

QUEERING CAPE TOWN

Queer in Africa III



Curated by Zethu Matebeni

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INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to think of Cape Town other than gay. The city has notoriously become known as the gay capital of Africa. This is an odd characterisation. How can an African city be gay, in the midst of such homophobia? Does Cape Town see itself as gay because of its colonial settler history related to imprisonment in Robben Island? Or does it become gay because every year in summer, white gay men flock the streets of Greenpoint, Cape Town to party topless? Or is it gay because elsewhere in South Africa there is a lesbian city, a transgender city, a bisexual city, an intersex city?

This booklet is interested in rethinking the notion of a gay Cape Town. The city, for many, is not an easy one to negotiate. For most black people, Cape Town functions as a form of a closet, a place you come to during certain hours of the day, or night to offer one's labour and leave at the end of the day. It is not a place one lives in. Living takes place in the townships and suburbs, under the bridges of highways, or in public parks. For many black people who are not just gay, Cape Town is not a gay capital of Africa.

Cape Town is a gay capital only for those who can enjoy all the privileges associated with the category gay.

And to be gay, in a Cape Town sense, is to have the luxury of not having to negotiate all forms of class, gender, sex and racial injustices and oppressions associated with post/apartheid identification.

To assert Cape Town as a gay capital of Africa is **not** to say the city is non-normative; that it celebrates difference; that it is open to ALL persons presumed gay (and here it is important to highlight that lgbtiq people are not necessarily Gay).

Queering Cape Town is a collaboration between activists, artists, students and academics as a way of interrogating the city for the queer – that is for those deemed non-normative and not desirable - bodies that exist on the margins of the city. These are bodies that unsettle the white able-bodied (homo)normativity of the city (as seen in the work by Genna Gardini¹): black lesbians, trans people; sex workers; queer persons; gender non-conforming people; disabled bodies; poor gay men of colour; poor queer persons; black radical queer feminists. These are bodies for whom gay Cape Town suffocates. Essentially, these are the bodies who disappear in the idealised tourist version of the city². Bodies that even when they are the most visible in the form of drag queens³ or married under the now ten-year old Civil Union Act⁴, there is still much more to understand about their lived realities.

This booklet follows a series of interventions in the city, including the Alternative Inclusive Pride Network, an intervention aimed at raising awareness about inclusivity in gay pride events in the city. This intervention was started by a group of black lesbians and queer people who felt marginalised by the exclusive nature of Cape Town Pride, as seen in a published letter to the Mayor of Cape Town.

Pride itself is a site of contestation. Recent pride events in South Africa have testified to this dynamicⁱ (Matebeni, 2015). In Cape Town and Johannesburg, where pride has a longer history, challenges posed to pride organisers have included: lack of political engagement with social issues such as violence; access to space; pride blamed for focusing on commercial ventures benefiting only a few; pride turning into a party; and lack of interest or investment in racial divisions within the lgbt community, and not taking seriously some of the issues affecting black lesbians in the townships, particularly violent crimes committed on the basis of hatred towards black lesbians.

The second intervention is the three-part symposium series 'Queer in Africa' that I have been convening since 2014. The essay below by Dr Stella Nyanzi focuses on the third instalment of this series, **Queer in Africa? The Cape Town Question**. In this series students, artists, activists and scholars were invited to engage with the question of what it means to queer Cape Town. Queer in this sense is a verb, not only a way of being, but also a way of doing. The abstracts below will form part of a more extensive publication of **Queering Cape Town**.

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i. See Matebeni, Zethu. 2015. Sexual Minorities in South Africa. In: James D. Wright (editor-in chief), International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2nd edition, Vol 21. Oxford: Elsevier, pp 744-749.

The Executive Mayor
The City of Cape Town

Appeal for Support of the Alternative Inclusive Pride Network

We write this letter under the banner, Alternative Inclusive Pride, a Network of organisations and individualsⁱⁱ representing the needs and interests of many lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersex, pansexual, asexual, and queer + citizens of the Western Cape. Over the past few years, many of us have been involved with the annual event, Cape Town Pride. We have witnessed the ways in which this event has continued to provoke the outrage of the most marginalised in this cityⁱⁱⁱ. One example was through the controversial theme “Jou ma se...” in 2009^{iv}, which already divided a fractured community along racial, class and cultural lines.

This year, Cape Town Pride has returned with its insensitive and insulting slogans for the 2016 festival “Gay/Proud/Colourblind”, now entrenching separation along race, gender, class and sexual orientation. The resurgence of the organiser’s insults come after

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ii. Laurie Gaum, Liesl Theron, Estian Smit, Lucinda van den Heever, Alex Muller, Nyx McLean

iii. Thurlo Cicero <http://www.news24.com/MyNews24/Uniting-cultures-of-Cape-Town-20150219>

iv. Mamba Online <http://www.mambaonline.com/2009/02/12/cape-town-pride-turmoil/>

many demands from this Network for Cape Town Pride to be an inclusive and representative 10-day event for all members of LGBTIPAQ+ communities. Most rigorously since 2014, the Alternative Inclusive Pride Network, through a community-elected Oversight Committee, has consistently been demanding that Cape Town Pride be accountable to the organisational principles and values of good governance and transparency. These demands have been met with numerous delays, members being misled, and further marginalised.

As members of the LGBTIPAQ+ community, we write to the Executive Mayor of the City of Cape Town requesting the Executive Mayor's support and intervention in a festival that attracts many tourists in the name of gay and queer people. It must be made clear that Cape Town Pride as it stands does not represent diverse gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, sexually diverse and queer groups. It only represents a small number of people who subscribe to the global label 'gay'. Not all LGBTIPAQ+ persons are gay. To misrepresent multitudes of people under this category is invisibilising the experiences that many people have because of who they are, how they present themselves and where they are located. Among the LGBTIPAQ+ community are faith communities, diverse population groups, communities of refugees, asylum seekers, sex workers, persons living in rural areas, township residents, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, poor people, to name a few. The current events under the Cape Town Pride theme "Gay/Proud/Colourblind" unjustly excludes many of these people from participating in an event endorsed and supported by the City of Cape Town. 'Colourblind' goes without saying as a slap-in-the face for a Pride event that is known to be racist.^v

As we understand, Cape Town Pride is not currently registered as

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 v. *Lisa Isaacs*, <http://beta.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/cape-town-pride-march-racist-1820822>; and *Barbara Maregele* http://groundup.org.za/article/gay-and-lesbian-activists-call-racist-cape-town-pride-be-more-inclusive_2725

an NPO, even though on its website claims it as a Section 21 NPO^{vi}. This is misleading. There is no functioning board and this has been the case for at least the past three years. Good governance principles, accountability and transparency have been compromised. The absence of financial reports further exacerbates the legitimacy of an organisation that claims its representative role of a community and that applies for funding, and collects sponsorship and other benefits, including from the City, on behalf of such communities. Furthermore, current allegations and legal determinations of fraud and theft made against the festival director^{vii}, who acts with impunity, put the organisation in a compromising position and jeopardise trust and honesty office bearers should embody.

Pride is an important festival to many lives. It represents moments in which we celebrate, mourn, interrogate, learn and unlearn ways to collectively advance LGBTIPAQ+ rights and causes. This has been the legacy of Pride in South Africa since the first Pride March organised by anti-apartheid activists Simon Nkoli and Bev Ditsie in Johannesburg in 1991. In 1993 Cape Town activists including Theresa Raizenberg, Midi Achmat, Zackie Achmat, Jack Lewis, Bassie Nelson, under Abigale (Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians)^{viii} led the first Pride march in this city, raising awareness about people's intersecting struggles along race, class, gender identity, disability, nationality, sexual orientation and HIV status.

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 vi. <http://www.capetownpride.org/>;
<http://www.mambaonline.com/2015/12/03/cape-town-pride-change-controversial-2016-theme/>

vii. <http://www.tesolsa.co.za/>

viii. *Shaun De Wall and Anthony Manion (eds). 2006. PRIDE: Protest and Celebration. Jacana.*

It is in this context that we appeal to the Executive Mayor to intervene and support this Network in ensuring that Cape Town Pride is an inclusive, accountable and transparent festival for all community members in this City by:

- Holding Cape Town Pride accountable, in particular for its lack of transparency in its sponsorship from the City of Cape Town and other related financial support.
- Ensuring that Cape Town Pride is inclusive of all mentioned communities. We request that the City assist in making this event inclusive by providing transport in order to procure 7 buses for 350 people from the different locations in Cape Town. This could be facilitated by a grant to the following registered NPOs to implement: Free Gender; Gender DynamiX; and Triangle Project.
- Being critical of non-inclusivity, exclusionary and elitist Cape Town Pride events that do not represent all groups and openly marginalise people on the basis of class, race, location, gender, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, gender identity, expression, and body diversity.

Until Cape Town Pride is inclusive and representative of all those marginalised in this City, we will continue to raise our voices and march under the slogan:

“Kwanele – Nothing About Us Without Us!”

The Alternative Inclusive Pride Network

ALTERNATIVE INCLUSIVE PRIDE NETWORK

Images by Nikki Carter



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QUEERING CAPE TOWN'S POSTURE AS AFRICA'S GAY CAPITAL

Queering Cape Town

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“Hey Chantelle,” I shouted to the snow-white lady smoking a cigarette, “Please wait for me a little longer. I am going to the toilets to do something with someone.”

“To the toilets, to do something with someone?” Chantelle repeated with mischievous emphasis.

“Yes, exactly,” I shouted back, competing with the booming music playing inside Zer021 Lounge.

“Okay,” she said and then smoked some more. She blew out a puff of smoke that rose up into the dark atmosphere of the dimly lit gay nightclub in the heart of Cape Town. “Thirty more minutes,” she said, and continued dancing with her partner.

“I won’t be long,” I said as I darted off with determination in my step.

