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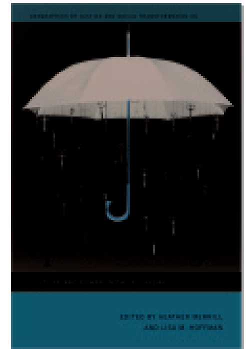

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CHAPTER 4

Exposing the Nation

Entanglements of Race, Sexuality, and Gender in Post-Apartheid Nationalisms

GILLIAN HART

On Friday, May 18, 2012, I arrived in O. R. Tambo Airport in Johannesburg and, as is my habit, stocked up with newspapers to read on the flight to my second home in Durban. On opening the *Times*, the daily version of the *Johannesburg Sunday Times*, I stared in disbelief at an image of a painting of President Jacob Zuma with his genitals exposed.[1] Titled *The Spear*, the (now-defaced) painting by Cape Town artist Brett Murray took off from a depiction of Lenin striking a triumphal pose in a 1967 Soviet propaganda poster.[2] The painting provoked a fierce national debate that raged like wildfire over the following two weeks, laying bare deep fault lines that underpin post-apartheid South Africa. The conflagration over *The Spear* was overshadowed by the Marikana massacre two months later, when police and paramilitary units assassinated thirty-four miners on strike for higher wages from the Lonmin platinum mine outside Rustenburg in the North West province. Yet, as I will argue in this essay, there are important threads connecting the two events that are crucial to understanding the ongoing crisis in South Africa.

The analysis is indebted to Allan Pred's work on many levels. My initial reaction was to see *The Spear* as an act of political lynching. In trying to think through this argument, I was drawn immediately to *The Past Is Not Dead: Facts, Fictions, and Enduring Racial Stereotypes* (2004)—a process that vividly recalled illuminating discussions about race, gender, and sexuality with Allan in 2002 when Sarah (Saartje) Baartman's remains were being reburied in South Africa.[3] As I tried to locate the uproar over *The Spear* on the larger canvas of post-apartheid dynamics, many other aspects of his work became powerfully salient, as I will show in this essay.

The essay unfolds in three steps. First, I narrate how the painting entered the domain of public debate, along with a series of spectacular events in the second half of May 2012 that drove the controversy in new directions and redefined the terrain of debate. Second, I take the controversy as a point from which to delve

more deeply into how sexuality and gender are deeply entangled with race and class in the constitution of South African nationalisms, drawing on Pred's work on racism and nationalism in *Even in Sweden* (2000) as an illuminating counterpoint. Finally, I bring the furor over *The Spear* into direct conversation with *The Past Is Not Dead*.

Spearing Zuma: The Shifting Contours of Controversy

> Representations of the racialized Other—once entered into local and wider discursive networks, once repeatedly given voice, once given redundant expression, once made subject to multiple exposure—are apt to become name-etched, word-wired, meaning-meshed. Are apt to become self-resonating, self-reverberating, self-reinforcing. Are apt to become essentialized reductions more or less indelibly stereo-typed upon the individual mind, deeply inscribed within the collective popular imagination. Open to reshaping and reworking with shifting context. Open to being acted upon, performed with concrete results . . . But seldom easily erased or unlearned.
> —ALLAN PRED, *The Past Is Not Dead*

On May 10, 2012, Brett Murray's exhibition titled *Hail to the Thief II* opened at the Goodman Gallery in Parkwood, an upper-middle-class suburb of Johannesburg, with no immediate public reaction either to *The Spear*, or to the other critical representations of the Zuma regime and the African National Congress (ANC) in the exhibition. The furor was set in motion on Sunday, May 13, when *City Press* published a review of the exhibition that featured an image of *The Spear*. In a statement on May 17, the ANC expressed outrage over the painting, demanding that it be removed from the gallery and the *City Press* Web site. Both the gallery and the newspaper refused, and the following day the ANC launched an urgent court application to prevent the Goodman Gallery and *City Press* from displaying the image. The issue of the *Times* that I picked up at the Johannesburg airport on May 18 reported on the opening salvos of what quickly became a ferocious national debate.

That weekend *The Spear* went viral, dominating the press, radio, television, and social media. The debate pivoted around two closely related issues. First was the figure of Zuma. The official ANC position was that the painting was a grievous assault on the dignity of the president, expressed in a press release in terms of his individual rights: "The image and the dignity of our President as both President of the ANC, President of the Republic and as a human being has been dented by this so-called piece of art by Brett Murray at Goodman

Gallery. We are also of the view that this distasteful depiction of the President has violated his individual right to dignity as contained in the constitution of our country" (Mthembu 2012). The dominant view in the mainstream English press was that Zuma's promiscuous behavior in the name of "tradition" invited precisely the sort of critique embodied in the painting—that Zuma had it coming to him, so to speak, and that Murray had provided a critique that was both incisive and amusing.[4] The predominantly white, liberal Democratic Alliance issued a press release referring to *The Spear* as "brilliant as a work of political satire, which is also why it became an instant icon" and condemning any effort to censor it (Smuts 2012).

An overlapping debate turned around a sharp distinction between African cultural traditions that had been offended and violated and liberal rights to freedom of artistic expression guaranteed by the constitution that were under threat from a corrupt ANC elite and barbarous "traditional" forces.[5] Anton Harber, chair of the Freedom of Expression Institute, summed up concisely the standard liberal position:

> The work is one of a number in Murray's exhibition which collectively make a strong protest against corruption, greed, nepotism and other issues of governance. It is a strong intervention, and I can see no reason why Murray should be bound by the ANC's notion of good taste or acceptability. Our Constitution protects our artists' rights to be rude, mocking, even disrespectful, and we should enjoy and appreciate that, even when it makes us uncomfortable. Or maybe especially when it makes us uncomfortable, as this is what we expect from our artists. (Gibbons 2012)

Echoing, I suspect, the reaction of many white South Africans, Harber later confessed to his enjoyment of the "open and hearty public debate about race and representation, about the limits of free speech, about the role of the artist and the size of the president's penis" in the first phase of the debate (2012, 28). I spent that weekend in Ladysmith, mostly hanging around in a provincial hospital where a close friend was extremely ill and talking with a group of older black South African women, all of whom expressed anger, hurt, and a deep sense of violation that went far beyond the figure of Zuma. I vividly recall reading the Sunday newspapers on the evening of May 20 and reflecting on the arrogant incomprehension of liberal white South African society.

