

## Master of Arts Research Report

Title: A Critical Analysis of the Representation of Interracial Desire in South African Cinema:  
Privileging Private Discourses of Desire

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**Declaration of Plagiarism:**

I declare that this research report submitted is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

(L. Mvusi)

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DATE

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## Introduction

From early European colonialists to apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, race, racism and interracial desire have formed a part of public discourse. This discourse created a racial order which secured the concept of white supremacy over non-whites and condemned interracial desire in its public moralising as impure, immoral and a threat to white hegemony and superiority. Regardless of the condemnation, so-called ‘colonial desire’ existed as a covert yet enduring ‘obsession’ with transgressive interracial sex and miscegenation (Young 1995:xii).

My aim is to critically analyse the influence of political agendas in the cinematic representation of interracial desire in South Africa. The focus is specifically on the representation of heterosexual interracial desire between white and black characters. The report will discuss the utilization of the representation of interracial desire as a political tool throughout the history of South African national cinema. Furthermore, it will analyse how interracial desire has become a part of public discourse making it a public act of miscegenation thereby disavowing the notion of interracial desire rather than functioning as a discourse which is situated in the private and is concerned with interracial desire itself. This is due to the prohibition of interracial desire in South Africa in order to uphold white domination. Thus this public discourse was not concerned with desire but rather a prohibition of interracial desire to enact white superiority. Alternatively, interracial desire functioned as a transgressive tool against segregationist and white supremacist ideals during apartheid and later became a vehicle for promoting racial unity in the post-apartheid era.

I will also show how race politics intersect with the private through conceptions of race and racism as they pertain to interracial desire. My intervention is then to argue for the cinematic representation of interracial desire itself. I aim to achieve this by foregrounding private articulations of interracial desire. In the process, I hope to normalize the relationship in its cinematic representation whilst still analysing how race politics intersect with articulations situated within the private as any discourse on interracial desire inevitably speaks back to articulations on race relations.

By privileging private discourses of interracial desire, the stereotypical cinematic representations of interracial desire, as articulated both during and post-apartheid, can be destabilized, subverted or contradicted in the hopes of finding new and contrasting representations. The function of the cinematic representation of interracial desire as a political tool depicts this relationship as exceptional and utilizes it to make a comment on the nation's race politics as opposed to an exploration of interracial desire itself. This results in shallow stereotypical representations of interracial desire which do not critically analyse the experience of interracial desire on the level of the private.

Within the broader context of international discourses with regard to the cinematic representation of interracial desire, my research is situated in a South African context and more primarily rooted within the Immorality Act of 1927 which prohibited extra-marital intercourse between whites and non-whites. The apartheid system was built on ensuring racial segregation to secure white racial purity and Afrikaner hegemony. Interracial sex threatened this purity through the reproduction of mixed race offspring. In this context, interracial desire was moralised in public discourse and earned its status as taboo.

Cinema has formed a part of this public discourse in relation to interracial desire in its consideration as a national product. National cinema is described as 'the products of national industries, produced in national languages, portraying national institutions and recycling national intertexts' (Shohat 2003:10). As Susan Hayward writes, 'the nation for its part is defined as a social cultural community and yet it is one that must comply with the state' (2000:89). This is because nationalist discourses forge a link between the nation and the state thereby making the state's policies a natural 'concept of nation' (2000:89) which suggests the state speaks for the nation. Therefore, according to these definitions, national cinema is representative of a nation's identity as constructed by the state during any given era. Furthermore, it reflects the ideals and restrictions of any given government.

Apartheid national cinema problematized interracial desire as a threat to the 'purity' of whiteness and white power. The lack of cinematic representations of interracial desire upheld these segregationist policies. Jans Rautenbach's film *Katrina* (1969) depicts a romantic relationship

between a white man and coloured woman and aims to critically analyse interracial desire. However, the film comments on racial identity and apartheid's societal aversion to interracial desire and therefore makes a political statement on race politics in apartheid South Africa and not a representation of desire as it pertains to the private. Furthermore, it upholds segregationist ideals as it articulates the policy of 'separate but equal'. Some filmmakers who depicted interracial desire sought to resist the government's policies by depicting the major threat to white purity and thus white power and rule- miscegenation- thereby utilizing it as a transgressive vehicle against the state.

In the post-apartheid era, the cinematic representation of interracial desire changed from reinforcing and protesting segregationist policies to the promotion of reconciliation and nation building under the banner of unity within racial diversity. Oliver Rodger's *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* (2010) explores a white man and black woman's attempts to grapple with their family's disapproval of their upcoming wedding. The film tackles strained race relations in post-apartheid South Africa as opposed to an experience of interracial desire itself.

Both *Katrina* and *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* will be discussed as case studies of the South African cinematic representation of interracial desire. They reinforce my argument that the primary usage of interracial desire in South African cinema has been to either reinforce or resist governmental policies thus its utilization as a political tool. My intervention calls for a cinematic reimagining of interracial desire which privileges the private without disavowing political discourses pertaining to race and interracial desire.

My short film *Litha & Amy*, aims to foreground the private with the intent of normalizing and exploring interracial desire itself as it occurs on the level of the private between lovers. It does not seek to reinforce nationalist agendas on race politics and therefore attempts to escape its utilization as a political tool. However, it will analyse how the political intersects with the private in relation to the conceptualization of interracial desire and race politics. It is the exploration of the relationship between Litha (black) and Amy (white) as they consider the future of their romance even as they both grapple with their own personal demons. In the depiction of Litha and Amy's relationship, race politics will inform the subtext of the film with regard to a love scene

which visually exhibits the fetishization of each other's 'otherness' on the level of the corporeal and the insecurities that both characters have about their interracial relationship. This will be discussed in relation to the characters' psyche with regard to race politics through Frantz Fanon and Richard Dyer's articulations of racial superiority, inferiority and interracial desire.

## **Laws Prohibiting Interracial Desire in South Africa**

The year 1910 saw South Africa's independence from British colonial rule and the union of the British Cape Colony and Natal with the Afrikaans Transvaal and Orange Free State to create a united South Africa (Horrel 1978:1). However, the end of colonialism sparked the intensification of a systematic set of laws which affected race relations in their insistence upon the segregation of the races specifically between blacks and whites.

The South African government's segregationist policies and laws negatively affected race relations and further entrenched racist attitudes. The cornerstone of the laws prohibiting interracial desire was the Immorality Act of 1927. The act declared that 'extra-marital intercourse between whites and Africans was prohibited' (Horrel 1978:8). It worked as a continuation of the Cape Act 36 of 1902 and the Orange Free State Ordinance 11 of 1903 which specifically forbade sexual intercourse between black men and white women as did the Natal Legislation Act 21 of 1903 and the Transvaal Ordinance 46 of 1903. The Immorality Amendment Act, No. 21 of 1950 and the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1957; sought to consolidate the 1927 Act by ensuring 'maximum penalties for illicit carnal intercourse between whites and "others" were increased' (1978:20) therefore extending the prohibition to include white men. Therefore it was illegal for a white person and someone from a different race group (clearly demarcated as non-white) to engage in what was described as 'indecent' acts or solicit each other to perform such acts.

These laws were the initial step in making interracial desire a part of political discourse and legitimised and embedded the taboo nature of interracial sexual relationships in South Africa. These segregationist policies are reflected in the mandates of apartheid national cinema which ensured racial segregation in cinematic representations.

## **The Concept of Race and the History of Race Relations and Interracial Desire**

<sup>1</sup>An interrogation of concepts pertaining to race, racism and interracial desire is vital in understanding racial prejudices and the influence of these prejudices on interracial desire. These racial concepts relate to political ideologies which moralised interracial desire to maintain white supremacy before and during apartheid and utilize it as a vehicle for furthering the policy of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. The concept of race has been embedded in historical, economic and socio-political processes and therefore has become a source of great debate from the start of European colonialism and the interaction between whites and ‘people of colour’ - a relationship I will later discuss.

