THE LIVING DEAD GIRL: A PERFORMANCE ART EXPLORATION OF POOR/WORKING CLASS WOMEN OF COLOUR AS SITES OF VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA

By

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DECLARATION

I,………………………………………………………………………….., declare that

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2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

3. This dissertation does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

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Dr. Miranda Young-Jahangeer

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led study (Barrett, 2007; Candy, 2006; Little, 2011) seeks to investigate the status of poor/working class women of colour as sites of violence in contemporary South Africa. My research objectives are explored through practice and the methodological processes I use engage elements of performance theory and reflexive practice (Shaw, 2010). Using the medium of performance art, I critically engage with the sexist and racist gender politics which create conditions of abuse and violence for women of colour.

This study also investigates how feminist performance practices in the works of South African women theatre and performance artists, signals an attempt to confront and deconstruct oppressive structures, which render women as invisible. The performed theory explores the processes which socialise women of colour into objects of sexual, physical, emotional and economic violence.

The methodological processes in this study are drawn from feminist performance art (Forte, 1988, 1992) and performative autoethnography (Jones, 2005; Spry, 2011). These creative methods offer strategies which add a reflexive and autobiographical element to the written component of the study. The creative practice plays a significant role in examining the interaction of race, class and sex as factors contributing to violence against women of colour in contemporary South Africa.

The creative output was further used to establish spaces which diversify representations of women of colour and create opportunities for women to resist racist and sexist constructions of identity and the body by establishing more complex and self-authored formations of self.

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INTRODUCTION

More than three years ago, I performed my experience of silence and my battle with self-acceptance to an audience that consisted of my university peers, staff and other public. While working towards the performance I was intimidated by others encountering my personal politics as well as my perspective on how I had been socialised as a young woman of colour in South Africa.

Women of colour live through the production of distance and silence, experiencing marginalisation and objectification through engendered processes in South Africa. Unequal power relations continue to oppress women of colour in post-apartheid South Africa, in the form of physical, sexual, economic[1] and emotional violence. This particular group of women[2] are subject to "deeply entrenched gender hierarchies" within their communities (Hassim, 2006:25) and must manage their households with little or no healthcare and low income (Gqola, 2007; Hassim, 2006).

When I began my first year as a Masters student I considered myself to be dedicated to the feminist cause, but was uncomfortable that my position as a young academic would in any way create obstacles in exploring interventions which might encourage women of colour to interrogate the processes which render them invisible. Stacey Holman Jones (2005) writes about this crisis in *Authoethnography: Making the Personal Political*. I encountered Jones' text at a time when I was trying to confront the racist and sexist treatment of women of colour and imagine them in contemporary South Africa.

A feminist reading of Jones' text raises significant questions regarding how we come to acquire knowledge; produce culture and see ourselves in relation to others. After reading this and participating in developing and performing my own personal narrative, I began to view the creation of self-narratives as a reflexive process enabling the individual to understand aspects of their lived experience under the influence of social and historical factors. Shireen Hassim (2006) maps the achievements and difficulties faced by women of colour in establishing their presence and agency in the fight for liberation that was largely male dominated in its organisation and resistance. Hassim's study also reflects moments of

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[1] These women are subject to economic difficulties which include rising prices in food, poor service delivery in their communities and low wages which affect the maintenance of their households (Gqola, 2007).
[2] This study acknowledges that abuse of women cuts across race and class but will focus specifically on poor/working class women of colour as they are most susceptible to the conditions presented above (Gqola, 2007).

achievement for women of colour during the establishment of the women's movement and resistance groups under the leadership of women. The sometimes changeable nature of the women's movement in South Africa is well documented but it is worth noting that the collective and political organisation of women, particularly those living in rural areas, constituted the very notion of achieving subjectivity by establishing a form of resistance that problematized the role of women in a male dominated fight for liberation. Women of colour not only took a stance against the apartheid government but also interrogated their status as poor and working class women, a status which is associated with being without any degree of agency.

I recall these events in South Africa's history because they foreground the lived experiences of women and was instrumental in uncovering gender inequalities that women of colour came to interrogate both socially and through performance. Black American Feminist bell hooks (2000:1) defines feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression". hooks (2000:1) further suggests that it is "systematic institutionalised sexism" which is the primary reason for the oppression of women and that in order for women to understand their construction as 'other' they must critically interrogate those structures which exploit and abuse them.

Feminist academic Lliane Loots (1997) reflects similar sentiments in her gendered critique of Protest Theatre in South Africa, observing that Protest Theatre came to situate its primary concern with issue of racism. She notes that women staging and performing in plays during this period emphasised "the individual stories of women's lives" (2007:145), personalising their lived experiences by engaging in how factors of race, class and gender affects the status of women of colour. Gcina Mhlope, author of *Have You Seen Zandile?* (1998), has produced performance works which use forms of storytelling and poetry. This use of 'languages' or forms (common to the artistic work of women of colour) reflect the rise of one women authored shows in feminist theatre where women of colour occupy a subject position and are responsible for the depiction of their own experiences (Case, 2008).

hooks' assertion that contemporary feminism focuses on enhancing the "personal power" (2000:111) of women finds resonance in feminist performance art and autobiographical performance narratives. Jeanie Forte (1992) observes that the foregrounding of gender issues in patriarchal societies is practiced as a form of deconstruction in feminist performance art. M. Heather Carver (1998) similarly notes that women in performance art have demonstrated

a particular interest in marginalised voices by developing performance narratives which speak to the lived experiences of women. Concepts including subjectivity, embodiment and agency are key focus areas in feminist theatre practice and reflect a contemporary feminist concern with power relations within patriarchal structures.

As gender inequality and gender-based violence continues to have adverse effects on transformation and empowerment particularly for poor[3] and working class women of colour (Hassim, 2006) performance narrative as a mode of inquiry presents the opportunity to situate the experiences of women within the context of cultural production in South Africa. In the context of a still male dominated political, social and cultural structure that privileges gendered identities, the application of autobiographical narratives realised through performance has the potential to articulate more complex representations of women's selfhood. Shereen Pandit's narrative accounts (2010) of women's encounters of abuse at the hands of male comrades further complicates the role of women as subservient supporters of politicized men in the struggle critiqued in Hassim's study. These accounts place women in a position where they may present themselves in a context which obstructed the visibility of marginalised women's voices.

As a methodological process of inquiry, narrative texts inspire an understanding of how marginalised voices may become visible and may constitute a significant contribution to the generation of theories surrounding social, gender and performance studies. In order to reduce the distance with which marginalised voices are viewed, the narrative texts are then realised through performance. The body in performance creates a sense of immediacy, allowing the audience to see and understand women in performance in the context of their abuse or oppressive conditions. Through the medium of Feminist Performance Art, the narrative texts present the potential for marginalised voices to experience a sense of agency by critically engaging with the racist and sexist structures that has come to define their experience as women.

The research process which begins to emerge is one in which traditional methods of inquiry shift, giving way to processes in which the researcher engages with the subject/s under study

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[3] The use of the term refers to economically disadvantaged people whose collective income sets up a number of social and financial obstacles in an exploitative system that creates inequality and difference in access to transformative processes (hooks, 1994). My use of the term is not to invoke a paternalistic attempt to position the subjects of this study as 'Other'. It is neither my intention to ascribe discriminatory qualities that would marginalise the people in my study or to conceal the diversity that accompanies 'marginalised voices'. Class in relation to gender is integral to the discussion of how existing power structures position women of colour within reductive categorisations in opposition to the ruling class (hooks, 1994).

in a manner which prioritises the performance narrative as central to the outcomes of the study. For the feminist researcher in particular, Virginie Magnat (2011:213) observes that engagements with "alternative research methodologies which foreground embodiment, [and] lived experience" are essential to the outcomes of the study. As my research explores and interrogates the key concepts of my study through practice, it is constituted as a Practice-led research project. In my study, the performance narratives position lived experiences as essential to presenting subjectivity and is prioritised as central to the outcomes of the study.

Chapter one will set up the feminist framework of the study by exploring the investigation of these key concepts in feminist theatre practice and more specifically within the practice of South Africa women theatre/performance artists whose works embody a reflexive and autobiographical nature. The application of feminist theory in performance provides a platform to critically analyse the complex nature and diversity that accompanies dissenting voices that are being made visible.

In Chapter two I explore the reflexive methodological processes that characterise my Practice-led research driven study. Falling under the Practice as Research paradigm, Practice-led research follows "an interactive process shaped by our personal histories, gender, social class, biography, ethnicity and race" (Stewart, 2007:128). I introduce autoethnography and performance art as providing methodological processes which speak to the feminist politics identified in Chapter one. This study further consists of a creative and theoretical component, each speaking to and informing each other. It is suggested that the reader view the recording of the creative component before embarking on the dissemination of the theory.

Chapter three focuses on the theoretical discussion of the historical construction of women of colour as sites of violence and will argue that violence against women of colour can be explained through factors of race, class and gender. I will do so by attempting to explore and make visible the social and cultural processes that allow for the oppression and abuse of women of colour. This discussion will reveal how colonial discourse was inscribed upon the body, "upon which colonial fears and anxieties regarding the nature of the sexualised black other could be projected and fixed" (Meyerov, 2006:40). I will further explore the oppression of women of colour by examining the organisation of women's groups under the apartheid government. Within the context of the National Liberation Movement, this discussion can shed light on the notion of complicity and autonomy as being important factors affecting the empowerment of women.

In Chapter four I engage in an analysis with the creative component of my research, *The Living Dead Girl* held at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in August 2013. In an analysis of this feminist performance art piece I explore how autuoethnographic texts in performance interrogate the naturalisation of racist and sexist constructions assigned to women of colour. I also use this project to justify the potential of autobiographical/self-authored narrative in performance as a means of achieving subjectivity. In conclusion this study will demonstrate how feminist politics and performance practice offers a number of strategies in which women of colour can occupy positions of subjecthood which offer more representations of their identity based not on gendered processes but on a progressive politics that acknowledge diversity, complexity and multiple ways of being.

CHAPTER ONE: FEMINIST THEATRE IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.1 A PERSONAL POLITICS

Chapter one will set up an appropriate theoretical framework in the form of a feminist critique by reviewing literature and feminist theatre practices globally and in South Africa. A feminist reading of the performance works and practices of the artists featured in this study will be explored in order to perceive the impact of gender based violence and the interventions by women of colour against oppressive structures. This will further make visible the development of strategies used to deconstruct and challenge hierarchal systems of oppression by women of colour in post-apartheid South Africa.

These artistic works have been selected because the performance processes/practices offer strategies through which to understand the key concepts in this study. The feminist principles evident in the work of the South African women mentioned in Chapter one will be applied in tandem with key concepts to an analysis of *The Living Dead Girl* (2013) in Chapter four, and signify the Practice-based nature of the study as a whole.

The artists in this study have, in their practice, committed to creating a space in which oppression and gender identity are problematized and understood in their own social and political context. The performances and texts under the lens of this chapter speak to the experiences of racism, physical and emotional violence and discrimination experienced by the authors and generally by women of colour in South Africa. The stories however, also speak of resistance and are instrumental in re-evaluating identity and advocating empowerment for women.

During the apartheid era the accomplishments and struggles of women in theatre often went undocumented, and were subject to the presence of discrimination in a social system which was complicit in perpetuating gender inequality (Daymond, 1996; Hassim, 2006). Fatima Dike and Gcina Mhlope had, in their pursuit as theatre makers, experienced the constraints of producing work in a male-dominated and racist apartheid-era. Performance artist Tracey Rose (who is featured later in Chapter one) adds another dimension to this study as featuring her performances of *Span I* and *Span II* (1997), and *Ongetiteld* (1996) reflects the diversity and evolution in performance practice and style in post-apartheid South Africa. While focus is placed primarily on the work of Rose, Reshma Chhiba and Donna Kukama are included in this discussion regarding performance artists working in post-apartheid South Africa. This is

in the hopes of situating the artists in a context in which the prevailing conditions influencing the presence of feminist aesthetics become apparent.

1.2 FEMINIST POLITICS AND WOMEN OF COLOUR IN SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

The emergence of Feminism as a social movement in the 1960s signalled a critical response to male-dominated and hierarchal social systems in an approach that Fortier (2001:70) describes as addressing the "struggle against the oppression of women as women". In the context of a post-apartheid South Africa, however, the oppression of women (and more specifically women of colour) cannot be understood within the broad spectrum of the category 'woman' and must be considered within a wider set of dynamics at play (Hassim, 2006). During the 1970s feminist researchers including Sue-Ellen Case (2008) and bell hooks (1981, 1994, 2000) posited that theorizing around the experiences of women of colour has to be done in reference to the social, political and economic organisation of their lives. A revisionist approach to the belief that the oppression of women was based solely on male domination revealed that the feminist movement of the 1960s expressed "insensitivity to issues of ethnic oppression" (hooks, 2000:3).

During this time the movement was composed primarily of white feminists, and largely focused on gaining equality with men in the workplace (Case, 2008; hooks, 2000). hooks problematizes this period of the feminist movement because it did not mark an attempt to seriously interrogate existing structures in the workplace. Case (2008) observes that it was during the 1980s that the feminist movement addressed the limitations within its objectives as it had earlier excluded women of colour who were subject to the interaction of race class and gender discrimination. This position meant that the sex, class and race politics that exploited women of colour were not confronted. Feminist thinker bell hooks prioritised the development of a feminist politics that addressed the socialisation and institutionalisation of violence and oppression of women, especially those who were materially disadvantaged. The growing visibility of women of colour in a feminist dialogue has steadily encouraged non-hierarchal strategies of engagement with women of colour.

Prior to these developments in the field of feminist enquiry, feminism and its ideological and critical influence on theatre practice has historically been criticised for promoting the non-inclusive systems it has challenged. In *Feminism and Theatre* Case adopts a critical stance on the gaps identified in feminist theatre by arguing for the development of "critical frameworks

appropriate for feminist analysis" (Aston in Case, 2008:x) and to theorise feminist theatre within practice.

In the introduction to my study I positioned hooks' definition of feminism as an important one. Largely hailed for reinvigorating the feminist movement with her essays on the systematic devaluation of women of colour, hooks' position on the aims of the contemporary feminist movement are similarly expressed by Hassim (2006) who asserts that within the context of a post-apartheid South Africa (where sexist power relations still exist both socially and at an institutional level) the exploitation of women of colour must be interrogated within a wider set of dynamics at play.

Loots (1997:145) observes that under increasing racial discrimination from the apartheid government and "patriarchal oppression of women" in protest theatre, women of colour complicated their subordinate positions by actively performing their "gendered concerns" (Loots, 1997:145). Theatre created and performed by women in South Africa plays a significant role in prioritising issues that affect poor and working class women of colour who experience alarmingly high levels of gender-based violence and are subject to a history of secondary concern (Gqola, 2007; Hassim, 2006).

Fatima Dike and Gcina Mhlope, who are both women of colour and self-taught playwrights, have produced work expressing a concern towards the absence of autonomy, and the oppression of women that needs to be dissected and understood within a specific set of social, cultural, historical and economic circumstances[4]. hooks (2000:4) further argues against the achievement of gender equality within an already "existing system" of sexism and exploitation, implying that women must understand how their identities are constructed within sexist structures. Mhlope (in Perkins, 1998:81) takes a similar stance on women exercising their right to selfhood stating: "If I can write about masses I can also write about me. I'm one of the masses".

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[4] A concern with issues pertaining to the struggles faced by poor/working class women of colour, including emotional, sexual, economic and physical violence are evident in the work of Dike and Mhlope.

Fatima Dike (in Perkins, 1998:1) provides the context in which many South African women of colour in art were working within by stating:

> South African women do things, but very little is known about us. Even during the era of protest theatre, most of the plays produced were by men and about men in the struggle. One of my many pains that I've had to live with was the fact that a lot of these women were the ones left behind by men who had to go into exile, to prison at Robben Island or were dead. So who do you think was keeping this country going? It was us!

The concern with gender issues in relation to race and class dynamics in their work begins to share commonalities with the contemporary feminist movement's focus on women and subjecthood.

In order that my study gauges the specific concerns of feminist theatre in South Africa, Chapter One will engage in the performance works and practices of women who use theatre and performance as a means to address and ameliorate gender-based violence and the oppression of women (Barrios, 2012). This study acknowledges that the women in theatre identified in the discussion do not all readily identify as feminists or as producing works with an explicit feminist agenda. It is further acknowledged that the ideology of feminism in a South African context has experienced difficulty in 'taking off' as it has been perceived to ignore race, class and cultural hierarchies in relation to gender violence. hooks (2000) observes that the presence of materially privileged white women fighting for issues in an already oppressive system appeared to perpetuate exploitative structures which affected mostly black working class people. This image of feminist politics perpetuated by sexist appropriation of feminist ideology provided a somewhat limited perspective of the 1960s 'sisterhood' concept of feminism (hooks, 2000). In a South African context the feminist movement which was associate with white dominance would not easily resonate with a large population of poor/working class black men and women.

1.2.1 A Gendered Analysis of Theatre in apartheid South Africa

The politics of Popular Theatre and Protest Theatre in South Africa and the emergence of a so called "black feminism"[5] (Barrios, 2012:2) will be presented as key historical moments which have had an impact on the development and presence of feminist theatre in South Africa. Though current publications focus on the emergence of women of colour in South Africa and their work, fewer attempt to explore the presence of feminist concerns within their theatre practice and work. This ambit is highly significant as the gender inequality reflected

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[5] In order that I avoid making an essentialist definition of feminism (as there are many) based on difference, I often make reference to the phrase or term: 'Visionary feminism' inspired by hooks (2000).

through these events reveals the construction and institutionalisation of gendered structures. Framed by feminist theory and criticism (hooks, 1981, 1994, 2000; Hassim, 2006; Gqola, 2007, 2009) the interaction of race, class and gender during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa will be examined more closely in Chapter three. This will further inform a feminist analysis of the play I wrote and directed for this study entitled *The Living Dead Girl*.

The discussion above provides the impetus for an analysis of how the presence of a feminist agenda in the theatre of the 1970s and 80s was displaced and of secondary concern to the politicised race narrative in the male-dominated Freedom Struggle against the apartheid government in South Africa. The constraints faced in the development of a feminist theatre practice in South Africa are inextricably linked to a predominantly male mode of organization which was radical in its response to the "white racist hegemony" (Kerr, 1995:215) of apartheid in the 1970s and 80s. Storylines directly relating to the concerns of women were displaced as Popular Theatre which perpetuated the "social and cultural exclusion" (Aston in Case, 2008:xvii).

During the 1950s and 60s Popular Theatre featured music and dance styles performed by black artists under the management of white-owned companies (Kerr, 1995; Perkins, 1998). Under this form of representation, black performers lacked a degree of autonomy and performed storylines which patronised and exacerbated stereotypical images of black townships and people. Though musical productions (produced by white-owned businesses) including *King Kong* (1959) were commercially successful, Kerr (1995:217) argues that this popular form of entertainment "projected the stereotype of the 'happy and lively rural African born with an irrepressible sense of rhythm'". A critical feminist reading of such a practice reveals how the exploitative nature of producing plays for commercial gain provided limited accessibility to theatre roles which spoke to the experiences of poor and working class women of colour (Perkins, 1998).

In response to disputes over autonomy, black artists, including Gibson Kente, produced theatre productions independent of white-owned companies, appealing to the working class through the advocacy of solidarity and unity among black South Africans (Kerr, 1995). The rise of the Black Consciousness Movement[6] in the late 60s and early 70s demanded a more

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[6] Established as a political response to the continual oppression and frustration of black people under the apartheid government during the 1970s, the Black Consciousness Movement was highly influenced by the philosophical standpoints of African theorists and black American advocators of liberation for black people. The

critical response from theatre makers who in turn had to appeal to the more politically minded black South African. The increasingly militant and radicalised nature of plays signalled a commitment to addressing and resisting the racist ideology of apartheid, and the creation of spaces in which black South Africans were encouraged to "reassert their pride and identity" (Kerr, 1995:223).

The promotion of the Black Consciousness ideology, championed by black activists including Steve Bantu Biko (Mangcu, 2013) and the rejection of stereotypical representations of black South Africans, signals a resistance (in the struggle) towards the practices of white-owned businesses and the "ideological prerogatives of white state nationalism" (Loots, 1997:143). Protest Theatre of the 1980s in South Africa had established itself as a form of resistance against the racist apartheid government (Loots, 1997). Loots cites plays such as *The Hungry Earth* (1972) as examples of Protest plays which sought to address unequal power relations experienced by marginalised black people. Protest Theatre would come to define itself against the racist rhetoric of apartheid and, as Loots (1997), argues would focus on its victimisation of working class black men.

