framed the black body as the "object" and "destitute". From this research, I am urged to say that yes "visibility does break the silent violence of rape"¹³. As is shown in the images of Muholi, *Hate Crime Survivor I, II* and *Flesh III* but it sometimes perpetuates the violence unintentionally. I, however, wonder if visibility can be achieved in another way, the work of Goliath starts this venture. Where there is a play between the binaries of silence/ speech and visibility/invisibility.

I have contested the claim that visibility is the only way of resisting dominant ideologies and argued that silence itself can be a method of resistance. The idea of "speaking out" is linked to Western ideology and claims that one has agency when they do this (Motsemme 2004: 910). "Speaking out" is also linked to Christian ideology, where confession is used to cleanse the soul and speaking is cathartic (ibid.). But silence can be another way in which people resist regimes such as patriarchy and another method, sometimes the only one of coping with trauma. I will now move to the conclusion of this research where I articulate the significant findings of this research.

¹³ It is not my aim to argue that visibility does not create change, as there are many instances where it does.

CONCLUSION

RESEARCH JOURNEY

I started this research in 2016 and I am completing it in 2019. During my studies, there have been "high profile" cases of rape in South Africa. In May 2017, a pregnant woman was gang-raped by 11 men in the Central Business District of Johannesburg. In May 2018, a 23-year-old, Rhodes University student, Khensani Maseko committed suicide after she had been raped by her boyfriend. In September 2018, a six-year-old girl was raped in the toilet of a Pretoria restaurant. In December 2018, a man who is only known as "Molefe" was released from police custody. He was standing trial for three counts of rape and 11 of the sexual assault of minors in a primary school in Soweto. In January 2019 there was a documentary titled, *Surviving R Kelly*. Here countless black girls and women retell their stories of being raped and sexually assaulted by the Rhythm and Blues singer. In March 2019, Cheryl Zondi was cross-questioned on live television regarding an alleged rape by her then pastor, Timothy Omotso, when she was 14. On the 31st of August 2019 the 19-year-old, University of Cape Town student Uyinene Mrwetyana was reported missing. A week later it was found that she had been raped and killed by a South African state official. She was raped and killed in a Post Office. Azoulay frames rape as a crime that happens within the private space, she notes "when rape does occur in the public space, it is usually during wartime or in the course of ethnic cleansing, when all systems collapse" (2008: 223). A number of these cases I have included happened in very public spaces. South Africa is not in a war or experiencing ethnic cleansing. My intention in listing these cases is to illustrate the magnitude of the problem in South Africa.

All of the cases above happened within three years, and they all have a common denominator, this is that the victims are black women and girls. As I have stated at the beginning of the dissertation, black women, especially in South Africa are vulnerable to sexual violence and yet there is a resounding silence around this occurrence. In this research, I have looked at visual culture throughout, roughly eight centuries and my argument is that the visual has been used to perpetuate the ideology that rape is the result of the victim's behaviour. Rape does emerge in everyday discourse and "catchy" statements like; "real men don't rape" and "if she cannot

say no then she cannot say yes". These are repeated on various media platforms. However, they are not powerful enough to challenge centuries of visual conditioning that state otherwise. In the following sections, I will continue my findings on the "visuality" of rape.

In chapter five of Ariella Azoulay's book, *The Civil Contract of Photography* she states; " During the years I have worked on this book, I looked at thousands of images of horror of different kinds from all over the world: famine, disease, epidemics, terror attacks, houses torn down, butchered bodies, bombings, torture, mass death and poverty....until I noticed that one image was absent from the various sites, newspapers, photo albums, television programmes – in which images of horror are shown: the image of rape"(2008: 203). In each of the chapters of this research, I have analysed images regarding rape and sexual assault. However, none of the images I have referenced make direct reference to rape.

Majority of the images show the opposite; like the lovemaking seen in *Jupiter and Io*. In other images, women are doing everyday activities such as; bathing like in *Bathsheba Bathing with Attendants*. In *Hate Crime Survivor I*, the woman is just lying on a bed. Some of the images only reflect violence as seen in, *The Sabine Women*. What is seen throughout the research are female bodies that have been abandoned by the institution of marriage (Azoulay 2008: 233). The latter provided physical safety for women, it protected them from the violence of other men (ibid.). The women in the images above are outside of this protection and are vulnerable to rape, but not being raped (ibid.). Although women's bodies are available to the "male gaze", the act of rape has been removed from this gaze. Without titles and knowledge of the Greek/Roman myth or Bible verses, and "hints" of sexual violence, these images are ambiguous. They are "partial, insufficient to tell the entire story" (Azoulay 2008: 233), and most importantly they sanitise rape and sexual violence from visual culture.

