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Brides, really fake virgins, Caster, 'Kwezi", The blade runner and 100% Zulu boy : reading the sexuality of post /apartheid cultural politics.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis throws into relief the nomadic meshings of sexualities with post/apartheid cultural politics. It explores how, why and with what effects sexualities and post/apartheid nationhood have been imbricated in signal events and phenomena. Terms used to construct the thesis' title each allude to significant events and processes through which assemblages of nationhood, sexualities, gender and race are worked on/with in particular ways. I propose that these events form a prism through which we are able to see refracted how a race-gender-sexuality complex becomes a pivotal mechanism through which post/apartheid subjectivities, embodiments, nationhood and sovereignty are being constructed and contested. I conclude that the events under discussion index how sexuality is both a site of political contestation; and, a central and crucial component of post/apartheid nationhood. That it is a 'machinic assemblage', which conditions and constitutes a particular field of the political including a popular consciousness of the post/apartheid body politic and sovereignty.

Presenting qualitative analysis that reflects on the rhetorical structures evident within the nationscapes under discussion, I analyse and make reference to a substantial sample of media representations of, and discourses about, each of the scenes evaluated across the thesis. To this end, I focalise what Lauren Berlant has termed, the 'National Symbolic'; an imaginary, chimerical and affect-laden screen projection through which citizens venture to 'grasp the nation in its totality'.

This interdisciplinary project both draws on and expands the South African, Feminist and Queer Studies Fields and is influenced by what Judith Butler calls the 'New Gender Politics'. I achieve this by bringing diverse critical perspectives into a discursive exchange with emerging bodies of scholarship concerned with questions of gender, sexualities, dis/ability and race in the South African context. I introduce novel, or previously untapped, theoretical repertoires to pursue unexplored interpretive horizons that generate new discourses about post/apartheid sexuality and politics. In doing so, I analyse a range of topics including: the state's management of contemporary virginity practices and its abstinence messaging; popular anti-polygamy discourse; and, critical intersex and dis/ability politics, which the available scholarship has not addressed.

Although President Jacob Zuma is not the subject of this inquiry, each chapter examines events and developments that are both explicitly, and more implicitly, associated with his presidency. These events have unfolded during a later period of the post/apartheid dispensation; sometimes called the post post/apartheid period. I have written about a time that marked a conservative twist in the transition, which is not imagined as a teleological process. This is a perplexing time of uneven shifts where old things seem to be hardening even as they are simultaneously thinning or leaking away while new things are emerging in unpredictable rhythms and forms.