Richard Dyer defines race as referring to ‘some intrinsically insignificant geographical/physical differences between people’ (Dyer 1997:1) but argues that it is the historical ‘imagery’ of race that holds power. This ‘imagery’ refers to long established societal judgments about a people’s capacity and worth solely based on their racial classification (Dyer 1997). He describes whites as non-raced. Instead, they are the norm- the human race. This is because white supremacy and colonization set ‘whiteness as the inaugural term of difference, the primary signifier of the symbolic order of race’ (Seshadri 2000:19). This role as the primary signifier gives whiteness its power as ‘the claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity’ (Dyer 1997:2). This enables whites to speak and act with authority in the world thereby giving them the power to impose their ‘superior’ culture on non-whites.

With European colonialism came the imposition of a cultural hegemony that reflected white western culture. Europe determined itself as superior in comparison to non-European countries and tasked itself with the duty of enlightening and civilizing the natives and ‘savages’ of the rest of the world. As Said writes in relation to Orientalism, ‘there is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves re-iterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness’ (1979:7). This relates aptly to the colonization of Africa and the arrival of missionaries who sought to ‘save’ Africans and civilize them (Young 1995:32). Colonialism for

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of Orientalism refers to the European cultural and ideological mode of discourse regarding the Orient.

the sake of civilisation was the guise colonisers used to enforce the standards of European civilisation on other cultures thereby undermining and diminishing them- reducing them to 'otherness' or as Dyer describes as not constituting humanity but rather a (black) race. White people have historically held power and so they create the 'dominant images of the world' and therefore 'they thus construct the world in their own image, white people set standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others are bound to fail' (Dyer 1997:9).

Where whiteness reflects humanity, blackness is raced and is defined by the imagery of the black race. This imagery has been created through white racist notions of blackness which associate black people with socio-politic and economic inferiority. Fanon speaks as the black man as he writes, 'I was all at once responsible for my body; responsible for my race, for my ancestors. I ran an objective gaze over myself, discovering my blackness, my ethnic characteristics, and then I was deafened by cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships...' (Fanon as cited in Bernasconi 2001:186). Although this can initially be read as a positive self-affirmation of blackness, the imagery of blackness is distorted by the racist labels of 'cannibal', 'animal' and 'intellectually deficient' ascribed to black people during colonialism and this was how whites maintained their supremacy. Additionally, unlike in Dyer's articulations of the individualized white man (1997:8), the black man has to speak for and defend his race because he is specifically raced. Therefore black people were suppressed 'because they were found to be in contradiction with a civilization that they did not know anything about and that was impressive to them' (Fanon as cited in Bernasconi 2001:184).

The idea of colonial Europe was 'a collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans' (Said 1979:7) thereby creating the binary opposition of 'people of colour' and white. More than that, it sets up the binary of white versus 'the other'. In declaring groups as 'other', white colonialists maintained their supremacy over other peoples and cultures as whiteness became the norm. This is how whiteness secured its power and became aspirational for those constituted as 'other'. Fanon explores the notion of the racialised 'other' referring particularly to blackness by taking on the voice of the 'other'/black man and describing it as 'to always feel in an uncomfortable position, to be one's own guard, to be prepared to be rejected' (1952:57). This is a rejection based on race because to be non-white is not to be a part of

humanity or the humanity of whiteness. It is to be inferior and 'other' than the norm. This concept of racial inferiority and superiority is reflected in my representation of interracial desire as it interrogates the power battle between a white woman and black man through a power play of submission and domination as I will later discuss.

The racial separation of 'us' versus 'the other' was key in ensuring the supremacy and 'purity' of the white race. This differentiation created a racialised hierarchy which forms the foundation of racial discrimination and the intolerance of interracial desire as interracial desire disturbs the 'racial order' as Seshadri writes, 'groups must be differentiated and related in order to make possible the claim to power and domination' (2000:7). 'People of colour' are differentiated from the white 'group' and classed as inferior to maintain white people's dominance and their claim to political and socio-economic power during colonialism and in apartheid South Africa. The symbolism of interracial desire is that it reflects the union of different groups signifying the equal status of those groups. The critics of miscegenation considered this a threat to the social order as this interracial symbol of social equality would affect those who 'enjoy preferential treatment' (Mojapelo 2008:25) i.e. whites. Furthermore, they argued that the 'social equality implicit in a mixed-race marriage violates socially sanctioned patterns of privilege and superiority' (Mojapelo 2008:25). Here, Mojapelo refers to legitimate mixed race children who are the product of mixed-race marriage. They are still half white and so could be entitled to the same privileges of whiteness as their white parent despite their 'racial impurity'.

However, this fear of mixed race offspring is not solely specific to mixed-race marriages. Even in the broader discourse of desire, interracial desire specifically between black men and white women posed the most direct threat to the purity of the white race. It resulted in the defilement of white women by black men and the reproduction of mixed race offspring. The desire between black men and white women threatened the concept of white supremacy as this racial superiority was dependent on the 'veiling and cloistering of white femininity... and white female behaviour' (Hintzen 2003:132). This is because white female sexuality was considered the key to racial domination or allaying the threat of miscegenation as women are the ones who bare children. Furthermore, it threatened the power of whiteness because 'if they (white men) can no longer guarantee their own reproduction as white, then the "natural" basis of their domination is no

longer credible' (Dyer 1997:25). Therefore, any mixed race children were no longer purely white and thereby diminishing the claim to 'pure' white power.

However, the converse, sexual intercourse between white men and black women, was 'non-problematized in colonial discourse' (Hintzen 2003:139). Although it was not recognized or encouraged, it occurred frequently in the form of hidden rape. It was an accepted societal secret. As Melissa Steyn writes in relation to the South African context, it was the 'most common form of interracial sex' and was 'illicit and forced intercourse between European men and African (female) slaves' (2009:56). The fear surrounding white women producing mixed-race offspring was far greater than the fear of black women producing mixed-race children. Interracial desire between black men and white women was problematized by white men who were as concerned with maintaining their power over white women as they were with ensuring white women did not bear mixed race children. This was to ensure white domination through maintaining the 'purity' of the white race. Subsequently, the opposite (white men and black women) was non-problematized because the power of social condemnation and public moralizing was held by white men. These public pronouncements against interracial desire were compounded by the laws instituted in 1902 and 1903 in South Africa preventing sexual intercourse between white women and black men.

To ensure the prohibition of interracial desire between black men and white women, the preservation of white female purity was vehemently guarded in colonial South Africa. The anxiety over white female sexuality resulted in whites circulating 'stories of their young women being raped by African men' (Steyn 2009:61). The sexual communion of black men and white women was described as 'brutal rape', 'animalistic' and 'a form of cross species mating' (Mellor 2002:171). This legend was then 'disseminated through literature, the media and social, religious and political discourse' (Steyn 2009:61) therefore interracial desire was utilized in political discourse to publicly moralise the relationship.

Films such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *De Voortrekkers* (1916) perpetuated these false representations of black male and white female sexuality. As Jaqueline Maingard writes, 'both films expound and promote racist views in the furtherance of a white supremacist cause and the

promotion of an exclusively white “nation”; and both exploit black people as “others” against which white identity is confirmed and celebrated’ (2007:19). In both films, miscegenation is a threat to white purity and its condemnation is clear in its depiction of black men ‘raping’ white women. In *Birth of a Nation*, this is presented using the trope of a horror film to scare its white audience regarding miscegenation. The horror genre is designed to instill fear in its audience as it deals with humanity’s ‘most primal nature and its fears: our nightmares, our vulnerability, our alienation, our revulsions, our terrors of the unknown, our fear of death and dismemberment, loss of identity, or fear of sexuality’ (Dirk 2013:1). The genre’s dark tone focuses on the horrifying, strange and forbidden and utilizes the archetypes of the monster, the damsel in distress and the hero (Brune 2011:1).