The development of feminist theatre was further complicated by the fervency with which practice in theatre was centred on race. Interviewed in a series of discussions spanning from 1991-1994 with Dennis Walder (1999), Mhlope spoke to the absence of women's issues in the political and performance arenas (both dominated by male leaders and artists). She stated that she had been regarded with criticism for addressing issues affecting women, on a more personal level in works such as *Have You Seen Zandile?* rather than centring on the politically overt movement. Mhlope in Walder (1999:39) states "it wasn't marching and singing revolutionary songs and 'Amandla!' I took out the mob, and looked at how things affect us personally". The political atmosphere in South Africa meant that leaders and activists campaigning for freedom had influenced the dramatization of stories[7] focused on the experience of black working class males (Kerr, 1995). The mobilisation of marginalised people focused primarily on racism meant that voices of women in the struggle were contained within a political space which excluded their voices (Loots, 1997). Loots' gendered revision of protest theatre in South Africa reveals that women in theatre responded to this

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movement, which had a strong presence among black students, sought to encourage solidarity and active participation in challenging the oppression of black people (Hirschmann, 1990).
[7] Theatre groups influenced by the movement had further been linked to and had the support of political groups including SASO and the BPC (Black People's Convention) (Kerr, 1995).

expulsion by developing stories (which were intimate and personal portrayals of their lived experiences) which foregrounded gender issues with race and class.

This critical focus on apartheid continued throughout the 1980s under increasingly violent circumstances and pressure from the apartheid government until the release of Nelson Mandela and the legalisation of the ANC in 1990. The collapse of the apartheid government in the 1990s signalled that "It was no longer a time for generalized consciousness raising, but for grappling with a host of complex, localized political, economic, social and psychological problems" (Kerr, 1995:237) in a democratic South Africa. Critics including Bob Mooki had however vocalised the failure of theatre (during the struggle) to address social issues, as well as other aspects in the lives of black people, at community level (Kerr, 1995; Perkins, 1998). The presence of a more radical and highly politicised theatre practice in South Africa meant that women were overlooked in a context where the "majority of published plays in South Africa focus primarily on men" (Perkins, 1998:1).

This perceived lack of autonomy and visibility for women of colour was addressed in Kathy Perkins' *Black South African Women: An Anthology of Plays*, capturing the perspectives of black women playwrights on the status and role of women during the transition into a post-apartheid South Africa. Perkins' collection of plays and interviews speaks to the construction of subjectivity and the invisibility suffered by women of colour where black male-authored dramas centred "on the oppression of blacks by whites" (Perkins, 1998:2) during apartheid. The anthology also brings into perspective how women were able to gain more exposure, though had to address the same issues in a post-apartheid context.

1.3 A FEMINIST VOICE: WHO SPEAKS?

While the previous section has explored the constraints faced by women of colour in theatre during apartheid, this section will shift its focus towards the presence of a feminist politics with a diverse set of strategies in South African theatre and performance made by women of colour. This section will explore how the feminist movement struggled to situate itself in South Africa, and will discuss a feminist position suitably addressing the oppression of women in post-apartheid South Africa. The application of feminist theory to the practice of women in theatre will enable myself as the researcher to identify concerns that may be categorised as feminist.

In support of investigating how "the lived reality" (de Gay and Goodman, 2003:3) of women of colour is made visible in women authored works, the application of a feminist framework that is open to the diversity, and interaction of race, class and gender hierarchies that mediate the gender category of 'women' in South Africa is highly significant.

Feminist theory consists of different voices and positions, informing the feminist frameworks within which the process of performing issues affecting women may be theorised (Case, 2008; de Gay and Goodman, 2003). I acknowledge that there are common aims between the different feminist political positions; however, for the purposes of this study the presence of a feminist thinking which allows for the theorizing of performance practices of women of colour is preferred. Thematically, marginalisation of women and the search for alternative modes of representation feature strongly in these plays/performances (Goodman, 1993; Perkins, 1998). In accordance with the creation of feminist theatre spaces reflecting the images and experiences of women of colour in their context, it is necessary to reflect on the somewhat difficult encounter women of colour have had with feminist ideology.

In its earlier inception (during the 1960s), the feminist movement focused primarily on gender equality in the workplace and domestic sphere (Case, 2008; hooks, 2000). During the 1970s, demonstrations in the US and the UK against the oppression of women "in many different public spaces, from academic conferences and university demonstrations to street theatre protest" (Goodman, 1993:24) signalled a growing interest in developing a feminist politics. During this period the women's movement called to demonstrate against the oppression of women's rights and in turn influenced the development of feminism (Goodman, 1993). Feminist theatre performances responded to the call for social change adopted by the feminist movement, by developing alternative spaces where women challenged gender inequality (Goodman, 1993).

During the 1980s feminist academics began to develop feminist frameworks with which to analyse feminist theatre performances, as a result, igniting debate around the development of a distinctive set of standards by which to evaluate feminist theatre (Goodman, 1993). The critical focus and methods of analysis in feminist theory argues Case (2008) exhibited a bias towards the concerns of white feminists while advocating the notion of a 'universal sisterhood' which repeated the same gender, race and class injustices experienced by women of colour. Mhlope (in Walder, 1999:36), who did not have formal training in theatre, lamented this disjuncture by arguing that universities were "very white oriented" and that this

environment offered "the type of training that goes with nothing from your culture that is honoured".

The weaknesses within feminist theory developed by white academics during the 60s in the West revealed a lack of concern and awareness towards women of colour and in the context in which their work was developed (Case, 2008; hooks, 2000; Goodman, 1993). It can be argued that women of colour in South Africa had, as a result, experienced difficulty in identifying with the feminist movement which was assumed to be "an upper-middle-class white women's movement" (Case, 2008:97).

Regarding her reflection of feminist ideology in South Africa, Desiree Lewis (1996:92) recalls the 1991 conference on Women and Gender (held at the then University of Natal in South Africa) as an example of the feminist movement's perceived lack of "sensitivity to ways in which identities like race and class overlap with gendered experience". Lewis argues that the event was marred by disagreements and a failure to create a space in which experiences of difference among all women were addressed. White middle-class academics have been accused of 'othering' poor and working class women of colour by relying on their given image and status as 'other' for knowledge production. Academic researcher Pumla Dineo Gqola (2007:11) similarly warns against the sanctioning and reproduction of "complicit femininities", arguing that the institutionalisation and socialisation of abuse against women will reinforce patriarchal structures which make women vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse.

Feminist academics occupying positions of privilege have further been accused of focusing solely on the category of gender, problematizing the formation of feminist theory which is adequately able to occupy discussion on subjectivity in South Africa (Lewis, 1996). It can be argued, that in the context of a post-apartheid South Africa, the 'category' of women cannot be understood or theorised without race, class and gender discourse (Lewis, 1996). While white middle-class feminists (during the liberation movement) focused their efforts on gender equality in the workplace and home, there was a failure to acknowledge that a very different set of interlinking hierarchies shape experiences of the oppression of women of colour in South Africa (hooks, 2000; Lewis, 1996). Poor and working class women of colour experience a number of economic and social constraints (including low income employment) which create a set of dynamics that make them vulnerable to violence and abuse operating within patriarchal and sexist structures (Cock and Fakier, 2009).

To prescribe specific models of feminine behaviour or women's experiences is problematic in a South African context where many poor and working class women of colour who are "often depended upon as breadwinners" (Lewis, 1996:97) are subject to the conditions above. To ignore these conditions would be to continue to suppress and marginalise poor and working class women of colour. The feminist framework in my study prioritises the interlinking of sex, class and race politics which exploit women of colour (hooks, 2000) in order to identify the concerns of a feminist theatre in post-apartheid South Africa.

hooks (2000:116) offers that "There is no one path to feminism. Individuals from diverse backgrounds need feminist theory that speaks directly to their lives." A campaigner for visionary feminist thinking, hooks (1981, 1994, 2000) has argued for a renewal in the feminist movement by developing interventions and strategies in feminist theory that are critical of the subordination of poor and working class women of colour, not only within social structures, but within the movement itself (hooks, 2000).

Along with other black American feminist writers, including Audre Lorde, hooks developed a visionary feminist theory which argued that gender was not the sole factor determining the status of women, and that the movement had to strive towards allowing women of colour to occupy positions of subjectivity without imposing on or devaluing their experiences (Aston, 1995; Barrios, 2012; hooks, 1981, 2000; Maqagi, 1996; Mohanty, 1991). Of a renewed feminist vision, hooks (2000:117) asserts "To ensure the continued relevance of feminist movement in our lives visionary feminist theory must be constantly made and re-made so that it addresses us where we live, in our present". I will depart from these thoughts above in prioritising and analysing the specific material and socio-political conditions that appear in the works in my study.

While I have attempted to begin to identify an appropriate feminist framework with which to locate feminist concerns in the plays and practices of women of colour in theatre, I caution against providing a definitive position, or as Case (2008:96) argues, ghettoising "these women and their work as they have been ghettoised traditionally". I have, instead, thus far attempted to set up a feminist framework which addresses the practices and plays of women of colour in South Africa, in pursuit of setting up a relationship between feminist politics and women of colour in theatre. As this notion will lead to the identification of a feminist framework with which to analyse the key concepts in the study, I will pursue a feminist analysis alongside the socio-political climate during South Africa's transition into a

democracy. A gendered analysis of theatre in the context of apartheid South Africa reveals women of colour created a form of resistance that uncovered and interrogated the lived experiences of women who were subject to the interaction of race and gender. This approach reveals a form of feminist theatre practice which reflects more complex representations of subjectivity (Loots, 1997). South African 'political' theatre had, in the struggle for liberation, focused primarily on producing plays about the oppression of black people under the apartheid government. Given the political circumstances at the time, black women and their life experiences had been under-represented in the narratives written by the majority of male playwrights who had greater access to being published and to having their work staged (Perkins, 1998). The transition into a democracy was crucial for women of colour in theatre as these women, many of whom were self-taught writers, actively responded by producing plays that represented the material conditions that women of colour faced. The plays and poetry performances that they had written "were informed by the idea that the personal is political - or at least that the personal is important and significant and worthy of representation on stage and in performance" (de Gay and Goodman, 2003:4).

The performance works and practices in the sections to follow articulate a feminist stance on the oppression of women of colour and also reflect how these works depict an interaction between race, class and gender in determining the status of women of colour in post-apartheid South Africa. This study has thus far acknowledged that the feminist movement consists of a variety of positions and 'languages' and has positioned a feminist framework that will be identified as sharing common concerns with those of women of colour in South African theatre (Agbebiyi, 2003; hooks, 2000).

Jane de Gay and Lizbeth Goodman (2003:1) describe theatre as "a place and space in which we can dream such large dreams and attempt to realise them which is one reason why women whose energies are often blocked in other areas of life and forms of expression will turn to the theatre". South Africa's transition from the collapse of the apartheid system into a period of democracy reflected a shift from the radicalised nature of theatre to the more visible presence of women of colour who actively sought to create spaces that were concretely aware of and sensitive to the social and cultural contexts behind the violence and abuse of women (Aronson, 2012; de Gay and Goodman, 2003).

The increased visibility of work by women of colour demonstrated that women in theatre had taken action by representing themselves, their work and the creation of a space in which

women oppressed by violence and abuse could explore a "personal sense of agency and identity" (de Gay and Goodman, 2003:1). During this period more exposure and visibility had been given to women in the theatre who created "their own 'spaces' to write their materially conditioned histories of oppression into theatrical contexts" (Aston, 1995:80).

1.4 THE PRESENCE OF A PERSONAL POLITICS: THE WORKS OF SOUTH AFRICAN FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS AND ARTISTS

The subsections to follow will feature women in theatre whose works explore how women of colour are constructed as sites of violence, and how this categorisation may be symbolic of oppressive structures of race, class and gender.

1.4.1 Gcina Mhlope

Gcina Mhlope, who wrote *My Dear Madame* (1981) in a public toilet, had broken the barriers of silence and invisibility experienced by black women in theatre by writing plays centring "around people more than the movements" (Mhlope in Walder, 1999:38). Mhlope's *Have You Seen Zandile?* (1998) was written as a personal story (heavily influenced by her own childhood) about a young girl, her relationship with her grandmother and having to mediate a world in which her 'blackness' signifies a lack of privilege (Mhlope in Walder, 1999). Mhlope's play marked a departure from the radicalised dramas (often featuring revolutionary songs) authored by black male writers, instead exploring the use of praise poetry[8] and story-telling (in multiple languages), both of which are markedly different forms from traditional Western dramas (Goodman, 1999; Perkins, 1998).

Subscribers to forms of writing privileged in Western literature are critical of the form and structures of praise poetry which is seen "as inferior- something one associates with an illiterate uncivilized society" (Kaschula, 1997:174). In *The Xhosa imbongi as trickster* (2010), Patrick McAllister and Jeff Opland however provide a far more in depth and complex imagining of a Xhosa praise poet (*imbongi*) whose performance is characterised by being loaded with social commentary and criticism which encourage the audience to consider how they have been moulded by and continue to be moulded by their social and cultural context. The imbongi (traditionally a position occupied by a man) reflected on the pride and history of families and "confirmed a sense of identity in his audiences as members of a chiefdom or nation; he upheld praiseworthy virtues and decried behaviour detrimental to society"

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[8] Praise poems are solo narratives traditionally performed by Zulu and Xhosa intsomi (Perkins, 1998).

(McAllister and Opland, 2010:157). Mhlope's use of the form arguably signals her presence as a social commentator, similarly exploring black identity in the context of the apartheid system attempting to suppress indigenous culture and identity.

The imbongi further occupied a position of status in being able to honour the qualities of the chief (McAllister and Opland, 2010). In *Praise to Our Mothers* (1989) Mhlope occupies a similar position of significance, empowering not only herself, but also the subject of her praise poem. Her use of the form challenges rigid gender roles both culturally and in performance. The poem was performed after Mhlope met with Nokukhanya Luthuli[9] (On The Issues Magazine, 2010). The poem which celebrates the role of women during apartheid was featured in *Women Writing Africa: The Southern Region, Volume 1* (2003). As an anthology, this was a significant publication featuring the voices of African women, across literary styles including praise poetry. This publication further provided a more detailed and personal account of each writer within the context of their experiences of colonial legacy and other issues encountered by women of colour (The Feminist Press, 2015).

Mhlope's exploration of 'personal struggles' signals the creation of a space in which women of colour are able to examine the social and personal issues through characters who reflect their specific reality, diversity and difference. Mhlope (in Walder 1999:39) is quoted as saying "Human relations are on par with the political relations we give so much priority to". *Have You Seen Zandile?* was not conceptualised as a result of feminist theoretical frameworks and neither was it influenced by women's organisations or coalition groups in South Africa. It is however political in the sense that it features a woman's story on a personal level and encourages empowerment and critical thinking (Goodman, 1993). Based on these attributes, the play, in this study, is identified as displaying a feminist sensibility.

During her year as the resident director in the Market Theatre (1989/90), Mhlope experienced resistance towards her approach to scripting and directing. While at the Market Theatre, Mhlope had prioritised an approach to telling far more intimate stories in the form of individual people rather than producing politically overt plays. This approach was criticised for not personifying the spirit of the struggle in South Africa. Mhlope however remained intent on giving greater visibility to a woman's voice in theatre and performance which necessitated a sense of individual freedom in telling personal stories. Working within a

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[9] The wife of struggle icon Chief Albert Luthuli, Nokukhanya Luthuli featured as a prominent figure in the struggle against apartheid (On The Issues Magazine, 2010).

traditionally male-dominated arena (and racist South Africa) in which women's accomplishments were overlooked resulted in Mhlope's departure from the Market Theatre (Mhlope in Walder, 1999).

Mhlope returned to the form of storytelling, becoming self-employed and increasingly aware of the power in autonomy as an artist. Mhlope's practice as a theatre maker reflects not only the necessitating of creating action around social issues affecting women, but also occupying a position in which her work is produced on her own terms.

1.4.2 Fatima Dike

Playwright Fatima Dike who "is the first black South African woman to have her plays published in the post-Soweto era"[10] (Flockeman, 1999:18) similarly adopted an approach to creating theatre that spoke to community issues and emotional and economic violence against women in a personal way. Dike, whose plays include *The Sacrifice at Kreli* (1977), *The Glass House* (1979 and *So What's New?* (1991), was also working in the context of an oppressive and racist South Africa (Flockemann, 1999). Recalling her entrance into the world of theatre, Dike (in Flockeman, 1999) stated that she felt compelled to respond to the brutal rape and murder of a seven-year old township girl. Dike's own awareness of her being deeply affected by apartheid is further reflected in her concern for the deterioration of township life and family, and the limited opportunities that were available to black women in the 50s, 60s and 70s (Flockeman, 1999; Perkins, 1998). Dike, who had herself come out of the margins[11], had channelled her frustration and anger by using her position of marginality to criticise the racist, classist and sexist ideology affecting the transformation of black women in South Africa (Perkins, 1998).

1.4.3 *Have You Seen Zandile?* and *So What's New?*

So What's New? reflects "concerns about unequal access to the right to speak" (de Gay and Goodman, 2003:4) and economic empowerment and security by featuring women of colour who speak, sometimes crudely, of financial strain, sexuality, sexist discrimination and "economic self-sufficiency" (hooks, 2000:49). Regarding the issue of economic violence against women of colour in the play, Thandi (an adult woman who makes her income by selling drugs) tells schoolgirl Mercedes (Dike, 1998, Act 2, Scene 2, pg. 37): "You see, your

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[10] This refers to the period following the Soweto uprising on June 16, 1976 (Sithole and Ndlovu, 2004).
[11] Born in the township of Langa, she had herself experienced limitations in opportunities regarding career choices and in fostering her love for reading (Perkins, 1998).

mother and I had a problem finding work that paid well. So, she chose the high road and I chose the low road."

Expressing her desire for financial independency and stability, Thandi sells drugs rather than opting to work for a low income or poor labour conditions in the service sector. She further explains to Mercedes saying (Dike, 1998, Act 2, Scene 2, pg. 37): "I really don't know what to say. I can say I'll stop, but I can't because I have a spare wheel full of tablets which is going to help me pay my bills and buy a house maybe."

Present in Dike's play is a feminist politics of addressing the issue of women who do not enjoy class privilege and as a result struggle to maintain the financial and domestic areas of their lives. Dike does not adopt the militant stance present in the work of her male contemporaries and instead focuses on highly personal stories that not only feature black women but are critical of colluding with systems which perpetuate gender inequality.

Other women playwrights whose plays also focus on highly personal stories featuring the struggle and triumphs women of colour experience include Sindiwe Magona and Malika Ndlovu (Lueen Conning). Magona's one hander play, *House-Hunting Unlike Soweto* is an autobiographical piece marking the author's shift from an apartheid run South Africa to a number of endless possibilities but financial and cultural difficulties in America. Magona's move to the US did not offer instant liberation, instead it highlighted how life as a black woman under an apartheid government as a woman had alienated and stripped her of economic gains and basic necessities (Perkins, 1998). Struggling to adapt to a context which foregrounded how her status as a black woman in South Africa, had left her feeling unresolved in her personal sense of freedom and identity. Ndlovu's *A Coloured Place* included confessional style monologues which highlighted perceptions of coloured identity and heritage in post-apartheid South Africa (Perkins, 1998). Dike, Ndlovu and Magona's plays reflect a keen and critical awareness of their own socialisation as South African women.

Dike's focus reflects similarities to those demonstrated in the second wave of feminism which brought with it the notion that 'the personal is political'. Women in this period who had spoken out against issues affecting women were seen as breaking the silence on the status of women of colour as secondary citizens subject to domestic, economic and sexual violence. In "gendered terms" (de Gay and Goodman, 2003:3), women in *So What's New?* are presented as being critical of the ignorance towards issues affecting women of colour. Dike's

play further reflects something of hooks' visionary feminism through the young and optimistic character Mercedes. Only in school, Mercedes is mature beyond her years, cognisant of the racial violence and tension that permeates the lives of the women around her. Resisting her mother's attempts to prepare her for the hard life of a woman in South Africa, Mercedes instead focuses on confronting the injustices faced by black women in South Africa.

The play takes place in Mercedes' mother's household and features a group of women who are struggling to head households as single parents. The pressure on these women to survive in a male-dominated world means that they are forced to choose to abandon their dreams to maintain their homes and income. Mercedes' mother Dee expresses guilt and worry in raising her daughter in the absence of a father figure as a black woman in a racist and sexist South Africa. In this context, Dee does what she believes to be best in raising her daughter, discouraging her daughter from pursuing an active voice in the struggle and in her attaining her dreams. The dynamics in this household are complex as Dee, trying to protect her daughter, perpetuates the silence that accompanies marginalised voices. As the narrative progresses, Mercedes grows increasingly aware of the oppression and the limitations she will likely face as a young black woman.

Mercedes' thoughts on her life in South Africa reflect Dike's concern with transforming the sexist and racist discourse that came to define apartheid South Africa. Zandile, in Mhlope's *Have You Seen Zandile?*, similarly reflects Mercedes' awareness of her 'othering' and her stoicism in wanting to resist her mother Lulama's intention for her to be married off and committed to a life of hard labour as a wife. Zandile protests saying (Mhlope, 1998, Scene 8, pg. 92): "I'm not going to get married. I am very good at school".