I found my friend, V. He was still seated in the side-room lobby next to the bar, where I had left him at the end of the Nude Reading which was the highlight of that evening. I grabbed his hand excitedly and bent my head close to his face.

“We can actually do it now,” I said. “I have thirty minutes before my chauffeur heads back to Stellenbosch,” I explained.

“Fine!” V replied in his calm matter-of-fact way.

“Yes,” I responded as I pumped the air with both fists – in symbolic celebration of the materialising of a queer proposal that V and I discussed throughout the interlude of the Nude Reading.

“Let’s go to the toilets, then,” he said as he rose from his seat positioned in front of his partner.

Cutting our way through small groups of people conversing, couples dancing, and past others sharing drinks in the busy nightclub, we made our way to the corner holding the two doors facing each other and leading to the binary gendered toilets. In the narrow corridor between the doors, V pointed at the labels showing pictures of a woman and a man respectively.

“Shall we go in there to really dismantle the gender binaries?” V asked with a smile that touched his big brown eyes.

He was pointing at the door with a picture label of a man; the gents’ door. My colonised brain froze for a second. I immediately pictured black and white peeing dicks raised above the open mouths of urinals. Cut dicks. Uncut dicks. All peeing in unison above the urinals I imagined to be lined up in a row along one of the walls behind that door.

“Eeoww, no thanks,” I silently thought to myself. For a brief moment, I experienced the distress of having to go into a wrongly gendered toilet. Nigel Patel’s⁵ scholarship about the challenges that transgender persons face in public toilets came flooding into my mind. The need to decolonise toilets so that they become safe spaces for gender non-binary people cannot be over-emphasised. Binary gendered toilets routinely create anxiety and danger for queer bodies in public.

“Do they have urinals in there?” I asked loudly.

V burst into amused laughter that lit up his eyes. He raised his palms with beautiful long fingers into the air. Calmly, he walked over to the door with a picture label of a woman; the ladies’ door. He pushed the door and led me inside. The walls of the toilets in Zer021 are a loud hot-pink colour. A lady stood washing her hands at the twin sink. For a slight moment, she stopped rubbing her hands together as she stared through the mirror - first at V, then at me, and then back at my friend’s body. Although he noticed the bland stare, V completely ignored the handwasher and instead reached for my hand as he led me into one of the available toilet cubicles. Just before we pushed the cubicle door shut, another lady emerged from one of the other cubicles and naughtily winked at me. It was not difficult to guess what her mind imagined we were about to do to each other in the tiny toilet with hot-pink walls.

Inside the tiny toilet cubicle, I stood face-to-face with V. He was cool and laid back as usual. I slowly took in his clean-shaven head, his forehead which signalled he was taller than myself, and those big brown innocent eyes.

“Okay. Let’s do this,” he said softly.

Slowly, he lifted his woollen jersey over his head. As it came off, I saw well-shaved armpits. I imagined they smelt a cool masculine scented musk deodorant or another.

"This is it," V told me as his removed jersey revealed an impressive pair of biceps. I stood still and quiet. I paid reverence to the first transgender man's vest I had seen in life. I took it in. Light brown. Beige. Dark cream. The colour could have been any of these three. The vest was made of firm netting akin to the material used to make bras for big-breasted women such as myself. It was sleeveless. The middle was padded with a white film on the inside of the vest.

"Can I touch?" I asked.

"Sure," he said as he pulled the vest material to reveal the padding on the inside.

"Isn't it too tight?" I asked as my fingers ran over the vest that firmly held my friend's chest intact.

"No. It is not too tight. Luckily, these vests come in sizes. My partner bought me the correct size from the United Kingdom when she visited."

"Wow! I like this colour because one does not have to wash it every day. It does not show dirt," I said.

"True. Also, the colour is supposed to be as close to the colour of one's skin as possible," V explained.

"Turn around. Let's see the back," I instructed.

He obediently turned his back to me.

“This is very effective,” I said. “I thought that you had undergone top-surgery to remove the breasts. Actually, your muscles all over are very well-toned. Your body muscles are manlier than when I last saw you last year, or even the year before” I continued.

“No. It is just the gym. See, I love the gym. It sorts me out. Even my worries about writing the doctoral thesis disappear into nothingness when I am in the gym,” V said.

“Thank you for showing me what a transman’s vest looks like. I feel very lucky. All that I knew before now is the rolls of bandage or tape that another friend in Uganda showed me. He needed me to buy him medicine to treat his body which was wounded because he had taped his bust area too tightly and for long. When he removed the tape he had sores and wounds which became septic because of constant binding,” I explained.

“The things that people endure in order to right their gender identities are unbelievable,” V said as he dressed up.

“But I heard that South Africa is the best place in Africa to have the different gender reassignment surgeries done. In fact, the first FtM chest that I saw post-operative belonged to Victor Mukasa who had his top surgery done here in Cape Town,” I replied.

“True. But the problem is that the surgery is very expensive... too expensive to be affordable by most people who need it,” my friend responded knowingly.

I silently thought about B whose journey with and without feminine breasts I had witnessed over the three years of the different chapters of the 'Queer in Africa' symposium. During the first chapter, B was very shy, uncertain, lacked self-esteem, and constantly bit the fingers on one hand. Conversation revealed a highly intelligent but very self-conscious person. I was impressed by B's proposed doctoral research because of the tentative idea to conduct some fieldwork in Uganda about factors that were leading sexual minorities to flee from the country in search of asylum⁶. At that time, B was using a gendered pronoun. The subsequent year, during the second chapter of the symposium series, B revealed plans to undergo top surgery. I remember that when we were reporting the take-home lessons we had each derived from this particular symposium, one of my striking points was about how I had learnt of the possibility of queering biology through obtaining surgery that removed typically female breasts and replaced them with gender-indeterminate ones. During the course of the next year, I followed news of the surgery on B's Facebook timeline. And in October 2016, at the third symposium, I complimented B on the complete transformation. I immediately noticed an energetic bounce in B's step, a straightened confident posture that was a reversal from the previous slouched one, a firm handshake, and beaming smile that touched the eyes behind the spectacles. We briefly talked about the healing process. I learnt that even after surgery, the nipples were able to regain their tingly sensation which could be encouraged by a gentle tapping. I learnt that B now identified with a non-binary gender identity and no longer used the female gender pronoun 'she'. I directly asked about the pronoun to use and B advised me to use the plural form 'they'. I also asked about whether B still identified as a lesbian or whether their sexual identity was now either back to heterosexual or other. B laughed and explained that they had not yet worked out that aspect of their sexual identity. B's journey with the (mis)gendered body and (mis)gender identities is perhaps the most radically queer/ queerly radical experience

I ever had. I found it productive for thinking that unlike many transsexual persons whose reassignment crossed from one fixed gender category into the other, B's gender reassignment was into gender-queerness that was wonderfully neither male nor female, and yet both male and female.

V and I walked out of the toilet cubicle together. In the corner of the bathroom, right next to the sinks was a condom-dispenser filled with double-packs of red rubber rings. "HEALTH 4 MEN: top to bottom" the bold words on the condom-dispenser announced. I silently wondered why everything – well, most things – focused on saving men. Even in a toilet marked with a picture label for ladies, the only condom dispenser beaming with wrappers was manufactured with the targeted purpose of saving men from catching HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

"Let me stock up on these free condoms," I called out to V who was leaving.

I dug my grabby hands into one of the mouths of the condom-dispenser. I took out four double-packs of red condoms rolled into neat rings. I suspected that they smelt kinkily of strawberry-jam. I folded my loot into two and carefully tucked them into the double EE cups of my bra. I thought briefly of the four pairs of bold and beautiful bare breasts of women who had just treated us to some delectable Nude Reading!

"How many firsts can one pack into a few days of queerness?" I silently wondered, as I walked out of the toilets at Zer021 and into the dim-lit pub.

Chantelle was grinding and rolling with Earl. It was beautiful to watch. I stood there staring at their passionate platonic erotic dance. They were both smoking. Their smoking went well with dancing. I loved the creative energy of youth.

“When you are done dancing erotically, let’s head back home to Stellenbosch,” I called out.

“Yes, let’s!” Chantelle dramatically pushed her dance partner away from her.

I laughed aloud. I found Chantelle very likeable. On the way out of the Zer021 Lounge, we found Bronwen and Tanya, our two other travel companions with whom we had travelled from Stellenbosch University to Cape Town to attend the third chapter of the ‘Queer in Africa’ symposium series.



Our daily road trip from Stellenbosch to Cape Town for the 'Queer in Africa' symposium and back is an important locus from which my reflections in this chapter are situated. We made this trip for the three consecutive days of the symposium. Perhaps, unlike many other participants of the symposium, we were emblematic of the multitudes of outsiders who sojourn into Cape Town for things queer. My fellow travellers into Cape Town for the symposium were always queer and diverse.

Chantelle, the car owner, drove with spunk and spirit. In the first few seconds of our first day travelling together, she laughingly warned us about people complaining about her bold driving. This she said, just as she jerkily changed gears and stepped on the accelerator, as we sped down Van Riebeeck Road in Stellenbosch, that Thursday afternoon. Having grown up on the bumpy highways and pot-filled roads in Uganda, I was not afraid of any driver on the orderly roads in South Africa. In fact, I rather liked how Chantelle cursed and swore in both English and Afrikaans at slow drivers ahead of her on the N2 Highway into Cape Town.

I was amused at how she sang loudly, even rapped, together with Earl, her co-driver, when a groovy song was blasting from the car's CD player. I learnt some lyrics of Beyonce's songs from the music in the car. Chantelle is a white lesbian with a Coloured partner, a queer activist, and postgraduate student studying at the university. From my observations, I gathered that she appropriates her whiteness to show others how white privilege functions as a routinised vector of oppression. At the symposium, she presented some of her preliminary analysis of a component of her qualitative research among White and Black lesbians at Stellenbosch University⁷. In her work, Chantelle Claire Croeser analyses how compared to Black lesbians, race buffers White lesbians against the dangers of living in conservative Stellenbosch.