Griffiths exploits these characteristics of the horror genre in a scene which suggests Lynch’s (a mulatto) impending rape of Elsie (a white woman). In the scene, Lynch proposes to Elsie and, when he is rejected, pursues her incessantly around his office creating the impression that he will attack her and take her against her will. Elsie is a young privileged white woman who comes from a family which is sympathetic to the plight of African Americans. She symbolizes the damsel in distress as she is exaggerated in her helplessness, vulnerability and innocence and depicted as child-like and silly. As Blandford writes, ‘a damsel in distress is often a female and is usually portrayed as helpless and in danger... and needs a man to protect them’ (2011:1). At first she threatens to have Lynch whipped however, when he corners her, she screams in terror and eventually faints in his arms overwhelmed at the prospect of being defiled by him and consumed by her fear. This portrayal clearly sets her up as one who is unable to fight back against Lynch and one in need of a hero to save her therefore setting her up as the archetypal damsel in distress as defined by Blandford.

Furthermore, her purity is captured by her being dressed in a bright white gown. The Colonel (the white man) is the hero who is also dressed in white (as a part of the Ku Klux Klan) and comes in and saves her. Alternatively, Lynch- the monster- is dressed in dark colours clearly demarcating Elsie as good and Lynch as evil. The battle between good and evil is also a characteristic of the horror genre. This costume design aids Griffiths’ polarization of black men

as villains, white men as the saviours and white women as weak and in need of white male protection.

Lynch's portrayal as the evil monster is further evidenced in his characterization as one who is driven by his uncontrolled sexual instincts when he stalks and chases Elsie around his office. When he attacks Elsie, his physical form transforms into that of the monstrous beast with his bulging eyes, shoulders back and elbows up preparing to leap onto her. He pounds his chest like a gorilla presenting himself as an animal instead of human thereby reinforcing the notion of black men as frenzied sexual beasts to be feared by white women.

As the scene develops, the music increases in tempo which builds tension and suspense for the audience as the horror of Lynch's attack (and the subsequent threat of miscegenation) terrifies the audience. The close up cuts between Elsie's horror and Lynch's menacing expression, also works to sway the audience's emotions toward being fearful for Elsie's innocence as Lynch approaches her.

Griffiths' utilization of characteristics of the horror genre firmly entrenches a fear of miscegenation in his white audience thereby further endorsing racial purity and the complete lack of representation of interracial desire in cinema.

*De Voortrekkers* and *The Birth of a Nation* utilized the recurrent motif of black men as sexually aggressive with white women as this 'displaces attention from the routinized misuse of non-white women by white men. Miscegenation also threatened white men's control over their property in two senses: their women as their chattels and their control over their wives' (Dyer 1997:26). This stemmed from the notion that interracial desire gave white women sexual freedom in their choice of lover and so they did not simply exist to please only white men thereby threatening white male control over them. These public discourses concerning interracial desire (film, laws etc) turned the private act of interracial desire into a public act of miscegenation. It was scorned by society, deemed immoral and, in South Africa, declared illegal.

The public moralizing of interracial desire in cinema and the laws enacted against it made the concept of miscegenation prohibited and taboo. According to Lacan, the taboo of miscegenation

‘behaves like the prohibition against incest by organizing kinship relations, punishing transgressions and offers subjects a place in the racial order’ (Seshadri 2000:41). As discussed, whiteness claimed supremacy in the racial order and miscegenation dilutes the purity of the white race and that claim to power through the reproduction of mixed race offspring. Therefore, to curb miscegenation and maintain racial order, the apartheid government declared it illegal enabling them to punish those who contradict the established racial order with imprisonment.

When critically analyzing the concept of the taboo, French theorist Georges Bataille remarks that such transgressions are influenced by civilization, community and background. The stigma of taboos served to eliminate sexual violence from society such as rape, murder or incest. The union of black men and white women having already been labeled as ‘rape’ would fall under this definition of taboo. However, as Bataille states, it is only in the desire to break a taboo that the taboo wields its power and status as he argues, ‘such taboos can only function successfully when individuals recognize that these problems demand to be transgressed’ (Bataille as cited in Bristow 2011:112). The notion of these problems is identified in relation to circumstances that contradict societal norms, morals or values and are usually concerned with sexual violence or deviancy. Bataille’s statements were made at a time when interracial desire would have deemed as sexual violence. This is due to the misrepresentations in literature, media and society of black men’s sexual aggression against white women thereby rendering it taboo.

Furthermore, Bataille argues that ‘taboos intensify erotic rebellion’ even in his description that taboos ‘often signify that (that type of) sexual pleasure is dirty, shameful, sinful and unclean’ (Bataille as cited in Bristow 2011:113). This shame is important in ensuring the maintenance of the taboo as ‘the presence of shame in the manifestations and exercise of the sexual functions, and of modesty of the mutual relations between the sexes, are the foundations of morality’ (Barrecca 1995:123). Therefore to shamelessly transgress the taboo, is to be immoral. In the South African apartheid context, interracial desire was declared immoral and shameful. Individuals who engaged in it were transgressors who broke the law and a so-called moral code.

Therefore, filmmakers who attempted to depict interracial desire battled with this segregationist policy thus affecting the national cinematic representation of interracial desire by ensuring a lack

of representation in this regard during early apartheid. This lack of the cinematic representation of interracial desire reflected the Immorality Act in that it prohibited representations of interracial desire to maintain white 'purity' and uphold white supremacist policies.

## National Cinema

The representation of interracial desire in South African national cinema depicts the endorsement of and the objection to national policies of racial segregation during apartheid. In the post-apartheid era, interracial desire articulated racial integration and the policy of reconciliation. As my case study films, *Katrina* (1969) and *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* (2010), will later show, cinema- and more specifically the cinematic representation of interracial desire- is utilized by the state as a political tool to advance socio-political agendas under the guise of national cinema. This is because ‘cinema has been brought into the national frame by virtue of official discourse in government or government-appointed bodies, by accompanying processes and policies, and by legislation and government funding schemes’ (Maingard 2007:3) making it a national product which operates as a part of national discourse as formulated by government. These include entities such as The Publications Control Board (PCB) which was the censorship guard during apartheid and the National Film and Video Foundation which seeks to redress the inequalities of national cinema in the post-apartheid era.

National products such as film are considered cultural artifacts that ‘represent a nation, to function as evidence of the nation’s distinctiveness’ (Hayward 200:89). National cinema depicts how the nation perceives itself but does not always articulate the reality of the nation. The perception presented is an ‘ideological construct’ (Hayward 2000:89) which serves to link cultural groups with the state creating ‘abstract or imagined communities that we loosely refer to as “the nation” or indeed “the nation-state”’ (Hayward 2000:89). However, these national identities are constructs created by individuals in power thereby limiting them (national identities) to the agenda of those in power. Hayward identifies the problematic nature of these definitions as they ‘produce a narcissistic, self-reflexive and self-fulfilling view of national cinema, one in which the historical subject/object becomes knowledge of itself and not the subject of knowledge’ (2000:92). Therefore, rather than producing films that seek to challenge and negotiate national identity, cinema is used as a tool to present a pre-conceived notion of national identity as decided upon by a select few with political power. This hinders the cinematic

representation of contradictory or complex notions of national identity in relation to various subjects and their specific historical and socio-economic contexts.

Although my case studies are from different eras of South African politics, both films are limited in their representations of interracial desire because they utilize interracial desire to communicate a larger political message concerning race politics in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The usage of interracial desire as a political tool predetermines particular narrative outcomes and conclusions which foster nationalist agendas. Therefore the cinematic representation of interracial desire in my case studies become a mouthpiece for national policies as opposed to an experience of desire situated within the private. It does not comment on interracial desire itself. Under the apartheid government's censorship, the love affair between coloured Katrina and white Alex in *Katrina* was doomed because of racial classification and segregationist laws prohibited interracial sexual relationships thereby reaffirming the policies of racial segregation and the Immorality Act of 1927. In *I Now Pronounce You Black and White*, despite their families' deep-seated racist ideals, Jackie and Simon marry creating the image of hope and racial unity in the new South Africa. These case studies will be further discussed later in the report.