Lulama's response to Zandile's unhappiness in the then Transkei reflects how "females were socialized to believe sexist thinking and values as males, the difference being simply that males benefited from sexism more than females and were, as a consequence, less likely to want to surrender patriarchal privilege" (hooks, 2000:7). Lulama in response to Zandile's protest says (Mhlope, 1998, Scene 8, pg. 92): "Life is different here. No time for rest-just work. If you learn that then you will make a good wife for Matshezi's son". Lulama, who has resentfully accepted that her dreams as a singer are unattainable attempts to convince Zandile into believing that she will need to submit to Matshezi's son as women in her context do not have an opportunity to perform in any duty other than being a wife and labourer.

hooks (2000:7) asserts: "Before women could change patriarchy we had to change ourselves, we had to raise our consciousness". Mercedes and Zandile embody each respective playwright's call to be aware of how the domination of women is expressed and maintained through social systems. It can thus be suggested that the works presented here fall within the ambit of interrogating the marginalisation of women and the deconstruction of women as sites of violence.

Mhlope's young Zandile is acutely aware of how her hopes and dreams will be tested against the reality faced by black women. With her imaginary friend, Bongi, Zandile imagines that as a white woman Bongi would have access to a wealthy lifestyle as well as the admiration from others for her beauty. This play also addresses the complex nature of gendered processes in homes where women are responsible for performing emotional and physical labour in order to maintain a social order in which men reign as asserters in the household (Cock and Fakier, 2009).

Zandile's grandmother, affectionately referred to as Gogo, observes how she must protect Zandile as neither her son nor Zandile's own mother would see her pursue an education. Zandile is taught by Gogo to value educational experiences and to actively pursue her dreams of a university education. After Zandile is kidnapped by her mother she is forced (as a result of her mother's own disappointment with her life) to confront the issue of how social reproduction within the homes of poor and working class black women create an environment in which women are responsible for emotional, physical and financial labour.

Lulama's resigned acceptance of her fate and her bitter disappointment at having been fired from her job as a singer for being pregnant (with Zandile) means that she has now fallen into the margins and is faced with financial insecurity and the fatigue of labour. The notion of women performing various tasks as a labour of love, as argued by Gqola (2007) exacerbates the socialisation of gendered violence and a complicity in enforcing binary oppositions which subordinate women (Cock and Fakier, 2009; Gqola, 2007; Morrell and Morrell, 2011). Zandile's fear that she will not have access to making independent choices should she marry Matshezi's son reflects how these conditions allow violence against women to flourish. hooks (2000) highlights the importance of consciousness-raising in communities with women vulnerable to exploitation, arguing that marginalised spaces are prone to conditions of social and economic struggle. Gqola (2007) similarly states that in these conditions, gender structures are reinforced with violence and abuse. As a voice of dissent in a partirachal

society, Zandile uncovers the "intimate wounds" (hooks, 2000:8) many women in these communities hide. *Have You Seen Zandile?* highlights the precarious position women of colour face in the gendered organisation of work and household tasks, which would seek to place them at the lower end of power relations.

Though Zandile and Mercedes often encounter grief, disappointment and fear in their personal journeys, both plays feature them as young women who are driven to become women free to express their desire for social change and realisation of their dreams. Though the women in *So What's New?* have complex relationships with each other, Dike does not shy aware from depicting their diversity and difference. Though their future is uncertain, their camaraderie and desire to survive at the end of the play signals an important achievement for women in theatre during apartheid. The possibility for transformation and empowerment for women also features strongly in Zandile's journey towards womanhood. Though she reaches the end of the play only to find that her beloved Gogo is now deceased, Zandile's quiet contemplation at the end of the play represents the possibility of reconciling and making peace with identity that women of colour are forced to suppress.

1.5 FEMINIST THEATRE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

The discussion below will explore the works produced by South African women artists in post-apartheid South Africa. I would like to argue that the artists whose work I feature below continue to connect their performance practices with a strong concern towards cultural production in South Africa. In this section of the study I will explore how the use of deconstructive performance strategies in Feminist Performance Art can be used to position women as subjects. The artists featured are among many artists whose works may feature feminist politics or characteristics in post-apartheid South Africa. I have however attempted to carefully include discussion around artists who make significant contributions to cultural production in South Africa and whose work I believe requires more theoretical engagement. An important implication for the future of feminist theatre/performance art is its engagement with women of colour beyond the interview format.

M. Heather Carver (2009) cites Carol Martin's *A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre and Performance: On and Beyond the Stage* (1996) as a valuable source of Feminist performance but cautions against its tendency to privilege and afford more theoretical discussions to well-known performance artists and less theoretical engagement with artists of colour. Carver however also mentions Rebecca Schneider's *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997) as

significant for its look at the body in performance art and its engagement with the artist's social and cultural contexts. Carver's critique on feminist performance theory is a reminder for the presence and development of feminist performance in South Africa. Her vision that "the future of feminist performance theory is in the intermingling of cultural studies and performance" (2009:398) sets up important platforms for how we can begin to envision the objectives of feminist performance in post-apartheid South Africa.

1.5.1 Performance Art: Contemporary Feminist Performance

The performative element of this MA falls within the ambit of feminist theatre, and draws largely from the form of performance art (Forte, 1992; Goldberg, 2004). This section will set up a context for which the performance style and reasoning behind performance art will be explored. The sections to follow will then feature a discussion on the selected works of Reshma Chibba (2013) and Donna Kukama (2009). The work and practice of performance artist Tracey Rose (1996, 1997) will be featured in a more detailed discussion to explore the presence of a feminist practice in her work. Rose's work is noted for the use of her body in performance to deconstruct the material conditions which shape it (Meyerov, 2006).

The practices of women artists (in this study) who have produced work during the apartheid era and during South Africa's first years into democracy have been found to explore social, economic and domestic concerns in relation to women of colour. These concerns similarly inform performance practices in the medium of feminist performance art. In her reflection of the development of feminism in relation to performance, Case (2001:146) states: "The social affixed itself to the theatrical event, affecting not only its interpretation but also its production". The practices of women performance artists, as suggested by Champagne (1990) and Case (2001:146) reflects a concern towards the disruption and deconstruction of "the socially disciplined body" and with the depiction of agency in highly personal performances.

Performance art originated as a performance medium with intentions to disrupt "accepted practices of knowledge acquisition and accumulation" (Forte, 1988:218) in the commercialized art world. It later developed a more social voice in being used as a medium to stage personal explorations of oppression and triumph, and to challenge (most often in an aggressive manner) the hierarchal systems which mediated women's experiences of their identities and their bodies (Champagne, 1990). Performance art can broadly be described as a medium that actively engages the context and history of a particular theme or subject in order to make visible the material conditions of oppression (Goldberg, 2004).

Women in performance art in the West used the form to confront issues relating to male dominance, physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence against women, and the status of women in art (Battista, 2011). Performance art was further used as a site in which female artists could experience a form of expression free from "working in historically male-dominated arenas of cultural production" (Mackenny, 2001:15). During the 1970s (a significant period in the West in which feminist political positions in theatre were being developed) performance artists including Carolee Schneeman[12] engaged the body as a site of performance using subversive and unconventional methods with which to challenge gender-based oppression and abuse.

Other performance artists however avoided the use of expression through nudity, engaging instead with "language or symbolic ritual as key elements in the live act" (Battista, 2011:5). The commonality among these varying positions was to employ strategies with which to challenge the construction of the status of women in social and artistic spheres, and to create alternative spaces in which the socially constructed individual could be deconstructed (Battista, 2011; Champagne, 1990). Various strategies employed included deconstructing perceptions of space and time in performance. Performance artists would, for example, perform in alternative spaces[13] including hotel rooms, kitchens or swimming pools (Champagne, 1990).

Locating spectators within a performance space that invokes the subject matter is significant to the political intentions of this study. The experience of performance art can also be characterised by participatory elements which work to confront audience or elicit certain responses "in the wider context of their lives outside of performance" (Forte, 1992:250). This is particularly important for this study as feminist theatre in South Africa is geared towards creating social change and awareness around the discrimination of women, particularly in a context where, given the levels of violence against women and children, South African society continues to sanction (in a mostly concealed manner) social behaviour and values that create gender-based violence (Barrios, 2012; Gqola, 2007).

While performance art did not feature strongly in apartheid South Africa, the medium now has a stronger presence, emerging as a platform in which South Africa artists use it "as a site

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[12] According to Battista (2011:5) artist Schneeman "believed the use of the body specifically that of the artist herself-elevated the female form from muse to master while exposing previously taboo topics".

[13] This signalled a critical stance towards the elitism in the art world which was not immediately accessible to the alternative practices of performance artists (Battista, 2011).

of gender resistance in the South African context" (Mackenny, 2001:15). In 2012, performance art had, for the first time, been included as a category in the National Arts Festival held annually in Grahamstown, South Africa (Khan, 2012). It is worth noting that contemporary performance artists in South Africa have had similar difficulties in establishing themselves as women in theatre did during apartheid. This could arguably stem from the fact that issues such as violence, high unemployment rates and poor service delivery are placed higher on the agenda than an art form whose meaning and style does not translate easily to South African audiences (McGroarty, 2013; Pather in Khan, 2012).

1.5.2 Performance artists in South Africa and the Deconstruction of women of colour as sites of violence

While the South African constitution is an aspirational document, which in theory reflects the transition of South Africa into a democracy, protecting its citizens from gender-based violence, violence has continued to permeate the country's social fabric "and play itself out along sharply gendered lines" (Gqola, 2007:113-114). These ongoing and residual issues are prominently featured in the works of South African performance and installation artists including Tracey Rose, Donna Kukama and Reshma Chhiba[14]. Though the artists identified in this section do not outright identity themselves as feminist performance artists, their performance works will be studied as they speak to gender issues that pertain to the feminist concerns of my research. I will furthermore explore how the use of alternative spaces and ritualistic elements in and through performance art reflect the feminist concern of understanding and theorising the material conditions experienced by women of colour in South Africa.

1.5.3 Reshma Chhiba

Artist Reshma Chhiba[15] is conceptually inspired by female agency and empowerment within male dominated spaces (Ntombela, 2013). Chhiba's walk-in vagina installation part of an exhibition titled of *The Two Talking Yonis* (2013) was twelve metres in length and was constructed out of red velvet and cotton. Inspired by her interest in the Hindu goddess Kali,

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[14] Their work not only explores issues pertaining to the social and economic status of women of colour but also explore how sexist and racist structures come to be "located in the body" (Forte, 1992:248).

[15] Though Chhiba's work may sit more comfortably in the form of Installation art, the particular art piece featured in this study shares commonalities with concerns raised in Feminist Performance Art. *The Two Talking Yonis* (2013) addresses the regulation of the gendered body in the context of sexist and patriarchal structures.

Chhiba installation explored the figure of the female and the metaphoric vagina or yoni as resisting complicit femininity and the oppression of female empowerment (Ntombela, 2013).

Figure 1: Chhiba, R. The Two Talking Yonis, 2013

Set in a former women's jail on Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, Chhiba's work was met with controversy and confusion, with some observers challenging the explicit nature of the installation (Legge, 2013). Entry into the installation required participants to remove their footwear, out of respect for the sanctity of the space, before being met with the sound of screaming and laughter. The installation was created by Chhiba in order to comment on the power of women and their bodies and in order to challenge a space that for the artist represented the socialisation of women as objects (Njanji, 2013). The installation could further be interpreted as challenging ideological views on the reproductive and sexual rights of women in South Africa. The jail, formerly used during apartheid, was, in this medium, used to deconstruct and act out against the politics of the space in order to reflect women's empowerment and transformation (Njanji, 2013). Gender Links' Kubi Rama responded to the installation by stating that the artwork made visible those issues which women privately endure. This point of view reflects the feminist thinking found in the works featured earlier in this study.

It is evident that issues including, but not limited to, the rape and physical abuse of women of colour in South Africa have influenced the practices of artists such as Chhiba. The depiction of the subject matter, though subversive, is significant because it has the ability to "disturb complacent viewing" (Von Veh in Aronson, 2012:2). Presenting the installation in a former women's jail as opposed to an art gallery is highly significant as the piece subverts a space understood to represent the oppression of women in South Africa. The location further signifies an important element in the work of female artists and their practice. Where women of colour have previously enjoyed less access to male dominated space during apartheid, the use of alternative venues and performance spaces in a post-apartheid context signifies a concern towards accessibility and the evocation of themes directly related to the space (Aronson, 2012; Battista, 2011).

1.5.4 Donna Kukama

The 2014 winner of The Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Performance Art[16] Donna Kukama participated in *The Swing* (2009), a performance in which she was suspended from a swing hung over a bridge in Johannesburg. While swinging from the bridge, Kukama tossed Ten Rand notes to people below. Kukama, who uses this performance medium, actively resisting the use of formal space and "established 'ways of doing'" (National Arts Festival, 2013), opting instead to interact with the general public and with public spaces (Krouse, 2013; McGroarty, 2013). Kukama's performance described above attempted to engage in what South African society values and how divisions within social, economic and class structures are still apparent in contemporary South Africa (McGroarty, 2013). I would like to suggest that Kukama's presence in a public space reflects a concern with community and consciousness-raising that calls into question the exclusion of marginalised voices within patriarchal and capitalist societies. Her use of this site further signals the use of alternative strategies in recovering those marginalised voices. The performance signals a feminist concern with recovering multiple histories and voices. Kukama's practice demonstrates an artist interested in more than simply entertaining audiences, but in questioning the status quo and in finding ways in which to establish a unique social voice in her interactions with space and social issues in South Africa.

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[16] This is the only award of its kind to be awarded to an artist for performance art in South Africa (National Arts Festival, 2013).

Figure 2: Kukama, D. The Swing, 2009, performance video installation

It can be argued that Chhiba and Kukama's work demonstrates that contemporary female performance artists in South Africa establish an autonomous voice in their work by working according to their own set of rules in their practice. More significantly both artists produce work pertaining to issues of interest to women of colour.

Women participating in art in contemporary South Africa have increased their visibility by engaging in a performance practice which seeks to understand the way systems of domination, oppression and sexism work in South African society (hooks, 2000; Perkins, 1999). These practices enable the opening of feminist spaces in which the "themes and methods for research and criticism" (Case, 2008:113) are derived from the exploration of issues affecting women of colour in South Africa.

1.5.5 Tracey Rose: Span II, Ongetiteld

The use of the body as a site in which to investigate issues of violence in relation to gender, race and culture features strongly in the work of South African artist and feminist Tracey Rose (Forte, 1992; Meyerov, 2006). Born to parents who were trade unionists, Rose adopts an autobiographical approach to her work, exploring her mixed heritage, the racialised and sexualised body, and gender discourse (Williamson, 2001).

In Rose's video performance piece titled *Ongetiteld (Untitled)*, featured in the "*Purity and Danger*" exhibition in Johannesburg in 1996, the artist was viewed under surveillance cameras in a bathroom shaving off all her body hair (Meyerov, 2006; Williamson, 2001). Rose foregrounds her body as a racialised and sexualised construction of patriarchal structures. The act of shaving her hair (which is a marker of her race) can be read as an attempt to disrupt and destabilise the objectification of women of colour. In this piece, Rose's body embodies interconnected systems of race, class and gender. Hair, in this piece becomes

a signifier of racial identity and discrimination, demonstrating how the female body is subject to "the structures of oppression which naturalize gender construction" (Forte, 1992:248).

Using her body as a site in which to interrogate and subvert racial discrimination and the essentialist beliefs which legitimise racial and gender construction, Rose "undermines these categories from within, exposing their inconsistencies, ambiguity and fragility of meaning, as well as highlighting, the extent to which the conceptualization of gender and racial identity are bound and read off the body's corporeality" (Meyerov, 2006:47). Her intention here is not to claim a particular construction of colouredness, but to resist the limits of racial and gender constructs, and through an awareness of the processes, embrace the many aspects of her own identity (Forte, 1992; Meyerov, 2006). By embodying her lived experience of race and gender in South Africa, Rose's performance fulfils hooks' and Loots' observation that women must examine the power relations that influence their experiences in order to seek alternative presentations of their identities.

Figure 3: Rose, T. Ongetiteld, 1996, Video

Rose's performance in *Ongetiteld* is performed not in a gallery space but in a bathroom, blurring boundaries between what is perceived to be public or private. The use of this strategy in performance means that the viewer's own perception of viewing is interrupted. The image of Rose in a 'private' space carrying out what she has described as "a certain kind of violence" (Rose in Williamson, 2001:1) forces the audience to engage in the themes of oppression and identity presented to them. Signalling the British feminist performance principles of the 70s, Rose uses such a performance set up to subvert the viewing and contextualising of the piece (Battista, 2011).

Like Chhiba and Kukama, Rose is able to express more freedom in connecting with and challenging audiences through alternative performance methods and spaces than in traditional

gallery or theatre settings historically dominated by male artists (Perkins, 1998). With surveillance cameras viewing her from above, Rose is seen first shaving the hair off her head before proceeding to shave the rest of her body. The artist in this performance never acknowledges the presence of the cameras or the uncomfortable gaze of the audience. With no traditional narrative, the audience is confronted with the naked image of Rose engaged in "demasculating [sic] and de-feminising" her body and making herself "unattractive and unappealing" (Rose in Williamson, 2001:1). Rose perhaps does this to counter the nude body being viewed as an object of sexual desire and passivity in performance. She chooses instead to foreground the gendered construction of the female body to interrogate what Forte (1992:250) describes as "the cultural forms that enforce and support an aesthetic norm of femininity".

This expression of the 'violation' and pain of the body is a strategy employed by Rose with the intention of challenging and speaking to the viewer. As with the playwrights featured earlier, Rose has a very critical stance on the collusion with systems of oppression women of colour are socialised into (Meyerov, 2006).

Prior to *Ongetiteld*, *Span II*, presented by Rose in 1997 at the second Johannesburg Biennale (Williamson, 2001:1), similarly explored how "physical markers such as skin colour and hair type remain highly significant in everyday social interactions and are often seen to signify 'race'" (Ali, 2000:137). Rose situated her body in the piece to signify the social, cultural and political construction of her "ethnic coloured identity (Ramgolam, 2011:159), and to provide a critique and form of resistance against the complex interaction of social, cultural and political discourse in post-apartheid South Africa.

Figure 4: Rose, T. Span II, 1997, performance video installation

The performance featured Rose seated on a television screen in a glass casing. With her head shaved, Rose sat with her body positioned sideways (to the audience) while the television screen (faced outward) featured the image of a reclining female nude (Meyerov, 2006). Situated as the subject of the piece, Rose engaged in knotting her shaven hair, a process which acts in resistance to the figure of the figure of the unassertive and unresisting female nude. Rose (in Williamson, 2001:1) states:

> With my naked body on the TV I wanted to negate the passivity of the action of the reclining nude. In doing the piece, I had to confront what I wasn't supposed to do with my body. The work is a cleansing act, a coming out. The knotting not only invokes the rosary beads of my childhood, but also the working with one's hands, and the meaning of this handiwork as a form of empowerment.

The inclusion of a reclining nude speaks to a number of issues which are problematized in Rose's work. Representations of the female body in European art depict a state of femininity (Goldberg, 1987) that works to "reinforce the structures of oppression which naturalize gender construction" (Forte, 1992:248). A feminist critique on representations of the female body, depicted to be the object of the spectator's gaze, demonstrates that the body is subject to social, cultural and political ideology (Goldberg, 1987).

The figure of the reclining nude reinforces these ideologies displaying a passive woman who is to be looked at (Goldberg, 1987), subject to internalized sexism and sexually accessible to

the spectator (Forte, 1992; hooks, 2000; McDonald, 2001). Feminist critique on European art, featuring the female nude, considers the construction of the image of the female body in art, its inherent eroticism and the mediation of beauty, defined and perpetuated by discriminatory discourse (McDonald, 2001). The inherent objectification of the female body found in images of the reclining nude signals a disturbing observation for women in a male-dominated and sexist system where mutual understanding and respect is not commonplace.

The image perceives women to be in state of femininity in which she cannot "express sexual desire, initiate sexual interaction and be sexually fulfilled" (hooks, 2000:79) but must be available to the male spectator. hooks (2000) argues that violence against women is perpetuated by sexism and gender construction which situates women without autonomy. In South Africa, this further legitimises the socialisation of women as having limited access to empowerment in the home or workplace, where their male counterparts may violate them "through various forms of coercive force" (hooks, 2000:61).

Contemporary feminist artists like Rose re-negotiate the politics within the representations of women in art by deconstructing[17] the manner in which the body is constructed in performance (McDonald, 2001). Seated with her head titled down and the side of her body facing in the opposite direction to the nude, Rose sits juxtaposed to the image of complicit femininity (Gqola, 2007) in the gallery space (historically dominated by male artists), interrupting the gaze of the spectator[18] as she is engaged in the process of knotting the hair she has shaven.