On May 21, the online *Daily Maverick* published an article by Chris Gibbons that began by acknowledging this mutual incomprehension and went on to suggest a reconciliation that stunningly reinscribed the situated ignorance of white liberalism (along with its fixation on the size of the president's penis):[6]

> Turn to this weekend's Sunday *Times* and look for the image of Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, reclining nude on a lounger with a small dog at his feet. Says his spokesman, via Twitter and quoted by the Sunday *Times*, "We're not impressed. Everyone knows the PM is a cat person." A skillful deflection, a smile, a little wit. No howls of outrage, no club for the enemy. Crisis—if there ever was one—defused and the storm remains in a very small tea-cup. What would have happened, for example, if [ANC spokesperson] Jackson Mthembu had Tweeted something similar: "ANC unimpressed . . . real Pres. Zuma is man of far greater . . . ahem . . . stature!" End of story. The fire in the crowded theatre quickly extinguished and the audience left laughing. Wouldn't that have been a far better outcome for all of "us," whoever "we" are? (Gibbons 2012)

Over the course of the following week, three key events fundamentally reconfigured the terrain of public debate, making clear that for large numbers of South Africans *The Spear* was distinctly unfunny. On Tuesday, May 22, two men—one black, the other white, and apparently acting quite independently

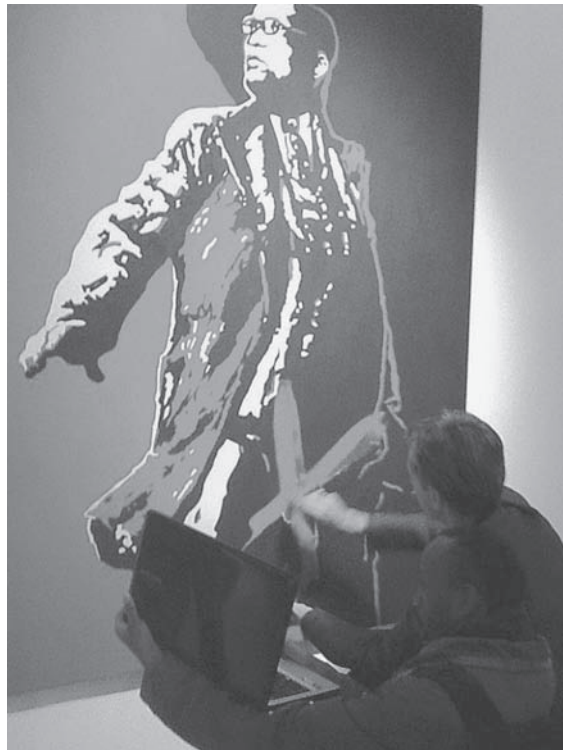

FIGURE 4.1.
Barend la Grange paints a red cross over the Zuma painting. Courtesy of eTV News.

FIGURE 4.2.
Louis Mabokela smears black paint over the Zuma painting. Courtesy of ETV News.

of each other—walked into the Goodman Gallery with pots of paint and defaced the painting (*TheJournal.ie* 2012). First, Barend la Grange painted red crosses over the image of Zuma's genitals and his face; Louis Mabokela then smeared black paint all over the painting (figures 4.1 and 4.2). As La Grange stood around casually chatting with reporters, Mabokela was wrestled to the ground and brutally beaten by a security guard.

In a television interview a few days later, La Grange (described as a fifty-eight-year-old Christian and an Internet businessman) explained that he thought the furor over *The Spear* had shifted from a political to a race issue, and that "when it became a racist issue, the situation was very dangerous" (ENCAnews 2012). Since whites were responsible for the painting and for the gallery, La Grange told the interviewer, he felt that as a white Afrikaner it was his duty to demonstrate opposition to the painting in order to defuse racial conflict. Mabokela, a twenty-five-year-old taxi driver who had traveled to Johannesburg from Limpopo province to deface the painting, explained that he was angered by disrespect for Zuma.

On Wednesday, May 23, the *Times* published an eloquent article by S'Thembiso Msomi that played a major role in transforming the debate by vividly conveying the depth and intensity of hurt invoked by the painting (see box 1).

Msomi's reference to Sarah Baartman was powerfully effective in underscoring the stakes of the debate—as well as the situated ignorance of large swathes of the white South African population. Several of the journalists who had been most adamant in their demands for freedom of expression subsequently admitted to having been shamed into backing down.

BOX 1 Zuma Has Become the 21st-Century Saartjie Baartman

S'THEMBISO MSOMI *Times*, May 23, 2012

I am a descendent of those who were dispossessed of their land; coerced into disposing of most of their prized livestock and then compelled to pay an onerous poll tax to the colonial administration.

Broke and risking lengthy jail sentences if they failed to pay the tax, they were forced to abandon farming and migrate to Durban and other urban centres where they were to feed the colonial economy's avaricious appetite for cheap black labour.

Like many others who made the trek down the coast to swell the ranks of the then-emerging black proletariat, my ancestors were made to strip naked in public and—like cattle—walk through a dipping tank filled with disinfectants before they could be allowed to live and work in the city. All in the name of "protecting" the city's inhabitants from the diseases allegedly borne by natives from the inland.

Even when the native happened to have been born in the city, like many of my father's generation, he still had to be subjected to the dastardly deed of having his genitals exposed in public for city officials to decide if they were healthy enough to work or had to be deported to some "homeland" in the yonder. And this was as late as the 1970s.

You don't believe me? I'll let the late Steve Biko, who spent a few years of his tragically short life in the Banana City, tell the story.

"You are made in some instances to stand naked in front of some doctors supposed to be running pus off you, because you may be bringing syphilis to the town, he tells you," Biko told a Judge Boshoff during the trial of a group of Black Consciousness leaders in May 1976.

Scene from the film *Drum: Stories from Sophiatown*, taken by EML Wessels.