VISUALITY

There could be various reasons for the gap in visual resources that illustrate sexual violence. Azoulay argues that one of the reasons is so that victims do not have a visual reference when sexual violence is perpetrated against them (2008: 245). The lack of visual knowledge of the experience of rape provides room for self-doubt (ibid.). If women have not been sexually

violated before, and have not encountered an image of such an experience, how can they know that they have been raped or sexually assaulted when it happens? They can only speculate. Therefore, the control of images of rape serves to continue the “vague” and ambiguous state rape has in reality.

Most of the images of rape that are available and that I have included in the research are “structured for a man” (Azoulay 2008: 245). The nudity of the women in these images is positioned to entice the “male gaze”. Azoulay contends that “rape is the ultimate fulfilment of a woman's being for a man” (ibid.: 248). This statement is illustrated in Figure 22, in *Chapter Three: Unidentified Women*. The details regarding the date and photographer are unknown however; the image is widely available on the internet. In some cases, the image is on pornography websites. The latter shows that there is a demand and sexual fulfilment gained by men when women and girls are sexually exploited and denied authority over their bodies. The possession of women’s bodies in the visual context seems to undo all the political and social emancipation that women have gained, through various movements like feminism and Black feminism (ibid.).

At the start of the feminist movement, a new discourse on rape was initiated. This was that rape was not a “moral crime”, “problematic sex” or a “crime of passion” but that it was the exertion of violence upon women and not the estate of men (Azoulay 2008: 208). Rape became an attack on women's dignity and the person that suffered the most was the woman and not the man she belonged to (ibid.). The emancipation of women during the 1970s meant that they had gained autonomy of their bodies (ibid.: 211). Their value was no longer determined by the value men assigned to them in sexual exchange (marriage) (ibid.). Essentially women had full citizenship, and their social and political position had changed. However, the images I have mobilised in this research suggest that their position has not changed in visual culture. In this space, women are still represented as owned by men. In the paragraphs that follow I will continue to illustrate the visual conditions of black women.

ANAGRAMMATICAL BLACKNESS

One major overarching finding of this research is that at different points in European and African history the victimhood of black women has been suffocated. Throughout the centuries covered in this research, blackness has been visualised as "anagrammatical" (Teshome and Yang 2018: 162). By this I refer to black existence, that at different stages of life (childhood, adulthood and old age) there has been disequilibrium, this is particularly true for black women. Saidiya Hartman frames contemporary and historical black existence as "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration and impoverishment" (1995: 2).

In this research, I have used visual examples to substantiate the latter. In *Chapter Three- Unidentified Women*, Figure 22 depicts a young black girl with a much older white male. The photograph portrays a childhood that may have been removed or even, have never existed due to sexual exploitation. Sharpe questions the position of black children in situations such as the one in Figure 22 and asks, "Where is her mother? Her father? Whom does she turn to when scared" (2016: chapter 2 para 1). In the same chapter Figure 26, depicts a fully grown black woman in the same predicament. She too is nude and is being subjected to sexual violation by four white men. Although the persons in Figure 22 and 26 are different, their positions in both images suggest that black women are subjected to sexual violation in both childhood and adulthood. Although their age may change, they are denied agency and bodily autonomy from childhood until adulthood. Both these images display, "what blackness looks like and how to look at blackness" (ibid.).

Figure 15, from *Chapter Two – The Help*, takes the notion of "anagrammatical blackness" further and depicts a black woman who appears to be in her late fifties. The woman is a "live in" domestic worker from a Johannesburg suburb. The photograph does not depict or suggest any sexual violence. However, it does mobilise the racist notion that "Black people... feel less pain" (Sharpe 2016: chapter 2 para 10). This is largely because women of other races particularly, white women are usually entering retirement at similar ages (Nattrass and Seeking 2001: 45). Most domestic workers in South Africa work their whole lives and must continue working in their old age because their profession does not provide for their retirement (ibid.). I

cannot state with absolute surety that this is the case for the woman in Figure 15, as I am not aware of what her circumstances were. But, it is highly likely that her case is similar. The image seems to continue the disequilibrium highlighted in Figures 22 and 24. It shows that throughout the various stages of life (childhood, adulthood and old age) black existence contains a form of violation and suffering. The following paragraphs will continue to discuss the visual findings of the research, most of which exist within the notion of “anagrammatical blackness”.

ERASURE AS SILENCE

In *Chapter One*, I discuss various artworks that were produced in Europe during the 14th – 17th century. The images included in this chapter depict a sexual assault or rape of women, however, all the women are white except for one artwork. In this chapter, I had difficulty obtaining images that portrayed black women doing banal activities, and even fewer of them being sexually violated. The dearth of images suggests that black people did not exist in this context. However, there are a few texts that trace the existence of black people (predominantly black men) in Europe during the 14th – 17th century.