Earl, Chantelle's bestie, is a Coloured gay man with a sweet disposition, and a postgraduate student researching about the use of Cape Afrikaans in education. He explained that everyday idioms of Cape Afrikaans transform faster than those of Afrikaner Afrikaans language. For example, rather than saying that the household head is "the person who wears the trousers in the home", the Cape Afrikaans idiom for this is the "person who holds the television remote-control." I found his research very interesting. Earl is also the middle child to a single mother who lives in Atlantis. When we were discussing the presentation about mis-gendered toilets, Earl intimated to us that he grew up using a bucket for a toilet, similar to many people living in South Africa's informal settlements. The children took turns cleaning the bucket-toilet. Sometimes, cleaning was particularly challenging because a user failed to properly aim their excreta or urine. Notions of the toilet as a private space are totally dismantled when one considers the multitudes of households using buckets for toilet. The commonplace practice of using the toilet for a quickie loses meaning in this context. Moreover, one cannot dispose of menstruation materials or semen-filled condoms, or even dental dams in the communal bucket-toilet.

In fact, the gendering or mis-gendering of toilets becomes a fuzzy discussion when the bucket-system of defecation is the context of analysis. Questions of gendering the toilet might move to consider the relative ease of taking a piss or shitting while balanced over an open bucket tucked in a corner of the crowded house. In the car, Earl often sang and rapped alongside Chantelle. He also sometimes lit a cigarette for Chantelle to smoke as she drove all of us up and down the highway.

“This is the first queer crowd where I was completely comfortable,” Earl declared on our way back from the first evening of the symposium.

“Totally!” Bronwen agreed. “It has such a diverse composition. It is not like the white majority queer spaces we have at Stellies,” she continued.

“Fucking white privilege even among the queers,” Earl said with disgust, causing me to silently wonder about Chantelle’s feelings towards these loud disavowals of white privilege by the passengers in her car.

She was white, after all. I remained silent. I was a mere passenger carpooling to and from the symposium.

Bronwen is a beautiful and very light-skinned Coloured postgraduate student researching about menstruation materials, but with plans to further develop her thesis into doctoral research about experiences of menstruation among transgender men. I was really impressed by her research ideas and encouraged her not to postpone the doctoral studies too long lest her ideas got stolen by ambitious others. While race registers are easy for South Africans to read because of their shared histories of

apartheid, I particularly struggled reading the race categories of people who were as fair-skinned as Bronwen. For me, she was White. I was wrong, although her skin was indeed very fine and fair. Her deep black hair was very long and silky with the most bouncy waves of curls. Her deep lipstick was always impeccable, flashy red and brilliantly contrasted with her fair skin. On our first shared trip, as we discussed Earl's study about Cape Afrikaans spoken by Coloured peoples, I asked about Bronwen's race category. Everybody in the car responded in unison that she was Coloured. In addition to highlighting the complexity of South Africa's race categorisations, Bronwen also highlighted the impossibility of adequate sexual identity classification.

"I am a pansexual. That is my preferred sexual identity, although it is not provided for under the LGB category," she said on the second day of carpooling in Chantelle's speedy car.

"Oh," I exclaimed, feigning ignorance.

"Yes. I am pansexual," Bronwen repeated.

"What does this pansexual term mean?" I asked foolishly.

"It means that my sexuality is fluid. Although I have been with a man, it was not so great. I have also been involved with a woman, you know," she said.

"Okay," I agreed.

I thought about the ever-increasing acronym. When I first got involved in queer scholarship and activism, there were only two letters: 'L' for lesbian and 'G' for gay men. The business of identity politics and sexual identity labelling was a lot easier, much less

messy, and perhaps still as erroneously simplistic as it is today. And then the 'B' for the bisexual category fractured the overly simplistic binary polarisation between heterosexual people who are sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex, on the one hand, and homosexual people who are sexually attracted to members of the same sex, on the other hand. The bisexual category represented those people who were both heterosexual and homosexual – whether sequentially or simultaneously.

Bisexuality complicates any discussion about sexual orientation.

And then the 'T' for the trans collective joined the acronym – whether as transgender, transsexual, transvestite or just trans. LBGT further complicated definitions of sexual identity that were based on the falsified idea that there exist only two genders that are signalled by the biological, physiological, anatomical, endocrinal and other bodily sex characteristics of all human beings. The broad category of non-conforming gender identities dismantled simple binary categorisations of gender. At the third chapter of the 'Queer in Africa' symposium series, I learnt of the new category within the Trans movement of individuals who self-identified as belonging to a non-binary gender-identity and often preferred the plural pronoun 'they'. The physicality of two genders was further complicated by the growing body of knowledge created about the lives of intersex persons. Thus, the recognition of intersexuality expanded the acronym to LGBTI, with the addition of the 'I' for intersex people. And then came 'Q' for the queer addition, making the acronym LGBTIQ. There are diverse interpretations of this letter including Queer, Quitting, or Questioning. While the movements in North America and Europe embraced and appropriated the label 'queer' from Nazi Germany's segregation of homosexuals, there is still a mixed

reaction towards this labelling within different LGBTI groups in Africa (Epprecht 2004). It was thus interesting that the series of symposia was named 'Queer in Africa'. More recent additions to the acronym include the letter 'A' and the symbol '+'. The letter 'A' variously refers to allies, activists, advocates, or ambassadors – who may or may not be homosexual or of non-conforming gender identities although they work for the broad cause of LGBTIQ+ rights and wellbeing. Another meaning of the letter 'A', that was mentioned in the car from Stellenbosch, is 'asexual'. Finally for now, in the acronym, the plus symbol includes any other non-heteronormative identities that may not be included within the LGBTIQA combination.

This plus symbol in the LGBTIQA+ acronym highlights an important awareness of the complexity of both sexual orientation and gender identity, by flagging that there are perhaps other forms of being sexual and that are still ineligible, unspoken and unnamed.

Bonwen's self-identity of pansexuality might be among those categories of non-heteronormative sexual identities covered by the '+' symbol in the LGBTIQA+ acronym.

When it came to my turn to own up about my identity, I revealed that although I was firmly heterosexual and comfortably cisgender, I also identified as queer.

There was an awkward silence in the car after my revelation. I did not bother to explain further because nobody was daring enough to probe me for more details. But in the longish silence, I was certain that I had just shocked the comfort zones of queer categories for my co-passengers.

Chantelle, Earl, Bronwen and I were the four regular co-travellers from Stellenbosch University to Cape Town for the third chapter of the 'Queer in Africa' series of symposia. We had occasional passengers who joined the trip to and from Cape Town for one day only. There was Tanya, a student of microbiology who identified as a gay woman because the term 'lesbian' had many negative connotations in her conservative Christian family. There was also Daniel, a make-up wearing, hair dyeing, story spinning gay White student of chemical engineering who identified as a twink and a "slut against slut-shaming" at the university. I was impressed by his speech for the Student Representative Council campaigns in which he was running. He shared the speech, stored on his smart phone and asked for ways to improve it. And lastly, there was also Owen, an androgynous and beautiful student of creative writing who travelled with us in order to attend an audition to act in a drama production and later join the symposium in the afternoon.



All seven of us admitted that Cape Town was way queerer than our own locale – Stellenbosch, which was described as very conservative, Christian, and closed against queer spaces in its midst. Daniel recounted how the night before, a bouncer at Mystix ridiculed him for wearing flashy make-up. The bouncer even went further to state that although the entrance fee was twenty rands per person, it had hiked up to thirty rands for men flaunting make-up on their faces. This led to telling conversations about the nationwide controversy over two men who were photographed while kissing at the Stellenbosch University's annual 'Kiss-in-the-Avenue' event called 'Soen in die Laan', and their picture published on the front page of the students' newspaper *Die Matie* (see Jones 2010). I also learnt about the heterosexist and racist welcome events called 'Skakels' during which new residents attend a dance where partners are picked based on shoes anonymously thrown into the centre of the dance-floor. Non-Whites and queers are excluded because White male dancers can reject to dance with shoes belonging to a person of another race (for details see Du Toit 2015). The students in the car variously lamented about the lack of affirming safe spaces for queer people at Stellenbosch University. Three forums organised for non-heteronormative students at the university – namely Queer House, Safe Space, and Lesbian Gay Bisexual – were all reportedly alienating of people who were non-white and had non-conforming gender identities. White privilege, particularly the dominance of White Afrikaner gay men, held the pinnacle of power at both Queer House and Safe Space. Lesbian Gay Bisexual was totally invisibilising of non-conforming gender identities, queerness, fluidity of gendered sexualities, and allies who identified with the cause rather than their sexual or gender identities. Chantelle's discussion of race and gender based on the analysis of qualitative data collected among White lesbians in Stellenbosch thus illuminated how whiteness and masculinity complicated the experiences of exclusion for other queers located in the same space.

In the car, I realised that although both cities were located in South Africa with the liberal Constitution whose Bill of Rights protects LGBTIQA+, compared to Stellenbosch, Cape Town was indeed the Gay Capital of Africa. We all variously idealised Cape Town as the happening place where queer folks of all hues, shapes, creeds, races, genders, orientations, ages, nationalities, income brackets, citizenship statuses, religions, political party affiliations, and so forth were safe to be queer. The analytical comparison between these two South African locations was very telling. Even in South Africa, Cape Town is a lot queerer than other spaces within the very same national boundaries. This confirms Andrew Tucker's (2009:188) observation that: "Cape Town has tried to position itself as one of the most accepting locations on the continent towards individuals with queer desire – in some cases even going so far as to contrast itself favourably with 'less tolerant' cities in the country."





Unlike the other sojourners in the car from Stellenbosch to Cape Town, I was the only foreigner visiting South Africa from the African continent – in Uganda specifically. Zethu Matebeni discusses the striking similarity between the pronunciations of the words 'queer' and 'kwerekwere' – the local derogatory label employed for African foreigners particularly during xenophobic fervour in South Africa (see also Warner and Finchilescu 2003). For me, as a non-South African, there has never been a doubt about Cape Town being the Pink Paradise of Africa, the Gay Capital of Africa, the Queer Haven for African homosexual rejects expelled from their home countries due to homophobic legal, political, social and cultural regimes.