"Now it is inhuman the way it is done. Three people are lined up in front of him, all naked, and he has just got to look at all of you. Now I must feel that I am being treated as an animal, and as you enter the room where this is done in Durban there is a big notice saying: Beware—Natives in a state of undress."

This practice of forcing "natives" to be in this "state of public undress" wasn't a mere aberration on the part of sadistic Durban city officials. It was common racist practice across the country.

Surely we have all seen the disturbing pictures taken secretly by the courageous photojournalist Bob Gosani in the 1950s of black prisoners at Hillbrow's Fort prison being forced to do the degrading "Tauza dance." To perform this compulsory "dance," prisoners had to be stark naked and expose their private parts to wardens to prove that they were not concealing any contraband.

That the Fort, or Number 4—as the notorious prison was commonly known then—now forms part of the Constitution Hill precinct, the home of democratic South Africa's most important court, is testimony to the giant strides we have taken as a young nation towards healing our deep and painful wounds of the past.

This national reconciliation was not as a result of some inexplicable miracle. It took a lot of hard work, political maturity and magnanimity on the part of most South Africans.

It demanded of us that we be more sensitive to each other's history and regard our diversity as a point of strength rather than a source of racial division.

But recent events, especially the currently raging debate over Brett Murray's disgusting painting of President Jacob Zuma, demonstrate that we are rapidly losing sight of what has so far made our country—with all its fault lines—work.

I am all for freedom of expression, which includes the right to artistic creativity. But such a right should be exercised with utmost responsibility and respect for human dignity—especially given our country's history of racial humiliation and oppression.

What has been most disappointing for me about the debate is the refusal by Murray and his cheer-leaders to acknowledge that the painting, which portrays Zuma posing with genitals exposed, reopens old and painful wounds.

Flawed as Zuma is as the head of state, husband and father, no one deserves to be humiliated in that way. Especially not in a country with a long and shameful history of publicly putting its black males in "a state of undress."

As one outraged reader wrote on one of the websites this past week, it is difficult to look at that painting without concluding that Zuma is being turned into a 21st-century Saartjie Baartman.

Even with the best constitution in the world, we would not succeed in building a stable and economically successful home for all unless we all acknowledge where we come from and avoid actions and utterances that would make some believe that despite a new flag, they remain second-class citizens who can be stripped of their dignity at will in the land of their birth.

BOX 2 **Memories Evoke Tears**

AMUKELANI CHAUKE *Times*, May 25, 2012

New layers of complexity were yesterday added to the controversy surrounding Brett Murray's The Spear.

A crowded gallery in the Johannesburg High Court—gathered for the ANC and President Jacob Zuma's application for an order that the painting be removed from the Goodman Gallery and from *City Press*'s website—watched in shock as Zuma's advocate wept.

Senior counsel advocate Gcina Malindi walks out of court after collapsing in tears following persistent questioning. Photograph: Alon Skuy / *The Times*.

The salience of this reframing was made vividly and painfully clear the following day (May 24), when Zuma's lawyer Gcina Malindi broke down in tears in the Johannesburg High Court at a hearing to have the painting removed from the Goodman Gallery and the *City Press* Web site (see box 2).

The court immediately adjourned and later ordered the media not to broadcast images of the lawyer weeping. By chance I was listening to the radio on that Thursday afternoon before the ban went into action and will never forget Malindi's gut-wrenching sobs.

In an Op-Ed column in the *Sunday Times* on May 27, Justice Malala drove home forcefully to readers of the newspaper how the controversy over *The*

Senior counsel Gcina Malindi had been engaged in a heated debate with Judge Neels Claassen about the relevance of claims of racism in relation to the painting, the artist, the gallery and the newspaper.

Malindi was in court to ask three high court judges—Claassen, Lucy Mailula and Fayeeza Kathree-Setiloane—to interdict the gallery and City Press from continued display of *The Spear* because the painting violated Zuma's dignity.

Malindi said the order would enable Zuma to litigate against any organisation or individual that subsequently published the image.

He argued that such an order would go a long way to soothing Zuma's battered feelings.

But Judge Claassen had asked how the case could be racist, and how the image could be banned from the internet, referring to a British court ruling that stated that such an order would be an insult to the law and the constitution.

In response, Malindi said: "Access to water is a basic human right in South Africa, but not all our people have access to water. Does this mean our constitution is [an] insult to our people?"

After Claassen expressed his dissatisfaction with his response, Malindi sat down, buried his head on the desk and sobbed loudly. Another advocate, Muzi Sikhakhane, tried to console him.

Malindi afterwards told journalists that the exchange had brought back "painful memories."

"I think it is because, as a former activist, it brought back a lot of things. The exchanges between me and the judge just brought back things that happened 25 or even 30 years ago. It [the breakdown] should not have happened but unfortunately it did," said Malindi. . . .

Kebby Maphatsoe, the chairman of the Umkhonto weSizwe Military Veterans' Association, said forcing Malindi to talk about people's daily struggles had reminded the advocate of the time when he was arrested.

"He was among the people arrested during the Vaal uprisings when he was an activist in the 1980s, and those painful memories just came back and he was overcome by emotion."

Spear extended well beyond the frame of the original debate the previous week—a debate in which Malala himself had come out in support of an orthodox liberal position. His explanation underscored many of Msomi's arguments (see box 3).

Immediately following Malindi's breakdown, ANC officials called for a boycott of *City Press* and announced plans for a march on the Goodman Gallery. On Monday, May 28, *City Press* removed the image from its Web site, and Goodman Gallery owner Liza Essers apologized: "Certainly, it was never my intention to hurt anyone by displaying the artwork. I am very sad by the divisiveness that the exhibition has caused because art is meant to bring social

BOX 3 Why Malindi Cried

JUSTICE MALALA *Sunday Times*, May 27, 2012

EVERY so often something comes along that affects you so deeply, it shifts the very essence of your viewpoint. When Advocate Gcina Malindi, the senior counsel arguing for President Jacob Zuma in *The Spear* case, broke down and cried on Thursday, something happened to me.

The very centre of my being moved. I remembered a huge chunk of what I had put away in the deepest recesses of my mind.