Rose occupies the space as a subversion of the unassertive female nude occupying a position of agency as a woman of colour. Her gaze is directed away from the audience and is instead focused on her activity. The knotting of the hair signals activities such as beadwork or handcrafting[19] which is strongly associated with women of colour in South Africa. The use of movement and actions (associated with activities women partake in) in a gallery space speaks to the presence of a feminist practice in her work (Battista, 2011).

Whereas the reclining nude in Renaissance art is still and constructed within a rigid representation of women (Berger, 1972), Rose (who is also nude) is positioned in action

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[17] Rose makes a concerted effort to show awareness of the objectification of the female body in everyday life by making visible "sociocultural processes" (Forte, 1992:250) which regulate how the body in performance is viewed.

[18] The spectator, whose perceptions of the female body has also been mediated by social discourse, been conditioned to view the female body as an object (Goldberg, 1987).

[19] Handcrafts including beadwork and the weaving of baskets are used as forms of economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

turned away from the gaze of the spectator, seeking an alternative position in which she can make visible the diversity of her difference. Through *Ongetiteld* and *Span II*, Rose accomplishes two significant objectives as a performance artist. Both performances are able to critically explore who women of colour, conditioned into enduring "codes that inscribe feminine passivity" (Gqola, 2007:117), and how this perpetuates the oppression of the body and identity by hierarchal systems (hooks, 2000). Rose is further able to achieve resistance to these social codes by positioning herself in a subject position, in opposition to hierarchal structures.

The positioning of women of colour as subjects provides a space in which feminist theatre can uncover aspects of women's lives which are crucial to their liberation and empowerment. The contemporary space in which feminism is attempting to occupy is one that must acknowledge the diversity and difference encountered in the lives of women of colour. Jane de Gay and Lizbeth Goodman (2003) have asserted that feminist theatre must echo the identities and contexts of the individuals involved. Both further argue that there must be an appreciation for different "modes of expression" (de Gay and Goodman, 2003:2) that have developed under women of colour.

Mhlope and Dike challenged the gender dynamics of apartheid by dramatizing the lives of women whose experience of race, class and gender politics mediated their status in the workplace and home. South Africa's transition into a post-apartheid democracy continued to see the creation of spaces in which performance artists were able to adopt more assertive roles in making visible those women who historically felt silenced or side-lined (Aronson, 2012; Hassim, 2006). The work produced by these artists situates issues related to race, class and gender within female subjects who interrogate the construction of their identities. The artists in this study have created performance works, which in form and structure; make use of performance strategies that foreground their concerns, defy the use of traditional male-centred narratives in Western literature, for a style of performance that conveys the author's ethnic, social and cultural identity. Where questions surrounding authorship have previously plagued earlier inceptions of feminism, this form of inquiry is significant for feminist praxis in academic and performance arenas.

I have thus far linked the feminist political position of the study to the plays and practices of contemporary theatre and performance by women in South Africa. Each artist featured in Chapter One has shown a conscious effort to intervene in the sexual, physical, emotional and

economic violence of women by making visible the social, historical and economic factors behind gender inequality. The development of a practice that focuses not only on intervention, but on the creation of agency and assertion, sets up an appropriate mechanism to undermine and understand gender construction and oppression. This is a useful strategy for deconstructing and resisting the ideology behind gender violence and oppression. An understanding of the construction of the status of women of colour in South Africa in relation to the social, economic and cultural context is crucial to the purposes of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: PRACTICE BASED RESEARCH: ENCOUNTERING THE EMBODIED SELF

2.1 A NARRATIVE AND PERFORMANCE ENQUIRY PROCESS

In *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (1994), bell hooks problematizes musician Madonna's erotic effort *Sex* (1992) as an exploitative array of images which feed regular consumers of pornography. The content in *Sex* is further criticised for appropriating and positioning her dancers (who are both homosexual and of colour) as "emotional cripples" (hooks, 1994:15) who need her as their minder. In terms of cultural representation, hooks argues that the bodies rendered as 'other' are framed against the purity of the "ideal feminine" (hooks, 1994:15) inviting the consumption of marginalised individuals, without questioning one's position in the production of hegemonic discourse.

As a young researcher I am acutely aware of how sexist and racist structures in post 1994 South Africa continue to position poor women of colour, their identities and bodies in a state of invisibility, perpetual victimhood and vulnerable to violence (Armstrong, 1994; Britton, 2006; Hassim, 2006; hooks, 1994). As a feminist writer and artist I am also conscious of avoiding a performance practice which works in tandem with dominant and oppressive representations of women of colour. My objective is to engage in research processes which would situate the experience of women of colour within racist and sexist discourse while exploring alternative spaces of representation for them to occupy.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha (2013) further explores the attainment of subjecthood, seeking ways to encounter and reconfigure the multiple positions women occupy in oppressive spaces without reinstituting the sexist and racist discrimination of women. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991) and hooks (1994) caution against characterising the oppression and exploitation of women of colour under a Western imperialist lens. To encounter women of colour through processes which re-inscribe sexist and racist discourse is to ignore difference and access to empowerment that is dependent on factors of race, class and gender (Mohanty, 1991).

The feminist researcher occupies a significant position in this context, having to negotiate the threat of casting themselves as the binary opposite to women of colour (Mohanty, 1991; Minh-Ha, 2013). On cultural criticism and production, hooks (1994, 2000) envisions a model of research that is able to engage the researcher in reflexive processes which negotiate lived experience with academic insight.

> And then of course Eve has many faces in relation to oppression- victim, resistor, fighter and ultimately survivor, but sometimes just witness and sometimes even perpetrator. It is the majority of *women* of South Africa- those who are poor and black- who have been voiceless for too long (Pandit, 2010:72).

> Today the suggestion that all women must be silent could be seen as a source of great amusement, disbelief, anger or sorrow. However, for women who have internalised the belief that this is the only acceptable position for them in society, the basic human right of free speech appears inaccessible (Iggulden, 2007:65).

I am particularly inspired by Annette Iggulden and Shereen Pandit's concept of how women occupy spaces of invisibility and silence. The notion of expanding on ways of knowing is present in Pandit's (2010) highly personal narrative descriptions of the level of oppression in the form of violence that affects South African women. In support of her discussion on gender violence (during apartheid and in post-democracy South Africa), Pandit recalls the experiences of women including activists, ANC commanders and poor women in rural areas, in order to increase their visibility. Rather than simplifying the narratives of these women into "sociological statistics" (Pandit, 2010:76) Pandit creates a space[20] in which these women are given a face and a voice in which to describe their experiences of poverty, sexual violence and economic strain.

I embody a strong connection to this concept of invisibility as I have, in my childhood and adult life, sometimes precariously negotiated the frustration and jubilation of exploring my own internalised silence. My interest in creative writing and performance (as a space in which to explore the construction of silence) has also framed my conceptualisation of research. I have further acknowledged the position of privilege I occupy (as an academic and student at a higher institution of learning) and have explored my area of study beyond the chokehold of statistical evidence.

The artists in my study (Chapter One) each situated themselves in the context of the marginalisation and exploitation of women of colour. A significant element in their practice is a reflexive engagement with gendered processes and the activation of selfhood while negotiating the silent spaces women occupy. My concern with reflexive practice (Spry, 2011) features quite predominantly in each chapter, signalling the desire to engage in methodological processes that advocate the presence of a subject and diversity in methodological forms (Iggulden, 2007). The researcher who engages in a study on women of colour requires a more complex analysis (Mohanty, 1991),

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[20] These narratives create visible spaces through which women of colour engage their experience of racism and sexism. These spaces present sites of resistance defined by their ability to make visible personal stories which are critical of the structures which shape their identities.

involving "individual socio-cultural situatedness" (Spry, 2011:58) that reflects the interaction of race, class and gender politics.

Although I had selected my areas of research I did not want to confine my feminist politics to the research processes that characterize scientific research methods. In the discussions to follow I identify the application of the Practice as Research Paradigm as demonstrating appropriate research processes that offer a more "complex…interaction of the world and the phenomena under investigation" (Vincs, 2007:128).

2.2 PRACTICE AS RESEARCH: A REFLEXIVE PROCESS

In 1962, Thomas S. Kuhn popularised the subject of paradigm shifts, noting that the theoretical underpinnings, methodologies and inquiries that frame research paradigms experience shifts and developments, questioning the fixed nature of a paradigm and its methodological processes (Kuhn, 1996). In light of Kuhn's conceptualisation of paradigm shifts, I recall South African performance artist Tracey Rose's presentation at the *Global Feminisms*[21] exhibition in 2007. Titled "*The Can't Show*", Rose staged a dialogue between two sock puppets, presenting a critical stance on the conservative parameters of the exhibition. Her presentation more significantly challenged the confines of the setting by using performative elements to conceptualise how women of colour are subject to ideological structures of discrimination in the art world and in cultural discourse (Brooklyn Museum, 2010; Deutsche e*t al*., 2008). Perhaps Rose's most significant criticism here is that when advancing the processes in which we create forums for critical rethinking, we do not re-create "the structures of mainstream, patriarchal institution" (Okudzeto, 2008:46).

Arts-based researchers are committed to capturing and understanding the complex nature of social and cultural discourse through inquiry processes that acknowledge "the multiplicity of ways of encountering and representing experience" (Sullivan, 2006:23-24). Iggulden (2007) and Pandit (2010) suggest that we re-examine the ways in which we have come to acquire knowledge and how we represent women of colour through research processes that are inclusive rather than detached in their nature. The inclusion of a performance element (in my study) has been used as a space in which to "explore

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[21] Held at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City, this exhibition was staged to feature dozens of women artists from the globe. The intended outcome of the event was to broaden representations of feminist voices in art in what has historically been dominated by a strong presence of Western ideology (Brooklyn Museum, 2010).

identity and the processes of understanding and healing, as well as recovering the past" (Hauptfleisch, 2010:283). Performance Studies theorist Dwight Conquergood (2002:146) speaks to the importance of recovering lived experiences by noting how performance as a form of research offers ways of discovering that "are rooted in embodied experience". Conquergood further notes that the dissemination of knowledge has in the past been gendered with embodied knowledge being excluded.

The Practice as Research paradigm offers methods of articulating and understanding subjects in ways that traditional approaches cannot (Fleishman, 2012). South African winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist for Performance Art Award, Anthea Moys attempted to create a forum of this nature by setting up a 'performance' in which she engaged directly with the people of Grahamstown. This form of direct engagement with a community of people is grounded in "active, intimate, hands on participation and personal connection" (Conquergood, 2002:146). Titled *Anthea vs. The City of Grahamstown*, Moys participated in a number of activities including a football match in which she engaged directly with the participants in a public space (McGroarty, 2013). Through this project she offered an alternative mode of engagement, coming into contact with a community rather than observing them from a distance. The outcomes, even if not clearly understood are significant as she challenges through her practice "the divides that have historically separated the artist…and the community" (Sullivan, 2006:26). Pandit (2010) and Temple Hauptfleisch (2010) argue for the presence of such a forum, because many poor and working class women of colour lack access to agency and are consequently subjected to institutionalised violence[22] across social, economic and cultural arenas.

A positivist perspective on research privileges a research process that is hypothesis driven, with clearly defined outcomes (Sullivan, 2006). Knowledge systems in traditional conceptualizations of research are constructed using "procedures that…build on the stock of existing knowledge" (Sullivan, 2006:20). In the context of this study, statistical evidence alone will not suffice in critically reflecting a legacy of violence that continues to be felt by poor and working class women of colour (Gqola, 2007). Research methods such as those in the sciences are not easily transferable in fields of

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[22] Although formal structures of apartheid and colonial rule have dissolved, Chapter three argues that complex systems of race, class and gender discrimination operated on an ideological level, thus explaining the deeply entrenched culture of gender-based violence directed towards women of colour.

study such as Feminism which expresses a significant concern with "avenues of female resistance" (Katrak, 2006:xxiii).

The shift in research practice earlier described by Kuhn has seen "a major theoretical and methodological shift in the performance disciplines" (PARIP, 2006:1). Suzanne Little (2011) argues that qualitative research methods have contributed a more layered development of theorising to the more systematic approach to quantitative research methods. Little further cites the diversification of research methods, referring to the emergence of creative enquiry in which artistic practice or research through creative output is central to the collation of research findings. This emerging paradigm which embraces a varied rather than distinctive approach is referred to as PaR (Practice as Research) or PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) (Fleishman, 2012; Little, 2011). These terms used are mutually exchangeable, reflecting the multiple approaches that characterise a creative output as the focus of a study or as a means of investigation (Little, 2011).

Practice as Research further manifests into two notable kinds of research, PBR (Practice-Based Research) and PLR (Practice-Led Research) (Borgdorff, 2011). Often used interchangeably, I apply Linda Candy's (2006) and Suzanne Little's (2011) descriptions of the terms. Candy provides a comprehensive explanation for PBR and the role of the practical component arguing that the outcomes of the study are directly related to the practice/artwork which is the primary focus of the study. Carole Gray in Little (2011:21) defines PLR as being characterised by processes in which "the research strategy is carried out through practice" applying methodologies that have been developed through practice. In this approach the practice can also constitute the research itself as the researcher pursues their research through interpretive arts based methodologies (Little, 2011).

As the chosen method of inquiry, my PLR consists of a practical component which, as a performative embodiment of the theory, will support the position taken in the theoretical component (Candy, 2006). As a practice led researcher, my approach is such that my focus is not solely on the creative component but that it instead acts as a means of complimenting or speaking to the theoretical framework of the paper. Research through art practice engages in critical enquiry that responds to "meaningful cultural issues" and calls on "critical social consciousness" (Sullivan, 2006:1).

The Living Dead Girl serves as the creative expression of this project, providing a critical response to the exploitation and abuse of women. According to Estelle Barrett (2007:1) "practice-led research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research". The performed theory has a strong presence in my research and signifies a shift in the approaches researchers may use to contribute new knowledge. The methodological processes are characterised by interpretative approaches which privilege the presence of embodied knowledge. As a result the theoretical component which is informed by practice carries a reflective tone in exploring the issues under study (Little, 2011).

Rachel L. Shaw (2010:236) argues that reflexivity means that the researcher cannot ignore the presence of their personal politics in the research, and the subject of the study and their experiences which "must be understood within the context in which they happen; the ways in which we make sense of our experiences and ourselves are bound by time and place". The presence of a researcher in practice related research suggests an engagement with methodological processes which are subjective in nature (Barrett, 2007). In light of the feminist politics of this study and the reflexive nature of PLR (Barrett, 2007) I have used methodological processes that are active in their engagement with knowledge production. The presence of multiple methodological processes "creates conditions for the emergence of new analogies, metaphors and models for understanding objects of enquiry" (Barrett, 2007:7).

2.2.1 The Nature of Knowing

Women in South Africa are not a unified category and "are divided by class, race, regional, and other interests that continually undercut the coherence of gender identities" (Hassim, 2006:44). Both hooks (1994; 2010) and Hassim argue that the above factors contribute to the construction of oppressive forces that affect women of colour. The discussion to follow will frame performance narrative expressions as a key method of inquiry in my practice-led project.

> In a society that largely frames black women as angry or meek, Braveheart's motives were gloriously unclear. She complicated the storyline about who and what black women are. She was neither the heroic mother who raises her children against the odds, nor was she the rape victim who is maimed into submission. Instead she was a totally free being, a person who rejected any script out of which we can make sense. She was in fact, impervious to sense-making, but somehow not belligerent about this stance (Msimang, 2014:1).

Sisonke Msimang's opinion piece *Big Butts and Blackface: Why we need more naked women in Sandton* (2014), featured in The Daily Maverick reflects both hooks' (1994) and Mohanty's (1991) concerns with the construction of women of colour within reductionist frameworks. Her article more specifically highlights how difference is encountered in ways that are counterproductive to the transformation and the creation of space of visibility for women.

Mohanty and Minh-Ha pose critical questions directed towards Western conceptualisations of women in developing countries. Both critically analyse that Western feminists have situated the Third World women's struggle in a manner where "a position of mastery" (Minh-Ha, 2013:12) has been assumed by reflecting women of colour in a perpetual condition of powerlessness, submissiveness and poverty. The notion of 'who speaks' and how, is of concern, especially where multiple women's voices cannot be generalised into a single group (Mohanty, 1991). How women come to be defined or understood in public and private spaces has a direct influence on their ability to reclaim and reconfigure their identity and status (Mohanty, 1991).

Mohanty asserts that the visibility of women generally labelled as victims must be imagined in spaces in which "the pain and the frustration of having to live a difference that has no name and too many names already" (Minh-Ha, 2013:14) can be declared so that the subject is viewed in their context. 'Marginal' stories become legitimised when they are seen in their context, reflecting the ability to transform gender inequality and internalised suffering for women of colour who "are characterised by their victim status" (Mohanty, 1991:58).

In light of what has been discussed above, I will explore the performance strategies used to reflect the complex spaces women of colour occupy in relation to gender politics in South Africa. I would like to argue that nowhere is the "body's material presence" more visible than in performance (Forte, 1992:251). Though the research strategies include the writing of performance texts, I caution against confining my expression to the written word.

Narrative writing enables the presence of the body in unpacking "layers and levels of ideological influences…that imposed knowledge or ignorance of female bodies and construct woman as gendered subject or object" (Katrak, 2006:9). Though narratives, like many artistic forums, serve as an act of resistance, it is performance that enhances

the visibility of women not only to herself but to an audience given the opportunity to encounter the subject (Forte, 1992; Katrak, 2006).

My methodological processes are drawn specifically from Performance Studies, as this is an area of study "based in the analysis and embodiment of emotion" (Spry, 2011:22). Performance Studies is already grounded "in interpretation, a process wrought with the crisis and complexity of representation through performance" (Spry, 2011:32). Performance and literary strategies evident in Performance Ethnography (Denzin, 2003), Performance Autoethnography (Jones, 2005; Spry, 2011) and Feminist Performance Art (Forte, 1988, 1992) have been applied in framing the "social and cultural phenomena" (Hughes and Sjoberg, 2013:1) affecting the status of women of colour in South Africa.

2.2.2 Complicating the Narrative

In her introduction to Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (1991) Chandra Talpade Mohanty placed feminist readings and representations of women in third world communities under a critical lens. Her critique placed specific focus on markers (in academic texts) used to describe areas of women's lives in these communities. Mohanty argued that many of these analyses were problematic because they simplified the lives of third world women into markers of poverty and passiveness. Dwight Conquergood's (2009:4) participation as an ethnographer also calls into question the "moral implications" of presenting people or communities under study. His work as an ethnographer highlights the complexity of presenting people, and the researcher's position on the methods of inquiry[23].

Text based ethnography or 'ethnographic writing' has previously involved ethnographers who have used text based research processes "to turn culture into an ensemble of written words" (Denzin, 2003:17). Earlier Ethnographic research compiled by European travellers has had a detrimental effect on how women of colour have been represented. Sara Mills (2005:16) argues that travel writers including Daisy Bates are guilty of being "active participants in the construction of colonial policy" by viewing Aboriginal groups in the twentieth century under a discriminatory lens.

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[23] Historically ethnographic inquiry has been characterised by moments of insensitivity to communities under study and for marginalised communities in a contemporary context; ethnographers have had to carefully manoeuvre the sometimes difficult reactions of more dominant communities towards marginalised voices (Conquergood, 2009).

Framed by racist ethnographic discourse, Aboriginal women in particular were not provided with a space in which to "challenge the marginality of women's voices" (Katrak, 2006:33) or to do so in a form that captured their social and cultural context. In this sense, culture is constructed within the confines of a text based approach which Denzin (2003) and hooks (1994) define as distancing itself from the context of the study.

In contrast, a performance element in the ethnographic process privileges context and performance as a space in which to experience empowerment (Denzin, 2003). Oral storytelling, poetry, performance art and many other forms of performance provide a more concrete, visible and diverse expression (between performers and spectators) of the 'marginalised other' (de Gay and Goodman, 2003; Forte, 1992; Perkins, 1998). These forms further play a significant role in avoiding the depiction of women as solely victims of a universal concept of male domination.

The representation of women in conflict scenarios (or those with a history of conflict) therefore demands a greater presence by the researcher in how they account for their analysis and depiction of gender politics affecting women of colour (Mohanty, 1991). The researcher in this process situates their artistic process within the greater context of cultural and social interactions, inserting their interpretation of human experience within a desire for social development and transformation (Borgdorff, 2011; Jones, 2005). One such medium that supports the feminist objective of this study is Autoethnography.

> Setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation…and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention your words in the context of their own lives (Jones, 2005:765).

Writer Stacy Holman Jones (2005) describes Autoethnography as a process in which personal narratives write and express culture while communicating lived experience. Autoethnographers, including Jones, create narrative texts which reflect the material conditions of issues including abuse and pain. The notion of self-investigation is a significant method explored by Jones. Jones describes the form of autoethnography as being influenced by the development of personal stories in autobiography, ethnography and performance. Borrowing from performance ethnography, autoethnography shifts our attention towards how an individual person's identity is both socially and culturally mediated (Jones, 2005).