The lack of visibility of black women during this period could be because they were at the bottom of social rankings. They did not enjoy the access and visibility that white women and black men had. Although white women were subordinate to white men, they still had the opportunity for representation. This is seen in the surplus of paintings and sculptures illustrating the sexual abuse of white women. As I have stated earlier this representation is skewed but, what is important is that it *exists*. There are a number of these paintings in existence and some have multiple renditions. I included five in the research, these are; *Susanna and the Elders*, *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*, *Jupiter and Io* and *Leda and the Swan*. There is an extensive list of other paintings that I did not include, these are; *The Rape of Proserpine*, *The Rape of the daughter of Leucippus*, *The Rape of Helene*, *The rape of Tamar* and *The Rape of Europa*. In all the artworks mentioned in this paragraph, the common thread is that all the women are white. These paintings made sexual violence and rape visible. They are evidence that the crime was taking place in this society, but they seem to suggest that the crime was exclusively perpetrated against white women.

PALATABLE SEXUAL VIOLENCE

When Sharpe discusses “anagrammatical blackness”, she notes that the word “child” takes on a different meaning when the adjective “black” is placed in front of it (2016: chapter 1 para 3).

Earlier in this research, I discussed the relatively easy availability of photographs of black women nursing white infants. These images suggest that black children may have been forced to fend for themselves because their parents were raising the children of others. This implication evokes a sense of loss, as it seems as though they are deprived of a “normal” childhood. Therefore, the word child starts to refer to a fully capable adult when the word “black” is placed in front of it.

I carry this idea forward into *Chapter Three - Unidentified Women*. Here Figures 22 and 24 depict young black girls in sexually compromising positions with adult white men. This visualisation of black girls is important as they are not shown as victims of gratuitous sexual violence and exploitation. Neither is their loss of protection from their parents visually pronounced. In my position as a black woman living in the 21st century, these images convey a great sense of loss to me. The girls in them have essentially lost their parents, childhood and sexual innocence however, the photographs reject their victimhood. Instead, they are represented as adult women, who can give sexual consent. My claim is that the framing of the girls as “women” silences their victimhood. Bringing forth the idea that black women can be abused at any age, that black childhood is not a time of innocence. It frames their violation as palatable.

In *Chapter Four- She is Determined to Assert her Refusal, He is Determined to Remind her of its Insignificance*, I continue with the narrative of “palatable sexual violence”. The images that I selected do not show any male sexual interaction with the bodies of the women. They are rather a “self-display” by the women, this signals choice, agency and ultimately consent.

Figure 38, is from the 2008, *Noord Street Taxi Rank*, sexual assault of two women. Figure 39, is a film still from the 2016 *eNCA Checkpoint* documentary, *Mavuso*.

The film still from the *eNCA Checkpoint* documentary, *Mavuso* functions similarly as that of the image of the *Noord Street Taxi Rank* assault does. This is because it focuses on the exposed

body parts of the women who engage in *Mavuso*. Whilst I was watching the documentary, there are numerous times where the cameraman focuses on the bodies of young women. At times the lens is on the breasts, exposed genitalia and "provocative" dancing. Visually depicting *Mavuso* as an activity where young black women "go wild" and behave in what is socially considered a "seductive" manner. The attendance, behaviour, and dress code suggest that there is an agency in the women. I agree, to some degree with the latter, because they are actively finding ways to exist in a country where the unemployment and cost of living are high.

My concern is that the "survival" element of the activity is silenced, as the documentary "omits" the socio-economic background of the women and their difficulties in finding employment. One woman is quoted saying, "I need the money to do my hair". This statement frames the woman as vain and calculative. The documentary also frames the men participating in this as "helpless victims of very explicit seduction". This representation of men "forgets" to include that they are economically (some of the men were taxi owners) much more powerful than the women they are interacting with.

This representation of *Mavuso* silences the systematic violence that is the residue of apartheid and in doing so, silences the economic vulnerability of the women who partake in it. There is also the denial of the very real physical danger that these women may be in. Can they refuse to have sexual intercourse once they have accepted drinks from the men? Can they refuse to engage in uncomfortable sexual behaviour? My observation is that the attendance to *Mavuso* is understood as "consent". But, can the women breach this non - verbal commitment? Will the male members of this activity accept a body, "that until a moment ago was available to him" (Azoulay 2008: 218). The documentary does not even suggest that sexual violence may be a *very real* possibility. The almost obsessive focus on the dress code of the women oversimplifies the activity. This very deliberate representation of *Mavuso* again silences the victimhood of women.