I remembered, I was forced to remember, that there is hurt, there is pain, there is anger and there is even hatred in my and my fellow black people's hearts about what has happened here. I remembered apartheid.

I remembered the disdain with which, whenever I went into the Pretoria city centre, white people treated me. I remembered how, when I was working as a gardener when I was 15, a white man made me work all day and at five told me he was not going to pay me because he did not have money. After an hour of this tawdry squabble, which he thought was hilarious, he finally paid me.

I have had this feeling several times in the past few weeks.

When F. W. de Klerk, the last president of apartheid South Africa, told Christiane Amanpour of CNN that blacks "were not disenfranchised, they voted. They were not put in homelands, the homelands were historically there," I recoiled with shock.

I grew up in a village called New Eersterus, in the Hammanskraal area just north of Pretoria. The first residents of this village had been forcibly moved from the "coloured" Eersterus near Pretoria because they were too dark, not "coloured enough." Those of us who came afterwards and were incorporated into the heinous Bophuthatswana homeland knew this homeland "democracy" was a sham.

Not once did the people of my village vote for Lucas Mangope, the puppet who acted for De Klerk's government. When the Bop army attempted a coup in 1988, guess who came to Mangope's rescue? The apartheid government, of course. So much for sovereignty.

cohesion and healing. To the extent that this exhibition has caused divisiveness, I am deeply saddened by that."[7] The march took place on May 29, when an estimated four thousand to five thousand ANC supporters sang and danced the three kilometers from the Zoo Lake to the Goodman Gallery, where they were addressed by ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) officials and the head of the Young Communist League. The ANC Youth League and its recently dismissed president, Julius Malema, were notably absent. On Wednesday, May 30, the ANC and the Goodman Gallery announced a peace deal that included the removal of the painting from the gallery's Web site.

Recently, a friend of mine in Cape Town participated in a charity bike ride. Afterwards, he went to a bicycle shop stall and asked to try out their cycles. He and his two boys hopped on the bikes and rode out.

"Stop that thief!" shouted the shop owner. Tens of people ran after my friend. He is black. Virtually everyone there was white. The shop owner, a white man, refused to acknowledge he had acted in a racist manner.

All these incidents, small and large, bring back that hurt, that pain, that remembrance that once, not so long ago, we were subhuman in this country. They bring back the remembrance that the black man was viewed as a sex-obsessed, lazy . . . well, animal, really. We were not human here.

In the sound and fury that has accompanied the decision by Zuma and the ANC to take the Goodman Gallery to court for displaying the Brett Murray painting of Zuma with his genitals exposed, I have been firmly on the side of those who declared the action ill-advised, nonsensical and a poor pandering to one man's whim above those of our constitution. I wrote that Zuma brought this upon himself: the past seven years have been defined by his flaunting of his sexuality in the guise of nebulous precepts of "African culture."

Yet I cannot escape the raw and real pain and hurt that Malindi's breakdown in court underlined. Perhaps, in my defence of the freedoms to express oneself, the freedoms to artistic creativity, I missed something. Perhaps I—and many of the people who have been batting on this side of the field—forgot that these freedoms cannot be exercised in a vacuum.

There is a hurt that is still not processed. There is a pain so infinitely deep and huge that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has done virtually nothing to assuage it. To many of the people outside court this week, this pain is raw and immediate. To them, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, with talk of reconciliation, are deluded dreamers.

I know this is true because one of my best friends was standing outside court supporting Zuma on Tuesday. For him, the Murray painting is an assault on blackness. He feels that "whiteness" still has the upper hand and that it continues to dictate to and defile black people in South Africa today.

In the flood of commentary on *The Spear*, remarkably little attention has been given to questions of nationalism. This is true even of Anne McClintock, the preeminent scholar of postcolonial nationalisms in relation to race, sexuality, and gender (1995). In a commentary titled "The Best Way to Deal with *The Spear*" published in the *Mail & Guardian*, she asserted, "Most critically at stake is how far the notoriously litigious Zuma and his ruling party are now willing to use the penis brouhaha to quell dissent"; might "paintergate," she went on to ask, "be the mordant symptom of a factionalised political elite in need of a headline-grabbing diversion?" (2012). Pointing to the dangers of censorship,

she recommended collective democratic action to keep "cultural critique and dissent alive."

While there is no question that key figures in the ANC and the SACP made strategic use of *The Spear*, I suggest that this was about not just quelling dissent but also tapping into widespread popular anger and racial hurt that the painting invoked. For many South Africans, the ANC's resolution of *The Spear* controversy represented the defeat of an arrogant racist white liberalism. For the ANC it was also an opportunity to reinvigorate official articulations of African nationalism through an infusion of moral authority that was rapidly eroding. In *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony* (2013), I argue that official articulations of nationalism are simultaneously crucial to bolstering the ANC's hegemonic project and a source of vulnerability. In the discussion that follows I draw on the furor over *The Spear* to elaborate and extend these arguments, and then bring them into conversation with Pred's analysis of European racisms and nationalisms to reflect more broadly on the entanglements of race, sexuality, and gender in the constitution of contemporary nationalisms.

Valences of Post-Apartheid Nationalisms

Let me start by outlining the contours of post-apartheid nationalisms, in relation to which *The Spear* episode can be seen as a key moment.[8] When former president F. W. de Klerk unbanned the ANC and other liberation movements in 1990, the "South African nation" was deeply in question. Quite literally, it had to be conjured into existence from the rubble of a deeply divided past. At that same time, powerful South African conglomerates were straining to break away from the confines of the national economy and to reconnect with the increasingly financialized global economy from which they had been partially excluded during the 1980s by sanctions, exchange controls, and the heightening crisis of the apartheid state.