By privileging private discourses of desire, my film intervention, *Litha & Amy*, avoids the utilization of interracial desire as a political tool as there are no foregone conclusions regarding the characters or their relationship. As the film functions within the post-apartheid context, the expectation would be for the film to articulate the nationalist policy of reconciliation as reinforced by the policies of national cinema. In the conclusion of my film, the characters do not overcome the obstacles of race politics and racial prejudice presenting an image of racial unity and multiculturalism as in *I Now Pronounce You Black and White*. Instead, the characters face an unpredictable future in which they will continue to grapple with race politics along with their personal flaws and insecurities regarding interracial desire. The film seeks to critically analyse interracial desire itself with the intention of reimagining it outside of the exceptional or the transgressive while still reflecting upon the race politics implicit to interracial desire.

South Africa's cinematic history is intertwined with the history of colonialism, apartheid and political liberation after the 1994 elections. Before the Nationalist Party's rise to power and the institution of apartheid, films were utilized to shape class perceptions, work roles and the racial

hierarchy in post-colonial South Africa. This continued through to apartheid as government policy was geared ‘not only to be upholding “morality” but, more importantly, to upholding the prevailing class structure of South African society’ (Tomaselli 1989:13) which included the maintenance of a racial order which secured white domination. To achieve this, the national identity depicted in South African cinema during apartheid was not representative of the whole nation. Rather it represented how the state constructed the nation to enforce national policies of racial segregation and Afrikaner nationalism in the pursuit of racial purity. White supremacy was founded on the concept of non-whites as inferior and as formally unacknowledged citizens of the nation. This notion of inferiority resulted in a cinematic representation of blacks that did not truly reflect blackness but rather racist and false stereotypes of blacks as savage, servants, unintelligent or white lackeys. With regard to national cinema, blacks did not constitute the imagined national identity. Instead, early national cinema articulated the supremacy and power of whiteness and the Afrikaner over disenfranchised blacks. This restricted cinematic representations of blackness and interracial desire to the furtherance of national mandates effectively silencing the voices of the oppressed black majority and ensuring the lack of the cinematic representation of interracial desire.

As previously alluded to, the concept of the preservation of morality was essential during apartheid because of the Calvinist religion and its strict code of morality. The narrow Calvinist perception of morality legitimized the ‘rigid class divisions upon which apartheid is based’ (Tomaselli 1989:25). Racial segregation constituted a part of these class divisions. In the 1960s, films were censored on issues such as race, sex, nudity and the usage of expletives as these elements departed from strict Calvinism (Tomaselli 1989:15). Erring filmmakers during apartheid ‘have been arrested, intimidated and had their films intercepted by state security agents’ (Tomaselli 1989:19). Furthermore, filmmakers experienced sabotage and intimidation by the prime minister’s office. These heavy handed tactics evidenced the government’s intolerance for filmmakers who ventured outside of their (government’s) nationalist policies with regard to cinema.

Judge L. Snyman, Chairman of the Publications Appeal Board in 1980, is quoted as saying, ‘the public bodies, the adjudicators, must decide what the moral standards are of the general

community, the bulk of which is not sophisticated' (Tomaselli 1989:13). Therefore, national cinema became the watch guard of morality and the Publications Appeal Board its judge. This insistence upon maintaining so-called morality makes the lack of the cinematic representation of interracial desire clear as interracial desire was deemed immoral within the context of the Immorality Act.

The image of national unity in South Africa is exemplified by initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which promoted national forgiveness and healing through testimonies given by perpetrators and victims of human rights violation during apartheid. As Saks writes of the TRC, 'no event consolidated the nation's democratic vision, offered a picture of the future, and trumpeted its triumph over the past in quite the same way' (2010:83) as perpetrators were shown forgiveness through amnesty and victims and their families were finally able to face perpetrators and achieve closure. For many black people, the amnesty provided for racist whites and black defectors was a betrayal by the African National Congress government however this public outpouring of forgiveness was the cornerstone of the policy of reconciliation. It also fuelled the role of cinema's usage as a vehicle of reconciliation as a slew of documentaries and films capitalized on the 'power and glory of the event and the desire to propagate that on screen to the public gaze' (Saks 2010:90). This developed the impetus for the usage of film in the post-apartheid era as a tool for political and social reconciliatory discourse.

A number of films situated within post-apartheid national cinema, gloss over the consequences of apartheid and the difficulties of the policy of reconciliation. The democratically elected government issued a mandate of peace and reconciliation among people of different races, genders and cultures. National cinema was also concerned with national healing and the celebration of the rainbow nation- the ideal of unity within the country's racial diversity- as government agencies ensured 'new national policy was put in place to make tangible an inclusive national cinema' (Maingard 2007:157). Government viewed media as a vehicle for reconciliation that could reach the masses. As a part of media, film was expected to 'give way to new forms of national understanding and (it is hoped) tolerance' (Saks 2010: 2). Therefore, there was a concerted effort to represent all South Africans regardless of race, culture or gender in their navigation of the new South Africa. This enabled filmmakers to analyse and change the

representation of the races. Black characters were no longer backgrounded, subservient or the enemy of the white race. White characters relinquished their superiority.

Hayward criticizes this change in nationalist discourse as cinema then appropriates different cultures, races and languages 'placing them under some sort of illusionist rainbow coalition and integrated whole, or by some vain attempt to wipe out the traces of these struggles' (2000:94).

This is because post-apartheid cinema presented an idealistic image of race politics where racism stemmed from ignorance and could be cured by characters getting to know one another and understanding each other through the narrative journey.

This is exemplified by Jan Turner's *White Wedding* (2010) is concerned with celebrating the new South Africa: its landscape, its people and its diversity as the lead characters take a road trip through the country to get to a wedding. At various points, the film addresses the racism and prejudices that still exist in South African society. Interracial desire is depicted in the film between Tumi a black male and Rose an English white female. Their kiss at the end of the film promotes the policy of reconciliation as the multiracial characters surrounding them overcome their racist attitudes and happily co-exist. The image of interracial desire in the film then becomes a vehicle utilised to further the political agenda of multiculturalism. The reality of continued issues relating to inequality and racist attitudes are sidelined in the interest of reinforcing political agendas. Furthermore, there is no focus on the notion of interracial desire as it pertains to the private. It is still utilized as a tool to discuss broader political issues relating to race.

The mandates of national cinema and the politics thereof affect the cinematic representation of interracial desire and the change in this representation is rooted in the politics of each era of government. The imagined post-apartheid South African cinema is one which is able to move beyond being 'cinema marked by race' (Saks 2010:3). Considering the country's history, this is clearly a difficult aim to achieve. As Saks writes, the change in the representation of the nation and of race is not easy as it requires a quick 'construction of new terms and images of state, society, citizenship, and identity' (2010:21). Therefore, even in my privileging of private discourses of interracial desire, I will not negate race politics for that would simply diminish the complexities of my representation of interracial desire as race politics are implicit to the

representation of interracial desire. However, my representation does not seek to re-articulate this reconciliatory rhetoric. Rather, it attempts to articulate an experience of interracial desire that intersects with race politics in a manner specific to my characters by normalizing their interracial relationship and, in doing so, cinematically represent interracial desire itself rather than its usage as a political tool as a part of nationalist discourse. My intervention seeks to broaden the conversation about cinematic representations within the context of post-apartheid South Africa. By moving beyond the political usage of interracial desire in cinema, filmmakers are able to explore the nature of interracial desire itself through their characters' particular experiences as they intersect with the political. I feel that national cinema should represent these different experiences instead of promulgating political agendas. National cinema should reflect various subjectivities situated within specific historic, political and socio-economic contexts as opposed to the imagined identity of a minority with political power.

## **Interracial Desire in Apartheid Cinema: Acquiescence and Resistance**

Keyan Tomaselli critically analyses the role of cinema during apartheid and the challenges that filmmakers faced whilst operating under this regime. Cinema was used by the Nationalist Party government to alter perceptions in their favour and reinforce their racial segregationist ideals. Tomaselli writes, that a ‘differential censorship based on race became common place’ (1989:16). Films were expected to promote the positive portrayal of whites and ensure white sovereignty over blacks. The depiction of miscegenation would threaten this as it would put blacks and whites on the same level socially and threaten the preservation of the purity of whiteness. This stems from the colonial propaganda about the fears surrounding black male and white female sexuality and miscegenation as discussed earlier in this paper.