During my first year, in 2012 as a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Creative Masters students participated in an autoethnographic project entitled *There's Something Growing in the Cold*. Each student wrote and created a performance narrative which reflected the experiences that shaped our individual journeys as researchers. I become interested in Jones' discussions regarding how selves are constructed and how the body and voice are mediated by hegemonic discourse. Her narrative process of inquiry explores how we have come to know what we know and how we may use narrative as a means of resisting this construction.

The presence of personal texts in the works of hooks (1994, 2010) and Jones (2005) signals an active response to social and cultural issues through self-awareness and self-study. These are performance enquiry processes which I earlier found to be situated within the practice of theatre and performance artists featured in chapter one.

I began this project with considerable interest in my life and identity as a bi-racial woman, focusing on childhood experience that had shaped my perspective on life and the values I practiced as an academic and as a creative being. The process of reflecting on self, allowed me to critically understand how I had come to embody certain characteristics and eventually learn how to articulate the pain of other women.

Of the reflexive process in research, Rachel L. Shaw (2010:234) states:

> when the researcher and researched are of the same order, that is, both living, experiencing human beings, it is necessary for us as researchers to reflect on how that might impact the research scenario when gathering data and when afterwards analysing it. For the majority of qualitative researchers, data gathering involves engaging with other people's language, the stories they tell and/or the experiences they have. Our job as researchers is to make sense of these stories and experiences in a meaningful way with a view to learning more about humankind and, often to effect change, whether that be in terms of influencing policy and practice or enhancing understanding at an individual or institutional level.

By situating myself within this model, I wrote a personal narrative expression of how factors of race, sex and class have "been marked by my physical body" (Reid, 2007:58). I began to critically understand how I had come to embody certain characteristics and acknowledged the detailed expression autoethnography could offer. The following is an extract which appears in the narrative:

> I do remember wanting to do the Ms Tinkerbelle competitions but my mother said I'd have to wait for all my teeth to grow- a guise for: we didn't have the money for it. My teeth are still growing today. So I created my very own performance world in the sand, grass and beach, in spaces that seem unending. There was even more secrecy growing in me (Marcia Peschke, 2012).

This text focuses largely on the presence of embodied knowledge (Holman-Jones, 2005; Forte, 1992; Spry, 2011), employing performance strategies, including deconstruction (Forte, 1992), in which I perform as a subject investigating the social historical and cultural landscape of my body and internalised repression. The image of teeth is symbolic not only of a desire to meet Western conceptualisations of beauty but more towards self-awareness of the material reality of economic struggle and self-importance in relation to financial status.

The extract further suggests the complex negotiation experienced by women of colour in trying to establish subjectivity while avoiding the hold of historical and social stereotypes associated with poverty or financial constraints (hooks, 1994). Having authored how I am read in performance, I have strategically confronted the body as an object within specific conditions and very importantly given myself a space in which to resist colluding with hegemonic discourse.

The involvement of the artist-researcher in the act of writing self provides "the foundations for social criticisms by subjecting specific programs and policies to concrete analysis" (Denzin, 2003:18). The Autoethnographic process described above motivated me to understand how individual pain is connected to a much larger social and political system (Spry, 2011).

The Living Dead Girl combines spoken text with imagery that describes "the oppressive weight" (Forte, 1992:253) of social and cultural structures in South Africa, as well as gender violence against women of colour. *The Living Dead Girl* was performed by students from UKZN in the Square Space Theatre from the 15-17 August 2013. An audition process was held for the student body at UKZN and six student performers were cast.

I wrote a series of personal narratives that focused on how factors such as race, class and gender could influence and account for the oppressive forces shaping experiences of women of colour. Although I had read academic articles which extensively covered my concerns, I did not want my creative output to be solely influenced by academic articles which had assisted in my research. I referred to media accounts of issues affecting women of colour as they provide reflections of real events (even if sometimes characterised with sensationalism) and reflect the social and cultural climate around these events.

In the context of a forum such as a newspaper article, these stories are seldom characterised outside being packaged amongst other depressing headlines. In a newspaper format they occupy a confined space with other faces and individuals trying to be seen or heard. In this sense individuals become situated as objects or "body without voice" (Spry, 2011:66). My interest in the interaction between race, sex and class politics in these reports resulted in seeking out the individual stories and establishing the context in which they play.

My approach to creating autoethnographies was to reflect on who they are in relation to "social structures and other sociocultural components which make up their public 'selves'" (Spry, 2011:35). In order to shift the focus towards the more personal elements of these stories, I used strategies present in neonarration. Neonarration referred to as "the study of stories" and involves the "interpretive reconstruction of an aspect of a person's life" (Stewart, 2007:130). With little more than a single utterance reported from Anene Booysen's death: "Here, help tog net… Eina (sore)" (Meyer, 2013:1) to work with, I built a story that connected Booysen to the race, sex and class politics that characterised her context.

Information gathered from academic articles and media sources enable researchers to compile and develop the reports into narratives (Barrett, 2007), providing a more detailed perspective of identity located within a specific set of social and cultural constraints. By employing strategies in autoethnographic writing these narratives further politicise the subject and challenge the construction individual in space characterised by oppressive forces (Spry, 2011). I reflect on Mohanty and hooks' assertions that we do not ignore the material conditions of oppression and I acknowledge that the matter of empowerment and agency is significant in generating critical thinking with an audience. The audience will therefore similarly become aware of the ideology and experience the subject's negotiation with reconstructing their selfhood (Spry, 2011). This form of active participation becomes significant for the researcher, subject and audience, as a feminist form of consciousness-raising (hooks, 2000).

As performative autoethnography, the narratives situate the subjects in an active space, placing the body in a position to perform a "reflexive critique" (Spry, 2011:19) on constructions of their identity as victim, aggressor or in collusion with hegemonic discourse. To achieve this sense of self-awareness, which I would like to argue is

inextricably linked to agency; I wrote my characters by situating them within the social and cultural structures that affect them. To simply depict characters within the narrow confines of binary oppositions would arguably prolong their oppression (Spry, 2011).

2.3 PERFORMING CULTURE: FEMINIST PERFORMANCE ART

Feminist performance art has historically been influenced by factors including censorship of speech and racial discrimination (Forte, 1988, 1992). As a performance medium with a strong connection to social consciousness, it further shows a "deconstructive intent" (Forte, 1988:217) bringing into focus the body as "an object of desire" (Striff, 1997:1). Feminist performance artists employ numerous strategies, in which to engage the social and cultural discourse, including modification of the body, and the expression of the body in pain.

Woodhouse, Greer and Perez-Langely (2015:2) argue that feminist performance artists "break and remake the social constructions that constitute our gendered selves". Feminist performance artists make specific choices in their performances which foreground and deconstruct how women sit in "binary dualisms" (Woodhouse, Greer and Perez-Langely, 2015:4). As the written text takes on a more personal tone, it challenges "linguistic binaries that devalue women" (Woodhouse, Greer and Perez-Langely, 2015:4). In the context of this study this is significant because it creates a space for women's stories and challenges the exclusion of women from sexist and patriarchal structures. Artists including Judy Chicago integrate the engagement with the culturally constructed body into their artistic practice (Gerhard, 2013).

In the work of feminist performance artists, the body is viewed as a primary site of knowledge production (Striff, 1997). In Chapter three I engage with the spectacle of 'The Hottentot Venus' (Crais and Scully, 2008) as symbolic of a racist and sexist colonial discourse. This discussion presents a great deal of significance to the study, as Feminist Performance Art is concerned with how women of colour are perceived by audiences on stage and in private spaces (Carver, 2009).

Various performance artists have a visual arts background (Striff, 1997) and display a keen interest in the sexist and racist gaze directed towards women's bodies in art pieces that have constructed them as objects to be consumed (Carver, 2009). Expressing concern over the lack of complexity in the social and cultural portrayal of black women,

Msimang (2014:1) offers "We are afforded neither respect nor singularity; we are rarely complex or idiosyncratic. Most of the time we are depicted as one of two extremes-either supremely meek or outrageously correct". Challenging these roles is significant for women in contemporary South Africa who are "rendered incapable of independent action or thought" (Forte, 1988:218).

In light of the feminist politics of this study, I have placed the narrative stories I constructed in an active space using performance art strategies which attempt to present women as subjects, actively authoring and deconstructing texts on the body (Carver, 2009). The foregrounding and deconstruction of patriarchal and sexist structures features strongly as a performance strategy in which to explore the construction of women as objects (Forte, 1988). Like Gqola (2007), Forte observes that women are constructed in positions of compliance and invisibility. Performance artists who explore the position of women in dominant structures include Robbie McCauley whose practice can be best understood as combining areas of cultural production and performance while examining race politics (Becker, 2000). With a background in social work McCauley's practice has a strong focus on the construction of social discourse arising out of binary opposites. Her work is a critique of the way in which difference is conceptualised, presenting one group as normal and the other as inferior (Becker, 2000).

Artist Laurie Anderson presents the body in performance as a cyborg, taking on biological essentialism and the 'natural' roles of women demarcated as feminine (Striff, 1997). I similarly attempted to critique this demarcation by situating the characters of the play in opposition to what was perceived to be normal and their perceived inferiority status. Chapter four explores in detail how this was accomplished through the use of costume and space and the interrogation of roles associated with women of colour.

2.3.1 The Personal is Political

How do performance artists perform and deconstruct women as objects so that they create "consciousness of one's own conditioning" (Forte, 1988:219) for the performer and the audience? Women of colour who are not able to attain the social status granted to those who can comfortably access privilege and financial status sit instead in marginal spaces (hooks, 1994). This image largely represents the distance that is kept from women who are poverty stricken or banished from their bodies and public spaces (Katrak, 2006; Mills, 2005).

French artist Orlan's surgical procedures, in which she undergoes plastic surgery to accomplish Western beauty standards, is an example of what is privileged and what is hidden from public space (Striff, 1997). What is unique about her practice is that she critiques the validity of these aesthetics and documents the surgical and healing parts of the process which would normally be hidden (Striff, 1997). In *Sitting Still* (1970) Bonnie Stark similarly addressed the invisibility of women and the social issues they face, by sitting "for hours in an overstuffed chair in the middle of a flooded vacant lot, in elegant evening dress" (Forte, 1988:219). She appeared to be trapped in this position and more importantly in the feminine position ascribed to her (Forte, 1988).

The notion of woman performing the silence which has been scripted on her body is heavily explored in the works of artists including Judy Chicago, Karen Finley, Carolee Schneeman and Anna Deveare Smith. Though these artists demonstrate varying strategies in their practice, I have observed that they each foreground the empowerment of the subject in the performance space.

While working at the Fresno State College, Chicago's teaching pedagogy, framed by feminist politics, had focused on the development of the woman artist. Centred on identifying the layers of social and cultural discourse on womanhood, she focused on challenging them (Gerhard, 2013). Demanding an autonomous space in which to do so, Chicago's feminist centred course included an intense focus on reflexive practice, situating oneself within the issues that had relevance to their lives (Gerhard, 2013). Chicago's students were required to address their own internalised sexism by engaging in consciousness-raising dialogues and refurbishing dilapidated spaces into studios. Although many of her students had grappled with the ambitiousness of her vision, it is worth noting that their experience had perhaps forced them as female artists to extend their range of skills and to deconstruct the qualities that had made them passive. Fixing broken windows and painting walls had meant that the students had literally and on a more conscious level, developed a creative space without the confines of social and cultural discourse (Gerhard, 2013).

Years later Chicago would go on to create *The Dinner Party* (1974-79) an installation in which she had explored and challenged the invisibility of women in history. *The Dinner Party* also spoke to women's ability to negotiate and triumph over the adversities encountered in public and private spaces (Gerhard, 2013). The project included a large

scale dinner setting featuring seating for thirty-nine women. A prominent feature of the exhibition were the large vulva shaped china plates at each seat, reflecting Chicago's concern with the female body under conditions of exploitation and oppression. After years of fund raising and working under the glare of the male dominated art world the exhibition opened to large audiences reflecting a work which had engaged the artist in a practice of self-reflexivity (Gerhard, 2013).

The work of Finley and Schneeman presents the nude body to the audience in order to disrupt the passive interaction and gaze of the audience (Striff, 1997; Carver, 2009). Finley produces her body in an aggressive manner, presenting "her body as defiled, as already consumed" (Striff, 1997:1). By engaging with the act of violence which is deeply ingrained in politics of race, sex and class (hooks, 1994), I am attempting to present a picture of gender politics that cannot be ignored by an audience.

Exposing our perception of ourselves and others through interview and then transcription into performance is artist Anna Deveare Smith. In her series titled *On the Road: A Search for American Character*, Smith performs theatre pieces which have been developed out of interviews with subjects. Smith attempts to create a non-threatening space in which the person being interviewed is able to speak for themselves (Davis, 1992). Smith acknowledges that her subjects could be performing certain personas but also finds that there are aspects to language and non-verbal language that are revealed where identity is under the spotlight. Demonstrating a keen awareness of this vulnerability she explores race, making visible complex phrases and behaviours that would otherwise be masked (Davis, 1992).

The performance art strategies above provide a means in which to effectively present "the interrelations and negotiations between selves and others in cultural contexts" (Spry, 2011:52). Performance art and autoethnographic writing share many similarities in that they politicise oppressed voices. Artists in both forms express an interest in the subjugation of women and in possible ways in which to increase their visibility (Carver, 2009). Many of the focus points present in the creative component speak to the theoretical discussion in Chapter three. The performance strategies discussed in this chapter also presents opportunities to extend feminist dialogue regarding the means with which to address gender inequality.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DYNAMICS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 THE INTERACTION OF RACE, CLASS AND GENDER IN SOUTH AFRICA

In chapter two I positioned my research within the Practice-based model of inquiry, with the use of narrative performance text, framed by feminist politics, as a means of reimagining women of colour in subject positions. Writing and performing personal narrative creates conditions for women of colour to re-imagine their bodies and their identities, in turn deconstructing oppressive sexist and racist systems (hooks, 2000; Malatjie, 2011).

Chapter three provides a theoretical background for the production of women of colour as sites of sexual, emotional, physical and economic violence in post-apartheid South Africa. The emergence of autonomous activities and attempts to negotiate the inclusion of gender politics in apartheid South Africa were significant in giving importance to the profile of women of colour. The colonisation of space and identity in South Africa subjected women of colour to racist and sexist discrimination, restraining their ability "to transcend the limits of the body as an object" (Mills, 2005:30). In these exploitative conditions, as argued by Katrak (2006) and Malatjie (2011), the identities of women are rendered invisible, entering history and the social sphere as objects of sexist and racial discourse.

Autoethnography seeks to "externalize the pain of bodily exile and marginality" (Katrak, 2006:7) making visible the voices of women subject to abuse. As a feminist strategy, personal narrative enables women to revisit their bodies, deconstructing the illusion of selfhood that has been used to marginalise them (Malatjie, 2011). Feminist politics place emphasis on marginalised women and their access to "critical consciousness" and "personal power" (hooks, 2000:113, 111).

In this chapter I will discuss how the construction of women of colour "within colonialism's racist, stereotypical discourses" (Meyerov, 2006:40) attempted to eliminate any form of complexity and diversity by positioning women of colour as subhuman as well as sexually and anatomically primitive (Meyerov, 2006). Women of colour have historically, under racist patriarchal systems, suffered omission from positions of subject hood (Malatjie, 2011). In chapter one, I argued that performance works emerging during the apartheid era into a post liberation South Africa are shown to have elements of feminist politics. The personal politics

in the works of the playwrights and artists featured in chapter one also feature strongly, navigating the sexist and racist gender politics that exist in South Africa.

The emergence of a feminist consciousness in apartheid South Africa and individual narratives saw women speaking through various executive platforms, enabling their stories of abuse and triumph over oppression to be engaged on a more public platform. Malatjie (2011:38) argues that the use of transformative feminist measure permit spaces in which "the body functions as a subject and a site through which some women contest their subjection".

3.2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN OF COLOUR AS 'OTHER'

The reductionist practice of 'Othering', a process in which Western imperialism creates and perpetuates difference is a concept explored in Edward Said's *Orientalism* released in 1978. Regarding the production of images of the Middle East and North Africa, during the 19th century, Ali Behdad applies Said's concept of Orientalism, arguing that photographic images, presented as genuine depictions of Oriental culture and life, must be viewed considering "the politico-cultural context that led them to be so rapaciously consumed as visual objects" (2010:712-713).

Behdad's criticism of visual representations of the Middle East suggests that these images focus on ancient archaeological interests rather than on "engagement with the people of the region or their everyday lives" (2010:713). Through visual representations, the Orient is viewed not in terms of how its people and culture have progressed but as objects of a distant past. Representations of the Orient then come to embody the views and descriptions of the Western gaze. Similarly, depictions of the European traveller viewing the oriental landscape communicate the subject discerning and perceiving the objectified orient before them. In this context, the orient feeds the European desire for exoticism. Behdad further argues that ethnographic projects which may have attempted to document Middle Eastern life, have ultimately projected an image of Middle Eastern people as 'Other'.

Key to Behdad's use of Said's concept of the 'Other' is his discussion of how "systems of knowledge" (2010:716) enable the construction and dissemination of the orient as 'Other'. These images are made problematic by the author because they have positioned "Middle Eastern people and their cultures…in an ethnographic system of differentiation and classification that made them both legible and desirable as images of cultural difference" (Behdad, 2010:717). In *The Spectacle of the Other* (1997) Stuart Hall explores the

construction of 'Otherness' by arguing that discourse which highlights and fixes difference produces conflict and conditions encouraging violence directed towards difference. Where power to mediate the identity and agency of poor women of colour is exercised, conditions of violence are set up in order to maintain unequal power relations.

Hall, like Behdad focuses on the power of 19th century colonial images in emphasising racial and physical differences. In referencing Said's essay, Hall very significantly reflects on the "power to represent someone or something in a certain way" (1997:259). Under the influence of colonial and apartheid violence, the status of women of colour is read in terms of difference (Hall, 1997). Colonial and apartheid discourse position people of colour as uncivilized and attempt to present this 'difference' as a natural state of being. Gqola (2007) argues that where dominant social and cultural structures positions women without selfhood, the potential for conditions of violence increases. This chapter will further explore how women of colour under colonial and apartheid discourse lacked complex representation and were often reduced to a state of servitude and entertainment (Hassim, 2006).

An understanding of racist colonial and apartheid discourse in relation to poor and working class women of colour plays a key role in the feminist politics of *The Living Dead Girl*. My role in deconstructing poor and working class women of colour as sites of violence further requires that I engage with internalised subordination in order to create awareness of how one is oppressed. In my discussion below of Sara Baartman's life as the 'Hottentot Venus', I will explore how colonial Europe exercised its power to create a discourse around what women of colour were, only to satisfy colonial fears and desire for exoticism (Hall, 1997).

Studies of Baartman's position as a static object consumed by colonial curiosity are significant for feminist projects such as *The Living Dead Girl* which attempts to encourage women to explore and create their "own narrative reflexivity" (Denzin, 2003:12). The presence of Autoethnographic writing in *The Living Dead Girl* attempts to explore "lived performances" (Denzin, 2003:12) of exploited women, like Baartman, by creating personal narratives for performance. The performance space becomes a forum where heteronormative, sexist and racist discourses can be understood and deconstructed (Denzin, 2003). Tami Spry, author of *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography* (2011) argues that the expression of the embodied self in performance narrative employs "tactics that enact a progressive politics of resistance" (Denzin, 2003:12).

The intention of staging *The Living Dead Girl* is to critically explore the narratives of women of colour in the highly contested space of gender politics in post-apartheid South Africa. Treated and identified as an animal on show, rather than as a complex woman, this feminist analysis of Baartman's life sets up an important precedent for the characters in *The Living Dead Girl* who are presented in a manner where they are not reduced to objects.

Chapter three explores further a more complex representation of women of colour by examining how women under apartheid rule attempted to understand and negotiate freedom from their oppression. In this Chapter, I apply some significant aspects of Said's essay regarding the corruption of colonial and apartheid ideology by following on my discussion with cases of violence that I explored through *The Living Dead Girl* (with extracts below). hooks' opening quote below establishes how this ideology has groomed the practice of violence against women in South Africa:

> In a culture of domination everyone is socialised to see violence as an acceptable means of social control (hooks, 2000: 64).
>
> Anene: I am 7 when I think the world of love, when I think everybody loves me **(pause)** Love, you tickle the holes in my socks. Love, I thought you were what the edge of my seat was made for… I struggle against his weight but it feels like hell is empty and all the devils are in him. Like an ocean he rises over me. As I push his hot shoulders I refuse to make love with his eyes. As I bleed the dream persists, history, his story, my story of that day is inked blood on my bed sheets. They tell me not to report him…you'll embarrass him **(pause).** It's not ok to promise comfort. This man tears my life into pieces so that people will find it hard to read me so that I'll be forever walking with strangers keeping this shameful ink on me. So that I will find it hard to read my body. So that I become the sacrifice. When my body has had enough of bloody gestures I will become the faceless. My body will wear his dirty business. I will lie on a cold floor hearing myself cry and my perfect death will be masqueraded on the earth. I'm the small change you didn't care about dropping (Peschke, 2013).
>
> Gangster (Rashaad Rooiland): She reminds me of the sand and stones I crawled out of **(pause)** I think about my father, I think about the dirt and despair and I think about my blind brother who I left behind, because it was a women's job to care for him. The sand and stone people will have shacks built on top of them. And when the wind blows they will ask what happened to the jack rollers and iinstara? My grandchildren will look at me and say "Oupa, you knew it was happening and you did nothing". And I will say…this is me, and they will say it too because I have said it (Peschke, 2013).