These tensions are most usefully understood in terms of simultaneous processes of denationalization and renationalization that have been playing out in relation to one another in increasingly conflictual ways (Hart 2013). "Denationalization" includes the extremely conservative package of neoliberal macroeconomic policies set in place in 1996 but also precedes and extends beyond them. Focusing on the heavily concentrated character of South African corporate capital, denationalization encompasses the highly advantageous terms on which these conglomerates engineered their reengagement with the increasingly financialized global economy through their relations with strategically placed forces in the ANC; how the conglomerates have restructured and

denationalized their operations; massive and escalating capital flight; the formation of a small but powerful black capitalist class allied with white corporate capital; understandings of the "economy" fostered through these alliances; their ongoing influence over ANC government policy; and the multiple ways these forces continue to play into and intensify brutal inequalities and the degradation of livelihoods of a large proportion of the black South African population.

Denationalization does *not* refer to political intervention in the "economy" conceived as a separate sphere. It signals instead the simultaneously economic, political, and cultural practices and processes that are generating ongoing inequality and "surplus" populations, and the conflicts that surround them. The forces of denationalization must also be understood in relation to, and as deeply entangled with, the practices and processes of *renationalization*, encompassing official efforts—mainly by the ANC—to produce a new nation, and how these play out in multiple arenas of everyday life.

There are at least three key dimensions of renationalization. First are inclusive discourses of the "rainbow nation" associated with Mandela—the liberal, ecclesiastical discourse of forgiveness that made possible the negotiations to end apartheid, which found further expression in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Discourses of inclusion were not just imposed from above—like the "national question" discussed later, they had (and to some degree still have) popular appeal. Yet they abstracted from and papered over historical geographies of racial oppression, exploitation, and racialized dispossession—and were falling apart by the end of the "Mandela decade" (Sitas 2010).

A second key dimension of post-apartheid renationalization is found in the ANC government's immigration policies and practices. Rainbowism coincided with "fortress South Africa"—the ANC government's continuing use of apartheid-era immigration legislation (the Aliens Control Act) premised on control, exclusion, and expulsion. The Aliens Control Act was repealed in 2002, but the bounding of the nation through immigration policy and practices—as well as popular vigilantism, abuses by police, and brutal detention of "aliens"—have ramped up and fed into xenophobia.

Third, the most important elements of post-apartheid renationalization are embodied in the keywords of the ANC and its alliance partners (the SACP and Cosatu, the Congress of South African Trade Unions): the "national question" and the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). South African understandings of the national question were forged in the context of fierce debates over race, class, and nationalism since the early twentieth century; further elaborated during the anti-apartheid struggle; and reworked in the context of the transition. An aspect of the national question, the NDR refers to the first stage in a two-stage theory of revolution adopted by the SACP in 1962, and subsequently

by the ANC, in which the overthrow of the apartheid state would inaugurate a phase of bourgeois national democracy, paving the way for the second-stage socialist revolution. In the post-apartheid period, this aspect of renationalization makes clear that it is not a separable "political" process, but instead makes the case for accommodation to the inequalities of post-apartheid capitalism as a transitory phenomenon, to be superseded by the (ever-receding) second phase.

The discursive power of the NDR both historically and in the present lies in its capacity to frame in flexible ways the articulation of three key ideological strands of the liberation movement: liberal-democratic leanings that go back to the African bourgeoisie that founded the movement at the turn of the twentieth century; a fairly narrow African nationalism brought to prominence by the ANC Youth League in the 1940s; and a broadly socialist tendency. The late Neville Alexander, a Robben Island veteran, noted astutely that "the particularity of one or other political tendency was determined by the way its exponents blended or interpreted these three discursive strategies" (2010, 3), all in various degrees of tension with one another and emblematic of the diverse social forces brought together under the banner of the liberation movement. In the post-apartheid era, mounting conflicts within and between the ANC and its alliance partners are frequently expressed in terms of fights over the meanings of the NDR (Hart 2013).

The stakes in these seemingly internecine battles are first and foremost ethico-political, turning around moral authority and ownership of the languages of suffering, struggle, and national liberation that are crucial to the ANC's hegemonic project. Official invocations of the nation and liberation continue to have deep popular resonance because they conjure up histories, memories, and meanings of racial oppression, racialized dispossession, and struggles for freedom. At the same time, they are shot through with tensions and contradictions because of the way renationalizing practices and processes operate in relation to denationalization.

It is in relation to these dynamics that I want to situate the furor over *The Spear*. By making vividly clear how the articulations of race and class that permeate post-apartheid nationalisms are deeply entangled with sexuality and gender, this analysis adds an important dimension to the contradictory dynamics through which denationalization and renationalization play out in practice.

In a pioneering effort to link sexuality with post-apartheid nationalisms, Deborah Posel (2005) offers an intriguing discursive analysis of former president Thabo Mbeki's AIDS denialism as an aspect of his nation-building project. Focusing on how sex became commodified and politicized in new ways in the post-apartheid era, Posel maintains that "Mbeki's position on AIDS [was]

an assertive and angry intervention in the discursive constitution of sexuality and the contestations associated with it" (2005, 142). He denied the connection between HIV-AIDS and sex in two ways, she argues. First, by exclusion, arguing that AIDS is a syndrome of familiar diseases associated with poverty and malnutrition (and by implication not sex); and second, by his refusal to countenance the possibility that AIDS could be sexually transmitted. Such denials—in effect efforts "to police the discursive constitution of sexuality in relation to AIDS"—were shaped in turn by "his aspirations as champion of the nation-building project" (145). Calling attention to the degradations and brutalizations of colonial oppression and the disappointments of the first phase of postcolonialism in other African countries, Mbeki's nation-building project invoked "the theme of redemption from a dark, oppressive and morally tainted past" (146), and South Africa's liberation as the rebirth of the continent—embodied in his vaunted notion of the African Renaissance. Hence "the symbolic association of nationhood with order rather than chaos, life rather than death, with sexuality at the fulcrum, [was] at the very heart of Mbeki's imagery of nation-building—with a particularly strong evocation of the forces of chaos and death which threatened to destroy the fledgling nation, at the very vulnerable moment of birth" (146).