The government’s anti-miscegenation policy with regard to cinema is exemplified by laws enacted to censor its cinematic representation. The Entertainment Act of 1931 meant that films needed censorship clearing before they could be publicly screened. Among other clauses, censorship included the cutting of ‘scenes with intermingling of Europeans and non-Europeans’ (Tomaselli 1989:13). This would include the depiction of sexual intimacy between whites and non-whites thereby creating the lack of representation of interracial desire in South African cinema after the Union government and in early apartheid. However, this law was largely concerned with imported films as ‘local producers rarely challenged the status quo’ (Tomaselli 1989:14). The Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963 was the first formal mandate for the censorship of locally produced films which meant that the separation of the races in terms of cinematic representation now also applied to South African films and not just imported films. This further entrenched racial segregation in relation to cinematic representation and the lack of representation with regards to interracial desire. This deliberate lack of representation pertaining to interracial desire served to further entrench the government’s policy of white hegemony and Afrikaner nationalism.

A 1974 amendment cancelled the racial basis of censorship in that it enabled black filmmakers, black characters and black stories to become a part of South Africa's cinematic discourse and representation. Despite the amendment, the PCB retained the right to restrict films to ensure the continued 'positive representations of whites on screen, though a degree of criticism against apartheid was allowed to filter through' (Tomaselli 1989:16). This amendment opened the gates for the filmmakers of the 1970s and 1980s - both black and white- who used their films 'to make critical statements against apartheid' (Maingard 2007:140). The cinematic representation of interracial desire became a tool to protest against apartheid policies of segregation.

The film adaptations of Nadine Gordimer's *Country Lovers* (1982) (directed by Manie van Rensburg) and *City Lovers* (1982) (directed by Barney Simon) are examples of films which tackle interracial desire. The films are concerned with exposing 'the deep-seated psychological effects of the Immorality Act' (Maingard 2007:140) and therefore the cinematic representation of interracial desire is utilized as a transgressive political tool against the apartheid government's policy of segregation particularly in relation to the Immorality Act. *Country Lovers* was deemed by the PCB as a 'sympathetic portrayal' of 'immorality' (Tomaselli 1989:17) as it depicted the love affair between a white farm boy and a black farm labourer's daughter. Additionally, the film was accused of giving 'undue "publicity" to sexual behaviour between characters' (Tomaselli 1989: 17). The PCB's moral pronouncements against these films intensified the so-called taboo status of interracial desire and encouraged some filmmakers' determination to rebel. The cinematic representation of interracial desire, though minimal, was utilized by these filmmakers as a political tool of transgression and public defiance as opposed to an exploration of interracial desire itself through privileging private discourses.

The appointment of Johan van Rooyen as chair of the Appeals Board in 1980 resulted in censors becoming 'more tolerant towards depictions of interracial affairs and criticism of racial policy' however they remained 'immovable on negative depictions of whites in film' (Tomaselli 1989:23). Therefore, as apartheid faced its dying years, so too did the racial censorship of South African cinema. It also created a space in which the representation of interracial desire could be renegotiated and reimagined.

*Katrina* (1969) is a film considered to be ‘one of the landmark films on the South African cinematic landscape that deals with an inter-racial sexual relationship’ (Maingard 2007:134) as it was produced before the ‘freedom’ of the 1974 amendment of the Entertainment Act of 1931. However, although the film is liberal in its intention, it is hampered by its socio-political context, censorship and choices made by the filmmakers. Despite its position as a landmark film with regards to interracial desire, the film promulgates an apartheid rhetoric. It depicts a relationship between a coloured woman and white man which would be palatable to an Afrikaner audience rather than a black/white dynamic further illustrating the lack of the representation of black/white interracial desire during apartheid and the reinforcing of racial barriers. Furthermore, a coloured woman/white man relationship would allay the most direct threat to miscegenation-desire between white women and black men. This is also true for *Country Lovers* (1982) and *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* (2010) which show relationships between black women and white men. These examples of apartheid and post-apartheid films suggest that the historical fears of representing desire between black men and white women may still resonate even within a modern day context.

*Katrina* follows the ill-fated love affair between Katrina, a coloured woman, and Alex, a white alcoholic priest. She is from a mixed-race background as her mother is coloured and her father is white. Subsequently, she is able to ‘pass’ for white outside of her coloured community. The actress playing Katrina, Jill Kirkland, is a celebrated white actress and so the love affair on the screen is essentially between white people as opposed to a real representation of interracial desire. Again, this would be easier to accept in apartheid cinema than casting a fair-skinned coloured actress.

In Diana Paulin’s *Representing Forbidden Desire: Interracial Unions, Surrogacy, and Performance*, she discusses the selection of a white actress to play the character of Lisa- a mixed race young woman- in the play *The White Slave* (1882). She writes that the playwright ‘deflates the threat of an actual miscegenated (octoroon) body- physical “evidence” of interracial sex- by indicating that Lisa’s underlying, “pure”, white womanhood is what generates her appeal to white men’ (Paulin 1997:423). This is achieved in relation to the fact that the character of Lisa is played by a white woman. Therefore, in *Katrina*, Alex could have only fallen in love with

Katrina as she is 'inherently white' because she is actually white actress Jill Kirkland. This makes one question the validity and authenticity of the film as one that truly represents interracial desire. Although it is presented on the screen, the interracial desire plot is undermined as the actors are both white thus the actual transgression implicit in interracial desire (during apartheid) as embodied through two people of different races engaging in a love affair is disavowed.

Katrina is condemned by her racial classification as Alex refuses to marry her when he discovers that she is coloured. This shows the apartheid government's envisioned power of racial classification and the policy of 'separate but equal'. When she is assumed white, she is loved but when her true classification is revealed, she is rejected. Katrina seems desperate to escape her coloured heritage in her white masquerade and possibly suffers from an inferiority complex discussed by Fanon fuelling her relationship with Alex. Fanon argues that the woman of colour is crippled by her economic inferiority and sees the relationship with a white man as a means of escaping her inferior status. She is pre-occupied with her attempt to 'whiten the race' (Fanon 1952:37) through her womb. However, there is the suggestion of a deeper psychological self-hatred that Katrina possesses. She is distraught over Alex's rejection and her inability to escape her racial classification. Katrina's hatred for her mixed race heritage becomes her death sentence as she subsequently commits suicide feeling trapped by her race and inferiority.

Alternatively, her brother preaches the righteousness of the concept of 'separate but equal' and her son (who was unaware of his coloured heritage because he has been living in England) is welcoming of the categorisation. He willingly steps into the open arms of the coloured community. Unlike Katrina who transgresses the social order, the two men go on to prosper in their communities. This creates the message that the apartheid system insisted upon: one must accept one's classification. Furthermore, it reinforces the notion of racial separation as Katrina's brother and son find happiness in their 'rightful' communities. This speaks back to the concept of 'separate but equal'. Any attempt to 'rise' above one's order in the hierarchy, would be met with failure and self-inflicted doom. In Katrina's case- it meant death.

Although the film is liberal in its attempt to represent interracial desire, it is limited due to the fact that it does not truly represent interracial desire. Rautenbach's casting of a white actress in the role of a coloured woman negates the actual presence of interracial desire in the film. Furthermore, the film preaches the policy of separate but equal and the acceptance of the government's segregationist policies in the form of racial classification. Katrina and Alex's relationship is based on the lie that Katrina is white. This is what unites them and causes their ultimate demise. The film essentially endorses the policies of apartheid.