The character extracts above (from *The Living Dead Girl*) are symbolic of women and men who are subject to the interactions of race, class and gender which support and legitimise the status of women of colour as sites of violence in South Africa. Characters in this performance piece occupy subject positions, deconstructing the status of 'Other' by arguing that "Identities are neither fixed or singular but rather fluid and open, constantly changing and shifting, in accordance to political and social contexts" (Meyerov, 2006:42). By revealing the ways in which race, class and gender can function

as oppressive instruments, I will also argue that women of colour must be in a position to practice autonomy if they are able to pursue the feminist ambit of investigating their oppression and gaining empowerment. In chapter four, an analysis of *The Living Dead Girl* will play a pivotal role in analysing the socialisation of women in post-apartheid South Africa within ideological constructions which are embedded in racist and sexist discourse.

3.3 THE HYPERMASCULINE AND THE SUPPRESSED FEMININE: INTERNALIZED SEXISM AND PERPETUAL VICTIMHOOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

Kleinbegin, an area in the town of Bredasdorp is paved with dust, sand and stone. The development of a low cost housing site promises to alleviate the town of its poverty, propelled by its numerous shebeens and high school dropouts (Amato, 2013). But the promise of transformation is threatened by an undercurrent of violence and aggression that is the norm and has a pronounced presence in the community.

The barely alive body of a 17 year-old girl lies struggling in pain, on the earth of the development site. Gang-raped, mutilated and left to die on sand and stone, the young woman will inspire headlines and debate that speaks to a "brutal manifestation of wider discrimination against women in the patriarchal system that still exists in South Africa" (Pillay, 2013:1).

Anene Booysen's young face appears in the newspapers, reminding South Africans that the continual references to women's accomplishments during celebratory periods including Women's month have allowed for self-congratulatory behaviour instead of addressing a much more sophisticated and complex system of control, discrimination and oppression that have allowed for the institutionalisation of violence.

Booysen's attack drew similarities to the violent 2012 rape of a Jyoti Singh Pandey (on a public bus in India) who survived her attack before dying from her extensive injuries. While the public in India (particularly in New Delhi where the attack happened) reacted in a flurry of protests and outcries against parliament, police and violent crimes against women, Booysen's rape and subsequent outcry did not garner the same scale of condemnation (Swart, 2013). This response could arguably demonstrate that in post-apartheid South Africa tackling gender violence does not have sufficient financial, political and social support.

The increasingly public response to rape attacks in India has brought further attention to the presence of class discrimination in the rape of Dalit[24] women and girls have demonstrated the ideological hold this system has on determining the rigour and seriousness with which rapes involving women of a lower caste are handled (Fontanella-Khan, 2014).

Writer Amana Fontanella-Khan's assertion that the social and economic discrimination, perpetuated by India's caste system, are factors which silence lower caste women, is a significant argument to consider in the South African context. Discourse involving power over 'Other' assumes rape is provoked by women. What these cases demonstrate is the patriarchal desire to exercise domination of women through the use of violence (James, 1998). These cases further demonstrate how women are viewed or represented in these contexts where their gender is used to abuse them (James, 1998). Women of a lower caste in India are positioned as inferior to their aggressors who exercise their 'right' to dominate them. In the South African context, Booysen's case suggests an institutionalisation of violence, where displays of male aggression and compliance from women are acceptable in societies that have been economically and socially deprived.

During South Africa's struggle for national liberation against the former apartheid regime, the women's movement was committed to promoting a democracy which was inclusive of gender equality in the social and political arena of women's lives in South Africa (Hassim, 2006). However, reflection upon the level of gender-based violence that is experienced by poor and working class women of colour, despite the historical achievements of women post-apartheid, demonstrates a failure to adequately address the oppression of women generally (Hassim, 2006).

In post-apartheid South Africa, women's bodies have become the battleground on which men attempt to define their masculinity. Kate Wood's study on the presence of violence and coercion as traits of group rape reveals "territorial criminal gangs emerged in townships in the midst of urban deprivation and destabilized family lives" (2005:306). Communities which have historically suffered under colonial and apartheid structures experience economic instability, and as such many young men associate having no income with the crumbling of their masculinity and self-worth. Wood further suggests a

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[24] Dalits, formally known as Untouchables, are positioned within Indian societies as a lower caste group (Fontanella-Khan, 2014).

deeply sexist nature to the prevailing heterosexual masculinity in South Africa, stating that rape also arises out of "deeply sexist and discriminatory assumptions about women's sexuality and autonomy" (2005:106).

An aspect of rape that I explore in *The Living Dead Girl* is the politics of the body. To use Ketu Katrak's (2006) description, women are exiled from their bodies because they are dominated by acts of violence such as rape which are legitimised as acts of the male 'keeper's' right to dominate women. The character Rashaad Rooiland offers the audience a sign of his father's absence from his life stating: "When I was a boy, my father left my brother and I in the shebeen." When a young girl proceeds to walk past him, he shouts: "Hey, when I speak to you don't disrespect me!" (Peschke, 2013).

Rooiland's anger towards his life of depravation and his predatory advances towards the girl are characteristic of those gangs who lurk outside of schools waiting to prey on girls or to punish those "deemed to have a "clever" (superior) air because of their impudence in answering back or ailing to respond to sexual propositions" (Wood, 2005:308). Also evident in this context is how women have been forced to internalize sexist discourse that blames them for inviting their rape (Wood, 2005). While I will later explore aspects of the traditional roles and spaces women are expected to occupy, it is worth noting that Wood's assertion above is in line with Paulo Freire's observation (in Hederman, 1982) that the oppressed internalize the discourse of the oppressor.

Wood similarly acknowledges Freire's emphasis on the social, political and economic conditions for oppression by observing how colonialism and apartheid have created repressive "prevailing ideas about masculinity and femininity" (2005:313). Booysen's violent death demonstrates that a link[25] between power relations and the violent abuse and exploitation of women exists.

Unequal power relations continue to oppress women of colour in post-apartheid South Africa in the form of physical, sexual, economic[26] and emotional violence. This particular group of women are subject to "deeply entrenched gender hierarchies" within their communities (Hassim, 2006:25) and must manage their households with little or no

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[25] The gendered roles of men and women in patriarchal and sexist societies teach mean and women not to question complicit behaviours within those structures (hooks, 2000).
[26] Poor and working class women of colour are subject to economic difficulties which include rising prices in food, poor service delivery in their communities and low wages which affect the maintenance of their households (Gqola, 2007).

healthcare[27] and low income (Gqola, 2007; Hassim, 2006). This picture of violence against women of colour and the violation of their social and economic rights reveals the manifestation of gendered processes which Pumla Dineo Gqola (2007) argues have become normalised within the context of South Africa.

By revealing the ways in which race, class and gender can function as oppressive instruments, I will also argue that women of colour must be in a position to practice autonomy if they are able to pursue the feminist ambit of investigating their oppression and gaining empowerment.

3.3.1 A History of Violence

> The assumption that domination is not only natural but central to the civilising process is deeply rooted in our cultural mindset (hooks, 1994:200).

How has colonialism and its offspring apartheid impacted South African society and particularly poor women of colour? In this section of chapter three I will argue that women of colour have historically been exploited and abused in covert and increasingly violent ways. hooks (1994) argues that the socialisation of women of colour (outside of their own context) within racist and sexist hierarchal systems enables those within that system to position them as marginalised 'Other'. Women who are objectified for their difference and exist within the margins of society are not afforded access to job security, financial stability and the skills to liberate themselves (hooks, 1994).

Godpower Okereke's (2006) report on the status of women in contemporary Africa reveals that political and social discourse regarding the rights of women has been prohibitive to their freedom, their access to property and economic stability, and their ability to express crimes committed against them. For women particularly in post-colonial countries, their exploitation and abuse "are supported by family and perpetuated both in the private and public realms" (Katrak, 2006:157). Katrak's study on the disciplining and control of women's bodies includes an investigation into the treatment of widows in India, and reveals how these women (under the guise of their traditional roles) are expected to commit a form of self-expulsion, retreating from social activities while being ostracized. Women in post-apartheid South Africa must similarly

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[27] With inadequate healthcare facilities in rural areas, women of colour who are responsible for the organization of households, which include members infected with HIV/AIDS, face great constraints in coping (Hassim, 2006).

endure and mediate the roles assigned to them in conditions of violence which Wood (2005) argues, has been created by its history of colonialism.

Also citing the presence of "gendered violence" in colonial discourse, Nishant Upadhyay (2013:264) draws the production of violence against women in colonial Africa to "gendered violence in contemporary postcolonial African states". To understand the construction of poor and working class women of colour as objects, this section will begin by analysing the construction of Sara Baartman as the 'Hottentot Venus' and the use of colonial violence by her handlers. In colonial South Africa, Baartman was presented as a body which was to be consumed, handled and studied as an object of curiosity and like the land in Africa, was seen as "wild, seductive, dark, open to possession" (Boehmer, 2005:129).

A study of Baartman's life is significant for a number of reasons. In colonial discourse, women of colour were objectified, having their differences marked through the body, which in Baartman's case, was displayed for the Western eye as something other than civilised (Hall, 1997). This image as a hyper-sexualised and primitive being was used to provide evidence that black women were subhuman and needed to be controlled (Hall, 1997). Baartman's gender in tandem with factors of race and class, which Sara Mills (2005) argues plays a critical role in the colonial violence and devaluation of marginalised women.

Crais and Scully (2008) similarly suggest that colonial ideology positions women of colour within the anxieties and racial discrimination of Imperial Europe. To better understand how the interaction of race and sexism as factors which condone violence in contemporary South Africa it is important to acquaint ourselves with how colonial discourse promoted the subordination of women of colour.

Figure 5: Sartjee, The Hottentot Venus, 1810-1811

In 1810 and 1811, etchings of the 'Hottentot Venus' were circulated as ethnographic portraits in London (Crais and Scully, 2008). The woman in these pictures is cast as 'Other', standing sideways, almost naked with bold lines painted across her face. She also stands with a tortoise shell around her neck and a pipe in her mouth (Crais and Scully, 2008). The image of Sara Baartman is however not in the context of her life in South Africa as a Gonaqua woman. In these etchings her "image and culture appear…in a context that mirrors racist hierarchies" (hooks, 1994:21).

The reimagining of Sara Baartman's narrative as a commodity in 19th century England provides a more layered perspective in understanding how internalised racism and sexism have been mirrored in contemporary South Africa. This reading further reveals how dominant structures, which exclude marginalised voices, privilege male narratives as markers of gender norms and knowledge production. I earlier established that when the fight against the apartheid system was prioritised, "the extremely sexist nature of South African society was hidden (Pandit, 2010:74). Attempts to include the liberation of women from gender violence, through nationalist organizations were seldom

embraced. The issue of women's agency was seen to be "divisive and detrimental to the main fight" (Pandit, 2010:74) during a time in which the identity of black people had, in the past, been suppressed (Pandit, 2010).

One such event in recent history that marks a crisis with the exclusion of women's dissenting voices is the Jacob Zuma rape trial. Regarding the support that Jacob Zuma experienced, as Thabo Mbeki's then Deputy President, Shapiro and Tebeau (2011:2) state: "Zuma was a populist who had built an independent base of support in COSATU, the trade union movement, and the Left-leaning ANC Youth League". This support base showed itself in the form of unwavering loyalty for Zuma's leadership and during the rape trial (Shapiro and Tebeau, 2011). The authors also maintain that the ANC, South Africa's ruling party, have been able to survive its internal conflicts[28]. The power of the ruling party and its leader Jacob Zuma are demonstrative of the institutionalisation of a political and social institution that is difficult to challenge.

During the rape trial both Jacob Zuma and former ANC Youth League president Julius Malema made controversial comments criticising the allegations of the complainant. Activists argued that the actions of the Judge and defence team and Zuma supporters painted a picture of the court system that was inaccessible to victims of rape. Furthermore it was argued that the trial and its outcome permitted the presence of sexist beliefs and myths around the contraction of HIV/AIDS, along with openly sexist displays of masculinity (Robbins, 2008). Their comments could arguably be located within the context of sexist hierarchies in which "male domination of women is promoted and male physical and sexual abuse of women is socially sanctioned" (hooks, 1994:18).

These comments furthermore reflect the interaction of violence and coercion that has continued into post-apartheid South Africa. More alarmingly, Zuma's comments not only create the impression that contact with sexually transmitted diseases can be washed away, but also liken his honour to being contaminated by a woman who is not innocent or pure. This trial demonstrated a troubling facet to the experience of women in conflict situations, revealing how the identities and voices of women were hidden, blocked from expression, with their personal politics overshadowed by those of the state. The

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[28] The lead up to the 2009 elections in South Africa saw the ousting of former president Thabo Mbeki and competition from breakaway part COPE led by former ANC member Mosiuoa Lekota (Shapiro and Tebeau, 2011).

realisation of the enhancement of women's rights through the South African constitution is halted by the presence of sexist gender discourse (Robbins, 2008).

It is from this context which I will embark on the complex interaction of choice, consensus and agency, that I will explore how the construction of Sara Baartman as the 'Hottentot Venus' within colonial discourse can develop the discussion on race, class and gender. In Chapter Two I argued how Autoethnographic and narrative accounts of women's lived experiences could force us to question the nature of knowing and could connect the personal to the cultural and social context (Jones, 2005). Crais and Scully (2008) adopt a similar approach in reconstructing the life and identity of Baartman by providing an account of her life in Cape Town, her history as a servant in the Cesar home and her life in London as an "object of curiosity" (Young, 2010). Both authors note that biography as a method of research is significant in reframing history and identity.

3.3.2 The parade of the 'Hottentot Venus': Sara Baartman as an object of Racial and Sexist colonial rule

Colonialism, as defined by Stephen Ocheni and Basil C. Nwankco (2012:46), is "the direct and overall domination of one country by another" further adding that "The first objective of colonialism is political domination" and that the "second objective is to make possible the exploitation of the colonised country". Under colonial rule, women of colour were identified outside of the space occupied by white women (hooks, 1994). While white women did not enjoy the same privilege as white males, they were responsible for maintaining the image of colonial superiority (hooks, 1994). In order to maintain the designation of purity and honour, white women did not engage in farm labour[29] as this was a form of work for black females.

During her life in the Cape and in London Sara Baartman's role as the 'Hottentot Venus' was based on sexist and racist structures which enabled her 'handlers' Dunlop and Cesars to exploit her (Crais and Scully, 2008). Under colonial rule, particularly in America, black men and women occupied gender roles in which black males worked as labourers while black women were exploited as workers in the fields, as domestic servants, as extending the workforce through breeding and as the "object of white male

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[29] Those white women who had worked in the fields had done so as punishment for some misdeed (hooks, 1994).

sexual assault" (hooks, 1994:22). This has significant implications for the economic abuse of women of colour who work in low paying jobs. White American colonialists held the belief that it was only uncivilised women who worked as labourers in the field (hooks, 1994). Association with such a status in post-apartheid South Africa carries with it the shame of poverty, a meagre income that does not liberate and the acceptance of sexual and racist exploitation of the underprivileged (Cock and Fakier, 2009; hooks, 1994).

Born in the Eastern Cape in the mid-1770s, Baartman belonged to the Gonaqua, Khoekhoe who were referred to as 'Hottentot'[30] by European settlers. The identification of the Khoekhoe as not speaking a proper language meant that settlers identified them as naturally having to be dominated (Crais and Scully, 2008).

Baartman grew up in colonial servitude, having to learn Dutch and inheriting a name which in Dutch meant 'bearded', implying an uncivilised status. This suggests that the construction of the 'Hottentot Venus' began before her journey to the Cape as Sara's identity and autonomy were already subject to colonial discourse (Crais and Scully, 2008). Within racist scientific literature and the academy itself, Baartman is often depicted in images exaggerating her difference. These images emphasise a colonial fixation with the black body as a sign of savagery (Crais and Scully, 2008). It is far more interesting to investigate how colonial powers structured racist and sexist hierarchies that located black women and men, and white women and men in specific roles and whether black women in particular were aware of the violence.

Under British rule, Cape Town (during the 1790s) was a port city that saw the exchange of commodities and an increased demand for domestic servants (Crais and Scully, 2008). Baartman was employed by Jan Michiel Elzer before being sold to Pieter Cesars. In 1803 she would eventually be employed by his brother Hendrik Cesars and his wife Anna Catharina Staal (Crais and Scully, 2008). After meeting with Baartman and Cesars, retired doctor Alexander Dunlop had planned to take Baartman to London and display her as an exhibit in order to make money (Crais and Scully, 2008).

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[30] The use of the word 'Hottentot' by Dutch colonialists signals the colonial drive to alienate and make strange indigenous languages and culture. Used to describe the "click sounds" in the language spoken by the Khoekhoe, the word derives from Huttentut, "to stammer" (Crais and Scully, 2008:307).

After fifteen years in Cape Town, Baartman would perform the identity of an over-sexualised woman, enacting culture and race in a way that mirrored the curiosity of the British in the nineteenth century. Away from her home country and financially reliant on her keeper, her journey mirrored the process of dejection that hooks (1994) describes as leading black women to believe that they were docile and without dignity. This process further reveals how women today are socialised into believing "that throughout her life, a female needs a man to belong to, for her own identity" (Katrak, 2006:173). Katrak (2006:173) argues that colonialism has further commoditised women through traditional practices such as the exchange of dowry or bride price which have been influenced by a "capitalist wage economy". In the introduction to Colette Guillaumin's *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, Danielle Juteau explains this naturalising process stating "slaves are objects as their physical material individuality is appropriated. And because they are things in reality, they are also thought of as things in the mind, they are naturalized" (1995:5).

Baartman's travel to London was an act that is consistent with the argument that women's movements were mediated by colonial discourse. In contemporary societies, women occupy as little space in public as possible (Mills, 2005). For Baartman, as an object in performance, she would not have been able "to transcend the limits of the body as an object" (Mills, 2005:30). In this space, her body became a sexualised object confined to its role as a purveyor of black crudeness and availability. Additionally, in these gendered spaces the presence of colonial power emphasised white fears regarding sexual relations between black males and white women, while Mills (2005:35) argues that "in reality, sexual contact often occurred between white males and indigenous females/males".

Anene Booysen was said to have last been seen in a tavern before her body was found on a construction site (Amato, 2013). In townships, taverns have been constructed as spaces in which the consumption of alcohol and the presence of women signals consent because the "taking of sex can be condoned" (Wood, 2005:311). That the space occupied by women is either highly sexualised or mediated by traditional roles is a pervasive and contradictory element in the controlling of women's bodies. Women's movements and occupation of space are defined and supervised by patriarchal discourse which sanctions "rough treatment" from men (Wood, 2005:312).

While in London, the King's Bench requested an investigation into whether Baartman had been performing of her own free will. Dunlop attempted to avoid charges of slavery by displaying Baartman as an educational experience and drawing up a contract that would employ her as a domestic servant for five years. Dunlop, and not Cesars, was allowed to be present during an interview with Baartman which was conducted in Dutch[31]. In her interview Baartman had to express herself "in a language that is not just alien but was part of the colonizer's weaponry" (Aidoo in Katrak, 2006:27). Her connection to her family, culture and identity are further severed by living in a country where her language is not spoken and is vilified.

An English translation of the interview revealed that Baartman was promised half of the earnings from the exhibition and that on completion of her contract, Dunlop would finance her return to the Cape. Baartman also appeared to avoid any discussion that would bring her into dispute with Dunlop. Representatives from the King's Court accepted Sara's statements in the context of relations between the coloniser and the colonised (Crais and Scully, 2008).

The extent to which Baartman could practice agency and free will[32] was complicated by living with slaves and servants in Cape Town. She will have further been exposed to the attitudes of settlers in the Cape who will have projected onto black women the image of "de facto prostitutes and slaves" (Crais and Scully, 2008:310). During the court's investigation Hendrik Cesar's wife had suggested that Baartman had willingly prostituted herself (Crais and Scully, 2008). Her actions highlight the maternal role taken on by British women presenting indigenous women as naive and guilty of sexual misconduct, cementing colonial Britain's "right to act as a moral arbiter in such matters" (Mills, 2005:100). This is significant in light of how *The Living Dead Girl* attempts to avoid the essentialist accounts created by British women who encountered indigenous people. A significant element of this project is to deconstruct racist and sexist discourse.