I know many Ugandan queers living as asylum-seekers, refugees and resettled citizens in Cape Town.

Relative to my own positionality within Africa where I am both a Ugandan national by birth and upbringing, as well as a long-time resident of The Gambia where I married a national and bore him

three children, South Africa's Cape Town is invariably the queer oasis of Africa. Given Uganda's legislative regime which enacted the Anti-Homosexuality legislation over five years (i.e. from October 2009 to February 2014) and The Gambia's National Assembly which also passed the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act No. 11 of 2014 which made aggravated homosexuality a crime, South Africa's 1994 Constitution whose Bill of Rights which names sexual orientation among the grounds upon which citizens are protected from discrimination, is both emancipating and protective of queers. Although it is neither a panacea nor a magic bullet that solves all homophobia-associated violations, the constitutional recognition and protection of sexual and gender minorities provides legislative insulation against homophobia and structural modes of redress in the event of related hate-crimes. These constitutional protections, freedoms and entitlements are unavailable in the vast majority of African jurisdictions where same-sex sexualities are either criminalised or otherwise invisibilised and silenced by the laws. As I listened to South Africans, Capetonians critiquing, criticising and condemning the illusions within the metaphor of Cape Town as Africa's Gay Capital, I realised how easy it is for insiders to totally take for granted the laudable advances made within South Africa's constitutional law to protect against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Queers in Africa outside South Africa admire, envy, aspire towards, long for, cherish and celebrate the constitutional protections of South Africa's sexual and gender minorities. It was thus disconcerting for me to experience how those living in the enviable dream were variously disparaging their very queerness in Africa's Gay Capital. It was also productively disturbing to witness residents of Cape Town systematically expressing their disavowal of Cape Town as the Gay Capital of Africa.

“What does it mean for Cape Town to call itself the Gay Capital of Africa? What does it mean for a city to call itself a capital

of Africa? Is Cape Town in Africa? What does it mean for a city to position itself as gay?" Zethu Matebeni, the convener of the series of symposia, foregrounded these questions during the opening session of the three-day program of 'Queer in Africa: the Cape Town Question'. These questions clarified the central question of the symposium that was captured on the first page of the Information and Programme booklet distributed to all participants. An excerpt from this page is reproduced below:

“Over three years we have gathered in Cape Town without fully interrogating this city – a place that reminds us every day about segregation and marginalisation – whether you look at Robben Island, or drive from Khayelitsha to Camps Bay, or try to find the ever-moving Refugee Reception Office. The Black queer person in this city lives on the margins.

This symposium is interested in those margins – what happens there and how do queer people on the margins tell us something new or different about urban life. Perhaps the central question we are all interested in is, whether Cape Town really is what it promotes itself to be – ‘the Gay Capital of Africa’? And if it is – should we be satisfied by its gayness? Gay for who? For what?

We invite you to ask these questions, engage the city in a way that unsettles it – and perhaps you too could be part of queering Cape Town” (Matebeni 2016:1).

Unlike several participants at this symposium, I was among the African world citizens for whom Cape Town, indeed, is the Gay Capital of Africa. Whether out of blasé naïveté, or of the ignorance of being a visitor, I was unshakeable in my firm consecration of Cape Town as Africa’s Gay capital.

Perhaps, my stubborn refusal to construct this city otherwise came from the vantage point of comparative analysis between Cape Town on the one hand, and on the other, both Kampala and Banjul – the two capital cities of Uganda and The Gambia respectively.

Not only had I lived in Banjul when President Yahya Jammeh publicly threatened to behead all homosexuals living in The Gambia, but I also lived in Kampala for the five years when Uganda's legislature was debating the death penalty proposed as punishment for forms of homosexual practice. In terms of reading the queer metre for life and death, location matters for the practice and predicament of marked forms of human sexuality. Simply because one lived in Cape Town, life as a queer person was guaranteed the vitality that comes from constitutional protections, rights, freedom, liberties and even entitlements.

After all, didn't Cape Town already have four whole annual Pride events (coming second only to Johannesburg – another city in South Africa with five annual Pride events)? Not only did queer people publicly claim space on the city's annual calendar, but even the budget for Cape Town Pride was funded by the city of Cape Town. The annual Mother City Queer Project (MCQP) costume ball has world renown. Committed to building the image of Cape Town as the International Gay Destination of Africa, the city invested resources into making Cape Town Pride an unforgettable experience of the wide range of tourists, foreign journalists and

other visiting celebrants or observers who attended. Local sex workers looked forward to the enhanced incomes to be earned annually from the wide range of gay sex tourists that visited the city in honour of Pride parades. To ensure the safety of the Pride celebrants travelling from near and far, police officers were on site to offer security of person and property, as well as observe law and order among the colourful jubilant crowds. Furthermore, traffic monitors cordoned off the route for the Pride Parade so that marchers had ample room to march, display their banners, exhibit their fanfare and floats without interruptions from and to city commuters. Jessica Scott's⁸ comparative analysis between Pride events in Cape Town and New Orleans in the United States of America complicates and disrupts an overly simple and depoliticised analysis of the inclusivity of these celebrations of queerness.

Furthermore, compared to the nascent history of Pride in Uganda where the police not only raided the first Gay Beach Pride March held in 2012 (Nyanzi 2014), but also raided the Beauty Pageant of Uganda Pride 2016 where they arrested sixteen participants. Police also raided and aborted the Beach Pride march of September 2016 by impounding six buses transporting Pride celebrants who were redirected and escorted in convoy style back to Kampala city. Further confirming the homophobic handiwork of the state, the latter police operations were undertaken on the widely publicised instructions of the Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity who circulated erroneous claims about Pride being an activity at which young people are recruited into homosexuality through the exploitative payment of money. The extreme juxtaposition between the freedom and protection offered during Cape Town Pride on the one hand, and the police raids, arrests, cancellation, intimidation and state propaganda against Uganda Beach Pride in repetitive years, on the other hand, casts the advances of Cape Town as a relatively much queerer metropolis in Africa.



IV

Spaces of safety are essential for the establishment of a place as queer-friendly, queer-inclusive, or simply queer. It was eye-opening for me to witness the intergenerational exchange between the two hosts of the symposium – Kealeboga Mase Ramaru and Mary Hames discussing a long list of spaces in Cape Town where Black lesbians socialised over the years. Boldly claiming the position of a Black lesbian from an older generation, Mary Hames rebuked her co-host's generation for easily mislabelling themselves.

“We never called ourselves ‘queer’. No. We were lesbians,” Mary stated firmly.

This generational discord echoed Tanya's insistence on self-labelling as neither a lesbian nor a queer person, but rather as a gay woman. Matebeni (2009) analyses the complex meanings associated with the label ‘lesbian’ among South African women who have sex with women. The politics and evolving history of naming and labels within the queer body of disparate

collectives is differentiated and given meaning by dissimilar, even contradictory experiences, experiences based on race, class, generation, education attainment, personal politics, gender, religion, ethnicity, citizenship status, geographical location, and even health status. Although the 'queer' label is still resisted by different segments whose constituencies it may encompass, its largely inclusive embrace stretched far enough to include the variously nuanced pertinent components of non-heteronormative agendas. In the particular context of the main objective of the third chapter of the 'Queer in Africa' symposium there was an open invitation to critically engage with the posturing of Cape Town as the Gay Capital of Africa.

Queerness is a political tool, a heuristic device, a conceptual reconfiguration that demands for transcendence beyond narrow exclusionary and constrictive framing of gayness.

The officially recognised, celebrated and paraded gayness of Cape Town was variously highlighted as being too miniscule in its bounded inclusion of only beautiful White gay men to be inclusive enough. Framing the symposium through the queer lens was a bold challenge to Capetonian gayness to show up in its limited, exclusionary mode that excluded the plethora of queer individuals and collectives that were neither gay men nor White. Moreover, this Capetonian gayness left out those who neither conformed nor ascribed to normative constructs of the beautiful youthful gay body. The large excluded collective of queers included those who identified as women, lesbians, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, cross dressers, drag queens, drag kings, non-binary gender-fabulous people, intersex, multi-spirited, non-

white, Black, Coloured, mixed race, foreigners, non-citizens, refugees, parents, among others – but also the poor, physically handicapped, unhealthy, elderly, mentally ill, substance abusers, drug addicts, dwellers in shacks and informal settlements, fat, and sex workers were further erased, invisibilised and deleted from the imagined gayness obtaining in Africa’s Gay Capital. Locating Cape Town’s Gay Village in an affluent area of the city, in Greenpoint ensured that those without the financial, social, political or other forms of capital to afford a piece of land or rent a flat in Sea Point could only come in as sojourners, temporary visitors, tourists, or patrons fraternizing the night clubs, pubs and bars. In this regard, a lot of queer Capetonians are excluded and marginalised in the very Mother City which self postures as the Gay Capital of Africa. In this regard,

***Cape Town merely masquerades
as the continent’s gay capital.***

In order to control the mixing of races – whether physically, socially or sexually, the apartheid regime routinely segregated the living quarters of South Africans. District Six – the location of the symposium was one of the last racially mixed areas from which non-whites were forcibly removed and relocated elsewhere in order to reallocate the land to only White people. The houses of the former inhabitants were demolished. The guided tour during the visit to the District Six Museum brought alive the dehumanising injustices of apartheid’s forced removals. Seeing the packed box-suitcases, the metallic street signs emblazoned with blue letters spelling street names, visiting a recreated former home on one of the streets of the District Six, hearing stories from the mouths of elderly men and women who were expelled from their homes, seeing family albums that commemorated the lives of family members and neighbours, looking at birth

certificates with race classifications, scrutinising the *dom* passes restricting access to the city after working hours, reading the enlarged newspaper cuttings pasted on the walls, and sitting on a bench with writings forbidding non-whites from using it – all these experiences evoked the raw pain of apartheid's segregation of races. The museum visit also enriched Shamil Jeppie's discussion of the 'Coon Carnival' Queers in District Six, which highlighted how effeminate men called *moffies* are a widely accepted facet of Coloured communities in South Africa.