This endorsement is also because of the political climate the film was produced in. It was heavily censored by government and the PCB. Subsequently, the film was shot with two endings. In the ending preferred by Prime Minister B.J Voster after a private screening (Tomaselli 1989:85), Alex discovers Katrina's true racial categorisation and rejects her. She then subsequently commits suicide suggesting she is doomed for attempting to rise above her 'station' i.e. loving a white man. Rautenbach's preferred ending was more progressive in that it is rumoured in their communities that Alex and Katrina have continued their relationship. Prime Minister Voster's chosen preferred ending warns of the consequences of disregarding the law of racial segregation thereby reinforcing the stance against interracial desire. Therefore, the film became a platform for furthering the apartheid agenda of ensuring complete racial segregation especially with regard to interracial desire. This reduced the representation of desire to a political tool as opposed to an examination of the private as it relates to the interracial desire between the two main characters.

In grappling with the censorship of cinema during apartheid South Africa, one is able to understand the legacy inherited by post-apartheid filmmakers. This is especially true when analyzing and comparing the representation of interracial desire both during and post-apartheid. The political mandates have changed from promoting and protesting against racial segregation to encouraging racial cohesion. The depiction of interracial desire has, according to my research, largely followed these mandates throughout the years making desire a part of political discourse as opposed to interrogating the private intimate discourses pertaining to interracial desire.

## **Interracial Desire in Post-apartheid South African Cinema: The Policy of Reconciliation**

Generally, films produced in the post-apartheid era present multiracial characters overcoming their prejudices, finding common ground and renegotiating their role in the new political dispensation. Cinema has been flooded by international films based on South Africa's past which 'expose' the horrors of apartheid to the international audience and highlight the miracle of the peace that followed the 1994 elections. Alternatively, local films have attempted to grapple with the reality of life post-apartheid as national cinema had to readjust and find new representations that speak to the new political dispensation and the problems it faces such as HIV/AIDS, crime and race relations. Government campaigned to fix structural inequalities in order to achieve non-discrimination, equality and inclusion in South African society and cinema has become a part of this endeavor as media is able to reach the population on a larger scale and can 'help catalyze multicultural affiliations and transnational identifications' (Shohat 2003:1).

The policy of reconciliation was built on the back of the image of the rainbow nation. This 'rainbow nation' is essentially the celebration of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a political term 'in relation to other axes of social stratification having to do with race, class, gender, sexuality and nation' (Shohat 2003:7) which promotes unity within diversity. It seeks to restructure these differences from historical discrimination to an entity worth celebrating for its inclusivity and attempts to eradicate this historical discrimination. Critics of the utilization of multiculturalism to redress historic discrimination argue that it is a vehicle for placation because it does not tackle the core issues of discrimination (Shohat 2003:6). This is the reality that South Africa's policy of reconciliation is faced with as the policy does not adequately provide avenues for debate regarding the core issues of historic racism and the injustice of apartheid.

Because much of post-apartheid national cinema is concerned with preaching national unity it limits its representation of race relations in the country to one that mimics the government's

policy of reconciliation. This is problematic in that national cinema does not interrogate the legacy of apartheid and the concepts of race and racism in keeping with the policy of reconciliation. Similarly, the cinematic representation of interracial desire is also utilized to reinforce this reconciliatory policy. Therefore, even in a post-apartheid society, the depiction of interracial desire continues to foster a political agenda rather than an investigation of private discourses in relation to interracial desire.

*I Now Pronounce You Black and White* is a film which embodies the government's reconciliatory stance. A young couple (black female Jackie and white male Simon) plan to marry following a brief courtship. Their obstacle is their separate families- wealthy white Jews and traditional Xhosas- who object to the marriage because of their own racist generalisations and misconceptions. Through the film, the families have to work past their differences for the sake of the happiness of their children. Although the film is one that initially seems to represent interracial desire itself, it articulates the message that South African society must move past its racial prejudices to find common ground in the new dispensation thereby furthering a reconciliatory agenda.

The clues to the foregrounding of the politics as opposed to private discussions on interracial desire are evident from the beginning of the film. Its opening scene is a conversation between Simon and his two coloured friends about racial stereotypes and the differences between black, white and coloured people. Then there is a comparatively short scene depicting Jackie and Simon meeting at a braai and flirting with each other. By starting with the conversation about race and then following it with the introduction to interracial desire between Jackie and Simon, the representation of interracial desire is set up as a political tool utilized within broader discourses pertaining to race and race relations with the post-apartheid context.

The film then cuts to the title sequence which is Jackie's point of view of their courtship. Through the entire sequence, the audience is looking through Jackie's eyes at Simon thereby foregoing the nuances of capturing their experience of interracial desire through their courtship. The point of view montage separates Jackie and Simon as Jackie is almost disembodied by the point of view shots. Her limbs are all that is seen of her. Subsequently, the film neglects the

exploration of interracial desire itself and this continues throughout the film as what follows are the audience's introductions to the characters' families. The audience sees Jackie with her family and Simon with his. Again there is a lost opportunity to depict how Simon and Jackie relate to each other and explore their particular experience of interracial desire together.

The first introduction is to Felix and Sheila Dawson (Simon's parents). They are firmly set up as stereotypical racist upper middle class Jews as evidenced by their ill-treatment of Yolanda their domestic worker. This is contrasted by Simon's kindness toward Yolanda depicting him as a 'different kind of white' - one who is able to marry a black woman. Jackie's parents- Clarence and Pauline Msolisi- are staunch Xhosas but Jackie speaks in a British accent and never speaks in Xhosa. Her maid of honour even jokes that she is whiter than most white people. The utilization of stereotypes that define Simon as 'nice to blacks' and Jackie as a 'coconut', force the plausibility of interracial desire within the film's context. This is because the focus of the film is not a critical analysis of interracial desire itself and therefore the representation of the relationship is shallow and stereotypical. This provides a simplistic comment on race relations as the film relies on stereotypical racial profiling and prejudices that the characters are not forced to grapple with but is rather used as a source of comedy in its goal to foster a multicultural nationalist agenda

The first meeting of the two families is a tense dinner table scene where racial divisions are evident in debates about politics, religion and racial and cultural differences- all of which are explosive political topics. During this scene, Jackie and Simon do not sit together. Instead they sit beside their families on opposite sides of the table. This is a long scene and the core of it is political debate about post-apartheid life and specifically racial differences. This is performed under the guise of parents' concern for their children however, Jackie and Simon are not central to the scene. However, there are small scenes in the kitchen where Jackie is upset about the tension between the families and Simon comforts her. The moments in the kitchen are one of only three short scenes where we see Jackie and Simon alone together (the other two being the first meeting and a scene on their wedding day where they decide to get married in spite of their families). The lack of scenes that focus purely on Jackie and Simon's relationship is incongruent

with a film which promotes itself as one which discusses interracial desire as there is no true examination of interracial desire itself or even the relationship between these two people.

At the wedding, Simon's coloured friends realise that Jackie and Simon's children will be coloured and make a comment about how they (coloureds) are the future suggesting the obliteration of racial divisions as interracial desire becomes more prominent. This idea is further enhanced by the arrival of Simon's pregnant sister and her black boyfriend. This is the message that the film articulates. Interracial desire is a means of breaking through racial barriers because it removes those barriers through producing mixed race offspring. Therefore, the film is about race relations in post-apartheid South Africa not interracial desire. Jackie and Simon's wedding is about relinquishing the hatred of the past (personified by their parents) and celebrating racial diversity. Therefore, the film is an attempt to promote the policy of multiculturalism and reconciliation rather than the presentation of interracial desire. The usage of interracial desire as a political tool diminishes the intricacies of their desire. In the film, interracial desire is secondary to the families' racist attitudes. Rather, the desire is a vehicle to discuss race in South Africa as opposed to a depiction of interracial desire.

Although the function and representation of interracial desire in cinema has changed after apartheid, it is clear that it still serves to push political agendas by prescribing mandates to filmmakers and society regarding how they should feel about interracial desire. By privileging the private, I aim to argue that one is able focus on the notion of interracial desire itself avoiding stereotypical representations in cinema.