This complex assumption that Baartman could exercise her right to agency while on the other hand believing that she was a helpless black woman in need of rescuing is an area

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[31] The absence of a translator in her native tongue is demonstrative of the stripping away of her identity (Crais and Scully, 2008).
[32] The issue of why women stay in abusive situations is a highly contentious one. Katrak (2006) explains this complicity on the part of abused women by suggesting that women who are isolated from their bodies are indoctrinated into a state of suppression.

of interest explored by Alison Jill King (2007) in her study of the interaction between domestic workers and their employers in post-apartheid South Africa. King's study argues that the dismantling of formal structures of racism has not removed its ideological presence in contemporary South Africa.

As the relationship between coloniser and colonised is fraught with racist and sexist conditioning, King (2007) argues that the relationship between employers and domestic workers is one which reflects unequal power relations in South Africa. A discussion of Baartman's construction as the 'Hottentot Venus' has already reflected how domestic service is exploitative and that race, class and gender play key roles in determining the status of women of colour in low paying jobs.

Interviews with domestic workers revealed that some employees were not empowered by the notion of a 'new South Africa' but that employers had undermined the empowerment of domestic workers "under the guise of kindness" (King, 2007:4). King's research is framed by the concept of paternalism. She defines paternalism as a process in which white people occupy "a parental role in their relationship to blacks, because 'the child' is incapable of making independent choices"[33] (King, 2007:12).

It can be argued that the same concept was used by colonial thinking to place Baartman within the role of 'child'. King further notes that the white female employee is further expected to maintain the interaction described above in order to maintain the hegemonic power of the male. In the case of a domestic servant the appearance of kindness is used as a tactic in order to distract the employee from her own exploitation. While it would be premature to assume that awareness and resistance would not develop, this acts as an obstacle to women's knowledge and promotes complicity in gender inequality. Assuming a maternal role that mirrors the objectives of paternalism is reflective of the honorary masculinity that Gqola (2007) argues as being a sign of complicity.

A feminist analysis of Sara Baartman's life as the 'Hottentot Venus' has revealed that gender roles and identities, within an imperialist context, are constructed around difference. Through colonial discourse women of colour, including Baartman, have been constructed as occupying a status that is without complexity and subjectivity. We have also learned that those within a position of privilege and access to power (in terms

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[33] It should be noted that the relationship described by King is largely was framed in large part by apartheid.

of their race, class and gender) create a culture of silence in which resistance and complicity arise (hooks, 1994).

During apartheid South Africa, women attempt to negotiate traditional expectations with autonomous ways of working. Women's autonomy and complicit femininities and masculinities (Gqola, 2007) will be viewed under the climate of apartheid characterised by a predominantly male nationalist strive for liberation. For women in colonial South Africa, their objectification has been "gender-specific" (Katrak, 2006:9) with interest directed towards the body as a sexualised commodity. This discussion will explore how the legacy of racist and sexist 19th century colonialism is mirrored in the struggle against apartheid and in particular against women of colour.

3.3.3. Gendered-Spaces: A Struggle for Autonomy

Political and social movements which limit women's participation, establish that women can only support the interests of those movements without confronting their identities within the existing culture of sexism (Hassim, 2006; hooks, 2000). hooks (2000:7) argues that collusion with an oppressive politics would result in partaking in the exploitation and abuse of women, and that women can only be free of oppression when they address "the issue of sexism and male-domination".

Regarding the emergence of women's organisations during apartheid, Hassim carefully explores how women's organisations attempted to express concerns related to gender within the larger struggle. This study also very importantly examines the presence of a progressive feminist politics in the form of autonomy for women. The fight for liberation during apartheid is significant as this is a period in time, in which women were expected to accept sexism but became aware of the ways in which they could practice their agency.

In a narrative titled '*Ducking and Diving*', Pandit (2010) captures the abuse and exploitation experienced by women participating not only in the role of activists and as comrades, but as mothers and wives. A pregnant comrade and her partner attend secret meetings in London, always going through tiresome lengths to ensure their safety. An increasingly militant approach to showing her commitment strains her relationship with male members of the organisation. In the narrative, the woman expresses the strain under such rigorous expectations, stating:

> I knew why I stayed. I wasn't sure whether I would lose him if I left the organisation. I had seen the realisation dawn on him that the methods of the organisation were wrong. I also know the strength of his belief in their cause. Our cause. And because neither of us knew of anyone else who would support that cause, we would stay, I knew. Stay in spite of the crazy methods, the wanton cruelty. We would duck and dive on instruction (Pandit, 2010:74).

As her baby increasingly demands more of her attention, she is then excluded from participation in the organisation while her partner is compelled to fulfil his role in the struggle. When the organisation in London dissolves, both parents find themselves practicing their rigid routines, boarding trains at the very last minute to avoid being followed by spies. On an occasion the mother recalls the train doors closing on her daughter's arm. She recalls "So close to losing her-for how much longer would the remnants of our past lives blight hers? And ours? I reached for his hand. We giggled again. But I was aware of the bitter tinge as I asked: 'Do you suppose we'll ever stop ducking and diving?'" (Pandit, 2010:76).

Pandit's narrative provides an important analogy to South Africa's deeply entrenched culture of violence and oppression. Within the very nationalist organisations who fought racist rule in South Africa, was a culture of gender-based discrimination and abuse that reflected a much larger endemic of violence in South Africa. Gqola (2007) argues that behind South Africa's history of colonialism, apartheid and the uprisings, violence and increased militarisation have permeated the defence of identity and freedom, and the institutionalisation of oppression. "Given the patriarchal structure of both Black and White societies in South Africa, this high militarization could only take on gendered forms, and play itself out along sharply gendered lines." (Gqola, 2007:113-114). The socialisation of violence within social, political and cultural spheres of South African life has created an expectancy of silence in accepting the hegemony which governs those practices.

A discussion of women's organisations in the women's movement will explore how silence protects those who collude with a system that does not ensure women's ability to practice their freedom and empowerment (hooks, 2000). Although the effectiveness of women's organisations during apartheid can be contested, their emergence speaks to the presence of autonomy for women that were not overtly politicised or militarised as were characteristic of male led movements (Hassim, 2006). This complex interaction between autonomy and complicity will contribute to a broader understanding of gender-based violence in post-apartheid South Africa.

3.3.4 Women's Organisations during apartheid: the Emergence of Feminist Politics

During the 1980s, women's organisations had responded to the oppression poor and working class women of colour experienced as workers and women, by addressing the interaction of gender with race and class (Fester, 2000). Under apartheid rule, white, Coloured, Indian and black women occupied different positions of power and access to autonomy (Fester, 2000). Women in South Africa were not a unified category and in the formation of women's groups, differences in race and class played a significant role in informing women's awareness of how they were oppressed (Fester, 2000; Hassim, 2006) and in the case of white members, their positions of privilege.

On Colette Guillaumin's 1995 study on the construction of race and sex, Danielle Juteau-Lee notes that categorizations of race and sex "can only occur once they have been socially constituted and naturalized (Juteau-Lee, 2003). Guillaumin's observations, in the context of apartheid South Africa can further signify that women of colour have been rendered compliant and submissive by categories of race and sex which legitimise their abuse and exploitation.

During this period, the racial classification of people of colour was used to naturalize and legitimise a process of spatial oppression in which the movements of black people were restricted and regulated by the enforcement of migrant labour laws and the establishment of living areas which separated races (Barnard, 2007). Black males were further required to carry identity documents called pass books (Fester, 2000).

The appropriation of processes based on 'difference' can adversely affect the independence of women where spaces such as the home and workplace can alienate women (Guillaumin, 2003; hooks, 2000). Barnard expands on this notion of space by describing how the design of residential areas known as townships isolated its inhabitants from urban areas and more devastatingly limiting the ability of people to challenge their social positions.

Women who travelled to cities during the 1980s in search of work had done so as their husbands had been unable to secure steady incomes to support their families (Pandit, 2010). Under the pass laws they suffered a lack of mobility and were at the mercy of violent crimes which were not addressed by policemen (Pandit, 2010). Suffering the indignity of the subordinate status they occupied, women were unemployed, illiterate

and "worked mainly in industries where there was no protective legislation" (Pandit, 2010). Most women who worked in the city were employed as domestic workers (Fester, 2000), a form of labour which historically is embedded with the separation and exploitative characteristics of colonialism (King, 2007). Katrak argues that in post-colonial societies, and in particular those countries that have experienced "nationalist struggles", "women are required to carry the additional burden of being the guardians of tradition, particularly against the colonizer, and into the postcolonial era" (2006:156). Structures of racism and sexism have dismantled homes and families, and have created difficulty for women who are expected to maintain their roles as mothers and wives.

Cock and Fakier's (2009) study on the experience of black working class women in townships revealed that many households were headed by women who had to cope under enormous pressure from a lack of steady income and access to healthcare. This study further revealed that these factors created conditions for violence especially where husbands (returning from their migrant labour) expect to take up their position as head of the household[34].

These are characteristics which could arguably maintain "spheres of power where racial hierarchies are fixed and absolute" (hooks, 2000:56). Women thus occupied positions (where they were trusted as docile domestic workers) in which they performed as surrogate men, through processes of division where black men were able to work but could not reap the benefits of a stable income (hooks, 1981).

Barnard further explores the politics of space and its impact on women of colour by citing Mamphela Ramphele's *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Hostels of Cape Town* published in 1993. In this text, Ramphele argues that space creates a complex set of factors that affect the ability of an individual to attain mobility and exercise their agency, freedom and identity. For people of colour in racially segregated South Africa, access to freedom and expression was mediated by "Physical space", "Psychosocial space", and "Intellectual space" (Barnard, 2007:121-122).

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[34] This position would entail the husband taking his place as the head of the household, while the woman is confined to the role of a wife. As a result it is assumed that they are naturally inclined to the fulfilling role of mother and wife (Cock and Fakier, 2009; hooks, 1981, 1994). Wood further adds to this argument suggesting that for working class men who were themselves exploited "the family domain became the primary sphere in which they could (coercively if necessary) re-assert their sense of masculinity" (2005:304).

As explained above, physical space during apartheid included a measure put in place to control locational access based on race. With regard to psychological space, Ramphele argues that an individual's social status plays a significant role in whether they are able to exercise their freedom. Women who are confined to the "domestic household, rearing children, and obeying the will of husbands" (hooks, 1981:47) are arguably confined to limitations in displaying their agency. Ramphele describes intellectual space in a similar vain to hooks' (2000) notion of feminist consciousness, when the individual is aware of their status within the social hierarchy and is aware of the ways in which they are exploited.

Those women's organisations who had directed their focus to those who had suffered the most under apartheid oppression had attempted to address the issue of access by holding meetings in different languages and arranging transportation (to meetings) for women who had lived in rural areas without access to transportation (Fester, 2000). These meetings would include discussions around diversity and privilege associated with race and class (Fester, 2000). Women at grassroots level were cautious to establish a voice without being dominated by middle class academics that may have been resistant "to divest of their power to dominate and exploit subordinated groups of women" (hooks, 2000:15-16). hooks (2000) argues that working within existing sexist and racist structures is problematic because it assumes that women cannot challenge their role in relation to the oppression of others or the institutionalisation of it.

Grounded in an attempt to address social, economic and political issues affecting women at a grassroots level, this form of intervention was instrumental as a model of intervention where participants could "cross boundaries to take another look, to contest, to interrogate, and in some cases to recover and redeem" (hooks, 1994:5). In her framework to feminist consciousness, hooks (2000) brings attention to class systems, arguing that they have historically disadvantaged those who are without access to conscientizing that which is critical to understanding sexist and racist ideology (hooks, 2000).

Challenges, including the State of Emergency and the aggressive action exercised by the apartheid police in townships resulted in arrests and detainment, and repressed the presence of township women (Fester, 2000). Hassim's (2006) study on women's organisations examines the constraints experienced by women in the political arena

while attempting to transform the climate of sexism in South Africa during apartheid. Women's participation in organisations was based on feminine and feminist concerns. In the former position, women would address their needs as mothers and wives[35], what Molyneux in Hassim (2006:5) refers to as "practical gender needs". Those who's thinking and action is framed by feminist politics attempt to directly challenge and transform gender discrimination in social and political areas (Hassim, 2006).

Under an inclusionary model, women's groups would acquire alliances from nationalist organisations in order to gain recognition and a voice within the legislation of the organisation. In a transformative process "alliance with other social movements" which includes poor women seeking "structural transformation" takes place (Hassim, 2006:7). This formation can be more confrontational of discrimination based on gender and as such can result in women being ostracized from nationalist organisations.

It is important to recognise that women under an inclusionary model played a significant role in mobilising and creating solidarity especially among poor women (Hassim, 2006). Although they may not have initially held political standpoints, their increasing awareness of how they were marginalised compelled women to take political action (Hassim, 2006). hooks (2000) comments on this kind of mobilising and increased awareness of gender discrimination, by arguing that transformative politics is made possible by a visionary feminist politics that seeks to transform sexist and racist structures. Framed by this thinking, consciousness-raising would advocate understanding how sexism and patriarchy are used to dominate women and how they have become legitimised through social and cultural structures (hooks, 2000).

In its earlier inception, and during a time in which democracy was prioritised, women's organisations created a forum in which they could discuss their representation and role in the politics of that period. In Chapter One, I describe how storyteller Gcina Mhlope had experienced restrictions in her movement around Johannesburg and in expressing a far more personal side of apartheid oppression. Her confinement to writing in a toilet stall acted as a form of resistance against the silencing of black voices. Miriam Tlali[36] has also spoken to the diminished space and reduced sense of selfhood experienced by

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[35] These formations could be established within community organisations such as church groups or stokvels (Hassim, 2006).

[36] Tlali is the author of *Muriel at Metropolitan* (1979) and the first black woman to write a novel in apartheid South Africa (Barnard, 2007).

black women, observing that in township homes, women were not afforded space or privacy. As a writer Tlali was confined to her kitchen, subject to the financial and spatial constraints of her home (Barnard, 2007).

A context for active engagement came to be realised with the mass mobilisation of women within a number of platforms including the 1956 Women's March on the Union Buildings[37] (Hassim, 2006). With increasing consciousness-raising across women's organisations, it is important to examine the possibility of how autonomy was "determined by the extent to which nationalist movements and other social movements were willing to allow feminist approaches to thrive" (Hassim, 2006:9).

The notion of autonomy within Western women's movements could transpire more easily than it could in a postcolonial setting like South Africa (Hassim, 2006). Hassim (2006:9) argues that this is largely due to how "women's political activism in post-colonial contexts has been enabled by larger struggles against colonial and class oppression". Historically, it is therefore the supportive role within an alliance rather than as autonomous bodies that women have occupied. Fester and Hassim's studies reveal that even those organisations closely aligned to nationalist groups have emphasised the need for a space in which decision making and action could take place free of interference.

The increasing visibility of women in positions to demand independent leadership provided significant insight into assessing the tension experienced with nationalist organisations who would mediate the selection of female leaders to further their own political ends (Hassim, 2006). While challenging gender discrimination, women's organisations also strongly opposed male domination and the mask of masculinity that "teaches men that their sense of self and identity, their reason for being, resides in their capacity to dominate others" (hooks, 2000:70).

3.3.5 Women's Activism: Resistance and Collusion

Gqola (2007) states that endemic levels of violence against women in contemporary South Africa are exacerbated by silence that is synonymous with feminine and masculine roles governed by patriarchy and male domination. The notion of

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[37] This historic event saw 20 000 women of different races, class and political backgrounds march together (Hassim, 2006).

empowerment in a post-apartheid context dictates that women should accept subservient roles within a system of male dominance by acquiring the status of what Ramphele in Gqola (2007:116) refers to as 'honorary men'. In this context, women are governed by rules that are inherently violent.

The trauma brought on by the political tension and support for Jacob Zuma during his rape trial and clearing in 2006, forced his rape accuser and her mother to seek asylum in the Netherlands for eight years (Mthethwa, 2014). Dubbed 'Khwezi' by the media, her mother expressed that she and her daughter had experienced stress in assimilating to life when they had moved back to South Africa, and that both had expressed difficulty in communicating their feelings toward the rape trial and it's outcome.

Zuma, who has previously headed the National Aids Council, was heavily criticised for having engaged in unsafe sex with the plaintiff who was HIV positive (Jurgens, 2014). The trauma of being ostracised during the rape trial is demonstrative of how women experience difference in access to the notion of empowerment and agency. While Jacob Zuma has indeed faced criticism for his actions, he has been able to weather many other controversies while being president of South Africa.

During the course of the trail, Zuma displayed himself as a struggle hero whose heroism was under political attack. Gqola (2009) argues that Zuma's performance of the song "umshi wam", during the course of the rape trial was "inappropriate" as it incited highly militarised masculine responses that were characteristic of the apartheid struggle. Furthermore Zuma's position in presidency further complicates the presence of oppositional voices against dominant powers. In this context Khwezi was situated in defiance of struggle heroism and in collusion with an attack on the ANC. Threats of violence against the plaintiff were synonymous with coercion into silence which hooks (1994:65) argues "undermines free speech and strengthens the forces of censorship".

Links were drawn between those who openly criticised Zuma and police informers who during apartheid were referred to as "dogs" (Gqola, 2009). In the face of paternalistic racist attitudes, displays of militant masculinity were used to challenge the categorisation of African men as inept (Gqola, 2009). In the context of this case, Zuma's display of his political power and status is demonstrative of male domination in social and political spheres of South Africa. Where violent reactions to voices of dissent are the norm, women are expected to defer from publically denouncing sexism and abuse.

The expectation that women adopt silence as a 'natural' state of being signals a form of complicity that has found its way into social and cultural aspects of South African life that has become apparent through violence, oppression and control (Gqola, 2007).

Although significant, the positioning of women in government, positions of wealth and the corporate world (in post-apartheid South Africa) has shown instances of complicit behaviours and sexist attacks on those women who attempt to create progressive pathways. In 2013, ANC MPs John Jeffreys and Buti Manamela directed verbal insults at former DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko's weight and how she dressed in parliament (Mkokeli, 2013).

Gqola (2009:64) perceives such aggressive displays of masculinity in parliament as "the hypervisible, and self-authorising performance of patriarchal masculinity in public space where such performance hints at masculine violence". Mazibuko responded to the comments, recognising that the arena of politics in South Africa is one in which the exchange of insults is common. She did however communicate that the comments had undertones of misogyny in them and were of a sexist nature, attacking her as a woman (Mkokeli, 2013).

During apartheid both the feminist and nationalist movement allowed for the mobilization of women, but within the nationalist framework, an autonomous identity was limited and was permitted only when it enhanced the image and popularity of the nationalist movement (Hassim, 2006). In Chapter One, I cited de Gay and Goodman, highlighting their concern with the creation of spaces that echo the many identities occupied by women. Their proposed framework resists the categorisation of women within 'confined spaces'. Restrictions on movement and the breakdown of traditional practices and family life forces women to head their households while managing finances and basic needs (Cock and Fakier, 2009). In this context, women can no longer exist as an extension of male heroism.

The question of women's liberation within a nationalist framework becomes an increasingly significant one to review. In *Women and the African National Congress* (2001) Frene Ginwala reported that women had experienced very little autonomy in the earlier years of the ANC. Though women had been involved in protesting issues relating to race and class, they did not have the right to vote, while men in the party assumed leadership roles. The Bantu Women's League for example was confined to promoting

education for girls and could not participate in reflecting the broader social and economic struggles of women (Hassim, 2006). Thirty one years after the formation of the ANC, women in 1943 became full members with voting rights. Although this signified a stronger presence for African women in the liberation, this move still presented the danger of women being used as recruits in furthering the male driven politics of the liberation movement (Hassim, 2006).

Forcing women to modify their behaviours and identify themselves only within the bracket of race ignores the interaction of sexism and racism in making women subservient (hooks, 1981; Gqola, 2007). Working within existing gender relations narrowly assumes that women of colour take naturally to supportive and not leadership roles.

During the 1940s, the Women's League had attempted to experience greater autonomy in their mobilising of women. As the nationalist framework had been largely responsible for the mobilisation of women, the ANC had expected cooperation and would not permit the organisation of a women's movement outside of its structures. Women would however become increasingly politicised and in the 1950s, a non-racial body, The Federation of South African Women was formed. The Federation's Charter expressed not only the vision of the struggle but addressed the issue of sexism and expressed the desire for women to access greater stability and recognition in social and economic spheres (Hassim, 2006). This form of resistance was significant for women of colour as the Federation mobilised them not only against the apartheid government but also in defiance of the ANC and the patriarchal framework that mediated their autonomy.