The conscious surfacing of the historicised issues of Black African lesbian organising was aptly narrated in the first-person singular by Funeka Soldaat⁹ – a veteran of queer activist struggles in South Africa. Analysing personal involvement in several early lesbian and gay organisations that dared to address the exclusion created by predominantly White support organisation in pre-Independence South Africa, Funeka Soldaat shared a range of embodied experiences of the struggles of being a Black lesbian activist. Experiences of exclusion and marginality were infused with personal narratives of suffering and surviving sexual and other forms of violence because of being a sexual and gender minority living in the townships. The slow responses of both the police and hospital workers were identified and analysed from this perspective of personal narrative. It was thus a rare privilege to engage with members of Free Gender – the support organisation later started by Funeka in Khayelitsha, and also visit the township environments during the last leg of the Queer Tour availed and facilitated by the 'Queer in Africa' symposium. In Khayelitsha and Langa townships, our tour bus followed the path travelled by the celebrants of the Alternative Pride formed to cater for social groups excluded by the main Cape Town Pride events.

The drag performance by Odidiva was exhilarating. A Black drag queen wearing an exquisitely patterned costume made from wax *Kitengi* with sequins that glittered in the light, Odidiva gave a spirited eclectic performance on the opening night of the symposium. Rather than lip synch in pantomime, during the live performance of songs from a wide range of genres, this creative artist sang and danced gracefully with energy in pointed shiny high heels. A spoken word performance about the Afro hairstyle was very affirming of African kinky hair. Introducing the song "The only man who could ever reach me was the son of a preacher man," Odidiva referenced being a child born and raised in the religious family of a pastor – a trait shared with other creative artists at the symposium.

Wanelisa Xaba's¹⁰ creative fiction presentation highlighted the importance of familial relationships with queer people. Employing the literary device of a child persona to narrate the memory of a close cross-dressing effeminate relative called *Uncle Gravel*, this story featured the complex issues of familial memorising of queer relatives. How are children taught about the queer members of their families? When do children begin to realise that their relative's sexual orientation or gender identity is not heteronormative? How are children conditioned to relate with their queer relatives? Where do children in Africa get role models who are queer? These important questions are poignantly cast into sharp relief.



GRAAF'S POOL ESSAY

By Dean Hutton



Graaf's Pool - erasure leaves marks



Pierre de Vos (left) and Jaco Barnard-Naudé perform



Queer Cape Town - Crime Scene at the ruins



Graaf's Pool. The pool was a gay cruising spot which experienced its heyday at the height of the Immorality Act. "Condoms and stolen property were found there regularly and rent boys also used the place as a hangout", proclaimed DA (Democratic Alliance) Councillor for Greenpoint and Sea Point areas, JP Smith, who campaigned for 3 years to destroy the pool. He succeeded in 2006.



“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us” - Ralph Emerson



“The water was said to be very cold, and if one lay on the white concrete and faced the sea, the view was of chasms of ocean bounded only by the horizon.” - Rebecca Hodes Junkyard Promenade: *The corporate vandalism of the Seapoint beachfront*

VI

The first stop-over of the Queer Tour¹¹ at Graaff's Pool in Sea Point was very much a drive down memory lane. It was practically a walk into the living queer archive of the politics of geographic space utilisation by queer folk living in Cape Town. Zethu Matebeni's commentary described how Graaff's Pool was one of the few public baths on the ocean where gay men would cruise, network, make new contacts, bathe and have sex. However, due to rising public concern over the so-called sin, debauchery and homosexual orgies reportedly happening at the pool, in June 2005, Mr. JP Smith the City Councillor of Cape Town ordered for the demolition of the perimeter wall that offered privacy to the users (Smith 2005). This demolition order, effectively ended the utilisation of Graaf's Pool as a meeting and socialising site for gay men in Cape Town. At Graaf's Pool, it was special listening to Pierre de Vos and Jaco Barnard-Naudé¹² reading in turn chapters about sex, desire and deaths, as the ocean's waves beat upon the coast and the wind blew the blessings of history onto our queer bodies listening in cold attentiveness. A group of symposium participants – probably all in their early twenties

– loudly exclaimed about their joy at finally meeting Pierre de Vos in the flesh. Recalling Earl’s earlier similar sentiments, I innocently asked why.

“Oh, he is the Pierre de Vos, you know?” I asked as he placed all his ten well-manicured fingers on his youthful heart.

“He is the one who sued Sliver Bar and Nightclub for refusing his Coloured partner entry,” another one explained to me as we got back onto the bus.

“Oh yes. I am elated. It is lit to finally meet him,” the first one said as he sprung up from his seat in the bus and did a rapid dance in the bus-corridor, while firmly holding his red hat in place.

I looked at Earl, who had the bus-seat next to me. I rolled my eyes heavenwards. Earl held my eyes. He did not blink.

“I can understand their excitement about meeting him. In fact I share it,” Earl said.

On hindsight, I remain in awe of the gathering of living archives participating in the symposium – be it as presenters named on the programme, or even as silent members of the audience. In my mind, I counted Mary Hames, Shamil Jeppie, Funeka Soldaat, Pierre de Vos, – who were named on the program. I also counted all the path-breakers who were the originators of innovative interventions, conceptualisations, theories and creative works that were the first to queer specific sites in South Africa. I wondered how many more living archives had written their names on the registration papers on each of the different days of the symposium. Considering that human life only stretches so far, how are different queer collectives documenting,

recording, preserving, storing, and then giving access to the deep repositories of archival materials embodied and inscribed in their existing archives? Without being overly morbid, how does one download and transmit the experiences of living archives before they rest forever, taking with them all their lived memories and experiences? For example, overhearing Leigh Davids narrating her recent painful experience of hospitalisation and going into coma because of AIDS-related illness, made my questions about living archives, seem even more urgent. If the multiple stories of founding, leading and growing SistaazHood are not recorded and preserved while Leigh still lives, how will future generations of transgender sex workers in Cape Town tap into and from this rich history of organising?

That night before going to bed, I read about the court case against racist door policies operating in gay night clubs in Cape Town (Kassiem 2004). This constitutional law professor, Pierre de Vos, was one among many others from the legal fraternity in South Africa who did a lot of lobbying of legislators and courts to make reversals in previously homophobic laws that did not fit the new protections granted to LGBT people in the Equality Clause of the Constitution.



Every queer generation faces its own erasure from the spaces built on spent love and the ruins of ruins

Death of queer people in South Africa was commemorated through another medium. Koleka Putuma's¹³ spoken word poetry, accompanied by live piano music was among the presentations that left some in the audience either in tears or sniffing quietly. Entitled "No Easter for Queers," the spoken word poem is a eulogy for victims of corrective rape and murder. References to Christian scriptures and routine Christian rituals explore the intersections between religious belief and queerness. Using the first person narrative to recount the dilemmas, unanswered questions and contradictions lived by a queer Christian daughter to a preaching pastor gives the narrative immediacy and urgency.

Alongside the spatial commemorations of queer experiences and living archives of historicals whose activism predated independence, the third 'Queer in Africa' symposium was enriched by the participation of the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA). In addition to selling a few of GALA's book titles on discount to symposium participants, Kendall Petersen¹³ presented a diverse range of archival materials originating from queer people, organisations, events, and processes over the years since the 1940s in Cape Town. These archived materials were important because by nuancing and diversifying the representations of Queer Cape Town, they splintered the exalted monotonous figure of the white middle-class gay man dominating the city.

Another focus on archival research explored pre-Independence communication. What was communication and networking like in the apartheid era of strong surveillance, which had neither internet nor social media? Liesl Theron's¹⁴ descriptive analysis of the experiences of four transgender people who belonged to an underground network called *The Phoenix Society* explores this important question. It is interesting to observe the tension between creatively maintaining secret personae via use of

pseudonyms, telephone books, and secret post boxes, and yet also publicly mobilising using communication in classified advertisements, obscure magazine advice columns like 'Agony Aunt' letters, and newspaper editorials. By carefully negotiating a delicate balance between the safety of concealing their real identities and personal addresses, and the danger that possibly came with disclosure and exposure from public communication, these members of the *Phoenix Society* were indeed able to actualise the metaphorical symbolism of rising above the isolation engineered by the apartheid government.

VII

The medium of photography was used twice in the symposium. Set in the Memorial Hall of the District Six Museum, Lindy-Lee Prince's exhibition entitled "Drag Lives Here Too" displayed a collection of photographs about drag culture at Zer021 – the gay nightclub where I saw V's vest? It is noteworthy that this visual anthropologist was also the designated symposium photographer who continuously captured key moments of the proceedings through the lenses of their camera.

A second exhibition entitled "InterseXions"¹⁶ was set up in the District Six Homecoming Centre. Opened by Sandile Ndelu, this multi-media exhibition displayed a set of photographs showing different states of gendered dress and undress of two transgender people: Robert Hamblin, a white transgender man and Leigh Davids, a transgender woman. There was also a set of demonstration photographs of the everyday operations of the SistaazHood support group for transgender women who also sell sex. Alongside these exhibited photographs was a documentary film in which Robert and Leigh, each narrates aspects of their lives as transgender people living in South Africa, as well as their attitudes and feelings towards each other. It was unsettling to hear Leigh's repeated envious admiration of Robert being a man.

This disturbing refrain emphasised for me that Leigh does not just choose to be a transgender woman, but rather IS a transgender woman. However, even as a transgender woman, Leigh Davids was fully aware of the advantages that Robert had in society, simply because he was a man. After watching the documentary film, there followed an interactive discussion with the audience, about the main themes, and the making of the film. This then led into a panel discussion about the experiences of transgender sex workers in Cape Town – drawing from the lived experiences of members of SistazHood who were present in the audience.