In his biography of Mbeki, Mark Gevisser points as well to how Mbeki drew on the work of Charles Geshekter, a historian closely associated with the main HIV/AIDS dissident group in the United States, who had worked in East Africa and focused on how colonial and Western medicine had pathologized Africans: "He [Mbeki] had come to share Geshekter's analysis that 'racist myths about the sexual excesses of Africans are old indeed'" (Gevisser 2007, 748). While Gevisser makes no mention of Posel's thesis about how Mbeki's denialism operated through the discursive articulation of sexuality and nationalism, he does seem to concur on Mbeki's need to repress questions of sexuality: "If we are dying because we have too little [of the material conditions of life] (or too much, too quickly) then Mbeki's mission—and the ANC's *raison d'être*—prevails. If, on the other hand, we are dying because we cannot control our primal urges, Mbeki's own liberatory paradigm is shattered. We are the Africans that our colonial oppressors said that we were, and we have not been able to liberate ourselves from their definition of us" (764).

Hein Marais (see 2011 and 2012) has more recently argued that laying the blame for denialism at Mbeki's door ignores a much wider complicity: "For most of that drawn-out debacle, scarcely any ANC figure of note publicly broke ranks, including stalwarts revered for their independence of thought and the courage of their convictions" (2012). Such complicity was not simply a matter of coercion but of "seduction and self-discipline, spiked with a hint of intimi-

dation" (2012). Like Gevisser, he argues that AIDS denialism "was fed in part by stinging memories of how colonial power and science (including medical science) converged in the lives of subjugated communities" (2012) and enabled a self-gratifying sense of resistance to imperial bullying: "In South Africa, denialism functioned as a grammar—and a substitute for broader political and ideological affirmations and tussles. It presented opportunities to denounce racism. It vented frustrations and passions that had been stifled during the 1990s, when stability and makeshift conciliation were the priorities. . . . It also chimed neatly with key themes of the then-in-vogue 'African renaissance,' by affirming Africans' right and duty to describe their own realities, define their own futures, and reject the imageries imposed by the West" (2012). Yet denialism also operated within key limits. Although expressed as a form of nationalist defiance, that defiance was not extended into other realms: "Economic policy was off limits; corporate capital had instilled a docile aversion to heterodoxy on that front. It was as if the embrace of economic and technocratic orthodoxy in post-apartheid South Africa demanded . . . resistance [that took the form of] anti-imperial posturing—for which AIDS became the stage" (2012).

Taken together, these analyses make clear how articulations of sexuality and race were crucial and deeply contentious dimensions of renationalizing practices and processes during the Mbeki regime (1999–2008)—and how they operated in relation to the dynamics of denationalization.

In December 2007 Jacob Zuma triumphed over Mbeki to become president of the ANC, and in September 2008 the ANC's National Executive Committee called for Mbeki's resignation as president of the country more than seven months before he was due to step down. Zuma's victory was made possible in part by his deployment of a militant masculinity that represented a profound *rearticulation* of sexuality, race, and nationalism. Precisely this rearticulation was vividly at play in the furor over *The Spear*, which, along with the history of racial and sexual affront, provided the ruling bloc within the ANC with an extraordinary opportunity to reassert its moral leadership of the national liberation movement and remind large numbers of South Africans of Zuma's status as a patriarchal figure.

Let me elaborate this argument with reference to three key moments. First, the title of the painting is a deliberately provocative reference not just to Zuma's hypersexuality but also to Umkhonto weSizwe—the Spear of the Nation—the armed wing of the liberation struggle launched in December 1961 in response to the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960, when police killed sixty-nine people protesting apartheid pass laws. The turn to armed struggle quickly came to embody a militant masculinity that remains a pervasive force in South Africa today that Zuma picked up and elaborated (Hart 2013). While the painting

reanimated for many South Africans the racio-sexual affronts suffered by black men in the past, its brazen title also brought into focus the history of armed confrontation with the forces responsible for these affronts and redounded powerfully to the advantage of the ANC.

A second, related point is that the painting's reference to Umkhonto we-Sizwe also served as a reminder of Zuma's prominent role in the armed struggle, which he used to great advantage in his titanic battle with Thabo Mbeki (Hart 2013). Emblematic here was his wildly popular theme song, "Awaleth' Umshini Wami" (Bring me my machine gun), accompanied by a sinuous dance routine. Liz Gunner's extraordinary article titled "Jacob Zuma, the Social Body and the Unruly Power of Song" (2008) points to the dangers of dismissing "Umshini Wami" as no more than an unpleasant manifestation of Zuma's hypersexualized militant masculinity, which he used to mobilize the manipulated mindless masses. With its deep links to liberation songs of the struggle era, Gunner explains, people recognized it as part of a language that they knew:

> The song . . . broke into popular public memory by recalling an earlier and more dangerous way of being. It evoked the years of pre-1994 resistance to the apartheid regime, the tense urban gatherings and the mass funerals. It forced back into the public imagination memories and stories of the long marches through the bush, the lost family members, and the camps to the north in the countries which had hosted the freedom fighters. These were all sites marked by song as an expressive tool. Song was a means of capturing and giving expression to the aspirations, the anxieties and the vision of people in that particularly turbulent and painful moment in South Africa's history. (Gunner 2008, 38)

Like many liberation songs, "Umshini Wami" is "embedded in a largely masculinist conception of militarism and nationalism" (Gunner 2008, 38), "with its weighty solemnity carrying the gravitas of a Zulu war song, the weight of heavy masculinity" (48). At the same time, it is far more than just an ethnic Zulu composition: "It was a song of the dispossessed and of the citizen-to-come. Perhaps at the heart of the song is the verb '-letha' (bring) suggesting a movement of process, of moving towards something yet to be made; suggesting too that the action is sanctioned by the giver or bringer. The instrument of the machine gun, umshini wami, suggests not so much brute power of war but that of agency, and the ability of the individual sanctioned by the group to bring about change" (43).

Yet the machine gun also "sent a warning to any complacent settling into a negotiated liberal democracy at the very same time that it gave hope to the longing for social and political change" (Gunner 2008, 40). An important part of what was at play in the furor over *The Spear* was the deep tension between

liberal complacency and the limits it has imposed on longings for social and political change—the fallout of which the ANC must manage with nationalist appeals.