Moreover, in *Chapter Five*, I visually analyse the covers of the South African newspaper *Daily Sun*. Figures; 40, 41 and 42 seem to humiliate the women in each of the covers. Azoulay argues that "The body ...symbolises our defenceless object-ness. Getting dressed means to camouflage

its object-ness” (2008: 211). The voluntary undress of the women suggests that they have voluntarily submitted to be objects. This implies that they see themselves as objects and the opposite sex should do the same. Therefore, if they do encounter the risk of sexual violence, it is not because of the potential perpetrator. It is rather because of their choice to reveal their bodies. *Chapter Four* and *Five* both include images from 21st century South Africa. However, these images are like those produced three and even four centuries prior. The latter is explicitly evident in the existence of the activity, *Mavuso*. Although, we are currently in post-apartheid South Africa the afterlife of apartheid and colonialism still exist, especially in the representation of black women. In the sections that will follow I will evaluate Muholi’s “counter” representation of black women.

DISRUPTING THE SILENCE

COUNTERVISUALITY

In the Introduction of this research, I quoted Rachel Nelson's claim, that "art has the capability to re-articulate signs and images" (2015: 24). My primary aim for this research was to surface the various visual mechanisms Muholi employs, to create an alternative representation of victims of sexual assault. This antagonism of historical and current representations comes from Muholi associating black women's bodies (sign) with images of gross injustice, bodily harm, fragility and pain. Shifting from images that associated her body with heightening sexuality and animalism. This shift starts to visualise black women as human, as beings that can feel pain. This creation of a being that feels pain rejects the representation of black women as "initiators of their violation". This, in turn, makes to a certain extent, the violence of rape visible.

Muholi starts to interrogate history's "visuality" of black women and counteracts dominant sexual stereotypes that have been used to identify them. She creates what Mirzoeff has termed “counter visuality” and “a right to look” (2011: 5). In *Chapter Five*, I present the argument that *Hate Crime Survivor I, II, Case Number* and *Flesh III* create an alternative representation of black women and it is one that challenges that of the presumed natural order of “visuality” (ibid)

Muholi does question certain traditions of representing rape victims, but she also strongly adheres to some. One of these is the removal of the victim's face to focus on another body part, particularly the hands. This feature of a woman has been used in conventional South African visual culture to convey victimhood. The focus on the hands in this artwork means that the body is removed from any identifiable figure. This figure cannot return the gaze of its viewer. This could be an earnest attempt from Muholi to spare the victim further humiliation. On the other hand, this act contradicts the feminist and Black feminist movements. These theories attempt to challenge the shame that victims of sexual violence inherit. They remove the perpetrator's behaviour from the victim's body and responsibility. They vigorously challenge the notion that "rape stains its victims" (Azoulay 2008: 236). The idea that rape is a result of the victim's actions is still widely held in South African society (Wojcicki 2002: 128). It takes courage for victims to share their experiences. With this, I understand Muholi's visual omission. But, I also wonder whether it does not further isolate and blame victims.

In the artwork *Triple III*, there is a more explicit adherence to the conventions of representing human pain. Muholi uses the bodies of three black slender, almost malnourished women. Each body is naked, and their bruises are exposed. The naked malnourished black body has been used locally and internationally in visual culture to create, "poverty pornography" (Kaskure and Krivorotko 2014: 10). Naked black bodies have been used in this visual field to frame the African continent as backward, poverty-stricken, incapable of helping itself and dependent on the charity of the West (ibid). I argue that Muholi contributes to this violent stereotype, by framing rape victims in the way that she does in *Triple III*. Furthermore, Muholi's display of these bodies in foreign galleries maintains the illusion that rape happens to "others". It is what happens to those that are outside of the centre, which in this case is, those that exist outside of Europe.

The struggle in Muholi's practice to represent victims of sexual violence may be due to the difficulty of representing this type of violation. As I have noted throughout this research, rape and sexual violence have been either omitted from the visual or greatly skewed. Muholi is working with what others may look at as, an "impossible task". Although she has to be

commended for her bravery, she is attempting to alter centuries of misrepresentation. I commend her for initiating this task, in a country that is in dire need of such activism.

My observations from this research is that because Muholi is working in the visual arena and with bodies, she is limited by inscribed meanings. Certain bodies have certain meanings, these inscribed meanings were formulated through centuries of anxious repetition. Therefore, they will take a similar amount of time and effort to alter. One of the reasons I included Goliath's work in this research is because she utilises visual and *audio* tools to creatively represent victims. The use of visual and audio gives her more room to experiment with representation. She uses silence to reinstate agency to women who have been stripped of it. Illustrating, that in many instances silence is the only mechanism victims have, to cope with trauma. Goliath shows that there are agency and self-preservation in silence.

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