A second documentary film premiered at the third 'Queer in Africa' symposium. Entitled "Giving Content to Decolonisation," the film focusses on the lived experiences of Black transgender students attending the celebrated University of Cape Town during the peak of the Fallist interventions called "Rhodes Must Fall" and "Fees Must Fall." The painful but yet humorously presented narratives of the students systematically tear apart the "Promised Land Fallacy", which they paint the University of Cape Town to be. Their reinterpretations of the prestigious university's acronym from UCT to "University of Colonised Thinking" in relation to the project of decolonisation, and "University of Constant Torture" referring to the constant de-gendering and mis-gendering that trans students must suffer routinely, are telling. The documentary film raised important questions about the role, place and safety of transgender persons within the decolonising project of the universities in South Africa. For transgender people, the film asserts sadly that: "There is no milk! There is no honey! There is no freedom!" Again, the rejected topics of mental illness and self-care for activists came to the fore. It was interesting to learn about the politics and praxis of Kyla Phil, the cisgender queer film maker who co-authored and co-produced this documentary film with the members of the Trans Collective¹⁷.

VIII

“Oh, my East African sister, I should introduce you to your fellow Ugandan,” Flavie interjected into our group conversation during tea-break.

“Is there someone else here from Uganda?” I asked.

“Yes. Evelyn. She is one of our members in the SistaazHood support group. We are very close like this, because we are the only two refugees in the group,” Flavie said as she raised two fingers pressed tightly together to illustrate how very close they are.

Later, Flavie made the introductions as promised and then left us to catch up with each other. I spoke Luganda, my mother tongue. Evelyn responded with a smile. We hugged each other – a common form of greeting among some Ugandans. Evelyn – a stocky, overly made-up transgender woman with a big smile that showed a gap between her front two teeth was wearing a big flamboyant wig, a *mushanana* traditional dress from Western

The open-back fashion of her attire showed off a considerable portion of her bleached back. We took selfies on our phones.

"I hear that Ugandan *kuchus* are easily getting visas from Nairobi and going to Sweden, Canada, America, Holland. Have you heard of this new process?" she asked me as soon as we were alone.

"Who told you this?" I replied, taken aback at her urgency and bluntness.

"Beyonce – another transgender activist from Uganda told me when she came here for the last AIDS Conference in Durban earlier this year. If it is true, for me, I want to try that deal and go to America or even to Sweden. Life here in South Africa is not easy, my sister," she said.

"But are you a registered refugee here?" I asked.

"I am, but then the process here is very, very, very, difficult. Don't see me selling sex here and you think that I am having a party, my sister. Life is too expensive and difficult to get used to. That is why Flavie is a very close friend. She has been there by my side through the difficulties of being a refugee, a transgender woman, and also selling sex. But surely I need a break from the hardship," she said.

Listening briefly to the lamentations of my Ugandan sister echoed B Camminga's discussion of the multiple challenges faced by transgender refugees and asylum seekers who flee from their home-countries on grounds of gender persecution, and

come to South Africa. From Evelyn, I heard first-hand about the difficulties of presenting oneself to the immigration officers as a woman, yet simultaneously carrying a passport that classified one as a man, and how this variously led to different challenges – sometimes even violence. Failing to partake in the refreshing life-giving waters of the Gay Oasis that Cape Town is projected to be, some gender-refugees such as my Ugandan sister entered into informal sex work, and joined support organisations, as they also planned to depart from South Africa to another location in Africa; reportedly processing queer asylum faster to other dream queer havens of the world. Cape Town presented challenges of economic survival for many queer asylum seekers and refugees without sufficient formal education qualification, expertise or skills to compete favourably in the job market.

IX

Given the extensively discussed marginalisation of Black people from Cape Town's gay set-ups, it was redeeming to listen to Thiyane Duda's¹⁸ presentation about the "Queer Possibilities" recreated at Zer021 for otherwise excluded peoples. Unlike many of the advertised queer spaces in Cape Town's gay village, Zer021 is a nightclub and bar that caters for non-white queer people. It attracts people from both Coloured and Black population groups, the former often coming early to catch drag performances and the latter mainly coming in later to meet, cruise, socialise, network, get partners, relax and have fun. It was priceless to listen to a critique and celebration of Zer021 from an insider who reported proudly enjoying his many regular visits to this nightclub. The vibrancy of Zero21 represented the possibilities for Black queers to fashion and create their own queer spaces of safety within an exclusionary Cape Town whose gayness only caters for wealthy White gay men.

Likewise, Susan Holland-Mutter's¹⁹ paper about the ways in which notions of safety and danger infuse each other within spaces created as inclusive of Black lesbians is drawn from ethnographic participant observations and interviews conducted in three locations. Considering the general widespread exclusion of non-whites and non-males from spaces marked as Gay Cape Town, it was important that this research was conducted in three safe-spaces catering for Black lesbians from the lower social classes within the townships of Cape Town. The successful existence of such alternative spaces of queerness within Cape Town's gay metropolis attests to viable forms of resisting and ultimately fracturing the monotonous dominant projection of Capetonian gayness as only focused on White gay men.

For me, there is therefore no wonder that one of the many highlights of the third 'Queer in Africa' symposium was actually physically visiting the Lounge of Zer021 for my debut experience of the Naked Girls Reading²⁰ Cape Town.

X

The Naked Girls Reading – oh my God – what an awesome wondrous concept! Those beautiful naked ladies wearing only shoes and trinkets of jewellery on a lithe neck here or a tender wrist there, were delightfully queer. Picture a slightly raised stage bearing four stools with four reading-stands carrying tiny reading lights. The Zer021 Lounge was packed with expectant guests speaking in hushed tones. A few people were still buying beers at the side-bar counter. The only exit/entrance was blocked with a black curtain.

A curly-haired lady opened the door. She came onto the stage. She gave brief instructions about protocol. No cameras. No photography. No phones ringing. No movements in and out of the lounge once the reading started. The expectation and tension mounted as she left the stage and exited through the door. The lights in the packed lounge were then further dimmed lower. A few seconds passed.

The door burst open again. Four beautiful ladies dressed in black satin gowns boldly marched onto the stage. The catcalls from the audience were deafening. And then the four beauties removed their black gowns, placed them on their stools, and proceeded to sit on the stools without a single fuss about anything. It seemed the most natural thing to do.

The audience got charged as if shot with electricity bolts. People ululated and whistled. People screamed. People clapped. People stomped their feet. A few people groped the middle of their pants. A few others raised their two arms in surrender. My neighbour ran her tongue across her lips. I focused on the mons pubis, looking for the lengths and colours of any pubic hairs. No wonder we were instructed not to photograph, Whatsapp or phone-post the presentation.

When the excited audience quietly settled down, the first naked lady proceeded to read ever so calmly from some book written by some author. One by one, the naked ladies took turns to read excerpts from important books. Some texts I knew. Most, I did not. The content mostly flew past me. I remember the funny euphemism of cocoa-bread used instead of vagina. I remember an excerpt read from my friend, Unoma Azuah's short stories. And I remember the poem praying for all sorts of unlikely people to become presidents. But most of all, I remember my awe and adoration, as I worshipped at the altar of the female human form, on which sat four of the most gorgeous naked women of all sizes, shades, races, heights, bust-sizes, pubic hair colours and lengths, reading from books. For those two sessions, I basked in the glorious power of women's nudity; at once finding connections of affirmation and legitimation of my personal contested uses of my own nudity (for details see Tamale 2016).

'DRAG LIVES HERE'

By Lindy-Lee Prince









XI

The session presented by SistaazHood²¹ was the shortest event of the symposium. It was also, perhaps, the most disturbing because it disrupted many ideas that seemed settled and resolved in my scholarly mind. Coming immediately after the discussion of the InterseXions Exhibition presented and discussed by Robert Hamblin and Leigh Davids, the different stunts presented by the members of SistaazHood were all tough quizzes shooting a barrage of complicated questions to the symposium participants. Sistaazhood is a support group for transgender women who are sex workers in Cape Town. We had lunch with the members and thus interacted with them before they all changed clothes. I was struck by how tired, frail, sickly and poor, some of the members looked. I saw a bloody scar at the back of the neck of a member who sat right in front of me. I smelt cheap perfume. I saw false nails carelessly glued onto fingers. I wondered who in their right minds would buy sex from a body that obviously looked unwell, tired and hungry.

“But these bodies do not look healthy. They are not beautiful bodies,” I told Chantelle.

“Heh! I have a problem with your conceptualisation of beauty,” she responded truthfully.

“They look as if the very life has been wrung out of them. They look over-burdened, weary and tired. I mean, don’t you see what I am seeing?” I asked.

“It could be drugs,” Earl chipped in.

“Ah, I see. I had not thought about that. It is one of the missing pieces in the conversations we have had so far. So, what drugs would they be taking?” I asked.

“Anything and everything ... but I think that it is *Tic*,” he explained mentioning a local label for a widely available narcotic drug that many youths accessed in Cape Town.

And then, in the safe-space created by the ‘Queer in Africa’ symposium at the District Six Museum’s Homecoming Centre, these ladies changed into comfortable clothes, wigs, shoes, jewellery and make-up. The transformation in their appearances was electric. In true diva-style, the group of about twenty or less people, went and sat at the very front of the hall, on seats facing the stage. They sat and listened to Sandile Ndelu’s opening remarks. They attentively listened to Robert and Leigh, occasionally responding to impromptu questions Leigh asked for clarifications about details important to the narrative about forming SistazHood. A few of them supplemented the presentation about the genesis and operations of SistaazHood, by sharing their experience.