## **Litha & Amy**

### **Plot:**

The narrative begins with the crisis point of Litha and Amy's relationship- the moment in which they decide their future course- with both of them looking both physically and emotionally drained. It then moves back and charts the progression of their relationship which began in secret but then blossoms into a deep yet troubled love. They are challenged by the immaturity of young love as it coerces their inherent flaws - Litha is possessive with a dark streak whereas Amy is temperamental and afraid of commitment. Within the context of their relationship, their flaws cause tension and pain. However, there is an incredible bond between them which draws them to each other. The relationship can only survive by them overcoming their destructive natures. Their ability to achieve that becomes the main question of the narrative. They are also challenged by the historical burdens of race as it pertains to interracial desire as the ideal of whiteness will be discussed in relation to Amy and the inferiority complex of blackness in relation to Litha. This is the manner in which the politics of race intersect with my private discourse on the notion of interracial desire.

### **Concept:**

My short film explores Litha and Amy's journey and their experience of interracial desire. The narrative takes the audience inside the relationship showing their attraction, tension and passion for each other and so is the representation of interracial desire itself. My film attempts to normalize interracial desire through foregrounding private articulations of interracial desire and how that intersects with the reality of race politics.

My film also tackles the taboo of sexual desire between black men and white women. My research has indicated that the sexual relationship between white males and black females has been deemed more acceptable due to the historical relationship between white masters and black female slaves, domestic workers etc. My case studies also reflect this sentiment. The black male and white female character binary was considered taboo because white women were held up as the epitome of sexual virtue and purity whereas black men were painted as dangerous, savage and even rapists. These myths were promoted by films such as *Birth of a Nation* and *De Voortrekkers*. My intervention seeks to renegotiate historical representations of white female and black male sexuality. The characters both reinforce and contradict these historical representations of race with the intention of destabilizing stereotypes and presenting an experience of interracial desire itself which does not simply perpetuate a political agenda.

To normalize interracial desire within the context of my film, the narrative and execution of the film seek to subvert stereotypes in relation to race and interracial desire as race politics intersect with private discourses of desire. As discussed, participation in interracial desire was deemed taboo because of the threat to racial purity and the misrepresentations of white and black sexuality. My narrative challenges this concept of the taboo as the main sexual transgression between the characters is infidelity and not engaging in interracial desire. This is because Litha and Amy's relationship originated as an affair as she was with another man- Mark. Interracial desire heightens the level of transgression because of the race politics implicit in interracial desire but is not the focus of the transgression. It is utilized by the characters to make personal attacks on each other as Litha accuses Amy of using him to diversify her sexual palette and Amy suggests that Litha is only interested in stealing a white woman away from a white man. Their shame and guilt from transgressing does not stem from their racial differences but rather the immorality of adultery.

Characters:

The idealization of white women is a historical concept originated and upheld by white men. In Ku Klux Klan discourse, white men 'etherealised white women to the point that to imagine them having sex and being delivered of children is scandalous and virtually sacrilegious' (Dyer

1997:29). Therefore, the virtue of white women had to be protected by white men in the face of the threat of black male sexual aggression. This enforced the prohibition of interracial desire between white women and black men. In my film, Amy is not a pure and virginal innocent in need of white male protection. She is strong, full-figured, sexually aware and able to challenge Litha both physically and emotionally.

The idealization of white women has been perpetuated in photography and film, as the ‘idealized white women are bathed in and permeated by light. It streams through them and falls onto them from above. In short, they glow’ (Dyer 1997:122). Although my character Amy is not bathed in light, her Aryan features (blonde hair and blue eyes) fortify the ideal of the white woman- ‘the idealized creature of light’ (Dyer 1997:140). The connection between bloneness and lightness dates back into early Christianity as ‘bloneness is identified with “heavenly effulgence... it appears to reflect solar radiance’ (Dyer 1997:124). Therefore, I am taking the historical idealization of white women and placing it within a context where it can be renegotiated in relation to the representation interracial desire. Amy is not the image of white angelic perfection in her relationship with Litha. She is sexualized, flawed and an adulteress in her representation. Amy buckles under the expectation to maintain the image of the ideal white woman. It is only when she is able to admit to those flaws with Litha in the conclusion of the film that she is able to truly contemplate a relationship with him even as the issues of race politics continue to weigh on them.

The radiance and sexualized image of white women as it pertains to interracial desire is addressed in Yunus Vally’s *The Glow of White Women* (2007). In the documentary, he delves into the attraction between men of colour (specifically black and coloured) and white women during apartheid South Africa. The film articulates the historical context of interracial desire and weaves Vally’s fascination with white women with several interviews conducted with both black men and white women. He therefore exhibits how the ‘ideal of white women’ is an allure for black men too. The documentary focuses on this allure of white women and transforms the image of the respectable virtuous white woman into that of a sexual object. White women are portrayed as blonde pin-ups and a parade of beauty queens tempting the man of colour. This is described as erotic fetishism by Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing. His paper *Psychopathia Sexualis*

(1871) defines it as the idolizing of 'physical and mental qualities of a person or merely even objects used by that person etc. because they awaken mighty associations with the beloved person, thus originating strong emotions of sexual pleasure' (von Krafft-Ebing as cited in Barrecca 1995:136). I will discuss the concept of fetishism further into my film discussion.

Alternatively, Litha challenges the concept of the sexually aggressive black male as discussed in relation to the colonial misrepresentations of the 'savage rapist' and the modern hip-hop culture and its representation of black men as hypermasculinized and misogynous. Initially, Litha reinforces this image in his forceful and volatile handling of Amy in the most intense moments of their arguments. In their love scene in particular, there is a moment when Litha holds Amy down in bed as she struggles against him which plays into the image of the black man raping an innocent white woman. However, this image is contradicted when it ends in their joint laughter as it becomes clear that they are playing a game of domination and submission.

This interaction between them reflects the characters' awareness of race and the established stereotypes associated with it. Additionally, the moment changes the historic balance of the supremacy of whiteness over blackness as Amy willingly submits to Litha giving him a deep level of power and trust. The knowledge of these historical representations of black male and white female sexuality form a part of their sexual attraction to each other and they revel in the subversion of these stereotypes thereby articulating a different experience of sexual attraction and aggression between this particular white woman and black man. Furthermore, Litha's antagonism is juxtaposed with his tenderness and gentleness with Amy in the remainder of their love scene. His touches are intimate and reverent exhibiting his desire for her as greater than political intentions of transgressing or asserting dominance over a white woman.

Simultaneously, Litha suffers an inferiority complex in his relationship with Amy. He views himself as her experiment and is insecure in his relationship with her. This is evident in his attempts to push her toward her white ex-boyfriend, Mark. Mark is representative of the white world that Litha will never be a part of.

In his critique of interracial desire, Fanon describes interracial desire as simply an opportunity for the black race to ascend from slaves to masters- to become white (Fanon 1952). For the black man, his motivation is his wish to be seen as white and not black. As Fanon writes, 'Who better than the white woman to bring this about? By loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man' (Fanon 1952:45). Alternatively in *The Glow of White Women*, Vally 'speaks white' to charm white women as he says 'you had to be clever, radical, brilliant, well read- what was most important was who you quoted- and the white girls would come running'. However, unlike Fanon's suggestion, Vally's intention is not to become white. He enjoys the transgression of being coloured and indulging in his fantasies of white women. He understands the lure of racial difference as the forbidden fruit for both parties. It is a game of how to 'score' a white girl.

According to Fanon, the black man wants to dominate a white woman; he wants to avenge his historic ill-treatment at the hands of white men. But his insecurity and inferiority as a black man means that he is in constant need of white men's approval. A relationship with a white woman will put him on equal footing with white men and he will become a part of the superior race. He is enslaved but wants to be accepted into the white world. Fanon ascribes internalized racial inferiority as the fuel to blacks' aspiration to whiteness and their sexual desire for the white race. This sentiment is what drives the lack of self-esteem which, according to Fanon, pushes men of colour toward white women in the hopes of no longer being the 'other' but rather a part of the acceptable white collective.