The defiance campaigns demonstrated the ability of women to organise and perform in leadership roles. Although the Federation had collapsed by 1963, the mobilisation of women through this organisation demonstration that consciousness raising did not only occur in the highly political manner that was characteristic of male-dominated structures (Hassim, 2006). During the 1980s, the Federation was revived and had created a profile of women's autonomy that showed progression in political activity and commitment to community and family issues. In 1986, the UWCO had a successful project with Rape Crisis in the Campaign against Sexual Abuse, exploring the factors around the rape and abuse of women during apartheid. Activists increasingly sought to create forums in which gender issues were articulated. The political concerns of the struggle were

broadened. As a result, a framework in which women's activism can be influenced by a feminist politics that takes cognisance of the context it is attempting to transform was recognized.

Through organisations such as the ones mentioned above, women were able to demonstrate their leadership as a form of resistance. This form of resistance is perhaps instrumental in deconstructing the discriminatory lens under which women of colour are viewed. These women were committed to reflecting the context out of which their issues arose. These actions reflect progress in acquiring the intellectual and psychosocial spaces in which to transform the deprivation brought on by their marginalisation.

My exploration of the social and political atmosphere for women of colour during apartheid has thus far revealed that women were largely constructed within the realm of support, limited to the militant masculinity of the nationalist movement. Women have similarly experienced tension with the traditionalist or militarised masculinity that has become equated with social and cultural identity (Gqola, 2009; Hassim, 2006). The degree of autonomy women experience is crucial in moving away from a culture of collusion and defining strategies for transforming gender inequality in South Africa.

In chapter four, I will examine how *The Living Dead Girl* demonstrates the construction of women's and men's roles in post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter will explore how women of colour are subjected to a complex set of interrelated factors (race, class and gender) which regulates their agency and socialises sexist and violent means of exploiting and abusing women. The creative component also serves to act as a platform in which the narrative is suited to argue for greater autonomy. I further acknowledge that the creation of these spaces are complex and highly influence the context in which they are situated. However, if we are to pursue an expression of women of colour as complex subjects then it is necessary to explore forms of resistance that reflect a feminist vision for the empowerment of women. In a story titled *Passive Resistance*, Pandit (2010) tells the story of two sisters who resist the apartheid government's attempt to coerce them into silencing any possibility of dissent and self-awareness. Sitting at their school desks for an entire afternoon, the sisters nervously wade through the silence under the angry gaze of their teachers who cannot get a half day off as promised by the apartheid government. Though they are frightened, each girl stands steadfast in the face

of corporal punishment and being shunned. Emerging from the silence and loneliness of the classroom, the sisters connect and stand together in their resistance. It is this act of resistance that they challenge a system that would seek to deprive them of their voices.

CHAPTER FOUR: *THE LIVING DEAD GIRL*

4.1 FEMINIST STRATEGIES IN PERFORMANCE

In South Africa we encounter simplified images of women of colour which reflect servitude, poverty and the burden of financial insecurity. For women of colour 'womanhood' is a concept that is all too often out of reach or not humanizing at all. Women of colour who encounter heteronormative concepts of womanhood must contend with representations of themselves lacking complexity and feelings of inadequacy brought on by their status as marginalised women. As if defined by their victim status, we gaze from afar, concentrating on the construction of women defined by the violence that has happened to them. This portrayal often found in newspapers becomes all too familiar and we skip to the next page adding this story to the repository of the other faceless headlines women of colour occupy.

In this exchange, the audience has not truly seen her diversity or her circumstances and the woman has not had an opportunity to negotiate how she is seen. In *The Art of Asking* (2014) performance artist and musician Amanda Palmer reflects on how she had come to create an experience of street performance in which she could exchange moments of intimacy and connection with people on the street. Having worked as a stripper, Palmer felt that while her body was always gazed at, she was never truly seen and desired a kind of intimacy that felt like sharing with her audience.

Dressed in full white, Palmer created the persona of an eight-foot bride, frozen on milk crates, standing as if to invite audiences for a moment in which to acknowledge each other. Palmer recounts that in exchange for their coins and notes, she would offer each patron a single flower and look that communicated her appreciation. Perhaps the most significant element in these encounters was that her audience embraced in this sacred exchange. Rather than simply dropping their coins into her hat, they stopped to see and to receive her in that moment of intimacy.

In Palmer's autobiography I find an important analogy for how we can begin to re-imagine women of colour in South Africa. Following the demise of the apartheid regime and the establishment of a democratic government, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created. This body had attempted to redefine cultural production in a country where meaningful and intimate encounters across racial groups was not promoted. Although the commission had attempted to reveal and record the atrocities of the apartheid system, its

success in encouraging South Africans to enter more intimate spaces in which the 'face' of the victim is more than a spectacle of violence is also questionable (Pandit, 2010). The injustice of apartheid and colonialism still pervades the lives of South Africans (King, 2008) and is behind the way we gaze at women of colour as objects.

Minutes before each performance of *The Living Dead Girl*, all audience and performer interactions that are common to the performance of theatre are manipulated. The lighting assistant asks the audience outside the theatre to wait outside the dressing room and not at the entrance door. The door opens and I appear to the audience, fashioned after a 'street child' complete with black garbage bag tied around my neck.

A complex interaction is presented to them. My role seems to suddenly pose the question of "What was the difference between *asking* and *begging?*" (Palmer, 2014:52). While the instructions I offered them appeared to mimic those normally announced over a microphone from a faceless voice in the darkness of a lighting box, the audience had a direct and perhaps confrontational presence in front of them. A subversion of the usual protocol means that "There's a much greater element of risk and trust on both sides" (Palmer, 2014:27) as the audience quickly begins to suspect that in that moment they are already in the performance.

Regarding the connection between performer and audience, Palmer (2014:52) states "If asking is a collaboration, begging is a less-connected demand: Begging can't provide value to the giver; by definition, its offers no exchange…Asking is an act of intimacy and trust". Dressed as a street child I reached out to my audience, not for pity but to ask them to share in the intimacy of seeing the characters instead of ducking into the repository of stereotypical images. Each person in the audience was asked to individually enter the dressing room and retrieve a single five cent coin from a scattering of leaves and dirt that lay in front of a dilapidated couch.

As each spectator collected their coin they entered the performance space of a woman dressed as a domestic worker lying across the couch, quietly contemplating the image of her oppression in the mirrors around her[38]. In this moment, the body speaks and what has been inscribed on her body is made visible. Her position as a domestic worker is foregrounded. She appears in 'uniform' with a dustpan and broom and sits on a couch with most of its

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[38] Later in her performance the audience will not be able to view her without seeing their own images reflecting back at them. Once confronted with the Woman's own trapped image they would hopefully question their own internalised discrimination.

stuffing removed. The character also wears school shoes, marking not only her abusive childhood experiences in school but also the childlike manner she will be treated with by her employer. The use of five cent coins is symbolic of the wages she will earn, wages that will not lift her out of poverty but will instead keep her struggling within a capitalist economy. It is a moment of intimacy and connection that quietly confronts the audience moving through a reverse process of picking up instead of dropping coins. While the audience is asked to await further instructions in the small backstage area, they encounter two other characters who also demonstrate an awareness of their internalised violence, victimhood and complicity.

Figure 6: Peschke, M. The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Woman in dressing room

These are not 'happy natives' (Kerr, 1995) ready to entertain with song and dance, and neither do they appear to be unaware of their insubordination as racist and sexist discourse would have them believe (King, 2008). During the performance characters assume positions of agency by demonstrating an awareness of the ways in which their identities are constructed within limited representations of their suffering. As the dynamics of "benevolent paternalism" (King, 2008:13) and 'maternalism' are important concepts to understanding the marginalisation of women of colour, the performance attempts to remove reactions from the audience that would distance their role in concealing violence against women.

As the audience is asked to enter the performance area, they find that the chairs in the auditorium (which has seating on three sides of the acting area) has been removed and that deciding where to sit or stand they must move through the various spaces already set up with performers. The lights are never dimmed so the audience and performers are confronted with a subversion of the distance created by designated spaces in the theatre (Agbebeyi, 2003). Performance artists have often adopted a critical stance towards the hierarchical practices and modes of behaviour carried by formal spaces such as museums and theatres that have not been accessible to feminist politics (Battista, 2011).

Although I had chosen to stage *The Living Dead Girl* in a theatre, I was far more interested in how I could foreground the key concepts of my research by deconstructing and reconfiguring various spaces in the theatre for use in performance. The structuring of the performance and movement through the performance venue affects how the thematic concerns are communicated or read (Agbebeyi, 2003). As stated in Chapter three, physical, psychosocial and intellectual space are significant elements in the make up for a person's sense of selfhood and awareness of their social status (Barnard, 2007). I decided to enact my character's dialogue with the social status by shifting my audience from space to space, causing them to become a part of the play's renegotiation of women in multiple oppressive states (Battista, 2011).

4.2 RE-AUTHORING WOMEN OF COLOUR AS SUBJECTS

Continuing the self-reflective practice of the study, I'd chosen for the characters to share stories that were difficult or traumatizing in tone, but had been cautious never to present the characters purely as incomplete individuals. Depicted only in extremes, women of colour are denied the possibility of being seen (hooks, 1994) and extending an "invitation to broaden public discourse as well as our understanding of ourselves beyond limiting and violent binaries" (Gqola, 2009:72-73).

Wanting to reflect a strong visual component in depicting the presence of the body onstage, I constructed a large tree using a steel frame, foam and red material. The steel frame gave the tree a sinewy and twisted look. I then extended the tree by creating long roots that would reach across the performance space and the auditorium. On a more important level, the tree and its extended roots further represented the interaction between race, class and sex and how these factors had grown into and were still deeply embedded in the social fabric of

contemporary South Africa. The image of roots suffocating as they grow in search of nourishment is also repeated in the play's gesture of speech.

Figure 7: Peschke, M. The Living Dead Girl, 2013, The Red Tree

As the audience settles, the character of the Mother begins to enact her pain, picking up a chain and walking the length of the auditorium. This act signifies the ritual of pain and the burden of motherhood and poverty that beleaguers poor/working class women of colour (hooks, 2000). The Mother, who bemoans the fate of her ill child, was inspired by the story of six-month old Songezo Mbambo[39] and his mother Khanyisile Mbambo (Mchunu Khoza, 2013). I'd found this story compelling as the mother and son's lack of access to financial and medical facilities spoke to the economic abuse of poor women in rural areas. The Mother's performance space consisted of a single metal wash basin reflecting how the home for many rural women becomes a place of struggle (hooks, 2000). The labour system in South Africa further aggravates the economic violence experienced by mother and child as the father

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[39] After falling ill with gastroenteritis, Songezo endured over a month of pain and discomfort while healing form the amputation of his toes and nine fingertips (Mchunu and Khoza, 2013). Songezo had fallen ill with what his unemployed mother believed to be a stomach ache. A few days after he had fallen ill, his condition worsened and his mother took him to a doctor. After receiving pain medication he continued to grow ill. After visits to a number of hospitals, mother and son were taken to Grey's Hospital (in Pietermaritzburg). There he was diagnosed with gastro-enteritis. As he had not been treated early enough, he experienced hypovolemic shock and this caused insufficient blood flow to his extremities. To prevent the spread of gangrene which had set into his hands and feet, his toes and nine fingers were amputated (Mchunu and Khoza, 2013).

figure is caught in unstable employment in the city while the mother remain in a cycle of servitude in the home (Cock and Fakier, 2009).

The subject of hegemonic masculinity features strongly in the play. The Mother communicates an awareness of the complexity that the absence of the father brings stating "You will be angry with me because I must be the chief in our home" (Peschke, 2013). While men work in urban areas, women of colour must adopt a substitute position taking on the burden of finance, family and motherhood in a heteronormative system that does not share opportunities for transformation (hooks, 1994). The Mother is aware that the boy will encounter the desire to construct his masculinity on the sexist and misogynist socialisation of men because his family already occupies a devalued space.

When the audience is guided again into the backstage area, they encounter the interplay between masculinity, complicit behaviours and violent aggression. Sitting in close proximity to the audience Rashaad Rooiland takes in his audience, clasping dried up roses before sharing and exposing the culture of violence that has moulded his selfhood. Rooiland was inspired partially by a report on the "drug-fuelled gang wars" (Swart, 2013:4) of Eldorado Park. While his gesture, dialect and costuming signalled the bravado of gangsters, I'd chosen for the words in his story to reveal just how he'd been inducted as a young boy into a system of violence that offered "a hyper-masculine brotherhood, of belonging, of order and status that a gang offers" (Orford, 2013:18).

Figure 8: Peschke, M. The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Rashaad Rooiland

Moving from viewing the young child's life to that of Rooiland's reminds the audience of the minimal choices young men in economically deprived communities have to face. The performance space around him is decorated with a few pieces of corrugated iron, symbolising the bareness and lifelessness of the community he describes as consisting of sand and stone. As he cannot access a space of privilege in society he resorts to building his masculinity on dominance, force and aggression.

Poverty and low income employment begin to affect both men and women who experience an inability to exercise personal power (Morrell and Morrell, 2011). I wanted the audience to encounter this complex interaction of shame, rejection and sexism through a character that is all too familiar to South African homes. The audience is ushered back into the dressing room, this time seeing the Woman standing with her school shoes in her hand. She shares her relationship with her employer and with men: her employer using her servitude as a means to subordinate her and her male abusers eroding her selfhood while the attempt to reinstate their masculinity though dominance. Like the Mother, she is aware of the cyclical nature of abuse and exploitation stating that she has always occupied the title of a 'girl', never been seen as an independent woman capable of different adult choices.

I wanted to further explore the notion that women of colour could naturally bare pain or that they were devoted to others and not to themselves (Cock and Fakier, 2009; hooks, 1981). While reading numerous stories on women of colour who had been lauded for their efforts in tending to the ill or in opening up their homes to abandoned children, the word 'devotion' often came to mind. I was in awe of these women's efforts but also wanted to explore the silence, longing and endurance behind women who tried to manoeuvre many of the roles assigned to them. The audience encounter Caregiver (Mkhataleli) and Sister at different points of the performance. Outside, Caregiver pleaded with the audience to help her carry two chairs into her space[40], one for herself and one for her daughter whose presence was signified by a night gown. In the theatre, Sister was positioned with a large shoe on her head, standing cautiously with the broken plates and furniture around her. Although these images clearly depict both women in pain or loss, the accompanying text allows the audience to see the faces behind the pain.

Figure 9: Peschke, M. The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Caregiver with Chairs

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[40] Confronted with an uncomfortable moment, the audience mostly didn't seem sure of whether or not to assist. Out of three performances, one young man opted to step forward and assist on the second night of the performance.

Figure 10: Peschke, M. The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Sister posing with shoe on her head surrounded by broken plates and furniture

According to Robert Morrell and Penny Morrell (2011), the rural homestead stood for the remaining authority black males could encounter after the racist and capitalist systems of apartheid dominated urban areas. Rural areas had however not escaped the racist and sexist politics of apartheid as the stability of the family unit and culture were disabled. The home which stood as an extension of the tradition of rural life is arguably a complex space in which ownership of masculine power is retaken (Cock and Fakier, 2009; Morrell and Morrell, 2011). In a number of academic readings I had come across both men and women subscribed to retaking ownership through sexist and patriarchal behaviours[41] specifically when they believe the traditional value system of the home to be under threat. Caretaker mourns the loss not only of her daughter but also of a value system which has effectively adopted the race, sex and class discourse of apartheid (Morrell and Morrell, 2011).

Figure 11: Peschke, M, The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Policeman and Jemimah during interrogation

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[41] See: *"Women enjoy punishment": Attitudes and Experiences of Gender-based Violence among PHC nurses in Rural South Africa* by Julia Kim and Mmatshilo Motsei, and *Male Teachers talk about Gender Violence: "Zulu men demand respect"* by Deevia Bhana, Naydene de Lange and Claudia Mitchell.

Figure 12: Peschke, M, The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Aluminium cup chandelier

In the final moments of the performance the Sister's story becomes entangled with that of her brother, the Policeman and Jemimah, a young coloured woman attempting to report her rape. Jemimah's text positions the body as a primary site of experience in the performance, invoking the violation of her sexual rights and the relationship with the shame of her body. Jemimah and the Policeman symbolically perform her rape using an aluminium cup and his baton. A number of cups hang (styled after a chandelier) as a macabre reminder of rape in South Africa and the secondary violence women experience when reporting rape.

Figure 13: Peschke, M, The Living Dead Girl, 2013, Policeman and Sister with skipping rope

A skipping rope is used to symbolise one of the more powerful confrontations in the play. Brother and Sister stand on either end, battling to keep their balance as they lean outwards. The tough exterior of the policeman is stripped away as his sister pleads with him, insisting that he recognise their shared battle in trying to reclaim their selfhood. His response mirrors the sexist upbringing of his childhood and his collusion with sexist discourse. He does however reveal a very important vulnerability, his lack of identification with a system that

rejects who he is. His sister echoes this sense of vulnerability saying "I am fleeing just like you" (Peschke, 2013).

The Woman walks into the performance area sweeping up pieces of the tree before stopping to look at it. Using HIV/AIDS as a metaphor, the statement the text makes is that the South African government has neglected to adequately address residual issues affecting women of colour and that South African society will need to carefully examining the role of privilege, complicity and silence in gender inequality. The audience is finally asked to collect and read statements instructing them to approach specific characters before leaving their coins with those characters. The act of sharing then becomes complete. Under sexist and racist discourse the spaces occupied by women of colour are limited. The crisis that gender inequality presents means that a framework for representation, informed by feminist politics, is needed in order to deconstruct hierarchies built on race, sex and class politics. In this project I have attempted to explore women of colour in subject positions by creating spaces that offer alternative representations and self-awareness.

CONCLUSION:

My use of performance, as a way to research the constructions of gender in post-apartheid South Africa, has shown that the performance of personal narratives can present women of colour with a means of seeking alternative spaces of representation. This is significant in the context of South Africa where the inclusion of capitalism and the normalisation of violence has relegated women of colour to increasingly subordinated spaces. The process of creating and staging *The Living Dead Girl* was highly influenced by my awareness of the politics of race, class and sex that play out on women's bodies in South Africa.

Despite democracy, men and women in South Africa still uncritically ascribe to complicit behaviours which reinforce sexist and racist discourse. I would argue that the practice/s I have experimented with in this study may present the creation of spaces, in which the silent and volatile spaces women of colour occupy may be made visible through spoken word and performance. Through the performance of self-narrative, I was able to challenge and deconstruct the silent spaces I occupied and to articulate and make visible how I had been constructed as woman of colour.

In this study, I have discussed how the construction of identity, subject and personhood can create exclusion or participation in the lives of women of colour. That feminist theatre practice creates spaces which allow for the body to be visible in performance, presents a much larger implication for how women can begin to speak for and represent themselves. This form of reflexivity that has come to characterise feminist performance practice redefines what is political and in turn plays a significant role in critical analysis and the making of culture. Where previously feminist theory was exclusive in its approach, the focus has now shifted so that the inclusion of race, sex and class politics means that we explore historical, social and economic factors (hooks, 1994, 2000).

I explored methodological processes which open up spaces for marginalised voices, making visible the inscribed meanings which operate on the body. The plays and performances have collectively played a significant role in developing strategies of resistance by constructing approaches to performance which address concerns specific to women of colour. The use of autobiography, storytelling and poetry produce modes of resistance defying "gender roles, racial and class stereotypes" (Case, 2008:104). They also feature women speaking in their own dialect, a significant strategy employed to make visible the ethnic identity of women of colour. The performance art pieces, particularly that of Tracey Rose, similarly work to

deconstruct and understand hierarchal codes, and reject the construction of the female body as an object. The body, situated in a position of agency, is then used to undermine social and political ideology.

I then examined how the subordination of women of colour has been influenced by the racist and sexist discourse of colonial and apartheid South Africa. Particular attention was paid to the construction of Sara Baartman as the 'Hottentot Venus'. The spectacle of Baartman was significant to the discussion of how the subordination of women came to be naturalised through difference. I explored how these categories came to be legitimised, treated as biological truths and embodied in the silent spaces women of colour occupied. Women of colour are not only censored and punished for their physical difference but are also subject to social differences, confining them to servitude and poverty. The normalisation of these categories are however disrupted by revealing that they are composed to maintain gendered processes and the social organisation of people. The emergence of marginalised voices through women's organisations, during apartheid, was viewed as a sign of resistance and making the personal politics of women more visible.

In my final chapter I provided an analysis of my feminist performance art piece titled *The Living Dead Girl*. Here I examined the impact of gendered processes on women of colour by positioning the body as a primary site of knowledge in performance. In this framework the rhetoric of racist and sexist discourse is deconstructed so that a sense of subject can be sought. I attempted to argue that the autobiographical and self-reflexive nature of narrative as a form of expression provides the opportunity to view social and political discourse under a more critical lens (Gqola, 2009). For women of colour the space that performance strategies provide allows for the shroud of silence to be lifted, making space for diversity, visibility and subjectivity.

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