The tall dark Burundian diva called Flavie, stood out for passionately sharing her horrifying experiences of being a young refugee with inadequate and sporadic support from home, joining sex work, experiencing violence while at work as a sex worker, and yet determined not to fail in Cape Town, the Mother City – the Gay Capital of Africa. I loved her Francophone accent that spoke simple English words about deep dark pains. I admired her skimpy attire of just a purplish wrap around her breasts and green wrap over her short shorts, that brazenly exposed her glowing dark-chocolate coloured body-parts including arch-like shoulders, lean tummy, athletic back, and long supple thighs.

After a brief Q & A session, Robert advised the audience that the next section was not appropriate for children below eighteen years of age. My voyeur instincts sharpened. He also expressly forbade the use of cameras to photograph the coming session. And then he invited the members of SistazHood onto the stage.

Dressed in flashy drag, the members rushed to the stage. There, they formed two lines. And then they stood dramatically and waited. Slowly and painfully, towards the stage approached the bland pounding of a cane on the wooden floor board. An elderly transgender woman slowly limped into view. She was being helped by another much younger transgender woman who supported her. Their slow ascent up the few stairs that led to the stage was haunting to watch. She was positioned in the middle of the group and sat on a chair. Posing as true divas, the group presented their first stunt – as if posing for a group photo. I noticed that a few members lowered a sleeve and exposed one nipple for the stunt.

The second stunt was more harrowing. The limping elderly transgender lady was led to the very front to the line. She leaned against her walking cane for support. The audience fell silent and

focussed all eyes on her. The silence grew as she slowly opened the belts of her gown noted in the front, flung the flaps open, and exposed the old body of a biological man. A flaccid penis was at rest. I forget if there was pubic hair or not. But my eyes were transfixed on the exposed naked old balls encased in withered wrinkly scrotum. They briefly darted up the very brown torso and settled on Netta's eyes which twinkled in a bold, proud and defiant gaze. A loud shocked silence fell over the audience inside District Six Museum's Homecoming Centre. I was envious of Robert whose single camera clicked, clicked, clicked away, and snapped, snapped, snapped away at the divas standing behind the elderly Netta. I would have died to silently photograph the audience's faces, zooming in on their eyes – the windows to the souls that were processing the stunt before us.

A chill ran up my spine.

And then the stillness was lost. The audience burst into claps, rose to their feet and gave a much deserved standing ovation. A teary-faced Zethu Matebeni came onto the stage from the wings. For another whole instant, she was silent. She nodded her head a few times, even after the audience had settled down back into their seats and Netta had tied up her brown creased gown. The session was over. No questions asked. No feedback. I loved the gift from the SistaazHood.

We were invited to tea, and snacks before the closing session – a musical performance by Dope Saint Jude.

XII

Cape Town is modest. This city has never advertised itself as what it's not. Cape Town does not put itself out there as the Lesbian Capital of Africa, or as the Trans Capital of Africa. This city does not even make claims to be the Queer Capital of Africa. Cape Town stridently advertises itself as the Gay Capital of Africa. One can critique Cape Town about what sort of gayness it represents, to the exclusion of all others. One can even fault this city for making claims about Africanness. However, it is foolhardy for scholars, activists and excluded collectives to blame Cape Town for excluding them when its advertisements have never been inclusive of them in their varied queernesses, to start with.

Beyond whinging, mourning and complaining about how Cape Town is not queer enough for them, excluded collectives in the area can choose to actively fracture, nuance, layer and expand on the claims of this city. An easy first step towards this, would be to start inflecting the city with new advertisements that are strategically inclusive of currently excluded categories.

Those who feel excluded should generate alternative claims that recast Cape Town as the Lesbian Lair of the World, or the Transgender Theatre of Africa, the Intersex Oasis, or even as the Queer Metropolis of the continent. In order for the advertisements to actualise, there is need to consciously create programs, spaces, events and activities that speak to and cater for the needs of these specific queer sub-constituencies being visibilised and actualised in the new Cape Town. In order to cater towards the ranges of classes, generations, races, genders, citizenship statuses, and so forth that are currently excluded from thriving in the city, community involvement in developing, programming and implementation of their inclusivity interventions is essential. Furthermore, it is important to have discussions that debunk and educate the dominant white gay communities that are already safely thriving and represented within Cape Town about the varieties of excluded queers from the current narrow imaginaries of Gayness. These discussions must also reach the current planners and developers of Cape Town city, who may in fact be ignorant or unaware of the complexities of non-heteronormative ways of being a human being.



lpa photography

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ABSTRACTS

1. *As If I Wasn't Enough Trouble Already* – Genna Gardini

This essay will function as a diary entry of sorts, tracking my personal experience as a new wheelchair user in Cape Town. As a queer, disabled, white ciswomxn, my daily experiences lie in the connections between these identities. This involves navigating the daily misogyny of being a straight-presenting ciswomxn and men unsolicitedly assuming that they can and must “help” me, disregarding or becoming aggressive at my refusal. If my wheelchair functions as an extension of my body, what does it mean to move through spaces where men feel entitled to touch my wheelchair without my consent?

I’m also interested in exploring the invisibility of disabled people in queer spaces. Queer events, buildings, conferences, marches and performances in Cape Town are often framed as inclusive, but does this inclusivity truly extend to disabled queer people? When is a person understood to be too difficult to accommodate, too different

to include even in spaces that are meant to celebrate and provide safe havens for the so-called other?

Ultimately, this essay will function to explore a year in my life as a queer wheelchair user in Cape Town, acknowledging the difficulties and privileges that I have experienced.

2. *Of Mountains and Multiculturalism: Packaging Cape Town for the Tourist Gaze- Annie Hikido*

During the twentieth century, Cape Town was developed and marketed as a destination of geographic splendor for European travelers. Garnering romantic monikers such as the “Tavern of the Oceans” and “The Mother City,” the city promised white elites a luxury getaway in the heart of white South Africa. In the twenty-first century, Cape Town has risen as a top world travel destination and continues to be spotlighted for its resplendent scenery and opulent accommodations. But in the wake of the democratic transition and the Nelson Mandela story, travelers now also expect to experience Cape Town’s multiculturalism and “heritage.” However, this nod to plurality and history presents a partial narrative tailored for a particular tourist, namely, white middle-class Westerners. This chapter examines the production of Cape Town representations through two of the city’s most popular tours: The Red Bus City Sightseeing Tour and the free walking tours through the central city. I discuss how these tours package “multiculturalism” and “heritage” in ways that decouple the city’s history from its contemporary social problems, effectively naturalising visible inequalities. Moreover, these narratives sit comfortably alongside the privileging of geographical beauty, glossing over the spatial politics of land dispossession and the failure of redistribution. I conclude by discussing the implications of these tours and the possibilities for re-imagining Cape Town in the tourist imagination.

**3. *The Talk: A frank inter-generational conversation focusing on the experiences of four black drag queens*
- Glenton Matthyse**

Cape Town's drag culture has a particular history which reveals the resilience of gender non-conforming people who participated in the performance of drag during apartheid. This resilience has seemingly stood with absolute immunity through the test of time and this is revealed in how drag culture, today, in democratic South Africa, is flourishing. The following interview focuses on the perceptions, experiences of four black drag queens who participate in Cape Town's drag sub-culture(s). The interview engages the narratives of two drag queens who started dragging under apartheid and two who started participating in drag many years after the dawn of democracy. The interview thematically explores their narratives by focussing on their understanding of what drag is, the meaning of drag in their lives, how they perceive drag as a performance on stage vis-a-vis manifesting in employment, education, recreational and other public spaces as well as to how this affects their intimate partnerships. In essence, this interview articulates the in-depth views, opinions and understandings of black drag queens in relation to self and the world(s) they live(d) in.

4. *"She is a duck from another pond": How married same-sex couples navigate race in Cape Town* – Lwando Scott

South Africans in their daily navigation have to negotiate race. This is no different for married same-sex couples. This chapter looks at racialized experiences of married same-sex couples in Cape Town and the surrounding areas. The different racialized experiences of married same-sex interracial couples, Black couples, Coloured couples, and White couples reveal complex racial politics. The paper argues that married same-sex couples are not exempt from negotiating

the often emotionally taxing racialised history of South Africa. This chapter looks at how the racialized history is further complicated by being a same-sex couple and being married.

5. *Decolonising Toilet Cisterns: Gender and Bathroom Spaces* – Nigel T. Patel

Transgender people in South Africa must navigate spaces that have been violently shaped by colonization and apartheid. Cape Town, despite being labelled ‘the gays capital’ of Africa, contains bathroom spaces that carry this often unscrutinised colonial legacy. This qualitative study investigates how this colonial legacy creates problems for transgender people of colour within the bathroom space. The study participants comprised of ten transgender people of colour. Their different narratives demonstrate symbiotic modes of violence. Thus, emphasising how safety for transgender people of colour necessitates an intersecting queer decolonisation of the toilet space.

6. *Shifting in the City: Being and Longing in Cape Town* – B Camminga

For many of those who come to South Africa seeking refuge from other countries within Africa it is the City of Cape Town - as the ‘Pink Capital’ - that has arguably come to stand for a kind of queer Utopia. This chapter unpacks the narratives of several transgender-identified refugees and asylum seekers or ‘gender refugees’ as they move to and through Cape Town. The chapter suggests that the way gender refugees navigate the city - as both transgender identified and asylum seekers - is inherently precarious, often met with violence and frequently requires furtiveness as a tactic of survival. Through mapping their lived experiences, this chapter troubles the assumption that Cape Town is walkable for all kinds of bodies, that the enacting of everyday experiences - an almost ‘unconscious’

claiming through navigation - will evince a sense of belonging. Rather their navigation of the city, their shifts suggest hitherto unexplored complexities to gender, sexuality and belonging in relation to space, place and marginality as they animate both the dream and the reality of Cape Town.