Litha is plagued by his historical inferiority as a black man in his relationship with Amy. He wants to dominate her, consume her and make her his alone. However, he does not want to become white nor does he view his relationship with Amy as purely transgressive or a game. Instead, he is forced to overcome his internal fears and fights for his relationship with Amy in the hopes of creating a possible future together despite the historical burdens of race and racism in relation to interracial desire.

The characterisations of Litha and Amy seek to subvert stereotypical representations of white women and black men especially pertaining to interracial desire while also reflecting on the

historical burdens of race. Amy does not fulfill the ideal of the 'glowing' white woman and Litha's aggressiveness is juxtaposed by his gentleness and tenderness with Amy in his love scene with her. Therefore it articulates a different cinematic experience of interracial desire itself which does not conform to political definitions of sexuality and interracial desire with regard to the historic representations of these concepts. Furthermore, it is not a political intervention which seeks to reinforce the policy of reconciliation. The final image of the film is Litha holding his hand out to Amy creating a sense of hope. However, it is hope for the characters' future course together as opposed to hope for a multicultural South African society. Therefore, the film is the characters' particular experience of interracial desire itself through foregrounding their private exploration of desire and normalizing their relationship.

#### Execution:

The film plays with the concept of time as the characters move between the past and present of their relationship in their consideration of their future together. Three phases of time are interwoven to create the narrative. In the first timeline, the film is concentrated on the couple's last day (a special lunch is made by Amy) as they decide whether or not to stay together. They are on the brink of complete destruction as they relive their journey. The film opens with them sitting on the floor and staring at each other looking emotionally defeated. I play with the concept of time even more on this timeline because the sequence will move back to reveal their argument earlier that same day. The other two threads of the film are flashbacks to this first timeline.

The second timeline is a recurring love scene between Amy and Litha in which their desire and tenderness is evident. This is their exploration of each other's bodies as they appreciate their physical similarities and differences. Initially, they focus on the parts of their body that are racially different- skin, hair, lips- the exploration of the 'other'. I utilize a series of extreme close ups to concentrate on this visual fetishization of the characters' bodies. The focus is on their physical differences and attraction and this is enhanced by the manner in which the close ups disembodied them and reduce them to limbs or their physicality. As the narrative progresses and the context of their relationship becomes clear, the camera's framing increases to medium shots

as they lay in each other's arms. This retains the intimacy of the closer framing however it shows Amy and Litha together as a couple. This is because, as Krafft-Ebing argues, love cannot exist in sexual pleasure or fetish alone as 'the desire to enjoy the full possession of the beloved object, and, in union with it, to fulfill the laws of nature' (as cited in Barrecca 1995:138) is the communion of the mind, body and soul in balance to find peace and harmony in life and love. He argues this cannot be achieved when the body (sexual pleasure) is utilized alone in a relationship. The love scene transforms from one concerned with physicality to emotional connection as they embrace each other.

As discussed, this scene is also an awareness of racial differences and the associations to race and interracial desire that have persisted through history. In *The Glow of White Women*, both the men and women in the documentary are drawn to each because of their physical appearance and, more specifically, because of their skin colour. They relish transgressing with the 'other' because of the taboo associated with interracial desire. This taboo stems from the racial segregation policies in apartheid South Africa and so the sexual interest in the 'other' could also be perceived as a political act of transgression in response to the laws discussed. For Litha and Amy, their love scene is a discovery and appreciation for their racial difference and the difference of skin colour informs their attraction. However, the medium two shots of Litha and Amy together is my attempt at acknowledging race but then looking beyond that to them as a couple in order to normalize their experience of interracial desire as opposed to their desire being simply transgressive.

The awareness of transgression is evident in the final timeline. It is a kitchen scene which I describe as the anticipation of desire. The tone is one of longing, temptation and the awareness of sexual transgression. Where the love scene is warm and romantic, the tone of this scene is dark and brooding with shadows across their faces as Litha and Amy attempt to fight their sexual attraction. The concept of the taboo lingers within the atmosphere of this scene which also uses close ups to establish the building of intimacy between the characters.

The constant cutting between these three scenes juxtaposing Amy and Litha's love scene with the arc of their relationship exhibits the thin line between the magic and destruction of young

love. The slow yet lyrical pace of the narrative and the edit suggests the film mediates between these timelines and is a rumination on their experience of interracial desire. Furthermore, the contrast between the love scene and the relationship's beginning and ending creates more subtext and depth of meaning because it juxtaposes their intimacy and hostility depicting the complexities of their relationship and personalities.

Both Litha and Amy narrate their story through voice overs however the voice-overs are performed as though it is a conversation between them. Additionally, moments of actual dialogue in their lunch scene will carry over to images from the other scenes making it an ongoing conversation. This aids the subtext of the conversation as dialogue is matched with contradictory images or images which aptly depict what is being felt by the characters. Furthermore, the voice-overs will give the characters' different perspectives and experiences of their relationship. Some of their sentiments will be the same whereas others will contradict exposing the reasons for their breakdown. Additionally, this aids the transition between the different timelines. The usage of only diegetic sound and the lack of music heightens the intensity, tension and disconnect between the characters. It is more realistic in style and forces the audience to stay in these difficult and intimate moments with the characters.

In its execution, my film attempts to normalize Amy and Litha's relationship through foregrounding their articulations of the private in relation to interracial desire and challenging established cinematic representations of interracial desire as they pertain to national cinema. In doing this, my film presents an experience of interracial desire itself specific to my characters. The utilization of close ups creates intimacy both between the characters and with the audience. The voice-overs express the characters' personal articulations of their exploration of interracial desire with each other. The characters contradict established stereotypes of black and white sexual characterisations thereby creating an individualized encounter of interracial desire.

## Conclusion

European colonialism led to the campaign of enforcing white civilization and supremacy on so-called inferior nations thereby creating the binary of white versus non-white. This binary aided the insistence upon a racial order where whites held power and non-whites were considered savages, slaves and unenlightened. However, colonialism resulted in the dislocation of Europeans in two significant ways: 'the disruption of domestic culture, and in the increasing anxiety about racial difference and the racial amalgamation that was apparent as an effect of colonialism and enforced migration' (Young 1995:4). For the European colonizer, these were negative consequences as, amongst other factors, they lead to colonial interracial desire which was considered immoral and taboo.

From as early as colonial South Africa, the representation of interracial desire in literature and art has reflected political discourses of race relations and this has continued in cinema. This desire becomes a political issue because 'the intersection of various historical strands of political struggle put sexuality in the political limelight' (Steyn 2009:14). Where physical desire is supposedly a natural and private experience, 'these natural phenomena become the focus for rigorous social, political and moral regulation' (Steyn 2009:7). From the union of South Africa in 1910 to post-apartheid South Africa, the cinematic representation of interracial desire has been utilized as a tool to further political agendas under the mandates of national cinema. The representation has been utilized to uphold segregationist policies as with *Katrina* which depicts the relationship between Katrina and Alex as a warning against contravening apartheid laws such as the Immorality Act which made interracial desire illegal. From the 1970s, a wave of filmmakers depicted interracial desire in protest against these same segregationist laws. Post-apartheid, films such as *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* promoted the ANC

government's policy of racial reconciliation by celebrating South Africa's multiculturalism and the image of the rainbow nation. Although these films have contradicting intentions with regard to their cinematic representation of interracial desire, they are all a response to politics during and post-apartheid.

These public discourses on interracial desire were and remain 'imbued with notions of hierarchy, race, gender and morality' (Steyn 2009:55). These factors restrict the cinematic representation of interracial desire as they do not posit an encounter of interracial desire itself in the nationalist imagining. Rather, they provide representations which merely speak back to race politics as opposed to an exploration of interracial desire. My intervention destabilizes this utilization of interracial desire as a political vehicle by privileging private discourses of interracial desire. Through privileging the private, one is able to present an articulation of interracial desire itself thereby normalizing interracial desire. This attempt to normalize interracial desire hopefully lends itself to discovering unique and nuanced cinematic representations in South Africa. This challenges and seeks to renegotiate the mandates of national cinema so that it reflects the experience of different subjects and not the national identity constructed by the state.

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