A third reference in the painting—to Zuma's having been charged with rape in November 2005—also redounded to his advantage and that of his faction within the ANC. In April 2006, Zuma was acquitted of having raped a thirty-five-year-old woman in a trial that horrified and infuriated many feminists, and he called forth massive ridicule when he explained that he showered after intercourse to protect himself from contracting HIV-AIDS. Yet, if anything, the rape trial served to enhance his popular appeal—including to very large numbers of women.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic research in a northeastern region of KwaZulu-Natal, Mark Hunter (2011) offers important insights into how Zuma was able to resonate with the everyday lived experiences of millions of poor black South Africans. Hunter shows how the long-term contraction of employment that many label the "crisis in social reproduction" in South Africa is deeply entangled with transformations of intimacy—signified by a sharp reduction in marriage, the inability of a large proportion of the younger generation to "build a home" (*ukwaza umuzi*), and intensifying gender conflict, "as women deride men for failure to marry them and men deride women for their new independence" (2011, 13). At the time of the rape trial, Hunter argues, women in the settlement where he worked regarded Zuma not as a rapist but as a respectable patriarch, willing and able to support his wives and children, and having offered to pay bride-price (*ilobolo*) to marry the woman who accused him of rape. This analysis accords closely with my own observations in the areas where I work—namely, that the rape trial served, if anything, to consolidate support for Zuma among women and underscore a sense of his having been betrayed. More generally, Hunter argues,

> It is precisely Zuma's ability to talk to society's tremendous economic *and* personal upheavals . . . that allowed him partly to transcend generation, ethnicity, and gender. For the youth, he brought hope of work, service delivery, and a re-mooring of gender relations now in turmoil; for the old, he could also stand for a renewed sense of generational respect. If many South Africans felt a strong sense of betrayal towards their political leaders, Zuma somehow stood inside and outside government: he connected in new ways (and quite contrary to the famous feminist slogan) the *personal* and the *political*. (Hunter 2011, 20)

Far from contradictory, the militant nationalist masculinity of "Umshini Wami" and the respectable, responsible patriarchy described by Hunter are

mutually reinforcing. Both resonate deeply with memories, meanings, experiences, and practices in the multiple arenas of everyday life, meshing together to solidify a "common sense" understanding of Zuma as a powerful and compassionate leader.[9]

Together they also illuminate how and why *The Spear* as critique backfired so spectacularly. By May 2012 this broadly based empathy for Zuma was wearing thin, and he was also coming under fierce attack from Julius Malema, the firebrand former leader of the ANC Youth League whom the ANC had recently dismissed, and an opposing coalition within the ANC that was backing Malema.[10] Through complex entanglements and articulations of race, sexuality, gender, and class, *The Spear* reanimated for many South Africans a positive understanding of Zuma that was unraveling at that moment and, simultaneously, provided the ruling bloc in the ANC with an extremely valuable cache of nationalist resources with which to renovate its hegemonic project and fend off the challenge to Zuma.

Yet this fillip was short-lived. Two and a half months later, on August 16, 2012, police and paramilitary units shot and killed thirty-four striking miners near the town of Marikana on the northwest platinum belt. This was by far the most traumatic event of the post-apartheid era, evoking images and memories of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and the Soweto uprising in 1976. Over the weekend following the massacre, Julius Malema was cheered by large crowds of angry mineworkers and their families at a moment when ANC officials were terrified to set foot in the area. In July 2013 he formed the Economic Freedom Fighters party under the banner of nationalization of the mines and expropriation without compensation of white-owned land. The horrors of Marikana provide Malema with ongoing opportunities to drive home the "truth" of his rearticulation of nationalism in terms of race and nature (Hart 2013)—and they constitute as well a profound threat confronting the ANC.

Part of what Marikana also did was to disrupt the complacent white liberalism that was so prominently on display in the furor over *The Spear*. As I've shown in this essay, the huge irony of this furor is that the white liberal establishment's pompous oblivion to racio-sexual affronts helped to enhance the militant masculinity and nationalist credentials of the ruling bloc in the ANC, thereby bolstering its hegemonic project—at least temporarily. When Peter Bruce, editor of *Business Day*, commented shortly after the massacre that Marikana was "the end of the beginning of the end" he was in effect acknowledging that the capacity of the ANC to contain popular discontent was running out of steam. Marikana underscored, in other words, how predominantly white corporate capital relies heavily on the ANC to contain popular discontent

through ongoing articulations of nationalism, while at the same time generating the conditions of impossibility because of the way denationalizing processes play out in practice.

Thus far I have paid close attention to Pred's analysis of nationalism and racism in *Even in Sweden*:

> Whatever their particularities in any given instance, nationalism and racism were . . . not merely mutually articulating discourses with repeatedly recharged meanings that at once legitimated the authority of the state and the overseas activities of domestic capital, but also an interconnected set of practices that at once socially normalized and corporeally excluded. Together, both types of discourse and practice constituted an interfused "unity of opposites." In so far as coexisting discourses of gender and class difference were also couched in terms of a biologically given hierarchy . . . those discourses constituted gender and class "racisms" belonging to the same "unity of opposites." (Pred 2000, 27)[11]

In concluding, I will draw a more direct line of connection between my arguments in this essay and *The Past Is Not Dead*.

Reflections through a Predian Lens: Re-Cognizing Racisms

> Every "Western" city has its unspeakable spaces. Its spaces where racisms past and present are on exhibit, enfolded within one another, but silenced, rendered unspeakable. . . . Its spaces where stereotypes of threatening hypersexuality and other negatively charged images of the Other are still activated more or less instantaneously. . . . Its spaces where the dialectics of not seeing are still operative, still privileging the modern Us over the never-can-be-modern Them. Its spaces where the (con)fusions of fact and fiction demand to be refused, to be reimage(in)ed.
>
> —ALLAN PRED, *The Past Is Not Dead*

A driving force in *The Past Is Not Dead* is Allan Pred's incandescent rage over a 1999 exhibition in the National Historical Museum in Stockholm. This exhibition included items from Hartkopf's Wax Cabinet and Anatomical Museum, exhibited in the late nineteenth century:

> Imagine now, *if you possibly can*, the presence of *the skin of a black African "native"*—once again stretched out and nailed down, figuratively and literally fixed in place; the presence of *a Negro penis*—once again faultlessly hand-labeled and set aside in a separate case . . . ; *and* the absence of any well-publicized calling into question, the absence of any widely broadcast statement of critical concern

> or ethical dismay, the absence of any controversy or debate in those mass media outlets where the arts and other elements of *Kultur* are reviewed and extensively discussed. (Pred 2004, 181)

Pred directed his fury not just at the curator of the exhibition and the owner of these cruelly obscene wax objects; he excoriated as well the public silence that accompanied their display. Why, he demanded in his inimitable Benjaminian fashion, "when the Then-and-There of 1895–1898 and the Here-and-Now of 1999 were brought into constellation, was there no visible flash of lightning, no illumination, no awakening with a startled shout (from the fantasy-filled [bad] dreamworld of nineteenth century racism), no fleeting revelation converted into written expression, no shock of re-cognition followed by a critical explosion of words, no dialectical image worth speaking about, but a dialectics of not seeing?" (Pred 2004, 185–86).

His enraged response to these "unspeakable spaces" of reproduction of late nineteenth-century racisms in the present was to transport his readers to an earlier moment in the nineteenth century and remind them vividly of Sarah Baartman:

> *She who was labeled "The Hottentot Venus" and fetishized, she who was encaged and reduced to a commodified sexual freak; she whose naked body was inspected and gawked at "in the jungle of European barbarism," she who was discursively linked with "primitive" nature rather than "civilized" culture; . . . she who was reduced to a scientific specimen; she whose brain and genitalia were preserved in formaldehyde and, along with a cast of her (in)famous body, placed on exhibit in Paris at the Musée de l'Homme, where they remained accessible for public 'edification' until 1974.* (Pred 2004, 182–83; emphasis in original)

He draws attention as well to how Sarah Baartman's remains were returned to South Africa in 2002 despite opposition from the director of the Musée de l'Homme, and to how the elaborate official burial ceremony organized by the South African government contrasted so sharply with contemporaneous Swedish silences over racio-sexual affronts. In his remonstrance of Swedish indifference, Pred cites an excerpt from Thabo Mbeki's speech at the burial taken from a newspaper report: "The story of Sarah Baartman is the story of the African people. It is the story of the loss of our ancient freedom. . . . It is the story of our reduction to the state of objects who could be owned, used and discarded by others. . . . It was not the lonely African woman in Europe who had been deprived of her identity and native country who was a barbarian, but those who treated her with barbarian brutality" (Pred 2004, 182).

I was in South Africa at the time and recall mailing this and other news-

paper clippings to him (online newspapers were not widely available then), as well as our subsequent conversations. In retrospect I can see with much greater clarity than at the time how important the return of Sarah Baartman's remains was to Mbeki's rearticulation of nationalism. This rearticulation turned importantly around AIDS denialism as I have argued earlier, linked in turn to a history of racio-sexual affront. It also needs to be seen in relation to the failure of discourses of the Rainbow Nation in the second half of the 1990s. This failure, as Ari Sitas (2010, 22) argues, can be attributed to white intransigence and to the self-serving indifference of many whites to the "new South Africa." Sitas goes on to observe that the "straps of racism were too close to white hearts" and that the refusal of the white population to own the past frightened and angered Mandela. It also helped to propel Mbeki's rearticulations of nationalism. The Baartman burial was an act of remembering that enabled Mbeki to issue a sharp reminder that the past is not dead. But we also need to recall the point made earlier about how the critique of white racism associated with Mbeki's rearticulations of nationalism was limited by the ongoing power of corporate capital, embodied in the practices and processes of denationalization.

In conclusion, let me return to *The Spear*. The rambunctious reaction to the painting of course stood in dramatic contrast to the silent "unspeakable spaces" against which Pred was railing in his critique of the National Historical Museum exhibit. Yet there is an important continuity. In the furor over *The Spear*, the figure of Sarah Baartman played much the same role as that assigned to her by Allan Pred and also by Thabo Mbeki in 2002—namely as a medium for re-cognizing racisms in the present.

By drawing vivid lines of connection between Sarah Baartman, the historical affronts suffered by black men in South Africa, and ongoing racisms, S'Thembiso Msomi's article that reconfigured debate over *The Spear* exemplifies what Pred was calling for: an insistent bringing of the past in relation to the present so as to detonate racio-sexual stereotypes. It was as if—at least at the level of public debate—those who dominated the liberal demands for freedom of expression could only re-cognize the brutality of the painting through the medium of Sarah Baartman.

NOTES

1. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spear_%28painting%29.

2. The original, titled *Lenin Lived, Lenin Is Alive, Lenin Will Live*, is by Victor Ivanov.

3. Sarah Baartman, a woman of Khoikhoi descent born in 1789, was working as a slave on a farm in the vicinity of Cape Town in 1810 when she was taken to Europe and exhibited in freak shows. After her death in 1815, her brains and genitals were preserved

in formaldehyde and put on display in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until 1974. For the official South African story of Sarah Baartman and more on her reburial ceremony, see SouthAfrica.info 2012.

4. In addition to Zuma's having been charged with rape (and acquitted in 2006), much commentary focused on his multiple wives and his twenty children, including a child he fathered out of wedlock by the daughter of an eminent soccer magnate (and for which he apologized in 2010, following a national outcry).

5. Including a demand from a spokesperson of the Nazareth Baptist Church that Murray be stoned to death, which he subsequently retracted (City Press 2012).

6. Incisive commentary on this fixation was provided by Gillian Schutte (2012).

7. Reference and video.

8. Parts of the text in this section are paraphrased from Hart 2013.

9. With "common sense" here interpreted in Gramscian terms as *senso commune*, or that which is taken for granted.

10. I discuss this challenge more fully in Hart 2013.

11. He is in conversation here with Etienne Balibar's observation that "the connection between nationalism and racism is neither a matter of perversion (for there is no 'pure' essence of nationalism) nor a question of formal superiority, but a question of historical articulation. This is to say, by the very same token, that the articulation of nationalism and racism . . . requires a dialectics of the unity of opposites" (1991, 50).

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