7. *Unearthing silences around and about raced and gendered queerness in Stellenbosch* – Chantelle Claire Croeser

This chapter investigates the aspects of whiteness in Stellenbosch that protect white lesbians from the violence that Black lesbians experience, and protects us when we do experience violence. Yet, our experiences of the space are not entirely separate. It is necessary to probe why White lesbians in Stellenbosch often do not (know how to) share in and voice the (shared) struggle of our Black lesbian sisters; to what extent has whiteness blinded White lesbians to ‘being queer’ alongside Black bodies in this space, and what are the points where our queerness does meet? Do we experience violence that is similar and that is particular only to our queerness, or is any violence against a queer body necessarily informed and changed by our race, class and gender? Our shared womxnness and queerness implies that we (should) share in the struggles that ones with less (or the least) power in our community experience, but why is this hard to do? What are the silences we need to be unearthing around and about racialised and gendered queerness in Stellenbosch?

8. *Disruption and Withdrawal: Responses to 21st century prides from the South* – Jessica Scott

In this chapter, I present two examples of queer refusals of Pride in order to demonstrate the narrowing of Pride’s politic, as it moves away from its origins of disruption, and to raise serious questions around what it means for Pride to continue in this form. I see activist

engagements with Cape Town Pride and New Orleans Pride as explicative of a process of challenging the contemporary form that many Pride celebrations have taken. Disruptions and withdrawals embody the original political ethic of Pride by asserting that liberation is not only for White, able-bodied, cisgender men. When Pride is disrupted, Black, queer, gender non-conforming bodies are at the centre of actions designed to call attention to racial exclusions, the violence of gentrification, socio-economic inequalities, and the problem of increased policing.

**9. *Black Lesbian Politics and Organising Spaces* –
Funeka Soldaat**

Funeka delivers a personal account of three decades of activism as a Black lesbian living in Khayelitsha. In this narrative she portrays the important ways in which Black lesbians and gay men have carved new and alternative spaces in Cape Town since the 1980s, driven by different forms of exclusion within White-dominated spaces and those that are against lesbian and gay people.

**10. *Remembering Ndabeni land evictions: a short story* –
Wanelisa Xaba**

A fictionalised short story about a child who discovers queerness within the family in the midst of socio-political challenges in Langa township

11. *The Queer Tour* – Zethu Matebeni

This bus tour takes you on a queer journey through Cape Town tracing the different histories of the city by connecting Sea Point to Khayelitsha. The bus departs from District Six Museum, makes

its first stop at Graaf's pool then passes Greenpoint, Bo-Kaap, Company's Garden, Observatory, Rondebosch, Gugulethu, Langa and makes a final stop in Khayelitsha before returning to District Six Museum.

12. *The scene of the crime: Queer Cape Town – Jaco Barnard-Naudé & Pierre de Vos*

This performance assumes the form of an exchange for two voices, sometimes dialogic, at other times not. The point of departure is the rise of the anti-social thesis in queer theory, linked as it is to the death drive 'beyond the pleasure principle' in Freud and Lacan. Yet 'death drive' is the name of an undead energy beyond death as the eternal recurrence of the Same. As such 'death drive' names the possibility of a futural energy through which one can perhaps momentarily apprehend that which remains radically and openly to come as and for Queer. In this exchange, we return to the scenes of crime against the queer body in Cape Town, asking how the scenes of queer murder in the city and surrounds reproduce one another, stand in for one another and do so as parts for the whole; asking also how Queer Cape Town is itself the name of an advanced neoliberal orgiastic crime scene where the very queer body that was supposed to be lived radically ends up suffocated out of time, out of mind, struck from the roll of Pride, foreclosed by the Mother City Queer Project. Which forms of precarious life and grievable death emerge from these readings? How are we complicit? How do you take responsibility for a place? How does Queer survive Cape Town? How does Cape Town survive Queer? Is it even a question of survival?

13. *No Easter Sunday for Queers – Koleka Putuma*

'No Easter Sunday For Queers' chronicles the murders and rapes, reported and unreported, that have occurred in various spaces and

places in Cape Town (both historically and recently). It eulogises the events of ‘corrective rape’ in parallel with the stages of Christ’s crucifixion, through the medium of spoken word poetry and a sermon. The piece looks at how violence and danger are inflicted on the queer body through doctrine and religion in both private and public spaces, currently and historically. It also looks at the possibility of reconciliation between queer identity and Christianity, and can Christianity and queerness coexist if the principles of the bible and Christianity are inherently homophobic or violent toward the queer body.

14. *The GALA Archives: Preserving the ‘Queerer’ side of Queer Cape Town* – Kendall Petersen

While Cape Town may be seen by some as the queer capital of South Africa, this is a designation which is problematic, because it is predicated somehow, on the binary opposition of rich vs. poor, Black vs. White, urban vs. rural, and perhaps more problematically tourist/visitor vs. migrant. The apparent perpetuation and dissemination of this binary model has led to the development and almost active dissemination of the current image of the Cape Town Queer as generally or homogenously that of the White, rich, cis-gendered male. GALA’s position as the repository and custodian of queer history and memory, locates it in the ideal situation to provide alternative images to that of the contemporary Cape Town Queer. This chapter will showcase some of the highlights from the GALA archives that are specific to Cape Town, and which provide a nuanced insight into not only the contemporary Cape Town Queer, but also to other perhaps ‘queerer’ sides or images of the Queer Mother City.

15. *Phoenix rising above isolation* – Liesl Theron

In this chapter I explore the experiences of transgender people in South Africa and particularly Cape Town, during apartheid through

paying attention to The Phoenix Society - an underground network that relied on pseudonyms, people calling from telephone booths and opening secret post boxes purely to receive their trans-related correspondence. Through closely following the stories of a few Cape Town Phoenix Society members - Marlene, Joy, Charl and Prier - I will present a glimpse into the closeted lives of transgender people in a time before internet and social media. The Phoenix Society played a very important role in a time of apartheid oppression, isolation and silencing. With its utilisation of classified adverts, letters to obscure magazines 'Agony Aunt' and newspapers editors, living from post boxes - this collection of stories about the Phoenix Society shows us how communication systems were used to mobilise transgender communities before internet and social media.

16. 'InterseXions' - Robert Hamblin, Leigh Davids & Sandile Ndelu

A multi-media exhibition that follows two people. Both based in Cape Town, Robert Hamblin and Leigh Davids whose individual stories interrogate how the spatial, economic, political and social configurations of Cape Town have impacted each of their lives and their relationship with each other.

17. *Giving content to decolonisation* - Trans Collective

In the intersectional struggle towards decolonisation, marginalised and oppressed bodies are constantly expected to validate real and very traumatic lived experiences. The lack of humanity that those who occupy positions of power exert onto poor, Black, queer, trans bodies, sheds light on the lack of empathy, insight and understanding that is deeply embedded in the former Cape Colony and society in general. This documentary film explores the micro-aggressions as well as obvious violence that Black queer trans bodies are faced with

everyday. This film will show how the White supremacist capitalist patriarchy is reinforced and nourished in our daily experiences in Cape Town's institutional and social spaces. The audience will see how each and every moment of the Black queer trans existence is coloured by systemic oppression. It influences clothing choices, going to the bathroom, choosing longer public transport routes for unguaranteed safety. This film will afford viewers the chance to begin to develop an understanding of Black queer trans bodies, psyches, desires and pain, showing how our safety is in the hands of people who not only disregard our existence, but also actively or passively work towards killing us or making sure we kill ourselves.

18. Zer021 Queer Possibilities – Thiyane Duda

In this chapter I explore and reflect on my observations and experiences at Zer021 in relation to other spaces in Cape Town. In an attempt to balance my views I also reflect on conversations I have had with close friends who also frequent Zer021 about their experiences of being queer and black in Cape Town. Focusing on Zer021 allows me to address the question of Cape Town by exploring why Zer021 is the only space where one can experience being queer and black in Cape Town, which brings to focus the relationship between Zer021 and other spaces in Cape Town. Furthermore Zer021 is often left out of the narrative of "Cape Town is the pink capital of Africa" despite the fact that the space features greatly in the experiences of many queer and black people in Cape Town and in South Africa.

19. *Queer World Making in Cape Town: Lesbian experiences of safety and danger* - Susan Holland-Mutter

The ability to exercise one's sexual citizenship is experienced unevenly across Cape Town and within different communities, troubling the narrative of a gay friendly and welcoming city for all. At the same time, Cape Town's spatial geography reveals stark social and economic inequalities and cultural divides, bearing witness to the legacies of Apartheid. These social and economic divisions are experienced within LGBTIQ communities. Based on semi-structured interviews with 23 self-identified lesbians or queer women, the chapter will explore what their everyday navigations of Cape Town, their subjective cityscapes, reveal about their queer world making experiences and strategies. Their practices of queer world making will be discussed via the lens of their perceptions and experiences of feeling safe and/or in danger in everyday spaces in Cape Town. Lesbian women's narratives reveal contrasting and competing experiences of the city, surfacing how Cape Town is a hybrid space, a place of multiple contradictions, simultaneously positioned as a site of personal realisation, sexual liberation and diversity, and exclusion, division and oppression.

20. *Naked Girls Reading Cape Town presents 'Queerly Beloved'* - performed by Charlie French, Lyricnotic, Lady Magnolia and Velvet Nix

Naked Girls Reading is a performance art and literary event that happens across four continents and in 25 cities across the world. A small cast of women remove their clothing (yes, all of it) and take turns reading to an adoring audience. It is entertaining, magical, often funny, sometimes heart-wrenching and really very sexy. Are we really naked? Yes, we are. Is the audience naked? No, they are not. Why the Nudity? Naked Girls Reading is far more than storytime for

adults - it is performance art. It is entertaining and provocative. It is a celebration and a challenge. It is a living, breathing nude painting that asks people to celebrate female sensuality rather than dissect and scandalise it. The Cape Town chapter of Naked Girls Reading is the first in Africa and also the only chapter to regularly dedicate entire shows to queer stories and queer writers.

21. *SistaazHood (SWEAT)* discuss the experiences of trans women sex workers in Cape Town.

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